

Roy Lillian Elizabeth

Polly and Her Friends Abroad



Lillian Roy

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CHAPTER I – THE ALEXANDERS

Eleanor Maynard left her friend, Polly Brewster, in the stateroom, cutting the stems of the gorgeous American Beauty roses, and arranging them anew in the tall glass of fresh water. As she was about to close the door behind her, she turned and said:

“Be sure and come up on deck, Polly, as soon as you are done with the roses.”

“All right, run along and I’ll be with you in a jiffy,” returned Polly, her thoughts engaged with the flowers.

So Eleanor strolled to the upper deck and tried to find an interest with which to amuse herself until Polly joined her.

Of course, you remember Polly Brewster of Pebbly Pit, and her chum, Eleanor Maynard, of Chicago? Mr. Fabian, their teacher in interior decorating, and the Ashbys from New York City, were escorting the two girls on this trip abroad, with the idea of visiting famous European museums and places where antiques of all kinds could be seen and studied.

Eleanor walked part way around the promenade deck before she was accosted by a decidedly plump woman of about forty, with decidedly blondine hair, and flashing —*most* decidedly – too many large diamonds from ears, fingers and neck.

“Excuse me, but aren’t you one of the young ladies I met at the Denver railway station last year when Anne Stewart and her friends were about to leave for New York?” questioned the lady.

Eleanor turned, glanced at the living representative of the newly-rich, and smiled delightedly – not with recognition but at the possibility of having fun with someone arrayed like a peacock.

“Oh yes, I was there! Do you know Anne Stewart?” said she.

“I should think I did! Didn’t we live next door to the Stewarts when Anne and Paul were little tots?”

“How nice to meet you, now,” returned Eleanor, noting the quality of the apparel and the approximate value of the gems adorning the lady.

“But that was before Ebenezer struck ‘pay dirt’ down in Cripple Creek. After that, we moved from the little house and bought a swell mansion in the fashionable part of Denver,” explained the lady, with pride.

“Did you say you met us last summer?” ventured Eleanor.

“Yes, don’t you remember me? I got off the train coming in from Colorado Springs, just as you-all stood waiting for the East-bound Express.”

“I have a faint recollection of Anne shaking hands with someone, and introducing Polly and me, but there were so many in our party that you must pardon me if I do not recall you now.”

“Oh sure! I know how it is,” giggled the lady, affably. “You *did* have a crowd waiting to see you off, I remember.”

“And now we meet again on the steamer bound for Europe! Well, it goes to show how small a place this world is,” remarked Eleanor, not knowing what else to say, but feeling amused at the hackneyed phrase she had to make use of.

“How comes it that you are sailing across? Is your Ma and family with you?”

“No, but Polly Brewster – she’s the girl you saw that day with Anne – and I are going to tour Europe with some friends, to study more of our profession.”

“Profession! Good gracious – didn’t that gold mine I read about pan out anything?” exclaimed the lady, astonished.

Eleanor laughed. "Oh yes, I believe it is going to pay even richer than we at first thought possible; so Polly and I can use our own money to improve our education."

"And what are you going to take up?"

"We have taken it up – Polly and I have been studying Interior Decorating for two years, now."

"Interior Decorating! Good gracious – isn't that the sort of work the upholsterers and painters have to do for you?" gasped the lady.

Eleanor laughed again. Here was fun indeed! So she carefully fed the fuel now beginning to take fire in her companion's brain. "I am afraid it *has* been their work in the past. But Polly and I plan to try and uplift the work, and by investing our money in a first-rate business, we will try to create a real profession out of what is merely a paint-brush and a tack-hammer job, nowadays."

Eleanor glanced about to make sure her friends were not within hearing of the remarks she had just made to her new acquaintance. The expression on the lady's face, as the young aspirant for a new ideal explained her plans, sufficed Eleanor for the story she had just told.

"And what did you say your name was, dearie?" asked the lady, finally.

"Eleanor Maynard – of the Chicago Maynards, you know."

"Yes, yes, I know of them," replied the lady, glibly. "I am Mrs. Ebenezer Alexander, of Denver. P'raps you've heard how Eben made a million in a night?"

Mrs. Alexander's puckered forehead led Eleanor to understand what was expected of her in reply, so she fibbed as glibly as her companion had. "Oh yes! *who* has not heard of the Alexanders of Denver?"

The lady smoothed out her steamer-rug and smiled happily. Then the remembrance of this banker's daughter going into a common trade, to better the conditions and reputation of the work, rose uppermost in her shallow mind again.

"I should think your Ma'd go wild to think that one of her girls wanted to work instead of getting married to a rich young man," remarked she.

"Maybe my mother would object if I gave her time to think about it," Eleanor said, smilingly. "But she's too busy getting my sister Bob ready to marry, to bother about me."

"Well, by the time your sister is settled down and having a family, you'll be ready to turn your back on work and do as your Ma thinks best," declared Mrs. Alexander, knowingly.

The very suggestion of Barbara's having a family so amused Eleanor that she laughed uncontrollably, to the perplexity of her companion.

"Don't you believe you will grow tired of work?" asked Mrs. Alexander, thinking her remarks on that subject had sounded preposterous to Eleanor.

"No indeed! Polly and I are tremendously interested in the study, and as we go into it deeper, the more absorbing it grows," replied Eleanor.

"I didn't know you had anything to study, except how to handle a paint-brush, or tuck in the furniture covering, before you tack the guimpe along the edges."

"Oh yes, there's a little more than that to learn first, before you can hang out a sign to tell folks you are a decorator, and wish to solicit their trade," smiled Eleanor.

"Who are these Ashbys you spoke of? Are they New York trade people, or do they travel in society?" now asked Mrs. Alexander, as she remembered the escort Eleanor had mentioned.

"Mr. and Mrs. Ashby, and their daughter Ruth, are very nice people who know just the sort of folks Polly and I need to meet to help us in our business, later on. Mr. Ashby has a large upholstery and decorating business in New York City, but his wife goes into society, somewhat," explained Eleanor, a twinkle in her eyes that would have warned one who understood her mischievous inclinations. But her companion did not understand.

"Oh – I see! Just a tradesman who's made some money, I s'pose, and now his wife wants to climb. Did you ever read that novel about some 'climbers'?"

"No, but I've heard of it. The Ashbys are not that sort."

“But not the sort that can help me with Dodo, either, I see,” said Mrs. Alexander, thoughtfully for her.

“Dodo?”

“Yes, she’s my daughter. It’s because of her that I’m going over to the other side. I’ve heard say there are titles going begging for American millionaires since the war. And Dodo isn’t bad looking, even if she isn’t as prepossessing as I used to be – and am yet, I can say.”

Eleanor could hardly believe she had heard aright. An American mother from *Denver* going to exchange her child for a title! And the absolute egotism with which she mentioned her own looks and behavior!

“Well!” thought Eleanor to herself, “I was looking for entertainment, and here I have more of it than I dreamed of.”

“Does your daughter agree with you about marrying a title?” Eleanor could not help asking.

“She doesn’t say anything about it, one way or another. I told her what she had to do, and that settles it.”

“How old is she?” wondered Eleanor aloud.

“Past sixteen, but she looks more like twenty. If it wasn’t that it would make me look so old, I’d dress her like twenty-one ’cause I hear the Europeans prefer a woman of age, and over there she can’t be her own lawful self ’til twenty-one.”

“Sixteen! Why – she isn’t much older than Polly or I!” gasped Eleanor.

“No, but I said – she seemed older.”

“Nancy Fabian is nineteen and *she* never thinks of getting married – not yet. Everyone thinks, nowadays, that twenty-five is plenty young enough for a girl to think of marriage. That gives her a chance to see the world and men, and then make a wise choice.”

“Nancy Fabian – who is she?” asked Mrs. Alexander.

“Nancy is the daughter of Mr. Fabian who taught Polly and me interior decorating thus far. He is a wonderful teacher, and Nancy, his only child, has been studying art in Paris. Her mother went over with her to chaperone her, while there, and now we are going to meet them. Nancy managed to have several of her watercolors exhibited at the Academy this year, and one of them took a prize.” Eleanor’s tone conveyed the delight and pride she felt in Nancy Fabian’s achievement, even though she had not met her.

“And this teacher is traveling with you?” was Mrs. Alexander’s rejoinder.

Eleanor felt the condescension in Mrs. Alexander’s tone and resented it. So she decided to answer with a sharp thrust.

“Yes; Mr. Fabian promised Anne and my mother to take good care of Polly and me, until he turns us over to his wife and Nancy, who are visiting Sir James Osgood, of London.”

“Visiting a Sir James!” gasped Mrs. Alexander, sitting bolt upright for the first time since the interview began.

“Uh-huh! The Fabians and the Osgoods are very close friends, I hear. Nancy Fabian and Angela Osgood studied in the same class, in Paris; and Mrs. Fabian chaperoned Angela when her mother, Lady Osgood, had to return to England for the London Season.” Eleanor had her revenge.

“Mercy! Then these Fabians must *be* somebody!”

“Why, of course! What made you think they were not?”

“From what you said,” stammered Mrs. Alexander, humbly. “You said he was a teacher and that he was an intimate friend of the Ashbys who were painters and upholsterers.”

“Oh no, I didn’t!” retorted Eleanor. “*You* said that. *I* said that Mr. Ashby was an interior decorator who helped Polly and me a lot, and that Mr. Fabian was our teacher. There is a vast difference between decorators and paint-slingers, you will learn, some day.”

Eleanor was about to walk away with that parting shot, when a very attractive girl came from a side-door of the Lounge and looked around. Catching sight of Mrs. Alexander, she started for her.

She was over-dressed, and her face had been powdered and rouged as much as her mother's was; her lips were scarlet as carmine could tinge them, and her hair was waved and dressed in the latest style for adults. As Mrs. Alexander had said, her daughter looked fully ten years older than she really was, because of her make-up.

She glanced casually at Eleanor, without expressing any interest in her, and turned to her mother. "Oh, Ma! I've been looking for you everywhere! Pa says he *won't* come out and sit down, just to watch who goes by."

Eleanor was severely tailored in her appearance, but her suit represented the best cut and fit that the most exclusive shop in New York could provide, and the broad-cloth was of the finest. Dodo, (whose real name was Dorothy but was cut to Dodo for a pet name) failed to recognize the lines and material of the gown, but she passed it over lightly because she saw no gorgeous trimmings to claim value for it.

"Dodo, dearie, do you remember those two girls we read about, out west? The ones who discovered that gold mine just below Grizzly Slide? Well, this is Eleanor Maynard from Chicago, who was with her chum Polly, when they sought refuge in that cave on the mountain-top. Isn't it lovely for you to meet her, this way?"

At mention of the gold mine, and the unusual circumstances in connection with it, Dodo's expression changed. She smiled politely at Eleanor and said: "So glad to meet you."

"And Dodo being my only child, Miss Maynard, she is well worth knowing. She will inherit the million her father made," added Mrs. Alexander.

Eleanor smiled cynically. "I'm sorry for you, Dodo. It spoils one's life to be reminded of how much one has to live up to, when one is young and only wants to be carefree and happy."

"Oh, do you feel that way, too! I thought it was only me who was queer. Ma says other girls would give their heads to be in my place," exclaimed the girl, anxiously.

Eleanor now took a keener look at the speaker. It was evident from her words that she was not what she was dressed up to represent. "You have a chance to be yourself, in spite of every one, you know," said Eleanor.

"Well, I wish to goodness you would show me how! I hate all this fluffy-ruffle stuff and I wish we could get back to that time when I could go with my hair twisted at the back of my neck; and a cold water wash to clean my face, instead of all this cold cream business, and then the paint and flour afterwards!" declared Dodo, bluntly.

"Oh deary! I beg of you – don't display your ignorance before strangers like this!" wailed her mother, fluttering a lace handkerchief before her eyes. "Eleanor Maynard is one of *the* Maynards of Chicago."

"Why not! If Eleanor Maynard is half the girl I think she is – from what I read, that time they were lost on the Flat Tops and from what she just said, then she'll appreciate me the more for my honesty," asserted the girl.

"I do, Dodo. I never had much use for make-up, but I know society condones the use of it all. So I'm glad to find a real girl who dislikes it as much as Polly and I do."

"There now, Ma! And I bet these girls will look at your pet hobby much the same as I do." Then Dodo turned to Eleanor and added: "Ma's bound to palm me off on some little stick of a nobleman in Europe, just to brag about my name with a handle to it. But *I* say I don't want a husband – especially a foreign one. If I have to marry, let me choose a westerner! The kind I'm used to."

Eleanor could have hugged the girl for her frank honesty so different from what she had looked for from the daughter of the silly woman before her.

"If only we could persuade Ma to see that this going to Europe does not mean just buying Paris dresses and parading them to catch a lord, I'll be happy," concluded Dodo.

"Poor child! How she does find fault with her little mother!" sighed Mrs. Alexander, wiping her eyes in self-pity.

Dodo turned her entire attention to her new acquaintance, at this. "Are you alone, or is your family with you?"

"Oh, I forgot to tell you, Dodo dear; Miss Maynard is going to study decorating in Europe; and her friend Polly, and their teacher, is with her. She just told me that the teacher's wife and daughter are visiting a real English peer! Think of it – a teacher's family stopping with a live lady of quality!" exclaimed Mrs. Alexander, eagerly.

"I hope they are nice English folks," commented Dodo.

"Naturally they would be, if they belong to the peerage, Dodo," returned her mother, innocent of a "Burke" and the difference between a baronet and a peer. "But I was thinking, that it would be quite easy for us to get acquainted with dukes and lords, if a mere teacher got his family invited to one's house."

Dodo's lip curled sarcastically, and Eleanor learned that the daughter had nothing in common with these empty fads of her mother. Then Dodo said: "I hope the teacher's family know enough to make the lord's family appreciate a good old American!"

Eleanor laughed, and said: "If Nancy Fabian and her mother are anything like Mr. Fabian, you can rest assured that they'll do full justice to the United States, and the Stars and Stripes."

To change the subject from this dangerous ground that created more resistance for her to fight than she had to meet, recently, from Dodo, Mrs. Alexander hastily said: "Do you know, Dodo, Miss Maynard told me that Polly and she took up the study of Interior Decorating, in New York, in order to better the conditions of painters and upholsterers who work at that trade. Not to make money."

Eleanor frowned. "I think you misunderstood me, Mrs. Alexander. I said we were studying the profession and that it took a great deal of application and perseverance to reach the high plane which was necessary for a good decorator to stand on. So few who call themselves interior decorators really know much about the art. And in order to increase our education and understanding of the profession, Polly and I are about to visit the great museums of Europe."

"Well, it is the same thing, isn't it?" pouted Mrs. Alexander.

"No, I think your idea of interior decorators is that any 'paint-slinger or tack-driver' is a professional. Whereas I see that *that* is the very error necessary to be reversed by us, before the public recognises the value of genuine decorators. In France and other European countries, an interior decorator has to have a certificate. And that is what we hope to do in the United States – put the real ones through a course of studies and have them examined and a diploma given, before one can claim title to being a decorator." Eleanor spoke with emphasis and feeling.

"Well, I don't know a fig about it, or anything else, for that matter," laughed Dodo, cheerfully. "But I can understand how much more interesting it must be to trot around hunting up worm-eaten furniture, or examining ruined masonry, or admiring moth-holed fabrics, than to do as I have to – follow after Ma and sit with my hands idly folded waiting for some old fossil to pass by and say: 'I choose her, because she's got the most cash.'"

Eleanor laughed outright at the girl's statement, but Mrs. Alexander showed her anger by twisting her shoulders and saying: "Dodo Alexander! If I didn't know better, I'd believe you were trying to make Eleanor believe that you detested your opportunity!"

Dodo tossed her head and said: "Time will show!"

At that crisis in the conversation, another girl's voice was heard across the deck. "Nolla! Are you there?"

Eleanor turned and called back: "No, I am not here!"

Then all three girls laughed. The newcomer, Polly Brewster, skipped lightly across the deck, and joined the group she had spied from the open doorway. Eleanor introduced Mrs. Alexander as an old friend of Anne's, and Dodo her daughter, as an independent American who believed in suffrage and all the rights of American womanhood. At this latter explanation, Dodo grinned and her mother gasped in amazement at Eleanor.

Then Mrs. Alexander said politely: "How is Anne Stewart? I haven't seen her for some time."

"Anne is married to my brother John, now," returned Polly. "And they are going to live home, with mother, while I am away. Anne's mother is to live at the old home in Denver, and keep house for Paul."

"It seems years and years since I lived next door to them," remarked Dodo. "I always played with Paul Stewart."

"Deary, it can't be years and years, because I am not so old as you try to make me appear," corrected Mrs. Alexander.

Polly, understanding from the words, saw how vain the woman was and stood looking at her in surprise. But Eleanor heard only Dodo's speech.

"Did you say you always played with Paul Stewart when you were neighbors?"

"Yes indeed!" laughed Dodo, as she remembered various incidents of that childhood.

"We always played we were married, and Paul's Irish Terrier and my kitten were our children. We dressed them up in old dust-cloths and tried to make them behave, but no parents ever had such trials with their children as we had when Terry and Kitty got to scrapping!"

Eleanor was deeply interested and Polly smiled at what she saw expressed in her friend's face. Dodo continued her reminiscences.

"Paul used to draw me on his sled when we went to school, and he always saved a bite of his apple for me at noon-time. I gave him half of my cake in exchange. Oh, we had such fun – we two, in those days!" the girl sighed and looked out over the billowy sea.

"Then Pa struck that vein of gold down at Cripple Creek and everything changed. Ma got the social bug, so bad, we had to leave all our old friends, and move to a strange neighborhood where Pa never spoke to a soul and I felt out of place. But Ma said it had to be done to establish our position.

"The Stewarts rented their house and I heard that Paul went to Chicago to college, while Anne went to teach a school in New York. Then I never heard again, of any of them, until Ma met you-all at the Denver railroad station." Dodo smiled at that crumb of comfort.

Polly and Eleanor were deeply touched at the girl's tale, for they knew how lonely she must have been away from her old associations, in an atmosphere where she was not at home. And such a frivolous mother who could not understand the true blue of such an honest character as Dodo's!

"Ma sent me to a swell seminary near our new house, but the girls snubbed me, and I never had a pal all the time I was there. When Ma ordered me to come to Europe with her to stock up with fine dresses and then try to make a match for me with some man with a title, I came, but goodness knows! I just hate the idea."

"Oh, Dodo! You'll break my heart, if you talk like that!" cried Mrs. Alexander, trying to impress the two other girls with her maternal sorrow.

"Nolla! I almost forgot what I came for," laughed Polly, to change the subject. "Prof. says for you to come to the salon where they have used Adams period and Louis XIV furniture in the same room. He wants to show us a bad example of decoration."

"May I come with you?" asked Dodo, eagerly.

"Of course! Come right along," agreed Eleanor, thrusting her hand through the new friend's arm and starting away with her.

The moment they were out of hearing, Eleanor said impressively to Dodo: "Don't you ever give in to that idea of marrying a foreigner! Your mother will soon get over it if you just keep on making her see it's no use. If you pretend to take up some study like we are doing, she will see you mean business."

"That's good advice, and I sure will follow it," declared the eager girl.

"And Nolla and I will help along all we can," promised Polly.

"Even if you have to make your mother believe you are in love with Paul Stewart and won't marry anyone else – then do it!" declared Eleanor, in tones of brave self-sacrifice and renunciation.

“Oh, but I’m not! Paul is a dandy boy and we had good times when we were small, but I’ve seen other boys I like a heap better’n him, now! But I really don’t want to marry anyone, yet!”

“I shouldn’t think you would!” breathed Eleanor, in great relief. “So Polly and I will agree to help you out of all the plots your mother plans for you. Won’t we, Polly?”

“We sure will!” agreed Polly. And that is how Dodo came to travel about Europe with Polly and Eleanor. And why the two old friends felt it a duty to protect and save Dodo from the wily plans of her mother who wished to own a title in the Ebenezer Alexander family.

CHAPTER II – DODO MEETS POLLY’S FRIENDS

Dorothy Alexander was a good type of the healthy western girl. She was tall, well-built, and the picture of splendid health. Her hair was of a ruddy hue, with copper glints in it. Her complexion was like “peaches and cream,” and needed no cosmetic to enhance its charm. Her form was lithe and supple, and her features were good. Her bright eyes sparkled with good-humor, and her smile was contagious in its sweetness. When she was well-dressed, she would be a beauty, thought Eleanor, but her present overdressing depreciated her genuine good looks.

“Prof., we bring you a new convert,” laughed Eleanor, as the three girls approached Mr. Fabian.

“Dorothy Alexander, Mr. Fabian,” added Polly.

The two acknowledged the introduction and the girl thought: “What a fine face he has! Such wonderful expression and forehead.”

And Mr. Fabian thought: “There’s a great deal under all that sham.”

Shortly after the introduction, Mr. Fabian spoke of the flaunting mistakes some so-called decorator had made in the selection and furnishings of the salon. So they turned their attention to that interesting subject. Dodo stood by and listened to it all, as she wondered what these two good-looking girls could find to interest them in such a dry subject? But she confessed that both girls seemed more beautiful and attractive, when they were thoroughly interested and animated with the ideas they were exchanging with Mr. Fabian.

As they left the room, Mr. Fabian turned his attention to Dodo, particularly. And soon she was telling him freely, all about her life in Denver, and how hard her father had worked and suffered at Cripple Creek, to amass the fortune they now enjoyed. When Dodo described her father’s character and how simple and blunt he was in everything, her hearers fell in love with the unknown. She told how generous he was to every one, and how no one was left in need if he could help it.

“But he has one awful sin that Ma can’t forgive him,” added Dodo, glancing covertly around to make sure no one could hear.

Mr. Fabian shivered at what she was about to say, and he wished Dodo was not *quite* so frank as to reveal family skeletons. But she was launched and nothing could check her.

“Pa has a pet old pipe that’s as black as ink. He just won’t smoke any of the imported cigars Ma buys for him, and he won’t let her throw the old pipe away. He gets away by himself and smokes it until he feels happy – no matter what Ma says or does.”

All three of her audience bent double in merriment at what they just heard. Mr. Fabian was so relieved at the “sin” he feared to hear about, that he laughed louder than the two girls.

“S-sh!” warned Dodo, hurriedly. “Here comes Pa, now!”

Instantly they hushed and turned to watch the “grand being” they had just heard about. The shock of beholding the actual man who was the opposite of what Dodo had pictured him caused them to mumble confusedly when Mr. Alexander was introduced.

He was a little wiry man of about fifty years. The top of his head was bald, with a fringe of grey all about the crown. Right in front, on top, grew a stiff lock of stubborn hair that generally stood upright. This gave him the funny appearance that is often portrayed in the comic section of the Sunday papers. His hands were knotted with hard work, and his legs were bowed just enough to make him walk awkwardly. His eyes were small and merry, and his ears large and fan-like. But his mouth was the feature that attracted instant attention and held it wonderingly. It was a wide, good-natured mouth, and when he smiled he literally demonstrated that saying: “His head opened from ear to ear.” He wore a huge ulster of checks and a tourist cap with ear-tabs tied on top.

“Hello, Dodo! Who’s your friends?” called he cheerily, as he came up to them.

He was introduced, and Dodo followed up the introduction by saying: “I was just talking about you – telling my friends what a fine man you are.”

Mr. Alexander smiled happily. "It ain't every man what has a gal that says that, eh?"

"You're right there, Mr. Alexander," agreed Mr. Fabian, glad to speak and express something worthy of himself.

"And Dodo is sure one fine gal, too. I wonder why she ain't sp'iled like other gals I see."

"Perhaps her father's example is before her," ventured Eleanor. And forever after that, Dodo swore allegiance to Eleanor.

"I'm right glad you-all met Dodo, 'cause I was fearin' the missus might get her to give in to them foolish notions about gettin' a furriner. Did you tell 'em, Dodo?" said her father.

"Yes, Pa, and the girls are going to help me cure Ma of that fad."

"That's the best news, yet! I hope you kin do it!" said he, slapping his knee. "You must be real gals, too, like mine, here."

Polly laughed, and Eleanor said: "We like to ride and hike, and have good times, but we're not out hunting for husbands. If we ever reach that place where we want to marry, we'll take a man we know by heart, and not one who is buying a doll made up at a hair-dresser and beauty-doctor's."

"You're the right sort, all right!" chuckled the little man, transferring the slap from his knee to Eleanor's back.

Eleanor gasped for breath but she considered the sharp commendation a compliment that any *man* might be glad to get. Mr. Fabian had to smile at Eleanor's sudden gasp and instant recovery, but Polly laughed outright, for she was accustomed to such pleasantries from the ranchers at home.

"Poor Pa. He's so glad to meet some sensible folks, that he doesn't stop to think how hard his hand is, with all the mining and picking at gold ore, out west," added Dodo, smiling sympathetically at Eleanor, and then at her father.

"Right again! This traipsing to U-rope fer a title, isn't my kind of work. But I jus' couldn't let Ma run off with Dodo and all my cash, when I knew Dodo didn't want to. So I says, 'Unless you lug me along wherever you go, my cash stays behind in America.' You-all know, 'cash makes the mare go,' so I was included in the trip."

The little man chuckled and caused the others to laugh at his amusing expression. Then he leaned forward and said confidentially: "But I'll confess, all this tight-fittin' clothes, and a boiled shirt with stiff collars and cuffs ain't to my likin'! I have to pinch my feet into shiny tight shoes, and use a tie that has to be knotted every day, 'stead of a ready-made one that I can hook on to my collar-button."

At that admission, the girls laughed merrily and Mr. Fabian simply roared, for he understood collar-buttons and the agony Mr. Alexander must endure.

The little man felt that he was making fine headway in his conversational powers, so he continued to practice the art.

"But say! let me tell you-all – when Ma carted me to Noo York and made me take dancing lessons to get graceful, I tried it twicet – then I balked! 'No more of them monkey-shines for an old miner,' says I. And I never did it again, did I, Dodo?"

Dodo laughed and shook her head, and the others renewed their mirth. Mr. Alexander was now encouraged to proceed.

"Ma went to a Madam Something-er-other fer to learn how to act in polite society and how to not do the wrong things at the right time, and vice versy, but she couldn't get *me* to go there! I spent that time at the Movies or ridin' on the Fifth Avenoo bus, and laughin' at folks – the way they rushed around like ants.

"But here I am, mixin' in as good comp'ny as I want, and it ain't costin' me a cent to sit in a little room and listen to a fat old woman who charges a dollar a throw." As he concluded his speech, a group of people standing directly back of Mr. Fabian and the girls, joined the circle.

Mr. Alexander instantly froze up and felt uncomfortable lest they had heard him speak. Then Mr. Fabian eased his mind by saying: "Now you can meet the Ashbys, Mr. Alexander. Miss Dodo, this

is Mrs. Ashby, and Ruth, and Mr. Ashby. And this is a new friend, Mr. Ashby, but an old acquaintance of Polly and Eleanor's from Denver – Mr. Alexander and Miss Dodo.”

The introductions over, Mr. Ashby quickly smoothed the way for the nervous little man from the west; but Dodo wondered why her mother had the impression that these people were inferior because they were in business in New York. She had never met any one more refined, or who showed truer gentility than these people.

After an exchange of words, Mr. Alexander whispered to his daughter: “Dodo, do you think we'd better go out to Ma? She might get huffy, you know, when she finds out we've been meetin' all the nice people and leavin' her in the cold.”

“We'll all go out, Mr. Alexander,” suggested Eleanor, seeing how much better it would be for the two culprits if Mrs. Alexander had to entertain a number of new-comers instead of her own people.

They started to go on deck, but Mr. Alexander hastily surveyed himself in a mirror as he passed. Then he pulled at Mr. Fabian's sleeve.

“I reckon I'd better take off the ulster before the Missus sees me in it. She can't bear it, 'cause she thinks it looks like a workin'-man's coat.”

So saying, the wrap was slipped off and Mr. Alexander straightened the cap on his shiny head. He brushed a speck from his pale grey spats, and tugged at his tie to have it correctly placed. Then he hurried after the others. In that time, Mr. Fabian saw how hen-pecked the poor little man must be, and he resolved to stand by him in his troubles. Thus Dodo won two allies, and her father unconsciously acquired a splendid friend for times of need.

“Have you ever been abroad before?” asked Mr. Ashby, as Mr. Alexander caught up with him.

“Not on your life! The States is good enough for me, but Dodo had to be saved, you see, and I come along.”

Mr. Ashby knew nothing of Mrs. Alexander's hopes and aspirations, and he was in the dark about the little man's words.

“You have a great treat awaiting you, if you have never visited the famous old cities of Europe, before,” added Mr. Ashby.

“Most folks go over for other things than to see the fine towns,” remarked Mr. Alexander.

“I hear the women-folk mostly go to get clothes in Paris.”

Everyone laughed; then the group crossed the deck to the steamer-chair occupied by Mrs. Alexander. Dodo introduced her mother to the strangers; she smiled loftily at the Ashbys, but was very effusive over Mr. Fabian. So much so, that he wondered at it.

But in a few moments she unconsciously showed her reason for it. “I hear you are going to visit at an English Peer's, in London, Mr. Fabian.”

“My wife and daughter are visiting at Sir James Osgood's, I believe, but my visit there all depends on whether the Ashbys and my girls are included in the invitation. If they are not, of course I will have to decline, also.”

“Oh, you wouldn't miss such a chance, would you?” cried the surprised woman.

“I'm missing nothing that I know of,” replied Mr. Fabian; then Polly came to his rescue and changed the conversation.

In the next few days, Mr. Alexander and Dodo became great favorites with the Ashbys and Mr. Fabian, while Polly and Eleanor declared that the girl was splendid! She had dropped all pretence and make-up, and had donned the simplest gowns she had in the trunk, much to her mother's disapproval, and to the girls' smiling approval.

In constant association with the quiet Polly, the well-bred Ruth Ashby, and the thoroughbred Eleanor, Dodo soon acquired better form in every way. She was quick and bright enough to recognise her shortcomings and eager to improve herself.

The last morning of the trip, after the English shore had been sighted, Mrs. Alexander suddenly changed her plans about going to Havre, and decided to land in England when the others did. This change of plan she confided to no one at the time. But she awaited a chance.

"Have you really decided to leave us, Mr. Fabian?" said she coyly, when she met that gentleman in the morning at breakfast.

"Yes, we take the lighter that comes off shore at Dover, and takes on those who wish to land."

"Dodo tells me that you got a wireless that your wife and daughter would meet you at the wharf, in Dover," continued Mrs. Alexander.

"Yes, and the invitation from Sir James, includes my party, I hear, so it is all right. We are all going there for an informal dinner-party and to spend the night. Then we will hire an auto and continue on our trip in the morning," explained Mr. Fabian.

"Dear, dear! I am so upset," sighed the amateur actress. "I find *my* car – it was shipped over before we left New York – was left in London instead of going on to France. So we have to get off when you do, and go to London just to get our car."

"Oh, really! I didn't know you had sent a car across," said Mr. Fabian.

"Dear yes! You might as well, when you have one, you know. But I expect to buy myself a new French car while I am in Paris. Just for myself, and a friend or two, to use, you know; and that lets Pa drive his own touring car, 'cause he is crazy about motoring."

Mr. Alexander had not mentioned a car, nor had Dodo said anything about the trouble in the delivery of a car to the wrong port, so Mr. Fabian mistrusted the truth of the statement made by Mrs. Alexander; but he forbore saying anything about the matter to any of his companions.

Evidently the lady's husband and daughter had just previously been warned about the car, also, for they looked troubled and made no comment when Mrs. Alexander surprised everyone by saying: "We find we have to land at Dover, also, as our car went astray during shipment and we have to see about it in London."

"Oh, how nice! Then Dodo can remain with us a bit longer," said Ruth, guilelessly.

"And her mother, of course," said Mrs. Alexander pointedly, lifting her shoulders as well as her eye-brows.

"And her old man, too," chuckled Mr. Alexander, causing everyone who heard him to laugh.

His spouse sent him a most disquieting look, however, and he subsided in his chair. But Eleanor, who sat beside him at the table, nudged him encouragingly when Mrs. Alexander was not looking.

So, when the lighter touched at the Dover dock, the entire party got off, and soon Mr. Fabian was encircled by four arms, while two heads were pressed close to his face. A younger woman stood a bit aside, smiling sympathetically at the reunion.

Then she was introduced to the Americans as Angela Osgood, Nancy Fabian's friend. And in turn, Mr. Fabian introduced his two protégées, Polly and Eleanor, and the Ashbys, and the Alexanders.

When Mrs. Alexander really found herself face to face with the daughter of an English Baronet, she was speechless with joy. Now she could write home and tell everyone she ever knew about meeting Sir James Osgood's daughter!

But Angela never dreamed of the disturbance she had caused in the breast of this unusual-looking woman.

"Now, how shall we dispose of all the passengers, Nancy?" laughed Angela, counting the heads of the party she expected to drive to the town house for dinner.

"The car only holds seven, you see," explained she, turning to the Ashbys. "I counted on Nancy's father and two girls driving with me, and the three Ashbys taking the seat in the road-car where the luggage will be placed. The groom drives that. Or we can rearrange it any way you say."

Mrs. Alexander instantly pushed herself forward and said: "Oh, how very kind of you to include us in your party! I really can't accept a seat in the car if anyone else must be crowded."

Dodo looked like a thunder-cloud and pulled at her mother's arm, but Mr. Alexander spoke out bluntly.

"I ain't invited to nobody's house, so I'm going on to London to get that car you told me about. Dodo can come with me."

His spouse instantly silenced him with a glowering look, and Angela hoped to smooth matters out by what she now said.

"Mother and father will be delighted to have all of you come, and I'm sure they will feel *dreadfully*, if anyone is left out. We never stand on ceremony, you know, and this is an occasion where you all must come without formality."

"We're delighted, I assure you, Miss Osgood, and I will accept for my family and myself. The only question now, is, how shall we manage about the cars. If only my seven-passenger car was here instead of in London!" exclaimed Mrs. Alexander, eagerly.

"Why, the ladies will use this car, of course," said Mr. Fabian, "while we men go in the baggage-car. You may be uncomfortably crowded, but I see no other way."

So Mrs. Fabian, Mrs. Ashby and Mrs. Alexander sat in the back seat while Polly, Eleanor, Ruth and Dodo had to crowd upon the folding seats in the middle of the car. Nancy sat in front and Angela drove the car. The groom with the baggage and the three men followed directly after in his car.

Mrs. Alexander certainly was a general when she wanted to win a battle of wits, but it was a pity she had no better ambitions than the mere forcing a way into society and marrying her daughter to a title.

As they started for London, she leaned back in the seat and said: "If only the company hadn't mistaken the directions about my car. It is such a great roomy affair, that everyone could have traveled in it with the utmost comfort."

"But it wouldn't have been here at all, for us to travel in, if they had sent it as you directed – to Havre, instead of London," said Mrs. Ashby.

"Oh true! But I meant – if it had been left over at Dover instead of going on to London," quickly corrected the lady.

The conversation drifted to other topics but was switched back again when Mrs. Alexander remarked: "I was just thinking how nice it would be for the Fabians and Ashbys to tour Great Britain first instead of Europe; then they could use my big car whiles Dodo and I go in my new runabout that I expect to buy immediately."

"Why, Ma! you know you're talking –" began Dodo, from the seat in front of her mother, but Mrs. Alexander interrupted instantly.

"Oh yes, deary, I know what you would say! That I must try a new car, first, and get acquainted with it. But I can select a make similar to our big one, can't I? and that is quite familiar to me."

"Oh yes, if you want to duplicate our old car, you can do it. But you said you wanted an up-to-date car with all the latest equipment, this time, and such a car won't seem familiar to you, be –"

"Never mind, Dodo! Our friends are not interested in our old cars, or what we have done with them," cut in Mrs. Alexander.

So Dodo subsided for the time, while her mother continued: "So there will be ample room for you to tour in my large car, ladies, while Dodo and I use the roadster and follow you."

"We cannot say, one way or another, Mrs. Alexander, because nothing has been said about a change in the itinerary. It all depends upon Mr. Fabian and Mr. Ashby," replied Mrs. Ashby, politely.

But Mrs. Alexander was satisfied with the progress she had made by mentioning the tour, and so she left the rest to time.

After a long drive through the highly cultivated countryside that spread out between Dover and London, Angela drove up in front of an imposing mansion on one of the avenues of England's great city. As a uniformed man came down the wide marble steps to take orders from Angela, Mrs. Alexander sat breathless with pleasure at the success of her maneuvering.

The baggage-car came up shortly after the ladies had alighted from the first automobile, and the servants carried the bags indoors, then waited to be directed to the proper rooms.

Sir James and his wife welcomed the party of Americans, but Mrs. Alexander felt disappointed when she saw a plain little lady dressed in grey taffeta, and found Sir James to be a short fat man with a genial expression, but a horsy manner. The others seemed quite at home with these English people and all were soon exchanging opinions about the recent problems in politics.

Not a word or look from either Sir James, or his lady, led anyone to think that three extra visitors were thrust upon the hospitable family, nor did any hint escape them that the unexpected guests were other than socially their equals. Mrs. Alexander was looking for some sign of this superiority in them because of the title, and felt most uneasy because she detected none of it; but finding she and her family were accepted on the same standard as the Fabians and Ashbys, she recovered her wonted habit of pushing a way to the foreground in everything.

As the group separated to go to their separate suites, Sir James reminded them: "Quite informal dinner, you know. We are only tarrying in town a few days, before going on to Osgood Hall, so we make no pretence at dressing formally."

The Ashbys and Fabians knew this to be a courtesy extended them because of their lack of baggage, but Mrs. Alexander thought Sir James meant that their own trunks had gone to the country and so they were not able to dress in dinner clothes. But she determined to show how *she* could dress, with her money.

Before Dorothy could lock the door of her room, her mother entered and handed her the dress she was to wear for dinner.

"Why, Ma! we were told *not* to dress!" exclaimed she.

"That's only bluff. You put this on and show folks that we know what's what, even if we haven't a title!" declared her mother.

Reluctantly Dodo took the beaded georgette evening dress and then closed the door after her mother's commanding figure. As she went to the toilet-table she thought: "I wonder what poor Pa will have to wear tonight!" But she was to learn about that sooner than she thought for.

CHAPTER III – THE TOUR IS PLANNED

“Ma, why did you speak of your car bein’ in London? You know durn well it ain’t!” exclaimed Mr. Alexander, as he soaped his head and gurgled in the water, then he ducked it up and down in the basin.

“That’s my business! If I plan it that way to get acquainted with a lot of fine folks, why should you care?”

“*I* don’t care, but I didn’t know you thought these folks so fine. I heard you say they was only decorators,” argued her spouse.

“Ebenezer, there are times when I could just choke you – you are so thick!” exclaimed Mrs. Alexander, impatiently.

“Mebbe I’m thick, Ma, but I can’t see how you can drive a party across England when your old car is on second-hand sale out in Denver!”

“That proves you’re thick – if you can’t see how! I am going straight to a shop, in London, tomorrow, where I can *buy* a car exactly the same as mine – only it will be up-to-date with self-starter and all. Then you can drive it back here and we will show the folks a seven-passenger car that we owned long ago.”

As Mr. Alexander swabbed his dripping face and hair on a damask towel, he shook his head dubiously. “Well, these days, a hull lot of stuff goes, but I always said such a game as you’re playin’ was fibbin’ and that’s callin’ it by a polite name, too.”

Mrs. Alexander humped her shoulders angrily and said: “You are the most aggravating man! I s’pose you’ll tell everyone we know, all about my plan to get a car in a hurry.”

“Oh no, I won’t tell no one, ’cause I don’t want folks to believe you ain’t as honest as you pretend to be,” said he meekly.

After that he wondered what he had said to anger his wife so that she would not speak to him; and when he asked her to help him with his collar-button, she ignored him entirely. Later, when he had trouble with his neck-tie and dared not ask assistance of his mate, he was amazed that she caught hold of the two ends and began to tie it.

But she had a subtle reason for helping him. As she tied and untied it, she dinned into his ears all the rules and reminders he had heard often before – about his behavior at the table. At last, desperate with the nagging, he snatched the tie-ends from her hand and rushed from the room.

“Ebenezer! Ebenezer – I say! come back here!” called she.

But the little man fled down the stairs and dodged into the first room he found. It happened to be the library where Mr. Fabian was conversing with Sir James. Both men arose at the perturbed appearance of Mr. Alexander, as he ran breathlessly into the room.

“Why – what has happened?” asked Sir James, fearfully.

“Nothin’ much. My wife made me so nervous a-fussin’ over my manners and this tie, that I just had to run!” explained he.

“Allow me to help you, Mr. Alexander,” said Sir James, and his voice was so kindly and gentle, that Mr. Alexander decided that for true democracy you had to meet an English baronet.

As Sir James was adding the last touch to the tie, Mrs. Alexander swept into the room in search of her escaped husband. When she beheld him facing the host, who was adjusting the tie, she was speechless.

Mrs. Alexander caught the reflection of herself in a long mirror opposite where she stood, and immediately forgot, in admiring herself, her concern over her husband’s shortcomings. She waved her feather fan to and fro slowly and seemed absorbed in the vision seen in the glass.

Mr. Fabian smiled to himself, and Sir James engaged Mr. Alexander in conversation to make him feel more at ease. Then Dodo peeped around the corner of the portière, and saw her mother

very much preoccupied, so she beckoned to Mr. Fabian without being seen by the others. He quietly moved over to the doorway.

“Just look at me, Mr. Fabian! Ma made me dress up like a monkey, just to show folks that she knew what’s what!”

Mr. Fabian felt sorry for Dodo, for he knew she wished to appear rational to the others at the dinner-party. So he hinted: “It is still very early for the others to appear. You’d have time to change your mind, Dodo.”

They both laughed at that, and the girl replied: “I will! I’ll run up and change my dress, at the same time.”

“Perhaps you’ll feel better in a simple little silk,” suggested he.

Dodo nodded understandingly and disappeared. Just as Mr. Fabian turned to walk back to the fireplace, Mrs. Alexander finished the contemplation of her satisfying appearance – satisfying to herself.

Sir James immediately came over and took such a deep interest in his guest that she had no opportunity, thereafter, to harass her poor little husband. The others came in, one by one, and finally, Dodo reappeared in a modest pale-blue taffeta silk.

Mrs. Alexander gasped at what she considered rank insubordination, but Lady Osgood managed to engage so much of her attention that Dodo escaped further persecution that night.

Just as the butler threw open the doors of the dining-room to announce dinner, Mrs. Alexander noticed her husband’s lack of gems which she had insisted upon his wearing that night.

“Ebenezer! What did you do with those shirt-studs and the scarf-pin you were told to wear tonight? They are diamonds of the purest quality, and that stud weighs, at *least*, four carats!”

Even the butler looked shocked at the guest’s lack of tact, and everyone wondered what little Mr. Alexander would say. It was a tense moment for all.

“Well, this time I speak out even if I lose my head for it!” retorted the badgered man, in a voice that plainly signified he expected to be tortured forever afterwards. “I saw that Mr. Fabian and Sir James didn’t have no jooels of any kind shinin’ around ’em, and I am as good as them, any day. Why should I look like pawn-shop, when I don’t feel that way!”

It was hard work for the grown-ups to keep a straight face, but Dodo set the younger members the example of laughing outright. In a moment, the young folks were all enjoying the blunt repartee.

“Oh, Pa!” sighed Dodo, finally. “What would our life be without you to entertain us!”

“Miss Dodo is right, there, Mr. Alexander. You certainly are a valuable member to any party on a pleasure trip,” added Mr. Ashby. And Mrs. Alexander smirked and nodded her head approvingly, so that everyone breathed easier, knowing a catastrophe had been averted for the little man.

Sir James now turned the conversation into a different channel. As they enjoyed the excellent dinner, he told about the new car he had presented to his son Jimmy, on his twenty-first birthday, two weeks previous.

“Oh, have you a grown-up son?” asked Mrs. Alexander, eagerly.

“Yes indeed! And a very fine young man we think him, too,” returned Lady Osgood.

“He is not at home, is he?” asked Mrs. Alexander.

“He is dining with his latest love, this evening,” laughed Angela. “He has a new one every other week, but this one has lasted since Nancy refused him some time ago.”

“Refused him! Nancy Fabian refused Sir James’s son,” gasped the unbelieving hunter for a title.

The girls laughed, and Nancy shrugged her shoulders nonchalantly. Mrs. Alexander stared from her to each one about the table, as if the truth of the statement would not sink into her mind.

Again Sir James entered the breach and bridged over the yawning chasm in the conversation. “I gave Jimmy the car – which is a fine seven-passenger affair – with the understanding that he was to take Angela and the Fabians on a summer tour through England, but he spoiled all that by falling madly in love with Nancy and then being refused. Of course, he had no desire after that, to join any

party. We are giving him ample opportunity, now, to recover from his broken heart. Then he and his car will be ours, again.”

Jimmy’s family did not express much concern over his damaged heart, and the guests considered that pity or sympathy for him would be useless. However, Mrs. Alexander began to feel an intense interest in the absent heir and, as usual, she suggested a plan which others would have weighed carefully before mentioning.

“If your son has a seven-passenger car and I have mine, wouldn’t it be just *too* lovely for anything, if we took all this party on the tour of England. He can drive his motor, and Pa can drive mine.”

Her very audacity caused sudden silence with everyone, although the younger members of the party felt that the plan would be perfectly wonderful if it could be carried out. Sir James finally answered.

“If Jimmy could be induced to join such a party, it certainly would be fine for all. But Lady Osgood and myself have to go down to our country house, in a few days, as there are so many things an owner of a large estate has to take charge of, in summer.”

“Perhaps Miss Angela will join us, and we can divide the party accordingly,” persisted Mrs. Alexander, eagerly.

“Oh yes, I’d love to be one of the touring party,” said Angela. “But what do the others say about this idea?”

“If we could make the trip and get me back to London in two weeks’ time, so I can keep the appointments with several men I agreed to see, I’d like it immensely,” said Mr. Ashby.

“As for us – we planned to tour England, anyway, and traveling with a party of friends will make it all the pleasanter,” added Mr. Fabian.

“Oh, how grand! Then it is all settled, isn’t it?” cried Mrs. Alexander, clasping her be-ringed hands ecstatically.

“That depends on Jimmy,” remarked Angela.

“Jimmy will agree to do anything, the moment he meets this new bevy of pretty girls,” laughed Sir James.

“You don’t seem to worry much over his susceptible heart,” ventured Mr. Fabian.

“No, because ‘there is safety in numbers,’ you know,” said Lady Osgood. “And Jimmy falls out of love quite as safely as he falls in.”

Mrs. Alexander listened intently whenever anyone spoke of the heir, and she made up her mind that that son must fall in love with Dodo if she had to take him by the neck and shake him into it. And once he was in love, she would see that Dodo accepted him and gave him no excuse to fall out again.

“What do you think of this touring plan, Angie?” asked Nancy Fabian of her friend Angela.

“Why I like it, Nan; don’t you think it will be heaps of fun? Much nicer than doing as we first planned, you know. With a large party of young folks there is always more sport.”

“Yes, I agree with you.” Then Nancy turned to her father: “Have we arranged about the expenses of the trip? Of course the guests will want to entertain the owners of the two cars.”

“Oh decidedly!” agreed Mr. Fabian.

“Indeed not!” objected Mrs. Alexander. “What do you think of me, with all my money, letting others pay any of the bills?”

This shocked her hearers and she actually realized that she had committed a social error that time. So she hoped for some opening by which she could mend matters. Sir James gave it to her.

“It would seem better, if financial arrangements were left to the men, to settle. Ladies are seldom experienced enough to assume such responsibilities. So, if all agree, the cost and payment of bills will be attended to by the four gentlemen.”

That smoothed matters out agreeably for the time being, and the subject of the itinerary was taken up and discussed. Dinner passed with no other breach of etiquette by the Alexanders, and they all went to the drawing-room to complete the plans for the trip.

Dodo and her father were unusually quiet that evening, but Mrs. Alexander seemed the more pleased at it. In fact, she did so much talking about the car and how they all loved to drive it, that Dodo finally silenced her with a strange remark.

"Ma, suppose you wait until you find whether your car can be driven this summer. It may have disappeared from the garage in London, where you *say* it is waiting."

Mrs. Alexander then remembered a very grave situation. "Did anyone remember that there would be thirteen in this party? Someone must drop out, or we'll have to add an extra passenger."

The others laughed, believing she was joking, and Sir James said: "Oh, that sort of superstition never worries one, these days."

"Do you mean to say, you wouldn't hesitate to do anything when there were thirteen in it?" wondered Mrs. Alexander.

"Of course not! Thirteen really ought to be a lucky number because it is made up of one and three – both very lucky numerals," returned Sir James. "It is only the fear of a thing that gives it any power. And the sooner you overcome the fear of thirteen being unlucky, it turns out to be favorable for you."

As long as a wise man like Sir James said so, Mrs. Alexander thought it must be so, and nothing more was said about the thirteen in the party.

Jimmy had not come in that night when the guests said good-night to their host and hostess and retired. But what Sir James and his wife said to him when he did let himself in in the 'wee sma hours' about the bevy of very wealthy girls who were waiting for him to choose a wife from, had due effect on the young man.

"And remember, Jimmy," added his sister Angela. "These four girls have money by the bag! Nancy Fabian is a dandy girl, but she hasn't a cent to bless her husband with."

In the morning, when Mr. and Mrs. Alexander appeared in street costumes ready to go to the garage where they believed their automobile would be awaiting them, Jimmy said he would go with them.

"Oh dear no! I couldn't think of such a thing," declared Mrs. Alexander, anxiously, "Why, I am not even taking Dodo. But leaving her here for you to entertain."

Jimmy grinned and thought to himself: "If Dodo is anything like her parents she'll entertain *me*, not *me her*." But he said aloud: "I really feel that your husband and I ought to get the car out, Mrs. Alexander, and spare you that trouble."

"No trouble whatever, my dear boy, as I propose looking at a new roadster for myself, at the same time," said the lady.

To escape further explanations, she managed to get her husband out of the house before the others came down to the morning meal.

As one girl after another appeared and was introduced to Jimmy, he thought: "Angie was right! here is as delightful a bouquet of lovely buds as I ever saw."

And Nancy Fabian saw, to her satisfaction, that he had quite forgotten his broken heart that was caused by her refusal. Angela was nineteen in years, but older in experience than Jimmy who was twenty-one. She generally advised her brother in family problems that he would have shirked, had it not been for his sister.

With all the display of wealth and the semblance of riches that had to be carried on by Sir James in order to maintain his new position, the Osgood estate was in sore need of help. The loss of much money invested in war speculations and the heavy taxes imposed since the war, had impoverished his estate. But the Osgoods bravely kept up appearances while their feet were marking time on a treadmill that Jimmy could, and would have to, work for them by marrying money.

So it was with a sense of tremendous relief that both Sir James and his wife saw such pretty American girls descend upon them, that day, and the fact that each girl had a fortune coming to her, was no obstacle in the way of their welcome of them.

Because of this fact, and also because Mrs. Alexander plainly showed her hand to the Englishman, he overcame many scruples to herself and seconded her plan of the touring party. To Angela, he confided the hope that she would return home with Jimmy securely engaged to one of the rich girls – for Jimmy had to obey his family in this matter.

The first girl Jimmy met that morning was Polly, who was always an early riser. She came downstairs in a slow dignified way, and Angela introduced her to Jimmy, who was standing in the library. He thought he had never seen such wonderful eyes, and such a mass of bronze-glinting hair. He attended her to the breakfast room and watched every motion and manner of her perfectly poised form.

Before he could quite lose himself in her charm, however, Eleanor bounced into the room. Here was a bright merry girl, full of mischief, and dearly delighting to flirt and tease anyone who would give her the opportunity.

Eleanor was attractive and pretty in a different way from Polly. And now Jimmy found it hard to choose which of the two girls he preferred. Then before he could decide, Dodo came in.

Dodo was domineering in her grand beauty. She was so frank and sincere, too, that everyone liked her, but Jimmy felt afraid of her. The fact that she was the richest one of the girls, also caused him to fear to try his luck with her.

While he was considering all these facts, sweet pretty Ruth came in. Here was a type Jimmy fully understood. She was pensive and alluring, and her round baby-blue eyes appealed to his gallant heart. Her wavy chestnut hair and her dainty figure would look well when she received with Lady Osgood, thought he. And Ruth also had a fortune awaiting her because she was an only child. So he finally chose Ruth for his bride-to-be. And straightway he turned all his attention to her.

The young folks thoroughly enjoyed that morning while growing better acquainted with each other; and by noon, when the purr of an engine came to them from the driveway, they rushed to the front windows and crowded their pretty heads together, in order to see who was stopping at the house in this unusual season for London.

“My goodness! if it isn’t Ma in a splendiferous car!” exclaimed Dodo, laughing uncertainly at the sight.

Little Mr. Alexander sat behind the wheel, perfectly happy, there, with a black pipe between his lips. He was smoking like a factory chimney and his wife was not saying a word in protest. She sat beside him, trying to impress upon his mind some new rule or remembrance of etiquette that he had ignored.

“Now don’t forget, Eben,” she was heard to say. “We had it all done over for this very tour!”

And her husband grinned self-complacently as he looked at her, but he never admitted that she had any further authority to command him. He actually seemed to have gained some power over his wife that she dared not question.

The groom ran down the stone steps of the house and held open the door of the automobile while the lady got out, then Mr. Alexander locked the engine and followed her.

“No use talking, Ma is a wizard when she makes up her mind to do a thing,” said Dodo to her companions. “There’s a car, and there’s Pa driving it, so that shows it is just like our old one, or he couldn’t handle it so cleverly.”

The excitement caused by the appearance of the car that was to carry half of the party on the proposed tour, was the only thing that saved the Alexanders from discovery of the little plot. But Angela had taken notice of Dodo’s surprise and unconscious admission, and she soon ferreted out the fact that the Alexanders purchased the handsome large touring car that very morning. That it was up-to-date and of a sporty appearance, went without saying, for Mrs. Alexander would see to that,

all right. And the fact that a fabulous price was paid for the new car solved the discovery made by Angela, for the price paid proved, to her satisfaction, that the Alexander fortune could easily stand a check like the one paid to the motor company.

At luncheon that day, Mrs. Alexander led the conversation without interruption. Sir James had gathered from his daughter that the car was a recent purchase, and he could approximate the sum paid for it. Now he felt relieved to find this American lady so willing to be the victim of his carefully-laid plans.

"I saw just the kind of roadster I want," said she, "but I guess I won't buy it until we get back from the tour. Ebenezer says it will keep a couple of weeks, and I agreed with him. We'll go on with the old car, now, and I'll buy the new one, for myself, when we return."

Sir James and Angela exchanged glances when they heard this woman speak of buying high-priced cars as glibly as she would mention buying a new glove.

"Well, I won't point out of this business, too," chuckled Mr. Alexander. Everyone paid strict attention to what he was about to say, for he generally caused a general laugh with his remarks; and everyone liked him so genuinely that they would have listened eagerly whether he was amusing or contrariwise.

"Ebenezer, remember what I told you just before we came in!" warned his wife.

"Yeh, but I'm not alone with you now, Maggie," said he.

"*Please* don't call me 'Maggie,' Eben. You know my name is 'Margaret'," cried Mrs. Alexander, beside herself at her husband's shortcomings.

"Don't worry, Maggie. Us folks know it is a pet name," chuckled the little man. "But what I was goin' to say, is: I won a hard fight while I was out this mornin' with my wife. She's promised to let me smoke my old pipe if I agree to drive the car just like she wants."

His happy laugh was echoed by his friends, especially by the men who felt in sympathy with him. They say that a woman can never understand, because she cannot appreciate, the solace of an old pipe.

Then the interesting part of the programme of the tour began – the arrangement of the members of the party for the two cars.

"I say, let the girls go in my car, Pater, and let Mr. Alexander drive the adults," suggested Jimmy, eagerly.

"Yes, that sounds very good, if the youngsters will agree to follow our advice carefully, and behave as if a chaperone was in the car with them," added Sir James.

"Oh, so many chaperones in the second car will suffice," laughed Nancy.

"You arrange matters so independently in America, that I suppose it will be all right, from your point of view," admitted Lady Osgood, glancing at Angela for her opinion.

"Yes, and one young man with so *many* girls, must behave himself, you know. So everyone will see it is quite proper for us to travel without an older woman in the car."

All this fuss about "Mrs. Grundy" made Dodo laugh, and she freely confessed how silly it all really was to a sensible girl.

The plans were perfected that they were to start on the tour early the following morning, driving southward from London and following the coast as far as Brighton. On the northward route they would travel as far as Holyhead and then cross to Ireland; then tour to the farthest northerly point on the Irish coast and cross over again to Scotland. And lastly, follow the automobile route to Edinburgh and southward again to London.

They figured that two weeks ought to be sufficient for this trip, but a few days more would not really make much difference, as Mr. Ashby could leave them at any time, if necessary, and go on to London by train.

That afternoon they used the two cars to drive about the city of London and visit the parks, and other famous sights. The exterior of The Tower of London, Nelson's Monument in Trafalgar

Square, the Houses of Parliament, the Museums and Art Galleries, and other noted places were seen on this drive, but the visiting of these individual buildings and their contents, was left until the return from the trip.

That night, Jimmy was carefully instructed as to his cue and part in this trip. Before he returned, he was to have proposed and been accepted by one of the rich girls he would have to choose from on the drive. There was not much difference between them, said his parents, but of the four girls, it was probable that Dodo had the most money and could be more agreeably handled, as her parents would prove to be easily influenced by the title.

CHAPTER IV – THE TOUR OF GREAT BRITAIN

Early the following morning, the two large cars were in front of Osgood House, ready for the start. Jimmy managed to get Ruth to occupy the front seat beside him, as he preferred her company to that of the other girls. His car was to lead the way, because he knew the roads quite well; the second car would follow with Mr. Alexander driving it.

They drove through the suburbs of London to Guildford, and then southward. As they went, the English Channel could be glimpsed from the knolls, every now and then, with the lovely rolling country on all sides except in front.

“Jimmy,” called Mr. Fabian at one of the stops made to allow the girls to admire the view, “if it will not take us too far out of the way, I’d like to visit Hastings where the historical ruins can be seen. My students will there see several unique lines of architecture that can never be found elsewhere in these modern days.”

“All right, Prof.; and after that I can take you to see Pevensky Castle, another historic ruin,” returned Jimmy.

So they turned off, just before coming to Brighton, and visited the ruins of the castle said to have been built by William the Conqueror. Cameras were brought forth and pictures taken of the place, and then they all climbed back into the automobiles.

“Now for Pevensky Castle, near which William is said to have landed in 1066,” announced Jimmy, starting his car.

Fortunately, this day happened to be one of the visiting days at the old ruins, and they had no trouble in securing an entrance. Mr. Fabian and his interested friends found much to rejoice their hearts, in this old place; but Jimmy had persuaded Ruth to remain in the car with him, so that he could have her companionship to himself.

As Mrs. Alexander was the last adult to leave her new car, she saw Jimmy hold to Ruth’s hand and beg her to stay with him. This was contrary to her scheme of things, but she had to follow the rest of the party at the time. While she went, she planned how to get back immediately and frustrate any tête-à-tête of Jimmy’s, unless Dodo was the girl.

Mr. Alexander had settled himself down in his car for a nice little smoke with his pipe, as per agreement with his spouse, so he was not interested in the lover-like scene Jimmy was acting in the other car. But all this was changed when Mrs. Alexander suddenly returned from the ruins, and joined the two young people in Jimmy’s car.

“It’s so very tiresome to climb over tumbled down walls and try to take an interest in mouldy interiors,” sighed she, seating herself on the running-board of Jimmy’s car.

That ended Jimmy’s dreams of love for the time being, but in his heart the youthful admirer heartily cursed Dodo’s mother. She sat unconcernedly dressing her face with powder and rouge, then she lined up her eye-brows, and finally touched up her lips with the red stick. When the toilet outfit was put away in her bag, she sat waiting for the others to reappear from the castle, feeling that she had done her duty by her family.

At Chichester, the next stopping place on the route, Mr. Fabian led his friends to the old cathedral; as before, Jimmy had Ruth wait with him while the others went to inspect the old place. This time, Mrs. Alexander made no pretence of leaving, but remained on guard beside the young people. Jimmy gritted his teeth in baffled rage, but he could say nothing to the wily chaperone.

After the tourists got back in the motor-cars, Portsmouth, Porchester, Southampton and Christ Church were reeled off speedily. At Christ Church they stopped long enough to see the carved Gothic door at the north entrance, and the Norman architecture of the interior of the Priory – a famous place for lovers of the antique and ancient.

Ruth jumped out and went with her friends when they visited the Priory, and Jimmy had to console himself with a cigarette. Mrs. Alexander endeavored to enter into conversation with him, but he was too surly for anything.

That evening they reached Exeter, and stopped for the night at the New London Inn, a veritable paradise for the decorators of the party. Its public-room and bed-rooms were furnished with genuine old mahogany pieces centuries old. Settles, cupboards, and refectory tables stood in the main room downstairs, while old Sheraton tables, Chippendale chairs, ancient, carved four-posters, and highboys or lowboys, furnished the guest-chambers.

"Nolla, did you ever see so many lovely old things!" exclaimed Polly, as they admired one thing after another.

"I wish we could steal some of them," ventured Eleanor, laughingly.

"Maybe the owner will sell some," suggested Polly.

But Mr. Fabian learned later, that the inn-keeper was as great an enthusiast and collector of antiques as the Americans, and would not part for love or money, with any piece in his collection.

In the morning Mr. Fabian escorted his friends to the cathedral of Exeter, explaining everything worth while, as he went.

Jimmy had ascertained, the night previous, that Ruth purposed going with her friends, so he refused to get up in the morning, sending down word instead, that he felt bad. He hoped this might induce Ruth to remain and comfort him, but he learned later that she had gone gayly with the others, when they started out for the old edifice.

Shortly after the party left, a knock came upon Jimmy's door and he gruffly called out: "Come in!"

Mrs. Alexander tip-toed in and immediately began to condole with him. "Poor Jimmy! I feel so concerned over you. Just let me mother you, if you are ill!"

Jimmy growled: "I'm not ill – just sleepy!"

"All the same, you dear boy, something must be troubling you to make you feel so ill-natured," said she, pointedly.

"I should think it would!" snapped he, the patch-work quilt drawn up close about his chin so that only his face showed.

"Then do tell me if I can help in any way. My purse and heart are both wide open for you to help yourself, whenever you like."

Jimmy was young, and had not yet realized that independence was a great privilege. But he had learned that poverty was not the virtue people called it. It meant doing without pleasant things, and constantly sacrificing what seemed most desirable. He knew Mrs. Alexander would buy her way into his good graces if she could, and he was just angry enough, and sulky at fate, to tempt him to take advantage of her offer. Even though he might regret it shortly after.

"Well, to confess – as I would to my own mother – I'm broke! And it's no pleasant state of affairs on a long trip like this one, with a lot of pretty girls wanting to be treated to candy, and other things," growled Jimmy.

"Poor dear boy!" sighed Mrs. Alexander, seating herself on the edge of the great antique bed, and patting his head. "Don't I understand? Now let me be your other mother, for a while, and give you a little spending money. When it is gone, just wink at me and I will know you need more. If there were a *number* of young men to assume the expenses of treating the crowd of girls with you, I wouldn't think of suggesting this. But I remember that you are but one with a galaxy of beauties who look for entertainment from you."

Thus Mrs. Alexander cleverly managed to induce Jimmy to believe he was justified in taking her money, and as she got up to go out, she said: "I'll leave a little roll on the dresser. If you feel able to get up and come out, you will see that you will feel better for the effort and the air."

So saying, she left a packet under the military brushes on the dresser and, smiling reassuringly at the youth, went out. But she did not leave the closed door at once; she waited, just outside, until she heard him spring from the bed and rush over to the place where the money had been left. Then she nodded her head satisfactorily, and crept downstairs.

Jimmy counted out the notes left for him, and gasped. He hadn't seen so much money at one time, since the war began! And he felt a sense of gratitude, then repulsion, to the ingratiating person who thus paid him for his good-will.

Mr. Fabian and his party were examining the old cathedral, with its two Norman towers and the western front rich with carvings, without a thought of the two they had left at the Inn. Having completed the visit to the edifice, they all returned to see the old inn known as "Moll's Coffee-house."

"It was at this famous place that many of England's noted people used to gather," said Mr. Fabian, as they crossed the green. "Sir Walter Raleigh was a frequent visitor here, as well as many historical men."

As they came to the place, they found Mrs. Alexander and Jimmy seated on a worm-eaten bench, chatting pleasantly about the ancient room they were in. But no one knew that the conversation had been suddenly switched from a personal topic, the moment the sight-seers appeared to interrupt the tête-à-tête.

Mrs. Alexander got up and crossed the room to meet the other members in the party, saying as she came: "I hear how folks used to come here and drink coffee – and a record is kept of who they were. It must be nice to have folks remember you after you are gone. I wish someone would say, years after I am dead, 'Mrs. Alexander was in this house, once'."

"A lot of good that would do you, then!" laughed Dodo.

"I was just telling Jimmy that it would be a lot of satisfaction to us all if he became famous and this trip of ours was spoken of in years to come. He's got a title in the family, you know, and the English think so much of that! The inn-keeper across the green might be glad to remember how Sir Jimmy stopped here when he toured England with his friends from America."

Everyone laughed at the silly words but Mrs. Alexander was really in earnest. Her imagination had jumped many of the obstacles placed in her way, and she saw herself as Jimmy's mother-in-law and revered as such by the English public.

During their tête-à-tête at Old Moll's Coffee-house, she had impressed it upon Jimmy's mind, that not a soul was to know about the money. And she extracted a promise that he would call upon her for more if he needed it. Feeling like a cad, still he promised, for he was in dire need of money to be able to appear like a liberal host.

"Well, Jimmy – are you ready to start along the road?" asked Angela, suspicious of this sudden change of front in Jimmy for the obnoxious rich woman.

"Yes, if Mrs. Alex and everyone else is," agreed he.

"Mrs. Alex?" queried his sister, pointedly.

"Oh yes, folks! Dodo's mother says 'Alexander' is such a lot to say, that she prefers us to cut it to Mrs. Alex. Every one else has nicknames, so why not nick Alexander?" said Jimmy.

The others laughed, and Mr. Alexander said quaintly: "I always liked that name Alexander 'cause it made me feel sort of worth while. I might be no account in looks, but 'Alexander' gives me back-bone, 'cause I only have to remember 'Alexander the Great'!"

His friends laughed heartily and Mr. Fabian said: "What's in a name, when you yourself are such a good friend?"

"Mebbe so, but all the same, I'll miss that name. 'Alex' looks too much like a tight fit for my size. But I s'pose it's got to be as the missus says!"

Now the cars sped through the charming country of rural England, with its ever-changing scenes, than which there is nothing more beautiful and peaceful. Cattle browsed upon the hillocks,

tiny hamlets were spotlessly neat and orderly, the roads were edged with trimmed hedges, and even in the woods, where wild-plants grew, there was no débris to be found. It was all a picture of neatness.

On this drive, the girls were made happy by being able to buy several pieces of old Wedgwood from the country people. Polly also secured a chubby little bowl with wonderful medallions upon its sides, and Eleanor found a “salt-glaze” pitcher.

“I believe lots of the people in the country, here, will gladly sell odd bits if we only have time to stop and bargain,” said Polly, hugging her bowl.

“And lots of them will swear their furniture is genuine antique even if they bought it a year ago from an installment firm,” laughed Jimmy.

“Oh, they wouldn’t do that!” gasped Polly.

“Wouldn’t they! Just try it, and see how they rook your pocket-book,” retorted Jimmy.

“Why James Osgood! Where ever did you learn such words – ‘rook’ and the like?” gasped his sister.

“Oh, I’m going to be a thorough American, now,” laughed Jimmy, recklessly. “Mrs. Alex has agreed to take me West with her on her return, and let me run a ranch in Colorado.”

“What will mother say to that?” wailed Angela, as this was not what she had hoped for.

“Don’t worry, Angela dear,” quickly said Mrs. Alexander, soothingly. “Jimmy is only joking. I told him about our ranches but I have no idea of taking him away from England.” Neither had she.

At Glastonbury the tourists stopped to see the “Inne of ye Pilgrims” which proved to be very old and most interesting. Here King Henry the VIII and Abbot Whiting’s rooms are maintained with the old furnishings as in that long-past day.

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