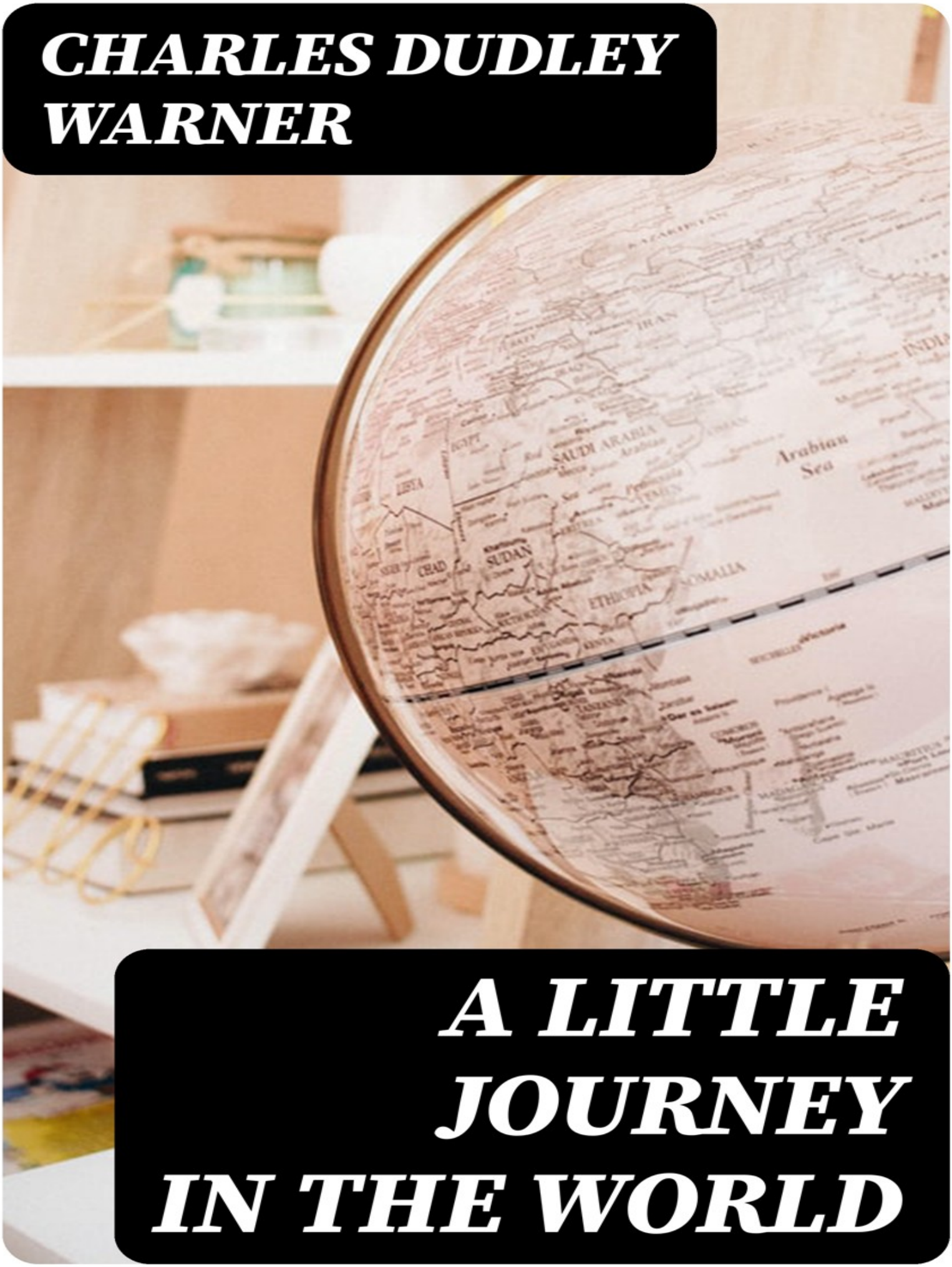
CHARLES DUDLEY WARNER



A LITTLE JOURNEY IN THE WORLD

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We were talking about the want of diversity in American life, the lack of salient characters. It was not at a club. It was a spontaneous talk of people who happened to be together, and who had fallen into an uncompelled habit of happening to be together. There might have been a club for the study of the Want of Diversity in American Life. The members would have been obliged to set apart a stated time for it, to attend as a duty, and to be in a mood to discuss this topic at a set hour in the future. They would have mortgaged another precious portion of the little time left us for individual life. It is a suggestive thought that at a given hour all over the United States innumerable clubs might be considering the Want of Diversity in American Life. Only in this way, according to our present methods, could one expect to accomplish anything in regard to this foreign-felt want. It seems illogical that we could produce diversity by all doing the same thing at the same time, but we know the value of congregate effort. It seems to superficial observers that all Americans are born busy. It is not so. They are born with a fear of not being busy; and if they are intelligent and in circumstances of leisure, they have such a sense of their responsibility that they hasten to allot all their time into portions, and leave no hour unprovided for. This is conscientiousness in women, and not restlessness. There is a day for music, a day for painting, a day for the display of tea-gowns, a day for Dante, a day for the Greek drama, a day for the Dumb Animals' Aid Society, a day for the Society

for the Propagation of Indians, and so on. When the year is over, the amount that has been accomplished by this incessant activity can hardly be estimated. Individually it may not be much. But consider where Chaucer would be but for the work of the Chaucer clubs, and what an effect upon the universal progress of things is produced by the associate concentration upon the poet of so many minds.

A cynic says that clubs and circles are for the accumulation of superficial information and unloading it on others, without much individual absorption in anybody. This, like all cynicism, contains only a half-truth, and simply means that the general diffusion of half-digested information does not raise the general level of intelligence, which can only be raised to any purpose by thorough self-culture, by assimilation, digestion, meditation. The busy bee is a favorite simile with us, and we are apt to overlook the fact that the least important part of his example is buzzing around. If the hive simply got together and buzzed, or even brought unrefined treacle from some cyclopaedia, let us say, of treacle, there would be no honey added to the general store.

It occurred to some one in this talk at last to deny that there was this tiresome monotony in American life. And this put a new face on the discussion. Why should there be, with every race under the heavens represented here, and each one struggling to assert itself, and no homogeneity as yet established even between the people of the oldest States? The theory is that democracy levels, and that the anxious pursuit of a common object, money, tends to uniformity, and that facility of communication spreads all over the land

the same fashion in dress; and repeats everywhere the same style of house, and that the public schools give all the children in the United States the same superficial smartness. And there is a more serious notion, that in a society without classes there is a sort of tyranny of public opinion which crushes out the play of individual peculiarities, without which human intercourse is uninteresting. It is true that a democracy is intolerant of variations from the general level, and that a new society allows less latitude in eccentricities to its members than an old society.

But with all these allowances, it is also admitted that the difficulty the American novelist has is in hitting upon what is universally accepted as characteristic of American life, so various are the types in regions widely separated from each other, such different points of view are had even in conventionalities, and conscience operates so variously on moral problems in one community and another. It is as impossible for one section to impose upon another its rules of taste and propriety in conduct—and taste is often as strong to determine conduct as principle—as it is to make its literature acceptable to the other. If in the land of the sun and the jasmine and the alligator and the fig, the literature of New England seems passionless and timid in face of the ruling emotions of life, ought we not to thank Heaven for the diversity of temperament as well as of climate which will in the long-run save us from that sameness into which we are supposed to be drifting?

When I think of this vast country with any attention to local developments I am more impressed with the

unlikenesses than with the resemblances. And besides this, if one had the ability to draw to the life a single individual in the most homogeneous community, the product would be sufficiently startling. We cannot flatter ourselves, therefore, that under equal laws and opportunities we have rubbed out the saliencies of human nature. At a distance the mass of the Russian people seem as monotonous as their steppes and their commune villages, but the Russian novelists find characters in this mass perfectly individualized, and, indeed, give us the impression that all Russians are irregular polygons. Perhaps if our novelists looked at individuals as intently, they might give the world the impression that social life here is as unpleasant as it appears in the novels to be in Russia.

This is partly the substance of what was said one winter evening before the wood fire in the library of a house in Brandon, one of the lesser New England cities. Like hundreds of residences of its kind, it stood in the suburbs, amid forest-trees, commanding a view of city spires and towers on the one hand, and on the other of a broken country of clustering trees and cottages, rising towards a range of hills which showed purple and warm against the pale straw-color of the winter sunsets. The charm of the situation was that the house was one of many comfortable dwellings, each isolated, and yet near enough together to form a neighborhood; that is to say, a body of neighbors who respected each other's privacy, and yet flowed together, on occasion, without the least conventionality. And a real neighborhood, as our modern life is arranged, is becoming more and more rare.

I am not sure that the talkers in this conversation expressed their real, final sentiments, or that they should be held accountable for what they said. Nothing so surely kills the freedom of talk as to have some matter-of-fact person instantly bring you to book for some impulsive remark flashed out on the instant, instead of playing with it and tossing it about in a way that shall expose its absurdity or show its value. Freedom is lost with too much responsibility and seriousness, and the truth is more likely to be struck out in a lively play of assertion and retort than when all the words and sentiments are weighed. A person very likely cannot tell what he does think till his thoughts are exposed to the air, and it is the bright fallacies and impulsive, rash ventures in conversation that are often most fruitful to talker and listeners. The talk is always tame if no one dares anything. I have seen the most promising paradox come to grief by a simple “Do you think so?” Nobody, I sometimes think, should be held accountable for anything said in private conversation, the vivacity of which is in a tentative play about the subject. And this is a sufficient reason why one should repudiate any private conversation reported in the newspapers. It is bad enough to be held fast forever to what one writes and prints, but to shackle a man with all his flashing utterances, which may be put into his mouth by some imp in the air, is intolerable slavery. A man had better be silent if he can only say today what he will stand by tomorrow, or if he may not launch into the general talk the whim and fancy of the moment. Racy, entertaining talk is only exposed thought, and no one would hold a man responsible for the thronging thoughts that contradict and

displace each other in his mind. Probably no one ever actually makes up his mind until he either acts or puts out his conclusion beyond his recall. Why should one be debarred the privilege of pitching his crude ideas into a conversation where they may have a chance of being precipitated?

I remember that Morgan said in this talk that there was too much diversity. “Almost every church has trouble with it—the different social conditions.”

An Englishman who was present pricked-up his ears at this, as if he expected to obtain a note on the character of Dissenters. “I thought all the churches here were organized on social affinities?” he inquired.

“Oh, no; it is a good deal a matter of vicinage. When there is a real-estate extension, a necessary part of the plan is to build a church in the centre of it, in order to—”

“I declare, Page,” said Mrs. Morgan, “you'll give Mr. Lyon a totally erroneous notion. Of course there must be a church convenient to the worshipers in every district.”

“That is just what I was saying, my dear: As the settlement is not drawn together on religious grounds, but perhaps by purely worldly motives, the elements that meet in the church are apt to be socially incongruous, such as cannot always be fused even by a church-kitchen and a church-parlor.”

“Then it isn't the peculiarity of the church that has attracted to it worshipers who would naturally come together, but the church is a neighborhood necessity?” still further inquired Mr. Lyon.

“All is,” I ventured to put in, “that churches grow up like schoolhouses, where they are wanted.”

“I beg your pardon,” said Mr. Morgan; “I'm talking about the kind of want that creates them. If it's the same that builds a music hall, or a gymnasium, or a railway waiting-room, I've nothing more to say.”

“Is it your American idea, then, that a church ought to be formed only of people socially agreeable together?” asked the Englishman.

“I have no American idea. I am only commenting on facts; but one of them is that it is the most difficult thing in the world to reconcile religious association with the real or artificial claims of social life.”

“I don't think you try much,” said Mrs. Morgan, who carried along her traditional religious observance with grateful admiration of her husband.

Mr. Page Morgan had inherited money, and a certain advantageous position for observing life and criticising it, humorously sometimes, and without any serious intention of disturbing it. He had added to his fair fortune by marrying the daintily reared daughter of a cotton-spinner, and he had enough to do in attending meetings of directors and looking out for his investments to keep him from the operation of the State law regarding vagrants, and give greater social weight to his opinions than if he had been compelled to work for his maintenance. The Page Morgans had been a good deal abroad, and were none the worse Americans for having come in contact with the knowledge that there are other peoples who are reasonably prosperous and happy without any of our advantages.

“It seems to me,” said Mr. Lyon, who was always in the conversational attitude of wanting to know, “that you Americans are disturbed by the notion that religion ought to produce social equality.”

Mr. Lyon had the air of conveying the impression that this question was settled in England, and that America was interesting on account of numerous experiments of this sort. This state of mind was not offensive to his interlocutors, because they were accustomed to it in transatlantic visitors. Indeed, there was nothing whatever offensive, and little defensive, in Mr. John Lyon. What we liked in him, I think, was his simple acceptance of a position that required neither explanation nor apology—a social condition that banished a sense of his own personality, and left him perfectly free to be absolutely truthful. Though an eldest son and next in succession to an earldom, he was still young. Fresh from Oxford and South Africa and Australia and British Columbia he had come to study the States with a view of perfecting himself for his duties as a legislator for the world when he should be called to the House of Peers. He did not treat himself like an earl, whatever consciousness he may have had that his prospective rank made it safe for him to flirt with the various forms of equality abroad in this generation.

“I don't know what Christianity is expected to produce,” Mr. Morgan replied, in a meditative way; “but I have an idea that the early Christians in their assemblies all knew each other, having met elsewhere in social intercourse, or, if they were not acquainted, they lost sight of distinctions in one

paramount interest. But then I don't suppose they were exactly civilized."

"Were the Pilgrims and the Puritans?" asked Mrs. Fletcher, who now joined the talk, in which she had been a most animated and stimulating listener, her deep gray eyes dancing with intellectual pleasure.

"I should not like to answer 'no' to a descendant of the Mayflower. Yes, they were highly civilized. And if we had adhered to their methods, we should have avoided a good deal of confusion. The meeting-house, you remember, had a committee for seating people according to their quality. They were very shrewd, but it had not occurred to them to give the best pews to the sitters able to pay the most money for them. They escaped the perplexity of reconciling the mercantile and the religious ideas."

"At any rate," said Mrs. Fletcher, "they got all sorts of people inside the same meeting-house."

"Yes, and made them feel they were all sorts; but in those, days they were not much disturbed by that feeling."

"Do you mean to say," asked Mr. Lyon, "that in this country you have churches for the rich and other churches for the poor?"

"Not at all. We have in the cities rich churches and poor churches, with prices of pews according to the means of each sort, and the rich are always glad to have the poor come, and if they do not give them the best seats, they equalize it by taking up a collection for them."

"Mr. Lyon," Mrs. Morgan interrupted, "you are getting a travesty of the whole thing. I don't believe there is

elsewhere in the world such a spirit of Christian charity as in our churches of all sects.”

“There is no doubt about the charity; but that doesn't seem to make the social machine run any more smoothly in the church associations. I'm not sure but we shall have to go back to the old idea of considering the churches places of worship, and not opportunities for sewing-societies, and the cultivation of social equality.”

“I found the idea in Rome,” said Mr. Lyon, “that the United States is now the most promising field for the spread and permanence of the Roman Catholic faith.”

“How is that?” Mr. Fletcher asked, with a smile of Puritan incredulity.

“A high functionary at the Propaganda gave as a reason that the United States is the most democratic country and the Roman Catholic is the most democratic religion, having this one notion that all men, high or low, are equally sinners and equally in need of one thing only. And I must say that in this country I don't find the question of social equality interfering much with the work in their churches.”

“That is because they are not trying to make this world any better, but only to prepare for another,” said Mrs. Fletcher.

“Now, we think that the nearer we approach the kingdom-of-heaven idea on earth, the better off we shall be hereafter. Is that a modern idea?”

“It is an idea that is giving us a great deal of trouble. We've got into such a sophisticated state that it seems easier to take care of the future than of the present.”

“And it isn't a very bad doctrine that if you take care of the present, the future will take care of itself,” rejoined Mrs. Fletcher.

“Yes, I know,” insisted Mr. Morgan; “it's the modern notion of accumulation and compensation—take care of the pennies and the pounds will take care of themselves—the gospel of Benjamin Franklin.”

“Ah,” I said, looking up at the entrance of a newcomer, “you are just in time, Margaret, to give the coup de grace, for it is evident by Mr. Morgan's reference, in his Bunker Hill position, to Franklin, that he is getting out of powder.”

The girl stood a moment, her slight figure framed in the doorway, while the company rose to greet her, with a half-hesitating, half-inquiring look in her bright face which I had seen in it a thousand times.

II

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I remember that it came upon me with a sort of surprise at the moment that we had never thought or spoken much of Margaret Debree as beautiful. We were so accustomed to her; we had known her so long, we had known her always. We had never analyzed our admiration of her. She had so many qualities that are better than beauty that we had not credited her with the more obvious attraction. And perhaps she had just become visibly beautiful. It may be that there is

an instant in a girl's life corresponding to what the Puritans called conversion in the soul, when the physical qualities, long maturing, suddenly glow in an effect which we call beauty. It cannot be that women do not have a consciousness of it, perhaps of the instant of its advent. I remember when I was a child that I used to think that a stick of peppermint candy must burn with a consciousness of its own deliciousness.

Margaret was just turned twenty. As she paused there in the doorway her physical perfection flashed upon me for the first time. Of course I do not mean perfection, for perfection has no promise in it, rather the sad note of limit, and presently recession. In the rounded, exquisite lines of her figure there was the promise of that ineffable fullness and delicacy of womanhood which all the world raves about and destroys and mourns. It is not fulfilled always in the most beautiful, and perhaps never except to the woman who loves passionately, and believes she is loved with a devotion that exalts her body and soul above every other human being.

It is certain that Margaret's beauty was not classic. Her features were irregular even to piquancy. The chin had strength; the mouth was sensitive and not too small; the shapely nose with thin nostrils had an assertive quality that contradicted the impression of humility in the eyes when downcast; the large gray eyes were uncommonly soft and clear, an appearance of alternate tenderness and brilliancy as they were veiled or uncovered by the long lashes. They were gently commanding eyes, and no doubt her most effective point. Her abundant hair, brown with a touch of red

in it in some lights, fell over her broad forehead in the fashion of the time. She had a way of carrying her head, of throwing it back at times, that was not exactly imperious, and conveyed the impression of spirit rather than of mere vivacity. These details seem to me all inadequate and misleading, for the attraction of the face that made it interesting is still undefined. I hesitate to say that there was a dimple near the corner of her mouth that revealed itself when she smiled lest this shall seem mere prettiness, but it may have been the keynote of her face. I only knew there was something about it that won the heart, as a too conscious or assertive beauty never does. She may have been plain, and I may have seen the loveliness of her nature, which I knew well, in features that gave less sign of it to strangers. Yet I noticed that Mr. Lyon gave her a quick second glance, and his manner was instantly that of deference, or at least attention, which he had shown to no other lady in the room. And the whimsical idea came into my mind—we are all so warped by international possibilities—to observe whether she did not walk like a countess (that is, as a countess ought to walk) as she advanced to shake hands with my wife. It is so easy to turn life into a comedy!

Margaret's great-grandmother—no, it was her great-great-grandmother, but we have kept the Revolutionary period so warm lately that it seems near—was a Newport belle, who married an officer in the suite of Rochambeau what time the French defenders of liberty conquered the women of Rhode Island. After the war was over, our officer resigned his love of glory for the heart of one of the loveliest women and the care of the best plantation on the Island. I

have seen a miniature of her, which her lover wore at Yorktown, and which he always swore that Washington coveted—a miniature painted by a wandering artist of the day, which entirely justifies the French officer in his abandonment of the trade of a soldier. Such is man in his best estate. A charming face can make him campaign and fight and slay like a demon, can make a coward of him, can fill him with ambition to win the world, and can tame him into the domesticity of a drawing-room cat. There is this noble capacity in man to respond to the divinest thing visible to him in this world. Etienne Debree became, I believe, a very good citizen of the republic, and in '93 used occasionally to shake his head with satisfaction to find that it was still on his shoulders. I am not sure that he ever visited Mount Vernon, but after Washington's death Debree's intimacy with our first President became a more and more important part of his life and conversation. There is a pleasant tradition that Lafayette, when he was here in 1784, embraced the young bride in the French manner, and that this salute was valued as a sort of heirloom in the family.

I always thought that Margaret inherited her New England conscience from her great-great-grandmother, and a certain esprit or gayety—that is, a sub-gayety which was never frivolity—from her French ancestor. Her father and mother had died when she was ten years old, and she had been reared by a maiden aunt, with whom she still lived. The combined fortunes of both required economy, and after Margaret had passed her school course she added to their resources by teaching in a public school. I remember that she taught history, following, I suppose, the American notion

that any one can teach history who has a text-book, just as he or she can teach literature with the same help. But it happened that Margaret was a better teacher than many, because she had not learned history in school, but in her father's well-selected library.

There was a little stir at Margaret's entrance; Mr. Lyon was introduced to her, and my wife, with that subtle feeling for effect which women have, slightly changed the lights. Perhaps Margaret's complexion or her black dress made this readjustment necessary to the harmony of the room. Perhaps she felt the presence of a different temperament in the little circle.

I never can tell exactly what it is that guides her in regard to the influence of light and color upon the intercourse of people, upon their conversation, making it take one cast or another. Men are susceptible to these influences, but it is women alone who understand how to produce them. And a woman who has not this subtle feeling always lacks charm, however intellectual she may be; I always think of her as sitting in the glare of disenchanting sunlight as indifferent to the exposure as a man would be. I know in a general way that a sunset light induces one kind of talk and noonday light another, and I have learned that talk always brightens up with the addition of a fresh crackling stick to the fire. I shouldn't have known how to change the lights for Margaret, although I think I had as distinct an impression of her personality as had my wife. There was nothing disturbing in it; indeed, I never saw her otherwise than serene, even when her voice betrayed strong emotion. The quality that impressed me most,

however, was her sincerity, coupled with intellectual courage and clearness that had almost the effect of brilliancy, though I never thought of her as a brilliant woman.

“What mischief have you been attempting, Mr. Morgan?” asked Margaret, as she took a chair near him. “Were you trying to make Mr. Lyon comfortable by dragging in Bunker Hill?”

“No; that was Mr. Fairchild, in his capacity as host.”

“Oh, I'm sure you needn't mind me,” said Mr. Lyon, good-humoredly. “I landed in Boston, and the first thing I went to see was the Monument. It struck me as so odd, you know, that the Americans should begin life by celebrating their first defeat.”

“That is our way,” replied Margaret, quickly. “We have started on a new basis over here; we win by losing. He who loses his life shall find it. If the red slayer thinks he slays he is mistaken. You know the Southerners say that they surrendered at last simply because they got tired of beating the North.”

“How odd!”

“Miss Debree simply means,” I exclaimed, “that we have inherited from the English an inability to know when we are whipped.”

“But we were not fighting the battle of Bunker Hill, or fighting about it, which is more serious, Miss Debree. What I wanted to ask you was whether you think the domestication of religion will affect its power in the regulation of conduct.”

“Domestication? You are too deep for me, Mr. Morgan. I don't any more understand you than I comprehend the

writers who write about the feminization of literature."

"Well, taking the mystery out of it, the predominant element of worship, making the churches sort of good-will charitable associations for the spread of sociability and good-feeling."

"You mean making Christianity practical?"

"Partially that. It is a part of the general problem of what women are going to make of the world, now they have got hold of it, or are getting hold of it, and are discontented with being women, or with being treated as women, and are bringing their emotions into all the avocations of life."

"They cannot make it any worse than it has been."

"I'm not sure of that. Robustness is needed in churches as much as in government. I don't know how much the cause of religion is advanced by these church clubs of Christian Endeavor if that is the name, associations of young boys and girls who go about visiting other like clubs in a sufficiently hilarious manner. I suppose it's the spirit of the age. I'm just wondering whether the world is getting to think more of having a good time than it is of salvation."

"And you think woman's influence—for you cannot mean anything else—is somehow taking the vigor out of affairs, making even the church a soft, purring affair, reducing us all to what I suppose you would call a mush of domesticity."

"Or femininity."

"Well, the world has been brutal enough; it had better try a little femininity now."

"I hope it will not be more cruel to women."

"That is not an argument; that is a stab. I fancy you are altogether skeptical about woman. Do you believe in her

education?”

“Up to a certain point, or rather, I should say, after a certain point.”

“That's it,” spoke up my wife, shading her eyes from the fire with a fan. “I begin to have my doubts about education as a panacea. I've noticed that girls with only a smattering—and most of them in the nature of things can go, no further—are more liable to temptations.”

“That is because 'education' is mistaken for the giving of information without training, as we are finding out in England,” said Mr. Lyon.

“Or that it is dangerous to awaken the imagination without a heavy ballast of principle,” said Mr. Morgan.

“That is a beautiful sentiment,” Margaret exclaimed, throwing back her head, with a flash from her eyes. “That ought to shut out women entirely. Only I cannot see how teaching women what men know is going to give them any less principle than men have. It has seemed to me a long while that the time has come for treating women like human beings, and giving them the responsibility of their position.”

“And what do you want, Margaret?” I asked.

“I don't know exactly what I do want,” she answered, sinking back in her chair, sincerity coming to modify her enthusiasm. “I don't want to go to Congress, or be a sheriff, or a lawyer, or a locomotive engineer. I want the freedom of my own being, to be interested in everything in the world, to feel its life as men do. You don't know what it is to have an inferior person condescend to you simply because he is a man.”

“Yet you wish to be treated as a woman?” queried Mr. Morgan.

“Of course. Do you think I want to banish romance out of the world?”

“You are right, my dear,” said my wife. “The only thing that makes society any better than an industrial ant-hill is the love between women and men, blind and destructive as it often is.”

“Well,” said Mrs. Morgan, rising to go, “having got back to first principles—”

“You think it is best to take your husband home before he denies even them,” Mr. Morgan added.

When the others had gone, Margaret sat by the fire, musing, as if no one else were in the room. The Englishman, still alert and eager for information, regarded her with growing interest. It came into my mind as odd that, being such an uninteresting people as we are, the English should be so curious about us. After an interval, Mr. Lyon said:

“I beg your pardon, Miss Debree, but would you mind telling me whether the movement of Women's Rights is gaining in America?”

“I'm sure I don't know, Mr. Lyon,” Margaret replied, after a pause, with a look of weariness. “I'm tired of all the talk about it. I wish men and women, every soul of them, would try to make the most of themselves, and see what would come of that.”

“But in some places they vote about schools, and you have conventions—”

“Did you ever attend any kind of convention yourself, Mr. Lyon?”

“I? No. Why?”

“Oh, nothing. Neither did I. But you have a right to, you know. I should like to ask you one question, Mr. Lyon,” the girl, continued, rising.

“Should be most obliged.”

“Why is it that so few English women marry Americans?”

“I—I never thought of that,” he stammered, reddening. “Perhaps—perhaps it's because of American women.”

“Thank you,” said Margaret, with a little courtesy. “It's very nice of you to say that. I can begin to see now why so many American women marry Englishmen.”

The Englishman blushed still more, and Margaret said good-night.

It was quite evident the next day that Margaret had made an impression on our visitor, and that he was struggling with some new idea.

“Did you say, Mrs. Fairchild,” he asked my wife, “that Miss Debree is a teacher? It seems very odd.”

“No; I said she taught in one of our schools. I don't think she is exactly a teacher.”

“Not intending always to teach?”

“I don't suppose she has any definite intentions, but I never think of her as a teacher.”

“She's so bright, and—and interesting, don't you think? So American?”

“Yes; Miss Debree is one of the exceptions.”

“Oh, I didn't mean that all American women were as clever as Miss Debree.”

“Thank you,” said my wife. And Mr. Lyon looked as if he couldn't see why she should thank him.

The cottage in which Margaret lived with her aunt, Miss Forsythe, was not far from our house. In summer it was very pretty, with its vine-shaded veranda across the front; and even in winter, with the inevitable raggedness of deciduous vines, it had an air of refinement, a promise which the cheerful interior more than fulfilled. Margaret's parting word to my wife the night before had been that she thought her aunt would like to see the “chrysalis earl,” and as Mr. Lyon had expressed a desire to see something more of what he called the “gentry” of New England, my wife ended their afternoon walk at Miss Forsythe's.

It was one of the winter days which are rare in New England, but of which there had been a succession all through the Christmas holidays. Snow had not yet come, all the earth was brown and frozen, whichever way you looked the interlacing branches and twigs of the trees made a delicate lace-work, the sky was gray-blue, and the low-sailing sun had just enough heat to evoke moisture from the frosty ground and suffuse the atmosphere into softness, in which all the landscape became poetic. The phenomenon known as “red sunsets” was faintly repeated in the greenish crimson glow along the violet hills, in which Venus burned like a jewel.

There was a fire smoldering on the hearth in the room they entered, which seemed to be sitting-room, library, parlor, all in one; the old table of oak, too substantial for ornament, was strewn with late periodicals and pamphlets—English, American, and French—and with books which lay unarranged as they were thrown down from recent reading. In the centre was a bunch of red roses in a pale-blue

Granada jug. Miss Forsythe rose from a seat in the western window, with a book in her hand, to greet her callers. She was slender, like Margaret, but taller, with soft brown eyes and hair streaked with gray, which, sweeping plainly aside from her forehead in a fashion then antiquated, contrasted finely with the flush of pink in her cheeks. This flush did not suggest youth, but rather ripeness, the tone that comes with the lines made in the face by gentle acceptance of the inevitable in life. In her quiet and self-possessed manner there was a little note of graceful timidity, not perhaps noticeable in itself, but in contrast with that unmistakable air of confidence which a woman married always has, and which in the unrefined becomes assertive, an exaggerated notion of her importance, of the value added to her opinions by the act of marriage. You can see it in her air the moment she walks away from the altar, keeping step to Mendelssohn's tune. Jack Sharpley says that she always seems to be saying, “Well, I've done it once for all.” This assumption of the married must be one of the hardest things for single women to bear in their self-congratulating sisters.

I have no doubt that Georgiana Forsythe was a charming girl, spirited and handsome; for the beauty of her years, almost pathetic in its dignity and self-renunciation, could not have followed mere prettiness or a commonplace experience. What that had been I never inquired, but it had not soured her. She was not communicative nor confidential, I fancy, with any one, but she was always friendly and sympathetic to the trouble of others, and helpful in an undemonstrative way. If she herself had a secret feeling that

her life was a failure, it never impressed her friends so, it was so even, and full of good offices and quiet enjoyment. Heaven only knows, however, the pathos of this apparently undisturbed life. For did a woman ever live who would not give all the years of tasteless serenity, for one year, for one month, for one hour, of the uncalculating delirium of love poured out upon a man who returned it? It may be better for the world that there are these women to whom life has still some mysteries, who are capable of illusions and the sweet sentimentality that grows out of a romance unrealized.

Although the recent books were on Miss Forsythe's table, her tastes and culture were of the past age. She admired Emerson and Tennyson. One may keep current with the news of the world without changing his principles. I imagine that Miss Forsythe read without injury to herself the passionate and the pantheistic novels of the young women who have come forward in these days of emancipation to teach their grandmothers a new basis of morality, and to render meaningless all the consoling epitaphs on the mossy New England gravestones. She read Emerson for his sweet spirit, for his belief in love and friendship, her simple Congregationalist faith remaining undisturbed by his philosophy, from which she took only a habit of toleration.

“Miss Debree has gone to church,” she said, in answer to Mr. Lyon's glance around the room.

“To vespers?”

“I believe they call it that. Our evening meetings, you know, only begin at early candlelight.”

“And you do not belong to the Church?”

“Oh, yes, to the ancient aristocratic church of colonial times,” she replied, with a little smile of amusement. “My niece has stepped off Plymouth Rock.”

“And was your religion founded on Plymouth Rock?”

“My niece says so when I rally her deserting the faith of her fathers,” replied Miss Forsythe, laughing at the working of the Episcopalian mind.

“I should like to understand about that; I mean about the position of Dissenters in America.”

“I'm afraid I could not help you, Mr. Lyon. I fancy an Englishman would have to be born again, as the phrase used to be, to comprehend that.”

While Mr. Lyon was still unsatisfied on this point, he found the conversation shifted to the other side. Perhaps it was a new experience to him that women should lead and not follow in conversation. At any rate, it was an experience that put him at his ease. Miss Forsythe was a great admirer of Gladstone and of General Gordon, and she expressed her admiration with a knowledge that showed she had read the English newspapers.

“Yet I confess I don't comprehend Gladstone's conduct with regard to Egypt and Gordon's relief,” she said.

“Perhaps,” interposed my wife, “it would have been better for Gordon if he had trusted Providence more and Gladstone less.”

“I suppose it was Gladstone's humanity that made him hesitate.”

“To bombard Alexandria?” asked Mr. Lyon, with a look of asperity.

“That was a mistake to be expected of a Tory, but not of Mr. Gladstone, who seems always seeking the broadest principles of justice in his statesmanship.”

“Yes, we regard Mr. Gladstone as a very great man, Miss Forsythe. He is broad enough. You know we consider him a rhetorical phenomenon. Unfortunately he always 'muffs' anything he touches.”

“I suspected,” Miss Forsythe replied, after a moment, “that party spirit ran as high in England as it does with us, and is as personal.”

Mr. Lyon disclaimed any personal feeling, and the talk drifted into a comparison of English and American politics, mainly with reference to the social factor in English politics, which is so little an element here.

In the midst of the talk Margaret came in. The brisk walk in the rosy twilight had heightened her color, and given her a glowing expression which her face had not the night before, and a tenderness and softness, an unworldliness, brought from the quiet hour in the church.

“My lady comes at last,
Timid and stepping fast,
And hastening hither,
Her modest eyes downcast.”

She greeted the stranger with a Puritan undemonstrativeness, and as if not exactly aware of his presence.

“I should like to have gone to vespers if I had known,” said Mr. Lyon, after an embarrassing pause.

“Yes?” asked the girl, still abstractedly. “The world seems in a vesper mood,” she added, looking out the west windows at the red sky and the evening star.

In truth Nature herself at the moment suggested that talk was an impertinence. The callers rose to go, with an exchange of neighborhood friendliness and invitations.

“I had no idea,” said Mr. Lyon, as they walked homeward, “what the New World was like.”

III

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Mr. Lyon's invitation was for a week. Before the end of the week I was called to New York to consult Mr. Henderson in regard to a railway investment in the West, which was turning out more permanent than profitable. Rodney Henderson—the name later became very familiar to the public in connection with a certain Congressional

investigation—was a graduate of my own college, a New Hampshire boy, a lawyer by profession, who practiced, as so many American lawyers do, in Wall Street, in political combinations, in Washington, in railways. He was already known as a rising man.

When I returned Mr. Lyon was still at our house. I understood that my wife had persuaded him to extend his visit—a proposal he was little reluctant to fall in with, so interested had he become in studying social life in America. I could well comprehend this, for we are all making a “study” of something in this age, simple enjoyment being considered an unworthy motive. I was glad to see that the young Englishman was improving himself, broadening his knowledge of life, and not wasting the golden hours of youth. Experience is what we all need, and though love or love-making cannot be called a novelty, there is something quite fresh about the study of it in the modern spirit.

Mr. Lyon had made himself very agreeable to the little circle, not less by his inquiring spirit than by his unaffected manners, by a kind of simplicity which women recognize as unconscious, the result of an inherited habit of not thinking about one's position. In excess it may be very disagreeable, but when it is combined with genuine good-nature and no self-assertion, it is attractive. And although American women like a man who is aggressive towards the world and combative, there is the delight of novelty in one who has leisure to be agreeable, leisure for them, and who seems to their imagination to have a larger range in life than those who are driven by business—one able to offer the peace and security of something attained.