CHAPTER IV

A MISTAKE OF THE POSTBOY'S

As the weeks passed at Stornham Court the Atlantic Ocean seemed to Rosalie Anstruthers to widen endlessly, and gay, happy, noisy New York to recede until it was as far away as some memory of heaven. The girl had been born in the midst of the rattling, rumbling bustle, and it had never struck her as assuming the character of noise; she had only thought of it as being the cheerful confusion inseparable from town. She had been secretly offended and hurt when strangers said that New York was noisy and dirty; when they called it vulgar, she never wholly forgave them. She was of the New Yorkers who adore their New York as Parisians adore Paris and who feel that only within its beloved boundaries can the breath of life be breathed. People were often too hot or too cold there, but there was usually plenty of bright glaring sun, and the extremes of the weather had at least something rather dramatic about them. There were dramatic incidents connected with them, at any rate. People fell dead of sunstroke or were frozen to death, and the newspapers were full of anecdotes during a "cold snap" or a "torrid wave," which all made for excitement and conversation.

But at Stornham the rain seemed to young Lady Anstruthers to descend ceaselessly. The season was a wet one, and when she rose in the morning and looked out over the huge stretch of trees and sward she thought she always saw the rain falling either in hopeless sheets or more hopeless

drizzle. The occasions upon which this was a dreary truth blotted out or blurred the exceptions, when in liquid ultramarine deeps of sky, floated islands and mountains of snow-white fleece, of a beauty of which she had before had no conception.

In the English novels she had read, places such as Stornham Court were always filled with "house parties," made up of wonderful town wits and beauties, who provided endless entertainment for each other, who played games, who hunted and shot pheasants and shone in dazzling amateur theatricals. There were, however, no visitors at Stornham, and there were in fact, no accommodations for any. There were numberless bedrooms, but none really fit for guests to occupy. Carpets and curtains were ancient and ragged, furniture was dilapidated, chimneys would not draw, beds were falling to pieces. The Dowager Lady Anstruthers had never either attracted desired, or been able to afford company. Her son's wife suffered from the resulting boredom and unpopularity without being able to comprehend the significance of the situation.

As the weeks dragged by a few heavy carriages deposited at the Court a few callers. Some of the visitors bore imposing titles, which made Rosalie very nervous and caused her hastily to array herself to receive them in toilettes much too pretty and delicate for the occasion. Her innocent idea was that she must do her husband credit by appearing as "stylish" as possible.

As a result she was stared at, either with open disfavour, or with

well-bred, furtive criticism, and was described afterwards as being either "very American" or "very over-dressed." When she had lived in huge rooms in Fifth Avenue, Rosalie had changed her attire as many times a day as she had changed her fancy; every hour had been filled with engagements and amusements; the Vanderpoel carriages had driven up to the door and driven away again and again through the mornings and afternoons and until midnight and later. Someone was always going out or coming in. There had been in the big handsome house not much more of an air of repose than one might expect to find at a railway station; but the flurry, the coming and going, the calling and chatting had all been cheery, amiable. At Stornham, Rosalie sat at breakfast before unchanging boiled eggs, unfailing toast and unalterable broiled bacon, morning after morning. Sir Nigel sat and munched over the newspapers, his mother, with an air of relentless disapproval from a lofty height of both her food and companions, disposed of her eggs and her rasher at Rosalie's right hand. She had transferred to her daughter-in-law her previously occupied seat at the head of the table. This had been done with a carefully prepared scene of intense though correct disagreeableness, in which she had managed to convey all the rancour of her dethroned spirit and her disapproval and disdain of international alliances.

"It is of course proper that you should sit at the head of your husband's table," she had said, among other agreeable things. "A woman having devoted her life to her son must relinquish her position to the person he chooses to marry. If you should have a son you will give

up your position to his wife. Since Nigel has married you, he has, of course, a right to expect that you will at least make an effort to learn something of what is required of women of your position."

"Sit down, Rosalie," said Nigel. "Of course you take the head of the table, and naturally you must learn what is expected of my wife, but don't talk confounded rubbish, mother, about devoting your life to your son. We have seen about as little of each other as we could help. We never agreed." They were both bullies and each made occasional efforts at bullying the other without any particular result. But each could at least bully the other into intensified unpleasantness.

The vicar's wife having made her call of ceremony upon the new Lady Anstruthers, followed up the acquaintance, and found her quite exotically unlike her mother-in-law, whose charities one may be sure had neither been lavish nor dispensed by any hand less impressive than her own. The younger woman was of wholly malleable material. Her sympathies were easily awakened and her purse was well filled and readily opened. Small families or large ones, newly born infants or newly buried ones, old women with "bad legs" and old men who needed comforts, equally touched her heart. She innocently bestowed sovereigns where an Englishwoman would have known that half-crowns would have been sufficient. As the vicaress was her almoner that lady felt her importance rapidly on the increase. When she left a cottage saying, "I'll speak to young Lady Anstruthers about you," the good woman of the house curtsied low and her husband touched his forehead respectfully.

But this did not advance the fortunes of Sir Nigel, who personally required of her very different things. Two weeks after her arrival at Stornham, Rosalie began to see that somehow she was regarded as a person almost impudently in the wrong. It appeared that if she had been an English girl she would have been quite different, that she would have been an advantage instead of a detriment. As an American she was a detriment. That seemed to go without saying. She tried to do everything she was told, and learn something from each cold insinuation. She did not know that her very amenability and timidity were her undoing. Sir Nigel and his mother thoroughly enjoyed themselves at her expense. They knew they could say anything they chose, and that at the most she would only break down into crying and afterwards apologise for being so badly behaved. If some practical, strong-minded person had been near to defend her she might have been rescued promptly and her tyrants routed. But she was a young girl, tender of heart and weak of nature. She used to cry a great deal when she was alone, and when she wrote to her mother she was too frightened to tell the truth concerning her unhappiness.

"Oh, if I could just see some of them!" she would wail to herself. "If I could just see mother or father or anybody from New York! Oh, I know I shall never see New York again, or Broadway or Fifth Avenue or Central Park--I never--never--never shall!" And she would grovel among her pillows, burying her face and half stifling herself lest her sobs should be heard. Her feeling for her husband had become one of terror and repulsion. She was almost more afraid of his patronising, affectionate

moments than she was of his temper.

His conjugal condescensions made her feel vaguely--without knowing why--as if she were some lower order of little animal.

American women, he said, had no conception of wifely duties and affection. He had a great deal to say on the subject of wifely duty. It was part of her duty as a wife to be entirely satisfied with his society, and to be completely happy in the pleasure it afforded her. It was her wifely duty not to talk about her own family and palpitatingly expect letters by every American mail. He objected intensely to this letter writing and receiving, and his mother shared his prejudices.

"You have married an Englishman," her ladyship said. "You have put it out of his power to marry an Englishwoman, and the least consideration you can show is to let New York and Nine-hundredth street remain upon the other side of the Atlantic and not insist on dragging them into Stornham Court."

The Dowager Lady Anstruthers was very fine in her picture of her mental condition, when she realised, as she seemed periodically to do, that it was no longer possible for her son to make a respectable marriage with a woman of his own nation. The unadorned fact was that both she and Sir Nigel were infuriated by the simplicity which made Rosalie slow in comprehending that it was proper that the money her father allowed her should be placed in her husband's hands, and left there with no

indelicate questioning. If she had been an English girl matters would have been made plain to her from the first and arranged satisfactorily before her marriage. Sir Nigel's mother considered that he had played the fool, and would not believe that New York fathers were such touchy, sentimental idiots as not to know what was expected of them.

They wasted no time, however, in coming to the point, and in a measure it was the vicaress who aided them. Not she entirely, however.

Since her mother-in-law's first mention of a possible son whose wife would eventually thrust her from her seat at the head of the table, Rosalie had several times heard this son referred to. It struck her that in England such things seemed discussed with more freedom than in America. She had never heard a young woman's possible family arranged for and made the subject of conversation in the more crude atmosphere of New York. It made her feel rather awkward at first. Then she began to realise that the son was part of her wifely duty also; that she was expected to provide one, and that he was in some way expected to provide for the estate--to rehabilitate it--and that this was because her father, being a rich man, would provide for him. It had also struck her that in England there was a tendency to expectation that someone would "provide" for someone else, that relatives even by marriage were supposed to "make allowances" on which it was quite proper for other persons to live. Rosalie had been accustomed to a community in which even rich men worked, and in which young and able-bodied men would have felt rather indignant if aunts or uncles had thought it necessary to

pension them off as if they had been impotent paupers. It was Rosalie's son who was to be "provided for" in this case, and who was to "provide for" his father.

"When you have a son," her mother-in-law had remarked severely, "I suppose something will be done for Nigel and the estate."

This had been said before she had been ten days in the house, and had set her not-too-quick brain working. She had already begun to see that life at Stornham Court was not the luxurious affair it was in the house in Fifth Avenue. Things were shabby and queer and not at all comfortable. Fires were not lighted because a day was chilly and gloomy. She had once asked for one in her bedroom and her mother-in-law had reproved her for indecent extravagance in a manner which took her breath away.

"I suppose in America you have your house at furnace heat in July," she said. "Mere wastefulness and self-indulgence! That is why Americans are old women at twenty. They are shrivelled and withered by the unhealthy lives they lead. Stuffing themselves with sweets and hot bread and never breathing the fresh air."

Rosalie could not at the moment recall any withered and shrivelled old women of twenty, but she blushed and stammered as usual.

"It is never cold enough for fires in July," she answered, "but we--we

never think fires extravagant when we are not comfortable without them."

"Coal must be cheaper than it is in England," said her ladyship. "When you have a daughter, I hope you do not expect to bring her up as girls are brought up in New York."

This was the first time Rosalie had heard of her daughter, and she was not ready enough to reply. She naturally went into her room and cried again, wondering what her father and mother would say if they knew that bedroom fires were considered vulgarly extravagant by an impressive member of the British aristocracy.

She was not at all strong at the time and was given to feeling chilly and miserable on wet, windy days. She used to cry more than ever and was so desolate that there were days when she used to go to the vicarage for companionship. On such days the vicar's wife would entertain her with stories of the villagers' catastrophes, and she would empty her purse upon the tea table and feel a little consoled because she was the means of consoling someone else.

"I suppose it gratifies your vanity to play the Lady Bountiful," Sir Nigel sneered one evening, having heard in the village what she was doing.

"I--never thought of such a thing," she stammered feebly. "Mrs. Brent said they were so poor."

"You throw your money about as if you were a child," said her mother-in-law. "It is a pity it is not put in the hands of some person with discretion."

It had begun to dawn upon Rosalie that her ladyship was deeply convinced that either herself or her son would be admirably discreet custodians of the money referred to. And even the dawning of this idea had frightened the girl. She was so inexperienced and ignorant that she felt it might be possible that in England one's husband and one's mother-in-law could do what they liked. It might be that they could take possession of one's money as they seemed to take possession of one's self and one's very soul. She would have been very glad to give them money, and had indeed wondered frequently if she might dare to offer it to them, if they would be outraged and insulted and slay her in their wrath at her purse-proud daring. She had tried to invent ways in which she could approach the subject, but had not been able to screw up her courage to any sticking point. She was so overpowered by her consciousness that they seemed continually to intimate that Americans with money were ostentatious and always laying stress upon the amount of their possessions. She had no conception of the primeval simpleness of their attitude in such matters, and that no ceremonies were necessary save the process of transferring sufficiently large sums as though they were the mere right of the recipients. She was taught to understand this later. In the meantime, however, ready as she would have been to give large sums if she had known how, she was terrified by the thought that it might be possible

that she could be deprived of her bank account and reduced to the condition of a sort of dependent upon the humours of her lately acquired relations. She thought over this a good deal, and would have found immense relief if she dared have consulted anyone. But she could not make up her mind to reveal her unhappiness to her people. She had been married so recently, everybody had thought her marriage so delightful, she could not bear that her father and mother should be distressed by knowing that she was wretched. She also reflected with misery that New York would talk the matter over excitedly and that finally the newspapers would get hold of the gossip. She could even imagine interviewers calling at the house in Fifth Avenue and endeavouring to obtain particulars of the situation. Her father would be angry and refuse to give them, but that would make no difference; the newspapers would give them and everybody would read what they said, whether it was true or not. She could not possibly write facts, she thought, so her poor little letters were restrained and unlike herself, and to the warm-hearted souls in New York, even appearing stiff and unaffectionate, as if her aristocratic surroundings had chilled her love for them. In fact, it became far from easy for her to write at all, since Sir Nigel so disapproved of her interest in the American mail. His objections had indeed taken the form of his feeling himself quite within his rights when he occasionally intercepted letters from her relations, with a view of finding out whether they contained criticisms of himself, which would betray that she had been guilty of indiscreet confidences. He discovered that she had not apparently been so guilty, but it was evident that there were moments when Mrs. Vanderpoel was uneasy and disposed to ask

anxious questions. When this occurred he destroyed the letters, and as a result of this precaution on his part her motherly queries seemed to be ignored, and she several times shed tears in the belief that Rosy had grown so patrician that she was capable of snubbing her mother in her resentment at feeling her privacy intruded upon and an unrefined effusiveness shown.

"I just feel as if she was beginning not to care about us at all, Betty," she said. "I couldn't have believed it of Rosy. She was always such an affectionate girl."

"I don't believe it now," replied Betty sharply. "Rosy couldn't grow hateful and stuck up. It's that nasty Nigel I know it is."

Sir Nigel's intention was that there should be as little intercourse between Fifth Avenue and Stornham Court as was possible. Among other things, he did not intend that a lot of American relations should come tumbling in when they chose to cross the Atlantic. He would not have it, and took discreet steps to prevent any accident of the sort. He wrote to America occasionally himself, and knowing well how to make himself civilly repellent, so subtly chilled his parents-in-law as to discourage in them more than once their half-formed plan of paying a visit to their child in her new home. He opened, read and reclosed all epistles to and from New York, and while Mrs. Vanderpoel was much hurt to find that Rosalie never condescended to make any response to her tentatives concerning her possible visit, Rosalie herself was mystified by the fact

that the journey "to Europe" was never spoken of.

"I don't see why they never seem to think of coming over," she said plaintively one day. "They used to talk so much about it."

"They?" ejaculated the Dowager Lady Anstruthers. "Whom may you mean?"

"Mother and father and Betty and some of the others."

Her mother-in-law put up her eye-glasses to stare at her.

"The whole family?" she inquired.

"There are not so many of them," Rosalie answered.

"A family is always too many to descend upon a young woman when she is married," observed her ladyship unmovedly. Nigel glanced over the top of his Times.

"I may as well tell you that it would not do at all," he put in.

"Why--why not?" exclaimed Rosalie, aghast.

"Americans don't do in English society," slightingly.

"But they are coming over so much. They like London so--all Americans

like London."

"Do they?" with a drawl which made Rosalie blush until the tears started to her eyes. "I am afraid the sentiment is scarcely mutual."

Rosalie turned and fled from the room. She turned and fled because she realised that she should burst out crying if she waited to hear another word, and she realised that of late she seemed always to be bursting out crying before one or the other of those two. She could not help it. They always seemed to be implying something slighting or scathing. They were always putting her in the wrong and hurting her feelings.

The day was damp and chill, but she put on her hat and ran out into the park. She went down the avenue and turned into a coppice. There, among the wet bracken, she sank down on the mossy trunk of a fallen tree and huddled herself in a small heap, her head on her arms, actually wailing.

"Oh, mother! Oh, mother!" she cried hysterically. "Oh, I do wish you would come. I'm so cold, mother; I'm so ill! I can't bear it! It seems as if you'd forgotten all about me! You're all so happy in New York that perhaps you have forgotten--perhaps you have! Oh, don't, mother--don't!"

It was a month later that through the vicar's wife she reached a discovery and a climax. She had heard one morning from this lady of a misfortune which had befallen a small farmer. It was a misfortune which was an actual catastrophe to a man in his position. His house had caught

fire during a gale of wind and the fire had spread to the outbuildings and rickyard and swept away all his belongings, his house, his furniture, his hayricks, and stored grain, and even his few cows and horses. He had been a poor, hard-working fellow, and his small insurance had lapsed the day before the fire. He was absolutely ruined, and with his wife and six children stood face to face with beggary and starvation.

Rosalie Anstruthers entered the vicarage to find the poor woman who was his companion in calamity sobbing in the hall. A child of a few weeks was in her arms, and two small creatures clung crying to her skirts.

"We've worked hard," she wept; "we have, ma'am. Father, he's always been steady, an' up early an' late. P'r'aps it's the Lord's 'and, as you say, ma'am, but we've been decent people an' never missed church when we could 'elp it--father didn't deserve it--that he didn't."

She was heartbroken in her downtrodden hopelessness. Rosalie literally quaked with sympathy. She poured forth her pity in such words as the poor woman had never heard spoken by a great lady to a humble creature like herself. The villagers found the new Lady Anstruthers' interviews with them curiously simple and suggestive of an equality they could not understand. Stornham was a conservative old village, where the distinction between the gentry and the peasants was clearly marked. The cottagers were puzzled by Sir Nigel's wife, but they decided that she was kind, if unusual.

As Rosalie talked to the farmer's wife she longed for her father's presence. She had remembered a time when a man in his employ had lost his all by fire, the small house he had just made his last payment upon having been burned to the ground. He had lost one of his children in the fire, and the details had been heartrending. The entire Vanderpoel household had wept on hearing them, and Mr. Vanderpoel had drawn a cheque which had seemed like a fortune to the sufferer. A new house had been bought, and Mrs. Vanderpoel and her daughters and friends had bestowed furniture and clothing enough to make the family comfortable to the verge of luxury.

"See, you poor thing," said Rosalie, glowing with memories of this incident, her homesick young soul comforted by the mere likeness in the two calamities. "I brought my cheque book with me because I meant to help you. A man worked for my father had his house burned, just as yours was, and my father made everything all right for him again. I'll make it all right for you; I'll make you a cheque for a hundred pounds now, and then when your husband begins to build I'll give him some more."

The woman gasped for breath and turned pale. She was frightened. It really seemed as if her ladyship must have lost her wits a little. She could not mean this. The vicaress turned pale also.

"Lady Anstruthers," she said, "Lady Anstruthers, it--it is too much. Sir Nigel----"

"Too much!" exclaimed Rosalie. "They have lost everything, you know; their hayricks and cattle as well as their house; I guess it won't be half enough."

Mrs. Brent dragged her into the vicar's study and talked to her. She tried to explain that in English villages such things were not done in a manner so casual, as if they were the mere result of unconsidered feeling, as if they were quite natural things, such as any human person might do. When Rosalie cried: "But why not--why not? They ought to be." Mrs. Brent could not seem to make herself quite clear. Rosalie only gathered in a bewildered way that there ought to be more ceremony, more deliberation, more holding off, before a person of rank indulged in such munificence. The recipient ought to be made to feel it more, to understand fully what a great thing was being done.

"They will think you will do anything for them."

"So I will," said young Lady Anstruthers, "if I have the money when they are in such awful trouble. Suppose we lost everything in the world and there were people who could easily help us and wouldn't?"

"You and Sir Nigel--that is quite different," said Mrs. Brent. "I am afraid that if you do not discuss the matter and ask advice from your husband and mother-in-law they will be very much offended."

"If I were doing it with their money they would have the right to be," replied Rosalie, with entire ingenuousness. "I wouldn't presume to do such a thing as that. That wouldn't be right, of course."

"They will be angry with me," said the vicaress awkwardly. This queer, silly girl, who seemed to see nothing in the right light, frequently made her feel awkward. Mrs. Brent told her husband that she appeared to have no sense of dignity or proper appreciation of her position.

The wife of the farmer, John Wilson, carried away the cheque, quite stunned. She was breathless with amazement and turned rather faint with excitement, bewilderment and her sense of relief. She had to sit down in the vicarage kitchen for a few minutes and drink a glass of the thin vicarage beer.

Rosalie promised that she would discuss the matter and ask advice when she returned to the Court. Just as she left the house Mrs. Brent suddenly remembered something she had forgotten.

"The Wilson trouble completely drove it out of my mind," she said. "It was a stupid mistake of the postboy's. He left a letter of yours among mine when he came this morning. It was most careless. I shall speak to his father about it. It might have been important that you should receive it early."

When she saw the letter Rosalie uttered an exclamation. It was addressed

in her father's handwriting.

"Oh!" she cried. "It's from father! And the postmark is Havre. What does it mean?"

She was so excited that she almost forgot to express her thanks.
Her heart leaped up in her throat. Could they have come over from America--could they? Why was it written from Havre? Could they be near her?

She walked along the road choked with ecstatic, laughing sobs. Her hand shook so that she could scarcely tear open the envelope; she tore a corner of the letter, and when the sheet was spread open her eyes were full of wild, delighted tears, which made it impossible for her to see for the moment. But she swept the tears away and read this:

DEAR DAUGHTER:

It seems as if we had had pretty bad luck in not seeing you. We had counted on it very much, and your mother feels it all the more because she is weak after her illness. We don't quite understand why you did not seem to know about her having had diphtheria in Paris. You did not answer Betty's letter. Perhaps it missed you in some way. Things do sometimes go wrong in the mail, and several times your mother has thought a letter has been lost. She thought so because you seemed to

forget to refer to things. We came over to leave Betty at a French school and we had expected to visit you later. But your mother fell ill of diphtheria and not hearing from you seemed to make her homesick, so we decided to return to New York by the next steamer. I ran over to London, however, to make some inquiries about you, and on the first day I arrived I met your husband in Bond Street. He at once explained to me that you had gone to a house party at some castle in Scotland, and said you were well and enjoying yourself very much, and he was on his way to join you. I am sorry, daughter, that it has turned out that we could not see each other. It seems a long time since you left us. But I am very glad, however, that you are so well and really like English life. If we had time for it I am sure it would be delightful. Your mother sends her love and wants very much to hear of all you are doing and enjoying. Hoping that we may have better luck the next time we cross--

Your affectionate father,

REUBEN L. VANDERPOEL.

Rosalie found herself running breathlessly up the avenue. She was clutching the letter still in her hand, and staggering from side to side. Now and then she uttered horrible little short cries, like an animal's. She ran and ran, seeing nothing, and now and then with the clenched hand in which the letter was crushed striking a sharp blow at her breast.

She stumbled up the big stone steps she had mounted on the day she was brought home as a bride. Her dress caught her feet and she fell on her knees and scrambled up again, gasping; she dashed across the huge dark hall, and, hurling herself against the door of the morning room, appeared, dishevelled, haggard-eyed, and with scarlet patches on her wild, white face, before the Dowager, who started angrily to her feet:

"Where is Nigel? Where is Nigel?" she cried out frenziedly.

"What in heaven's name do you mean by such manners?" demanded her ladyship. "Apologise at once!"

"Where is Nigel? Nigel! Nigel!" the girl raved. "I will see him--I will--I will see him!"

She who had been the mildest of sweet-tempered creatures all her life had suddenly gone almost insane with heartbroken, hysteric grief and rage. She did not know what she was saying and doing; she only realised in an agony of despair that she was a thing caught in a trap; that these people had her in their power, and that they had tricked and lied to her and kept her apart from what her girl's heart so cried out to and longed for. Her father, her mother, her little sister; they had been near her and had been lied to and sent away.

"You are quite mad, you violent, uncontrolled creature!" cried the

Dowager furiously. "You ought to be put in a straitjacket and drenched with cold water."

Then the door opened again and Nigel strode in. He was in riding dress and was breathless and livid with anger. He was in a nice mood to confront a wife on the verge of screaming hysterics. After a bad half hour with his steward, who had been talking of impending disasters, he had heard by chance of Wilson's conflagration and the hundred-pound cheque. He had galloped home at the top of his horse's speed.

"Here is your wife raving mad," cried out his mother.

Rosalie staggered across the room to him. She held up her hand clenching the letter and shook it at him.

"My mother and father have been here," she shrieked. My mother has been ill. They wanted to come to see me. You knew and you kept it from me. You told my father lies--lies--hideous lies! You said I was away in Scotland--enjoying myself--when I was here and dying with homesickness. You made them think I did not care for them--or for New York! You have killed me! Why did you do such a wicked thing!

He looked at her with glaring eyes. If a man born a gentleman is ever in the mood to kick his wife to death, as costermongers do, he was in that mood. He had lost control over himself as completely as she had, and while she was only a desperate, hysteric girl, he was a violent man.

"I did it because I did not mean to have them here," he said. "I did it because I won't have them here."

"They shall come," she quavered shrilly in her wildness. "They shall come to see me. They are my own father and mother, and I will have them."

He caught her arm in such a grip that she must have thought he would break it, if she could have thought or felt anything.

"No, you will not have them," he ground forth between his teeth. "You will do as I order you and learn to behave yourself as a decent married woman should. You will learn to obey your husband and respect his wishes and control your devilish American temper."

"They have gone--gone!" wailed Rosalie. "You sent them away! My father, my mother, my sister!"

"Stop your indecent ravings!" ordered Sir Nigel, shaking her. "I will not submit to be disgraced before the servants."

"Put your hand over her mouth, Nigel," cried his mother. "The very scullery maids will hear."

She was as infuriated as her son. And, indeed, to behold civilised human

beings in the state of uncontrolled violence these three had reached was a sight to shudder at.

"I won't stop," cried the girl. "Why did you take me away from everything--I was quite happy. Everybody was kind to me. I loved people, I had everything. No one ever--ever--ever ill-used anyone----"

Sir Nigel clutched her arm more brutally still and shook her with absolute violence. Her hair broke loose and fell about her awful little distorted, sobbing face.

"I did not take you to give you an opportunity to display your vulgar ostentation by throwing away hundred-pound cheques to villagers," he said. "I didn't take you to give you the position of a lady and be made a fool of by you."

"You have ruined him," burst forth his mother. "You have put it out of his power to marry an Englishwoman who would have known it was her duty to give something in return for his name and protection."

Her ladyship had begun to rave also, and as mother and son were of equal violence when they had ceased to control themselves, Rosalie began to find herself enlightened unsparingly. She and her people were vulgar sharpers. They had trapped a gentleman into a low American marriage and had not the decency to pay for what they had got. If she had been an

Englishwoman, well born, and of decent breeding, all her fortune would have been properly transferred to her husband and he would have had the dispensing of it. Her husband would have been in the position to control her expenditure and see that she did not make a fool of herself. As it was she was the derision of all decent people, of all people who had been properly brought up and knew what was in good taste and of good morality.

First it was the Dowager who poured forth, and then it was Sir Nigel. They broke in on each other, they interrupted one another with exclamations and interpolations. They had so far lost themselves that they did not know they became grotesque in the violence of their fury. Rosalie's brain whirled. Her hysteria mounted and mounted. She stared first at one and then at the other, gasping and sobbing by turns; she swayed on her feet and clutched at a chair.

"I did not know," she broke forth at last, trying to make her voice heard in the storm. "I never understood. I knew something made you hate me, but I didn't know you were angry about money." She laughed tremulously and wildly. "I would have given it to you--father would have given you some--if you had been good to me." The laugh became hysterical beyond her management. Peal after peal broke from her, she shook all over with her ghastly merriment, sobbing at one and the same time.

"Oh! oh! oh!" she shrieked. "You see, I thought you were so aristocratic. I wouldn't have dared to think of such a thing. I thought

an English gentleman--an English gentleman--oh! oh! to think it was all because I did not give you money--just common dollars and cents that--that I daren't offer to a decent American who could work for himself."

Sir Nigel sprang at her. He struck her with his open hand upon the cheek, and as she reeled she held up her small, feverish, shaking hand, laughing more wildly than before.

"You ought not to strike me," she cried. "You oughtn't! You don't know how valuable I am. Perhaps----" with a little, crazy scream--"perhaps I might have a son."

She fell in a shuddering heap, and as she dropped she struck heavily against the protruding end of an oak chest and lay upon the floor, her arms flung out and limp, as if she were a dead thing.