Frances Hodgson Burnett

The Making of a Marchioness

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(Emily Fox-Seton, Complete)

e-artnow, 2021
EAn 4064066374143

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EMILY FOX-SETON

BEING “THE MAKING OF A MARCHIONESS” AND
“THE METHODS OF LADY WALDERHURST”

PART ONE

Chapter One

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When Miss Fox-Seton descended from the twopenny bus as it drew up, she gathered her trim tailor-made skirt about her with neatness and decorum, being well used to getting in and out of twopenny buses and to making her way across muddy London streets. A woman whose tailor-made suit must last two or three years soon learns how to protect it from splashes, and how to aid it to retain the freshness of its folds. During her trudging about this morning in the wet, Emily Fox-Seton had been very careful, and, in fact, was returning to Mortimer Street as unspotted as she had left it. She had been thinking a good deal about her dress—this particular faithful one which she had already worn through a twelvemonth. Skirts had made one of their appalling changes, and as she walked down Regent Street and Bond Street she had stopped at the windows of more than one shop bearing the sign “Ladies’ Tailor and Habit-Maker,” and had looked at the tautly attired, preternaturally slim models, her large, honest hazel eyes wearing an anxious expression. She was trying to discover *where* seams were to be placed and how gathers were to be hung; or if there were to be gathers at all; or if one had to be bereft of every seam in a style so unrelenting as to forbid the possibility of the honest and semi-penniless struggling with the problem of remodelling last season’s skirt at all. “As it is only quite an ordinary brown,” she had murmured to herself, “I might be able to buy a yard or so to match it, and I *might* be able to

join the gore near the pleats at the back so that it would not be seen.”

She quite beamed as she reached the happy conclusion. She was such a simple, normal-minded creature that it took but little to brighten the aspect of life for her and to cause her to break into her goodnatured, childlike smile. A little kindness from any one, a little pleasure or a little comfort, made her glow with nice-tempered enjoyment. As she got out of the bus, and picked up her rough brown skirt, prepared to tramp bravely through the mud of Mortimer Street to her lodgings, she was positively radiant. It was not only her smile which was childlike, her face itself was childlike for a woman of her age and size. She was thirty-four and a well-set-up creature, with fine square shoulders and a long small waist and good hips. She was a big woman, but carried herself well, and having solved the problem of obtaining, through marvels of energy and management, one good dress a year, wore it so well, and changed her old ones so dexterously, that she always looked rather smartly dressed. She had nice, round, fresh cheeks and nice, big, honest eyes, plenty of mouse-brown hair and a short, straight nose. She was striking and well-bred-looking, and her plenitude of goodnatured interest in everybody, and her pleasure in everything out of which pleasure could be wrested, gave her big eyes a fresh look which made her seem rather like a nice overgrown girl than a mature woman whose life was a continuous struggle with the narrowest of mean fortunes.

She was a woman of good blood and of good education, as the education of such women goes. She had few relatives, and none of them had any intention of burdening themselves with her pennilessness. They were people of excellent family, but had quite enough to do to keep their sons in the army or navy and find husbands for their daughters. When Emily’s mother had died and her small annuity had died with her, none of them had wanted the

care of a big raw-boned girl, and Emily had had the situation frankly explained to her. At eighteen she had begun to work as assistant teacher in a small school; the year following she had taken a place as nursery-governess; then she had been reading-companion to an unpleasant old woman in Northumberland. The old woman had lived in the country, and her relatives had hovered over her like vultures awaiting her decease. The household had been gloomy and gruesome enough to have driven into melancholy madness any girl not of the sanest and most matter-of-fact temperament. Emily Fox-Seton had endured it with an unfailing good nature, which at last had actually awakened in the breast of her mistress a ray of human feeling. When the old woman at length died, and Emily was to be turned out into the world, it was revealed that she had been left a legacy of a few hundred pounds, and a letter containing some rather practical, if harshly expressed, advice.

Go back to London [Mrs. Maytham had written in her feeble, crabbed hand]. You are not clever enough to do anything remarkable in the way of earning your living, but you are so goodnatured that you can make yourself useful to a lot of helpless creatures who will pay you a trifle for looking after them and the affairs they are too lazy or too foolish to manage for themselves. You might get on to one of the second-class fashion-papers to answer ridiculous questions about housekeeping or wallpapers or freckles. You know the kind of thing I mean. You might write notes or do accounts and shopping for some lazy woman. You are a practical, honest creature, and you have good manners. I have often thought that you had just the kind of commonplace gifts that a host of commonplace people want to find at their service. An old servant of mine who lives in Mortimer Street would probably give you cheap, decent lodgings, and behave well to you for my sake. She has reason to be fond of me. Tell her I sent you to her, and that she must take you in for ten shillings a week.

Emily wept for gratitude, and ever afterward enthroned old Mrs. Maytham on an altar as a princely and sainted benefactor, though after she had invested her legacy she got only twenty pounds a year from it.

"It was so *kind* of her," she used to say with heartfelt humbleness of spirit. "I never *dreamed* of her doing such a generous thing. I hadn't a *shadow* of a claim upon her—not a *shadow*." It was her way to express her honest emotions with emphasis which italicised, as it were, her outpourings of pleasure or appreciation.

She returned to London and presented herself to the ex-serving-woman. Mrs. Cupp had indeed reason to remember her mistress gratefully. At a time when youth and indiscreet affection had betrayed her disastrously, she had been saved from open disgrace and taken care of by Mrs. Maytham.

The old lady, who had then been a vigorous, sharp-tongued, middle-aged woman, had made the soldier lover marry his despairing sweetheart, and when he had promptly drunk himself to death, she had set her up in a lodging-house which had thriven and enabled her to support herself and her daughter decently.

In the second story of her respectable, dingy house there was a small room which she went to some trouble to furnish up for her dead mistress's friend. It was made into a bed-sitting-room with the aid of a cot which Emily herself bought and disguised decently as a couch during the daytime, by means of a red and blue Como blanket. The one window of the room looked out upon a black little back-yard and a sooty wall on which thin cats crept stealthily or sat and mournfully gazed at fate. The Como rug played a large part in the decoration of the apartment. One of them, with a piece of tape run through a hem, hung over the door in the character of a _portière_; another covered a corner which was Miss Fox-Seton's sole wardrobe. As she began to get work, the cheerful, aspiring creature bought herself a Kensington carpet-square, as red as Kensington art would

permit it to be. She covered her chairs with Turkey-red cotton, frilling them round the seats. Over her cheap white muslin curtains (eight and eleven a pair at Robson's) she hung Turkey-red draperies. She bought a cheap cushion at one of Liberty's sales, and some bits of twopenny-halfpenny art china for her narrow mantelpiece. A lacquered tea-tray and a tea-set of a single cup and saucer, a plate and a teapot, made her feel herself almost sumptuous. After a day spent in trudging about in the wet or cold of the streets, doing other people's shopping, or searching for dressmakers or servants' characters for her patrons, she used to think of her bed-sitting-room with joyful anticipation. Mrs. Cupp always had a bright fire glowing in her tiny grate when she came in, and when her lamp was lighted under its home-made shade of crimson Japanese paper, its cheerful air, combining itself with the singing of her little, fat, black kettle on the hob, seemed absolute luxury to a tired, damp woman.

Mrs. Cupp and Jane Cupp were very kind and attentive to her. No one who lived in the same house with her could have helped liking her. She gave so little trouble, and was so expansively pleased by any attention, that the Cupps,—who were sometimes rather bullied and snubbed by the "professionals" who generally occupied their other rooms,—quite loved her. Sometimes the "professionals," extremely smart ladies and gentlemen who did turns at the balls or played small parts at theatres, were irregular in their payments or went away leaving bills behind them; but Miss Fox-Seton's payments were as regular as Saturday night, and, in fact, there had been times when, luck being against her, Emily had gone extremely hungry during a whole week rather than buy her lunches at the ladies' tea-shops with the money that would pay her rent. In the honest minds of the Cupps, she had become a sort of possession of which they were proud. She seemed to bring into their dingy lodging-house a touch of the great world,—that world whose people

lived in Mayfair and had country-houses where they entertained parties for the shooting and the hunting, and in which also existed the maids and matrons who on cold spring mornings sat, amid billows of satin and tulle and lace, surrounded with nodding plumes, waiting, shivering, for hours in their carriages that they might at last enter Buckingham Palace and be admitted to the Drawing-room. Mrs. Cupp knew that Miss Fox-Seton was “well connected;” she knew that she possessed an aunt with a title, though her ladyship never took the slightest notice of her niece. Jane Cupp took “Modern Society,” and now and then had the pleasure of reading aloud to her young man little incidents concerning some castle or manor in which Miss Fox-Seton’s aunt, Lady Malfry, was staying with earls and special favorites of the Prince’s. Jane also knew that Miss Fox-Seton occasionally sent letters addressed “To the Right Honourable the Countess of So-and-so,” and received replies stamped with coronets. Once even a letter had arrived adorned with strawberry-leaves, an incident which Mrs. Cupp and Jane had discussed with deep interest over their hot buttered-toast and tea.

Emily Fox-Seton, however, was far from making any professions of grandeur. As time went on she had become fond enough of the Cupps to be quite frank with them about her connections with these grand people. The countess had heard from a friend that Miss Fox-Seton had once found her an excellent governess, and she had commissioned her to find for her a reliable young ladies’ serving-maid. She had done some secretarial work for a charity of which the duchess was patroness. In fact, these people knew her only as a well-bred woman who for a modest remuneration would make herself extremely useful in numberless practical ways. She knew much more of them than they knew of her, and, in her affectionate admiration for those who treated her with human kindness, sometimes spoke to Mrs. Cupp or Jane of their beauty or charity with a very nice, ingenuous feeling.

Naturally some of her patrons grew fond of her, and as she was a fine, handsome young woman with a perfectly correct bearing, they gave her little pleasures, inviting her to tea or luncheon, or taking her to the theatre.

Her enjoyment of these things was so frank and grateful that the Cupps counted them among their own joys. Jane Cupp—who knew something of dressmaking—felt it a brilliant thing to be called upon to renovate an old dress or help in the making of a new one for some festivity. The Cupps thought their tall, well-built lodger something of a beauty, and when they had helped her to dress for the evening, baring her fine, big white neck and arms, and adorning her thick braids of hair with some sparkling, trembling ornaments, after putting her in her four-wheeled cab, they used to go back to their kitchen and talk about her, and wonder that some gentleman who wanted a handsome, stylish woman at the head of his table, did not lay himself and his fortune at her feet.

“In the photograph-shops in Regent Street you see many a lady in a coronet that hasn’t half the good looks she has,” Mrs. Cupp remarked frequently. “She’s got a nice complexion and a fine head of hair, and—if you ask *me*—she’s got as nice a pair of clear eyes as a lady could have. Then look at her figure—her neck and her waist! That kind of big long throat of hers would set off rows of pearls or diamonds beautiful! She’s a lady born, too, for all her simple, everyday way; and she’s a sweet creature, if ever there was one. For kind-heartedness and goodnature I never saw her equal.”

Miss Fox-Seton had middle-class patrons as well as noble ones,—in fact, those of the middle class were far more numerous than the duchesses,—so it had been possible for her to do more than one good turn for the Cupp household. She had got sewing in Maida Vale and Bloomsbury for Jane Cupp many a time, and Mrs. Cupp’s dining-room floor had been occupied for years by a young man Emily had been

able to recommend. Her own appreciation of good turns made her eager to do them for others. She never let slip a chance to help any one in any way.

It was a goodnatured thing done by one of her patrons who liked her, which made her so radiant as she walked through the mud this morning. She was inordinately fond of the country, and having had what she called “a bad winter,” she had not seen the remotest chance of getting out of town at all during the summer months. The weather was beginning to be unusually hot, and her small red room, which seemed so cosy in winter, was shut in by a high wall from all chance of breezes. Occasionally she lay and panted a little in her cot, and felt that when all the private omnibuses, loaded with trunks and servants, had rattled away and deposited their burdens at the various stations, life in town would be rather lonely. Every one she knew would have gone somewhere, and Mortimer Street in August was a melancholy thing.

And Lady Maria had actually invited her to Mallowe. What a piece of good fortune-what an extraordinary piece of kindness!

She did not know what a source of entertainment she was to Lady Maria, and how the shrewd, worldly old thing liked her. Lady Maria Bayne was the cleverest, sharpest-tongued, smartest old woman in London. She knew everybody and had done everything in her youth, a good many things not considered highly proper. A certain royal duke had been much pleased with her and people had said some very nasty things about it. But this had not hurt Lady Maria. She knew how to say nasty things herself, and as she said them wittily they were usually listened to and repeated.

Emily Fox-Seton had gone to her first to write notes for an hour every evening. She had sent, declined, and accepted invitations, and put off charities and dull people. She wrote a fine, dashing hand, and had a matter-of-fact intelligence and knowledge of things. Lady Maria began to

depend on her and to find that she could be sent on errands and depended on to do a number of things. Consequently, she was often at South Audley Street, and once, when Lady Maria was suddenly taken ill and was horribly frightened about herself, Emily was such a comfort to her that she kept her for three weeks.

“The creature is so cheerful and perfectly free from vice that she’s a relief,” her ladyship said to her nephew afterward. “So many women are affected cats. She’ll go out and buy you a box of pills or a porous plaster, but at the same time she has a kind of simplicity and freedom from spites and envies which might be the natural thing for a princess.”

So it happened that occasionally Emily put on her best dress and most carefully built hat and went to South Audley Street to tea. (Sometimes she had previously gone in buses to some remote place in the City to buy a special tea of which there had been rumours.) She met some very smart people and rarely any stupid ones, Lady Maria being incased in a perfect, frank armour of good-humoured selfishness, which would have been capable of burning dulness at the stake.

“I won’t have dull people,” she used to say. “I’m dull myself.”

When Emily Fox-Seton went to her on the morning in which this story opens, she found her consulting her visiting-book and making lists.

“I’m arranging my parties for Mallowe,” she said rather crossly. “How tiresome it is! The people one wants at the same time are always nailed to the opposite ends of the earth. And then things are found out about people, and one can’t have them till it’s blown over. Those ridiculous Dexters! They were the nicest possible pair—both of them good-looking and both of them ready to flirt with anybody. But there was too much flirting, I suppose. Good heavens! if

I couldn’t have a scandal and keep it quiet, I wouldn’t have a scandal at all. Come and help me, Emily.”

Emily sat down beside her.

“You see, it is my early August party,” said her ladyship, rubbing her delicate little old nose with her pencil, “and Walderhurst is coming to me. It always amuses me to have Walderhurst. The moment a man like that comes into a room the women begin to frisk about and swim and languish, except those who try to get up interesting conversations they think likely to attract his attention. They all think it is possible that he may marry them. If he were a Mormon he might have marchionesses of Walderhurst of all shapes and sizes.”

“I suppose,” said Emily, “that he was very much in love with his first wife and will never marry again.”

“He wasn’t in love with her any more than he was in love with his housemaid. He knew he must marry, and thought it very annoying. As the child died, I believe he thinks it his duty to marry again. But he hates it. He’s rather dull, and he can’t bear women fussing about and wanting to be made love to.”

They went over the visiting-book and discussed people and dates seriously. The list was made and the notes written before Emily left the house. It was not until she had got up and was buttoning her coat that Lady Maria bestowed her boon.

“Emily,” she said, “I am going to ask you to Mallowe on the 2d. I want you to help me to take care of people and keep them from boring me and one another, though I don’t mind their boring one another half so much as I mind their boring me. I want to be able to go off and take my nap at any hour I choose. I will *not* entertain people. What you can do is to lead them off to gather things of look at church towers. I hope you’ll come.”

Emily Fox-Seton’s face flushed rosily, and her eyes opened and sparkled.

“O Lady Maria, you *are* kind!” she said. “You know how I should enjoy it. I have heard so much of Mallowe. Every one says it is so beautiful and that there are no such gardens in England.”

“They are good gardens. My husband was rather mad about roses. The best train for you to take is the 2:30 from Paddington. That will bring you to the Court just in time for tea on the lawn.”

Emily could have kissed Lady Maria if they had been on the terms which lead people to make demonstrations of affection. But she would have been quite as likely to kiss the butler when he bent over her at dinner and murmured in dignified confidence, “Port or sherry, miss?” Bibsworth would have been no more astonished than Lady Maria would, and Bibsworth certainly would have expired of disgust and horror.

She was so happy when she hailed the twopenny bus that when she got into it her face was beaming with the delight which adds freshness and good looks to any woman. To think that such good luck had come to her! To think of leaving her hot little room behind her and going as a guest to one of the most beautiful old houses in England! How delightful it would be to live for a while quite naturally the life the fortunate people lived year after year—to be a part of the beautiful order and picturesqueness and dignity of it! To sleep in a lovely bedroom, to be called in the morning by a perfect housemaid, to have one’s early tea served in a delicate cup, and to listen as one drank it to the birds singing in the trees in the park! She had an ingenuous appreciation of the simplest material joys, and the fact that she would wear her nicest clothes every day, and dress for dinner every evening, was a delightful thing to reflect upon. She got so much more out of life than most people, though she was not aware of it.

She opened the front door of the house in Mortimer Street with her latchkey, and went upstairs, almost

unconscious that the damp heat was dreadful. She met Jane Cupp coming down, and smiled at her happily.

"Jane," she said, "if you are not busy, I should like to have a little talk with you. Will you come into my room?"

"Yes, miss," Jane replied, with her usual respectful lady's maid's air. It was in truth Jane's highest ambition to become some day maid to a great lady, and she privately felt that her association with Miss Fox-Seton was the best possible training. She used to ask to be allowed to dress her when she went out, and had felt it a privilege to be permitted to "do" her hair.

She helped Emily to remove her walking dress, and neatly folded away her gloves and veil. She knelt down before her as soon as she saw her seat herself to take off her muddy boots.

"Oh, *thank* you, Jane," Emily exclaimed, with her kind italicised manner. "That *is* good of you. I *am* tired, really. But such a nice thing has happened. I have had such a delightful invitation for the first week in August."

"I'm sure you'll enjoy it, miss," said Jane. "It's so hot in August."

"Lady Maria Bayne has been kind enough to invite me to Mallowe Court," explained Emily, smiling down at the cheap slipper Jane was putting on her large, well-shaped foot. She was built on a large scale, and her foot was of no Cinderella-like proportions.

"O miss!" exclaimed Jane. "How beautiful! I was reading about Mallowe in 'Modern Society' the other day, and it said it was lovely and her ladyship's parties were wonderful for smartness. The paragraph was about the Marquis of Walderhurst."

"He is Lady Maria's cousin," said Emily, "and he will be there when I am."

She was a friendly creature, and lived a life so really isolated from any ordinary companionship that her simple little talks with Jane and Mrs. Cupp were a pleasure to her.

The Cupps were neither gossiping nor intrusive, and she felt as if they were her friends. Once when she had been ill for a week she remembered suddenly realising that she had no intimates at all, and that if she died Mrs. Cupp's and Jane's would certainly be the last faces—and the only ones—she would see. She had cried a little the night she thought of it, but then, as she told herself, she was feverish and weak, and it made her morbid.

"It was because of this invitation that I wanted to talk to you, Jane," she went on. "You see, we shall have to begin to contrive about dresses."

"Yes, indeed, miss. It's fortunate that the summer sales are on, isn't it? I saw some beautiful colored linens yesterday. They were so cheap, and they do make up so smart for the country. Then you've got your new Tussore with the blue collar and waistband. It does become you."

"I must say I think that a Tussore always looks fresh," said Emily, "and I saw a really nice little tan toque—one of those soft straw ones—for three and eleven. And just a twist of blue chiffon and a wing would make it look quite *good*."

She was very clever with her fingers, and often did excellent things with a bit of chiffon and a wing, or a few yards of linen or muslin and a remnant of lace picked up at a sale. She and Jane spent quite a happy afternoon in careful united contemplation of the resources of her limited wardrobe. They found that the brown skirt *could* be altered, and, with the addition of new *revers* and collar and a *jabot* of string-coloured lace at the neck, would look quite fresh. A black net evening dress, which a patron had goodnaturedly given her the year before, could be remodelled and touched up delightfully. Her fresh face and her square white shoulders were particularly adorned by black. There was a white dress which could be sent to the cleaner's, and an old pink one whose superfluous breadths could be combined with lace and achieve wonders.

“Indeed, I think I shall be very well off for dinner-dresses,” said Emily. “Nobody expects me to change often. Every one knows—if they notice at all.” She did not know she was humble-minded and of an angelic contentedness of spirit. In fact, she did not find herself interested in contemplation of her own qualities, but in contemplation and admiration of those of other people. It was necessary to provide Emily Fox-Seton with food and lodging and such a wardrobe as would be just sufficient credit to her more fortunate acquaintances. She worked hard to attain this modest end and was quite satisfied. She found at the shops where the summer sales were being held a couple of cotton frocks to which her height and her small, long waist gave an air of actual elegance. A sailor hat, with a smart ribbon and well-set quill, a few new trifles for her neck, a bow, a silk handkerchief daringly knotted, and some fresh gloves, made her feel that she was sufficiently equipped.

During her last expedition to the sales she came upon a nice white duck coat and skirt which she contrived to buy as a present for Jane. It was necessary to count over the contents of her purse very carefully and to give up the purchase of a slim umbrella she wanted, but she did it cheerfully. If she had been a rich woman she would have given presents to every one she knew, and it was actually a luxury to her to be able to do something for the Cupps, who, she always felt, were continually giving her more than she paid for. The care they took of her small room, the fresh hot tea they managed to have ready when she came in, the penny bunch of daffodils they sometimes put on her table, were kindnesses, and she was grateful for them. “I am very much obliged to you, Jane,” she said to the girl, when she got into the four-wheeled cab on the eventful day of her journey to Mallowe. “I don’t know what I should have done without you, I’m sure. I feel so smart in my dress now that you have altered it. If Lady Maria’s maid ever thinks of

leaving her, I am sure I could recommend you for her place.”

Chapter Two

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There were other visitors to Mallowe Court travelling by the 2:30 from Paddington, but they were much smarter people than Miss Fox-Seton, and they were put into a first-class carriage by a footman with a cockade and a long drab coat. Emily, who traveled third with some workmen with bundles, looked out of her window as they passed, and might possibly have breathed a faint sigh if she had not felt in such buoyant spirits. She had put on her revived brown skirt and a white linen blouse with a brown dot on it. A soft brown silk tie was knotted smartly under her fresh collar, and she wore her new sailor hat. Her gloves were brown, and so was her parasol. She looked nice and taut and fresh, but notably inexpensive. The people who went to sales and bought things at three and eleven or “four-three” a yard would have been able add her up and work out her total. But there would be no people capable of the calculation at Mallowe. Even the servants’ hall was likely to know less of prices than this one guest did. The people the drab-coated footman escorted to the first-class carriage were a mother and daughter. The mother had regular little features, and would have been pretty if she had not been much too plump. She wore an extremely smart travelling-dress and a wonderful dust-cloak of cool, pale, thin silk. She was not an elegant person, but her appointments were luxurious and self-indulgent. Her daughter was pretty, and had a slim, swaying waist, soft pink cheeks, and a pouting mouth. Her large picture-hat of pale-blue straw, with its big gauze bow and crushed roses, had a slightly exaggerated Parisian air.

“It is a little too picturesque,” Emily thought; “but how lovely she looks in it! I suppose it was so becoming she

could not help buying it. I’m sure it’s Virot.”

As she was looking at the girl admiringly, a man passed her window. He was a tall man with a square face. As he passed close to Emily, he stared through her head as if she had been transparent or invisible. He got into the smoking-carriage next to her.

When the train arrived at Mallowe station, he was one of the first persons who got out. Two of Lady Maria’s men were waiting on the platform. Emily recognised their liveries. One met the tall man, touching his hat, and followed him to a high cart, in the shafts of which a splendid iron-gray mare was fretting and dancing. In a few moments the arrival was on the high seat, the footman behind, and the mare speeding up the road. Miss Fox-Seton found herself following the second footman and the mother and daughter, who were being taken to the landau waiting outside the station. The footman piloted them, merely touching his hat quickly to Emily, being fully aware that she could take care of herself.

This she did promptly, looking after her box, and seeing it safe in the Mallowe omnibus. When she reached the landau, the two other visitors were in it. She got in, and in entire contentment sat down with her back to the horses.

The mother and daughter wore for a few minutes a somewhat uneasy air. They were evidently sociable persons, but were not quite sure how to begin a conversation with an as yet unintroduced lady who was going to stay at the country house to which they were themselves invited.

Emily herself solved the problem, producing her commonplace with a friendly tentative smile.

“Isn’t it a lovely country?” she said.

“It’s perfect,” answered the mother. “I’ve never visited Europe before, and the English country seems to me just exquisite. We have a summer place in America, but the country is quite different.”

She was goodnatured and disposed to talk, and, with Emily Fox-Seton's genial assistance, conversation flowed. Before they were halfway to Mallowe, it had revealed itself that they were from Cincinnati, and after a winter spent in Paris, largely devoted to visits to Paquin, Doucet, and Virot, they had taken a house in Mayfair for the season. Their name was Brooke. Emily thought she remembered hearing of them as people who spent a great deal of money and went incessantly to parties, always in new and lovely clothes. The girl had been presented by the American minister, and had had a sort of success because she dressed and danced exquisitely. She was the kind of American girl who ended by marrying a title. She had sparkling eyes and a delicate tip-tilted nose. But even Emily guessed that she was an astute little person.

"Have you ever been to Mallowe Court before?" she inquired.

"No; and I am *so* looking forward to it. It is so beautiful."

"Do you know Lady Maria very well?"

"I've known her about three years. She has been very kind to me."

"Well, I shouldn't have taken her for a particularly kind person. She's too sharp."

Emily amiably smiled. "She's so clever," she replied.

"Do you know the Marquis of Walderhurst?" asked Mrs. Brooke.

"No," answered Miss Fox-Seton. She had no part in that portion of Lady Maria's life which was illumined by cousins who were marquises. Lord Walderhurst did not drop in to afternoon tea. He kept himself for special dinner-parties.

"Did you see the man who drove away in the high cart?" Mrs. Brooke continued, with a touch of fevered interest. "Cora thought it must be the marquis. The servant who met him wore the same livery as the man up there"—with a nod toward the box.

“It was one of Lady Maria’s servants,” said Emily; “I have seen him in South Audley Street. And Lord Walderhurst was to be at Mallowe. Lady Maria mentioned it.”

“There, mother!” exclaimed Cora.

“Well, of course if he is to be there, it will make it interesting,” returned her mother, in a tone in which lurked an admission of relief. Emily wondered if she had wanted to go somewhere else and had been firmly directed toward Mallowe by her daughter.

“We heard a great deal of him in London this season,” Mrs. Brooks went on.

Miss Cora Brooke laughed.

“We heard that at least half a dozen people were determined to marry him,” she remarked with pretty scorn. “I should think that to meet a girl who was indifferent might be good for him.”

“Don’t be too indifferent, Cora,” said her mother, with ingenuous ineptness.

It was a very stupid bit of revelation, and Miss Brooke’s eyes flashed. If Emily Fox-Seton had been a sharp woman, she would have observed that, if the _rôle_ of indifferent and piquant young person could be made dangerous to Lord Walderhurst, it would be made so during this visit. The man was in peril from this beauty from Cincinnati and her rather indiscreet mother, though upon the whole, the indiscreet maternal parent might unconsciously form his protection.

But Emily only laughed amiably, as at a humorous remark. She was ready to accept almost anything as humour.

“Well, he *would* be a great match for any girl,” she said. “He is so rich, you know. He is very rich.”

When they reached Mallowe, and were led out upon the lawn, where the tea was being served under embowering trees, they found a group of guests eating little hot cakes and holding teacups in their hands. There were several young women, and one of them—a very tall, very fair girl,

with large eyes as blue as forget-me-nots, and with a lovely, limp, and long blue frock of the same shade—had been one of the beauties of the past season. She was a Lady Agatha Slade, and Emily began to admire her at once. She felt her to be a sort of added boon bestowed by kind Fate upon herself. It was so delightful that she should be of this particular house-party—this lovely creature, whom she had only known previously through pictures in ladies' illustrated papers. If it should occur to her to wish to become the Marchioness of Walderhurst, what could possibly prevent the consummation of her desire? Surely not Lord Walderhurst himself, if he was human. She was standing, leaning lightly against the trunk of an ilex-tree, and a snow-white Borzoi was standing close to her, resting his long, delicate head against her gown, encouraging the caresses of her fair, stroking hand. She was in this attractive pose when Lady Maria turned in her seat and said:

"There's Walderhurst."

The man who had driven himself over from the station in the cart was coming towards them across the grass. He was past middle life and plain, but was of good height and had an air. It was perhaps, on the whole, rather an air of knowing what he wanted.

Emily Fox-Seton, who by that time was comfortably seated in a cushioned basket-chair, sipping her own cup of tea, gave him the benefit of the doubt when she wondered if he was not really distinguished and aristocratic-looking. He was really neither, but was well-built and well-dressed, and had good grayish-brown eyes, about the colour of his grayish-brown hair. Among these amiably worldly people, who were not in the least moved by an altruistic prompting, Emily's greatest capital consisted in the fact that she did not expect to be taken the least notice of. She was not aware that it was her capital, because the fact was so wholly a part of the simple contentedness of her nature that she had not thought about it at all. The truth was that she found all her

entertainment and occupation in being an audience or a spectator. It did not occur to her to notice that, when the guests were presented to him, Lord Walderhurst barely glanced at her surface as he bowed, and could scarcely be said to forget her existence the next second, because he had hardly gone to the length of recognising it. As she enjoyed her extremely nice cup of tea and little buttered scone, she also enjoyed looking at his Lordship discreetly, and trying to make an innocent summing up of his mental attitudes.

Lady Maria seemed to like him and to be pleased to see him. He himself seemed, in an undemonstrative way, to like Lady Maria. He also was evidently glad to get his tea, and enjoyed it as he sat at his cousin’s side. He did not pay very much attention to any one else. Emily was slightly disappointed to see that he did not glance at the beauty and the Borzoi more than twice, and then that his examination seemed as much for the Borzoi as for the beauty. She could not help also observing that since he had joined the circle it had become more animated, so far at least as the female members were concerned. She could not help remembering Lady Maria’s remark about the effect he produced on women when he entered a room. Several interesting or sparkling speeches had already been made. There was a little more laughter and chattiness, which somehow it seemed to be quite open to Lord Walderhurst to enjoy, though it was not exactly addressed to him. Miss Cora Brooke, however, devoted herself to a young man in white flannels with an air of tennis about him. She sat a little apart and talked to him in a voice soft enough to even exclude Lord Walderhurst. Presently she and her companion got up and sauntered away. They went down the broad flight of ancient stone steps which led to the tennis-court, lying in full view below the lawn. There they began to play tennis. Miss Brooke skimmed and darted about like a swallow. The swirl of her lace petticoats was most attractive.