Coolidge Susan

In the High Valley

Susan Coolidge

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Coolidge S.

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Содержание

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CHAPTER I.
ALONG THE NORTH DEVON COAST

IT was a morning of late May, and the sunshine, though rather watery, after the fashion of South-of-England suns, was real sunshine still, and glinted and glittered bravely on the dew-soaked fields about Copplestone Grange.

This was an ancient house of red brick, dating back to the last half of the sixteenth century, and still bearing testimony in its sturdy bulk to the honest and durable work put upon it by its builders. Not a joist had bent, not a girder started in the long course of its two hundred and odd years of life. The brick-work of its twisted chimney-stacks was intact, and the stone carving over its doorways and window frames; only the immense growth of the ivy on its side walls attested to its age. It takes longer to build ivy five feet thick than many castles, and though new masonry by trick and artifice may be made to look like old, there is no secret known to man by which a plant or tree can be induced to simulate an antiquity which does not rightfully belong to it. Innumerable sparrows and tomtits had built in the thick mats of the old ivy, and their cries and twitters blended in shrill and happy chorus as they flew in and out of their nests.

The Grange had been a place of importance, in Queen Elizabeth's time, as the home of an old Devon family which was finally run out and extinguished. It was now little more than a superior sort of farm-house. The broad acres of meadow and pleasaunce and woodland which had given it consequence in former days had been gradually parted with, as misfortunes and losses came to its original owners. The woods had been felled, the pleasure grounds now made part of other people's farms, and the once wide domain had contracted, until the ancient house stood with only a few acres about it, and wore something the air of an old-time belle who has been forcibly divested of her ample farthingale and hooped-petticoat, and made to wear the scant kirtle of a village maid.

Orchards of pear and apple flanked the building to east and west. Behind was a field or two crowning a little upland where sedate cows fed demurely; and in front, toward the south, which was the side of entrance, lay a narrow walled garden, with box-bordered beds full of early flowers, mimulus, sweet-peas, mignonette, stock gillies, and blush and damask roses, carefully tended and making a blaze of color on the face of the bright morning. The whole front of the house was draped with a luxuriant vine of Gloire de Dijon, whose long, pink-yellow buds and cream-flushed cups sent wafts of delicate sweetness with every puff of wind.

Seventy years before the May morning of which we write, Copplestone Grange had fallen at public sale to Edward Young, a well-to-do banker of Bideford. He was a descendant in direct line of that valiant Young who, together with his fellow-seaman Prowse, undertook the dangerous task of steering down and igniting the seven fire-ships which sent the Spanish armada "lumbering off" to sea, and saved England for Queen Elizabeth and the Protestant succession.

Edward Young lived twenty years in peace and honor to enjoy his purchase, and his oldest son James now reigned in his stead, having reared within the old walls a numerous brood of sons and daughters, now scattered over the surface of the world in general, after the sturdy British fashion, till only three or four remained at home, waiting their turn to fly.

One of these now stood at the gate. It was Imogen Young, oldest but one of the four daughters. She was evidently waiting for some one, and waiting rather impatiently.

"We shall certainly be late," she said aloud, "and it's quite too bad of Lion." Then, glancing at the little silver watch in her belt, she began to call, "Lion! Lionel! Oh, Lion! do make haste! It's gone twenty past, and we shall never be there in time."

"Coming," shouted a voice from an upper window; "I'm just washing my hands. Coming in a jiffy, Moggy."

"Jiffy!" murmured Imogen. "How very American Lion has got to be. He's always 'guessing' and 'calculating' and 'reckoning.' It seems as if he did it on purpose to startle and annoy me. I suppose one has got to get used to it if you're over there, but really it's beastly bad form, and I shall keep on telling Lion so."

She was not a pretty girl, but neither was she an ill-looking one. Neither tall nor very slender, her vigorous little figure had still a certain charm of trim erectness and youthful grace, though Imogen was twenty-four, and considered herself very staid and grown-up. A fresh, rosy skin, beautiful hair of a warm, chestnut color, with a natural wave in it, and clear, honest, blue eyes, went far to atone for a thick nose, a wide mouth, and front teeth which projected slightly and seemed a size too large for the face to which they belonged. Her dress did nothing to assist her looks. It was woollen, of an unbecoming shade of yellowish gray; it fitted badly, and the complicated loops and hitches of the skirt bespoke a fashion some time since passed by among those who were particular as to such matters. The effect was not assisted by a pork-pie hat of black straw trimmed with green feathers, a pink ribbon from which depended a silver locket, a belt of deep magenta-red, yellow gloves, and an umbrella bright navy-blue in tint. She had over her arm a purplish water-proof, and her thick, solid boots could defy the mud of her native shire.

"Lion! Lion!" she called again; and this time a tall young fellow responded, running rapidly down the path to join her. He was two years her junior, vigorous, alert, and boyish, with a fresh skin, and tawny, waving hair like her own.

"How long you have been!" she cried reproachfully.

"Grieved to have kept you, Miss," was the reply. "You see, things went contrairy-like. The grease got all over me when I was cleaning the guns, and cold water wouldn't take it off, and that old Saunders took his time about bringing the can of hot, till at last I rushed down and fetched it up myself from the copper. You should have seen cook's face! 'Fancy, Master Lionel,' says she, 'coming yourself for 'ot water!' I tell you, Moggy, Saunders is past his usefulness. He's a regular duffer – a gump."

"There's another American expression. Saunders is a most respectable man, I'm sure, and has been in the family thirty-one years. Of course he has a good deal to do just now, with the packing and all. Now, Lion, we shall have to walk smartly if we're to get there at half-after."

"All right. Here goes for a spin, then."

The brother and sister walked rapidly on down the winding road, in the half-shadow of the bordering hedges. Real Devonshire hedge-rows they were, than which are none lovelier in England, rising eight and ten feet overhead on either side, and topped with delicate, flickering birch and ash boughs blowing in the fresh wind. Below were thick growths of hawthorn, white and pink, and wild white roses in full flower interspersed with maple tips as red as blood, the whole interlaced and held together with thick withes and tangles of ivy, briony, and travellers' joy. Beneath them the ground was strewn with flowers, – violets, and king-cups, poppies, red campions, and blue iris, – while tall spikes of rose-colored foxgloves rose from among ranks of massed ferns, brake, hart's-tongue, and maiden's-hair, with here and there a splendid growth of Osmund Royal. To sight and smell, the hedge-rows were equally delightful.

Copplestone Grange stood three miles west of Bideford, and the house to which the Youngs were going was close above Clovelly, so that a distance of some seven miles separated them. To walk this twice for the sake of lunching with a friend would seem to most young Americans too formidable a task to be at all worth while, but to our sturdy English pair it presented no difficulties. On they went, lightly and steadily, Imogen's elastic steps keeping pace easily with her brother's longer tread. There

was a good deal of up and down hill to get over with, and whenever they topped a rise, green downs ending in wooded cliffs could be seen to the left, and beyond and below an expanse of white-flecked shimmering sea. A salt wind from the channel blew in their faces, full of coolness and refreshment, and there was no dust.

"I suppose we shall never see the ocean from where we are to live," said Imogen, with a sigh.

"Well, hardly, considering it's about fifteen-hundred miles away."

"Fifteen hundred! oh, Lion, you are surely exaggerating. Why, the whole of England is not so large as that, from Land's End to John O'Groat's House."

"I should say not, nothing like it. Why Moggy, you've no idea how small our 'right little, tight little island' really is. You could set it down plump in some of the States, New York, for instance, and there would be quite a tidy fringe of territory left all round it. Of course, morally, we are the standard of size for all the world, but geographically, phew! – our size is little, though our hearts are great."

"I think it's vulgar to be so big, – not that I believe half you say, Lion. You've been over in America so long, and grown such a Yankee, that you swallow everything they choose to tell you. I've always heard about American brag – "

"My dear, there's no need to brag when the facts are there, staring you in the face. It's just a matter of feet and inches, – any one can do the measurement who has a tape-line. Wait till you see it. And as for its being vulgar to be big, why is the 'right little, tight little' always stretching out her long arms to rope in new territory, in that case, I should like to know? It would be much eleganter to keep herself to home – "

"Oh, don't talk that sort of rot; I hate to hear you."

"I must when you talk that kind of – well, let us say 'rubbish.' 'Rot' is one of our choice terms which hasn't got over to the States yet. You're as opiniated and 'narrer' as the little island itself. What do you know about America, any way? Did you ever see an American in your life, child?"

"Yes, several. I saw Buffalo Bill last year, and lots of Indians and cow-boys whom he had fetched over. And I saw Professor – Professor – what was his name? I forget, but he lectured on phrenology; and then there was Mrs. Geoff Templestowe."

"Oh Mrs. Geoff – she's a different sort. Buffalo Bill and his show can hardly be treated as specimens of American society, and neither can your bump-man. But she's a fair sample of the nice kind; and you liked her, now didn't you? you know you did."

"Well, yes, I did," admitted Imogen, rather grudgingly. "She was really quite nice, and good-form, and all that, and Isabel said she was far and away the best sister-in-law yet, and the Squire took such a fancy to her that it was quite remarkable. But she cannot be used as an argument, for she's not the least like the American girls in the books. She must have had unusual advantages. And after all, – nice as she was, she wasn't English. There was a difference somehow, – you felt it though you couldn't say exactly what it was."

"No, thank goodness – she isn't; that's just the beauty of it. Why should all the world be just alike? And what books do you mean, and what girls? There are all kinds on the other side, I can tell you. Wait till you get over to the High Valley and you'll see."

This sort of discussion had become habitual of late between the brother and sister. Three years before, Lionel had gone out to Colorado, to "look about and see how ranching suited him," as he phrased it, and had decided that it suited him exactly. He had served a sort of apprenticeship to Geoffrey Templestowe, the son of an old Devonshire neighbor, who had settled in a place called High Valley, and, together with two partners, had built up a flourishing and lucrative cattle business, owning a large tract of grazing territory and great herds. One of the partners was now transferred to New Mexico, where the firm owned land also, and Mr. Young had advanced money to buy Lionel, who was now competent to begin for himself, a share in the business. He was now going out to remain permanently, and Imogen was going also, to keep his house and make a home for him till he should be ready to marry and settle down.

All over the world there are good English sisters doing this sort of thing. In Australia and New Zealand they are to be found, in Canada, and India, and the Transvaal, – wherever English boys are sent to advance their fortunes. Had her destination been Canada or Australia, Imogen would have found no difficulty in adjusting her ideas to it, but the United States were a *terra incognita*. Knowing absolutely nothing about them, she had constructed out of a fertile fancy and a few facts an altogether imaginary America, not at all like the real one; peopled by strange folk quite un-English in their ideas and ways, and very hard to understand and live with. In vain did Lionel protest and explain; his remonstrances were treated as proofs of the degeneracy and blindness induced by life in "The States," and to all his appeals she opposed that calm, obstinate disbelief which is the weapon of a limited intellect and experience, and is harder to deal with than the most passionate convictions.

Unknown to herself a little sting of underlying jealousy tinctured these opinions. For many years Isabel Templestowe had been her favorite friend, the person she most admired and looked up to. They had been at school together, – Isabel always taking the lead in everything, Imogen following and imitating. The Templestowes were better born than the Youngs, they took a higher place in the county; it was a distinction as well as a tender pleasure to be intimate in the house. Once or twice Isabel had gone to her married sister in London for a taste of the "season." No such chance had ever fallen to Imogen's lot, but it was next best to get letters, and hear from Isabel of all that she had seen and done; thus sharing the joys at second-hand, as it were.

Isabel had other intimates, some of whom were more to her than Imogen could be, but they lived at a distance and Imogen close at hand. Propinquity plays a large part in friendship as well as love. Imogen had no other intimate, but she knew too little of Isabel's other interests to be made uncomfortable about them, and was quite happy in her position as nearest and closest confidante until, four years before, Geoffrey Templestowe came home for a visit, bringing with him his American wife, whose name before her marriage had been Clover Carr, and whom some of you who read this will recognize as an old friend.

Young, sweet, pretty, very happy, and "horribly well-dressed," as poor Imogen in her secret soul admitted, Clover easily and quickly won the liking of her "people-in-law." All the outlying sons and daughters who were within reach came home to make her acquaintance, and all were charmed with her. The Squire petted and made much of his new daughter and could not say enough in her praise. Mrs. Templestowe averred that she was as good as she was pretty, and as "sensible" as if she had been born and brought up in England; and, worst of all, Isabel, for the time of their stay, was perfectly absorbed in Geoff and Clover, and though kind and affectionate when they met, had little or no time to spend on Imogen. She and Clover were of nearly the same age, each had a thousand interesting things to tell the other, both were devoted to Geoffrey, – it was natural, inevitable, that they should draw together. Imogen confessed to herself that it was only right that they should do so, but it hurt all the same, and it was still a sore spot in her heart that Isabel should love Clover so much, and that they should write such long letters to each other. She was a conscientious girl, and she fought against the feeling and tried hard to forget it, but there it was all the same.

But while I have been explaining, the rapid feet of the two walkers had taken them past the Hoops Inn, and to the opening of a rough shady lane which made a short cut to the grounds of Stowe Manor, as the Templestowes' place was called.

They entered by a private gate, opened by Imogen with a key which she carried, and found themselves on the slope of a hill overhung with magnificent old beeches. Farther down, the slope became steeper and narrowed to form the sharp "chine" which cut the cliff seaward to the water's edge. The Manor-house stood on a natural plateau at the head of the ravine, whose steep green sides made a frame for the beautiful picture it commanded of Lundy Island, rising in bold outlines over seventeen miles of blue, tossing sea.

The brother and sister paused a moment to look for the hundredth time at this exquisite glimpse. Then they ran lightly down over the grass to where an intersecting gravel-path led to the door. It stood hospitably open, affording a view of the entrance hall.

Such a beautiful old hall! built in the time of the Tudors, with a great carven fireplace, mullioned windows in deep square bays, and a ceiling carved with fans, shields, and roses. "Bow-pots" stood on the sills, full of rose-leaves and spices, huge antlers and trophies of weapons adorned the walls, and the polished floor, almost black with age, shone like a looking-glass.

Beyond opened a drawing-room, low-ceiled and equally quaint in build. The furniture seemed as old as the house. There was nothing with a modern air about it, except some Indian curiosities, a water-color or two, the photographs of the family, and the fresh flowers in the vases. But the sun shone in, there was a great sense of peace and stillness, and beside a little wood-fire, which burned gently and did not hiss or crackle as it might have done elsewhere, sat a lovely old lady, whose fresh and peaceful and kindly face seemed the centre from which all the home look and comfort streamed. She was knitting a long silk stocking, a volume of Mudie's lay on her knee, and a skye terrier, blue, fuzzy, and sleepy, had curled himself luxuriously in the folds of her dress.

This was Mrs. Templestowe, Geoff's mother and Clover's mother-in-law. She jumped up almost as lightly as a girl to welcome the visitors.

"Take your hat off, my dear," she said to Imogen, "or would you rather run up to Isabel's room? She was here just now, but her father called her off to consult about something in the hot-house. He won't keep her long – Ah, there she is now," as a figure flashed by the window; "I knew she would be here directly."

Another second and Isabel hurried in, a tall, slender girl with thick, fair hair, blue eyes with dark lashes, and a look of breeding and distinction. Her dress, very simple in cut, suited her, and had that undefinable air of being just right which a good London tailor knows how to give. She wore no ornaments, but Imogen, who had felt rather well-dressed when she left home, suddenly hated her gown and hat, realized that her belt and ribbon did not agree, and wished for the dozenth time that she had the knack at getting the right thing which Isabel possessed.

"Her clothes grow prettier all the time, and mine get uglier," she reflected. "The Squire says she got points from Mrs. Geoff, and that the Americans know how to dress if they don't know anything else; but that's nonsense, of course, – Isabel always did know how; she didn't need any one to teach her."

Pretty soon they were all seated at luncheon, a hearty and substantial meal, as befitted the needs of people who had just taken a seven-mile walk. A great round of cold beef stood at one end of the table, a chicken-pie at the other, and there were early peas and potatoes, a huge cherry-tart, a "junket" equally large, strawberries, and various cakes and pastries, meant to be eaten with a smother of that delicacy peculiar to Devonshire, clotted cream. Every body was very hungry, and not much was said till the first rage of appetite was satisfied.

"Ah!" said the Squire, as he filled his glass with amber-hued cider, – "you don't get anything so good as this to drink over in America, Lionel."

"Indeed we do, sir. Wait till you taste our lemonade made with natural soda-water."

"Lemonade? phoo! Poor stuff I call it, cold and thin. I hope Geoff has some better tipple than that to cheer him in the High Valley."

"Iced water," suggested Lionel, mischievously.

"Don't talk to me about iced water. It's worse than lemonade. It's the perpetual use of ice which makes the Americans so nervous, I am convinced."

"But, papa, are they so nervous? Clover certainly isn't."

"Ah! my little Clover, – no, she wasn't nervous. She was nothing that she ought not to be. I call her as sweet a lass as any country need want to see. But Clover's no example; there aren't many like her, I fancy, – eh, Lion?"

"Well, Squire, she's not the only one of the sort over there. Her sister, who married Mr. Page, our other partner, you know, is quite as pretty as she is, and as nice, too, though in a different way. And there's the oldest one – the wife of the naval officer, I'm not sure but you would like her the best of the three. She's a ripper in looks, – tall, you know, with lots of go and energy, and yet as sweet and womanly as can be; you'd like her very much, you'd like all of them."

"How is the unmarried one? – Joan, I think they call her," asked Mrs. Templestowe.

"Oh!" said Lionel, rather confused, "I don't know so much about her. She's only once been out to the valley since I was there. She seems a nice girl, and certainly she's mighty pretty."

"Lion's blushing," remarked Imogen. "He always does blush when he speaks of that Miss Carr."

"Rot!" muttered Lionel, with a wrathful look at his sister. "I do nothing of the kind. But, Squire, when are you coming over to see for yourself how we look and behave? I think you and the Madam would enjoy a summer in the High Valley very much, and it would be no end of larks to have you. Isabel would like it of all things."

"Oh, I know I should. I would start to-morrow, if I could. I'm coming across to make Clover and Imogen a long visit the first moment that papa and mamma can spare me."

"That will be a long time to wait, I fear," said her mother, sadly. "Since Mr. Matthewson married and carried off poor Helen's children, the house has seemed so silent that except for you it would hardly be worth while to get up in the morning. We can't spare you at present, dear child."

"I know, mamma, and I shall never go till you can. The perfect thing would be that we should all go together."

"Yes, if it were not for that dreadful voyage."

"Oh, the voyage is nothing," broke in the irrepressible Lionel, "you just take some little pills; I forget the name of them, but they make you safe not to be sick, and then you're across before you know it. The ships are very comfortable, – electric bells, Welsh rabbits at bed-time, and all that, you know."

"Fancy mamma with a Welsh rabbit at bed-time! – mamma, who cannot even row down to Gallantry on the smoothest day without being upset! You must bait your hook with something else, Lionel, if you hope to catch her."

"How would a trefoil of clover-leaves answer?" with a smile, – "she, Geoff, and the boy."

"Ah, that dear baby. I wish I *could* see the little fellow. He is so pretty in his picture," sighed Mrs. Templestowe. "That bait would land me if anything could, Lion. By the way, there are some little parcels for them, which I thought perhaps you would make room for, Imogen."

"Yes, indeed, I'll carry anything with pleasure. Now I'm afraid we must be going. Mother wants me to step down to Clovelly with a message for the landlady of the New Inn, and I've set my heart upon walking once more to Gallantry Bower. Can't you come with us, Isabel? It would be so nice if you could, and it's my last chance."

"Of course I will. I'll be ready in five minutes, if you really can't stay any longer."

The three friends were soon on their way, under a low-hung sky, which looked near and threatening. The beautiful morning was fled.

"We had better cut down into the Hobby grounds and get under the trees, for I think it's going to be wet," said Imogen.

The suggestion proved a wise one, for before they emerged from the shelter of the woods it was raining smartly, and the girls were glad of their water-proofs and umbrellas. Lionel, with hands in pockets, strode on, disdaining what he was pleased to call "a little local shower."

"You should see how it pours in Colorado," he remarked. "That's worth calling rain! Immense! Noah would feel perfectly at home in it!"

The tax of threepence each person, by which strangers are ingeniously made to contribute to the "local charities," was not exacted of them at the New Road Gate, on the strength of their being residents, and personal friends of the owners of Clovelly Court. A few steps farther brought them to the top of a zig-zag path, sloping sharply downward at an angle of some sixty-five degrees, paved

with broad stones, and flanked on either side by houses, no two of which occupied the same level, and which seemed to realize their precarious footing, and hug the rift in which they were planted as limpets hug a rock.

This was the so-called "Clovelly Street," and surely a more extraordinary thing in the way of a street does not exist in the known world. The little village is built on the sides of a crack in a tremendous cliff; the "street" is merely the bottom of the crack, into which the ingenuity of man has fitted a few stones, set slant-wise, with intersecting ridges on which the foot can catch as it goes slipping hopelessly down. Even to practised walkers the descent is difficult, especially when the stones are wet. The party from Stowe were familiar with the path, and had trodden it many times, but even they picked their steps, and went "delicately" like King Agag, holding up umbrellas in one hand, and with the other catching at garden palings and the edges of door-steps to save themselves from pitching headlong, while beside them little boys and girls with the agility of long practice, went down merrily almost at a run, their heavy, flat-bottomed shoes making a clap-clap-clapping noise as they descended, like the strokes of a mallet on wood.

Looking up and above the quaint tenements that bordered the "street," other houses equally quaint could be seen on either side rising above each other to the top of the cliff, in whose midst the crack which held the village is set. How it ever entered into the mind of man to utilize such a place for such a purpose it was hard to conceive. The eccentricity of level was endless, gardens topped roofs, gooseberry-bushes and plum-trees seemed growing out of chimneys, tall trees rose apparently from ridge-poles, and here and there against the sky appeared extraordinary wooden figures of colossal size, Mermaids and Britannias and Belle Savages, figure-heads of forgotten ships which old sea-captains out of commission had set up in their gardens to remind them of perils past. The weather-beaten little houses looked centuries old, and all had such an air of having been washed accidentally into their places by a great tidal wave that the vines and flowers which overhung them affected the new-comer with a sense of surprise.

Down went the three, slipping and sliding, catching on and recovering themselves, till they came to a small, low-browed building dating back for a couple of centuries or so, which was the "New Inn." "Old" and "new" have a local meaning of their own in Clovelly which does not exactly apply anywhere else.

Up two little steps they passed into a narrow entry, with a parlor on one side and on the other a comfortable sort of housekeeper's room, where a fire was blazing in a grate with wide hobs. Both rooms as well as the entry were hung with plates, dishes, platters, and bowls, set thickly on the walls in groups of tens and scores and double-scores, as suited their shape and color. The same ceramic decoration ran upstairs and pervaded the rooms above more or less; a more modern brick-building on the opposite side of the street which was the "annex" of the Inn, was equally full; hundreds and hundreds of plates and saucers and cups, English and Delft ware chiefly, and blue and white in color. It had been the landlady's hobby for years past to form this collection of china, and it was now for sale to any one who might care to buy.

Isabel and Lionel ran to and fro examining "the great wall of China," as he termed it, while Imogen did her mother's errand to the landlady. Then they started again to mount the hill, which was an easier task than going down, passing on the way two or three parties of tourists holding on to each other, and shrieking and exclaiming; and being passed by a minute donkey with two sole-leather trunks slung on one side of him, and on the other a mountainous heap of hand-bags and valises. This is the only creature with four legs, bigger than a dog, that ever gets down the Clovelly street; and why he does not lose his balance, topple backward, and go rolling continuously down till he falls into the sea below, nobody can imagine. But the valiant little animal kept steadily on, assisted by his owner, who followed and assiduously whacked him with a stout stick, and he reached the top much sooner than any of his biped following. One cannot have too many legs in Clovelly, – a centipede would find himself at an uncommon advantage.

At the top of the street is the "Yellery Gate" through which our party passed into lovely park grounds topping a line of fine cliffs which lead to "Gallantry Bower." This is the name given to an enormous headland which falls into the sea with a sheer descent of nearly four hundred feet, and forms the western boundary of the Clovelly roadstead.

The path was charmingly laid out with belts of woodland and clumps of flowering shrubs. Here and there was a seat or a rustic summer-house, commanding views of the sea, now a deep intense blue, for the rain had ceased as suddenly as it came, and broad yellow rays were streaming over the wet grass and trees, whose green was dazzling in its freshness. Imogen drew in a long breath of the salt wind, and looked wistfully about her at the vivid turf, the delicate shimmer of blowing leaves, and the tossing ocean, as if trying to photograph each detail in her memory.

"I shall see nothing so beautiful over there," she said. "Dear old Devonshire, there's nothing like it."

"Colorado is even better than 'dear old Devonshire,'" declared her brother; "wait till you see Pike's Peak. Wait till I drive you through the North Cheyenne Canyon."

But Imogen shook her head incredulously.

"Pike's Peak!" she answered, with an air of scorn. "The name is enough; I never want to see it."

"Well, you girls are good walkers, it must be confessed;" said Lionel, as they emerged on the crossing of the Bideford road where they must separate. "Isabel looks as fresh as paint, and Moggy hasn't turned a hair. I don't think Mrs. Geoff could stand such a walk, or any of her family."

"Oh, no, indeed; Clover would feel half-killed if she were asked to undertake a sixteen-mile walk. I remember, when she was here, we just went down to the pier at Clovelly for a row on the Bay and back through the Hobby, six miles in all, perhaps, and she was quite done up, poor dear, and had to go on to the sofa. I can't think why American girls are not better walkers, – though there *was* that Miss Appleton we met at Zermatt, who went up the Matterhorn and didn't make much of it. Good-by, Imogen; I shall come over before you start and fetch mamma's parcels."

CHAPTER II.
MISS OPDYKE FROM NEW YORK

THE next week was a busy one. Packing had begun; and what with Mrs. Young's motherly desire to provide her children with every possible convenience for their new home, and Imogen's rooted conviction that nothing could be found in Colorado worth buying, and that it was essential to carry out all the tapes and sewing-silk and buttons and shoe-thread and shoes and stationery and court-plaster and cotton cloth and medicines that she and Lionel could possibly require during the next five years, – it promised to be a long job.

In vain did Lionel remonstrate, and assure his sister that every one of these things could be had equally well at St. Helen's, where some of them went almost every day, and that extra baggage cost so much on the Pacific railways that the price of such commodities would be nearly doubled before she got them safely to the High Valley.

"Now what can be the use of taking two pounds of pins, for example?" he protested. "Pins are as plenty as blackberries in America. And all those spools of thread too!"

"Reels of cotton, do you mean? I wish you would speak English, at least while we are in England. I shouldn't dare go without plenty of such things. American cotton isn't as good as ours; I've always been told that."

"Well, it's good enough, as you'll find. And do make a place for something pretty; a few nice tea-cups for instance, and some things to hold flowers, and some curtain stuffs for the windows, and photographs. Geoff and Mrs. Geoff have made their house awfully nice, I can tell you. Americans think a deal of that sort of thing. All this haberdashery and hardware is ridiculous, and you'll be sorry enough that you didn't listen to me before you are through with it."

"Mother has packed some cups already, I believe, and I'll take that white Minton jar if you like, but really I shouldn't think delicate things like that would be at all suitable in a new place like Colorado, where people must rough it as we are going to do. You are so infatuated about America, Lion, that I can't trust your opinion at all."

"I've been there, and you haven't," was all that Lionel urged in answer. It seemed an incontrovertible argument, but Imogen made no attempt to overthrow it. She only packed on according to her own ideas, quite unconvinced.

It lacked only five days of their setting out when she and her brother walked into Bideford one afternoon for some last errands. It was June now, and the south of England was at its freshest and fairest. The meadows along the margin of the Torridge wore their richest green, the hill slopes above them were a bloom of soft color. Each court yard and garden shimmered with the gold of laburnums or the purple and white of clustering clematis; and the scent of flowers came with every puff of air.

As they passed up the side street, a carriage with three strange ladies in it drove by them. It stopped at the door of the New Inn, – as quaint in build and even older than the New Inn of Clovelly. The ladies got out, and one of them, to Imogen's great surprise, came forward and extended her hand to Lionel.

"Mr. Young, – it is Mr. Young, isn't it? You've quite forgotten me, I fear, – Mrs. Page. We met at St. Helen's two years ago when I stopped to see my son. Let me introduce you to my daughter, the Comtesse de Conflans, and Miss Opdyke, of New York."

Lionel could do no less than stop, shake hands, and present his sister, whereupon Mrs. Page urged them both to come in for a few minutes and have a cup of tea.

"We are here only till the evening-train," she explained, – "just to see Westward Ho and get a glimpse of the Amyas Leigh country. And I want to ask any quantity of questions about Clarence and his wife. What! you are going out to the High Valley next week, and your sister too? Oh, that makes

it absolutely impossible for me to let you off. You really must come in. There are so many messages I should like to send, and a cup of tea will be a nice rest for Miss Young after her long walk."

"It isn't long at all," protested Imogen; but Mrs. Page could not be gainsaid, and led the way upstairs to a sitting-room with a bay window overlooking the windings of the Torridge, which was crammed with quaint carved furniture of all sorts. There were buffets, cabinets, secretaries, delightful old claw-footed tables and sofas, and chairs whose backs and arms were a mass of griffins and heraldic emblems. Old oak was the specialty of the landlady of this New Inn, it seemed, as blue china was of the other. For years she had attended sales and poked about in farmhouses and attics, till little by little she had accumulated an astonishing collection. Many of the pieces were genuine antiques, but some had been constructed under her own eye from wood equally venerable, – pew-ends and fragments of rood-screens purchased from a dismantled and ruined church. The effect was both picturesque and unusual.

Mrs. Page seated her guests in two wide, high-backed chairs, rang for tea, and began to question Lionel about affairs in the High Valley, while Imogen, still under the influence of surprise at finding herself calling on these strangers, glanced curiously at the younger ladies of the party. The Comtesse de Conflans was still young, and evidently had been very pretty, but she had a worn, dissatisfied air, and did not look happy. Imogen learned afterward that her marriage, which was considered a triumph and a grand affair when it took place, had not turned out very well. Count Ernest de Conflans was rather a black sheep in some respects, had a strong taste for baccarat and *rouge et noir*, and spent so much of his bride's money at these amusements during the first year of their life together, that her friends became alarmed, and their interference had brought about a sort of amicable separation. Count Ernest lived in Washington, receiving a specified sum out of his wife's income, and she was travelling indefinitely in Europe with her mother. It was no wonder that she did not look satisfied and content.

"Miss Opdyke, of New York" was quite different and more attractive, Imogen thought. She had never seen any one in the least like her. Rather tall, with a long slender throat, a waist of fabulous smallness, and hands which, in their *gants de Suède*, did not seem more than two inches wide, she gave the impression of being as fragile in make and as delicately fibred as an exotic flower. She had pretty, arch, gray eyes, a skin as white as a magnolia blossom, and a fluff of wonderful pale hair – artlessly looped and pinned to look as if it had blown by accident into its place – which yet exactly suited the face it framed. She was restlessly vivacious, her mobile mouth twitched with a hidden amusement every other moment; when she smiled she revealed pearly teeth and a dimple; and she smiled often. Her dress, apparently simple, was a wonder of fit and cut, – a skirt of dark fawn-brown, a blouse of ivory-white silk, elaborately tucked and shirred, a cape of glossy brown fur whose high collar set off her pale vivid face, and a "picture hat" with a wreath of plumes. Imogen, whose preconceived notion of an American girl included diamond ear-rings sported morning, noon, and night, observed with surprise that she wore no ornaments except one slender bangle. She had in her hand a great bunch of yellow roses, which exactly toned in with the ivory and brown of her dress, and she played with these and smelled them, as she sat on a high black-oak settle, and, consciously or unconsciously, made a picture of herself.

She seemed as much surprised and entertained at Imogen as Imogen could possibly be at her.

"I suppose you run up to London often," was her first remark.

"N-o, not often." In fact, Imogen had been in London only once in the whole course of her life.

"Dear me! – don't you? Why, how can you exist without it? I shouldn't think there would be anything to do here that was in the least amusing, – not a thing. How do you spend your time?"

"I? – I don't know, I'm sure. There's always plenty to do."

"To do, yes; but in the way of amusement, I mean. Do you have many balls? Is there any gayety going on? Where do you find your men?"

"No, we don't have balls often, but we have lawn parties, and tennis, and once a year there's a school feast."

"Oh, yes, I know, – children in gingham frocks and pinafores, eating buns and drinking milk-and-hot-water out of mugs. Rapturous fun it must be, – but I think one might get tired of it in time. As for lawn parties, I tried one in Fulham the other day, and I don't want to go to any more in England, thank you. They never introduced a soul to us, the band played out of tune, it was as dull as ditch-water, – just dreary, ill-dressed people wandering in and out, and trying to look as if five sour strawberries on a plate, and a thimbleful of ice cream were bliss and high life and all the rest of it. The only thing really nice was the roses; those *were* delicious. Lady Mary Ponsonby gave me three, – to make up for not presenting any one to me, I suppose."

"Do you still keep up the old fashion of introductions in America?" said Imogen with calm superiority. "It's quite gone out with us. We take it for granted that well-bred people will talk to their neighbors at parties, and enjoy themselves well enough for the moment, and then they needn't be hampered with knowing them afterward. It saves a lot of complications not having to remember names, or bow to people."

"Yes, I know that's the theory, but I call it a custom introduced for the suppression of strangers. Of course, if you know all the people present, or who they are, it doesn't matter in the least; but if you don't, it makes it a ghastly mockery to try to enjoy yourself at a party. But do tell me some more about Bideford. I'm so curious about English country life. I've seen only London so far. Is it ever warm over here?"

"Warm?" vaguely, "what do you mean?"

"I mean *warm*. Perhaps the word is not known over here, or doesn't mean the same thing. England seems to me just one degree better than Nova Zembla. The sun is a mere imitation sun. He looks yellow, like a real one, when you see him, – which isn't often, – but he doesn't burn a bit. I've had the shivers steadily ever since we landed." She pulled her fur cape closer about her ears as she spoke.

"Why, what can you want different from this?" asked Imogen, surprised. "It's a lovely day. We haven't had a drop of rain since last night."

"That is quite true, and remarkable as true; but somehow I don't feel any warmer than I did when it rained. Ah, here comes the tea. Let me pour it, Mrs. Page. I make awfully good tea. Such nice, thick cream! but, oh, dear! – here is more of that awful bread."

It was a stout household loaf, of the sort invariable in south-county England, substantial, crusty, and tough, with a "nubbin" on top, and in consistency something between pine wood and sole leather. Miss Opdyke, after filling her cups, proceeded to cut the loaf in slices, protesting as she did so that it "creaked in the chewing," and that

> "The muscular strength that it gave to her jaw
> Would last her the rest of her life."

"Why, what sort of bread do you have in America?" demanded Imogen, astonished and offended by the frankness of these strictures. "This is the sort every one eats here. I'm sure it's excellent. What is there about it that you don't like?"

"Oh, everything. Wait till you taste our American bread, and you'll understand, – or rather, our breads, for we have dozens of kinds, each more delicious than the last. Wait till you eat corn-bread and waffles."

"I've always been told that the American food was dreadfully messy," observed Imogen, nettled into reprisals; "pepper on eggs, and all that sort of thing, – very messy and nasty, indeed."

"Well, we *have* deviated from the English method as to the eating of eggs, I admit. I know it's correct to chip the shell, and eat all the white at one end by itself, with a little salt, and then all the yellow in the middle, and last of all the white at the other end by itself; but there are bold spirits

among us who venture to stir and mix. Fools rush in, you know; they *will* do it, even where Britons fear to tread."

"We stopped at Northam to see Sir Amyas Leigh's house," Mrs. Page was saying to Lionel. "It's really very interesting to visit the spots where celebrated people have lived. There is a sad lack of such places in America. We are such a new country. Lilly and Miss Opdyke walked up to the hill where Mrs. Leigh stood to see the Spanish ship come in, – quite fascinating, they said it was."

"You must be sure to stay long enough in Boston to see the house where Silas Lapham lived," put in the wicked Miss Opdyke. "One cannot see too much of places associated with famous people."

"I don't remember any such name in American history," said honest Imogen, – "'Silas Lapham,' who was he?"

"A man in a novel, and Amyas Leigh is a man in another novel," whispered Miss Opdyke. "Mrs. Page isn't quite sure about him, but she doesn't like to confess as frankly as you do. She has forgotten, and fancies that he really lived in Queen Elizabeth's time; and the coachman was so solemnly sure that he did that it's not much wonder. I bought an old silver patch-box in a jeweller's shop on the High Street, and I'm going to tell my sister that it belonged to Ayacanora."

"What an odd idea."

"We are full of odd ideas over in America, you know."

"Tell me something about the States," said Imogen. "My brother is quite mad over Colorado, but he doesn't know much about the rest of it. I suppose the country about New York isn't very wild, is it?"

"Not very," returned Miss Opdyke, with a twinkle. "The buffalo are rarely seen now, and only two men were scalped by the Indians outside the walls of the city last year."

"Fancy! And how do you pass your time? Is it a gay place?"

"Very. We pass our time doing all sorts of things. There's the Corn Dance and the Green Currant Dance and the Water Melon pow wow, of course, and beside these, which date back to the early days of the colony, we have the more modern amusements, German opera and Italian opera and the theatre and subscription concerts. Then we have balls nearly every night in the season and dinner-parties and luncheons and lectures and musical parties, and we study a good deal and 'slum' a little. Last winter I belonged to a Greek class and a fencing class, and a quartette club, and two private dancing classes, and a girls' working club, and an amateur theatrical society. We gave two private concerts for charities, you know, and acted the Antigone for the benefit of the Influenza Hospital. Oh, there is a plenty to pass one's time in New York, I can assure you. And when other amusements fail, we can go outside the walls, with a guard of trappers, of course, and try our hand at converting the natives."

"What tribe of Indians is it that you have near you?"

"The Tammanies, – a very trying tribe, I assure you. It seems impossible to make any impression on them or teach them anything."

"Fancy! Did you ever have any adventures yourself with these Indians?" asked Imogen, deeply excited over this veracious resumé of life in modern New York.

"Oh, dear, yes – frequently."

"Do tell me some of yours. This is so very interesting. Lionel never has said a word about the – Tallamies, did you call them?"

"Tammanies. Perhaps not; Colorado is so far off, you know. They have Piutes there, – a different tribe entirely, and much less deleterious to civilization."

"How sad. But about the adventures?"

"Oh, yes – well, I'll tell you of one; in fact it is the only really exciting experience I ever had with the New York Indians. It was two years ago; I had just come out, and it was my birthday, and papa said I might ride his new mustang, by way of a celebration. So we started, my brother and I, for a long country gallop.

"We were just on the other side of Central Park, barely out of the city, you see, when a sudden blood-curdling yell filled the air. We were horror-struck, for we knew at once what it must be, – the war-cry of the savages. We turned of course and galloped for our lives, but the Indians were between us and the gates. We could see their terrible faces streaked with war-paint, and the tomahawks at their girdles, and we felt that all hope was over. I caught hold of papa's lasso, which was looped round the saddle, and cocked my revolving rifle – all the New York girls wear revolving rifles strapped round their waists," continued Miss Opdyke, coolly, interrogating Imogen with her eyes as she spoke for signs of disbelief, but finding none – "and I resolved to sell my life and scalp as dearly as possible. Just then, when all seemed lost, we heard a shout which sounded like music to our ears. A company of mounted Rangers were galloping out from the city. They had seen our peril from one of the watch-towers, and had hurried to our rescue."

"How fortunate!" said Imogen, drawing a long breath. "Well, go on – do go on."

"There is little more to tell," said Miss Opdyke, controlling with difficulty her inclination to laugh. "The Head Ranger attacked the Tammany chief, whose name was Day Vidbehill, – a queer name, isn't it? – and slew him after a bloody conflict. He gave me his brush, I mean his scalp-lock, afterward, and it now adorns – " Here her amusement became ungovernable, and she went into fits of laughter, which Imogen's astonished look only served to increase.

"Oh!" she cried, between her paroxysms, "you believed it all! it is too absurd, but you really believed it! I thought till just now that you were only pretending, to amuse me."

"Wasn't it true, then?" said Imogen, her tardy wits waking slowly up to the conclusion.

"True! why, my dear child, New York is the third city of the world in size, – not quite so large as London, but approaching it. It is a great, brilliant, gay place, where everything under the sun can be bought and seen and done. Did you really think we had Indians and buffaloes close by us?"

"And haven't you?"

"Dear me, no. There never was a buffalo within a thousand miles of us, and not an Indian has come within shooting distance for half a century, unless he came by train to take part in a show. You mustn't be so easily taken in. People will impose upon you no end over in America, unless you are on your guard. What has your brother been about, not to explain things better?"

"Well, he *has* tried," said Imogen, candidly, "but I didn't half believe what he said, because it was so different from the things in the books. And then he is so in love with America that it seemed as if he must be exaggerating. He did say that the cities were just like our cities, only more so, and that though the West wasn't like England at all, it was very interesting to live in; but I didn't half listen to him, it sounded so impossible."

"Live and learn. You'll have a great many surprises when you get across, but some of them will be pleasant ones, and I think you'll like it. Good-by," as Imogen rose to go; "I hope we shall meet again some time, and then you will tell me how you like Colorado, and the Piutes, and – waffles. I hope to live yet to see you stirring an egg in a glass with pepper and a 'messy' lump of butter in true Western fashion. It's awfully good, I've always been told. Do forgive me for hoaxing you. I never thought you *could* believe me, and when I found that you did, it was irresistible to go on."

"I can't make out at all about Americans," said Imogen, plaintively, as after an effusive farewell from Mrs. Page and a languid bow from Madame de Conflans they were at last suffered to escape into the street. "There seem to be so many different kinds. Mrs. Page and her daughter are not a bit like each other, and Miss Opdyke is quite different from either of them, and none of the three resembles Mrs. Geoffrey Templestowe in the least."

"And neither does Buffalo Bill and your phrenological lecturer. Courage, Moggy. I told you America was a sizable place. You'll begin to take in and understand the meaning of the variety show after you once get over there."

"It was queer, but do you know I couldn't help rather liking that girl;" confessed Imogen later to Isabel Templestowe. "She was odd, of course, and not a bit English, but you couldn't say she was bad

form, and she was so remarkably quick and bright. It seemed as if she had seen all sorts of things and tried her hand on almost everything, and wasn't a bit afraid to say what she thought, or to praise and find fault. I told you what she said about English bread, and she was just as rude about our vegetables; she said they were only flavored with hot water. What do you suppose she meant?"

"I believe they cook them quite differently in America. Geoff likes their way, and found a great deal of fault when he was at home with the cauliflower and the Brussels sprouts. He declared that they had no taste, and that mint in green-peas killed the flavor. Clover was too polite to say anything, but I could see that she thought the same. Mamma was quite put about with Geoff's new notions."

"I must say that it seems rather impertinent and forth-putting for a new nation like that to be setting up opinions of its own, and finding fault with the good old English customs," said Imogen, petulantly.

"Well, I don't know," replied Isabel; "we have made some changes ourselves. John of Gaunt or Harry Hotspur might find fault with us for the same reason, giving up the 'good old customs' of rushes on the floor, for instance, and flagons of ale for breakfast. There were the stocks and the pillory too, and hanging for theft, and the torture of prisoners. Those were all in use more or less when the Pilgrims went to America, and I'm sure we're all glad that they were given up. The world must move, and I suppose it's but natural that the new nations should give it its impulse."

"England is good enough for me," replied the practical Imogen. "I don't want to be instructed by new countries. It's like a child in a pinafore trying to teach its grandmother how to do things. Now, dear Isabel, let me hear about your mother's parcels."

Mrs. Templestowe had wisely put her gifts into small compass. There were two dainty little frocks for her grandson, and a jacket of her own knitting, two pairs of knickerbocker stockings for Geoff, and for Clover a bit of old silver which had belonged to a Templestowe in the time of the Tudors, – a double-handled porringer with a coat of arms engraved on its somewhat dented sides. Clover, like most Americans, had a passion for the antique; so this present was sure to please.

"And you are really off to-morrow," said Isabel at the gate. "How I wish I were going too."

"And how I wish I were not going at all, but staying on with you," responded Imogen. "Mother says if Lionel isn't married by the end of three years she'll send Beatrice out to take my place. She'll be turned twenty then, and would like to come. Isabel, you'll be married before I get back, I know you will."

"It's most improbable. Girls don't marry in England half so easily as in America. It will be you who will marry, and settle over there permanently."

"Never!" cried Imogen.

Then the two friends exchanged a last kiss and parted.

"My love to Clover," Isabel called back.

"Always Clover," thought Imogen; but she smiled, and answered, "Yes."

CHAPTER III.
THE LAST OF DEVON AND THE FIRST OF AMERICA

WITH the morrow came the parting from home. "Farewell" is never an easy word to say when seas are to separate those who love each other, but the Young family uttered it bravely and resolutely. Lionel, who was impatient to get to work and to his beloved High Valley, was more than ready to go. His face, among the sober ones, looked aggressively cheerful.

"Cheer up, mother," he said, consolingly. "You'll be coming over in a year or two with the Pater, and Moggy and I will give you such a good time as you never had in your lives. We'll all go up to Estes Park and camp out for a month. I can see you now coming down the trail on a burro, – what fun it will be."

"Who knows?" said Mrs. Young, with a smile that was half a sigh. She and her husband had sent a good many sons and daughters out into the world to seek their fortunes, and so far not one of them had come back. To be sure, all were doing well in their several ways, – Cyril in India, where he had an excellent appointment, and the second boy in the army; two were in the navy, and Tom and Giles in Van Diemen's Land, where they were making a very good thing out of a sheep ranch. There was no reason why Lionel should not be equally lucky with his cattle in Colorado; there were younger children to be considered; it was "all in the day's work," the natural thing. Large families must separate, parents could not expect to keep their grown boys and girls with them always. So they dismissed the two who were now going forth cheerfully, uncomplainingly, and with their blessing, but all the same it was not pleasant; and Mrs. Young shed some quiet tears in the privacy of her own room, and her husband looked very serious as he strode down the Southampton docks after saying good-by to his children on board the steamer.

Imogen had never been on a great sea-going vessel before, and it struck her as being very crowded and confused as well as bewilderingly big. She stood clutching her bags and bundles nervously and feeling homesick and astray while farewells and greetings went on about her, and the people who were going and those who were to stay behind seemed mixed in an inextricable tangle on the decks. Then a bell rang, and gradually the groups separated; those who were not going formed themselves into a black mass on the pier; there was a great fluttering of handkerchiefs, a plunge of the screw, and the steamer was off.

Lionel, who had been seeing to the baggage, now appeared, and took Imogen down to her stateroom, advising her to get out all her warm things and make ready for a rough night.

"There's quite a sea on outside," he remarked. "We're in for a rolling if not for a pitching."

"Lion!" cried Imogen, indignantly. "Do you mean to say that you suppose I'm going to be sick, – I, a Devonshire girl born and bred, who have lived by the sea all my life? Never!"

"Time will show," was the oracular response. "Get the rugs out, any way, and your brushes and combs and things, and advise Miss What-d'-you-call-her to do the same."

"Miss What-d'-you-call-her" was Imogen's room-mate, a perfectly unknown girl, who had been to her imagination one of the chief bug-bears of the voyage. She was curled up on the sofa in a tumbled little heap when they entered the stateroom, had evidently been crying, and did not look at all formidable, being no older than Imogen, very small and shy, a soft, dark-eyed appealing creature, half English, half Belgic by extraction, and going out, it appeared, to join a lover who for three years had been in California making ready for her. He was to meet her in New York, with a clergyman in his pocket, so to speak, and as soon as the marriage ceremony was performed, they were to set out for their ranch in the San Gabriel Valley, to raise grapes, dry raisins, and "live happily all the days of their lives afterward," like the prince and princess of a fairy tale.

These confidences were not made immediately or all at once, but gradually, as the two girls became acquainted, and mutual suffering endeared them to each other. For, in spite of Imogen's Devonshire bringing up, the English Channel proved too much for her, and she had to endure two pretty bad days before, promoted from gruel to dry toast, and from dry toast to beef-tea, she was able to be helped on deck, and seated, well wrapped up, in a reclining chair to inhale the cold, salty wind which was the best and only medicine for her particular kind of ailment.

The chair next hers was occupied by a pretty, dark-eyed, and very lady-like woman, with whom Lionel had apparently made an acquaintance; for he said, as he tucked Imogen's rugs about her, "Here's my sister at last, you see;" which off-hand introduction the lady acknowledged with a pleasant smile, saying she was glad to see Miss Young able to be up. Her manner was so unaffected and cordial that Imogen's stiffness melted under its influence, and before she knew it they were talking quite like old acquaintances.

Imogen was struck by the sweet voice of the stranger, with its well-bred modulations, and also by the good taste and perfection of all her little appointments, from the down pillow at top of her chair to the fur-trimmed shoes on a pair of particularly pretty feet at the other end. She set her down in her own mind as a London dame of fashion, – perhaps a countess, or a Lady Something-or-other, who was going out to see America.

"Your brother tells me this is your first voyage," said the lady.

"Yes. He has been out before, but none of us were with him. It's all perfectly strange to me" – with a sigh.

"Why do you sigh? Don't you expect to like it?"

"Why no, not *like it* exactly. Of course I'm glad to be with Lionel and of use to him, but I didn't come away from home for pleasure."

"Pleasure must come to you, then," said the lady, with a smile. "And really I don't see why it shouldn't. In the first place you are acting the part of a good sister; and you know the adage about duty performed making rainbows in the soul. And then Colorado is a beautiful State, with the finest of mountain views, a wonderful climate, and such wild flowers as grow nowhere else. I have some friends living there who are quite infatuated about it. They say there is no place so delightful in the world."

"That is just the way with my brother. It's really absurd the way he talks about it. You would think it was better than England!"

"It is sure to be very different; but all the same, you will like it, I think."

"I hope so" – doubtfully.

Just then came an interruption in the shape of a tall girl of fifteen or sixteen, with a sweet, childish face who came running down the deck accompanied by a maid, and seized the strange lady's hand.

"Mamma," she began, "the first officer says that if you are willing he will take me across to the bows to see the rainbows on the foam. May I go? He says Anne can go too."

"Yes, certainly, if Mr. Graves will take charge of you. But first speak to this young lady, who is the sister of Mr. Young, who was so kind about playing ship-coil with you yesterday, and tell her you are glad she is able to be on deck. Then you can go, Amy."

Amy turned a pair of beautiful, long-lashed, gray eyes on Imogen.

"I'm glad you're better, Miss Young. Mamma and I were sorry you were so sick," she said, with a frank politeness that was charming. "It must be very disagreeable."

"Haven't you been sick, then?" said Imogen, holding fast the little hand that was put in hers.

"No, I'm never sick *now*. I was, though, the first time we came over, and I behaved *awfully*. Do you recollect, mamma?"

"Only too well," said her mother, laughing. "You were like a caged bird, beating yourself against the bars in desperation."

Amy lingered a moment, while a dimple played in her pink cheek as if she were moved by some amusing remembrance.

"Ah, there's Mr. Graves," she said. "I must go. I'll come back presently and tell you about the rainbows, mamma."

"I suppose most of these people on board are Americans," said Imogen after a little pause. "It's always easy to tell them, don't you think?"

"Not always. Yes, I suppose a good many of them are – or call themselves so."

"What do you mean by 'call themselves so'? That girl is one, I am sure," indicating a pretty, stylish young person, who was talking rather too loudly for good taste with the ship's doctor.

"Yes, I imagine she is."

"And those people over there," pointing to a large, red-bearded man who lay back in a sea-chair reading a novel, by the side of a fat wife who read another, while their little boy raced up and down the deck quite unheeded, and amused himself by pulling the rugs off the knees of the sicker passengers. "They are Americans, I know! Did you ever see such creatures? The idea of letting that child make a nuisance of himself like that! No one but an American would allow it. I've always heard that children in the States do exactly as they please, and the grown people never interfere with them in the least."

"General rules are dangerous things," said her neighbor, with an odd little smile. "Now, as it happens, I know all about those people. They call themselves Americans because they have lived in Buffalo for ten years and are naturalized; but he was born in Scotland and she in Wales, and the child doesn't belong exactly to any country, for he happened to be born at sea. You see you can't always tell."

"Do you mean, then, that they are English, after all?" cried Imogen, disconcerted and surprised.

"Oh, no. Every body is an American who has taken the oath of allegiance. Those Polish Jews over there are Americans, and that Italian couple also, and the big party of Germans who are sitting between the boats. The Germans have a large shop in New York, and go out every year to buy goods and tell their relations how superior the United States are to Breslau. They are all Americans, though you would scarcely suppose it to look at them. America is like a pudding, – plums from one part of the world, and spice from another, and flour and sugar and flavoring from somewhere else, but all known by the name of pudding."

"How very, very odd. Somehow I never thought of it before in that light. Are there no real Americans, then? Are they all foreigners who have been naturalized?"

"Oh, no. It is not so bad as that. There are a great many 'real Americans.' I am one, for example."

Конец ознакомительного фрагмента.