

## Chapter Three

To awaken in a still, delicious room, with the summer morning sunshine breaking softly into it through leafy greenness, was a delightful thing to Miss Fox-Seton, who was accustomed to opening her eyes upon four walls covered with cheap paper, to the sound of outside hammerings, and the rattle and heavy roll of wheels. In a building at the back of her bed-sitting-room there lived a man whose occupation, beginning early in the morning, involved banging of a persistent nature.

She awakened to her first day at Mallowe, stretching herself luxuriously, with the smile of a child. She was so thankful for the softness of her lavender-fragrant bed, and so delighted with the lovely freshness of her chintz-hung room. As she lay upon her pillow, she could see the boughs of the trees, and hear the chatter of darting starlings. When her morning tea was brought, it seemed like nectar to her. She was a perfectly healthy woman, with a palate as unspoiled as that of a six-year-old child in the nursery. Her enjoyment of all things was so normal as to be in her day and time an absolute abnormality.

She rose and dressed at once, eager for the open air and sunshine. She was out upon the lawn before any one else but the Borzoi, which rose from beneath a tree and came with stately walk toward her. The air was exquisite, the broad, beautiful stretch of view lay warm in the sun, the masses of flowers on the herbaceous borders showed leaves and

flower-cups adorned with glittering drops of dew. She walked across the spacious sweep of short-cropped sod, and gazed enraptured at the country spread out below. She could have kissed the soft white sheep dotting the fields and lying in gentle, huddled groups under the trees.

"The darlings!" she said, in a little, effusive outburst.

She talked to the dog and fondled him. He seemed to understand her mood, and pressed close against her gown when she stopped. They walked together about the gardens, and presently picked up an exuberant retriever, which bounded and wriggled and at once settled into a steady trot beside them. Emily adored the flowers as she walked by their beds, and at intervals stopped to bury her face in bunches of spicy things. She was so happy that the joy in her hazel eyes was pathetic.

She was startled, as she turned into a rather narrow rose-walk, to see Lord Walderhurst coming toward her. He looked exceedingly clean in his fresh light knickerbocker suit, which was rather becoming to him. A gardener was walking behind, evidently gathering roses for him, which he put into a shallow basket. Emily Fox-Seton cast about for a suitable remark to make, if he should chance to stop to speak to her. She consoled herself with the thought that there were things she really wanted to say about the beauty of the gardens, and certain clumps of heavenly-blue campanulas, which seemed made a feature of in the herbaceous borders. It was so much nicer not to be obliged to invent observations. But his lordship did not stop to speak to her. He was

interested in his roses (which, she heard afterward, were to be sent to town to an invalid friend), and as she drew near, he turned aside to speak to the gardener. As Emily was just passing him when he turned again, and as the passage was narrow, he found himself unexpectedly gazing into her face.

Being nearly the same height, they were so near each other that it was a little awkward.

"I beg pardon," he said, stepping back a pace and lifting his straw hat.

But he did not say, "I beg pardon, Miss Fox-Seton," and Emily knew that he had not recognised her again, and had not the remotest idea who she was or where she came from.

She passed him with her agreeable, friendly smile, and there returned to her mind Lady Maria's remarks of the night before.

"To think that if he married poor pretty Lady Agatha she will be mistress of three places quite as beautiful as Mallowe, three lovely old houses, three sets of gardens, with thousands of flowers to bloom every year! How nice it would be for her! She is so lovely that it seems as if he must fall in love with her. Then, if she was Marchioness of Walderhurst, she could do so much for her sisters."

After breakfast she spent her morning in doing a hundred things for Lady

Maria. She wrote notes for her, and helped her to arrange plans for the entertainment of her visitors. She was very busy and happy. In the afternoon she drove across the moor to Maundell, a village on the other side of it. She really went on an errand for her hostess, but as she was fond of driving and the brown cob was a beauty, she felt that she was being given a treat on a level with the rest of her ladyship's generous hospitalities. She drove well, and her straight, strong figure showed to much advantage on the high seat of the cart. Lord Walderhurst himself commented on her as he saw her drive away.

"She has a nice, flat, straight back, that woman," he remarked to Lady Maria. "What is her name? One never hears people's names when one is introduced."

"Her name is Emily Fox-Seton," her ladyship answered, "and she's a nice creature."

"That would be an inhuman thing to say to most men, but if one is a thoroughly selfish being, and has some knowledge of one's own character, one sees that a nice creature might be a nice companion."

"You are quite right," was Lady Maria's reply, as she held up her lorgnette and watched the cart spin down the avenue. "I am selfish myself, and I realise that is the reason why Emily Fox-Seton is becoming the lodestar of my existence. There is such comfort in being pandered to by a person who is not even aware that she is pandering. She doesn't

suspect that she is entitled to thanks for it."

That evening Mrs. Ralph came shining to dinner in amber satin, which seemed to possess some quality of stimulating her to brilliance. She was witty enough to collect an audience, and Lord Walderhurst was drawn within it. This was Mrs. Ralph's evening. When the men returned to the drawing-room, she secured his lordship at once and managed to keep him. She was a woman who could talk pretty well, and perhaps Lord Walderhurst was amused. Emily Fox-Seton was not quite sure that he was, but at least he listened. Lady Agatha Slade looked a little listless and pale. Lovely as she was, she did not always collect an audience, and this evening she said she had a headache. She actually crossed the room, and taking a seat by Miss Emily Fox-Seton, began to talk to her about Lady Maria's charity-knitting which she had taken up. Emily was so gratified that she found conversation easy. She did not realise that at that particular moment she was a most agreeable and comforting companion for Agatha Slade. She had heard so much of her beauty during the season, and remembered so many little things that a girl who was a thought depressed might like to hear referred to again. Sometimes to Agatha the balls where people had collected in groups to watch her dancing, the flattering speeches she had heard, the dazzling hopes which had been raised, seemed a little unreal, as if, after all, they could have been only dreams. This was particularly so, of course, when life had dulled for a while and the atmosphere of unpaid bills became heavy at home. It was so to-day, because the girl had received a long, anxious letter from her mother, in which much was said of the importance of an early

preparation for the presentation of Alix, who had really been kept back a year, and was in fact nearer twenty than nineteen.

"If we were not in Debrett and Burke, one might be reserved about such matters," poor Lady Claraway wrote; "but what is one to do when all the world can buy one's daughters' ages at the book-sellers'?"

Miss Fox-Seton had seen Lady Agatha's portrait at the Academy and the way in which people had crowded about it. She had chanced to hear comments also, and she agreed with a number of persons who had not thought the picture did the original justice.

"Sir Bruce Norman was standing by me with an elderly lady the first time I saw it," she said, as she turned a new row of the big white-wool scarf her hostess was knitting for a Deep-Sea Fisherman's Charity. "He really looked quite annoyed. I heard him say: 'It is not good at all. She is far, far lovelier. Her eyes are like blue flowers.' The moment I saw you, I found myself looking at your eyes. I hope I didn't seem rude."

Lady Agatha smiled. She had flushed delicately, and took up in her slim hand a skein of the white wool.

"There are some people who are never rude," she sweetly said, "and you are one of them, I am sure. That knitting looks nice. I wonder if I could make a comforter for a deep-sea fisherman."

"If it would amuse you to try," Emily answered, "I will begin one for you. Lady Maria has several pairs of wooden needles. Shall I?"

"Do, please. How kind of you!"

In a pause of her conversation, Mrs. Ralph, a little later, looked across the room at Emily Fox-Seton bending over Lady Agatha and the knitting, as she gave her instructions.

"What a good-natured creature that is!" she said.

Lord Walderhurst lifted his monocle and inserted it in his unilluminated eye. He also looked across the room. Emily wore the black evening dress which gave such opportunities to her square white shoulders and firm column of throat; the country air and sun had deepened the colour on her cheek, and the light of the nearest lamp fell kindly on the big twist of her nut-brown hair, and burnished it. She looked soft and warm, and so generously interested in her pupil's progress that she was rather sweet.

Lord Walderhurst simply looked at her. He was a man of but few words. Women who were sprightly found him somewhat unresponsive. In fact, he was aware that a man in his position need not exert himself. The women themselves would talk. They wanted to talk because they wanted him to hear them.

Mrs. Ralph talked.

"She is the most primeval person I know. She accepts her fate without a trace of resentment; she simply accepts it."

"What is her fate?" asked Lord Walderhurst, still gazing in his unbiassed manner through his monocle, and not turning his head as he spoke.

"It is her fate to be a woman who is perfectly well born, and who is as penniless as a charwoman, and works like one. She is at the beck and call of any one who will give her an odd job to earn a meal with. That is one of the new ways women have found of making a living."

"Good skin," remarked Lord Walderhurst, irrelevantly. "Good hair--quite a lot."

"She has some of the nicest blood in England in her veins, and she engaged my last cook for me," said Mrs. Ralph.

"Hope she was a good cook."

"Very. Emily Fox-Seton has a faculty of finding decent people. I believe it is because she is so decent herself"--with a little laugh.

"Looks quite decent," commented Walderhurst. The knitting was getting on famously.

"It was odd you should see Sir Bruce Norman that day," Agatha Slade was saying. "It must have been just before he was called away to India."

"It was. He sailed the next day. I happen to know, because some friends of mine met me only a few yards from your picture and began to talk about him. I had not known before that he was so rich. I had not heard about his collieries in Lancashire. Oh!"--opening her big eyes in heart-felt yearning,--"how I wish I owned a colliery! It must be so nice to be rich!"

"I never was rich," answered Lady Agatha, with a bitter little sigh. "I know it is hideous to be poor."

"I never was rich," said Emily, "and I never shall be. You"--a little shyly--"are so different."

Lady Agatha flushed delicately again.

Emily Fox-Seton made a gentle joke. "You have eyes like blue flowers," she said. Lady Agatha lifted the eyes like blue flowers, and they were pathetic.

"Oh!" she gave forth almost impetuously, "sometimes it seems as if it does not matter whether one has eyes or not."

It was a pleasure to Emily Fox-Seton to realise that after this the beauty seemed to be rather drawn toward her. Their acquaintance became almost a sort of intimacy over the wool scarf for the deep-sea fisherman, which was taken up and laid down, and even carried out on the lawn and left under the trees for the footmen to restore when they brought in the rugs and cushions. Lady Maria was amusing herself with the making of knitted scarfs and helmets just now, and bits of white or gray knitting were the fashion at Mallowe. Once Agatha brought hers to Emily's room in the afternoon to ask that a dropped stitch might be taken up, and this established a sort of precedent. Afterward they began to exchange visits.

The strenuousness of things was becoming, in fact, almost too much for Lady Agatha. Most unpleasant things were happening at home, and occasionally Castle Clare loomed up grayly in the distance like a spectre. Certain tradespeople who ought, in Lady Claraway's opinion, to have kept quiet and waited in patience until things became better, were becoming hideously persistent. In view of the fact that Alix's next season must be provided for, it was most awkward. A girl could not be presented and properly launched in the world, in a way which would give her a proper chance, without expenditure. To the Claraways expenditure meant credit, and there were blots as of tears on the letters in which Lady Claraway reiterated that the tradespeople were behaving horribly. Sometimes, she said once in desperation, things looked as if they would all be obliged to shut themselves up in Castle Clare to retrench; and then what was to become of Alix and her season? And there were Millicent

and Hilda and Eve.

More than once there was the mist of tears in the flower-blue eyes when Lady Agatha came to talk. Confidence between two women establishes itself through processes at once subtle and simple. Emily Fox-Seton could not have told when she first began to know that the beauty was troubled and distressed; Lady Agatha did not know when she first slipped into making little frank speeches about herself; but these things came about. Agatha found something like comfort in her acquaintance with the big, normal, artless creature--something which actually raised her spirits when she was depressed. Emily Fox-Seton paid constant kindly tribute to her charms, and helped her to believe in them. When she was with her, Agatha always felt that she really was lovely, after all, and that loveliness was a great capital. Emily admired and revered it so, and evidently never dreamed of doubting its omnipotence. She used to talk as if any girl who was a beauty was a potential duchess. In fact, this was a thing she quite ingenuously believed. She had not lived in a world where marriage was a thing of romance, and, for that matter, neither had Agatha. It was nice if a girl liked the man who married her, but if he was a well-behaved, agreeable person, of good means, it was natural that she would end by liking him sufficiently; and to be provided for comfortably or luxuriously for life, and not left upon one's own hands or one's parents', was a thing to be thankful for in any case. It was such a relief to everybody to know that a girl was "settled," and especially it was such a relief to the girl herself. Even novels and plays were no longer fairy-stories of entrancing young men

and captivating young women who fell in love with each other in the first chapter, and after increasingly picturesque incidents were married in the last one in the absolute surety of being blissfully happy forevermore. Neither Lady Agatha nor Emily had been brought up on this order of literature, nor in an atmosphere in which it was accepted without reservation.

They had both had hard lives, and knew what lay before them. Agatha knew she must make a marriage or fade out of existence in prosaic and narrowed dulness. Emily knew that there was no prospect for her of desirable marriage at all. She was too poor, too entirely unsupported by social surroundings, and not sufficiently radiant to catch the roving eye. To be able to maintain herself decently, to be given an occasional treat by her more fortunate friends, and to be allowed by fortune to present to the face of the world the appearance of a woman who was not a pauper, was all she could expect. But she felt that Lady Agatha had the right to more. She did not reason the matter out and ask herself why she had the right to more, but she accepted the proposition as a fact. She was ingenuously interested in her fate, and affectionately sympathetic. She used to look at Lord Walderhurst quite anxiously at times when he was talking to the girl. An anxious mother could scarcely have regarded him with a greater desire to analyse his sentiments. The match would be such a fitting one. He would make such an excellent husband--and there were three places, and the diamonds were magnificent. Lady Maria had described to her a certain tiara which she frequently pictured to herself as glittering above Agatha's exquisite low brow. It would be

infinitely more becoming to her than to Miss Brooke or Mrs. Ralph, though either of them would have worn it with spirit. She could not help feeling that both Mrs. Ralph's brilliancy and Miss Brooke's insouciant prettiness were not unworthy of being counted in the running, but Lady Agatha seemed somehow so much more completely the thing wanted. She was

anxious that she should always look her best, and when she knew that disturbing letters were fretting her, and saw that they made her look pale and less luminous, she tried to raise her spirits.

"Suppose we take a brisk walk," she would say, "and then you might try a little nap. You look a little tired."

"Oh," said Agatha one day, "how kind you are to me! I believe you actually care about my complexion--about my looking well."

"Lord Walderhurst said to me the other day," was Emily's angelically tactful answer, "that you were the only woman he had ever seen who always looked lovely."

"Did he?" exclaimed Lady Agatha, and flushed sweetly. "Once Sir Bruce Norman actually said that to me. I told him it was the nicest thing that could be said to a woman. It is all the nicer"--with a sigh--"because it isn't really true."

"I am sure Lord Walderhurst believed it true," Emily said. "He is not a

man who talks, you know. He is very serious and dignified." She had herself a reverence and admiration for Lord Walderhurst bordering on tender awe. He was indeed a well-mannered person, of whom painful things were not said. He also conducted himself well toward his tenantry, and was patron of several notable charities. To the unexact and innocently respectful mind of Emily Fox-Seton this was at once impressive and attractive. She knew, though not intimately, many noble personages quite unlike him. She was rather early Victorian and touchingly respectable.

"I have been crying," confessed Lady Agatha.

"I was afraid so, Lady Agatha," said Emily.

"Things are getting hopeless in Curzon Street. I had a letter from Millicent this morning. She is next in age to Alix, and she says--oh, a number of things. When girls see everything passing by them, it makes them irritable. Millicent is seventeen, and she is too lovely. Her hair is like a red-gold cloak, and her eyelashes are twice as long as mine." She sighed again, and her lips, which were like curved rose-petals, unconcealedly quivered. "They were all so cross about Sir Bruce Norman going to India," she added.

"He will come back," said Emily, benignly; "but he may be too late. Has he"--ingenuously--"seen Alix?"

Agatha flushed oddly this time. Her delicate skin registered every emotion exquisitely. "He has seen her, but she was in the school-room, and--I don't think--"

She did not finish, but stopped uneasily, and sat and gazed out of the open window into the park. She did not look happy.

The episode of Sir Bruce Norman was brief and even vague. It had begun well. Sir Bruce had met the beauty at a ball, and they had danced together more than once. Sir Bruce had attractions other than his old baronetcy and his coal-mines. He was a good-looking person, with a laughing brown eye and a nice wit. He had danced charmingly and paid gay compliments. He would have done immensely well. Agatha had liked him. Emily sometimes thought she had liked him very much. Her mother had liked him and had thought he was attracted. But after a number of occasions of agreeable meetings, they had encountered each other on the lawn at Goodwood, and he had announced that he was going to India. Forthwith he had gone, and Emily had gathered that somehow Lady Agatha had been considered somewhat to blame. Her people were not vulgar enough to express this frankly, but she had felt it. Her younger sisters had, upon the whole, made her feel it most. It had been borne in upon her that if Alix, or Millicent with the red-gold cloak, or even Eve, who was a gipsy, had been given such a season and such Doucet frocks, they would have combined them with their wonderful complexions and lovely little chins and noses in such a manner as would at least have prevented desirable acquaintances from feeling free to take P. and O. steamers to

Bombay.

In her letter of this morning, Millicent's temper had indeed got somewhat the better of her taste and breeding, and lovely Agatha had cried large tears. So it was comforting to be told that Lord Walderhurst had said such an extremely amiable thing. If he was not young, he was really very nice, and there were exalted persons who absolutely had rather a fad for him. It would be exceptionally brilliant.

The brisk walk was taken, and Lady Agatha returned from it blooming. She was adorable at dinner, and in the evening gathered an actual court about her. She was all in pink, and a wreath of little pink wild roses lay close about her head, making her, with her tall young slimness, look like a Botticelli nymph. Emily saw that Lord Walderhurst looked at her a great deal. He sat on an extraordinarily comfortable corner seat, and stared through his monocle.

Lady Maria always gave her Emily plenty to do. She had a nice taste in floral arrangement, and early in her visit it had fallen into her hands as a duty to "do" the flowers.

The next morning she was in the gardens early, gathering roses with the dew on them, and was in the act of cutting some adorable "Mrs. Sharman Crawfords," when she found it behoved her to let down her carefully tucked up petticoats, as the Marquis of Walderhurst was walking straight toward her. An instinct told her that he wanted to talk to her about

Lady Agatha Slade.

"You get up earlier than Lady Agatha," he remarked, after he had wished her "Good-morning."

"She is oftener invited to the country than I am," she answered. "When I have a country holiday, I want to spend every moment of it out of doors. And the mornings are so lovely. They are not like this in Mortimer Street."

"Do you live in Mortimer Street?"

"Yes."

"Do you like it?"

"I am very comfortable. I am fortunate in having a nice landlady. She and her daughter are very kind to me."

The morning was indeed heavenly. The masses of flowers were drenched with dew, and the already hot sun was drawing fragrance from them and filling the warm air with it. The marquis, with his monocle fixed, looked up into the cobalt-blue sky and among the trees, where a wood-dove or two cooed with musical softness.

"Yes," he observed, with a glance which swept the scene, "it is

different from Mortimer Street, I suppose. Are you fond of the country?"

"Oh, yes," sighed Emily; "oh, yes!"

She was not a specially articulate person. She could not have conveyed in words all that her "Oh, yes!" really meant of simple love for and joy in rural sights and sounds and scents. But when she lifted her big kind hazel eyes to him, the earnestness of her emotion made them pathetic, as the unspeakableness of her pleasures often did.

Lord Walderhurst gazed at her through the monocle with an air he sometimes had of taking her measure without either unkindliness or particular interest.

"Is Lady Agatha fond of the country?" he inquired.

"She is fond of everything that is beautiful," she replied. "Her nature is as lovely as her face, I think."

"Is it?"

Emily walked a step or two away to a rose climbing up the gray-red wall, and began to clip off blossoms, which tumbled sweetly into her basket.

"She seems lovely in everything," she said, "in disposition and manner and--everything. She never seems to disappoint one or make mistakes."

"You are fond of her?"

"She has been so kind to me."

"You often say people are kind to you."

Emily paused and felt a trifle confused. Realising that she was not a clever person, and being a modest one, she began to wonder if she was given to a parrot-phrase which made her tiresome. She blushed up to her ears.

"People are kind," she said hesitatingly. "I--you see, I have nothing to give, and I always seem to be receiving."

"What luck!" remarked his lordship, calmly gazing at her.

He made her feel rather awkward, and she was at once relieved and sorry when he walked away to join another early riser who had come out upon the lawn. For some mysterious reason Emily Fox-Seton liked him. Perhaps his magnificence and the constant talk she had heard of him had warmed her imagination. He had never said anything particularly intelligent to her, but she felt as if he had. He was a rather silent man, but never looked stupid. He had made some good speeches in the House of Lords, not brilliant, but sound and of a dignified respectability. He had also written two pamphlets. Emily had an enormous respect for intellect, and

frequently, it must be admitted, for the thing which passed for it. She was not exacting.

During her stay at Mallowe in the summer, Lady Maria always gave a village treat. She had given it for forty years, and it was a lively function. Several hundred wildly joyous village children were fed to repletion with exhilarating buns and cake, and tea in mugs, after which they ran races for prizes, and were entertained in various ways, with the aid of such of the house-party as were benevolently inclined to make themselves useful.

Everybody was not so inclined, though people always thought the thing amusing. Nobody objected to looking on, and some were agreeably stimulated by the general sense of festivity. But Emily Fox-Seton was found by Lady Maria to be invaluable on this occasion. It was so easy, without the least sense of ill-feeling, to give her all the drudgery to do. There was plenty of drudgery, though it did not present itself to Emily Fox-Seton in that light. She no more realised that she was giving Lady Maria a good deal for her money, so to speak, than she realised that her ladyship, though an amusing and delightful, was an absolutely selfish and inconsiderate old woman. So long as Emily Fox-Seton did not seem obviously tired, it would not have occurred to Lady Maria that she could be so; that, after all, her legs and arms were mere human flesh and blood, that her substantial feet were subject to the fatigue unending trudging to and fro induces. Her ladyship was simply delighted that the preparations went so well, that she could turn to Emily for

service and always find her ready. Emily made lists and calculations, she worked out plans and made purchases. She interviewed the village matrons who made the cake and buns, and boiled the tea in bags in a copper; she found the women who could be engaged to assist in cutting cake and bread-and-butter and helping to serve it; she ordered the putting up of tents and forms and tables; the innumerable things to be remembered she called to mind.

"Really, Emily," said Lady Maria, "I don't know how I have done this thing for forty years without you. I must always have you at Mallowe for the treat."

Emily was of the genial nature which rejoices upon even small occasions, and is invariably stimulated to pleasure by the festivities of others. The festal atmosphere was a delight to her. In her numberless errands to the village, the sight of the excitement in the faces of the children she passed on her way to this cottage and that filled her eyes with friendly glee and wreathed her face with smiles. When she went into the cottage where the cake was being baked, children hovered about in groups and nudged each other, giggling. They hung about, partly through thrilled interest, and partly because their joy made them eager to courtesy to her as she came out, the obeisance seeming to identify them even more closely with the coming treat. They grinned and beamed rosily, and Emily smiled at them and nodded, uplifted by a pleasure almost as infantile as their own. She was really enjoying herself so honestly that she did not realise how hard she worked during the days before the

festivity. She was really ingenious, and invented a number of new methods of entertainment. It was she who, with the aid of a couple of gardeners, transformed the tents into bowers of green boughs and arranged the decorations of the tables and the park gates.

"What a lot of walking you do!" Lord Walderhurst said to her once, as she passed the group on the lawn. "Do you know how many hours you have been on your feet to-day?"

"I like it," she answered, and, as she hurried by, she saw that he was sitting a shade nearer to Lady Agatha than she had ever seen him sit before, and that Agatha, under a large hat of white gauze frills, was looking like a seraph, so sweet and shining were her eyes, so flower-fair her face. She looked actually happy.

"Perhaps he has been saying things," Emily thought. "How happy she will be! He has such a nice pair of eyes. He would make a woman very happy." A faint sigh fluttered from her lips. She was beginning to be physically tired, and was not yet quite aware of it. If she had not been physically tired, she would not even vaguely have had, at this moment, recalled to her mind the fact that she was not of the women to whom "things" are said and to whom things happen.

"Emily Fox-Seton," remarked Lady Maria, fanning herself, as it was frightfully hot, "has the most admirable effect on me. She makes me feel generous. I should like to present her with the smartest things from the

wardrobes of all my relations."

"Do you give her clothes?" asked Walderhurst.

"I haven't any to spare. But I know they would be useful to her. The things she wears are touching; they are so well contrived, and produce such a decent effect with so little."

Lord Walderhurst inserted his monocle and gazed after the straight, well-set-up back of the disappearing Miss Fox-Seton.

"I think," said Lady Agatha, gently, "that she is really handsome."

"So she is," admitted Walderhurst--"quite a good-looking woman."

That night Lady Agatha repeated the amiability to Emily, whose grateful amazement really made her blush.

"Lord Walderhurst knows Sir Bruce Norman," said Agatha. "Isn't it strange? He spoke of him to me to-day. He says he is clever."

"You had a nice talk this afternoon, hadn't you?" said Emily. "You both looked so--so--as if you were enjoying yourselves when I passed."

"Did he look as if he were enjoying himself? He was very agreeable. I did not know he could be so agreeable."

"I have never seen him look as much pleased," answered Emily Fox-Seton. "Though he always looks as if he liked talking to you, Lady Agatha. That large white gauze garden-hat"--reflectively--"is so very becoming."

"It was very expensive," sighed lovely Agatha. "And they last such a short time. Mamma said it really seemed almost criminal to buy it."

"How delightful it will be," remarked cheering Emily, "when--when you need not think of things like that!"

"Oh!"--with another sigh, this time a catch of the breath,--"it would be like Heaven! People don't know; they think girls are frivolous when they care, and that it isn't serious. But when one knows one must have things,--that they are like bread,--it is awful!"

"The things you wear really matter." Emily was bringing all her powers to bear upon the subject, and with an anxious kindness which was quite angelic. "Each dress makes you look like another sort of picture. Have you,"--contemplatively--"anything quite different to wear to-night and to-morrow?"

"I have two evening dresses I have not worn here yet"--a little hesitatingly. "I--well I saved them. One is a very thin black one with silver on it. It has a trembling silver butterfly for the shoulder, and one for the hair."

"Oh, put that on to-night!" said Emily, eagerly. "When you come down to dinner you will look so--so new! I always think that to see a fair person suddenly for the first time all in black gives one a kind of delighted start--though start isn't the word, quite. Do put it on."

Lady Agatha put it on. Emily Fox-Seton came into her room to help to add the last touches to her beauty before she went down to dinner. She suggested that the fair hair should be dressed even higher and more lightly than usual, so that the silver butterfly should poise the more airily over the knot, with its quivering, outstretched wings. She herself poised the butterfly high upon the shoulder.

"Oh, it is lovely!" she exclaimed, drawing back to gaze at the girl. "Do let me go down a moment or so before you do, so that I can see you come into the room."

She was sitting in a chair quite near Lord Walderhurst when her charge entered. She saw him really give something quite like a start when Agatha appeared. His monocle, which had been in his eye, fell out of it, and he picked it up by its thin cord and replaced it.

"Psyche!" she heard him say in his odd voice, which seemed merely to make a statement without committing him to an opinion--"Psyche!"

He did not say it to her or to any one else. It was simply a kind of

exclamation,--appreciative and perceptive without being enthusiastic,--and it was curious. He talked to Agatha nearly all the evening.

Emily came to Lady Agatha before she retired, looking even a little flushed.

"What are you going to wear at the treat to-morrow?" she asked.

"A white muslin, with entre-deux of lace, and the gauze garden-hat, and a white parasol and shoes."

Lady Agatha looked a little nervous; her pink fluttered in her cheek.

"And to-morrow night?" said Emily.

"I have a very pale blue. Won't you sit down, dear Miss Fox-Seton?"

"We must both go to bed and sleep. You must not get tired."

But she sat down for a few minutes, because she saw the girl's eyes asking her to do it.

The afternoon post had brought a more than usually depressing letter from Curzon Street. Lady Claraway was at her motherly wits' ends, and was really quite touching in her distraction. A dressmaker was entering

a suit. The thing would get into the papers, of course.

"Unless something happens, something to save us by staving off things, we shall have to go to Castle Clare at once. It will be all over. No girl could be presented with such a thing in the air. They don't like it."

"They," of course, meant persons whose opinions made London's society's law.

"To go to Castle Clare," faltered Agatha, "will be like being sentenced to starve to death. Alix and Hilda and Millicent and Eve and I will be starved, quite slowly, for the want of the things that make girls' lives bearable when they have been born in a certain class. And even if the most splendid thing happened in three or four years, it would be too late for us four--almost too late for Eve. If you are out of London, of course you are forgotten. People can't help forgetting. Why shouldn't they, when there are such crowds of new girls every year?"

Emily Fox-Seton was sweet. She was quite sure that they would not be obliged to go to Castle Clare. Without being indelicate, she was really able to bring hope to the fore. She said a good deal of the black gauze dress and the lovely effect of the silver butterflies.

"I suppose it was the butterflies which made Lord Walderhurst say 'Psyche! Psyche!' when he first saw you," she added, en passant.

"Did he say that?" And immediately Lady Agatha looked as if she had not intended to say the words.

"Yes," answered Emily, hurrying on with a casual air which had a good deal of tact in it. "And black makes you so wonderfully fair and aërial. You scarcely look quite real in it; you might float away. But you must go to sleep now."

Lady Agatha went with her to the door of the room to bid her good-night. Her eyes looked like those of a child who might presently cry a little. "Oh, Miss Fox-Seton," she said, in a very young voice, "you are so kind!"