

FRANCES HODGSON BURNETT



THE SHUTTLE

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www.jazzybee-verlag.de
admin@jazzybee-verlag.de

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CHAPTER I - THE WEAVING OF THE SHUTTLE

No man knew when the Shuttle began its slow and heavy weaving from shore to shore, that it was held and guided by the great hand of Fate. Fate alone saw the meaning of the web it wove, the might of it, and its place in the making of a world's history. Men thought but little of either web or weaving, calling them by other names and lighter ones, for the time unconscious of the strength of the thread thrown across thousands of miles of leaping, heaving, grey or blue ocean.

Fate and Life planned the weaving, and it seemed mere circumstance which guided the Shuttle to and fro between two worlds divided by a gulf broader and deeper than the thousands of miles of salt, fierce sea—the gulf of a bitter quarrel deepened by hatred and the shedding of brothers' blood. Between the two worlds of East and West there was no will to draw nearer. Each held apart. Those who had rebelled against that which their souls called tyranny, having struggled madly and shed blood in tearing themselves free, turned stern backs upon their unconquered enemies, broke all cords that bound them to the past, flinging off ties of name, kinship and rank, beginning with fierce disdain a new life.

Those who, being rebelled against, found the rebels too passionate in their determination and too desperate in their defence of their strongholds to be less than unconquerable, sailed back haughtily to the world which seemed so far the greater power. Plunging into new battles, they added new conquests and splendour to their land, looking back with something of contempt to the half-savage West left to build its own civilisation without other aid than the strength of its own strong right hand and strong uncultured brain.

But while the two worlds held apart, the Shuttle, weaving slowly in the great hand of Fate, drew them closer and held them firm, each of them all unknowing for many a year, that what had at first been mere threads of gossamer, was forming a web whose strength in time none could compute, whose severance could be accomplished but by tragedy and convulsion.

The weaving was but in its early and slow-moving years when this story opens. Steamers crossed and recrossed the Atlantic, but they accomplished the journey at leisure and with heavy rollings and all such discomforts as small craft can afford. Their staterooms and decks were not crowded with people to whom the voyage was a mere incident—in many cases a yearly one. "A crossing" in those days was an event. It was planned seriously, long thought of, discussed and re-discussed, with and among the various members of the family to which the voyager belonged. A certain boldness, bordering on recklessness, was almost to be presupposed in the individual who, turning his back upon New York, Philadelphia, Boston, and like cities, turned his face towards "Europe." In those days when the Shuttle wove at leisure, a man did not lightly run over to London, or Paris, or Berlin, he gravely went to "Europe."

The journey being likely to be made once in a lifetime, the traveller's intention was to see as much as possible, to visit as many cities cathedrals, ruins, galleries, as his time and purse would allow. People who could speak with any degree of familiarity of Hyde Park, the Champs Elysees, the Pincio, had gained a certain dignity. The ability to touch with an intimate bearing upon such localities was a *raison de plus* for being asked out to tea or to dinner. To possess photographs and relics was to be of interest, to have seen European celebrities even at a distance, to have wandered about the outside of poets' gardens and philosophers' houses, was to be entitled to respect. The period was a far cry from the time when the Shuttle, having shot to and fro,

faster and faster, week by week, month by month, weaving new threads into its web each year, has woven warp and woof until they bind far shore to shore.

It was in comparatively early days that the first thread we follow was woven into the web. Many such have been woven since and have added greater strength than any others, twining the cord of sex and home-building and race-founding. But this was a slight and weak one, being only the thread of the life of one of Reuben Vanderpoel's daughters—the pretty little simple one whose name was Rosalie.

They were—the Vanderpoels—of the Americans whose fortunes were a portion of the history of their country. The building of these fortunes had been a part of, or had created epochs and crises. Their millions could scarcely be regarded as private property. Newspapers bandied them about, so to speak, employing them as factors in argument, using them as figures of speech, incorporating them into methods of calculation. Literature touched upon them, moral systems considered them, stories for the young treated them gravely as illustrative.

The first Reuben Vanderpoel, who in early days of danger had traded with savages for the pelts of wild animals, was the lauded hero of stories of thrift and enterprise. Throughout his hard-working life he had been irresistibly impelled to action by an absolute genius of commerce, expressing itself at the outset by the exhibition of courage in mere exchange and barter. An alert power to perceive the potential value of things and the possible malleability of men and circumstances, had stood him in marvellous good stead. He had bought at low prices things which in the eyes of the less discerning were worthless, but, having obtained possession of such things, the less discerning had almost invariably awakened to the fact that, in his hands, values increased, and methods of remunerative disposition, being sought, were found. Nothing remained unutilisable. The

practical, sordid, uneducated little man developed the power to create demand for his own supplies. If he was betrayed into an error, he quickly retrieved it. He could live upon nothing and consequently could travel anywhere in search of such things as he desired. He could barely read and write, and could not spell, but he was daring and astute. His untaught brain was that of a financier, his blood burned with the fever of but one desire—the desire to accumulate. Money expressed to his nature, not expenditure, but investment in such small or large properties as could be resold at profit in the near or far future. The future held fascinations for him. He bought nothing for his own pleasure or comfort, nothing which could not be sold or bartered again. He married a woman who was a trader's daughter and shared his passion for gain. She was of North of England blood, her father having been a hard-fisted small tradesman in an unimportant town, who had been daring enough to emigrate when emigration meant the facing of unknown dangers in a half-savage land. She had excited Reuben Vanderpoel's admiration by taking off her petticoat one bitter winter's day to sell it to a squaw in exchange for an ornament for which she chanced to know another squaw would pay with a skin of value. The first Mrs. Vanderpoel was as wonderful as her husband. They were both wonderful. They were the founders of the fortune which a century and a half later was the delight—in fact the piece de resistance—of New York society reporters, its enormity being restated in round figures when a blank space must be filled up. The method of statement lent itself to infinite variety and was always interesting to a particular class, some elements of which felt it encouraging to be assured that so much money could be a personal possession, some elements feeling the fact an additional argument to be used against the infamy of monopoly.

The first Reuben Vanderpoel transmitted to his son his accumulations and his fever for gain. He had but one child. The second Reuben built upon the foundations this afforded him, a fortune as much larger than the first as the rapid growth and increasing capabilities of the country gave him enlarging opportunities to acquire. It was no longer necessary to deal with savages: his powers were called upon to cope with those of white men who came to a new country to struggle for livelihood and fortune. Some were shrewd, some were desperate, some were dishonest. But shrewdness never outwitted, desperation never overcame, dishonesty never deceived the second Reuben Vanderpoel. Each characteristic ended by adapting itself to his own purposes and qualities, and as a result of each it was he who in any business transaction was the gainer. It was the common saying that the Vanderpoels were possessed of a money-making spell. Their spell lay in their entire mental and physical absorption in one idea. Their peculiarity was not so much that they wished to be rich as that Nature itself impelled them to collect wealth as the load-stone draws towards it iron. Having possessed nothing, they became rich, having become rich they became richer, having founded their fortunes on small schemes, they increased them by enormous ones. In time they attained that omnipotence of wealth which it would seem no circumstance can control or limit. The first Reuben Vanderpoel could not spell, the second could, the third was as well educated as a man could be whose sole profession is money-making. His children were taught all that expensive teachers and expensive opportunities could teach them. After the second generation the meagre and mercantile physical type of the Vanderpoels improved upon itself. Feminine good looks appeared and were made the most of. The Vanderpoel element invested even good looks to an advantage. The fourth Reuben Vanderpoel had no son and two daughters. They were brought up in a brown-stone

mansion built upon a fashionable New York thoroughfare roaring with traffic. To the farthest point of the Rocky Mountains the number of dollars this "mansion" (it was always called so) had cost, was known. There may have existed Pueblo Indians who had heard rumours of the price of it. All the shop-keepers and farmers in the United States had read newspaper descriptions of its furnishings and knew the value of the brocade which hung in the bedrooms and boudoirs of the Misses Vanderpoel. It was a fact much cherished that Miss Rosalie's bath was of Carrara marble, and to good souls actively engaged in doing their own washing in small New England or Western towns, it was a distinct luxury to be aware that the water in the Carrara marble bath was perfumed with Florentine Iris. Circumstances such as these seemed to become personal possessions and even to lighten somewhat the burden of toil.

Rosalie Vanderpoel married an Englishman of title, and part of the story of her married life forms my prologue. Hers was of the early international marriages, and the republican mind had not yet adjusted itself to all that such alliances might imply. It was yet ingenuous, imaginative and confiding in such matters. A baronetcy and a manor house reigning over an old English village and over villagers in possible smock frocks, presented elements of picturesque dignity to people whose intimacy with such allurements had been limited by the novels of Mrs. Oliphant and other writers. The most ordinary little anecdotes in which vicarages, gamekeepers, and dowagers figured, were exciting in these early days. "Sir Nigel Anstruthers," when engraved upon a visiting card, wore an air of distinction almost startling. Sir Nigel himself was not as picturesque as his name, though he was not entirely without attraction, when for reasons of his own he chose to aim at agreeableness of bearing. He was a man with a good figure and a good voice, and but for a heaviness of feature

the result of objectionable living, might have given the impression of being better looking than he really was. New York laid amused and at the same time, charmed stress upon the fact that he spoke with an "English accent." His enunciation was in fact clear cut and treated its vowels well. He was a man who observed with an air of accustomed punctiliousness such social rules and courtesies as he deemed it expedient to consider. An astute worldling had remarked that he was at once more ceremonious and more casual in his manner than men bred in America.

"If you invite him to dinner," the wording said, "or if you die, or marry, or meet with an accident, his notes of condolence or congratulation are prompt and civil, but the actual truth is that he cares nothing whatever about you or your relations, and if you don't please him he does not hesitate to sulk or be astonishingly rude, which last an American does not allow himself to be, as a rule."

By many people Sir Nigel was not analysed, but accepted. He was of the early English who came to New York, and was a novelty of interest, with his background of Manor House and village and old family name. He was very much talked of at vivacious ladies' luncheon parties, he was very much talked to at equally vivacious afternoon teas. At dinner parties he was furtively watched a good deal, but after dinner when he sat with the men over their wine, he was not popular. He was not perhaps exactly disliked, but men whose chief interest at that period lay in stocks and railroads, did not find conversation easy with a man whose sole occupation had been the shooting of birds and the hunting of foxes, when he was not absolutely loitering about London, with his time on his hands. The stories he told—and they were few—were chiefly anecdotes whose points gained their humour by the fact that a man was a comically bad shot or bad rider and either peppered a gamekeeper or was thrown into a ditch when his horse

went over a hedge, and such relations did not increase in the poignancy of their interest by being filtered through brains accustomed to applying their powers to problems of speculation and commerce. He was not so dull but that he perceived this at an early stage of his visit to New York, which was probably the reason of the infrequency of his stories.

He on his side was naturally not quick to rise to the humour of a "big deal" or a big blunder made on Wall Street—or to the wit of jokes concerning them. Upon the whole he would have been glad to have understood such matters more clearly. His circumstances were such as had at last forced him to contemplate the world of money-makers with something of an annoyed respect. "These fellows" who had neither titles nor estates to keep up could make money. He, as he acknowledged disgustedly to himself, was much worse than a beggar. There was Stornham Court in a state of ruin—the estate going to the dogs, the farmhouses tumbling to pieces and he, so to speak, without a sixpence to bless himself with, and head over heels in debt. Englishmen of the rank which in bygone times had not associated itself with trade had begun at least to trifle with it—to consider its potentialities as factors possibly to be made useful by the aristocracy. Countesses had not yet spiritedly opened milliners' shops, nor belted Earls adorned the stage, but certain noblemen had dallied with beer and coquetted with stocks. One of the first commercial developments had been the discovery of America—particularly of New York—as a place where if one could make up one's mind to the plunge, one might marry one's sons profitably. At the outset it presented a field so promising as to lead to rashness and indiscretion on the part of persons not given to analysis of character and in consequence relying too serenely upon an ingenuousness which rather speedily revealed that it had its limits. Ingenuousness combining itself with remarkable alertness

of perception on occasion, is rather American than English, and is, therefore, to the English mind, misleading.

At first younger sons, who "gave trouble" to their families, were sent out. Their names, their backgrounds of castles or manors, relatives of distinction, London seasons, fox hunting, Buckingham Palace and Goodwood Races, formed a picturesque allurements. That the castles and manors would belong to their elder brothers, that the relatives of distinction did not encourage intimacy with swarms of the younger branches of their families; that London seasons, hunting, and racing were for their elders and betters, were facts not realised in all their importance by the republican mind. In the course of time they were realised to the full, but in Rosalie Vanderpoel's nineteenth year they covered what was at that time almost unknown territory. One may rest assured Sir Nigel Anstruthers said nothing whatsoever in New York of an interview he had had before sailing with an intensely disagreeable great-aunt, who was the wife of a Bishop. She was a horrible old woman with a broad face, blunt features and a raucous voice, whose tones added acridity to her observations when she was indulging in her favourite pastime of interfering with the business of her acquaintances and relations.

"I do not know what you are going chasing off to America for, Nigel," she commented. "You can't afford it and it is perfectly ridiculous of you to take it upon yourself to travel for pleasure as if you were a man of means instead of being in such a state of pocket that Maria tells me you cannot pay your tailor. Neither the Bishop nor I can do anything for you and I hope you don't expect it. All I can hope is that you know yourself what you are going to America in search of, and that it is something more practical than buffaloes. You had better stop in New York. Those big shopkeepers' daughters are enormously rich, they say, and they are immensely pleased by attentions from men of your class. They say they'll marry anything if it has an aunt or a

grandmother with a title. You can mention the Marchioness, you know. You need not refer to the fact that she thought your father a blackguard and your mother an interloper, and that you have never been invited to Broadmere since you were born. You can refer casually to me and to the Bishop and to the Palace, too. A Palace—even a Bishop's—ought to go a long way with Americans. They will think it is something royal." She ended her remarks with one of her most insulting snorts of laughter, and Sir Nigel became dark red and looked as if he would like to knock her down.

It was not, however, her sentiments which were particularly revolting to him. If she had expressed them in a manner more flattering to himself he would have felt that there was a good deal to be said for them. In fact, he had put the same thing to himself some time previously, and, in summing up the American matter, had reached certain thrifty decisions. The impulse to knock her down surged within him solely because he had a brutally bad temper when his vanity was insulted, and he was furious at her impudence in speaking to him as if he were a villager out of work whom she was at liberty to bully and lecture.

"For a woman who is supposed to have been born of gentle people," he said to his mother afterwards, "Aunt Marian is the most vulgar old beast I have ever beheld. She has the taste of a female costermonger." Which was entirely true, but it might be added that his own was no better and his points of view and morals wholly coincided with his taste.

Naturally Rosalie Vanderpoel knew nothing of this side of the matter. She had been a petted, butterfly child, who had been pretty and admired and indulged from her infancy; she had grown up into a petted, butterfly girl, pretty and admired and surrounded by inordinate luxury. Her world had been made up of good-natured, lavish friends and relations, who enjoyed themselves and felt a delight in her

girlish toilettes and triumphs. She had spent her one season of belledom in being whirled from festivity to festivity, in dancing in rooms festooned with thousands of dollars' worth of flowers, in lunching or dining at tables loaded with roses and violets and orchids, from which ballrooms or feasts she had borne away wonderful "favours" and gifts, whose prices, being recorded in the newspapers, caused a thrill of delight or envy to pass over the land. She was a slim little creature, with quantities of light feathery hair like a French doll's. She had small hands and small feet and a small waist—a small brain also, it must be admitted, but she was an innocent, sweet-tempered girl with a childlike simpleness of mind. In fine, she was exactly the girl to find Sir Nigel's domineering temperament at once imposing and attractive, so long as it was cloaked by the ceremonies of external good breeding.

Her sister Bettina, who was still a child, was of a stronger and less susceptible nature. Betty—at eight—had long legs and a square but delicate small face. Her well-opened steel-blue eyes were noticeable for rather extravagant ink-black lashes and a straight young stare which seemed to accuse if not to condemn. She was being educated at a ruinously expensive school with a number of other inordinately rich little girls, who were all too wonderfully dressed and too lavishly supplied with pocket money. The school considered itself especially refined and select, but was in fact interestingly vulgar.

The inordinately rich little girls, who had most of them pretty and spiritual or pretty and piquant faces, ate a great many bon bons and chattered a great deal in high unmodulated voices about the parties their sisters and other relatives went to and the dresses they wore. Some of them were nice little souls, who in the future would emerge from their chrysalis state enchanting women, but they used colloquialisms freely, and had an ingenuous habit of referring to the prices of things. Bettina Vanderpoel, who

was the richest and cleverest and most promisingly handsome among them, was colloquial to slanginess, but she had a deep, mellow, child voice and an amazing carriage.

She could not endure Sir Nigel Anstruthers, and, being an American child, did not hesitate to express herself with force, if with some crudeness. "He's a hateful thing," she said, "I loathe him. He's stuck up and he thinks you are afraid of him and he likes it."

Sir Nigel had known only English children, little girls who lived in that discreet corner of their parents' town or country houses known as "the schoolroom," apparently emerging only for daily walks with governesses; girls with long hair and boys in little high hats and with faces which seemed curiously made to match them. Both boys and girls were decently kept out of the way and not in the least dwelt on except when brought out for inspection during the holidays and taken to the pantomime.

Sir Nigel had not realised that an American child was an absolute factor to be counted with, and a "youngster" who entered the drawing-room when she chose and joined fearlessly in adult conversation was an element he considered annoying. It was quite true that Bettina talked too much and too readily at times, but it had not been explained to her that the opinions of eight years are not always of absorbing interest to the mature. It was also true that Sir Nigel was a great fool for interfering with what was clearly no affair of his in such a manner as would have made him an enemy even had not the child's instinct arrayed her against him at the outset.

"You American youngsters are too cheeky," he said on one of the occasions when Betty had talked too much. "If you were my sister and lived at Stornham Court, you would be learning lessons in the schoolroom and wearing a pinafore. Nobody ever saw my sister Emily when she was your age."

"Well, I'm not your sister Emily," retorted Betty, "and I guess I'm glad of it."

It was rather impudent of her, but it must be confessed that she was not infrequently rather impudent in a rude little-girl way, but she was serenely unconscious of the fact.

Sir Nigel flushed darkly and laughed a short, unpleasant laugh. If she had been his sister Emily she would have fared ill at the moment, for his villainous temper would have got the better of him.

"I 'guess' that I may be congratulated too," he sneered.

"If I was going to be anybody's sister Emily," said Betty, excited a little by the sense of the fray, "I shouldn't want to be yours."

"Now Betty, don't be hateful," interposed Rosalie, laughing, and her laugh was nervous. "There's Mina Thalberg coming up the front steps. Go and meet her."

Rosalie, poor girl, always found herself nervous when Sir Nigel and Betty were in the room together. She instinctively recognised their antagonism and was afraid Betty would do something an English baronet would think vulgar. Her simple brain could not have explained to her why it was that she knew Sir Nigel often thought New Yorkers vulgar. She was, however, quite aware of this but imperfectly concealed fact, and felt a timid desire to be explanatory.

When Bettina marched out of the room with her extraordinary carriage finely manifest, Rosy's little laugh was propitiatory.

"You mustn't mind her," she said. "She's a real splendid little thing, but she's got a quick temper. It's all over in a minute."

"They wouldn't stand that sort of thing in England," said Sir Nigel. "She's deucedly spoiled, you know."

He detested the child. He disliked all children, but this one awakened in him more than mere dislike. The fact was that though Betty herself was wholly unconscious of the

subtle truth, the as yet undeveloped intellect which later made her a brilliant and captivating personality, vaguely saw him as he was, an unscrupulous, sordid brute, as remorseless an adventurer and swindler in his special line, as if he had been engaged in drawing false cheques and arranging huge jewel robberies, instead of planning to entrap into a disadvantageous marriage a girl whose gentleness and fortune could be used by a blackguard of reputable name. The man was cold-blooded enough to see that her gentle weakness was of value because it could be bullied, her money was to be counted on because it could be spent on himself and his degenerate vices and on his racked and ruined name and estate, which must be rebuilt and restocked at an early date by someone or other, lest they tumbled into ignominious collapse which could not be concealed. Bettina of the accusing eyes did not know that in the depth of her yet crude young being, instinct was summing up for her the potentialities of an unusually fine specimen of the British blackguard, but this was nevertheless the interesting truth. When later she was told that her sister had become engaged to Sir Nigel Anstruthers, a flame of colour flashed over her face, she stared silently a moment, then bit her lip and burst into tears.

"Well, Bett," exclaimed Rosalie, "you are the queerest thing I ever saw."

Bettina's tears were an outburst, not a flow. She swept them away passionately with her small handkerchief.

"He'll do something awful to you," she said. "He'll nearly kill you. I know he will. I'd rather be dead myself."

She dashed out of the room, and could never be induced to say a word further about the matter. She would indeed have found it impossible to express her intense antipathy and sense of impending calamity. She had not the phrases to make herself clear even to herself, and after all what

controlling effort can one produce when one is only eight years old?

CHAPTER II - A LACK OF PERCEPTION

Mercantile as Americans were proclaimed to be, the opinion of Sir Nigel Anstruthers was that they were, on some points, singularly unbusinesslike. In the perfectly obvious and simple matter of the settlement of his daughter's fortune, he had felt that Reuben Vanderpoel was obtuse to the point of idiocy. He seemed to have none of the ordinary points of view. Naturally there was to Anstruthers' mind but one point of view to take. A man of birth and rank, he argued, does not career across the Atlantic to marry a New York millionaire's daughter unless he anticipates deriving some advantage from the alliance. Such a man—being of Anstruthers' type—would not have married a rich woman even in his own country with out making sure that advantages were to accrue to himself as a result of the union. "In England," to use his own words, "there was no nonsense about it." Women's fortunes as well as themselves belonged to their husbands, and a man who was master in his own house could make his wife do as he chose. He had seen girls with money managed very satisfactorily by fellows who held a tight rein, and were not moved by tears, and did not allow talking to relations. If he had been desirous of marrying and could have afforded to take a penniless wife, there were hundreds of portionless girls ready to thank God for a decent chance to settle themselves for life, and one need not stir out of one's native land to find them.

But Sir Nigel had not in the least desired to saddle himself with a domestic encumbrance, in fact nothing would have induced him to consider the step if he had not been driven hard by circumstances. His fortunes had reached a stage where money must be forthcoming

somehow—from somewhere. He and his mother had been living from hand to mouth, so to speak, for years, and they had also been obliged to keep up appearances, which is sometimes embittering even to persons of amiable tempers. Lady Anstruthers, it is true, had lived in the country in as niggardly a manner as possible. She had narrowed her existence to absolute privation, presenting at the same time a stern, bold front to the persons who saw her, to the insufficient staff of servants, to the village to the vicar and his wife, and the few far-distant neighbours who perhaps once a year drove miles to call or leave a card. She was an old woman sufficiently unattractive to find no difficulty in the way of limiting her acquaintances. The unprepossessing wardrobe she had gathered in the passing years was remade again and again by the village dressmaker. She wore dingy old silk gowns and appalling bonnets, and mantles dripping with rusty fringes and bugle beads, but these mitigated not in the least the unflinching arrogance of her bearing, or the simple, intolerant rudeness which she considered proper and becoming in persons like herself. She did not of course allow that there existed many persons like herself.

That society rejoiced in this fact was but the stamp of its inferiority and folly. While she pinched herself and harried her few hirelings at Stornham it was necessary for Sir Nigel to show himself in town and present as decent an appearance as possible. His vanity was far too arrogant to allow of his permitting himself to drop out of the world to which he could not afford to belong. That he should have been forgotten or ignored would have been intolerable to him. For a few years he was invited to dine at good houses, and got shooting and hunting as part of the hospitality of his acquaintances. But a man who cannot afford to return hospitalities will find that he need not expect to avail himself of those of his acquaintances to the end of his career unless he is an extremely engaging person. Sir Nigel

Anstruthers was not an engaging person. He never gave a thought to the comfort or interest of any other human being than himself. He was also dominated by the kind of nasty temper which so reveals itself when let loose that its owner cannot control it even when it would be distinctly to his advantage to do so.

Finding that he had nothing to give in return for what he took as if it were his right, society gradually began to cease to retain any lively recollection of his existence. The tradespeople he had borne himself loftily towards awakened to the fact that he was the kind of man it was at once safe and wise to dun, and therefore proceeded to make his life a burden to him. At his clubs he had never been a member surrounded and rejoiced over when he made his appearance. The time came when he began to fancy that he was rather edged away from, and he endeavoured to sustain his dignity by being sulky and making caustic speeches when he was approached. Driven occasionally down to Stornham by actual pressure of circumstances, he found the outlook there more embittering still.

Lady Anstruthers laid the bareness of the land before him without any effort to palliate unpleasantness. If he chose to stalk about and look glum, she could sit still and call his attention to revolting truths which he could not deny. She could point out to him that he had no money, and that tenants would not stay in houses which were tumbling to pieces, and work land which had been starved. She could tell him just how long a time had elapsed since wages had been paid and accounts cleared off. And she had an engaging, unbiassed way of seeming to drive these maddening details home by the mere manner of her statement.

"You make the whole thing as damned disagreeable as you can," Nigel would snarl.

"I merely state facts," she would reply with acrid serenity.

A man who cannot keep up his estate, pay his tailor or the rent of his lodgings in town, is in a strait which may drive him to desperation. Sir Nigel Anstruthers borrowed some money, went to New York and made his suit to nice little silly Rosalie Vanderpoel.

But the whole thing was unexpectedly disappointing and surrounded by irritating circumstances. He found himself face to face with a state of affairs such as he had not contemplated. In England when a man married, certain practical matters could be inquired into and arranged by solicitors, the amount of the prospective bride's fortune, the allowances and settlements to be made, the position of the bridegroom with regard to pecuniary matters. To put it simply, a man found out where he stood and what he was to gain. But, at first to his sardonic entertainment and later to his disgusted annoyance, Sir Nigel gradually discovered that in the matter of marriage, Americans had an ingenuous tendency to believe in the sentimental feelings of the parties concerned. The general impression seemed to be that a man married purely for love, and that delicacy would make it impossible for him to ask questions as to what his bride's parents were in a position to hand over to him as a sort of indemnity for the loss of his bachelor freedom. Anstruthers began to discover this fact before he had been many weeks in New York. He reached the realisation of its existence by processes of exclusion and inclusion, by hearing casual remarks people let drop, by asking roundabout and careful questions, by leading both men and women to the innocent expounding of certain points of view. Millionaires, it appeared, did not expect to make allowances to men who married their daughters; young women, it transpired, did not in the least realise that a man should be liberally endowed in payment for assuming the duties of a husband. If rich fathers made allowances, they made them to their daughters themselves, who disposed of them as they pleased. In this case, of

course, Sir Nigel privately argued with fine acumen, it became the husband's business to see that what his wife pleased should be what most agreeably coincided with his own views and conveniences.

His most illuminating experience had been the hearing of some men, hard-headed, rich stockbrokers with a vulgar sense of humour, enjoying themselves quite uproariously one night at a club, over a story one of them was relating of an unsatisfactory German son-in-law who had demanded an income. He was a man of small title, who had married the narrator's daughter, and after some months spent in his father-in-law's house, had felt it but proper that his financial position should be put on a practical footing.

"He brought her back after the bridal tour to make us a visit," said the storyteller, a sharp-featured man with a quaint wry mouth, which seemed to express a perpetual, repressed appreciation of passing events. "I had nothing to say against that, because we were all glad to see her home and her mother had been missing her. But weeks passed and months passed and there was no mention made of them going over to settle in the Slosh we'd heard so much of, and in time it came out that the Slosh thing"—Anstruthers realised with gall in his soul that the "brute," as he called him, meant "Schloss," and that his mispronunciation was at once a matter of humour and derision—"wasn't his at all. It was his elder brother's. The whole lot of them were counts and not one of them seemed to own a dime. The Slosh count hadn't more than twenty-five cents and he wasn't the kind to deal any of it out to his family. So Lily's count would have to go clerking in a dry goods store, if he promised to support himself. But he didn't propose to do it. He thought he'd got on to a soft thing. Of course we're an easy-going lot and we should have stood him if he'd been a nice fellow. But he wasn't. Lily's mother used to find her crying in her bedroom and it came out by degrees that it was because Adolf had been

quarrelling with her and saying sneering things about her family. When her mother talked to him he was insulting. Then bills began to come in and Lily was expected to get me to pay them. And they were not the kind of bills a decent fellow calls on another man to pay. But I did it five or six times to make it easy for her. I didn't tell her that they gave an older chap than himself sidelights on the situation. But that didn't work well. He thought I did it because I had to, and he began to feel free and easy about it, and didn't try to cover up his tracks so much when he sent in a new lot. He was always working Lily. He began to consider himself master of the house. He intimated that a private carriage ought to be kept for them. He said it was beggarly that he should have to consider the rest of the family when he wanted to go out. When I got on to the situation, I began to enjoy it. I let him spread himself for a while just to see what he would do. Good Lord! I couldn't have believed that any fellow could have thought any other fellow could be such a fool as he thought I was. He went perfectly crazy after a month or so and ordered me about and patronised me as if I was a bootblack he meant to teach something to. So at last I had a talk with Lily and told her I was going to put an end to it. Of course she cried and was half frightened to death, but by that time he had ill-used her so that she only wanted to get rid of him. So I sent for him and had a talk with him in my office. I led him on to saying all he had on his mind. He explained to me what a condescension it was for a man like himself to marry a girl like Lily. He made a dignified, touching picture of all the disadvantages of such an alliance and all the advantages they ought to bring in exchange to the man who bore up under them. I rubbed my head and looked worried every now and then and cleared my throat apologetically just to warm him up. I can tell you that fellow felt happy, downright happy when he saw how humbly I listened to him. He positively swelled up with hope and comfort. He

thought I was going to turn out well, real well. I was going to pay up just as a vulgar New York father-in-law ought to do, and thank God for the blessed privilege. Why, he was real eloquent about his blood and his ancestors and the hoary-headed Slosh. So when he'd finished, I cleared my throat in a nervous, ingratiating kind of way again and I asked him kind of anxiously what he thought would be the proper thing for a base-born New York millionaire to do under the circumstances—what he would approve of himself."

Sir Nigel was disgusted to see the narrator twist his mouth into a sweet, shrewd, repressed grin even as he expectorated into the nearest receptacle. The grin was greeted by a shout of laughter from his companions.

"What did he say, Stebbins?" someone cried.

"He said," explained Mr. Stebbins deliberately, "he said that an allowance was the proper thing. He said that a man of his rank must have resources, and that it wasn't dignified for him to have to ask his wife or his wife's father for money when he wanted it. He said an allowance was what he felt he had a right to expect. And then he twisted his moustache and said, 'what proposition' did I make—what would I allow him?"

The storyteller's hearers evidently knew him well. Their laughter was louder than before.

"Let's hear the rest, Joe! Let's hear it!"

"Well," replied Mr. Stebbins almost thoughtfully, "I just got up and said, 'Well, it won't take long for me to answer that. I've always been fond of my children, and Lily is rather my pet. She's always had everything she wanted, and she always shall. She's a good girl and she deserves it. I'll allow you——'" The significant deliberation of his drawl could scarcely be described. "I'll allow you just five minutes to get out of this room, before I kick you out, and if I kick you out of the room, I'll kick you down the stairs, and if I kick you down the stairs, I shall have got my blood

comfortably warmed up and I'll kick you down the street and round the block and down to Hoboken, because you're going to take the steamer there and go back to the place you came from, to the Slosh thing or whatever you call it. We haven't a damned bit of use for you here.' And believe it or not, gentlemen——" looking round with the wry-mouthed smile, "he took that passage and back he went. And Lily's living with her mother and I mean to hold on to her."

Sir Nigel got up and left the club when the story was finished. He took a long walk down Broadway, gnawing his lip and holding his head in the air. He used blasphemous language at intervals in a low voice. Some of it was addressed to his fate and some of it to the vulgar mercantile coarseness and obtuseness of other people.

"They don't know what they are talking of," he said. "It is unheard of. What do they expect? I never thought of this. Damn it! I'm like a rat in a trap."

It was plain enough that he could not arrange his fortune as he had anticipated when he decided to begin to make love to little pink and white, doll-faced Rosy Vanderpoel. If he began to demand monetary advantages in his dealing with his future wife's people in their settlement of her fortune, he might arouse suspicion and inquiry. He did not want inquiry either in connection with his own means or his past manner of living. People who hated him would be sure to crop up with stories of things better left alone. There were always meddling fools ready to interfere.

His walk was long and full of savage thinking. Once or twice as he realised what the disinterestedness of his sentiments was supposed to be, a short laugh broke from him which was rather like the snort of the Bishopess.

"I am supposed to be moonstruck over a simpering American chit—moonstruck! Damn!" But when he returned to his hotel he had made up his mind and was beginning to look over the situation in evil cold blood. Matters must be settled without delay and he was shrewd enough to realise

that with his temper and its varied resources a timid girl would not be difficult to manage. He had seen at an early stage of their acquaintance that Rosy was greatly impressed by the superiority of his bearing, that he could make her blush with embarrassment when he conveyed to her that she had made a mistake, that he could chill her miserably when he chose to assume a lofty stiffness. A man's domestic armoury was filled with weapons if he could make a woman feel gauche, inexperienced, in the wrong. When he was safely married, he could pave the way to what he felt was the only practical and feasible end.

If he had been marrying a woman with more brains, she would be more difficult to subdue, but with Rosalie Vanderpoel, processes were not necessary. If you shocked, bewildered or frightened her with accusations, sulks, or sneers, her light, innocent head was set in such a whirl that the rest was easy. It was possible, upon the whole, that the thing might not turn out so infernally ill after all. Supposing that it had been Bettina who had been the marriageable one! Appreciating to the full the many reasons for rejoicing that she had not been, he walked in gloomy reflection home.

CHAPTER III - YOUNG LADY ANSTRUTHERS

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

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

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

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

"I suppose we do make more noise than English people," she admitted a second or so later. "I wonder why?" And without waiting for an answer—somewhat as if she had not expected or quite wanted one—she leaned a little farther over the side to look back, waving her small, fluttering handkerchief to the many still in tumult on the wharf. She was not perceptive or quick enough to take offence, to