

CHAPTER III

YOUNG LADY ANSTRUTHERS

When the marriage took place the event was accompanied by an ingenuously

elate flourish of trumpets. Miss Vanderpoel's frocks were multitudinous and wonderful, as also her jewels purchased at Tiffany's. She carried a thousand trunks--more or less--across the Atlantic. When the ship steamed away from the dock, the wharf was like a flower garden in the blaze of brilliant and delicate attire worn by the bevy of relatives and intimates who stood waving their handkerchiefs and laughingly calling out farewell good wishes.

Sir Nigel's mental attitude was not a sympathetic or admiring one as he stood by his bride's side looking back. If Rosy's half happy, half tearful excitement had left her the leisure to reflect on his expression, she would not have felt it encouraging.

"What a deuce of a row Americans make," he said even before they were out of hearing of the voices. "It will be a positive rest to be in a country where the women do not cackle and shriek with laughter."

He said it with that simple rudeness which at times professed to be almost impersonal, and which Rosalie had usually tried to believe was the outcome of a kind of cool British humour. But this time she started

a little at his words.

"I suppose we do make more noise than English people," she admitted a second or so later. "I wonder why?" And without waiting for an answer--somewhat as if she had not expected or quite wanted one--she leaned a little farther over the side to look back, waving her small, fluttering handkerchief to the many still in tumult on the wharf. She was not perceptive or quick enough to take offence, to realise that the remark was significant and that Sir Nigel had already begun as he meant to go on. It was far from being his intention to play the part of an American husband, who was plainly a creature in whom no authority vested itself. Americans let their women say and do anything, and were capable of fetching and carrying for them. He had seen a man run upstairs for his wife's wrap, cheerfully, without the least apparent sense that the service was the part of a footman if there was one in the house, a parlour maid if there was not. Sir Nigel had been brought up in the good Early Victorian days when "a nice little woman to fetch your slippers for you" figured in certain circles as domestic bliss. Girls were educated to fetch slippers as retrievers were trained to go into the water after sticks, and terriers to bring back balls thrown for them.

The new Lady Anstruthers had, it supervened, several opportunities to obtain a new view of her bridegroom's character before their voyage across the Atlantic was over. At this period of the slower and more cumbrous weaving of the Shuttle, the world had not yet awakened even to the possibilities of the ocean greyhound. An Atlantic voyage at times

was capable of offering to a bride and bridegroom days enough to begin to glance into their future with a premonition of the waning of the honeymoon, at least, and especially if they were not sea-proof, to wish wearily that the first half of it were over. Rosalie was not weary, but she began to be bewildered. As she had never been a clever girl or quick to perceive, and had spent her life among women-indulging American men, she was not prepared with any precedent which made her situation clear. The first time Sir Nigel showed his temper to her she simply stared at him, her eyes looking like those of a puzzled, questioning child. Then she broke into her nervous little laugh, because she did not know what else to do. At his second outbreak her stare was rather startled and she did not laugh.

Her first awakening was to an anxious wonderment concerning certain moods of gloom, or what seemed to be gloom, to which he seemed prone. As she lay in her steamer chair he would at times march stiffly up and down the deck, apparently aware of no other existence than his own, his features expressing a certain clouded resentment of whose very unexplainableness she secretly stood in awe. She was not astute enough, poor girl, to leave him alone, and when with innocent questionings she endeavoured to discover his trouble, the greatest mystification she encountered was that he had the power to make her feel that she was in some way taking a liberty, and showing her lack of tact and perspicuity.

"Is anything the matter, Nigel?" she asked at first, wondering if she were guilty of silliness in trying to slip her hand into his. She was

sure she had been when he answered her.

"No," he said chillingly.

"I don't believe you are happy," she returned. "Somehow you seem so--so different."

"I have reasons for being depressed," he replied, and it was with a stiff finality which struck a note of warning to her, signifying that it would be better taste in her to put an end to her simple efforts.

She vaguely felt herself put in the wrong, and he preferred that it should be so. It was the best form of preparation for any mood he might see that it might pay him to show her in the future. He was, in fact, confronting disdainfully his position. He had her on his hands and he was returning to his relations with no definite advantage to exhibit as the result of having married her. She had been supplied with an income but he had no control over it. It would not have been so if he had not been in such straits that he had been afraid to risk his chance by making a stand. To have a wife with money, a silly, sweet temper and no will of her own, was of course better than to be penniless, head over heels in debt and hemmed in by difficulties on every side. He had seen women trained to give in to anything rather than be bullied in public, to accede in the end to any demand rather than endure the shame of a certain kind of scene made before servants, and a certain kind of insolence used to relatives and guests. The quality he found

most maddeningly irritating in Rosalie was her obviously absolute unconsciousness of the fact that it was entirely natural and proper that her resources should be in her husband's hands. He had, indeed, even in these early days, made a tentative effort or so in the form of a suggestive speech; he had given her openings to give him an opening to put things on a practical basis, but she had never had the intelligence to see what he was aiming at, and he had found himself almost floundering ungracefully in his remarks, while she had looked at him without a sign of comprehension in her simple, anxious blue eyes. The creature was actually trying to understand him and could not. That was the worst of it, the blank wall of her unconsciousness, her childlike belief that he was far too grand a personage to require anything. These were the things he was thinking over when he walked up and down the deck in unamiable solitariness. Rosy awakened to the amazed consciousness of the fact that, instead of being pleased with the luxury and prettiness of her wardrobe and appointments, he seemed to dislike and disdain them.

"You American women change your clothes too much and think too much of them," was one of his first amiable criticisms. "You spend more than well-bred women should spend on mere dresses and bonnets. In New York it always strikes an Englishman that the women look endimanche at whatever time of day you come across them."

"Oh, Nigel!" cried Rosy woefully. She could not think of anything more to say than, "Oh, Nigel!"

"I am sorry to say it is true," he replied loftily. That she was an American and a New Yorker was being impressed upon poor little Lady Anstruthers in a new way--somehow as if the mere cold statement of the fact put a fine edge of sarcasm to any remark. She was of too innocent a loyalty to wish that she was neither the one nor the other, but she did wish that Nigel was not so prejudiced against the places and people she cared for so much.

She was sitting in her stateroom enfolded in a dressing gown covered with cascades of lace, tied with knots of embroidered ribbon, and her maid, Hannah, who admired her greatly, was brushing her fair long hair with a gold-backed brush, ornamented with a monogram of jewels.

If she had been a French duchess of a piquant type, or an English one with an aquiline nose, she would have been beyond criticism; if she had been a plump, over-fed woman, or an ugly, ill-natured, gross one, she would have looked vulgar, but she was a little, thin, fair New Yorker, and though she was not beyond criticism--if one demanded high distinction--she was pretty and nice to look at. But Nigel Anstruthers would not allow this to her. His own tailors' bills being far in arrears and his pocket disgustingly empty, the sight of her ingenuous sumptuousness and the gay, accustomed simpleness of outlook with which she accepted it as her natural right, irritated him and roused his venom. Bills would remain unpaid if she was permitted to spend her money on this sort of thing without any consideration for the requirements of other people.

He inhaled the air and made a gesture of distaste.

"This sachet business is rather overpowering," he said. "It is the sort of thing a woman should be particularly discreet about."

"Oh, Nigel!" cried the poor girl agitatedly. "Hannah, do go and call the steward to open the windows. Is it really strong?" she implored as Hannah went out. "How dreadful. It's only orris and I didn't know Hannah had put it in the trunks."

"My dear Rosalie," with a wave of the hand taking in both herself and her dressing case, "it is all too strong."

"All--wh--what?" gaspingly.

"The whole thing. All that lace and love knot arrangement, the gold-backed brushes and scent bottles with diamonds and rubies sticking in them."

"They--they were wedding presents. They came from Tiffany's. Everyone thought them lovely."

"They look as if they belonged to the dressing table of a French woman of the demi-monde. I feel as if I had actually walked into the apartment of some notorious Parisian soubrette."

Rosalie Vanderpoel was a clean-minded little person, her people were of the clean-minded type, therefore she did not understand all that this ironic speech implied, but she gathered enough of its significance to cause her to turn first red and then pale and then to burst into tears. She was crying and trying to conceal the fact when Hannah returned. She bent her head and touched her eyes furtively while her toilette was completed.

Sir Nigel had retired from the scene, but he had done so feeling that he had planted a seed and bestowed a practical lesson. He had, it is true, bestowed one, but again she had not understood its significance and was only left bewildered and unhappy. She began to be nervous and uncertain about herself and about his moods and points of view. She had never been made to feel so at home. Everyone had been kind to her and lenient to her lack of brilliancy. No one had expected her to be brilliant, and she had been quite sweet-temperedly resigned to the fact that she was not the kind of girl who shone either in society or elsewhere. She did not resent the fact that she knew people said of her, "She isn't in the least bit bright, Rosy Vanderpoel, but she's a nice, sweet little thing." She had tried to be nice and sweet and had aspired to nothing higher.

But now that seemed so much less than enough. Perhaps Nigel ought to have married one of the clever ones, someone who would have known how to understand him and who would have been more entertaining than she could

be. Perhaps she was beginning to bore him, perhaps he was finding her out and beginning to get tired. At this point the always too ready tears would rise to her eyes and she would be overwhelmed by a sense of homesickness. Often she cried herself silently to sleep, longing for her mother--her nice, comfortable, ordinary mother, whom she had several times felt Nigel had some difficulty in being unreservedly polite to--though he had been polite on the surface.

By the time they landed she had been living under so much strain in her effort to seem quite unchanged, that she had lost her nerve. She did not feel well and was sometimes afraid that she might do something silly and hysterical in spite of herself, begin to cry for instance when there was really no explanation for her doing it. But when she reached London the novelty of everything so excited her that she thought she was going to be better, and then she said to herself it would be proved to her that all her fears had been nonsense. This return of hope made her quite light-spirited, and she was almost gay in her little outbursts of delight and admiration as she drove about the streets with her husband. She did not know that her ingenuous ignorance of things he had known all his life, her rapture over common monuments of history, led him to say to himself that he felt rather as if he were taking a housemaid to see a Lord Mayor's Show.

Before going to Stornham Court they spent a few days in town. There had been no intention of proclaiming their presence to the world, and they did not do so, but unluckily certain tradesmen discovered the fact that

Sir Nigel Anstruthers had returned to England with the bride he had secured in New York. The conclusion to be deduced from this circumstance was that the particular moment was a good one at which to send in bills for "acct. rendered." The tradesmen quite shared Anstruthers' point of view. Their reasoning was delightfully simple and they were wholly unaware that it might have been called gross. A man over his head and ears in debt naturally expected his creditors would be paid by the young woman who had married him. America had in these days been so little explored by the thrifty impecunious well-born that its ingenuous sentimentality in certain matters was by no means comprehended.

By each post Sir Nigel received numerous bills. Sometimes letters accompanied them, and once or twice respectful but firm male persons brought them by hand and demanded interviews which irritated Sir Nigel extremely. Given time to arrange matters with Rosalie, to train her to some sense of her duty, he believed that the "acct. rendered" could be wiped off, but he saw he must have time. She was such a little fool. Again and again he was furious at the fate which had forced him to take her.

The truth was that Rosalie knew nothing whatever about unpaid bills. Reuben Vanderpoel's daughters had never encountered an indignant tradesman in their lives. When they went into "stores" they were received with unfeigned rapture. Everything was dragged forth to be displayed to them, attendants waited to leap forth to supply their smallest behest. They knew no other phase of existence than the one in

which one could buy anything one wanted and pay any price demanded for it.

Consequently Rosalie did not recognise signs which would have been obviously recognisable by the initiated. If Sir Nigel Anstruthers had been a nice young fellow who had loved her, and he had been honest enough to make a clean breast of his difficulties, she would have thrown herself into his arms and implored him effusively to make use of all her available funds, and if the supply had been insufficient, would have immediately written to her father for further donations, knowing that her appeal would be responded to at once. But Sir Nigel Anstruthers cherished no sentiment for any other individual than himself, and he had no intention of explaining that his mere vanity had caused him to mislead her, that his rank and estate counted for nothing and that he was in fact a pauper loaded with dishonest debts. He wanted money, but he wanted it to be given to him as if he conferred a favour by receiving it. It must be transferred to him as though it were his by right. What did a man marry for? Therefore his wife's unconsciousness that she was inflicting outrage upon him by her mere mental attitude filled his being with slowly rising gall.

Poor Rosalie went joyfully forth shopping after the manner of all newly arrived Americans. She bought new toilettes and gewgaws and presents for her friends and relations in New York, and each package which was delivered at the hotel added to Sir Nigel's rage.

That the little blockhead should be allowed to do what she liked with her money and that he should not be able to forbid her! This he said to himself at intervals of five minutes through the day--which led to another small episode.

"You are spending a great deal of money," he said one morning in his condemnatory manner. Rosalie looked up from the lace flounce which had just been delivered and gave the little nervous laugh, which was becoming entirely uncertain of propitiating.

"Am I?" she answered. "They say all Americans spend a good deal."

"Your money ought to be in proper hands and properly managed," he went on with cold precision. "If you were an English woman, your husband would control it."

"Would he?" The simple, sweet-tempered obtuseness of her tone was an infuriating thing to him. There was the usual shade of troubled surprise in her eyes as they met his. "I don't think men in America ever do that. I don't believe the nice ones want to. You see they have such a pride about always giving things to women, and taking care of them. I believe a nice American man would break stones in the street rather than take money from a woman--even his wife. I mean while he could work. Of course if he was ill or had ill luck or anything like that, he wouldn't be so proud as not to take it from the person who loved him most and wanted to help him. You do sometimes hear of a man who won't work and lets his

wife support him, but it's very seldom, and they are always the low kind that other men look down on."

"Wanted to help him." Sir Nigel selected the phrase and quoted it between puffs of the cigar he held in his fine, rather cruel-looking hands, and his voice expressed a not too subtle sneer. "A woman is not 'helping' her husband when she gives him control of her fortune. She is only doing her duty and accepting her proper position with regard to him. The law used to settle the thing definitely."

"Did-did it?" Rosy faltered weakly. She knew he was offended again and that she was once more somehow in the wrong. So many things about her seemed to displease him, and when he was displeased he always reminded her that she was stupidly, objectionably guilty of not being an English woman.

Whatever it happened to be, the fault she had committed out of her depth of ignorance, he did not forget it. It was no habit of his to endeavour to dismiss offences. He preferred to hold them in possession as if they were treasures and to turn them over and over, in the mental seclusion which nourishes the growth of injuries, since within its barriers there is no chance of their being palliated by the apologies or explanations of the offender.

During their journey to Stornham Court the next day he was in one of his black moods. Once in the railway carriage he paid small attention to

his wife, but sat rigidly reading his Times, until about midway to their destination he descended at a station and paid a visit to the buffet in the small refreshment room, after which he settled himself to doze in an exceedingly unbecoming attitude, his travelling cap pulled down, his rather heavy face congested with the dark flush Rosalie had not yet learned was due to the fact that he had hastily tossed off two or three whiskies and sodas. Though he was never either thick of utterance or unsteady on his feet, whisky and soda formed an important factor in his existence. When he was annoyed or dull he at once took the necessary precautions against being overcome by these feelings, and the effect upon a constitutionally evil temper was to transform it into an infernal one. The night had been a bad one for Rosy. Such floods of homesick longing had overpowered her that she had not been able to sleep. She had risen feeling shaky and hysterical and her nervousness had been added to by her fear that Nigel might observe her and make comment. Of course she told herself it was natural that he should not wish her to appear at Stornham Court looking a pale, pink-nosed little fright. Her efforts to be cheerful had indeed been somewhat touching, but they had met with small encouragement.

She thought the green-clothed country lovely as the train sped through it, and a lump rose in her small throat because she knew she might have been so happy if she had not been so frightened and miserable. The thing which had been dawning upon her took clearer, more awful form. Incidents she had tried to explain and excuse to herself, upon all sorts of futile, simple grounds, began to loom up before her in something like

their actual proportions. She had heard of men who had changed their manner towards girls after they had married them, but she did not know they had begun to change so soon. This was so early in the honeymoon to be sitting in a railway carriage, in a corner remote from that occupied by a bridegroom, who read his paper in what was obviously intentional, resentful solitude. Emily Soame's father, she remembered it against her will, had been obliged to get a divorce for Emily after her two years of wretched married life. But Alfred Soames had been quite nice for six months at least. It seemed as if all this must be a dream, one of those nightmare things, in which you suddenly find yourself married to someone you cannot bear, and you don't know how it happened, because you yourself have had nothing to do with the matter. She felt that presently she must waken with a start and find herself breathing fast, and panting out, half laughing, half crying, "Oh, I am so glad it's not true! I am so glad it's not true!"

But this was true, and there was Nigel. And she was in a new, unexplored world. Her little trembling hands clutched each other. The happy, light girlish days full of ease and friendliness and decency seemed gone forever. It was not Rosalie Vanderpoel who pressed her colourless face against the glass of the window, looking out at the flying trees; it was the wife of Nigel Anstruthers, and suddenly, by some hideous magic, she had been snatched from the world to which she belonged and was being dragged by a gaoler to a prison from which she did not know how to escape. Already Nigel had managed to convey to her that in England a

woman who was married could do nothing to defend herself against her husband, and that to endeavour to do anything was the last impossible touch of vulgar ignominy.

The vivid realisation of the situation seized upon her like a possession as she glanced sideways at her bridegroom and hurriedly glanced away again with a little hysterical shudder. New York, good-tempered, lenient, free New York, was millions of miles away and Nigel was so loathly near and--and so ugly. She had never known before that he was so ugly, that his face was so heavy, his skin so thick and coarse and his expression so evilly ill-tempered. She was not sufficiently analytical to be conscious that she had with one bound leaped to the appalling point of feeling uncontrollable physical abhorrence of the creature to whom she was chained for life. She was terrified at finding herself forced to combat the realisation that there were certain expressions of his countenance which made her feel sick with repulsion. Her self-reproach also was as great as her terror. He was her husband--her husband--and she was a wicked girl. She repeated the words to herself again and again, but remotely she knew that when she said, "He is my husband," that was the worst thing of all.

This inward struggle was a bad preparation for any added misery, and when their railroad journey terminated at Stornham Station she was met by new bewilderment.

The station itself was a rustic place where wild roses climbed down a

bank to meet the very train itself. The station master's cottage had roses and clusters of lilies waving in its tiny garden. The station master, a good-natured, red-faced man, came forward, baring his head, to open the railroad carriage door with his own hand. Rosy thought him delightful and bowed and smiled sweet-temperedly to him and to his wife and little girls, who were curtsying at the garden gate. She was sufficiently homesick to be actually grateful to them for their air of welcoming her. But as she smiled she glanced furtively at Nigel to see if she was doing exactly the right thing.

He himself was not smiling and did not unbend even when the station master, who had known him from his boyhood, felt at liberty to offer a deferential welcome.

"Happy to see you home with her ladyship, Sir Nigel," he said; "very happy, if I may say so."

Sir Nigel responded to the respectful amiability with a half-military lifting of his right hand, accompanied by a grunt.

"D'ye do, Wells," he said, and strode past him to speak to the footman who had come from Stornham Court with the carriage.

The new and nervous little Lady Anstruthers, who was left to trot after her husband, smiled again at the ruddy, kind-looking fellow, this time in conscious deprecation. In the simplicity of her republican sympathy

with a well-meaning fellow creature who might feel himself snubbed, she could have shaken him by the hand. She had even parted her lips to venture a word of civility when she was startled by hearing Sir Nigel's voice raised in angry rating.

"Damned bad management not to bring something else," she heard. "Kind of thing you fellows are always doing."

She made her way to the carriage, flurried again by not knowing whether she was doing right or wrong. Sir Nigel had given her no instructions and she had not yet learned that when he was in a certain humour there was equal fault in obeying or disobeying such orders as he gave.

The carriage from the Court--not in the least a new or smart equipage--was drawn up before the entrance of the station and Sir Nigel was in a rage because the vehicle brought for the luggage was too small to carry it all.

"Very sorry, Sir Nigel," said the coachman, touching his hat two or three times in his agitation. "Very sorry. The omnibus was a little out of order--the springs, Sir Nigel--and I thought----"

"You thought!" was the heated interruption. "What right had you to think, damn it! You are not paid to think, you are paid to do your work properly. Here are a lot of damned boxes which ought to go with us and--where's your maid?" wheeling round upon his wife.

Rosalie turned towards the woman, who was approaching from the waiting room.

"Hannah," she said timorously.

"Drop those confounded bundles," ordered Sir Nigel, "and show James the boxes her ladyship is obliged to have this evening. Be quick about it and don't pick out half a dozen. The cart can't take them."

Hannah looked frightened. This sort of thing was new to her, too. She shuffled her packages on to a seat and followed the footman to the luggage. Sir Nigel continued rating the coachman. Any form of violent self-assertion was welcome to him at any time, and when he was irritated he found it a distinct luxury to kick a dog or throw a boot at a cat. The springs of the omnibus, he argued, had no right to be broken when it was known that he was coming home. His anger was only added to by the coachman's halting endeavours in his excuses to veil a fact he knew his master was aware of, that everything at Stornham was more or less out of order, and that dilapidations were the inevitable result of there being no money to pay for repairs. The man leaned forward on his box and spoke at last in a low tone.

"The bus has been broken some time," he said. "It's--it's an expensive job, Sir Nigel. Her ladyship thought it better to----" Sir Nigel turned white about the mouth.

"Hold your tongue," he commanded, and the coachman got red in the face, saluted, biting his lips, and sat very stiff and upright on his box.

The station master edged away uneasily and tried to look as if he were not listening. But Rosalie could see that he could not help hearing, nor could the country people who had been passengers by the train and who were collecting their belongings and getting into their traps.

Lady Anstruthers was ignored and remained standing while the scene went on. She could not help recalling the manner in which she had been invariably received in New York on her return from any journey, how she was met by comfortable, merry people and taken care of at once. This was so strange, it was so queer, so different.

"Oh, never mind, Nigel dear," she said at last, with innocent indiscretion. "It doesn't really matter, you know."

Sir Nigel turned upon her a blaze of haughty indignation.

"If you'll pardon my saying so, it does matter," he said. "It matters confoundedly. Be good enough to take your place in the carriage."

He moved to the carriage door, and not too civilly put her in. She gasped a little for breath as she sat down. He had spoken to her as if she had been an impertinent servant who had taken a liberty. The poor

girl was bewildered to the verge of panic. When he had ended his tirade and took his place beside her he wore his most haughtily intolerant air.

"May I request that in future you will be good enough not to interfere when I am reproving my servants," he remarked.

"I didn't mean to interfere," she apologised tremulously.

"I don't know what you meant. I only know what you did," was his response. "You American women are too fond of cutting in. An Englishman can think for himself without his wife's assistance."

The tears rose to her eyes. The introduction of the international question overpowered her as always.

"Don't begin to be hysterical," was the ameliorating tenderness with which he observed the two hot salt drops which fell despite her. "I should scarcely wish to present you to my mother bathed in tears."

She wiped the salt drops hastily away and sat for a moment silent in the corner of the carriage. Being wholly primitive and unanalytical, she was ashamed and began to blame herself. He was right. She must not be silly because she was unused to things. She ought not to be disturbed by trifles. She must try to be nice and look cheerful. She made an effort and did not speak for a few minutes. When she had recovered herself she tried again.

"English country is so pretty," she said, when she thought she was quite sure that her voice would not tremble. "I do so like the hedges and the darling little red-roofed cottages."

It was an innocent tentative at saying something agreeable which might propitiate him. She was beginning to realise that she was continually making efforts to propitiate him. But one of the forms of unpleasantness most enjoyable to him was the snubbing of any gentle effort at palliating his mood. He condescended in this case no response whatever, but merely continued staring contemptuously before him.

"It is so picturesque, and so unlike America," was the pathetic little commonplace she ventured next. "Ain't it, Nigel?"

He turned his head slowly towards her, as if she had taken a new liberty in disturbing his meditations.

"Wha--at?" he drawled.

It was almost too much for her to sustain herself under. Her courage collapsed.

"I was only saying how pretty the cottages were," she faltered. "And that there's nothing like this in America."

"You ended your remark by adding, 'ain't it,'" her husband condescended. "There is nothing like that in England. I shall ask you to do me the favour of leaving Americanisms out of your conversation when you are in the society of English ladies and gentlemen. It won't do."

"I didn't know I said it," Rosy answered feebly.

"That is the difficulty," was his response. "You never know, but educated people do."

There was nothing more to be said, at least for a girl who had never known what it was to be bullied. This one felt like a beggar or a scullery maid, who, being rated by her master, had not the refuge of being able to "give warning." She could never give warning. The Atlantic Ocean was between her and those who had loved and protected her all her short life, and the carriage was bearing her onwards to the home in which she was to live alone as this man's companion to the end of her existence.

She made no further propitiatory efforts, but sat and stared in simple blankness at the country, which seemed to increase in loveliness at each new point of view. Sometimes she saw sweet wooded, rolling lands made lovelier by the homely farmhouses and cottages enclosed and sheltered by thick hedges and trees; once or twice they drove past a park enfolding a great house guarded by its huge sentinel oaks and beeches; once the carriage passed through an adorable little village, where children

played on the green and a square-towered grey church seemed to watch over the steep-roofed cottages and creeper-covered vicarage. If she had been a happy American tourist travelling in company with impressionable friends, she would have broken into ecstatic little exclamations of admiration every five minutes, but it had been driven home to her that to her present companion, to whom nothing was new, her rapture would merely represent the crudeness which had existed in contentment in a brown-stone house on a noisy thoroughfare, through a life which had been passed tramping up and down numbered streets and avenues.

They approached at last a second village with a green, a grass-grown street and the irregular red-tiled cottages, which to the unaccustomed eye seemed rather to represent studies for sketches than absolute realities. The bells in the church tower broke forth into a chime and people appeared at the doors of the cottages. The men touched their foreheads as the carriage passed, and the children made bobbing curtsies. Sir Nigel condescended to straighten himself a trifle in his seat, and recognised the greetings with the stiff, half-military salute. The poor girl at his side felt that he put as little feeling as possible into the movement, and that if she herself had been a bowing villager she would almost have preferred to be wholly ignored. She looked at him questioningly.

"Are they--must I?" she began.

"Make some civil recognition," answered Sir Nigel, as if he were

instructing an ignorant child. "It is customary."

So she bowed and tried to smile, and the joyous clamour of the bells brought the awful lump into her throat again. It reminded her of the ringing of the chimes at the New York church on that day of her marriage, which had been so full of gay, luxurious bustle, so crowded with wedding presents, and flowers, and warm-hearted, affectionate congratulations, and good wishes uttered in merry American voices.

The park at Stornham Court was large and beautiful and old. The trees were magnificent, and the broad sweep of sward and rich dip of ferny dell all that the imagination could desire. The Court itself was old, and many-gabled and mellow-red and fine. Rosalie had learned from no precedent as yet that houses of its kind may represent the apotheosis of discomfort and dilapidation within, and only become more beautiful without. Tumbled-down chimneys and broken tiles, being clambered over by tossing ivy, are pictures to delight the soul.

As she descended from the carriage the girl was tremulous and uncertain of herself and much overpowered by the unbending air of the man-servant who received her as if she were a parcel in which it was no part of his duty to take the smallest interest. As she mounted the stone steps she caught a glimpse of broad gloom within the threshold, a big, square, dingy hall where some other servants were drawn up in a row. She had read of something of the sort in English novels, and she was suddenly embarrassed afresh by her realisation of the fact that she did not know

what to do and that if she made a mistake Nigel would never forgive her.

An elderly woman came out of a room opening into the hall. She was an ugly woman of a rigid carriage, which, with the obvious intention of being severely majestic, was only antagonistic. She had a flaccid chin, and was curiously like Nigel. She had also his expression when he intended to be disagreeable. She was the Dowager Lady Anstruthers, and being an entirely revolting old person at her best, she objected extremely to the transatlantic bride who had made her a dowager, though she was determinedly prepared to profit by any practical benefit likely to accrue.

"Well, Nigel," she said in a deep voice. "Here you are at last."

This was of course a statement not to be refuted. She held out a leathern cheek, and as Sir Nigel also presented his, their caress of greeting was a singular and not effusive one.

"Is this your wife?" she asked, giving Rosalie a bony hand. And as he did not indignantly deny this to be the fact, she added, "How do you do?"

Rosalie murmured a reply and tried to control herself by making another effort to swallow the lump in her throat. But she could not swallow it. She had been keeping a desperate hold on herself too long. The bewildered misery of her awakening, the awkwardness of the public row

at the station, the sulks which had filled the carriage to repletion through all the long drive, and finally the jangling bells which had so recalled that last joyous day at home--at home--had brought her to a point where this meeting between mother and son--these two stony, unpleasant creatures exchanging a reluctant rub of uninviting cheeks--as two savages might have rubbed noses--proved the finishing impetus to hysteria. They were so hideous, these two, and so ghastly comic and fantastic in their unresponsive glumness, that the poor girl lost all hold upon herself and broke into a trembling shriek of laughter.

"Oh!" she gasped in terror at what she felt to be her indecent madness. "Oh! how--how----" And then seeing Nigel's furious start, his mother's glare and all the servants' alarmed stare at her, she rushed staggering to the only creature she felt she knew--her maid Hannah, clutched her and broke down into wild sobbing.

"Oh, take me away!" she cried. "Oh, do! Oh, do! Oh, Hannah! Oh, mother--mother!"

"Take your mistress to her room," commanded Sir Nigel. "Go downstairs," he called out to the servants. "Take her upstairs at once and throw water in her face," to the excited Hannah.

And as the new Lady Anstruthers was half led, half dragged, in humiliated hysteric disorder up the staircase, he took his mother by the elbow, marched her into the nearest room and shut the door. There they

stood and stared at each other, breathing quick, enraged breaths and looking particularly alike with their heavy-featured, thick-skinned, infuriated faces.

It was the Dowager who spoke first, and her whole voice and manner expressed all she intended that they should, all the derision, dislike and scathing resignation to a grotesque fate.

"Well," said her ladyship. "So THIS is what you have brought home from America!"