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Lovers  
in  
London

A. A. Milne







# Lovers in London



# Lovers in London

By A. A. Milne



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## CHAPTER I.

### A FAMILY GROUP.

LADIES and gentlemen: Amelia. Amelia's father and mother. Amelia's dog. Absent through illness: Amelia's brother.

Amelia, you will observe, is in the centre of the group. She has in her hands a book, evidently a work of great lore. No doubt it is a history of the American War of Independence. Amelia, you are at liberty to suppose, contemplates the publishing of an American Encyclopædia. *W.* War. See *I.* Independence. It will be a valuable dictionary of reference, and you are invited to subscribe for it now, before it is too late...

One can notice the length and beauty of her eyelashes. She is looking at the book carelessly. May be it is only an album of the photographer's family.

She is wearing (for the benefit of the male novelist) "a simple dress of some soft, white, clinging material." There is "a red rose at her waist, and another at her

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hair." (These, too, are for the male novelist's benefit. This is as far as he will venture.)

She has, one gathers, the bloom of youth upon her cheek. Her mouth turns down delightfully at the corners. Her nose, if one may speak of it, is well shaped.

This gentleman on the right is Amelia's father. He has his hand to his brow. We conceive him thinking out next Sunday's sermon. His hair and beard are white; a kindly-looking young old man.

Amelia's mother on the left. She is glancing over Amelia's book. Is that the photographer's wife? My dear, what a fright she looks!

Amelia's dog. Query: Is it really a dog?

So far the photograph. Amelia's brother, says the letter, was down with a broken leg. He is at Cornell. One remembers how they play football in America, and is glad it is only a leg that is broken. We feel sure that he will work hard at the University, in order to please his parents.

And now to put the letter and photograph carefully away in our most private drawer. . . .

It is Amelia who writes the letter—rather shyly, and in places at second hand. "Mother wants me to write and tell you that, after all, we shan't reach England until the beginning of the year. . . . Mother thought you would like to see the enclosed photograph of us all. It is a good one of father. Isn't Toddles just too sweet for words? . . . I look a sight. . . ." (Toddles must be

## A Family Group.

the dog.) She begins, "My dear Teddy," crosses out "Teddy," and puts "Edward," and finally "Teddy" again. I rather like it.

The letter is headed "*S.S. Antelope at sea.*" Amelia has not been very well, so they are coming to England by way of San Francisco and the Pacific and other places. I must look them up on the map. I never was much at geography....

But who is Amelia?

When I am reading a book of adventure, I turn over quickly the pages which describe the beautiful scene spread before the hero's gaze as he lay hidden in the cocoanut tree. I turn over the pages until I come to the words, "But George had no time for these things now. Already the Malays ..." I am like George for the moment. On the other hand, when I am reading a humorous work, I go solemnly through the dullest looking page, lest it should hide one of the author's jokes. Now this is not a book of adventure, and if you omit a page which looks dull I cannot promise that the next one will be more exciting. Nor should I care to call this a humorous work. Wherefore you need not be afraid of missing inadvertently a hearty laugh. So that you may do as you please with the short explanation of Amelia's parentage that impends, having nothing to hope for, nor anything to fear.

Very well then. I first met Amelia's father at a christening, when he gave me the names of William Edward. (He also presented me with a solid silver

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napkin ring. I look at it sometimes now.) As he was then my godfather, so he is now, and for many years has been my guardian. By birth an Englishman, he married an American, settled with her in the States, and soon became naturalised. Nearly every year, however, he would come over to England to see after my education. (Generally he came alone, occasionally he brought his wife. Twice Amelia has come herself; at the ages of six and twelve.) I have a good many aunts and cousins and things who looked after my domestic affairs when I was a boy. (Arranged about my socks and so on.) Amelia's father did the other part. He selected my school and college, spent my money for me till I was of age (about £300 a year it is), and was the sole court of appeal in time of trouble.

Finally, he is a Presbyterian minister whom I call "Father William." I owe him a good deal one way and another.

Amelia's mother and I have never got on well together. She is "going" rather quickly. When I last saw her (four years ago) she gave me the idea that she was a little upset at having a grown-up daughter. A little soured, I think. A little jealous. "Aunt Anne" she is—and kisses me on the forehead.

As for Amelia and myself, if you are kind enough to take any interest in us, you will have learnt all that there is to know by the time you have finished the last chapter. (Amelia's favourite waltz is mentioned in the fifteenth chapter, her favourite live poet in the sixth.

## A Family Group.

In the fifteenth also is named her hero in real life, but perhaps the twenty-fourth will give you another impression.)

Amelia, then, is the heroine. If you had seen her you would say so. But for my own position in the lime-light, I can only plead that as actor-manager I have precedent for it. I have taken all the best lines for myself. . . . And, besides, I was in love already! In love with Amelia's photograph—with Amelia of the family group.

But Amelia herself was on the sea. I had a mind to buy an atlas.

## CHAPTER II.

### A DREAM OF ISLANDS.

IN a certain shop in the Strand there is a large map of the world on somebody's projection. Little models of ships are dotted over the sea part, and if you have a cousin who left last month for the gold-digging, you look at this map and realise at once where he is. Perhaps you find him stuck in a Suez Canal or so; perhaps you are not keen on the Suez Canal, nor yet on the cousin; certainly you have no expectations from him. So you leave him there, nor trouble yourself further about the matter. Only when people talk of the chances of the Baltic Fleet getting through the Canal, and of other things connected with the laws of neutrality, you say, "My dear fellow! My dear fellow," you say, "I have a cousin there, so I ought to know."

But suppose it is not a cousin, but—the daughter of somebody's godfather! Suppose she is going round the world for her health, which is weak. Daily you watch her glide over the Pacific; and your heart beats high, for there are so many islands in the Pacific where a girl of good family may be wrecked. At last you come down to the window to see that there is one particular

## A Dream of Islands.

little island directly in the way of her ship. It looks uninhabited on the map; but there is something about the shape of it which speaks eloquently of coral-reefs and cocoanuts. . . .

This is your moment. You go back to your rooms—well, it is useless to deceive you—I go back to my rooms, and put on a pair of white flannel trousers, a soft-fronted shirt with a double collar, and a pair of pumps. I have long ago decided that I will be shipwrecked nohow else.

My hair, I need hardly say, is parted to perfection.

Then I close my eyes. . . .

\* \* \* \* \*

Half carrying, half dragging Amelia, I fought my way up out of the tumbling waves, until at last I could lay her down on the dry sand beyond the reach of harm. . . .

I stood up, but dimly conscious of the heaving waste of waters before me. Suddenly a terrible suspicion flashed across my mind. I looked down. Yes, it was only too true. One of my pumps was missing. . . .

I glanced seawards. All at once I spied it upon the crest of a wave. To plunge in after it was the work of a moment. . . .

I have a confused remembrance of breakers crashing over me . . . of being pulled down and down and still down. . . .

Of wondering if this were indeed the end. . . .

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Of Amelia, and of sunny days when we played together in the paddock. . . .

And then—a blank.

\* \* \* \* \*

It was a glorious morning when I opened my eyes again. (One of those wonderful tropic days which we get so often in the Pacific.) Amelia had already gathered some sticks, and was busy lighting a fire.

“You’ve been asleep hours and hours,” she said, when she saw that I was awake. “I thought you were dead. This was going to be your funeral pyre.”

“I wasn’t asleep,” I protested. “I fell into a swoon. You’d have done it if you had been through all I went through last night. I forget how many times it was I saved your life.”

“Well, but for me you wouldn’t be here at all. So come and find something for breakfast.”

Breakfast, I must confess, was a failure. Five shellfish and a young lizard sounds all right from a distance; but, actually, the lizard preserved his *status quo* through the intercession of Amelia, and of the shellfish only one was obliging enough to come undone. The loss of the lizard was a great blow to me. All the time we were struggling with the clams I could catch Amelia out of the corner of my eye throwing wistful glances at it.

“You’ll spoil that lizard,” I said at last, “if you make eyes at it. It will begin to give itself airs. A while

## A Dream of Islands.

ago it was content to be a breakfast dish; now it will aspire to nobler things. All the same," I added bitterly, "if it thinks it's come here to be a pet it's jolly well mistaken. The necessities of man"—and I took up the toasting fork.

"Just when I've christened him William Henry," sobbed Amelia. "Come to your mother, darling." And she took him up in her hands.

"It only makes it harder for him to leave us. You shall have the tail. Epicures say it's the best part."

"Spare my child," wailed Amelia. "Strike, but hear me. He's going to find truffles for us; aren't you, sweetest?"

So there, of course, we left it.

After breakfast we started to tour the island. You must imagine us: I led the way with the gun over my shoulder; Amelia came next, bare-headed and short-skirted, carrying the box of matches; behind waddled William Henry, officially looking for truffles.

"What do we do first?" asked Amelia.

"The first thing to do is to find out whether this really is an island, or just part of an ordinary continent."

"Fancy, if it's really Brighton, and we didn't know," giggled Amelia.

"Incidentally we must find the bread-fruit tree, and shoot something."

"Bags I the turtle's eggs, then."

"Amelia," I said sternly, "you are very frivolous

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about it all. Little wot you that at any moment we may be surrounded by yelling savages."

"Wot what?"

"Savages!" I said, in a hoarse voice.

"Oh, I say, and I haven't got a hat on! What *will* they think of me?"

The caustic reply which I had prepared froze upon my lips, for at this moment we plunged into the depths of an impenetrable forest. In a little while there was a silence as of night. Through the tangled undergrowth we fought our way for what seemed hours. There appeared to be no living creature there save ourselves. The ghostly stillness worked upon our nerves until we hardly dared to speak to each other. What catastrophe was about to happen?

Suddenly I put my hand to my brow, and staggered back. Directly in front of us was a "blazed" tree! I moistened my lips, and spoke in a voice which I barely recognised as my own.

"Whose footprint is that?" I gasped.

"Please I cannot tell a lie. I done it with my little hatchet. I thought it was the proper thing to do."

"Amelia," I said, "you have saved our lives."

We lunched on the sands off bread-fruit and a peculiar kind of bark which I had discovered, William Henry having had no success. After the meal was over Amelia announced her intention of going to sleep for an hour.

## A Dream of Islands.

"Very well," I said; "I'll leave you here, and you shall have William Henry to guard you."

"What are you going to do?"

I looked at her in surprise.

"Find the india-rubber tree, of course," I said, simply.

"What do we want india-rubber for?"

"My dear girl," I said, "what else are we here for? You don't seem to realise the strategical importance of finding the india-rubber tree."

"No, I don't; nor does William Henry, do you, dear?"

"Well, any how, it's got to be done. Good-bye, Amelia."

"Good-bye, dear."

I had a premonition of coming evil as I left her. But duty came first. I turned away, and struck inland.

It was lonely without her. Every tree, every little shrub brought back the incidents of the morning with a sudden stab of regret. Something seemed to have gone out of the day. I threw stones idly at a group of monkeys playing in the trees, and wondered that Amelia was not there to laugh at my bad aim. The whole place now seemed alive with the chattering of birds and the hum of insects. But they brought no sense of companionship. . . .

I don't know what can have happened. Perhaps I fell asleep, for suddenly I realised that it was late and cold. There was a wind in the air. I shivered, and ran down to where I had left Amelia. I must have

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wandered miles that afternoon. I began to wonder if I should ever get there. Ah! the sea at last . . .

Somehow I knew she would be gone. Perhaps she had only moved away to find shade. Yet, as I told myself that, I knew that I did not believe it. What had happened?

Suddenly I saw her. There was a little hillock of palms half a mile away, may be; and she was standing there among the trees, with the dark blue sky behind her, looking out over the sea. I followed her eyes.

Canoes! Half a dozen of them. I knew what that meant. They were near the shore, but I could get to her before they were beached. There was no danger if I was with her.

Yet I couldn't! Simply I couldn't! I see her there now as I write, looking calmly on while her fate drew nearer. And I, powerless to move a limb! Tall and queenly, she stood lined out firmly against the wind. She pushed her hair back from her face, and half turned her head, as though she wondered why I was not with her. . . .

\* \* \* \* \*

That was the last I saw of her. My pumps gave out, and I had to return to London and the realities again. Yet that evening, as I walked down the Strand, I looked half fearfully in at the window, and when I saw that the island was left well behind, I heaved a sigh of relief.

## CHAPTER III.

### GREETINGS AND ARRANGEMENTS.

THEY had been in London for three days before I saw Amelia. Her father had written asking me to meet them at Southampton; but I had pleaded urgent business. I much regretted, I wrote, that owing to extremely urgent business, I should be unable to return to London until the Saturday after their arrival. On Saturday afternoon I would give myself the pleasure of calling on them, and I hoped that they would recognise me.

Now, the truth must be told, there were two reasons for this urgent business. First of all, I refuse absolutely to be anywhere near Amelia's parents when they are catching a train, or landing from a boat, or going up the Great Wheel, or doing anything of that kind. Amelia's father is the sort of man who goes into church half-an-hour before the service begins, who gets to his train half-an-hour before it starts, who pops his head out of the window at every station to see how his luggage is getting on. . . . He worries. You know the kind of man. Of course, the young should make allowances for the weaknesses of age;

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but—I know my own weaknesses too, and to save unpleasantness I stay away.

Also I had been growing a moustache, and I wanted to give it as long as I could. By Saturday it would be “taking notice,” I hoped.

On Saturday afternoon I called. They had taken a house near the South Kensington Museum. I was shown in, and soon there appeared what was evidently Amelia. I rose from my chair.

“It’s a dream,” I murmured to myself, “a beautiful dream. I shall wake soon and have fish for breakfast. Ugh!” (They always give me fish for breakfast.)

“Hullo, Teddy,” said the vision, “I’ve been just longing for you to come. How are you?”

“Pinch me,” I said. “Ow! Not there.”

“Aren’t you glad to see me? You’ve grown a heap.”

“Is it really you?”

“Yes. You are Teddy, aren’t you?”

“Oh, I’m all right,” I said. “The only question is whether you are—they must be awfully bad photographers in America.”

“Oh, I see what you mean. Did it flatter me so?” Amelia laughed.

“Flatter?” I said, indignantly. “You’ve—you’re—” she said she was longing for me! Oh lord!

I cannot attempt to describe Amelia. I don’t know how it is with other people, but when I read that Lady Clara, daughter of a hundred earls, had an oval face, pearly teeth, a slightly *retroussé* nose, and a dimpled

## Greetings and Arrangements.

chin—it conveys nothing at all to me. But if the author says simply that she is just sweet, then I think of the prettiest face I know, or have ever known, and, be it country maid's or town madame's, there is my Lady Clara. So now, if you will think of the loveliest girl you ever saw, if you will remember that she spoke with the divinest American accent, and forget (if it makes it easier) that she had been "longing for me," then there will be Amelia for you to the last chapter.

"When I last saw you I was twelve," said Amelia.

"Ten years ago, so you're now nineteen."

"I'd rather be twenty-two, if you don't mind. Fancy! we're both grown up. Now, Teddy, you've just got to show me London. Everything."

"Things like the Zoo and the Tower, and—"

"Yes, everything. Oh, except the South Kensington Museum."

"You've seen that?"

"I went this morning."

"Then, let's shake hands again," I said. "But I should love to take you to the Zoo, or anywhere else."

Amelia's father and mother also remarked on my growth, looks, and age. It seemed to please them. At tea I made myself agreeable, I hope. I talked about the fiscal question to Father William, pointing out that there were two ways of regarding it, and that one must not come to a hasty conclusion. I also told him in what way Togo had lost his opportunity. War had just been declared then. I gave Aunt Anne information

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as to the best chapel for the family to attend, throwing in details about the private life of the minister. He kept a canary called Percy. I talked to Amelia herself—about everything. I had no idea what I was saying.

But afterwards I saw her alone for awhile.

“We start on Monday,” she said.

“Where?”

“Round the world. Round London. You can spare the time?”

“Certainly, my dear Holmes. I have an obliging friend who can take my practice. Where do we go to first?”

“Where do you want to go?”

“The Zoo. I love the Zoo.”

“Then we’ll go. But I’ve been twice already—yesterday and Thursday. I’m just crazy on it.”

“Amelia, how could you? Why weren’t you unpacking? And who did you go with? Of course we won’t go—if—”

“Of course we’ll go, and I’ll introduce you to someone. A darling. I love him already.”

“I like reptiles,” I said; “but I loathe insects. If it isn’t an insect I shall be glad to meet it.”

“Him, please,” said Amelia. “Good-bye. Two o’clock on Monday. And we’ll go in a hansom. I adore hansom.”

I got home somehow.

## CHAPTER IV.

### LONDON IN BED.

I LAY awake that night thinking of Amelia. I imagined us in wonderful situations. One of the most ferocious lions in the Zoo had escaped. There was a panic. Cries and shrieks rent the air. Amelia and I in another part of the grounds heard the noise, and wondered idly what was the matter. Suddenly we turned the corner, and there—there was the king of beasts. . . .

I took off my coat and rolled up my sleeves.

"Amelia," I called, "save yourself! I will rejoin you outside the opossums' cage."

"Teddy!" sobbed Amelia.

I seized her umbrella, and waving and shouting, dashed at the animal. Some of my past life rose before my eyes—the more satisfactory parts. I thought of Amelia. I thought of Livingstone. There used to be a picture of the intrepid missionary underneath a lion. Livingstone was pretending to be dead, and the lion was gnawing a piece of his arm, and pretending too. One gathered from the text that the sensation was pleasant rather than otherwise—from Livingstone's

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point of view, I mean (and probably from the lion's, if hungry). I thought much of that. It cheered me. I shouted and waved. . . .

Would the animal turn? . . .

And then, just as I was upon it, the lion remembered that it had left its cage open, and went back to close it. We were saved.

I turned to Amelia, putting on my coat. A grand moment! . . .

They clean the roads at night. I found myself listening to the sound. The horses' feet—clod—clod-clod—clod-clod—clod; the wish—sh of the brush as it goes round. Then "*Woa-back!* woa! woa-back! woa, carn't yer? Get ba-ack; woa!" Whish—sh—sh. Clod—clod. "*Woa-back!*"

I was seized with an unreasoning rage. I cursed the driver. Never did I loathe anybody so much. I wanted to get up and hit him hard with his own whip several times across the face. I concentrated my mind on that man. Man? Reptile. If there is anything in telepathy, he must have felt that I despised him and ground him under my feet.

"*Woa-back!*" he shouted again; and all through the night. Why couldn't he talk gently to his animal? A vulgar man.

They print the newspapers at night. Newspapers are all around. How have I ever managed to sleep here with that noise of engines outside. There goes the *Daily Mail*.

## London in Bed.

"No stomach-tax, no stomach-tax, no stomach-tax, no—." Then it changes. "Oh, it's *not* a stomach-tax; no, it's *not* a stomach-tax; oh, it's not a stomach-tax; no, it's not a stomach-tax."

There goes the *Daily News*. Mark how smoothly. No betting news, no drink advertisements there. Nothing but peace. Pe-e-e-ace. Hallo, what's that? A little harsh and violent, is it? Ah, that's because it's giving a much-needed lesson to the Yellow Press. It's rebuking the *Daily Mail* for bringing about war between Russia and Japan. What, you actually thought that Russia brought on war? And your friend says it was all the Japanese's fault, and that they've been preparing for war for seven years? Nonsense, my dear man. It was the *Daily Mail*. Russia and Japan weren't even consulted. Listen! Can't you hear it? "The *Daily Mail* again, the *Daily Mail* again, the *Daily Mail* again." . . .

Directly opposite works the *Sun*. Hark to its motto grinding away. "If you see it in the *Sun* it is so. If you see it in the *Sun* it is so. If you see it in the *Sun* it is *not* so." Hallo! something in the machinery caught there. Ah! that's right. Now it's working properly again. "If you see it in the *Sun* it is so."

"Toot, toot!" comes from the river. I suppose Amelia will want the exact spot in Westminster Bridge on which Wordsworth composed his sonnet. Well, she can't have it.

And I refuse to go up the Monument.

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And she shan't see the Lord Mayor's Show. I haven't. My one achievement.

Let's see. There's the Zoo, and the Tower, and the Abbey, and the British Museum. Hang the British Museum! It always gives me a headache.

And Earl's Court and the National Gallery. Hang the National Gallery! I seem to be in for headaches.

Anyhow, there's Amelia. She may go and see the National Gallery if she likes, and I shall go to the National Gallery to see her. That's fair.

Toot, toot, whish-sh-sh, clod-clod, clod-clod. "Woa there, can't yer? Get ba-ack!" It suddenly became clear to me that I was not going to sleep that night. I went into the other room and turned on the light. Then I took out the family group.

It wasn't a bit like her, you know. Fancy thinking I was in love with that! Bah! Some men are fools.

## CHAPTER V.

### AN AFTERNOON WITH THE ANIMALS.

AMELIA'S friend turned out to be a racoon, and so on Monday afternoon we went to call on him. He is known as the Crab-eating Racoon—no doubt because he eats crabs. We, however, call him "Charles." (I was allowed to call him "Charles" on the very first day.) Those in the know may refer to him as "Procyon Cancriferous," but to us it seems an unwarranted familiarity.

Charles wanted to see us about four o'clock, so we strolled through the gardens first.

The polar bear is a love and a darling and a sweet thing. Likewise he is just a dear, and rather a pet. There you have our united criticism. The "rather a pet" was my own idea; I threw it in, as Amelia appeared to be getting heady over the animal. Unfortunately you can't stroke him without breaking a by-law. But we blew kisses to him, and hoped he would sit up and take his fish nicely at dinner.

At the back of the bears' cages are the hyænas'. The worst noise in the Gardens comes from the spotted hyæna at lunch-time; the most plaintive from the seal

## Lovers in London.

at all times; the most surprising from the one-wattled cassowary when we happened to pass him. Amelia said it was because he was disappointed at only having one wattle. But after all a wattle is a wattle, and many of us haven't even one. His christian name is Casuarius Uniappendiculatus. Perhaps that will explain why he barks so well.

As we went under the bridge to get to the elephant-house Amelia insisted on buying buns for the rhinoceros.

"But they don't eat buns," I objected.

"He will if I offer it to him," said Amelia confidently.

"My dear Amelia," I said, "it is a matter of common knowledge that the rhinoceros, belonging as it does to the odd-toed set of ungulates, has a gnarled skin, thickened so as to form massive plates, which are united by thinner portions forming flexible joints. Further, the animal in question, though fierce and savage when roused, is a vegetable feeder. In fact, he may be said to be herbivorous."

"I don't care," said Amelia defiantly; "all animals in the Zoo eat buns."

"I can tell you three that don't."

"I bet a shilling you can't—not straight off."

I instanced the electric eel, the ceciopian silk moth, and the cocoanut crab. So Amelia paid for our teas. But in the elephant-house the rhinoceros took his bun with *verve*—not to say *aplomb*.

Beyond this is the canal bank aviary—a wonderful

## **An Afternoon with the Animals.**

place. All sorts of birds mix up together here. We were witnesses of a scene between two herons and a little green bird—name unknown. Suppose we call him a green-cheeked amazon—because there is such a bird.

He sat on a branch, and the two herons strolled up to him.

Said the first: "What on earth is it?"

The second looked the amazon over carefully. "Upon my word, I shouldn't like to say. It's a mistake of some sort."

"Go away!" said the amazon nervously.

"Very inferior place the Gardens are getting," said the herons, "not like they were when we were boys."

"I wonder if that green comes off," said the first one reflectively.

He proceeded to try. . . .

Then Amelia clapped her hands, and they all flew away.

In the next house we found the Somali wild ass. "There used to be another," said Amelia. I explained that he had fled into Italian territory, and no one could say when he would return.

Just here is No. 58a, "The Meerkats' Cages." Next comes No. 59, "The Superintendent's House." You are requested not to feed the superintendent.

We made a similar mistake a moment later. My guide-book spoke about a téa-house. "I don't remember ever seeing the te-as," said Amelia? "what are they like?" I didn't want to confess ignorance.

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"The téa," I said, "is a cross between an emu and a wild goat. Something like a rhea, and something like a thar, you know."

"Yes, I remember now," she said; "where is it?"

We went all over the place, looking for the common or herbaceous téa. We grew wonderfully keen on it. I pointed out to Amelia that it was probably a very rare animal, and that we might have to pay extra to see it. . . .

Then it suddenly struck me. As I have said, Amelia paid for both.

After tea we saw the reptiles. A donation to the man at the wheel, and for the first time in her life Amelia wore a real boa. Quite a young one, and like linoleum to feel. (I shall not advertise it any further. I leave this to the puff adder.)

We came back by way of the eagles. They like having their heads scratched. One of them is called the "vociferous eagle," but luckily he did not vociferate.

Space forbids me to tell of the hairy-nosed agouti and the two-toed sloth. I may not refer to the Indian darter that I left behind me. Nor can I say a word for the grunting ox, nor pronounce an opinion (or anything else) on Prjevalski's wild horse. I have only a moment for Charles.

The racoon may be stroked with the first finger—and with impunity.

"Tell me, dear," said Amelia to him, "you don't really like horrid crabs, do you?"

## **An Afternoon with the Animals.**

"Never touch 'em," said Charles, with a wink at me.

"And your name isn't really Proki—what was it, is it?"

"What's in a name?" said Charles, airily.

"Procyon Cancriverous," I suggested.

Charles looked uneasy.

"A family name," he said hastily; "my great-grandfather's. I haven't an idea what it means."

"Charles!" I said, sternly.

"It doesn't mean what you mean," he said.

"You're making Charles angry," said Amelia.

"Did'ums, was they horrid to him, then?"

"They was!" said Charles, stiffly. "Send him away."

Amelia looked appealingly at me.

"The glutton is next door," said Charles, vindictively.

"That's more in his line."

## CHAPTER VI.

### WESTMINSTER WAY.

WESTMINSTER Abbey is to the American what—a moment ago I had a simile, but I have forgotten it now. It is to the American as—well, it doesn't matter much, so long as you realise how greatly Amelia wished to see it. She had heard of it; she knew its direction from Marble Arch. (Amelia reckons from Marble Arch, not knowing London very well.) To get from the Bank to Liverpool Street she would make for Marble Arch, and then enquire the way. Policemen, shedding tears of anguish in their futile attempts to direct her, brighten up when they hear that she knows Marble Arch. Something of this sort happens, you may say.

*Amelia* : Say, how do I get to St. Paul's, please ?

*Policeman (thinking he has a soft thing on)* : It's just at the top of Ludgate Hill, ma'am. You can't mistake it.

*Amelia (innocently)* : Ludgate Hill ?

*Policeman* : Yes. That's at the bottom of Fleet Street. Go straight up the Strand.

*Amelia* : Fleet Street ? Strand ?

*Policeman* : Yes. You know the Strand ?

*Amelia (with a charming smile)* : No ! Where is it ?

## Westminster Way.

*Policeman (getting anxious, but feeling that now at last he has touched bottom)*: Well, you know Charing Cross, ma'am?

*Amelia (brightly)*: But I don't. (*Thinking to please him.*) But I've heard of it!

*Policeman (desperate)*: Trafalgar Square, then?

*Amelia*: No-o.

*Policeman*: Well, ma'am, what do you know?

*Amelia (beaming all over)*: I know Mar-rble Ar-rch.

Looking up, I see that this dialogue started life as a parenthesis. Well, well, it is lost now. . . . But it was a mistake. All Amelia's sayings and doings should come into a main sentence. They do—for me.

We went over and through and round the Abbey. The Nave, the Choir, the Poets' Corner. Into the Triforium, the Waxworks, the Chapels. Perhaps one may be permitted a smile at the Waxworks; but, for the rest, Amelia was quiet—almost frightened. We spoke in the lowest whispers, for fear of rousing the dead kings and queens. . . .

There is a monument to Sir Isaac Newton. For a long time it was supposed that the Binomial Theorem was written on it. As many a poet has composed his own requiem, so it seemed possible that carved on Sir Isaac Newton's tomb was some mathematical truth. Now Deans and Chapters are not mathematicians as a rule, and to the Classic the Binomial Theorem is a mystic thing—connoting, according to his personality, a new star in the heavens, a definition of quaternion

## Lovers in London.

fluids, the sign for infinity; whatever, in fact, is outside his vision. So, when they wished to find out the truth of the legend, they knew not what they went out for to see.

At last, quite a few years ago, a mathematician of eminence was called in. Armed with a step-ladder, a microscope, and an Algebra, he made his examination—to find . . .

Nothing. There was not even an Arithmetical Progression.

In the Cloisters afterwards Amelia said: "Teddy, do you know Silas Kerranhappuch Bloggs?"

"What is it like?" I asked, for you can never be sure from the name what these American drinks are going to be.

"It! He's a man! Oh, a man!"

"Oh, a man? A friend of yours?"

"A friend of *mine*?" asked Amelia in amazement.

"No? Then tell me. Does he pack pork, or is he a Gum King?"

"He's a poet. The greatest American poet."

"Is he a good poet?"

"The only poet. *He* ought to be in that corner of yours."

"Is he still alive?" I asked anxiously.

"Oh, yes."

"Then I agree with you. He ought."

American poets have such funny names. An Englishman called Bloggs wouldn't dare to turn out verse.

## Westminster Way.

But they do it in the States. You can never tell with an American what he is going to be.

In the Cloisters there is a piece of statuary; a figure turning over the pages of a book. I told Amelia the legend. If you come down the Cloisters facing this, as soon as you turn to the right and have your back to it, the figure turns over a page of his book.

Frankly, Amelia didn't believe it.

"All right," I said; "try it."

We walked past, and then looked suddenly back.

"There you are," I said, "he's just turned over. If we had been a moment sooner we should have seen him."

"How many pages are there in an ordinary book?" asked Amelia.

"About four hundred," I ventured.

"Then I shall walk past it four hundred times, and just show you how absurd it is. You say the book will be finished by then."

"May I sit down?" I asked.

After the tenth time I thought I ought to interfere.

"He will never get to the end," I said. "There are an infinite number of pages in that book. All you will prove is the existence of the number infinity, a thing which has bothered many mathematicians of the highest credentials. I will write to the British Association about it."

We walked into Little Dean's Yard.

Westminster School is not an easy place to find. Nor

## Lovers in London.

when found is it always understood—by the ladies at least. I have a friend who was at school there, and this frequently, he tells me, is the sort of remark in which he is involved.

“Oh, so you were at Westminster,” she says. “Were you in the choir?”

My friend then explains with great heat and fervour that no Westminster boy has anything to do with the choir.

If she does not ask him about the choir then she is thinking of something else, and the conversation takes this turn.

“Oh, were you really? Did you know George Jones?”

“I don’t seem to remember the name.”

“Oh, I know he was there. He left about three years ago.”

“Oh yes, that’s all right. But he wasn’t in my house. Of course you can’t expect to know everybody.”

“Oh! He was very good at games. In the eleven, I fancy. He got his colours, didn’t he, Arthur?”

“Who?” says Arthur.

“George.”

“Oh yes, rather!”

“Well, that’s very funny,” said my friend. “I was in the eleven three years ago, and there was certainly nobody called Jones in it. There was a fellow called Smith, who was twelfth man.”

“Oh, I’m certain his name was Jones.”

## Westminster Way.

My friend still looked mystified, so Arthur was called in again. It then transpired (as the papers say) that she was thinking of Winchester. My friend says that among the fairer sex this often happens.

Amelia says, "How can women be expected to know?" For her own part she can hardly distinguish between Marlborough and Nelson—or is it Wellington?

We came round by the Houses of Parliament. Amelia wondered, as so many have done, whether Richard wasn't feeling tired after holding his sword up so straight for so long. Perhaps he has writer's cramp by now, in which case the ancients had all the diseases, as well as all the virtues. "King Richard and I," I shall observe to my friends. . . .

"And is the House of Commons sitting now?" asked Amelia.

"Yes; they are making laws for us."

"For us? For you; they can't touch me."

"But, perhaps, some day it will apply to both of us," I hazarded.

"You mean, I might become naturalised."

"Well, yes."

"Why?"

"Legally," I began. . . . "It was just an idea," I said. "Come and have some tea."

## CHAPTER VII.

A. B. C.

WHEN Amelia was twelve her uncle gave her T at an A. B. C. I am not certain how many scones it was that she ate. Legends grow up around one's early adventures, as you know. In the Amelian circle the reference to it is general rather than particular, and proverbial. "Amelia and the scones" is as historic, and teaches as important a lesson, as "Alfred and the cakes." (Dear old Alfred and the cakes !)

This, of course, was the Amelia of years ago. Since that almost fatal day she had never been to an A. B. C. So, after leaving the Abbey that afternoon, she persuaded me to give her tea there. "It must be the identical dépôt," she said, and so it was.

Trembling with excitement, Amelia entered. I don't know what she expected would happen. I never knew rightly what happened before. Of course, if it really was seventeen—these are wild words.

"Scones and butter and tea for two," I ordered.

"I thought you were Scotch," said Amelia.

"Hoots, lassie, ye dinna ken. Ah'm English. My name is Norval, and on the Grampian Hills my father

## A. B. C.

fed his flock. At least he didn't. If he fed them any where, it was on Primrose Hill."

"Well, anyhow, they are called scones."

"When you had seventeen they were called scones."

"It wasn't seventeen, Teddy."

"Seventeen is merely a symbol denoting excess."

Really, I refuse to call them "scones."

In this relation there is a pretty little story about me, which I proceeded to tell to Amelia. It brings out the nobleness of my character. I figure very handsomely in this story. But it is in no spirit of self-satisfaction that I repeat it now; rather for the good it may do others.

Once upon a time there was in an A. B. C. shop a fair Scotch waitress. She was a newcomer, but in this shop they know my ways. One day I was not quite sure what to have, so I left it to her. I said, "I leave it to you, partner." At least, she took it upon herself to say:

"Scones or cut bread and butter with your honey?"

Now, I wanted scone. But, as she had said "scon," I couldn't correct her by saying, "Scone, please." I did not wish her to feel her Scotch inferiority. You appreciate, of course, my instinct? Nor could I bring myself to say "scon;" my English blood boiled at the idea. So I said, "Bread and butter, please;" and I didn't want it a bit.

Amelia says it was very nice of me.

I claim to have discovered scones and honey. There

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is, of course, a story that somebody's wife was "in the parlour eating scones and honey." (Or perhaps I am confusing the Spider and the Fly with the Knave of Hearts' performance.) But toasted A. B. C. scones and honey is, I am sure, my own invention. I use the plural in a confident way; but the A. B. C. scone is, really, about the size and weight of the ancient *diskus*. If anyone will prove to me that he has eaten two of these toasted, with honey (total cost, 6d.), at a sitting, I will give a shilling to any charity he likes to name—as they say. This is genuine; no money returned. And I think I may add that, if this wager is taken up, kind friends would oblige by accepting this the only intimation.

Amelia has just ordered some blackberry jelly. I am ruined.

The beauty of the A. B. C. is its catholicity. A man sat down next to me one morning—I was having my modest roll and butter for lunch—and ordered fried fish. "Fried fish off? Oh, well, then I'll have—let's see—a plate of porridge and an apple." After that he could have had a sparkling limado and a tin of butter drops had he wished.

"You couldn't do that at Princes', you know," I said to Amelia. "A plate of porridge, perhaps; a sparkling limado under another name, no doubt; but the butter drops, I fancy not. On second thoughts I should say that one could hardly rely on the porridge—for lunch."

"What is a sparkling limado?"

## A. B. C.

"It isn't the same as a sparking plug."

"Shall I ask for one?"

"Not while I'm here," I said firmly.

"Then *you* ask. You're afraid, I believe."

"No, I'm not."

"Then ask."

"Not now. I promise to ask for one some time, if that will do."

"Very well, then. Only mind you do."

Amelia then asked for and obtained a piece of iced madeira cake. *Gourmande!*

The A. B. C. pays, I believe, an excellent dividend. It also presents such *employées* as are in need of it with a wedding cake. So I hope they won't mind my saying that their tea cups are too thick. The idea, no doubt, is that in this way they are unbreakable. I feel sure that this is the idea, because I have so often heard the A. B. C. girls trying to break them. I could make other complaints, too; for my experience is great. I have had tea here often; lunch, at one time, invariably; and, for a period, breakfast. I don't know why. One could get a tin of butter drops as cheap anywhere else. The marble tops to the tables are polished just as well at the Carlton. The serving is no better than it is at the Savoy. . . . Frankly, I abhor the A. B. C. as I abhor nothing else. But it is an institution, a habit. . . .

It is a great joke to watch old ladies at the *dépôts* of the Aërated Bread Company—(called by the vulgar, I am told, A.B.C's.). They study the *menu* with such

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care ;—as though they were about to order a six-course lunch. The “wine” is selected with the pains of a *connoisseur*. Number Sixty-three. A small milk. For *entrées* they fall back on eggs. I find that one generally falls back on eggs at A. B. C.’s. Personally, I fall back often on two poached eggs on toast. Sometimes on two scrambled eggs.

Scrambled eggs are the nearest approach to mystery, to romance, that one can make. The keynote of the A. B. C. is its obviousness. You may get there everything which is plainly something, and nothing which might be anything. You order a meal, and can say at once, “This is a plate of ham”—or a poached egg, or a sardine, or an apple, or porridge. There is nothing fancy, nothing made-up. Its plainness is almost a pose. . . .

Of course one might be in doubt for a moment about sparkling limado. . . .

I told Amelia my ideas and experiences of A. B. C.’s, and she said, “You think of nothing but your—” She answered, “Your thoughts turn only to—” What she implied was that my sole care was for—that I worshipped, in fact, my—Amelia is American and she speaks in a plain blunt way like Antony. But it is not true. I have a heart above my stomach; physiologically, anyhow.

An epicure, indeed! There’s gratitude for you. No more luxury for Amelia. No more A. B. C.’s. . . .

Meanwhile there was this beastly sparkling limado

## A. B. C.

hanging over me. I worried about it all the way to South Kensington. Amelia tried to cheer me up by telling me about people who had been happy with an even more terrible ordeal before them. It was no good. I saw her safely home, and sadly walked back to my club.

## CHAPTER VIII.

### THE FINEST VIEW IN LONDON.

MY club has the finest view in London. If I were to change my politics, my colour, my creed; if I were to lose my family or my favourite pipe; if circumstances compelled me to become a German spy—whate'er befel, I should insist on keeping my club. I might be forced to spend five years in Portland, you say? Then I should arrange to be a country member. The Committee might come to me on bended knees, and beseech me to consider myself blackballed. They might point out with tears in their eyes, and truth, that I joined as a married greengrocer with Conservative tendencies, and that I am now an Irish Nationalist, a bachelor, and a butcher. "My dear sirs," I should reply, "I came here because I know a good view when I see one; not as a butcher, but as a lover of London, I condescended to join this club. Go away."

But how to describe the view? Even were mine the necessary skill, yet I must see to it that there is a

## **The Finest View in London.**

vagueness about the picture. My club must never reveal its identity. This is not an advertisement authorised by a secretary at a loss for new members. No; I must be cautious. . . Hist! . . .

Below lies the river. Is it the Severn? Is it the Yalu? Alas! it were useless to deny that this is the Thames.

Below lies the Thames. The heavy barges slide down it. They slide slowly under the bridge (Charing Cross Bridge, perhaps; perhaps another), and overhead the trains rattle and rattle unendingly. Sometimes a steamboat paddles importantly past, and then again a long string of barges.

(Two men are taking that barge up the river with oars. It is hard work. They are rowing at three to the minute. Steady, bow! Look, look! Can it be? Yes, it is! They are quickening to four! Now you have them, Cambridge.)

Opposite, between bridges, warehouses and wharfs. When the tide is high they come straight down into the water, and this of itself gives them an air of adventure. Strange things could happen over the river when the sun was set: things out of the run of our well-ordered lives. A body could be dropped from one of the lower windows there. It would hide fearfully a moment behind the moored barges; then, out into the tide, and away down to the sea. Nor anyone the wiser.

## Lovers in London.

But there is romance there, too. What are the words it brings to one's mind? Ah, yes.

“For ere she reach'd upon the tide  
The first house by the water side,  
Singing in her song she died,  
The Lady of Shalott.  
A gleaming shape she floated by,  
A corse between the houses high,  
Silent into Camelot.  
Out upon the wharf they came,  
Knight and burgher, lord and dame,  
And round the prow they read her name,  
The Lady of Shalott.” . .

But that was before I was elected.

Away on the left rise two modern palaces. Red and white, and gardens beneath them. We are in good company. Even to-day knights and burghers, lords and dames, lunch quite close to us.

Further round with the bend of the river is an older palace. Alas! a palace no longer. Certain minions of the Government work here now. I say “work.” I think that will put you off the trail. You will begin to wonder what this wonderful Government building can be.

And overtopping all at the head of the river is St. Paul's. Yes, surely, it is St. Paul's—I must grant you that. When the sun is setting this is the finest view in London. A great artist has called it the finest view in England. I won't go so far as that with him. But,

## **The Finest View in London.**

so far as London is concerned, I am behind him. He has my authority for his statement. This is the best view in London.

And to think that some people want to climb up monuments to get views.

## CHAPTER IX.

### FOR ONE NIGHT ONLY.

ON the 29th of February, Edward the VIIth being on the throne and our relations with other countries continuing to be of a peaceful nature, I went to a masked ball. A feature of the evening—perhaps I should say “another feature of the evening”—was that the ladies were to ask the men for dances—a reversal of the customary etiquette, as, perhaps, my readers are aware. (I am confident of two readers, at least.)

I had talked to Amelia about this dance, and wondered if I should wear fancy dress as well. Amelia thought I had better not.

“What would you go as?” she asked.

“Port Arthur. Act I.: Provisioning for the Siege.”

“Pig!”

“Act II.: The Surrender. I wish you were going to be there. The opportunity only comes on leap-year days, and I can’t wait another four years. Mother wants me to go off this season.”

“I’m sorry I shan’t be there,” said Amelia, with a smile. “Mother and I are going out somewhere. You must tell me all about it.”

## For One Night Only.

I happened to know one of the stewards, so I discussed with him the chances of getting a full programme

"That girl might be pretty," I said. "But that's the best of a masked ball—anybody might be pretty."

"But she really is," he said. "I'll introduce her to you."

A minute later: "May I have the pleasure?" said the domino.

I handed her my programme.

"I have taken 'five,'" she said.

"Oh, have six or seven, won't you?" I pleaded. "Five isn't very many."

"I meant number five," she said, coldly.

We *must* remember to be haughty, I thought to myself.

"The fact is," I said, "there are so many people here who want to dance with me. I have such a lot of friends here to-night, you know. I am afraid I can only square you a spare—I mean spare you a square one."

But she had already passed on. I looked at my programme, and wondered who she was. Five. My favourite waltz. That was practically a proposal, wasn't it? Anyhow, I think it is where one begins to hope.

I watched her steadily through four dances. Then suddenly it struck me. "But it can't be," I thought; "it's simply impossible. She said she was going out with Aunt Anne."

I worried about it a bit, and then I approached my friend the steward.

## Lovers in London.

"Is there anyone here as Joan of Arc?" I asked.

"Hundreds."

"What I mean is, Is there anybody here who—who *says* she's Joan of Arc. She wouldn't be dancing."

"Oh, I see. Yes, I think there is."

Then that accounted for Aunt Anne; and she had, indeed, come out with her mother. Bless her! We were going to have some fun.

After number five was over we found a secluded corner.

"My programme," I said, pointedly, "is a desert. There," pointing to five, "is the one oasis. I have a premonition that I shall soon be thirsty again." I always talk like this at dances.

"Didn't you come with friends?" she asked.

"Oh, heaps, heaps. But when once your initials were there it seemed sacrilege to let another scan it."

"You are rather—well, progressive, aren't you, considering this is the first time we've met?"

"I'm not really much of a sprinter," I said, modestly; "but to-day being to-day—"

"Oh, do you believe in leap-year proposals?"

"As a pursuit?"

"Well, it does amount to that, I suppose," she said, with a smile.

"Oh, I didn't mean—"

"No, but really?"

"Isn't it rather a dangerous topic?" I suggested,

## For One Night Only.

"Of course, it's quite safe with me, but you might put ideas into anybody else's head."

"Oh, indeed," she began, indignantly. "But why is it so safe with you?" she ended.

"There is another," I said. "Besides, we've only just met."

"Yes," she said, thoughtfully. . . .

Two hours later I pointed out, "You've had six dances with me."

"I can't enter into statistics," she said, carelessly. "They're always misleading, too."

"Still it is interesting," I suggested.

"Possibly, but not to me."

I wondered whether to keep up the farce of pretending that I didn't recognise her. She seemed very keen on it herself. She even talked in a silly, affected voice, not a bit like her own. I decided to play with her a little longer.

"You haven't told me your name yet," I murmured.

"No?"

"The initials on the programme I can't read," I went on.

"Can't you? Let me look." She took my programme. "Can't you really read that?" she said, and looked down.

I seized the programme, and examined them carefully. By Jove!

My name begins with a C. Amelia's initials are A. R. and the initials on the programme were A. C. ! Surely

## Lovers in London.

this was a sign on Leap Year night! The music had gone to my head. I looked into space, and said firmly :

“ I do.”

“ Likewise I will,” I added.

“ You conjugate very well,” said the girl.

“ It's the 29th,” I said, softly. “ Go in and win. Don't be afraid.”

She turned away.

“ Oh you silly girl,” I cried. “ Did you really think I didn't know you? Take that thing off and let me see you. . . . There! Oh Lord!”

For it wasn't Amelia!

It was a perfect stranger.

Well hardly that, because we had had six dances together.

Apologies were useless.

“ Anyhow, you're American,” I said.

She admitted it.

“ So I feel sure you will understand,” I went on. “ You must have thought me an awful bounder. But I'm not, really. You ask Amelia.”

She began to laugh to herself.

“ I think I ought to go back to mother,” I said.

She held out her hand. . . . We had five more dances together. It turned out that she was engaged to a great friend of mine, so there was no danger. But I didn't quite see how I was to tell Amelia all about that dance. I had promised to, you remember.

## CHAPTER X.

### TWO IN HEARTS.

I LEFT it to her, partner. She looked at her hand again, and frowned. Amelia is but a beginner at Bridge.

It was she and I against her father and mother. Amelia's mother plays a stern, unrelenting game. (I would quote Lamb here, only it is done so often and one is a little tired of it. Men like Lamb have a lot to answer for.) She is also conspicuously unsuccessful. Amelia's father can place every card in the pack after three rounds, now that he is used to his wife's style of play. But trouble ensues from this habit of his.

"I meant you to lead the knave," he says casually, at the end of the game.

"My dear William," says his wife, "I cannot lead a card that I have not got in my hand. Of course I should have played the knave of trumps if I had had it."

"But, mother," says Amelia.

"I think, Amelia, you should give me credit for knowing what I have in my own hand. I confess I don't know what other people have in their hands, nor do I care to enquire how they get their information. Why Edward should have played the queen, and not

## Lovers in London.

the ace, just now, unless he knew that I had the king.  
. . . Of course I'm not suggesting—"

"Amelia," I said, "we are betrayed. *Conspuez Zola.*"

"Honours?" says Amelia's father, looking up from his scoring. "I had the ace and ten. You must have had simple. Sixteen above."

"*We* had simple honours," says Amelia's mother. "I'm certain of it. I remember distinctly."

"They had the king and queen," he said. "Who had the knave?"

"I had the knave," said his wife indignantly. "Don't you go losing us our honours. It was a good thing I remembered. You were just going to give them sixteen."

Then Amelia's father smiles. He is always right, somehow.

Meanwhile I had left it to her. She went through her hand once more.

"May I play, partner?" she asked.

"Certainly not," I said. "You've got to make trumps."

"Anything I like?"

"Now don't be giving her a hint, Edward." It is unnecessary to indicate the speaker.

"Forward, Amelia."

"Well—say hearts."

Her father led. "She's only got two hearts," he chuckled.

"Oh, Amelia! Only two?"

## Two in Hearts.

"They're very determined," said Amelia.

"Two hearts with but a single thought. Little one, please."

Amelia threw on a small club. "Is it going to be all right?" she asked.

"They're such baby ones."

"One's almost grown up. He's just got his first little pair of knickerbockers."

"Amelia!" said her mother.

"It's all right, dear. It's no secret."

I took the trick and led a diamond. Amelia had the ace, queen. The *finesse* failed.

"Blow," I said. "Blow, blow."

"My dear Edward!" said Amelia's mother indignantly.

"Thou winter's wind. Shakespeare," I added. "Thou art not so unkind as man's ingratitude. As man's—let's see, you lead a spade, do you?—ingratitude. Thy tooth is—h'm, a spade—thy tooth—three there, and four's nine, and five in my own hand, fourteen—thy tooth is not so keen, so—there are fourteen spades at least in the pack, Amelia—thy tooth—well, we'll try a knave. Where had I got up to?"

"Thy tooth was not so keen," said Amelia.

"Oh yes. Thy—"

"If you can't play the game properly, we had better stop," said her mother.

"I'm sorry. It's nervousness. Amelia's little trump is just going into—going to take a trick, I mean."

## Lovers in London.

It did. "That was a mistake," said Amelia's father.

"Pure accident," I admitted.

"I meant that you'll lose a trick by it."

"You haven't seen my hand. It's all palm. Couldn't take anything. Ace of diamonds, please."

They got three tricks, which took them out. The usual discussion followed.

"Why did you go hearts?" I asked, more in sorrow than in anger.

"Well, you said we wanted two in hearts to win, and I had two."

"Ah, of course. Well they got three, I'm afraid."

"Didn't we get more than three?" asked Amelia's mother.

"I know we got one," I said, "because I watched it carefully."

"Well, I took eight in my own hand, and you had three, if not four, William."

"And Amelia took two, and I took two," I added. "Why these recriminations? Anyhow, that's sixteen already. Anybody else got any?"

"Honours?" said Amelia's father.

"I had all five in my own hand," said his wife.

"Yes, it was very unfortunate," I pointed out. "She sat right over Amelia's four of trumps."

"Why ever didn't you double, and why ever didn't you lead trumps?"

"I called for trumps," said his wife stiffly,

## Two in Hearts.

"I am afraid I wasn't listening."

"And you always get angry if I don't return your lead, so I purposely didn't lead trumps."

"I never get angry," he said.

I thought it was time to intervene.

"I saw a very pretty little problem the other day," I began, pacifically.

"Yes?" said Amelia, to help me.

"A. and B. were partners against X. and Z."

"And you *knew* I was weak in clubs," went on Amelia's mother, argumentatively.

I coughed loudly.

"Lord A. and the Marquis of B.," I repeated, "were partners against the Duke of X. and—and Prince Z."

"What is this, Edward?" asked Amelia's mother.

"A problem? How interesting! Do go on."

"Well, Viscount A. had practically nothing in his hand. An ace or two perhaps, but for a viscount—well, you know what they are. So he left it to his partner."

"The Marquis of B.?"

"Exactly. Well, he went no trumps. The score was twenty-four love in their favour. So the Earl of C.—"

"But who was he?" asked Amelia's mother. "You haven't mentioned him before."

I really didn't know. I was getting muddled with so many peers, and I had only begun the beastly problem to clear the air.

## Lovers in London.

"Oh no—no, of course not," I stammered; "*he* was looking on, you know. He said, 'Well, you *are* a bally ass.'"

"Oh!"

"Yes. So X.—"

"The Duke of X., yes?"

I felt that I must have one commoner among them.

"He wasn't a duke. Just X. A member of the Victorian Order. And he—well, really, I've forgotten what happened now. I know it ended up—What should Viscount A. do? I think the answer was, Nothing."

I wiped my heated brow. Amelia telegraphed her sympathy across the table.

"Best problem I ever heard," said her father, "was this. Score twenty-four love. Dealer has ace, king, six, two of hearts, king and another diamond, five small clubs, and three spades. What did he go?"

We discussed it carefully.

"Obviously clubs or leave it," I said. "I think I should have left it, but I don't know."

"Hearts," snapped Amelia's mother. "Certainly hearts."

"Rather risky with only four."

"What do you say, Amelia?"

"I hardly like to say, father. What did you say, Teddy?"

"Leave it."

"Then I guess I'll leave it, too."

## Two in Hearts.

"Hearts," persisted her mother, "I know I'm right."

"Well, what did he go?" I said at last.

Amelia's father rose with a smile, and made for the door.

"He didn't go anything. It was a misdeal. That hand had fourteen cards in it. Have you ever been caught like that before?"

## CHAPTER XI.

### EARL'S COURT.

WE sat down in the Queen's Court, and I took out my programme.

"Now, what shall we do first?" I said. "The placid waters of the lake are spoken of with enthusiasm in the programme, but that sounds more like an after-dinner amusement."

Amelia glanced up at the captive flying machine, which was rapidly whirling through space.

"I suppose we ought—" she began.

"The point of view is affected by gravitation," I remarked. "It says so here;" and I tapped my programme again.

"Oh, what does that mean?"

"I think it means that if you look over the side your 'point of view' is, in fact, affected by"—I thought for a moment. "'Point of view,'" I continued, "is a pleasant euphemism."

"I think I begin to understand," said Amelia, pensively. "You get all the fun of travelling by water without the discomfort of seeing a foreign country."

"The motion without the ocean, to put it epigrammatically," I suggested.

## Earl's Court.

"And there is the water below to help the illusion. Oh, dear! I know it so well."

Really, it is very handsome of them to do it to the life. Coming down by the Underground you are reminded (by the pace and dirt) of the journey to Dover. Once there, you are whirled rapidly six times through space, until you feel like you feel when you land at Calais. After that it is a mere step to Venice by Night.

We were soon in Venice. "Venice in London," they call it. I wonder if they have a "London in Venice," to which weary Venetians take the family. "Why not?" says Amelia.

Why not?

Bassanio having paid at the turnstile, enters "London by Night." "This way for the omnibuses!" shouts a voice. Bassanio pays again, and the family climbs up. The omnibus proceeds to glide placidly over the smooth cobbles. The conductor points to the scene painting on the right. "Westminster Abbey," says he, off-handedly. Bassanio gazes in rapture at St. Paul's.

"Westminster Abbey, my dear," he says in Italian.

"Ah-h," says his wife; "wasn't that where Wordsworth lived?"

Bassanio thinks "No."

"Savarino, listen to what father's saying, dear. That's Westminster Abbey."

Savarino looks vacantly at the Tower of London.

## Lovers in London.

"Oh, I have a pretty picture of that in my little geography-book at home," he says, as a well-brought-up child should.

A barrel-organ strikes up the old English air "Pansy Faces." Bassanio's face softens. His arm steals slowly round his wife's waist. They are back fifteen years now, when she was a simple country lass and he came a-courting her.

She looks up at him with a smile. The old, old melody is wafted over the cobbles. . . .

"Remember the conductor—thank you!" says the conductor in Italian. It is the only Italian he knows.

Bassanio wakes from his dream with a start. He hands the conductor the small Italian coin which one hands conductors in Italy. Then he leaps lightly into a mud-heap placed fortuitously there by the "London in Venice" County Council.

The memory of his courting days is still strong upon him. He turns back and helps his wife off the 'bus.

So we picture it.

After Venice came dinner. Absorbed as she was in the Venetian atmosphere, Amelia insisted on a real Italian dinner. She began with a sardine from Sardinia, and finished up with a Neapolitan ice from Naples. You see how strong in geography I am getting.

On the way she fell in with macaroni. Personally, I did not touch it; but when she had finished I told her how macaroni is made. First you—(but perhaps some of our gentle readers are in the middle of their macaroni

## Earl's Court.

at this moment ; maybe they have been promised some for tea if they are good). Well, then, you—(Amelia says she'll never touch it again, and I'm a nasty, horrid person. But it isn't my fault ; I didn't ask her to listen ; I was merely soliloquising). After that all you have to do is—(but they do say that it's the same with everything. If you saw chocolate made, I'm told . . . you'd never eat it again. Of course, that sounds rather absurd).

So that's how they do it.

By the way, macaroni is not the same as Garibaldi, who is a man. It's a small point, but I mention it in passing. (P.S.—Amelia wishes to add that there is a biscuit called Garibaldi, so there! And I'm not so clever as I thought I was.)

We did not glide over the placid waters of the lake, as originally intended. Instead, we proceeded to float in mellow darkness to a vault of shimmery blue. This is what the Capricians do at Capri. It is really very fine. Space and the uses of advertisement forbid further praise.

But the best of the evening was spent at the band. Surrounded by all the glories of the pyrotechnist's art (Amelia thought a pyrotechnist was a Spanish brigand), we sat and dreamed of wonderful things.

At least I did. But Amelia's first remark to me, as we walked out into the night, was—

“ How do you know it's made like that ? ”

## CHAPTER XII.

### THE SHORTEST IN THE BOOK.

THIS is probably the shortest chapter in the book. It records how Amelia went into a shop of some magnificence to buy table linen for an American friend. She found some which pleased her. It was worked in the corner with three feathers.

Amelia liked the design.

"How much is this?" she asked the splendid shop-walker.

The man looked condescendingly at her.

"Exclusive for Marlborough House, ma'am," he said, in a cold voice.

Amelia went out and ordered something hot for lunch.

## CHAPTER XIII.

### WE CALL ON COUSIN NANCY.

NANCY is my cousin, and has no connection with the great American continent. Sometimes, as a reward for blameless conduct in the past, I take Amelia to see her. I make it quite plain that it was I who discovered Nancy, that Amelia is an outsider—not to say an interloper, and that Nancy and I are—well—!

This came off the first time, Amelia—I believe they call it “bridling.”

“What are you doing to-morrow afternoon, Teddy?” she asked. She ought to have supposed that I would be working, but this never seems to strike her.

“I’m going to see Nancy,” I said.

“Is that a play, or what?”

“A cousin.”

“Oh!” said Amelia coldly.

“The dearest, prettiest thing in the world.”

“Arthur and I,” began Amelia, “thought of—” (I hadn’t an idea who Arthur was).

“I rather hoped you would come with me,” I said.

“I should think you’d get on very well by yourselves. You see, Arthur and I—”

## Lovers in London.

"Yes, but how about Nancy and I—I mean, me?"

"Miss—"

"Nancy. Everyone calls her Nancy."

"I hate that sort of girl."

I thought it was time to reveal the ter-ruth.

"Please, she's only four," I said.

"Oh! . . . You pig."

"How old is Arthur?"

She held up her arm, and waggled a little ivory elephant that clung to her bangle.

"Arthur," she said. "The dear!" So the next day we called on Cousin Nancy.

Nancy is, as I have said, my cousin. However, the difference in our ages leads her to call me "uncle." It is her own idea, and certainly I fancy myself most as an uncle. I remember that at school half the fellows used to be uncles, and I was never even a stepfather. But, thanks to Nancy, I may now lord it with the rest.

Nancy wears her hair short, another whim. Evidently she wishes me to be the uncle of a real nephew.

She was in bed with a cold. In a blue dressing gown she was prepared to receive callers. We arrived in style.

"Please come in," she called.

"Oh, *how* do you do, Mrs. Jones?" I said effusively.

"*How* do you do?" said Nancy.

"I ventured, dear Mrs. Jones, to bring Mrs. Jenkins with me." I presented Amelia. "Mrs. Jones, Mrs. Jenkins."

## We Call on Cousin Nancy.

"How do you do?" said Nancy, with a sweet smile.

There was a pause. I kicked Amelia gently.

"Charmin' weather we're havin'," said Amelia, Mrs. Jenkins.

"Yes," said Nancy, Mrs. Jones. "Would—would you like some tea?"

"Comin' along in my motor—"

"Would you like some tea?" asked Nancy, turning to me.

"I said to Lord Percy—" continued Mrs. Jenkins.

"Dear Mrs. Jones, we *should* like some, so much," I broke in. "You must excuse Mrs. Jenkins. This is the first time she has ever been out to tea, and she is nervous. She generally has an egg in the nursery. And how is your dear daughter Belinda?"

"Oh, she's very well. . . . Will you excuse me a minute while I speak to my maid?"

Nancy turned away to the bedpost, and began to whisper violently. We caught the word "tea." Amelia smiled across to me, and I sent a wireless message back that this was Clapham, and she wasn't to come siding about here with her motor cars and Lord Percies.

"My maid says she will bring tea up in a moment," said Nancy.

"Oh, thank you," I said. "Mrs. Jenkins, this is Belinda." Amelia shook a limp wax hand.

"Here is tea," said Nancy. She put her head on one side. "Sugar?"

"Nine lumps," I said.

## Lovers in London.

"None for me," said Amelia. "Thank you, dear Mrs. Jones. Oh, this *is* delicious tea. Where *do* you get it from?"

"From the grocer. May I have your cup back?"

Then an awful thing happened. Losing my customary *sang froid* and *savoir faire*, I swallowed the cup. It was an unpardonable breach of manners. A thing never done in the best circles.

"I'm awfully sorry," I said, "but I've swallowed the cup."

"Oh!" said Nancy. This was a new situation.

"I don't know how I came to do it," I apologised. "It's a thing that has never happened before with me."

"I'm afraid, dear Mrs. Jones, that he's not used to small cups," put in Amelia. "He prefers the thick wooden ones."

"Not to swallow," I explained. "Dear Mrs. Jones, can you forgive me?"

Nancy regained her nerve.

"Good-bye, Mr. Jenkins," she said. "I hope you've had a nice time. I'll just ask my maid to clear away."

She whispered behind the bedpost again. When she had finished Mr. and Mrs. Jenkins had left, but Amelia and Teddy were there for any other game.

Before we went away I tried to persuade Nancy to return our call. I don't think she was keen.

"I can't. I've got a cold," she said.

"Oh, but surely that won't matter."

"I've got two colds," said Nancy.

## We Call on Cousin Nancy.

"Oh!"

"And—and a sneeze."

When we were saying good-bye there was a slight accident. It happened in this way.

"Good-bye, Nancy dear," I said.

"Good-bye, uncle," she said, casually.

"Good-bye, Nancy," said Amelia.

"Good-bye, dawlin'," said Nancy.

I was jealous at this. It was *my* cousin, and I wasn't going to be cut out by Amelia. I leant over to kiss Nancy.

Amelia saw my movement. From the other side of the bed she leant over, too. . . .

Nancy doesn't like being kissed. She drew away her head suddenly. It didn't seem to make any difference, though . . .

"I'm awfully sorry," I said, realising what had happened. Amelia got up without answering, waving the red flag.

"It was quite a mistake," I went on. "Nancy—"

"Nancy, you darling," I said, all at once. "We aren't a bit sorry, are we?"

"I hope you've had a nice time," said Nancy.

"A glorious time," I said.

## CHAPTER XIV.

### THE CONFSSIONAL.

WAITING one day for a train to Kew, Amelia and I lingered at the bookstall. Amelia bought a *Woman's Life*, "for Maid and Wife"—which is poetry. It is recognised that a purchase of this sort gives you the right to turn over everything else on the stall. Together we glanced at the *Sketch*, and then, while Amelia looked through "Everybody's Book of Etiquette," I made for "The Complete Letter Writer." (You know the blue sixpenny series.)

"It isn't etiquette to eat soup with a knife," said Amelia. "It's not done in England."

"Not this season."

"You must take it with a spoon, half-way between the middle of it and the end."

"Which end?"

"The spoon end, of course."

"Not the handle. Well, I always do. I measure it with a compass. 'Dear madam, pardon the addresses of a perfect stranger, but ever since I sat behind you that day in church I have dared to worship you. I am a butcher in a fair way of business, and many times

## The Confessional.

lately have I had the pleasure of serving you in my shop. I can give you testimonials as to my honesty and sobriety, and would write to your father first if you preferred it.' *Answer unfavourable to the above.* 'Sir!'

"Are you fixing up a proposal, Teddy?"

"Well, I was thinking of it. Hallo, here's a confession-book; let's buy it." . . .

Later on, in Amelia's drawing-room, we went through it together.

Page 1 was for the owner of the book. The book was undoubtedly Amelia's.

"I will fill it in for you," I said.

Details as to name and age were soon done. Then came more interesting things.

"Your favourite hero in real life?" I read.

"Oh, that's easy. Teddy—"

"Spare my blushes. Besides, what would your mother say? I understand of course, and I think it is very nice of you. At the same time—"

"Teddy Roosevelt, I was about to say."

I had my revenge.

"Who is he?" I asked, carelessly; "an American?"

Amelia's outburst was suppressed with difficulty—and two cushions.

"Favourite poet? Longfellow," I suggested.

"Of course."

"Favourite hero in fiction? You had better fill that in yourself. I have only read one American novel; it was called 'Uncle Tom's Cabin,' or something like

## Lovers in London.

that. So I can't suggest a hero for you. My own novel, of which I am the hero, is not yet out."

"Most hated vices," broke in Amelia. "Conceit and self-advertisement."

In most confession-books one is asked one's favourite flower. If one is really witty one then replies "Cauliflower." This jest has a great reputation in the suburbs. In fact, one can be very funny in a confession-book if one tries. I hope you understand that I am giving particulars of Amelia's confessions solely in order that you may appreciate her character. Like a distinguished American, "I never try to be as funny as I can." I never—

"Most hated vice," repeated Amelia, "self-advertisement. Have you got that down? Now then."

Here follow a few:—

*Favourite game.* Lawn tennis. (In the suburbs they say "pheasant.")

*Favourite animal.* "Toddles." (Toddles is believed to be a dog. Outside he is mostly hair, and might be anything; but the Real Toddles, or Toddles from Within is, as I say, believed to be a dog.)

*Favourite food.* Candy.

*Favourite drink.* Soda-water. (Ugh!)

*Favourite occupation.* Seeing London. (A delicate compliment to me, as I am showing her London. Dear madam, pardon the addresses of a perfect stranger, but I am a butcher in a fair way of business . . .)

*Favourite instrument.* Banjo. (She plays rather well.)

*Favourite waltz.* "Waves of the Danube."

## The Confessional.

And so forth. When we had finished Amelia kindly allowed me to fill in a page for myself. I had her at the very start, just as she had had me. It was my r—revenge.

“Favourite heroine in real life, Amelia.”

Amelia turned away. You know how they “turn away” in novels, in order to “cast their eyes on the ground.”

“Amelia,” I repeated. “Our cook. She made the most heavenly meringues. Ah! those were happy days.”

Lower down I was asked my pet aversion. I have seven—five literary men, one politician, two cricketers, one newspaper, one policy, puns, tapioca pudding, whisky, all hairdressers, two more literary men, hockey, John Gilpin, Wordsworthians, one dramatic critic, and Essex. Some day, when I am asked, I shall write my Avowals, explaining these aversions. Until then I content myself with the single entry in Amelia’s book—*Insects*.

“Your favourite hero in history, Teddy?”

The good English boy sucks the end of his pen, and scrawls “Nelson.” This is the only hero he knows. The good American boy says “George Washington.” The American girl, perhaps, William Lloyd Garrison. The English girl, some well-known divine or reformer, or Sir Philip Sidney. In any case, it is hard to pin one’s hero down to the board. Yet, if there is a man to admire—

## Lovers in London.

"Columbus," I said; "I owe him a good deal."

"Thank you," smiled Amelia.

"That sort of pretty speech comes quite natural to me on Fridays," I said. "To-day being a Thursday, it was rather forced. I saw it coming a long way back."

The last question was my ambition in life. Ladies aren't asked for theirs. It is assumed they have none. They are only supposed to weep. Or it may be that the question is deemed unnecessary, since all girls have the same ambition. I was once introduced to somebody, and by-and-by it came like this. (It has to come, you know.)

". . . But I adore acting. All my friends say I ought to have gone on the stage; only mother wouldn't let me. Eva Moore parts suit me best."

I replied:

"My little brother is going to be a sailor."

"I didn't know you had a brother."

"He is an allegory," I said.

Since then, I have revived my little brother several times with effect. His is a useful but uncertain life.

In Amelia's case it was Ethel Barrymore parts which suited her. I am inclined to agree.

Well, as I say, I had to name my ambition in life. I hesitated for a time. First I thought I would say, "To be famous;" then it struck me that this was not ambition, but destiny. (The effect of this sort of remark on Amelia is delightful.) For a moment I considered a Sandford and Merton observation.

## **The Confessional.**

Other ideas occurred; to be written down and crossed out. . . . I made rather a mess of the book.

Amelia was glancing over my shoulder all the time. I threw down the pen, and looked at her.

"I'll tell you later on," I said.

## CHAPTER XV.

### OUR PRIZE STORY.

I HAD dropped into tea, and Amelia's mother had left us to amuse ourselves, like dears, while she attended to something else. I had seen that Amelia had something on her mind, and at this it came out. Bringing out an evening paper, she began,

"Do you want to earn three guineas?"

I was somewhat astonished. It was not the way people usually opened conversations with me. I felt as Lasker would feel if his opponent started by castling his king, when the more usual method, I believe, is to advance the pawn. (But may be I have that wrong, for I am no expert at chess.) So I said to Amelia :

"May we have that again, please?"

"Well, it's half of three guineas, really."

"Ah! that sounds more life-like. One pound eleven and six."

Amelia gazed at me in admiration.

"As a boy I won a prize at the arithmetic for long division," I explained. "It was not a good prize, but my Auntie has it still."

## Our Prize Story.

"Oh, I see. Well, now we're going to win three guineas between us. It's for a prize story."

"All right. What sort of story?"

"It must reflect the romantic side of life. It must be of living human interest. It must teem"—she glanced at the paper in her hand—"I know it teems with something—oh, here it is. 'It must teem with living human interest.'"

"It's done that already," I interrupted.

"Oh, I beg its pardon. I meant 'with quiet humour.' You see it's quite simple. Now then, what shall we have for a plot?"

She drew her chair closer to mine. The only thing left for me to do was to draw my chair closer to hers.

"A plot," I said, reflectively.

Most of my stories have a way of avoiding anything that approximates to a plot. They do this of their own intention, not regarding the wishes of the author. Often have I longed, regretfully, in the retrospect, for a plot. Why am I so different from others? Why did I never have a plot; a plot to which I could have retired when old age was near. "Of all sad words of tongue or pen . . ." And so on. Then I take myself in hand. "Come, come," I say to myself, "a truce to idle longings. The past cannot be altered. But there is no reason why you should not have a plot in the future. Be firm with your next story. Insist that it shall at least hint at some reference to a plan, to an arrangement." . . .

## Lovers in London.

But now I see that I cannot plot. I am a harmless, mild-mannered person. There is nothing "strong" about my work; nothing that calls for any violent display of emotion on the part of my puppets. I doubt if there could be an illegitimate canary (even) in my stories. . . .

Forgive this personal interlude. I only introduce it to explain why, when for the third time I said to Amelia, "H'm, yes, a plot, quite so," I was no nearer to one than I am—well, than I am now!

"Well, have you got one?"

"No; but I don't see that there's any hurry for it. Let's settle the hero first, and then we can see what is likely to happen to him."

"Right O!" said Amelia. "First then, he must be clean shaven." I have a neat moustache. That's a woman all over.

I took out a pencil. "'Hero,' I jotted down on my cuff, "'has slight moustache.'"

"Teddy! I said clean shaven."

"'Hero,'" I corrected, "'has a moustache like a walrus.' You'd better be careful," I said, looking up, "or he shall have a beard as well."

"Teddy!" said Amelia sternly.

"Do you really mean it?"

"I think you're very rude."

"Then how's this? 'Hero, who had had a neat moustache, which was justly the admiration of the ladies,

## Our Prize Story.

had lost it in a railway accident a few days before this story opens.’”

Amelia laughed. “Have it your own way. But anyhow, his name is Jack.”

Mine’s Edward. This story isn’t going a bit as it ought to.

“He was at Cornell,” went on Amelia. (Amelia’s brother was at Cornell! Cornell! Cornell! Rah! Rah! Rah! At least I think that was it.)

“You’re in England now,” I protested. “As a delicate compliment to me, anyhow, the hero ought to be an Englishman.”

“Right O! Oxford.”

“Cambridge.”

“Compromise, and say Durham.”

“What a beastly man he’s going to be.”

“Oh, well, then—Edinburgh.”

“Sorry; can’t get it on my cuff. There’s only just room enough for Durham. You’ve spoilt his life. I hope you’re satisfied now.”

“It doesn’t matter much,” said Amelia, “because his adventures happened afterwards.”

“My dear Amelia,” I said, “if you have written the story, why should I take half the money?”

“Oh, but I haven’t. I’ve only got an idea, and you must work it up. Besides, you must correct me if I go wrong anywhere. You know I’m American.”

“Proceed.”

“Well, Jack, after serving in the Boer War, where he

## Lovers in London.

won a medal with two clasps, embraced the profession of a—”

“There’s too much clasping and embracing about Jack for me,” I put in. “I don’t think he’s going to be a nice man at all.”

“It was only just at first. Please don’t interrupt. Afterwards he became a solicitor.”

“Oh, I see.”

“He then fell in love with a beautiful but poor maiden.”

“Such things have been known to happen in England, as well as in America.”

“And Jack, though well dressed and so on, depended chiefly on his aunt for his money.”

“We call them uncles in England. . . . Oh, I see! I beg your pardon.”

Amelia thus went on to explain that Jack’s aunt was really younger than he was, which is of course possible, though confusing. And she was in love with the man with whom the girl whom Jack loved was in love. Taken quickly, that is even more confusing still. But possible. Quite possible. And the man with whom the girl whom Jack loved was in love was in love with the girl who was in love with Jack. The difficulties of this situation are entirely due to Amelia’s absurd diffidence in giving names to her characters.

“This isn’t a story,” I interrupted. “It’s a trial in tact. And the right answer is, ‘Jack commits *hara kiri*.’”

## Our Prize Story.

"No, really. What do you think of it?"

I had one or two phrases running in my head.

"The subject," I said, "is a trifle thin. Likewise it is much too smart. The plot is hackneyed, not to say *vieux jeux*; there is too much of the religious element; the climax is unduly prolonged; the dialogue is not true to life; the murder in the fifth chapter is a trifle strained; the—"

"I suppose that's what they say of your work?"

"It is," I confessed.

Amelia smiled.

"It's a good plot," I went on, "but the country isn't ripe for it. More spade work is necessary."

"But do let's do it," pleaded Amelia. "I should like to win a prize so much."

So we did it. We made Jack speak in the Scots tongue. "Hoots ava, I'm no what ye'd call doited the noo," were his opening words, for he was gleg at the up tak'. Everybody else was a peer of the realm.

We sent it under Amelia's name, and it got a prize.

You needn't believe this.

## CHAPTER XVI.

### TWO AT THE TOWER.

AMELIA hadn't been to the Tower since she was six, nor I since I was eight. We went (it appears) in the same year, and our united age is now four hundred and thirty-seven. 'Now, tell me: How many horses are there in the stable?

I beg your pardon. I was quite carried away by the thought of a breakfast-table problem in real life.

Well, anyhow, we hadn't been over the Tower of London since we were quite small. But as I have already told you Amelia's age, I shall not dwell upon it again.

One begins by crossing the Moat. Some soldiers were playing football in it, but we would rather have seen water there. Certainly one of them shaped well at outside left, but this doesn't altogether compensate. Oh, for the days when one could plunge noiselessly in and swim across to the succour of one's lady! (After removing one's doublet, pardie.) I have no historical backing for such incidents, but I supposed they occurred.

Amelia thinks not. Amelia says what really happened was that she waved one lily hand from the dungeon keep, and murmured, "Eftsoons, he cometh.

## Two at the Tower.

not, Sir Guy." She implies, in fact, that I funk'd the affair. Ha, indeed!

But that was years ago. Yesterday we crossed the Moat on dry land, and proceeded through an array of Beefeaters to the Armoury. At the entrance to this we found an ordinary policeman! Amelia begs to lodge a formal protest. This is not doing the thing in style.

In the Armoury we were struck by the number of presents made to Henry VIII. by admiring friends, and in particular by the Emperor Maximilian.

"I didn't know he was so popular," I said. "It seems that I have misjudged him."

"Silly," said Amelia, "they're wedding presents, of course. If you got married six times you'd have a lot of presents."

Of course.

Among the presents to the bridegroom we noticed a fine set of fluted armour, bearing the Nuremburg stamp, richly *repoussé*, and displaying the Burgundian cross *ragulé*, etc., etc.

"Maximilian to bride, a combed morion."

And so on.

But poor Max must have got tired of it all.

We imagine him in his garden retreat when a courier bursts into the presence.

"Sire, his Majesty King Henry the Eighth thought that you might have forgotten that he is getting married to-morrow."

"What, *again*?"

## Lovers in London.

"Yes, please your Majesty."

"I say, look here, this can't go on. Tell him I shall bring an action against him if he does it again. He's ruining me."

However, being a kind-hearted man, he fetched down a helmet from the box-room. You may now see it in the Armoury on the left-hand side as you go in.

But if Anne Boleyn ever saw Henry wearing it—well, Amelia is sure that she welcomed her fate.

In this room also is a "collar for prisoners." Personally, both for neatness and comfort, I prefer the ordinary up-and-down sort. But fashions change.

If only these were the days of armour how much more interesting shopping would be. "Two suits of chain mail for the summer, please."

In boys' books the hero is always presented with the most beautiful chain mail, which he wears under his vest. It is somewhat cold at first, and a little bit rough on his mother, who had told him always to wear flannel next to his skin. This mail is very finely wrought (in gold, I fancy), and it is a dying gift from his uncle, who got it from a Jew. The dying uncle told him to wear it night and day, and that is why he wears it under his vest—to simplify the problem of undressing without removing it. The other reason is that, when the villain finds him in bed, and stabs him three times quickly, with the words, "Ha! so is my lord avenged!" then your hero sits up, and says, "Yah! never touched me!" After this the villain is his faithful slave for ever after,

## Two at the Tower.

and no wonder. A hero whom nothing can perforate is worth serving.

“But, really, it must be splendid,” I said to Amelia, “to have a mare Swallow between your knees, and to feel absolutely fire-and-burglar proof up above, and to go dashing about the country all along o’ the Black Prince and sich.”

“You’d probably fall off,” said Amelia; “and think of me, all alone; and anyhow, you promised to play croquet to-morrow afternoon. So, you see, the Black Prince will have to worry along without you. It can’t be done at the price.”

“One’s country first, Amelia, please. If the Black Prince wants me to fight the Wars of the Roses for him, I can hardly plead croquet as an excuse.”

“No; but you might tell him that you had been kept in for history, and couldn’t get off. He would quite understand.”

I find I have forgotten to mention Henry the Heighth’s Harquebus. There is nothing in it, except the name.

Leaving the Armoury, the intelligent visitor may proceed to the Beauchamp Tower. Inside there is an elaborate piece of sculpture—a memorial to the four brothers Dudley. There is a wreath of roses for the first (Ambrose), oak-leaves for Robert, gilly-flowers for Guildford. So far we see that the designer has shown a pretty wit. But, alas! we find “Honeysuckle for Henry!”

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Oh, Henry!

And he stood on the top of Beauchamp Tower, he did, and sang, "I'll be your honey honey-suckle. . . ."

And she, the jailer's daughter Beatrice, stood below and listened, and wondered that an Earl should woo her.

And when he died (killed at the siege of St. Quentin, 1558, as Amelia will tell you) she went and told his eldest brother John. He was head of the family, and had a right to know.

John, so it happened, was engaged upon a piece of amateur sculpture. Surrounding a bear and a lion (John fancied himself most at bears), he had designed to put four wreaths for his four brothers.

He wasn't altogether a bad sort, John, but a trifle dull. So when, after much thought, he had decided on roses for Ambrose, oak-leaves for Robert ("Robur an Oak," said John, and was proud), gilly-flowers for Guildford, he was fairly baffled by Henry.

Then came Beatrice.

"Honeysuckle for Henry. Oh, Henry!"

## CHAPTER XVII.

### ENGLAND *v.* AMERICA.

I HAVE an aunt who lives at Chiswick. (You mustn't think I'm boasting.) Hither came at noon Amelia and I. The International Croquet Tournament takes place at Chiswick now and then. England *v.* America. One Amelia represents America. Modesty prevents me from naming the English champion.

Once, though, I left the honour of the old country in the hands of Nancy. (I hope you haven't forgotten Nancy.) The result was excellent.

Nancy plays left-handed, with something of a golf-action; as she leans forward to make her stroke there is a foot or so of handle projecting above her neck. With her feet slightly apart she brings the mallet-head well over her shoulders; there is a look of determination on her face. "See me hit *him* in the eye," you can hear her say. . . .

Thud!

She has missed the ball, as the turf will show.

Amelia laughed unkindly. Nancy looked up at her calmly.

"I sometimes do that often," she explained

## Lovers in London.

Another effort, and the ball cleared a hoop ten yards away. "Good gracious, dawlin'," is her only comment. It gave her confidence, however, and she got going with black. Her method (an infallible one) is to chivy the ball through all the hoops at the end of the mallet. The game, played this way, resembles hockey. Nancy went round three times with black, scoring forty odd goals. She was on her fourth round before Amelia grasped the idea. Then she called Nancy's attention to a hoop that had been left in the cold.

"Won't you go through that one?" she suggested.

Nancy sat down on the grass, and looked at Amelia in surprise.

"I should think it's your turn now," she said with scorn for one who knew so little of the game.

Amelia took a futile shot with red.

"Your turn, Nancy," she said, brightly.

Nancy rose, and surveyed the field.

"I think I'll go with red this time," she said. "It hasn't done much lately."

Poor Amelia! Red took a few hoops with the air of a *connoisseur*. Amelia followed with yellow. Yellow happened to be in position—a pure oversight. The blood of all the Gibson girls was up. Yellow was going to do a hoop.

"Won't you play with red, dawlin'?" came Nancy's voice.

So England won.

After lunch we went out on to the lawn. Amelia

## England v. America.

sat down in a deck chair, while I selected a mallet. By the time I had found one which looked as though it would do justice to my style of play, Amelia was asleep.

“Coward,” I said; “America’s frightened. America was in for a licking this afternoon.”

Amelia opened one eye.

“Don’t,” she said; “I’m changing presidents, and I must be kept quiet. You’re too energetic.”

“I can go to sleep if you like,” I said. “No one is better at sleeping in the afternoon than I am. But I’m fighting against it.”

“I don’t want to fight, but by—”

“Look here, if you’ll just begin then you can go to sleep while my turn is on.”

America agreed to this, and when I had got the four balls going, she retired to her chair.

“2.25 p.m.” I called out, “Red doing the third hoop.”

Amelia snored delicately.

“2.30 p.m. Grand passage. Weather brilliant. Red making the fifth hoop.”

Amelia sighed.

“2.40 p.m. Wind dropped. Red ball drifting towards the stick.”

“May the best boat win,” murmured Amelia.

“2.45 p.m. Wind shifted a point. It *would* do it. Red ball rounded the stick, and beating up to the seventh hoop. The men are splendid.”

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Then I missed.

"Regrettable incident," I reported. "Yellow ball ambushed behind a wire entanglement. It's your turn, Amelia."

Amelia came out of her retirement and looked round.

"Where's black?"

"Oh, black. Well you see that beautiful bed there, with the hymantifilums in it?" (Hymantifilums is all the botany I know, and I don't really know that.)

"Yes."

"Well, black's behind that."

"What's he doing there?"

"Just resting. He's been out of an engagement for some time."

"I don't see how he got there," said Amelia suspiciously.

"He must have jumped the bed. Naughty boy! How dare he?"

"Then that's the way he's coming back."

"Oh, but think of Aunt Ethel's hymantifilums. Let me implore you to think of them before it is too late."

Amelia thought so much of them that she brought her ball round to the front of the bed, and took a shot from there. It hit red.

"The charm of croquet," I said, "is its uncertainty. The same applies to cricket, if we are to believe the special correspondents of the *Mail*."

## England v. America.

"Now then," said Amelia.

"Don't be bloodthirsty."

"Where would you like red to go?"

"Through the eighth hoop," I answered promptly.

"It's rather a long shot from here, but you might do it. Try."

"No, I've got a better future for red than that."

"Red really wants to be a sailor," I said; "but, as you say, he's rather young to decide."

"How about *that* corner of the lawn?" she meditated.

"No, not *that* corner of the lawn," I pleaded. "We speak for those who cannot speak for themselves."

"The other corner is certainly farther."

"Yes, the other corner's father all right. He hasn't a mother, poor lad. Pity the poor step-orphan."

So Amelia laughed and spared him. She also did five hoops, and wired yellow.

"Is yellow supposed to be wired?" I asked scornfully.

"Theoretically it is wired."

"An ounce of practice is worth a pound of theory," I moralised. "Look out."

"If you do hit, it will be a foul stroke."

"A follow-on stroke," I corrected.

I hit as hard as I could, twisted the mallet slightly, and heaved. There is nothing in the rules about that. Yellow and black dashed into the laurels. The hoop

## Lovers in London.

itself soared over into the next garden. A beautiful shot. If I had been allowed to go on I could have done the hole in three. . . .

“I don't know,” I said, “but I think it must be tea-time.”

## CHAPTER XVIII.

### MY COUNTRY HOUSE.

WHEN I am tired out by a week's hard work I run down to my Country House on the Sunday. Last week Amelia came with me, and we spent the afternoon sitting out by the lake. She didn't know at first that she was in my grounds. No, the silly thing must actually mistake it for St. James's Park!

We have tried all the parks, but we cling to St. James's. Indeed, I have now appropriated it, as you see. Battersea for its river, and Regent's for flowers; Kensington Gardens for its children, and Hyde Park for its grown-ups; Finsbury Park for them as likes it, and Victoria Park for those who know how to get there; the Green Park, too, for Piccadilly.

But St. James's for us.

I was somewhat nervous when Amelia came down. I had had to discharge one of my keepers that morning, and the thing had worried me a bit. Also I thought the grass wanted cutting. (Our boy had hurt his hock, and couldn't pull the mower.)

"I hope you like it," I said diffidently, as I brought her in. "I am afraid you aren't seeing it at its best. The

## Lovers in London.

autumn, when the leaves are turning ; or the spring, when the buds are shooting ; or the winter, when the snow is on the ground. In fact, this is really the worst time."

"I must come again in the autumn."

"I'm afraid you won't see it at its best in the autumn," I said. The spring, when the buds are shooting ; or the summer, when the flowers are blooming ; or the — "

"I think it's very nice," said Amelia. "Has it been in the family long ?"

"Only a few weeks. I throw it open to the public on Sundays, you observe. That man there without a collar, for instance, he isn't one of the guests. Oh, you mustn't run away with that idea."

"I suppose," said Amelia, doubtfully, "you must almost keep a gardener to look after it ?"

"He drops in every other morning and does a bit of weeding. The lawns aren't cut, because the boy has strained his fetlock. I mean—the pony has a headache. Gardeners and things are a great nuisance."

Amelia's father has a gardener in America of whom he is very proud. (I don't mean that he is proud of having one, but proud of having this particular one. Not proud of him *quâ* gardener, as they say.)

Amelia's father prattles with him pleasantly about Hymantiflums and fertilisers, and Mrs. Simkins and aphides. The gardener, not to be outdone, retaliates with a remark as to the evil effects of a maritime

## My Country House.

influence on the conifers. He has seen better days, and could, if necessary, add a word of French.

I have said that Amelia's father is proud of him. He is; prouder, indeed, than he is of Amelia or her brother. I believe that he would be more pleased if the man planted a tulip the right way up (inadvertently) than if his daughter married the most confirmed Duke.

"He's spoiling the man," said Amelia.

"I'm always careful with my underlings," I said; "at least, until last night."

"What happened then?"

"I killed a gardener's wife."

"Badly?"

"Don't joke about it. It's very sad. I didn't exactly kill her, but—"

It was like this. The day before I wrote a story. One of the characters was a gardener named Searle. He didn't come in much, but he had to come in a little. I fancy he opened the gate to the hero as the latter came back from the wars. One always calls gardeners Mister. So he was Mr. Searle.

I sent it to be typed. It came back that night, and I had a good many corrections to make. One sentence caught my eye. "'And glad it is I am to see you, maister,' said Mrs. Searle." (Mark the 'maister'; this is called local colour.) *Mrs.* Searle! Without thinking, I picked up a pen and ran a line through the "s"; and I put a little "d" in the margin—all as neat

## Lovers in London,

as could be. Then, suddenly, I realised what I had done. I had killed the gardener's wife!

"For one short hour, Amelia, that noble woman had lived and loved. She had made that interesting, and now historic, remark to my hero; and she had called him 'maister.' She may even have made other observations. A noble life was hers. . . . And think of Mr. Searle. Married for an hour, and now a bachelor again. Or is it a widower? No, I think a bachelor. Poor, poor man. Yes, I am a murderer!"

"Cheer up, Teddy."

"But think of the possibilities of Mrs. Searle. Think of the power for good she might have been. Ah, well . . . You know, Amelia, I think Mrs. Searle was one of the most finely drawn of all my characters. I am proud of that woman."

It is not only gardeners who worry me. I have a keeper who is supposed to feed the ducks. Does he ever remember this? No. The minnows in the lake are supposed to be preserved. But what do we see to-day? Hundreds of little boys fishing. Then take the sparrows. How can I let the shooting if they won't look after the sparrows?

"A landowner's life is a hard one. I sometimes wish that I were poor, that I had to eke out my existence on a paltry three thousand a year."

"So do I," said Amelia. "Being a great heiress bores me frightfully. I want to be loved for myself alone."

## My Country House.

Right O. She shall. That hundred pounds of hers shall be settled on herself exclusively. . . .

“Good-bye, Sir Charles,” said Amelia, as she got up to go. “Charmin’ old place this of yours.”

“Good-bye, dear lady.”

“Say, I guess Poppa would just like to buy it. I’ll send him right along to fix it up. How much would you be wanting?”

“My dear, dear lady!”

“Only a million? Guess Poppa would pay more than that to please me. Guess I—hallo! there’s our bus. Shriek, Teddy, and wave your hat. We just can’t miss it. Have you got tuppence? Because I haven’t.”

## CHAPTER XIX.

### LORD'S AND A LADY.

"I PLAYED cricket once," said Amelia.

"In Amurrika?" I asked.

"Yes; it was fun."

"But I thought they only played base-ball in Borse-ton," I objected.

"Oh no, they do lots more. They drink iced water, and eat popcorn, and say Momma. Oh, and marry real dukes. There are a heap of things you have to learn yet."

"Very well, I'll learn 'em, and write a book about America. But I shall leave out that bit about the dukes. It isn't giving a chap a fair chance."

Amelia's original remark had followed a suggestion of mine that we should look in at Lord's for an hour. "Looking in" at Lord's sounds so much better than "going" there. It implies that one is a member of the M.C.C. Which one isn't.

So we hailed a hansom. To leap into a hansom was the work of a minute. (If this seems unusually quick, it must be remembered that Amelia comes from America,

## Lord's and a Lady.

where they do things fast.) In a little while we were on the ground.

Kent was batting. If I were writing a novel I shouldn't dare to say Kent was batting, for fear of discovering the identity of my hero. I should remark that Loamshire was at the wickets, owing to the fact that the Downshire captain had lost the toss. This is very subtle.

But I cannot deceive you. Kent really was batting.

Bosanquet was bowling. His name might have been Smith or Jones or Robinson, But it wasn't. It wasn't even Hogbin. It was Bosanquet, and he was bowling "googlies." You see how honest I am with you.

As I had undertaken to explain to Amelia the sights of London, my duty now was evident.

"These are 'googlies,'" I said perfunctorily.

"Who is?"

"There. That's a 'googly' now."

"Oh, I see. We call them umpires in the States. Isn't it strange?"

"Goo-oh-ell-ee-ess-googlies," I said. "It's the name of that particular kind of ball."

"You mean when it pitches half-way and bounces twice?"

"Well, now and then," I admitted.

Apart from this, Amelia knows all about the game, so I said nothing more. But there was an old gentleman sitting behind us who insisted on explaining everything in detail to the lady with him. We listened (we couldn't

## Lovers in London.

help listening) with interest at first, but soon grew tired. He fairly leapt at anything that came his way.

“‘L.b.w., bowled Trott,’” he read out from his card. “Now, do you know what that means? When the batsman—impedes with his leg—a ball which—otherwise—would have struck the wicket—he is out. L.b.w., leg before wicket—that is to say—his leg—is in front of the wicket—and so—so—impedes the ball.”

He spoke in puffs, being in difficulty with his breath. Later on he noticed one of the eleven in the pavilion wearing a Band of Brothers blazer.

“You see—now that he is out—he puts on—a jersey—to prevent himself catching cold. They got very hot—at the wicket—and so they have—these jerseys. Some are red—some are blue—or any colour. When they are batting—they wear pads—to protect themselves from the ball. Some of the balls are very swift—and could give them a good hard blow. These athletics—are a great thing—for the youth of England. You know—we have a saying that—Waterloo—”

“I beg to move that the question be now put,” said Amelia to me. [Cries of “Gag, gag!”]

“I’m glad,” she went on, “that you aren’t always explaining things.”

“It *is* nice of me,” I admitted, “and is not to be attributed to ignorance. As an ardent follower of Kent, may I say, ‘Blow,’” I added, as my pet batsman was caught.

“It was a jolly good catch.”

## Lord's and a Lady.

"A child could have caught 'it," I said bitterly. "The old gentleman behind us could have caught it in his mouth. 'Twas ever thus from childhood's hour; I never loved a dear gazelle—and oh! the difference to me."

"Did 'ums! Did the nasty deep-extra-cover catch the horrid ball, then? Come and examine the pitch."

The innings being over, we gathered round the wicket, and speculated as to which end we should put Amelia on. She herself thought the nursery end, as the wind would help her swerve. But, as I pointed out, the wicket was badly cut up that end, and she could take advantage of it by bowling from the pavilion. Besides, the ball couldn't be hit out of the ground so easily from that wicket.

"But, really, I am jolly good," she said.

"I once made seven myself," I put in. "Don't think I'm boasting, but facts are facts."

"Oh, but I'm a bowler."

"I also bowl. I bowl very fast, and compared with me, James B. King is a slow leg-breaker. So is Kotze."

"Let's take a team to America," suggested Amelia.

"Right O. I guess I'll ask Charles B. Fry. We'll play matches against Borse-ton."

"You seem to think Boston is the only place in America."

"I don't, really," I said. "There's Noo York as well. We'll play Noo York, if you're good."

"If you make fun of me you shan't go on to bowl."

## Lovers in London.

"I'm very sorry," I said. "Beneath a poor but honest face and abominable manners I hide a kindly heart. So forgive me, there's a dear, and let me open the attack."

"Very well. And you shall report for the *Daily Mail*."

So it was agreed, and I entered upon my reporting duties at once. This was my telegram for that afternoon :—

LORD'S.

Weather ripping.

Amelia and I both scored very fast.

There was only one maiden the whole day.

Only one worth mentioning.

And she looked simply sweet.

She took tea with me afterwards.

It ought to be a good match.

But you never can tell.

## CHAPTER XX.

### EARLY IN THE MORNING.

It was ten o'clock as I sat down by the water next morning, in the gardens of my country house. (After all, ten o'clock is not so very early in the morning.) There was a mist, which showed the hot day to come, and I considered, without remorse, the hard fate of millions of workers around me.

There is something delightfully wicked about a wasted morning. The morning, one is told, is for work. The afternoon, if you can afford it, for recreation perhaps; more probably for work. The evening for social pleasures, possibly; but, of course, for work, if you want to be Lord Mayor. But anyhow—this is the point anyhow—the morning for work.

Theoretically, the morning is my busiest time. Breakfast over at nine, and then four hours' solid work till lunch time. I have pictured the scene to myself again and again. It is nothing to my imagination. But actually—well, Lords' is not far off, and Jessop is sixty not out, and—and—

Once there, you feel you are living riotously. You are the very dickens of a fellow. There is nothing you

## Lovers in London.

will not dare after this. You see, opening before you, the life of crime and adventure. You run away to sea, and don't care a pin for the motion; you rob your kind master's till (that comes before really); and finally, after a series of breathless escapes, you come to an unromantic end, such as is depicted by Hogarth in the Fourth Stage of Cruelty.

But it was worth it! Worth it a thousand times.

I have stolen this morning (as many other mornings), but I am not going to Lord's to-day. For one thing, I went yesterday; and, for another, Amelia wouldn't be there. She may not be here, but she won't be there.

Also she was here the other day. . . .

I am really saving money now.

If I were working in my rooms, I should probably be wanting to buy a box of nibs or some blotting paper. Or else I should be writing stories which would have to be typed. . . .

I spotted Amelia on the other side of the water. If only a wild bull would attack her, I could plunge in, and swim across to her rescue. Why is there no wild bull handy? As it is, I must take the prosaic (but drier) course of walking round.

She didn't see me. I sat on the end of her seat, and still she didn't see me.

"A beautiful morning," I said; "oughtn't you to be doing needlework? Or what is it girls do in the morning?"

## Early in the Morning.

Amelia gave a start as I began to speak, but didn't look round.

"Oh, good morning," she said.

"Won't you look at me and make sure it is me? I might be someone else."

Amelia smiled, and continued to look over the water.

"'His Ship in Sight,' by Marcus Stone. Note the *chiaroscuro* on the water. Or is it a brigantine?"

It turned out to be one of the wild birds for which St. James's Park is so famous.

"As a matter of fact, I'm not who you think I am. He's at home working hard. Good boy!"

Amelia looked round.

"I wanted to talk to you, Teddy," she said.

"It was very nice of you to call on me here."

"Yes, I thought I should find you at home. Now I'm going to be serious."

"Serious?" I said in dismay. "You'll spoil everything."

"Yes, really serious."

Well, anyhow, it shall have a chapter to itself.

## CHAPTER XXI.

SHOWING THAT ST. JAMES'S PARK HAS ITS MOMENTS.

"Now then," she began, "I'm going to talk like a mother and a father and an uncle all in one."

"Very well. I'll listen like a son and a nephew."

"Please be serious, Teddy. What do you do?"

"I don't do. I am."

"What am you then?"

"A nauthor, a rising nauthor."

"Late—rising, I expect. You write stories in magazines, don't you?"

"I think you misjudge me," I said; "I write stories in exercise-books. Then I pin the pages together and send them to be typed. After that the typed copy goes to a magazine accompanied by a polite note. The polite note points out that I am theirs faithfully. By-and-bye the typed copy returns. It is accompanied by another polite note which intimates that, on the contrary, the honour is theirs."

"But you have had things accepted, haven't you?"

"Certainly. There was one only last winter."

"You do nothing else but write stories?"

## St. James's Park has its Moments.

"And things. I was once 'Our Military Expert' in an evening paper. I gossiped about *échelons*."

"What I'm thinking, Teddy, is that you don't work hard enough. Now for instance—this morning—why aren't you writing something?"

"The duties of a host," I began.

"Teddy, I'm not playing now."

"Well, you see, *Punch* came out last night, so this is always a slack day with us. And the editor of the *Times* gave me a holiday as well."

"Of course, if you make a joke of everything —"

"I'm not making a joke of it, I'm being very bitter and sarcastic."

Amelia sniffed.

"I'm soured," I said; "I've drained the cup to the dregs. I've—"

"Isn't it a pretty view?" said Amelia.

"I do take the whole thing very seriously," I went on. "You mustn't think—"

"Oh, don't let's worry about it," said Amelia, pleasantly. "It's nothing to do with me. I wonder what the time is."

"Of course, if—"

"Oh, don't keep on! I'm sure you work very hard. What do you say the time is?"

I glanced at her as I took my watch out.

"Don't be angry with me," I said.

"Angry! My dear boy, what have I got to be angry about?"

## Lovers in London.

"Nothing. Absolutely nothing."

"I'm glad you think so."

"Well, don't you think so?"

"I don't want to discuss the question."

I got a glimpse with the left eye. She was looking straight in front of her, and was really very angry. We surveyed the water for a while. At last,—

"This is the first quarrel we've had," I said. I couldn't have made a more tactless remark if I had tried. It deserved, and got, no answer. I tried again.

"It was my— I mean your fault," I said.

Amelia leant back in her chair.

"You shouldn't have talked so much like my uncle," I said. "I always get angry with him when he talks like that."

I turned round and looked at her.

"Don't be an uncle to me," I implored.

Amelia put up her parasol.

"I say, don't let's be cross," I pleaded. "Say you're sorry I've been so disagreeable, or I shall go straight home and commit *banzai*. You wouldn't like it to be said of a nephew of yours that he went straight home and committed *banzai*, would you?" . . .

"She's very disagreeable, and I shan't play with her any more. I shall go and talk to a duck instead." . . .

A duck waddled up out of the water.

"Go away," I said nervously. "I was only joking. I'm not going to talk to anybody. Don't stop to thank me. Go away."

## St. James's Park has its Moments.

We sat in silence for ten minutes. . . .

"By the way," said Amelia, "I can't go to the British Museum to-morrow, after all."

"No? Had you arranged to go with somebody, then?"

"Ridiculous though it may sound, I had arranged to go with you."

"Surely not. I've got an engagement to-morrow. You must have been going with somebody else."

"Oh yes, you're quite right. I was going with a man called— but I won't tell you his name. He used to be a dear friend of mine. Something like you in looks, only he happened to be a gentleman."

"Poor man. I know that sort. And the extraordinary thing is that I was going to the British Museum with somebody very much like yourself, only certainly not so pretty. No. She has a perfectly sweet mouth, and she's always smiling and playing silly tricks like that with it. Of course that spoils her. Otherwise. . . . But I won't insult her by calling her a real lady. . . .

"She was a dear, though. We used to have perfectly ripping times together. We used to go to the Zoo, and the Tower, and silly places like that. Did your man ever take you to the Zoo? You can have awful fun there, you know. . . .

"And we used to have teas at places like the A.B.C. You can play there, too, rather well. Did your man— oh, but he was a real gentleman! He probably took you to the Carlton. . . .

## Lovers in London.

"And then we used to play in the parks. I used to meet her there in the mornings sometimes. Quite by accident, she thought. But it wasn't really an accident, you know, because I was there every morning—just on the chance. I used to work every night till about three to make up. Of course I didn't let her know, because she would have said I was ruining my health, or my eyesight, or something. . . . And seeing her was really working, because she was the heroine of the play I was writing. Somehow she seemed to be the heroine of all the things I was writing. I think editors must have got a bit tired of it. . . ." I looked over the water again.

"Was this girl you were going to the British Museum with—was she very nice?" said Amelia, after a pause.

"Simply sweet."

"I think she's a beast."

"No, no, you don't know her as well as I do."

"Well, you aren't going there with her now."

"No?"

"No. You're going to try and forgive her; and, to show that you do, you're going to take her down into the country to-morrow. She's a little—a little tired of London."

"And how's she going to show she has forgiven me?"

"By being really nice to you to-morrow. You know, she can be awfully nice when she tries."

"Don't I know it? Oh, don't I know it?"

## **St. James's Park has its Moments.**

“Will you meet her at Victoria to-morrow at half-past nine? Will Victoria do?”

“Victoria is the one station.”

“All right. And be very nice and jolly to her, and we won't be serious any more. I think I'll go home by myself. You stay here. Good-bye—dear.”

## CHAPTER XXII.

### THE MORNING.

WHAT follows, then, has really no place in the book, seeing that we were no longer in London. It is an interlude in the country. But its immense importance to two people in the world justifies its inclusion—(as they say of the twelfth man in the 'Varsity Match).

At nine twenty-five I was at Victoria. At nine thirty-five Amelia appeared. At nine forty—but no. Let us dissemble. We don't want you to have any clue to the spot chosen for our interlude. If you knew what time the train started, you might swarm down in your millions and vulgarise the place. At nine something, then, we got into an empty carriage.

"Alas! there's nobody to say good-bye to us," said Amelia, as the train moved off amid handkerchief-wavings and sobs.

"The last time I was on the line a woman got in at Clapham Junction, and her daughter saw her off, and said, 'Now, mind you write, dear, as soon as you get to London, and let us know you've arrived safely.'"

"I've never been to Clapham. Did she write?"

"Alas! at that breathlessly exciting point the story

## The Morning.

ends. Of course, your not having been to Clapham—I say, you are looking ripping. I don't know if I may just mention it."

"I never expected you'd be in time."

"Ah! but you didn't see my breakfast. Somehow it always seems to be Friday in my rooms. Never mind; wait till lunch."

"Shall we have lunch at an inn? What fun!"

We got out at the little station. It is a mile or more from our village, and really belongs to another one. We bought chocolates at the "grocer and draper."

The day was hot and cloudless.

I should like to describe the day more fully, but I think that gives you the impression. Hot and cloudless, and the smell of flowers, and the hum of bees, and I pointing out places of interest with the end of my cigarette to Amelia answering, "You don't say," with her mouth full of chocolates.

This pointing out of places of interest is a terrible ordeal for the stranger. The host must know that he is boring his visitor, and yet he has no mercy. "I'll just take you round after breakfast, and show you the country," he says. "That's where Sir Thomas lives—you know—the soap man. This road used to be private property, and then we made a row about it, and Sir Thomas . . . You see that building there—what would you say that was? A hospital? No. Everyone guesses hospital. Well, I'll tell you. It's . . ." And so on, *ad nauseam*.

## Lovers in London.

"There," said I, "I chased butterflies as a lad."

"Oh, really!" said Amelia.

"There we used to buy sweets. There was a particular kind of chocolate cream, and you got two for a penny, on the understanding that every fifth one had a threepenny bit inside it. We never seemed to strike the fifth one somehow. It seems incredible to the trained mathematician."

"Horrible gambler!"

"True. You see this lovely house here? The man who used to live there is now selling matches in the streets!" I announced this in a hushed voice.

"How terrible!" said Amelia. "Wax ones, or wooden ones with pink heads?"

We reached the village, and climbed up the hill to the common. Under a clump of firs we sat, and looked down upon the little church, the inn, the vicarage, the few shops. We looked at the wall of wooded hills all round us, the village in the valley below us.

"London isn't bad," said Amelia at last. "Only this is better."

"But it doesn't do to think of it when you are in London. Yes, this is where I retire to."

"And that's where you'll go to church every Sunday."

"Yes, you'll see me walking up the hill after the service, talking some of the way perhaps with the Vicar, and arranging to sing at his next concert on behalf of the cricket nets. And I compliment him on his sermon

## The Morning.

—on the gentle, unassertive voice in which he delivered it. Then I wander up here to get an appetite for lunch. Perhaps I meet the blacksmith, and congratulate him on his wonderful bowling the day before. . . . And so home. That's my house, I think."

"It's much too big for you."

"Is it? I wonder."

Below us the Vicar turned out of his house, and set off down the road.

"Why, there he is," said Amelia. "And—and there are you! But you've grown a beard!"

"That's the first thing I should do in the country."

"He's telling you about the concert."

"Yes."

"But he isn't asking you to sing."

"Isn't he, indeed?"

"No; you misunderstood him. He's saying would you mind *not* singing at the concert for the cricket nets, because they want the nets rather badly."

A lady joined the two men. "I feared as much," said Amelia. "You're married."

"Why not?"

"And you've brought her to live down here. Poor thing! She used to play Bridge all Sunday in town, and go to dances every day, and now she's eating her heart out in the dull, dull country."

"Not a bit," I said. "We run up once every month

## Lovers in London.

to town for the night. We have the two front seats in the upper circle at His Majesty's. And we always go to the dance at the schools. Yes, and I'm teaching her bezique."

"Poor, poor thing!"

The elderly lady shook hands with the bearded ruffian, and entered a shop.

"It isn't my wife," I said. "It's a friend of the Vicar's, and she's very keen on Church matters. She knitted the last lot of hassocks. Being a churchwarden myself, I am bound to be polite to her. It is now my lunch-time. Will you come with me?"

We lunched at the "Blue Lion." The sign left no doubt as to the blueness, but was speculative as to the lion.

"Here's the 'Blue Lion,'" I said, as we came up to it.

"It isn't a lion. It's a spaniel. No, it's not a spaniel, it's a jagu-are."

"My dear Amelia," I said, "your knowledge of botany is slender. It's either a lion or a cauliflower. And this is the Blue Lion Inn."

"It's nothing like a lion."

"Don't be obstinate. Have you ever seen a blue lion?"

"I've seen a ——"

"You've never seen a blue lion, so you can't say that it isn't one."

"I've never seen a purple cow," said Amelia; "I

## **The Morning.**

never want to see one. But I can tell you, anyhow, I'd rather see than be one."

We entered. It appeared that the inn was really called the "Bull."

"Not the 'Jagu-are,'" I pointed out to Amelia.

## CHAPTER XXIII.

### THE AFTERNOON.

WE had an excellent lunch in a room decorated with a portrait of King Edward, a fiscal almanac, and a broken piano. I carved. It was really a round of beef we learned afterwards, but I carved it as though it were steak. We ate it under the impression that it was mutton. Amelia said it tasted like veal. We were very hungry.

We earned a reputation with the landlord as a keen judge of horseflesh. [This is a new paragraph.] When once you have grasped the elementary rule that horses are measured by hands, not feet, it is an easy matter.

"And how many hands might she be? Really? . . . Fifty pounds! I should think not, indeed—I should want at least sixty if she were mine. I must come down one afternoon and take her out. . . . No, I'm afraid I can't now. We have to look over a house."

We strolled down past the church.

"Somebody told a story, I'm afraid," said Amelia.

"Somebody didn't. We're going to look over a house now. There, that one with creepers all over it."

"How do you know it's empty?"

## The Afternoon.

"'Cos I've been here before. Rent thirty pounds a year. Excellent *pied-à-terre*, comprising large kitchen garden and spacious summerhouse. *Pied-à-terre* is good, isn't it?"

"Excellent. I don't know how you think of those things."

"I am indeed a one."

We entered the house, opened the windows, and sat down on the stairs.

"Now then," said Amelia, "do you know how to look over a house?"

"Are there any particular rules? The ordinary way of keeping the eyes open I know."

"I'm afraid you don't know anything about it. The three things to go for first are the ceilings, the kitchen, and the rates."

"Let's go for the ceilings first," I said, and I began to take off my coat.

"Teddy, stop, or I shall scream."

"I'm not frightened," I said, rolling up my sleeves.

Amelia explained that all that was necessary was to see that the ceilings were in good repair.

"Oh!" I said, disappointedly. "Well, consider that done. What's the next thing?"

"The next thing is the kitchen."

"The kitchen, of course."

"Yes, we must see what sort of range there is. What would be the good of a spacious summerhouse if the bacon wasn't cooked properly?"

## Lovers in London.

“What, indeed? All the same I’ve cooked bacon without a range.”

“There are other things besides bacon.”

“Yes, there’s fish.”

“And the third thing,” said Amelia, “is the rates.”

“We shall have to ask someone that, shan’t we? We’ll ask at the ‘Bull.’”

We examined some of the ceilings. They seemed good ceilings, as ceilings go.

“I think we pass the ceilings,” I said. They really were very good ceilings.

“Then come on to the kitchen.”

The kitchen looked like most kitchens. I don’t know much about them, though. Amelia certified that it was good.

“I suppose,” I said, “that we may as well see how many bedrooms there are, or doesn’t that matter so long as the sink is an excellent one?”

We counted the bedrooms. Four. It was a jolly little *pied-à-terre*. (I nearly called it a house!) We then did the garden. While I counted the fruit trees, Amelia inspected the roof—an important matter she says. I am afraid I could never come house-hunting alone. I should always go for the wrong thing.

The summerhouse was chiefly cobwebs. There was no stabling, but then think of the mare at the “Bull” waiting to be taken out! Having seen all we could, we got out into the road again, and continued our walk.

## The Afternoon.

"By Jove!" I said, suddenly.

"What's happened?"

"You're a pretty house-hunter, you are!"

"Am I?" said Amelia, looking down.

"Yes, you are. What about the bathroom?"

"Oh, the bathroom?"

"Yes. The three things to go for first, let me tell you, are the bathroom, the number of apple trees, and the distance from the tobacconist. Thanks to my foresight, we know one of those three. The others—blow the ceilings!"

"There's gratitude, after all I've done for him. I shall go back to the inn, and have tea by myself. You can come, too, if you like. In fact, you had better come, because I have no money."

We had an excellent tea. (I always seem to be referring to meals.) We found the landlord in the stables.

"Yes," he was saying, "I wouldn't take fifty pounds for her."

"I should think not, indeed."

"The parson, he offered forty—"

"The bounder!" I put in.

"But I said fifty or nothing I said."

"I should have had the nothing," said Amelia.

"How many hands did you say she was?"

"By the way, what are the rates," I asked casually.

"The what?"

"R-a-t-s, rates."

## Lovers in London.

"Oh! She'll do her eleven mile in the hower, she will."

"Eleven? No!"

"Eleven mile in the hower. Now, Squire Morton's place, how far away would you say that was? Ten mile? Ten and a 'arf?"

"Oh, that's a good eleven miles," I said firmly.

"There you are then! I took her over there last Sunday. Ten o'clock we left 'ere, and it wanted two minutes of eleven as I drove up to his door."

"Well, really! By the way, how much are the rates here?"

"The rates?"

"Yes, I'm thinking of taking a house here. Are they very high?"

"High? Ah! that they are. Why when I first came 'ere . . ."

We left him, and climbed on to the common again. The evening sun shone on a gravel pit near us until it gleamed like gold. Three dark fir trees stood sentinel over it. They had the treasure to guard. . . .

I heard Amelia's voice at my side.

## CHAPTER XXIV.

### THE END AND THE BEGINNING.

‘It’s been a glorious day,” she said; “glorious! I don’t think I shall try to thank you. You will understand.”

“Yes, I think I understand. It was just what I wanted to say to you.”

“And now we have to go back to London. Oh, well ——”

“We’ve had some good times in London, though. Don’t be hard on the place.”

Amelia was silent.

“There was the Zoo,” I went on, “that was the first place we went to. Do you remember the polar bear? And Charles? And there was the Abbey, and the jolly tea afterwards. And the Tower, and ——”

“Of course I remember them all.”

“But you’ll forget ’em all when you go back to America.”

“Shall I?”

“You will, won’t you?”

“You say I will.”

## Lovers in London.

"America is such a big place, and there are such a lot of people, and ——"

"There are several millions," put in Amelia.

"That's it," I said.

I looked at the sentinels over the pit of gold. Lucky trees with such a treasure to guard. Yet there was something better than gold—or gravel.

"Don't go," I whispered. "I want you."

She looked over the valley to the hills. Beyond the hills, only a little way beyond, was London.

"I've shown you London," I said. "Let me show you the world. It's such a big world, you know. It would take years to see it properly."

"It would take more than years."

"Yes, it would be a lifetime. Perhaps more than that. . . . Oh, I know I'm a very bad showman, but my heart's in the work. And this would be my first place. If you will give me a trial, I will serve your ladyship faithfully. Oh, not your ladyship—your Majesty."

"Well," said Amelia, talking quickly, "you have a very good character, and you look honest and obliging, and so if you'll sign an agreement, I'll take you for a month on trial. Oh, Teddy, not for a month, for ever—for ever, my darling."

Teddy signed the agreement.

\* \* \* \*

"Do you remember calling on Cousin Nancy?" I asked.

## The End and the Beginning.

"Dear, I remember every little thing we ever did together."

"Do you remember saying good-bye to her?"

"Let's see," said Amelia, "it was something like this, wasn't it?"

\* \* \* \*

We walked to the station in the dusk, hand in hand.

"Anyhow, the ceilings are all right," I pointed out. "You said so yourself. And the ceilings are the most important part."

"And there were eleven apple trees, you said."

"And the sink was in a class by itself."

"What did he say the rates were?"

"Oh, blow the rates. . . ."

"She was not fair to look upon," I said. "I'm glad she's only the person who does the hassocks."

"And you won't grow a beard, dear?"

"Never! You noticed my moustache, didn't you?"

We found an empty carriage.

"I love you very much," whispered Amelia.

"Do you?"

"Yes. I'm not marrying you for your title, or your ancient mansions, or your future as a statesman."

"I'm afraid they'll think you are," I said. "The statesman part, I mean. America and England having just entered into a treaty—"

"Please I'm annexed," said Amelia.

THE END.



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