RANDOM HOUSE eBOOKS

# The Adventures of Sally

P.G. Wodehouse

**CONTENTS**

# About the Book

If you come into a lot of money, life becomes easier, right?

No, wrong – at least not for Sally Nicholas, whose generosity of spirit immediately runs into all the slings and arrows outrageous fortune can send. Her handsome fiancé turns out not to be all he seems – and then there is the show he's written, which Sally puts on in the theatre. No, life is not straightforward at all.

But waiting in the wings is Ginger Kemp, who really does adore her, seems to make a hash of everything he tries and yet is always ready to try something else. If money becomes a problem, perhaps Ginger can provide a solution.

# About the Author

The author of almost a hundred books and the creator of Jeeves, Blandings Castle, Psmith, Ukridge, Uncle Fred and Mr Mulliner, P.G. Wodehouse was born in 1881 and educated at Dulwich College. After two years with the Hong Kong and Shanghai Bank he became a full-time writer, contributing to a variety of periodicals including *Punch* and the *Globe*. He married in 1914. As well as his novels and short stories, he wrote lyrics for musical comedies with Guy Bolton and Jerome Kern, and at one time had five musicals running simultaneously on Broadway. His time in Hollywood also provided much source material for fiction.

At the age of 93, in the New Year's Honours List of 1975, he received a long-overdue knighthood, only to die on St Valentine's Day some 45 days later.

Also by P.G. Wodehouse

**Fiction**

*Aunts Aren't Gentlemen*
*The Adventures of Sally*
*Bachelors Anonymous*
*Barmy in Wonderland*
*Big Money*
*Bill the Conqueror*
*Blandings Castle and Elsewhere*
*Carry On, Jeeves*
*The Clicking of Cuthbert*
*Cocktail Time*
*The Code of the Woosters*
*The Coming of Bill*
*Company for Henry*
*A Damsel in Distress*
*Do Butlers Burgle Banks*
*Doctor Sally*
*Eggs, Beans and Crumpets*
*A Few Quick Ones*
*French Leave*
*Frozen Assets*
*Full Moon*
*Galahad at Blandings*
*A Gentleman of Leisure*
*The Girl in Blue*
*The Girl on the Boat*
*The Gold Bat*
*The Head of Kay's*
*The Heart of a Goof*
*Heavy Weather*
*Hot Water*
*Ice in the Bedroom*

*If I Were You*
*Indiscretions of Archie*
*The Inimitable Jeeves*
*Jeeves and the Feudal Spirit*
*Jeeves in the Offing*
*Jill the Reckless*
*Joy in the Morning*
*Laughing Gas*
*Leave it to Psmith*
*The Little Nugget*
*Lord Emsworth and Others*
*Louder and Funnier*
*Love Among the Chickens*
*The Luck of Bodkins*
*The Man Upstairs*
*The Man with Two Left Feet*
*The Mating Season*
*Meet Mr Mulliner*
*Mike and Psmith*
*Mike at Wrykyn*
*Money for Nothing*
*Money in the Bank*
*Mr Mulliner Speaking*
*Much Obliged, Jeeves*
*Mulliner Nights*
*Not George Washington*
*Nothing Serious*
*The Old Reliable*
*Pearls, Girls and Monty Bodkin*
*A Pelican at Blandings*
*Piccadilly Jim*
*Pigs Have Wings*
*Plum Pie*
*The Pothunters*
*A Prefect's Uncle*
*The Prince and Betty*

*Psmith, Journalist*
*Psmith in the City*
*Quick Service*
*Right Ho, Jeeves*
*Ring for Jeeves*
*Sam me Sudden*
*Service with a Smile*
*The Small Bachelor*
*Something Fishy*
*Something Fresh*
*Spring Fever*
*Stiff Upper Lip, Jeeves*
*Summer Lightning*
*Summer Moonshine*
*Sunset at Blandings*
*The Swoop*
*Tales of St Austin's*
*Thank You, Jeeves*
*Ukridge*
*Uncle Dynamite*
*Uncle Fred in the Springtime*
*Uneasy Money*
*Very Good, Jeeves*
*The White Feather*
*William Tell Told Again*
*Young Men in Spats*

**Omnibuses**

*The World of Blandings*
*The World of Jeeves*
*The World of Mr Mulliner*
*The World of Psmith*
*The World of Ukridge*
*The World of Uncle Fred*
*Wodehouse Nuggets (edited by Richard Usborne)*

*The World of Wodehouse Clergy*
*The Hollywood Omnibus*
*Weekend Wodehouse*

**Paperback Omnibuses**

*The Golf Omnibus*
*The Aunts Omnibus*
*The Drones Omnibus*
*The Jeeves Omnibus 1*
*The Jeeves Omnibus 3*

**Poems**

*The Parrot and Other Poems*

**Autobiographical**

*Wodehouse on Wodehouse (comprising Bring on the Girls, Over Seventy, Performing Flea)*

**Letters**

*Yours, Plum*

# The Adventures of Sally

P.G. Wodehouse

DEDICATION TO GEORGE GROSSMITH

Dear George,

The production of our mutual effort, *The Cabaret Girl*, is a week distant as I write this; and who shall say what the harvest will be? But, whether a week from now we are slapping each other on the back or shivering in the frost, nothing can alter the fact that we had a lot of fun writing the thing together. Not a reproach or a nasty look from start to finish. Because of this, and because you and I were side by side through the Adventure of the Ship’s Bore, the Episode of the Concert In Aid of the Seamen’s Orphans and Widows, and the Sinister Affair of The Rose of Stamboul, I dedicate this book to you.

P. G. WODEHOUSE

*Garrick Club*

# 1 – SALLY GIVES A PARTY

1

SALLY LOOKED CONTENTEDLY down the long table. She felt happy at last. Everybody was talking and laughing now, and her party, rallying after an uncertain start, was plainly the success she had hoped it would be. The first atmosphere of uncomfortable restraint, caused, she was only too well aware, by her brother Fillmore's white evening waistcoat, had worn off; and the male and female patrons of Mrs Meecher's select boarding-house (transient and residential) were themselves again.

At her end of the table the conversation had turned once more to the great vital topic of Sally's legacy and what she ought to do with it. The next best thing to having money of one's own, is to dictate the spending of somebody else's, and Sally's guests were finding a good deal of satisfaction in arranging a Budget for her. Rumour having put the sum at their disposal at a high figure, their suggestions had a certain spaciousness.

'Let me tell you,' said Augustus Bartlett, briskly, 'what I'd do, if I were you.' Augustus Bartlett, who occupied an intensely subordinate position in the firm of Kahn, Morris and Brown, the Wall Street brokers, always affected a brisk, incisive style of speech, as befitted a man in close touch with the great ones of Finance. 'I'd sink a couple of hundred thousand in some good, safe bond-issue – we've just put one out which you would do well to consider – and play about with the rest. When I say play about, I mean have a flutter in anything good that crops up. Multiple Steel's worth

looking at. They tell me it'll be up to a hundred and fifty before next Saturday.'

Elsa Doland, the pretty girl with the big eyes who sat on Mr Bartlett's left, had other views.

'Buy a theatre, Sally, and put on good stuff.'

'And lose every bean you've got,' said a mild young man, with a deep voice across the table. 'If I had a few hundred thousand,' said the mild young man, 'I'd put every cent of it on Benny Whistler for the heavyweight championship. I've private information that Battling Tuke has been got at and means to lie down in the seventh . . .'

'Say, listen,' interrupted another voice, 'lemme tell you what I'd do with four hundred thousand . . .'

'If I had four hundred thousand,' said Elsa Doland, 'I know what would be the first thing I'd do.'

'What's that?' asked Sally.

'Pay my bill for last week, due this morning.'

Sally got up quickly, and flitting down the table, put her arm round her friend's shoulder and whispered in her ear:

'Elsa darling, are you really broke? If you are, you know, I'll . . .'

Elsa Doland laughed.

'You're an angel, Sally. There's no one like you. You'd give your last cent to anyone. Of course I'm not broke. I've just come back from the road, and I've saved a fortune. I only said that to draw you.'

Sally returned to her seat, relieved, and found that the company had now divided itself into two schools of thought. The conservative and prudent element, led by Augustus Bartlett, had definitely decided on three hundred thousand in Liberty Bonds and the rest in some safe real estate; while the smaller, more sporting section, impressed by the mild young man's inside information, had already placed Sally's money on Benny Whistler, doling it out cautiously in small sums so as not to spoil the market. And so solid, it seemed, was Mr Tuke's reputation with those in the inner circle of

knowledge that the mild young man was confident that, if you went about the matter cannily and without precipitation, three to one might be obtained. It seemed to Sally that the time had come to correct certain misapprehensions.

‘I don’t know where you get your figures,’ she said, ‘but I’m afraid they’re wrong. I’ve just twenty-five thousand dollars.’

The statement had a chilling effect. To these jugglers with half-millions the amount mentioned seemed for the moment almost too small to bother about. It was the sort of sum which they had been mentally setting aside for the heiress’s car fare. Then they managed to adjust their minds to it. After all, one could do something even with a pittance like twenty-five thousand.

‘If I’d twenty-five thousand,’ said Augustus Bartlett, the first to rally from the shock, ‘I’d buy Amalgamated . . .’

‘If I had twenty-five thousand . . .’ began Elsa Doland.

‘If I’d had twenty-five thousand in the year nineteen hundred,’ observed a gloomy-looking man with spectacles, ‘I could have started a revolution in Paraguay.’

He brooded sombrely on what might have been.

‘Well, I’ll tell you exactly what I’m going to do,’ said Sally, ‘I’m going to start with a trip to Europe . . . France, specially. I’ve heard France well spoken of – as soon as I can get my passport; and after I’ve loafed there for a few weeks, I’m coming back to look about and find some nice cosy little business which will let me put money into it and keep me in luxury. Are there any complaints?’

‘Even a couple of thousand on Benny Whistler . . .’ said the mild young man.

‘I don’t want your Benny Whistler,’ said Sally. ‘I wouldn’t have him if you gave him to me. If I want to lose money, I’ll go to Monte Carlo and do it properly.’

‘Monte Carlo,’ said the gloomy man, brightening up at the magic name. ‘I was in Monte Carlo in the year ’97, and if I’d

had another fifty dollars . . . just fifty . . . I'd have . . .'

At the far end of the table there was a stir, a cough, and the grating of a chair on the floor; and slowly, with that easy grace which actors of the old school learned in the days when acting was acting, Mr Maxwell Faucitt, the boarding-house's oldest inhabitant, rose to his feet.

'Ladies,' said Mr Faucitt, bowing courteously, 'and . . .' ceasing to bow and casting from beneath his white and venerable eyebrows a quelling glance at certain male members of the boarding-house's younger set who were showing a disposition towards restiveness,' . . . gentlemen. I feel that I cannot allow this occasion to pass without saying a few words.'

His audience did not seem surprised. It was possible that life, always prolific of incident in a great city like New York, might some day produce an occasion which Mr Faucitt would feel that he could allow to pass without saying a few words; but nothing of the sort had happened as yet, and they had given up hope. Right from the start of the meal they had felt that it would be optimism run mad to expect the old gentleman to abstain from speech on the night of Sally Nicholas' farewell dinner party; and partly because they had braced themselves to it, but principally because Miss Nicholas' hospitality had left them with a genial feeling of repletion, they settled themselves to listen with something resembling equanimity. A movement on the part of the Marvellous Murphys – new arrivals, who had been playing the Bushwick with their equilibristic act during the preceding week – to form a party of the extreme left and heckle the speaker, broke down under a cold look from their hostess. Brief though their acquaintance had been, both of these lissom young gentlemen admired Sally immensely.

And it should be set on record that this admiration of theirs was not misplaced. He would have been hard to please who had not been attracted by Sally. She was a small, trim, wisp of a girl with the tiniest hands and feet, the

friendliest of smiles, and a dimple that came and went in the curve of her rounded chin. Her eyes, which disappeared when she laughed, which was often, were a bright hazel; her hair a soft mass of brown. She had, moreover, a manner, an air of distinction lacking in the majority of Mrs Meecher's guests. And she carried youth like a banner. In approving of Sally, the Marvellous Murphys had been guilty of no lapse from their high critical standard.

'I have been asked,' proceeded Mr Faucitt, 'though I am aware that there are others here far worthier of such a task – Brutuses compared with whom I, like Marc Antony, am no orator – I have been asked to propose the health . . .'

'Who asked you?' It was the smaller of the Marvellous Murphys who spoke. He was an unpleasant youth, snub-nosed and spotty. Still, he could balance himself with one hand on an inverted ginger-ale bottle while revolving a barrel on the soles of his feet. There is good in all of us.

'I have been asked,' repeated Mr Faucitt, ignoring the unmannerly interruption, which, indeed, he would have found it hard to answer, 'to propose the health of our charming hostess (applause), coupled with the name of her brother, our old friend Fillmore Nicholas.'

The gentleman referred to, who sat at the speaker's end of the table, acknowledged the tribute with a brief nod of the head. It was a nod of condescension; the nod of one who, conscious of being hedged about by social inferiors, nevertheless does his best to be not unkindly. And Sally, seeing it, debated in her mind for an instant the advisability of throwing an orange at her brother. There was one lying ready to her hand, and his glistening shirt-front offered an admirable mark; but she restrained herself. After all, if a hostess yields to her primitive impulses, what happens? Chaos. She had just frowned down the exuberance of the rebellious Murphys, and she felt that if, even with the highest motives, she began throwing fruit, her influence for good in that quarter would be weakened.

She leaned back with a sigh. The temptation had been hard to resist. A democratic girl, pomposity was a quality which she thoroughly disliked; and though she loved him, she could not disguise from herself that, ever since affluence had descended upon him some months ago, her brother Fillmore had become insufferably pompous. If there are any young men whom inherited wealth improves, Fillmore Nicholas was not one of them. He seemed to regard himself nowadays as a sort of Man of Destiny. To converse with him was for the ordinary human being like being received in audience by some more than stand-offish monarch. It had taken Sally over an hour to persuade him to leave his apartment on Riverside Drive and revisit the boarding-house for this special occasion; and, when he had come, he had entered wearing such faultless evening dress that he had made the rest of the party look like a gathering of tramp-cyclists. His white waistcoat alone was a silent reproach to honest poverty, and had caused an awkward constraint right through the soup and fish courses. Most of those present had known Fillmore Nicholas as an impecunious young man who could make a tweed suit last longer than one would have believed possible; they had called him ‘Fill’ and helped him in more than usually lean times with small loans: but tonight they had eyed the waistcoat dumbly and shrank back abashed.

‘Speaking,’ said Mr Faucitt, ‘as an Englishman – for though I have long since taken out what are technically known as my “papers” it was as a subject of the island kingdom that I first visited this great country – I may say that the two factors in American life which have always made the profoundest impression upon me have been the lavishness of American hospitality and the charm of the American girl. To-night we have been privileged to witness the American girl in the capacity of hostess, and I think I am right in saying, in asseverating, in committing myself to the statement that this has been a night which none of us

present here will ever forget. Miss Nicholas has given us, ladies and gentlemen, a banquet. I repeat, a banquet. There has been alcoholic refreshment. I do not know where it came from: I do not ask how it was procured, but we have had it. Miss Nicholas . . .'

Mr Faucitt paused to puff at his cigar. Sally's brother Fillmore suppressed a yawn and glanced at his watch. Sally continued to lean forward raptly. She knew how happy it made the old gentleman to deliver a formal speech; and though she wished the subject had been different, she was prepared to listen indefinitely.

'Miss Nicholas,' resumed Mr Faucitt, lowering his cigar, '. . . But why,' he demanded abruptly, 'do I call her Miss Nicholas?'

'Because it's her name,' hazarded the taller Murphy.

Mr Faucitt eyed him with disfavour. He disapproved of the marvellous brethren on general grounds because, himself a resident of years standing, he considered that these transients from the vaudeville stage lowered the tone of the boarding-house; but particularly because the one who had just spoken had, on his first evening in the place, addressed him as 'grandpa.'

'Yes, sir,' he said severely, 'it is her name. But she has another name, sweeter to those who love her, those who worship her, those who have watched her with the eye of sedulous affection through the three years she has spent beneath this roof, though that name,' said Mr Faucitt, lowering the tone of his address and descending to what might almost be termed personalities, 'may not be familiar to a couple of dud acrobats who have only been in the place a week-end, thank heaven, and are off tomorrow to infest some other city. That name,' said Mr Faucitt, soaring once more to a loftier plane, 'is Sally. Our Sally. For three years our Sally has flitted about this establishment like – I choose the simile advisedly – like a ray of sunshine. For three years she has made life for us a brighter, sweeter thing. And now

a sudden access of worldly wealth, happily synchronizing with her twenty-first birthday, is to remove her from our midst. From our midst, ladies and gentlemen, but not from our hearts. And I think I may venture to hope, to prognosticate, that, whatever lofty sphere she may adorn in the future, to whatever heights in the social world she may soar, she will still continue to hold a corner in her own golden heart for the comrades of her Bohemian days. Ladies and gentlemen, I give you our hostess, Miss Sally Nicholas, coupled with the name of our old friend, her brother Fillmore.'

Sally, watching her brother heave himself to his feet as the cheers died away, felt her heart beat a little faster with anticipation. Fillmore was a fluent young man, once a power in his college debating society, and it was for that reason that she had insisted on his coming here tonight. She had guessed that Mr Faucitt, the old dear, would say all sorts of delightful things about her, and she had mistrusted her ability to make a fitting reply. And it was imperative that a fitting reply should proceed from someone. She knew Mr Faucitt so well. He looked on these occasions rather in the light of scenes from some play; and, sustaining his own part in them with such polished grace, was certain to be pained by anything in the nature of an anti-climax after he should have ceased to take the stage. Eloquent himself, he must be answered with eloquence, or his whole evening would be spoiled.

Fillmore Nicholas smoothed a wrinkle out of his white waistcoat; and having rested one podgy hand on the table-cloth and the thumb of the other in his pocket, glanced down the table with eyes so haughtily drooping that Sally's fingers closed automatically about her orange, as she wondered whether even now it might not be a good thing . . .

It seems to be one of Nature's laws that the most attractive girls should have the least attractive brothers.

Fillmore Nicholas had not worn well. At the age of seven he had been an extraordinarily beautiful child, but after that he had gone all to pieces; and now, at the age of twenty-five, it would be idle to deny that he was something of a mess. For the three years preceding his twenty-fifth birthday, restricted means and hard work had kept his figure in check; but with money there had come an ever-increasing sleekness. He looked as if he fed too often and too well.

All this, however, Sally was prepared to forgive him, if he would only make a good speech. She could see Mr Faucitt leaning back in his chair, all courteous attention. Rolling periods were meat and drink to the old gentleman.

Fillmore spoke.

‘I’m sure,’ said Fillmore, ‘you don’t want a speech. Very good of you to drink our health. Thank you.’

He sat down.

The effect of these few simple words on the company was marked, but not in every case identical. To the majority the emotion which they brought was one of unmixed relief. There had been something so menacing, so easy and practised, in Fillmore’s attitude as he had stood there that the gloomier-minded had given him at least twenty minutes, and even the optimists had reckoned that they would be lucky if they got off with ten. As far as the bulk of the guests were concerned, there was no grumbling. Fillmore’s, to their thinking, had been the ideal after-dinner speech.

Far different was it with Mr Maxwell Faucitt. The poor old man was wearing such an expression of surprise and dismay as he might have worn had somebody unexpectedly pulled the chair from under him. He was feeling the sick shock which comes to those who tread on a non-existent last stair. And Sally, catching sight of his face, uttered a sharp wordless exclamation as if she had seen a child fall down and hurt itself in the street. The next moment she had run round the table and was standing behind him with her arms

round his neck. She spoke across him with a sob in her voice.

‘My brother,’ she stammered, directing a malevolent look at the immaculate Fillmore, who, avoiding her gaze, glanced down his nose and smoothed another wrinkle out of his waistcoat, ‘has not said quite – quite all I hoped he was going to say. I can’t make a speech, but . . .’ Sally gulped,’ . . . but, I love you all and of course I shall never forget you, and . . . and . . .’

Here Sally kissed Mr Faucitt and burst into tears.

‘There, there,’ said Mr Faucitt, soothingly.

The kindest critic could not have claimed that Sally had been eloquent: nevertheless Mr Maxwell Faucitt was conscious of no sense of anti-climax.

## 2

Sally had just finished telling her brother Fillmore what a pig he was. The lecture had taken place in the street outside the boarding-house immediately on the conclusion of the festivities, when Fillmore, who had furtively collected his hat and overcoat, had stolen forth into the night, had been overtaken and brought to bay by his justly indignant sister. Her remarks, punctuated at intervals by bleating sounds from the accused, had lasted some ten minutes.

As she paused for breath, Fillmore seemed to expand, like an indiarubber ball which has been sat on. Dignified as he was to the world, he had never been able to prevent himself being intimidated by Sally when in one of these moods of hers. He regretted this, for it hurt his self-esteem, but he did not see how the fact could be altered. Sally had always been like that. Even the uncle, who after the death of their parents had become their guardian, had never, though a grim man, been able to cope successfully with Sally. In that last hectic scene three years ago, which had ended in their going out into the world together like a second Adam and

Eve, the verbal victory had been hers. And it had been Sally who had achieved triumph in the one battle which Mrs Meecher, apparently as a matter of duty, always brought about with each of her patrons in the first week of their stay. A sweet-tempered girl, Sally, like most women of a generous spirit, had cyclonic potentialities.

As she seemed to have said her say, Fillmore kept on expanding till he had reached the normal, when he ventured upon a speech for the defence.

'What have *I* done?' demanded Fillmore plaintively.

'Do you want to hear all over again?'

'No, no,' said Fillmore hastily. 'But, listen, Sally, you don't understand my position. You don't seem to realize that all that sort of thing, all that boarding-house stuff, is a thing of the past. One's got beyond it. One wants to drop it. One wants to forget it, darn it! Be fair. Look at it from my viewpoint. I'm going to be a big man . . .'

'You're going to be a fat man,' said Sally, coldly.

Fillmore refrained from discussing the point. He was sensitive.

'I'm going to do big things,' he substituted. 'I've got a deal on at this very moment which . . . well, I can't tell you about it, but it's going to be big. Well, what I'm driving at, is about all this sort of thing' – he indicated the lighted front of Mrs Meecher's home-from-home with a wide gesture – 'is that it's over. Finished and done with. These people were all very well when . . .'

'. . . when you'd lost your week's salary at poker and wanted to borrow a few dollars for the rent.'

'I always paid them back,' protested Fillmore, defensively.

'I did.'

'Well, *we* did,' said Fillmore, accepting the amendment with the air of a man who has no time for chopping straws. 'Anyway, what I mean is, I don't see why, just because one has known people at a certain period in one's life when one was practically down and out, one should have them round

one’s neck for ever. One can’t prevent people forming an I-knew-him-when club, but, darn it, one needn’t attend the meetings.’

‘One’s friends . . .’

‘Oh, *friends*,’ said Fillmore. ‘That’s just where all this makes me so tired. One’s in a position where all these people are entitled to call themselves one’s friends, simply because father put it in his will that I wasn’t to get the money till I was twenty-five, instead of letting me have it at twenty-one like anybody else. I wonder where I should have been by now if I could have got that money when I was twenty-one.’

‘In the poor-house, probably,’ said Sally.

Fillmore was wounded.

‘Ah! you don’t believe in me,’ he sighed.

‘Oh, you would be all right if you had one thing,’ said Sally.

Fillmore passed his qualities in swift review before his mental eye. Brains? Dash? Spaciousness? Initiative? All present and correct. He wondered where Sally imagined the hiatus to exist.

‘One thing?’ he said. ‘What’s that?’

‘A nurse.’

Fillmore’s sense of injury deepened. He supposed that this was always the way, that those nearest to a man never believed in his ability till he had proved it so masterfully that it no longer required the assistance of faith. Still, it was trying; and there was not much consolation to be derived from the thought that Napoleon had had to go through this sort of thing in his day.

‘I shall find my place in the world,’ he said sulkily.

‘Oh, you’ll find your place all right,’ said Sally. ‘And I’ll come round and bring you jelly and read to you on the days when visitors are allowed . . . Oh, hullo.’

The last remark was addressed to a young man who had been swinging briskly along the sidewalk from the direction

of Broadway and who now, coming abreast of them, stopped.

‘Good evening, Mr Foster.’

‘Good evening, Miss Nicholas.’

‘You don’t know my brother, do you?’

‘I don’t believe I do.’

‘He left the underworld before you came to it,’ said Sally. ‘You wouldn’t think it to look at him, but he was once a prune-eater among the proletariat, even as you and I. Mrs Meecher looks on him as a son.’

The two men shook hands. Fillmore was not short, but Gerald Foster with his lean, well-built figure seemed to tower over him. He was an Englishman, a man in the middle twenties, clean-shaven, keen-eyed, and very good to look at. Fillmore, who had recently been going in for one of those sum-up-your-fellow-man-at-a-glance courses, the better to fit himself for his career of greatness, was rather impressed. It seemed to him that this Mr Foster, like himself, was one of those who Get There. If you are that kind yourself, you get into the knack of recognizing the others. It is a sort of gift.

There was a few moments of desultory conversation, of the kind that usually follows an introduction, and then Fillmore, by no means sorry to get the chance, took advantage of the coming of this new arrival to remove himself. He had not enjoyed his chat with Sally, and it seemed probable that he would enjoy a continuation of it even less. He was glad that Mr Foster had happened along at this particular juncture. Excusing himself briefly, he hurried off down the street.

Sally stood for a minute, watching him till he had disappeared round the corner. She had a slightly regretful feeling that, now it was too late, she would think of a whole lot more good things which it would have been agreeable to say to him. And it had become obvious to her that Fillmore was not getting nearly enough of that kind of thing said to

him nowadays. Then she dismissed him from her mind; and turning to Gerald Foster, slipped her arm through his.

‘Well, Jerry, darling,’ she said. ‘What a shame you couldn’t come to the party. Tell me all about everything.’

3

It was exactly two months since Sally had become engaged to Gerald Foster; but so rigorously had they kept the secret that nobody at Mrs Meecher’s so much as suspected it. To Sally, who all her life had hated concealing things, secrecy of any kind was objectionable: but in this matter Gerald had shown an odd streak almost of furtiveness in his character. An announced engagement complicated life. People fussed about you and bothered you. People either watched you or avoided you. Such were his arguments, and Sally, who would have glossed over and found excuses for a disposition on his part towards homicide or arson, put them down to artistic sensitiveness. There is nobody so sensitive as your artist, particularly if he be unsuccessful: and when an artist has so little success that he cannot afford to make a home for the woman he loves, his sensitiveness presumably becomes great indeed. Putting herself in his place, Sally could see that a protracted engagement, known by everybody, would be a standing advertisement of Gerald’s failure to make good: and she acquiesced in the policy of secrecy, hoping that it would not last long. It seemed absurd to think of Gerald as an unsuccessful man. He had in him, as the recent Fillmore had perceived, something dynamic. He was one of those men of whom one could predict that they would succeed very suddenly and rapidly – overnight, as it were.

‘The party,’ said Sally, ‘went off splendidly.’ They had passed the boarding-house door, and were walking slowly down the street. ‘Everybody enjoyed themselves, I think, even though Fillmore did his best to spoil things by coming looking like an advertisement of What The Smart Men Will

Wear This Season. You didn’t see his waistcoat just now. He had covered it up. Conscience, I suppose. It was white and bulgy and gleaming and full up of pearl buttons and everything. I saw Augustus Bartlett curl up like a burnt feather when he caught sight of it. Still, time seemed to heal the wound, and everybody relaxed after a bit. Mr Faucitt made a speech and I made a speech and cried, and . . . oh, it was all very festive. It only needed you.’

‘I wish I could have come. I had to go to that dinner, though. Sally . . .’ Gerald paused, and Sally saw that he was electric with suppressed excitement. ‘Sally, the play’s going to be put on!’

Sally gave a little gasp. She had lived this moment in anticipation for weeks. She had always known that sooner or later this would happen. She had read his plays over and over again, and was convinced that they were wonderful. Of course, hers was a biased view; but then Elsa Doland also admired them; and Elsa’s opinion was one that carried weight. Elsa was another of those people who were bound to succeed suddenly. Even old Mr Faucitt, who was a stern judge of acting and rather inclined to consider that nowadays there was no such thing, believed that she was a girl with a future who would do something big directly she got her chance.

‘Jerry!’ She gave his arm a hug. ‘How simply terrific! Then Goble and Kohn have changed their minds after all and want it? I knew they would.’

A slight cloud seemed to dim the sunniness of the author’s mood.

‘No, not that one,’ he said reluctantly. ‘No hope there, I’m afraid. I saw Goble this morning about that, and he said it didn’t add up right. The one that’s going to be put on is “The Primrose Way”. You remember? It’s got a big part for a girl in it.’

‘Of course! The one Elsa liked so much. Well, that’s just as good. Who’s going to do it? I thought you hadn’t sent it out

again.’

‘Well, it happens . . .’ Gerald hesitated once more. ‘It seems that this man I was dining with to-night – a man named Cracknell . . .’

‘Cracknell? Not *the* Cracknell?’

‘The Cracknell?’

‘The one people are always talking about. The man they call the Millionaire Kid.’

‘Yes. Why, do you know him?’

‘He was at Harvard with Fillmore. I never saw him, but he must be rather a painful person.’

‘Oh, he’s all right. Not much brains, of course, but – well, he’s all right. And, anyway, he wants to put the play on.’

‘Well, that’s splendid,’ said Sally: but she could not get the right ring of enthusiasm into her voice. She had had ideals for Gerald. She had dreamed of him invading Broadway triumphantly under the banner of one of the big managers whose name carried a prestige, and there seemed something unworthy in this association with a man whose chief claim to eminence lay in the fact that he was credited by metropolitan gossip with possessing the largest private stock of alcohol in existence.

‘I thought you would be pleased,’ said Gerald.

‘Oh, I am,’ said Sally.

With the buoyant optimism which never deserted her for long, she had already begun to cast off her momentary depression. After all, did it matter who financed a play so long as it obtained a production? A manager was simply a piece of machinery for paying the bills; and if he had money for that purpose, why demand asceticism and the finer sensibilities from him? The real thing that mattered was the question of who was going to play the leading part, that deftly drawn character which had so excited the admiration of Elsa Doland. She sought information on this point.

‘Who will play Ruth?’ she asked. ‘You must have somebody wonderful. It needs a tremendously clever