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Lord Loveland Discovers America



Charles Williamson

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Williamson A. M. Alice Muriel, Williamson C. N. Charles Norris Lord Loveland Discovers America

CHAPTER ONE

The Discovery of America by Lord Loveland

"Even the Last Resort has refused me." Loveland broke the news to his mother when he had kissed her.

"Miss Mecklenburg?"

"Yes. I begin to realise that I'm a sinking ship. The early rats are deserting me – or declining to come on board. Clever little animals!"

"You *shan't* sink," protested Lady Loveland, clasping the pretty hands whence all save the wedding ring and its guard had gone to pay a visit of indefinite length to Messrs. Battenborough.

"The idiot, to refuse you – with her *nose*, too."

"She didn't do it with her nose, Mater."

"Val, you know what I mean. And after you'd overlooked her being a Jewess!"

"Yes, it was kind of me, wasn't it? An Italian Prince has just overlooked it, too. Her engagement to Doriana was announced the morning after she'd offered to be a sister to me. It was the size of her purse, not her nose, which caught his eye. But sooner or later he'll beat her."

"I hope so. She deserves it for taking him instead of you. Oh, Val, what a world!"

"Don't grouse, Mater. *I* might have beaten her if I'd got her, and then there'd have been a scandal. I can't stand women with important looking teeth, and noses which throw their other features into perspective. Besides, Lillah Mecklenburg isn't as young as she's painted."

"So few women are nowadays, dearest," sighed Lady Loveland, who, in living for her handsome son, did not trouble to live up to the past of her complexion, and whose way of doing her hair was alone enough to show that though lenient to Val's weaknesses, she would not condone those of her sister women. "Oh, Val, it's hard you should have to think of such creatures. But what are we to do?"

"That's just where I want your advice," said Loveland, who had come a long way to get it. For the distance from London to the north of Scotland is formidable when birds are out of season.

Lady Loveland was flattered that Val should ask for her advice which, when offered gratuitously, he had never been known to take.

"My advice!" she echoed sadly. "That's all I can give you now! Although I did hope, dear Boy, I must confess. I – I have been trying for Limericks. It was for your sake, and I hoped to win large sums. I thought of lines all night long, and I did send in some splendid ones, a thousand times better than those for which other people (dreadful people, my dear, with names like Hogson, and Dobbs) have won hundreds of pounds. I gave the editors permission to *use my name*, too; one would have thought, a valuable advertisement for their papers. But all I've won after the greatest efforts has been fifteen and six – an insult – while these Dobbs and Hogsons – I believe the editors must be *Socialists*. And – the shillings for the postal orders have counted up into pounds. I am crushed with remorse."

"Never mind, dear, you meant it for the best," said Val, who cared more for his mother than for anyone else in the world – except himself. And that he made this exception was largely Lady Loveland's fault, for she had brought him up to believe in but one person of paramount importance, adorning the universe: Perceval George Victor Edward Gordon, thirteenth Marquis of Loveland. "What would a few pounds matter – or a few hundreds even, if you'd won them? The ship's too far under water to be raised with Limericks."

"Dearest – is it as bad as that?"

"It's as bad as anything can be. Look out of your window at the snow falling. Well, that's nothing to the way it's snowing bills outside my window. If you and I can't think of something to clear the weather, I shall have to chuck the army. And even if I do, the bills will still keep on snowing."

"What horrible creatures tradesmen must be," said Lady Loveland, whose opinions had come down to her crusted and spider-webbed from the cellars of the Stone Age. "To think that we'd have had power of life and death over them if we'd lived a few hundred years ago. I wish those times could come back."

"The world at large doesn't agree with you."

"It oughtn't to be at large," replied Lady Loveland, without the smallest idea of a joke. "It's reached a pretty pass when Worms who make boots and uniforms and – "

"And sell wine – "

"Oh, if you like – "

"And jewellery – "

"Very well. Admit the jewellery – "

"And motors. I've wasted a good deal of substance in riotous motor-cars, Mater."

"Oh, I suppose men of your position have some right to enjoy their lives? As I was saying, it's come to a pretty pass when Worms who make or sell what every gentleman *must* have – things that ought simply to come, like the air you breathe – can turn and rend an officer of the Guards, a peer of the realm, without fear of being crushed."

"If I'd chosen to be a kind of secret advertising agent for tradespeople, I might have been dressed and wined for nothing, motor-carred too, perhaps," said Loveland. "I know some fellows who do go in for that sort of thing. But I'm hanged if I could. I'd rather blow out my brains decently."

"Oh, my darling, don't speak so wildly," implored his mother. "There must be resources we can call upon – if we could only think of them."

"I have called on several people's resources, without any good coming of it." Loveland grinned faintly, though he was in the depths of depression, and had suffered from insomnia for at least a week, between eight and ten in the morning, when so popular a young man should (in his own opinion) have been dreaming of last night's pleasures, instead of worrying how to pay for them.

"There is surely a last resort," went on Lady Loveland.

"Miss Mecklenburg was mine – and she's failed me – thank Heaven!"

"There must be something else."

"Something still worse?"

"Don't be flippant, dearest. I can't concentrate my thoughts when you are. Ah, if we could have let Loveland Castle as well as we did twelve years ago!"

"It's crumbled a lot since. And we're too poor to repair ourselves, let alone our castles."

"You at least don't need repairing," said his mother, gazing at her son with admiration. "You're the handsomest young man in the Kingdom."

Loveland laughed, though he believed her. As a child he had been kissed by all his mother's prettiest friends, because he was so absurdly beautiful, and so precocious. If he had been a plain or stupid boy he might have grown up to be an estimable young man, as Marquises go. "Why don't you say, 'in the world'?" he asked.

"I'm not a woman to *exaggerate*, dearest. All the Lovelands have been good-looking. One has only to go into the picture gallery at the Castle to see that – "

"Yes. As we can't sell their portraits."

"If we could, your father would have done it when he sold the Town house. But you will be so confusing, Val. My argument is, that as you're the best looking and the cleverest – "

"I don't know a blessed thing, my dear ladyship. Never had any education. You ought to have sent me to Eton, instead of coddling me up with tutors and – "

"You didn't think so then. I remember well when it was proposed, you flung yourself on the floor and howled."

"So of course that settled it."

"Why, yes. You generally settled things like that. You had such a determined way, dear. But you were *born* knowing more than many studious, uninteresting young men have forgotten. Then, your South African career! It was like a romance. You, who had been crammed, oh, ever so little, for Sandhurst, and then left there to go to the war when you were a mere child, hardly nineteen – so brave! And then, the Thing you did on the battlefield! Of course you ought to have had the Victoria Cross, but as it was, the newspapers rang with your praises, and I was besieged for your photographs to publish. That deed alone would have made you a personage of consideration, even without your rank."

"I've told you lots of times, Mater, the whole thing was a sort of accident. I couldn't bear the chap. If I'd stopped to think, I don't believe I'd have run back a step to drag him out from under fire. But I was there, hauling him away, before I knew what I was doing."

"Yes, you have told me – and other people. But no one believes you. How could they? They see it's your modesty." (Lord Loveland's mother was perhaps the one person on earth who would have attributed to him this quality.) "And as for disliking the young man whose life you saved at the risk of your own, of course that proves you all the more noble. Everybody must see that."

"Oh, well, it's a jolly good thing for me if they do," said Val, mechanically passing his hand over the scar on his forehead, which became him like a hall mark or a halo. It, together with the South African brown that never quite faded, had made him still more ornamental in the eyes of the pretty young married women with whom he was popular. Also in the eyes of girls, who liked to dance and flirt with Lord Loveland, even though they preferred to marry Dukes and Princes. "But what are you working up to so elaborately, Mater?"

"To your Prospects. There's no young man so liked and wanted everywhere."

"Oh, I'm fair at polo: I can ride straight, and shoot a bit," said Loveland with a pretence at self-depreciation he was far from feeling. "I get asked to all the amusing house parties. But you know as well as I do, that stopping at such places is a lot more expensive than swaggering about at the most expensive hotels in Europe."

"I know, dearest," sighed the devoted lady who by industrious spoiling had made him what he was. "I was only going on to say that you *are* a personage of importance; never think you're not. As for the two or three wretched girls who have hurled themselves at the heads of princes, when they might have had you – why, our English heiresses are growing disgustingly conceited and ambitious, quite unmaidenly, and let *them* regret their mistakes – you needn't. Val, you want my advice. Well, I've had an inspiration, I do believe, a real inspiration. *Why don't you go to America?*"

"To try ranching?"

"Good Heavens, no, my son! To try marrying. In America you'll succeed brilliantly. Why not run over and see what there is?"

She spoke as if to see meant to have, notwithstanding certain failures nearer home. But Loveland's sense of humour, which had a real existence, did not always bestir itself when his own affairs were in question. When things come too close to the eye, one is apt to lose the point of view. And Loveland did not laugh at his mother's suggestion.

"Oh, girls!" he said, distastefully. "Why go there for them? Plenty come over here to collect us."

"Ye – es. But think of the competition. There are still unmarried Dukes. It's so annoying, there always seem to be Dukes, and foreign semi-Royalties who might better stop in their own countries than prowl about ours, seeking what they may devour."

"That's what you propose my doing in the States."

"Oh, that's different. The Americans would be the foreigners, not you."

"They don't look on themselves in that light."

"Let them look at you – the girls I mean – in *any* light, there, on their native heath, where practically no competition can exist. For who ever heard of an American heiress marrying an American man?"

"I suppose it must happen sometimes," said Val.

"It's never in the newspapers. No, dearest, I believe that is why, according to statistics, there are so many more men than women in the States. The girls marry our men. And really some of them are quite presentable."

If any one of three or four beautiful and charming Duchesses had heard the tone in which old Lady Loveland said this, she would have laughed or sneered, according to her mood.

"Do you know many Americans, Val?" his mother went on, thoughtfully.

"Hardly any except Jim Harborough, and – er – his cousin who has married Stanforth."

(This was another instance of a misguided young woman who preferred a Duke to the Marquis. Therefore she remained nameless between mother and son.)

"Mr. Harborough would, I suppose, give you letters of introduction to the Right People over there?"

"Oh, yes, I suppose he would. He doesn't approve of me; but he couldn't refuse letters to his wife's cousin."

"Doesn't approve of you, indeed! What impertinence! But perhaps he's jealous, and thinks you were once in love with Betty. I feared it myself before she paid that visit to the States which turned out such a success. Just as I'm sure yours would, if you went."

"I never was in love with Betty. First cousins are a bit too near to be interesting. One's generally known them since the stage when they were silly over dolls. Besides, Betty looks too much like me. I don't care for yellow-haired, blue-eyed girls."

"It's just as well you didn't care for Betty. Such a marriage would have been disastrous. But she's a sweet girl, and must have made a good many friends in the States. There was the young woman Mohunsleigh married, for instance. I believe he met her through Betty. Oh, Val, you really *ought* to go over. I'm sure you'd be the greatest success."

"Perhaps it wouldn't be a bad idea," Loveland patronized his mother's inspiration. "Of course Harborough and Betty would both give me letters. If I had to marry – horrid bore, at my age! – and could afford to choose, I'd take an English girl of the right sort. But Americans are a lot better than English ones of the wrong sort; middle class mushrooms who've shot up in a night – on the strength of Pale Pills for Pink People, or Corsets, or Disinfectants. If a man's a beggar he must be content with the wine and wives of the country where he begs. American girls, no matter what they've sprung from, seem adaptable; and anyhow, people are tolerant of any queer ways they may have."

"That's true," agreed Lady Loveland, who had never in her life spoken to an American girl, but was now eager to become Dowager for the sake of a desirable one. "If you went to New York – or somewhere – you'd see enough girls to feel you were picking out the best. Oh, you would virtually have a clear coast! And judging from novels I've read, everybody in American society would be fighting for the honour of entertaining you, racking their brains to get up the most wonderful spectacles for your amusement."

"They wouldn't amuse me," said Loveland, in the *blasé* way he had cultivated since he came back a wounded hero of nineteen, in the last year of the South African war. "I should be there purely on business." But though he spoke like a tired man of forty rather than a happy and healthy one of twenty-six or seven, he was beginning to lean towards his mother's advice. He could easily get long leave. He had a couple of months due to him. During a tour of inspection in the States he would be free from all the bills that flesh is heir to, as he would have no settled address, until the "business" that took him over was settled. After that, when his engagement was published in the papers, tradesmen would hold their hands.

"It oughtn't to take you many weeks," Lady Loveland was reflecting aloud, "if you went at the right season, and to the right place."

"The Season is different for different places over there, Betty says," remarked Loveland, who now, having discovered America as a spot worthy of note on the world's map, was ready to explain it to his mother.

"How odd!" exclaimed Lady Loveland, to whom all things were odd, and scarcely proper, if they were not as in Great Britain. "But oh, of course, you only mean that they go to one place to shoot at a certain time, to another to hunt at a different time, as We do –"

"Not exactly that, I think," said Val, getting out of his element. "I believe it's something to do with the thermometer. Betty went in summer, and was obliged to stop at Newport. One reads things about Newport."

"Yes. Though I forget what," replied his mother, dismissing Newport. "But in the States there must be heiresses abounding in great quantities everywhere, as all American girls appear to be rich in more or less degrees. They flock to Europe from towns with the most extraordinary names. I don't know why it's happened to stick in my memory, but I know there was one – Oshkosh, or something truly awful of that sort. A young person from there, with millions, actually millions, married the Marquise de Merpoule's third son, if you remember, a most unprepossessing youth, whose face looked like an *accident*."

"I hardly think I should have to go as far afield as Oshkosh, wherever it may be," said Loveland, glancing at his double in the mirror – where was reflected also the worn furnishing of his mother's drawing-room. With a pang he saw the sorry background and forgot himself for a moment in thinking of Loveland Castle – a very noble, dull palace, all marble, gold plate, portraits and precedence when in its prime; echoing sadness now, until such time as the heir might redeem it with some fair lady's dollars. The murmur of those echoes depressed him, as did the white whirl of snow veiling the windows of the shooting lodge whither Lady Loveland had retired to live upon nothing, that he might have something.

But his mother was happy in prophetic thoughts of a future, when Val should have saved his own and the family's fortunes. "Of course you won't need to go to Oshkosh," she said. "Very likely they'd have small-pox or Red Indians there. I only meant that if there could be millions in a town with such a name, what must there be in others more important and easier to get at?"

"I'll stick to the important ones that are easy to get at."

"That means you are making up your mind to go?"

"It's practically made up – thanks to you, Mater. I believe in quick decisions."

"How like your father! After selling the house in Grosvenor Square, he made up his mind in ten minutes to go to Monte Carlo, and –"

"Don't compare that decision with this, for Heaven's sake. It wouldn't be lucky."

"No, dearest," said Lady Loveland meekly, her delicate nose reddening with reminiscences. "Well then, it's quite settled. I feel it's for the best. And I can trust you to bring me a daughter-in-law to be – well, not to be *ashamed* of."

"I'll promise you anyhow she shan't disgrace you by her manners, or me by her looks, after I've gone so far to get her."

"Why, you might find something that would do, on the ship, which would save so much time and trouble!" exclaimed Lady Loveland, brightening. "You could marry immediately on landing. And yet – perhaps it would be foolish to do anything irrevocable until you'd looked to see what there was in New York. You mustn't be reckless when so much depends upon prudence. Still it would be wise to sail on a good ship, where you might meet millionairesses. That would be only an ordinary precaution."

"It wouldn't be an ordinary price," said Loveland.

"We must manage it somehow – and a good cabin. You owe that to your position."

"I owe so much already, I may as well owe a little more."

"Val, dear, I asked you not to joke. It confuses me. And I need to concentrate all my ideas upon one point. Let me see. Yes! *The pink pearls!*"

"The pink what?" asked Loveland, startled.

"I still have them. The double rope, you know."

"I know. Another beastly heirloom."

"Still, one can pawn heirlooms. Your bride can redeem it – and the other things. I've always saved the pink pearls for a great emergency. This *is* a great emergency. Battenborough ought to give seven or eight hundred. And though seven or eight hundred, as you say, wouldn't go far among the debts, they might send you to America and back."

"I'll have to throw a few sops to Cerberus, if I want new clothes to impress the American girls," laughed Val. "That brute Deedes won't give me so much as a waistcoat unless he gets something on account."

"Pay him something," said Lady Loveland. "Pay what you must. Keep what you can – for yourself. As for me, I want nothing."

"Except a rich daughter-in-law," finished her son, his spirits rising though the snow still fell. After all, it was only October, and there was sunshine elsewhere. In America perhaps it was now shining on his bride to be! "I'll write to Betty about the letters," he said, "after you've given me some tea."

CHAPTER TWO

Between Betty and Jim

One of Loveland's most easily detected virtues was his careless habit of telling the truth. He had never lied, or even fibbed whitely, as a small boy, an idiosyncrasy which had often seriously inconvenienced his mother and other relations whose pet failings or economies he had ruthlessly exposed. But Lady Betty Bulkeley had always maintained that this bold truthfulness of her cousin's was the result of inconsiderateness rather than nobility of soul.

She said (and she ought to have known, as she had been acquainted with him since she was two, and he eight, years old) that he did not bother to think of polite fibs, simply because the feelings of others were not for him of enough importance to seem worth saving at the cost of mental effort. Besides, according to Betty, Val took an impish delight in shocking people. As for blurting out the truth about his own affairs, the habit sprang from that impishness, in idle moods, and a sublime indifference to public opinion in serious states of mind. Now, in his letter to Betty asking for introductions, he made no attempt to cover his real intentions with the roses of pretty fiction.

He let it appear plainly that he thought his cousin, having visited America and snatched a millionaire from the matrimonial grab-bag, ought gladly to help him succeed in the same game.

"The wretch!" said Betty, in the midst of reading Loveland's brutally frank letter to Jim, her American trophy, "I believe he has the impudence to think I married you for money! I'd like to shake him, and box his silly, conceited ears."

"They may be silly and conceited, but they're exactly the shape of yours, darling, so I couldn't find it in my heart to box them, no matter how much good it might do their owner," said Jim Harborough, who had been Betty's husband for nearly a year, and was joyously watching her triumphs as a young married woman.

Naturally Betty kissed him for this speech, as they were at breakfast alone together, the servants banished.

"Well, anyway, we won't give him the letters," she said when she had gone back to her own place – not far away.

"Won't we?" asked Jim, with a thoughtful air.

"No, certainly not," returned Betty. "I like your country-women, and I won't deliberately let Loveland loose to prey upon them."

"I 'guess' they can take care of themselves," said Jim, putting on his Yankiest accent.

"I don't know. Some of them might fall in love with him," suggested Betty doubtfully. "He's awfully good-looking, with a kind of winning, boyish way, and – a voice that's far too nice to express him, really. One often feels too lenient with Val, as if he were one of one's own pet weaknesses come alive and walking about."

"As for his looks, he's more like you than your own brother is," said Jim, "eyes, dimples, curly hair and all; so you wouldn't want me to hate him, would you? And as for his voice, it's occurred to me that maybe it expresses something in his *real* self – the hidden self that he and nobody else knows anything about – the self he's never had a chance to develop or find out, because his mother and other people have spoiled him from his babyhood."

"That's very subtle of you, Jim, as well as very kind – and like you," said Betty. "I wish I could think it's true, as he's my cousin. But thank goodness, I for one never spoiled him. I scratched his face once when I was a small girl, and I'm glad. I wish it had left a mark."

"It would have been even a more honourable scar than the one South Africa gave him. But I admit, he is rather an unlicked cub, – at present. I pity the girl who falls in love with him – as he now is."

"Always was and probably ever will be, Loveland without end," finished Betty, flippantly. "The *cheek* of him, expecting me to ask you for letters, so that he can go over to your country and do his best to make some nice American girl miserable for life – and spend all her money. I shall punish him – since I can't do anything worse – by telling him exactly what I think of him."

"There are other ways of punishing him – more fitting to the crime, perhaps," remarked Jim, thoughtfully.

"What ways?"

"Giving him the letters."

"Jim!"

"And then – and then – well, a lot depends upon whether he's a *born* egoist, or merely a made one. I haven't quite worked out the idea yet. It's simmering – it'll soon begin to boil."

Whether Jim Harborough's idea had already boiled or not, at all events that same afternoon a fat envelope went out by post, registered, and addressed to The Marquis of Loveland, Cragside Lodge, Dorloch, N. B. In it there were at least ten letters of introduction, all to names the bare mention of which had power to raise the circulation of Society papers in America, or create a flutter in Wall Street. Each envelope enclosed in the big one was left open, so that Loveland might acquaint himself with the terms in which his cousins described him to their millionaire friends.

Perhaps he was slightly aggrieved that they did not paint him in more glowing terms, or dwell upon the honour conferred on the recipients of the letters. But there was no real fault to find, and – as Jim would perhaps have said – it was "up" to Loveland to make his own impression. On the whole, Val was satisfied with what he had got, and condescendingly wrote two lines of thanks to Betty.

CHAPTER THREE

The Inestimable Foxham

Times were bad, said Battenborough, the polite and popular pawnbroker; therefore Lady Loveland got only six hundred pounds on the pink pearls. Two hundred were sprinkled about among Val's creditors, like pepper out of a pot, where such seasoning was necessary. A hundred more were spent outright, with heartburnings, upon obstinate tailors, hatters and hosiers, who would not tail, hat nor hose, except upon instalments of ready money. Fifty pounds were apologetically retained by Lady Loveland, who grudged every penny to herself and especially to her servants. Another fifty a little more than paid for a cabin almost worthy of his lordship on the big ship *Baltic*. Fifty and some vague dust of gold and silver went into Val's pocket for current expenses; and the remaining hundred and fifty condensed into the form of a letter of credit.

Of course there ought to have been more, much more. But there would have been less had not Loveland's man, Foxham, given notice at the last moment. This inestimable person assured his master that nothing but the most urgent necessity could have induced him to take such a course. He suffered poignantly, Foxham intimated with proper respect, in the idea that another must perform for his lordship those services which had been his pleasure and duty; but Foxham's grandfather had died (even valets have grandfathers) leaving a tidy sum; and as there were peculiarities in the will, Foxham would lose his chance of inheriting if he left England.

Loveland privately thought it almost equivalent to *lèse majesté* that his man should desert him for such a selfish trifle as private interest. But he would have scorned to retain a servant who wished to leave him; besides, there were advantages in losing even such a treasure as Foxham before the two passages were taken.

Val had learned from a friend that, if you sent your valet second class, you were not able to command his services on shipboard. This seemed a disgusting waste of money, and ought to be protested against in *The Times*, or somewhere. On the other hand, he could not afford a first-class fare for Foxham.

"I dare say I can get some fellow over there, if everything goes well," said he. "Meanwhile I shall save money on old Fox. He hasn't opened his mouth about wages. Jolly impudent if he had, because of course he knows I'll pay up when its convenient. And anyhow, a hundred and fifty in the letter of credit is the least I can rub along with, on the other side. I must 'look sharp' as Harborough says, and pick up the right girl, so as to get everything in shape as soon as possible, or I may find myself in a mess."

"Don't imagine anything so horrid, darling," said Lady Loveland, anxious to prop up her son's spirits as well as his credit. "Think only of the best. But I'm sorry about Foxham. He turns you out so perfectly."

"Oh, I learned to shift for myself like a regular navy in South Africa," Loveland consoled her. "A chap has to keep clean and have the right folds in his trousers, whatever happens; and I worried along somehow without disgracing the family. I can do the same now, though it'll be a bore, especially till I get used to it again."

Thus the pink pearl money was apportioned, a little here and a little there, and made to go as far as possible.

Foxham stopped with his lordship till after the return to London, doing the final packing, and all his ordinary work as usual, without a greedy word as to arrears of wages. Perhaps this was due to an angelic disposition; or perhaps he guessed the motive of his master's errand, and was willing to speculate on the result. But Loveland took the man's devotion for granted, without going too deeply into causes.

On getting back to his quarters near Wellington Barracks, Val was somewhat surprised to receive a visit from Harborough, who had never come to call on him before.

"So you've got your leave, I hear, and are sailing for my blessed country in a few days," Jim remarked.

Loveland replied that this was the case, and happened to think of thanking Jim for his letters of introduction.

Harborough answered casually that that was all right; and went on to say that he had read in a paper, or heard from a man, that Loveland had taken his passage on the *Baltic*.

"Yes," said Val. "I wanted to go over on a good ship."

"Well, the *Baltic's* a ripping one – couldn't be a better," Jim admitted. "But I should have thought you'd have the curiosity to try the newest thing."

"The *Mauretania*?" said Loveland. "Don't suppose I could have got a passage on her for the next three or four trips across."

"Perhaps *you* couldn't," said Jim. "But I can get you one."

"Why, she sails tomorrow, doesn't she?" asked Val.

"Yes," said Jim, "but you can go on her if you like, with a good cabin too, all to yourself."

"My passage is paid for on the *Baltic*, and my name's on her passenger list," said Loveland.

"Well, it's too late to have your name printed on the *Mauretania's* passenger list, or perhaps to get back your money for the *Baltic*," said Jim, "but that needn't stand in your way. You won't have to pay for your cabin on the *Mauretania*. It's going begging. A friend of mine who can't sail has given his ticket to me, to do with as I like; but as he's a man whose movements make things in Wall Street jump up and down like a see-saw, he doesn't want it known that he's got to stay behind because he's seedy. That's all. If you want to go in his place, go, and say nothing till you get on the other side. By that time he'll be on his way, on a following ship. At least, that's what he hopes."

"Do you mean, that if I want to cross in the *Mauretania*, I must pass under your friend's name?" asked Loveland, beginning to look haughty; for though he was tempted by the offer, he did not think that another man's name was worthy of his wearing even for five days. He would as willingly have appeared in Bond Street in a second-hand, ready-made coat.

"Oh no, nothing of the sort," answered Jim Harborough, smiling his pleasant smile. "What I meant was, don't go advertising the fact that you've got Henry VanderPot's cabin because he's not well enough to sail. All you'll have to do is to swagger about as if you'd meant to be a passenger on the *Mauretania* from the beginning of things."

Loveland was prepared to do any amount of swaggering, though he did not say so to Jim, or indeed acknowledge it to himself. He replied that, if this were the only condition, he would accept the ticket, and instruct Foxham (as he would not have time himself) to try and sell the passage which he had paid for on the *Baltic*.

"Fox'll have several days to do it in, and I'll tell him if he brings it off, there's ten per cent for himself," said Val. "Meanwhile I'll be enjoying myself on the *Mauretania*."

"Meanwhile you'll be enjoying yourself on the *Mauretania*," echoed Jim.

"I suppose there are sure to be a lot of millionaires on board?" suggested Val.

"Sure to be, even at this time of year."

"With pretty daughters?" Loveland's tone and air in making this addition were so conceited that Jim would have wanted to kick him if he had not looked so ridiculously like Jim's own adored and beautiful Betty. Besides, the scar showed white on the brown. This had been a brave boy. Jim was inclined to believe that he was worth reforming.

"With pretty daughters," Harborough repeated, his tone quiet though his eyes showed a danger signal. "However, be prudent. Don't make up your mind too soon. The best fish aren't always caught in the deep sea. One waits to have a look round the markets."

Loveland grinned. "Thank you for the tip. I won't forget."

"Not likely that you'll hold yourself too cheap, eh?" Jim could not resist that one dig, in spite of the scar, and Betty's laugh in the blue eyes between their black fringes.

But Val did not see the joke, as he assuredly would if it had been aimed at anybody else. Jim having married into the family, ought to uphold the family pride, and Loveland doubted not that he did.

"Rather not," he returned patronizingly. "You needn't be afraid, my dear chap. Very kind of you to think of me for this cabin. And though it's a bit short notice, that can't be helped. Foxham will get me off somehow."

"You'll hardly have time to let people know your change of plan," said Jim. "But of course if you don't mind a little expense you can Marconi to Lady Loveland from the ship."

"Of course," assented Lady Loveland's son, who would not have thought of the attention had it not been suggested to him. "But it will hardly be necessary."

"Perhaps not," said Jim.

CHAPTER FOUR

Lord Loveland Makes a Start

Loveland's only experience of sea life, except for a little yachting, had been in going out to, and returning from, South Africa; but he had learned to take care of himself on shipboard, and though his name was not on the passenger list of the *Mauretania*, his deck chair was soon placed by an attentive steward in a sheltered corner nearly amidship. This advantage was secured by a tempting tip, a tip out of all proportion to the giver's resources: but then, there were many people on the *Mauretania* who came on board more like clients returning to a hotel where they had been known by the management for years, than passengers travelling on a new ship; and Loveland did not intend to be defeated in an unequal competition. He wanted the best of everything on this trip, and felt that money would be well spent in obtaining it. He always did feel this when he had any money – or credit – to spend.

Possibly he might have economized coin by parading his title, but though spoiled and conceited he was also a gentleman, and while he might trade upon his position for the matrimonial market, would not flaunt it gratuitously. He considered he would be giving value for value: taking a girl's dollars and making her a Marchioness: but he thought too much of himself to "put on side."

When the deck-steward politely asked if he wished to use a visiting card as a chair-marker, Val told him to write the name of Loveland on a slip of paper or a luggage label; anything would do. So the steward did as he was bidden, ignorant that he served a "lord."

Loveland did not feel that he needed cheap advertisement. It would soon leak out that he was a personage, and, sure enough, it did. When he had discreetly explained to the purser his possession of Mr. VanderPot's cabin, the news of the change went round from steward to steward, and was promptly "spotted" as a tit-bit by the greatest gossip on the ship, who happened to inhabit the stateroom opposite.

Major Cadwallader Hunter (a retired major, of course; he would not have had time to develop his qualities while on the active list) was told that he had Loveland for a neighbour, and looked at the cabin door with kindling interest. Being himself, he had studied the passenger list, as a collector of antiques is wont to study the announcements of sales. He could have rattled off by heart all the names worth rattling, and he was certain that Lord Loveland's had not been among them.

Major Cadwallader Hunter was an American of a type laughed at by the best of his own countrymen. He knew his Burke and Debrett better than many an Englishman even of that middle class which can afford to be ignorant of no detail concerning the aristocracy. He was aware that there existed a Marquis of Loveland who was young and unmarried; he knew all about his family connections, and he wondered how such an important gentleman had strayed on board the *Mauretania* unheralded. "I suppose this fellow must be *the* Loveland, of course," he said to himself. "But why not be published frankly on the passenger list? Can there be a secret?"

At this moment Loveland walked out from his stateroom, having come below for pipe and tobacco-pouch. He caught Major Cadwallader Hunter staring at his door, and gave him a brief yet supercilious glance. To some men it would have seemed an offensive glance, but Major Cadwallader Hunter was not to be easily offended by a man he wished to know. He disappeared into his own cabin, by way of proving that he was a neighbour, not a Paul Pry; but a few minutes later he was on deck, ambling amiably from one group of acquaintances to another, and dexterously avoiding detrimentials.

Cadwallader Hunter aspired to be a leader of society. He was one of those strange beings – heraldic, rampant, disregardant – who are born snobs, in spite of good birth and good breeding. Therefore he was not a genuine article (since no snob can be genuine) but had moulded himself into a thing of airs and affectations. Nevertheless he managed to impress most second-rate people, and some who were first-rate. Those who did not live in New York believed him to be of consequence in

that city, and the Paris *Herald* always reported his comings and goings. He was a thin, well-groomed man, of middle age, with a heart-hiding smile, a high nose and a high voice; gold-rimmed eyeglasses giving glitter to pale, cold eyes; a waxed moustache; a carefully cultivated "English accent," and a marvellous fund of scandalous anecdotes concerning everyone about whom it was worth while to be scandalous. He had at least a bowing acquaintance with all the richest Americans on board, and he mixed with his greetings here and there a careless "Do you know we have Lord Loveland on the ship – the Marquis of Loveland? Such a good-looking young man. One of the oldest and most distinguished peerages in England; family of soldiers since the dark ages, though the less said about some of them since the days of the Georges the better. This boy not so bad as some of the old boys before him. Not to be despised by *débutantes*, eh? Do I know him? – "

(As a matter of fact, Cadwallader Hunter could count his acquaintances in the British peerage on the fingers of one hand, and have a thumb to spare; for it is the genuine, unaffected, typical Americans, or else the heavily gilded and diamond-incrusted ones whom English people like to know. But this question was bound to come. He had led up to it, and was prepared.)

"Do I know him? Why, in a way we're connections by marriage. You must remember pretty Lady Betty Bulkeley who took us all by storm a year or two ago – sister of the Duke of Stanforth? Jimmy Harborough, whom she married, is I believe a forty-second cousin of mine: and Lady Betty and Lord Loveland are related. So you see – "

And for fear that they should see – something that he did not wish them to see – he potted away to "get at" Loveland before anyone could possibly have the chance to find out that they two were strangers.

Meanwhile Loveland had not been wasting time.

He thought that Jim Harborough's hint about "deep sea fish" was a wise one, wiser than he would have expected from Harborough. Still, there was no harm in keeping his eyes open; and having kept them open from the first moment after coming on board, he had discovered several very pretty girls. With a certain amount of eagerness, rather as one looks at one's cards when beginning a new rubber of bridge, he glanced over the passenger-list, hoping that some of the names might be identical with those on his letters of introduction. But there were no such coincidences, and he, unluckily, was too ignorant of American society to know which of his fellow passengers were most important. However, he made up his mind that one of the first things to do, was to find out.

Sure of his chair, on which the name of "Loveland" already appeared in the steward's handwriting, he paced up and down and all round the deck, pipe in mouth and hands in pockets. It was a November day, of Indian summer warmth. The huge ship felt no impulse from the waves which fawned upon her sides, and Loveland, who had been bored by the necessity to leave his native land, began suddenly to feel happy, quite boyishly happy.

A great many other people were parading up and down also; pretty girls, walking alone, or with parents, or accompanied by youths with whom they intended to flirt during the voyage. Shrewd-faced men, with eyes good-natured yet keen, and an air of solid importance which might mean millions; handsome, prosperous-looking women whom Loveland guessed to be Newport and New York hostesses pleased to welcome prowling Marquesses; and besides these, numbers of vague persons whom to meet once was to forget twice.

After half an hour's walk, Val had selected two girls from the "rosebud garden" which, he felt, bloomed for his benefit in this mammoth, floating flower-bed. There were so many attractive ones, that it was difficult to choose, yet Val did not doubt that he had weeded out the best; and he hoped that, of the pair, one might be the principal unmarried millionairess of the *Mauretania*.

There could hardly have been a greater contrast between girls than between these two whom Lord Loveland had mentally set apart for himself, as a man picks out the most becoming neckties from a box on a shop counter.

One, who walked the deck with an elderly man whose likeness of feature proclaimed him her father, was very tall, almost as tall as Loveland, who could be a six-footer when he took the trouble not to slouch. She was slender in all the right places, and rounded in all the right places, her waist being so slim that she seemed held together only by a spine and a lady-like ligament or two; which means faultlessness of figure according to fashion-plate standards. She had burnished auburn hair, and magnificent yellow-grey eyes rimmed with dark lashes. Her nose was aquiline, her mouth red and drooping at the corners, a combination which made her profile closely resemble a famous photograph of the Empress Eugenie in the prime of loveliness.

A number of the nicest looking people who came and went on deck seemed glad to claim acquaintance with this girl and her handsome father; but though they were warmly greeted again and again, the girl maintained a cool dignity not unworthy of Betty Bulkeley's mother, the Duchess of Stanforth.

Val said to himself that the Mater would be pleased with a daughter-in-law of this type, and that such a girl would never make her husband ashamed. He could not imagine falling in love with her hard brilliance; but then he wasn't going to America to fall in love. His intentions were strictly businesslike. And this girl was bound to be admired everywhere. She would look an ideal hostess, entertaining house parties at Loveland Castle, when her money had restored it to all and more than its ancient splendour.

Loveland's second choice might have been his first, for some reasons, and in fact she was his first by impulse; only she did not look as obviously an heiress as the other. Neither was she so obviously a beauty; yet her charm leaped at the beholder with the briefest glance, especially if that beholder were a man; leaped at him through his eyes, and thrillingly through his nerves, in a mysterious, indescribable, curiously interesting way.

She was not very tall, and she was a slim slip of a creature, not in the least like a fashion plate, but suggestive of soft natural curves, even in her navy-blue tailor-made frock.

If she had been stage-struck, and had asked for a chance in the chorus, a theatrical manager would have found himself giving it to her, he hardly knew why, more because she said she wanted it than on the strength of her voice, or form, or features. Then, having yielded so far to her magnetism, he would have said to himself, "She isn't striking enough for the front row, or even the second. She must go into the third." And there she would have gone docilely. Yet the critics and all other men with eyes would have picked her out; and presently she would have been more noticed than the beauties in the front row. By and by, when there arose a little part with a few lines to speak, she would have got it; and at last, in some way or other, it would have been she who was making the "hit of the piece."

Lord Loveland did not say anything of this sort to himself, but he felt a faint electric shock of interest every time they passed and repassed each other; though after the first she did not look at him, with the big brown eyes that surely had the prettiest, most bewitching lashes ever seen.

Really, they were charming eyes. If nothing else were actually beautiful about the girl, her eyes undoubtedly were exquisite. They were very soft, and no man could look into them even for half a second in passing without realizing deliciously that they were a woman's eyes; yet they were not coquettish, except for that piquant effect of the curled lashes. They were full of sympathy and intelligence, and gazed frankly, sweetly out at the world, as if they could understand, and laugh or cry at things which other, commonplace eyes would never even see.

For the rest, she had the clear, colourless skin which shows every change of emotion, a sensitive mouth, not too small for generosity; in the firm little chin, a cleft which meant a keen sense of humour; and a slightly impertinent nose which might mean anything or nothing.

Loveland felt that it would be interesting to know this girl, even if she were not an heiress, but he hoped that she might prove to be one, because it would be hard to learn the wisdom of ceasing to know her if she turned out as poor as himself.

The difficulty in judging these American girls, Val began to think as he watched the charming review, was that they all looked like millionairesses. They walked as if they were so used to being young persons of importance, that they graciously waived the fact of their own greatness: which means, that they had the air of goddesses, or princesses at the least. They were all dressed perfectly, and groomed perfectly. Their frocks fitted perfectly, and every detail of their toilets was perfect, from the buttons of their English gloves to the toes of their American boots. So how was a man to judge which were *the* ones, and which the other ones?

Val made up his mind at last that he would walk no more, but would sit down and think this question over. Besides, for some moments the enchanting girl in the navy-blue frock had ceased to flit to and fro. Therefore he went towards the sheltered corner where he knew his deck chair was waiting for him, and to his extreme surprise found her comfortably installed in it.

CHAPTER FIVE

The Girl in the Chair

For a moment Loveland was more conceited than he had ever been in his life, – which is saying not a little. He told himself that the girl must have found out who he was, and that this was her artful way of scraping acquaintance. She had taken possession of his chair, with his name upon it, waiting for him to come and claim his property, and expecting the conversation which would be sure to follow.

He was conscious of a shock of disappointment. In spite of the witching, curled eyelashes, he had not fancied her that sort of obvious, flirting girl; and like other spoiled young men a conquest which fell to him easily was less worth making. Nevertheless, he still wanted to know her. No man, even a spoiled one, could help wanting to know a girl with eyes like those: and he intended to go through the whole programme which he believed that she had deliberately planned out for him; yet he wished that she had not made herself so cheap.

The chair next to his was unoccupied, though usurpers were warned off by the name of "Mr. James R. Smythe," boldly painted in black letters across the back. Stretching away to the left was a row of Smythe chairs, which Val did not trouble to count. He merely received the impression of a large family of impending Smythes, and was glad that they were not assembled. Their absence gave him a splendid chance to make the girl with the eyes a present of the flirtation she encouraged.

Val, risking the avalanche of Smythehood which might overwhelm him at any instant, sat down in the empty chair next to his own, expecting the girl to glance up and down, and flutter the coquettish lashes. To his bewilderment her tactics were more subtle. She did not look up at all, but calmly went on reading her book, a volume of disagreeably intellectual suggestion.

This development of the game was interesting, because surprising, but Val still regarded it as a game. He looked at the girl, while she, apparently unconscious of or indifferent to his nearness, slowly turned leaf after leaf. She turned so many that Loveland grew impatient. Besides, a man had begun to walk up and down in front of the line of Smythe chairs, fastening upon him so baleful an eye that he feared at any instant to be dispossessed of his borrowed resting-place.

At last he decided to be bold and wait no longer.

"What am I to do if Mr. James R. Smythe comes along and orders me out?" he asked pleasantly, in a low yet conversational tone.

The girl glanced up for the first time, suddenly and as if startled. She had the air of having been deeply absorbed in her book, and of not being sure that her neighbour had spoken to her. Also she looked extremely young and innocent.

"I said, what am I to do if Mr. James R. Smythe comes along and orders me out?" Val repeated.

"That's what I thought you said," replied the girl, meeting his admiring, quizzical eyes with a somewhat bewildered yet defensive gaze. "But – why should you say it to me?"

"Isn't that rather hard-hearted of you?" asked Loveland.

"I don't understand you at all," said the girl. "You look like a gentleman, so I suppose you can't mean to be rude or impertinent. But if not, you seem to be talking nonsense."

This was straightforward, to say the least, yet her voice was so sweet and girlish, with such a dainty little drawl in it, that the rebuke did not sound as severe as if spoken with sharper accents.

"Of course I don't mean to be rude or impertinent," Loveland defended himself, at a loss for the next move in the game. "But I thought – that is, I mean – you know, that *is* my chair. I'm delighted you should have it – "

"Your chair?" echoed the girl. "Oh, you are mistaken. No wonder, if you thought that I – but even then, you couldn't have dreamed I'd take it on purpose?"

"No – o, I – " began Loveland, looking guilty.

Her eyes were on him. "You did think so!" she exclaimed. "I see you did. That was why you – and yet I don't see how you could have fancied I should know who you were, unless – Are you a very famous person in the life to which it's pleased London to call you?"

Lord Loveland laughed rather foolishly. But he reddened a little, which made him look boyish, so that the foolishness was rather engaging.

"I think you've punished me enough," he said.

"Then you admit that you deserve to be punished?"

"Perhaps."

"Which means that you did believe I took your chair on purpose."

"I didn't stop to think," said Loveland, telling the truth as usual, but less truculently than usual.

"You *are* English, aren't you?" the girl asked, looking at him with her brown, bewildering eyes.

"Oh yes," replied Loveland, in a tone which added "Of course." But he would have realised now, if he had not been sure before, that the girl was genuinely ignorant of his important identity.

"I was sure you were. I suppose you don't understand American girls very well, or perhaps any girls yet. But then few men do, really. Except poets or novelists. And you're not a poet or a novelist?"

"Rather not!"

"You speak as though I'd asked if you were a pick-pocket. Do you despise writers?"

"I'd be sorry to be one. Wouldn't you?" He ventured this question, which, if answered, might after all send them on the way towards a more friendly understanding. But he seemed destined to put himself in the wrong – although the girl laughed.

"I *am* one," she said, "I write stories."

"You're chaffing."

"No, I'm not. Why should you think so?"

"Oh, well, because you don't look as if you wrote."

"Thank you. I suppose you mean that for a compliment. But women who write aren't scare-crows nowadays, if they ever were."

"Well, anyhow, you're too young."

"I've been writing stories – and getting them published, too, ever since I was sixteen. That's some years ago now. Please don't say you wouldn't have thought it! That would be too obvious even for an average American's idea of an average Englishman."

"Are you an average American?"

"Are you an average Englishman?"

"Is it fair to answer one question with another?"

"It's said to be American. Didn't you know that?"

"No," said Loveland. "As you thought, I don't know much about Americans yet. I'm going over to the States to learn."

"The States! How English that sounds! We think we're all of America – all that's worth talking about in ordinary conversation. But, by the way, this isn't ordinary conversation, is it? It began with – something to be punished for, on your part; and a wish to punish on mine. It's gone on – because, being a writing person, I suppose, I'm always trying for new points of view, at any cost. You thought I'd taken your chair – as if it were a point of view. I believe you really did think that."

"I did," admitted Val.

"I wonder why? My aunt's name is on it."

"Oh," said Loveland.

"See," went on the girl, leaning forward, and displaying the label in the deck-steward's handwriting.

"I do see," said Val. "But that happens to be my name."

"Loveland?"

"Yes."

The girl blushed brightly. And she was more attractive than ever when she blushed. "Oh, how very odd! Then perhaps this *is* your chair! How perfectly horrid." She began to unwind herself from the rug which was wrapped round her as a chrysalis round an incipient butterfly.

"Please don't get up." Loveland's tone was almost imploring. "Do keep the chair. I want you to keep it."

"Thank you very much. But I don't want to keep it, if it's yours, and I think now it probably is. If it weren't, you wouldn't have expected to find it waiting for you in this particular place?"

"But you expected to find yours here."

"No, it wasn't that. But as I was passing, I saw my aunt's name on the back of a chair, and because the deck-steward had been told to put one in a nice sheltered place, I took it for granted that this was hers. I didn't know there was another Loveland on the passenger list."

"I noticed there was a Mrs. Loveland," said Val, "but didn't think much about it, as she wasn't likely to turn out a relation of mine. And my name isn't on the list, I came in the place of – another man."

As he made this explanation, with a slight pause which meant the recollection of his promise to Jim Harborough, Major Cadwallader Hunter went by, walking slowly; and, having long-distance ears, heard as he passed. He was waiting for his chance to "nobble" Lord Loveland; and afterwards he remembered those few last words which he had caught. He seldom forgot anything which could possibly matter, even though it might be of seeming insignificance at the time.

"I'll go and look for the *other* Loveland chair," said the girl.

"You must do nothing of the sort," exclaimed Val.

"Oh, it's easy to see you're an Englishman. American men don't order us about like that."

Loveland laughed. "I didn't order you about. I ordered you to sit still."

"That's just as bad. You have the air of being used to give orders."

"I am. You see, I'm a soldier."

"Oh, what a relief. I began to be afraid you were a duke."

Loveland had the unusual sensation of feeling comparatively unimportant. When the girl came to find out who he was, she would know that he was less than a duke. And if he had the air of being a duke, she had the air of thinking no duke could possibly be superior to any self-respecting American.

As he reflected upon this extreme point of view, a deck-steward appeared, and was summoned by the girl. She wished to know the situation of the second Loveland chair, and which of the two was her aunt's, which this gentleman's – Mr. Loveland's.

"Or ought I to speak of you as Captain Loveland?" she broke off to ask.

"I'm not a captain yet," answered Val. He did not explain that neither was he "Mr." He left her to discover that fact for herself by and by, as he hoped she would discover a good many other things connected with him. Because by this time he had quite decided that, be she rich or be she poor, he would see a good deal of Mrs. Loveland's niece during the voyage to New York. Afterwards – but then, why begin now to think of an afterwards?

CHAPTER SIX

Catspawing

When the chair of Mrs. Loveland had been indicated, as it soon was by a tactless deck-steward, the girl was obstinate in her determination to seek it. Val went with her, carrying the rug and the book; but as there was no vacant place on either side of the new chair, he was obliged presently to go back to his own. And it was on the way back that Major Cadwallader Hunter's chance came.

"Lord Loveland, I see you don't remember me," he began, attaching himself to the younger man, with an air of "should auld acquaintance be forgot" in the bend of his back, and speaking in a low tone, that his words might not be heard by any curious ears. Then he hurried on, lest Loveland should deny him with undesirable frankness: "Quite natural you shouldn't remember" (which indeed it was, as they had never come within miles of each other) "but I feel I've some right to remind you of my existence, because we're connected in a way. I am Major Cadwallader Hunter –"

"Never heard the name in my life," said Loveland rudely. He thought that his uninvited companion looked like a bore, and he had never yet suffered a bore gladly. A flash of reflection told him that he possessed no envelope in Jim's or Betty's handwriting addressed to Major Cadwallader Hunter. The fellow would hardly be so mildly ingratiating if he were a millionaire with daughters to guard, and Val resented a trumped-up claim of connection.

Cadwallader Hunter could swallow a snub with a smile, but never would he forgive the snubber. He smiled now; but if Lord Loveland had not been Lord Loveland —

"I'm a distant relative of Jimmy Harborough's," he explained, "and I generally run over to London for a few weeks in the season. Jim seems to be as popular on your side the water as on his own."

Loveland did not trouble himself to reply. If Jim had thought this alleged relative an interesting or profitable person for him to know, the name of Major Cadwallader Hunter would probably have been on one of the introduction envelopes.

Undismayed by the chilling silence, Cadwallader Hunter still walked by Lord Loveland's side and prattled. His next sentence hinted that he possessed in some degree the quality of clairvoyance.

"I suppose Jim's given you lots of letters," he continued, "but it's not likely there's one to me. I'm a mere bachelor, and therefore must take a back place. Jim would naturally send you to married people with big houses of their own, where they can entertain you. Still, in my own small way, I can be useful to strangers, and should be glad to be useful to you, because in my eyes you don't seem quite a stranger. I am, by the by, a great admirer of your cousin, charming Lady Betty, and if you'll allow me to say so, there's a strong family resemblance between you." (Major Cadwallader Hunter had been out of America during Betty's visit, but had seen her photograph.) "If this is your first time on our side, you don't know the ropes yet, and you must let me tell you anything you care to hear; about people, about places, about hotels; about the sights, should you want to see them. I can begin, for instance, by telling you who is Who on this ship. There are several of our millionaires."

Loveland's handsome young face lost its frozen stare. He had taken a dislike to Cadwallader Hunter, but it was not so serious a dislike that he could not bury it. He wanted to know several things which this man might be able to tell, but most of all he wanted to know about the niece of Mrs. Loveland. As he confessed to her, he had passed over the coincidence of names with indifference, when idly noting it on the passenger-list, thinking that the existence of a Mrs. B. Loveland could not concern the Marquis of that ilk. Now, however, if this know-all, officious sort of person could prove that the lady sprang from the same stock, be she no matter how remote a cutting, it would be pleasant news.

Cadwallader Hunter, who was a student of faces, saw the change on Lord Loveland's features and was relieved, though relief brought no liking. He had begun to be anxious as to the result of the conversation, because a failure to thaw on Loveland's part would have been awkward after certain boasts lately made. Now he saw that he had, as usual, taken the right tack, and that his efforts were destined to succeed.

"I know almost everybody on board," went on the American. "That is, everybody who counts."

"Who is that man walking with the tall girl in grey?" Val deigned to enquire, as his first choice among the beauties of the ship came in sight. "Is he someone of importance?"

Cadwallader Hunter naturally understood that it was the girl, not the man, in whom Loveland was interested. "That is Judson R. Coolidge," he replied, "and it is Miss Elinor Coolidge, his only child, who is with him. He is a rich man, though not one of our richest. Made his money in the wholesale dry goods business in Chicago. But Miss Elinor, whom he adores, 'runs' him (the mother's dead); and as the girl knows her market value, she's induced her father to take a big house in New York and a cottage at Newport. Would you care to meet them?"

"Thanks, yes. A little later," answered Val, very civilly for him.

"There are several other pretty young women on board," said Cadwallader Hunter.

"So I've noticed," said Loveland.

"Ah, men of your country appreciate the charming women of ours! You've carried away many of our fairest flowers. And some of the best worth plucking."

"Is that a pun?" asked Loveland, staring at his companion to see if he had the impudence to mean anything.

Major Cadwallader Hunter tittered. He had an irritating little habit of tittering when he was ingratiating himself with new acquaintances. But it was a most refined titter.

"Oh, dear, I see what you mean. But, no indeed, I was quite innocent of any *double entendre*. I was merely trying my best to be poetical, I assure you. There was no question of 'plucking' in the international alliances of British titles and American dollars I had in mind. A familiar, and, to my idea, suitable combination. But perhaps you disapprove of international marriages?"

"Not I," said Val.

The tone told Cadwallader Hunter all that he wanted to learn. He now knew, if he had not been practically sure before, that Lord Loveland was in search of a rich wife. He saw his way to earning considerable kudos in playing bear-leader to a young and unusually good-looking British peer, and he determined to become that bear-leader, whether the bear yearned for his leadership or not.

"Miss Coolidge is not the only handsome heiress on board. There are others – there are others," he went on airily. "You have only to point out any young lady whose acquaintance you would like to make, and the thing is a *fait accompli*."

"Do you know a Mrs. Loveland on the ship?" Val enquired, after a slight hesitation which he could hardly have explained to himself.

Major Cadwallader Hunter shook his head. "Now that you speak of it, I think I do recall there being a Mrs. Loveland on the passenger-list, but –"

"She has a niece," said Val.

"Ah?" The elder man pulled a folded passenger-list out of his pocket, and ran his eye down the "L's." "Then the niece has not the same name. But I'll engage to find out all about the ladies for you, if you're interested in them."

Loveland paused for an instant, on the point of refusing the service. But he reflected that making enquiries about unknown ladies was not a dignified proceeding, and that he would prefer to have Major Cadwallader Hunter undertake it, rather than compromise himself.

"It will be easy for me, as I know so many people," volunteered the American.

"Oh, very well. Thank you," said Loveland, stiffly, with that upward inflection of the voice, which can make a "thank you" as irritating as a mosquito-bite.

He was ready now to use Major Cadwallader Hunter for catspawing in all its branches, but did not intend to be over civil in return. He divined that Cadwallader-Hunter by name was a Tuft-Hunter by nature; that vast wealth, or even a really good title was to him balm in Gilead; and that he was not one of those sensitive souls who find it difficult to be kind to the rich, for fear of being misunderstood by the world.

And the would-be leader was delighted to become Lord Loveland's catspaw, because he hoped that his way of handling the chestnuts would do him honour. He believed that, if through Lord Loveland he did not become King of all the lions in New York that season, he might at least be King's jester.

Presently, still smiling, he left Val stretched luxuriously in the labelled deck-chair, and trotted away to tell more people what a charming fellow Lord Loveland was. All the while it would have done his soul good – what there was of it – to box Val's ears. But it would have done him still more good to be re-souled or even half-souled, for all that he had ever possessed was long ago worn to rags.

Major Cadwallader Hunter prided himself on being able to find out everything about everybody, even when starting from the point of complete ignorance, and handicapped by a time limit. Indeed, he had a nice detective instinct, and putting it to use was one of the games he played best. But he found himself confronted with difficulties in the case of Mrs. Loveland and her niece.

It was simple to find out the girl's name, and that Mrs. Loveland, the aunt, was a delicate little person, at that time of life when sensible women cling no longer to the ragged edge of youth, as a bat clings to a shutter. It was easy to learn (stewards and stewardesses reveal such things, if handled by experts) that Mrs. Loveland had slipped into her berth on starting, with the intention of remaining there during the whole voyage, weather or no weather. But as to Wealth and as to Ancestors (Cadwallader Hunter was as devout a worshipper of Ancestors as any Chinaman) the matter was more difficult. However, he was eventually fortunate enough to stumble upon an acquaintance, a Mrs. Milton, who had met Mrs. Loveland and her niece while travelling in England. Mrs. Milton was a charming woman, but she had some weaknesses. In a sojourn of six weeks, she had become so much more English than the English that she had taken to calling her daughter Fanny "Fawny." She pitied Mrs. Loveland and Mrs. Loveland's niece because they were so – "so *unnecessarily* American, don't you know?" Also she was perfectly certain from their way of doing things, from remarks they had let drop, and answers they had given to her questions, that they were nobodies. They lived in a town in the middle west, knew no New York people, poor things, and were altogether provincial. They had been abroad for the first time, had enjoyed themselves with the most countrified enthusiasm everywhere, and were so much interested in history and dull subjects of that sort that Fawny's mother fancied they were perhaps schoolteachers on their holidays, especially as they were so reserved about their own affairs, that there must be something they were ashamed of.

Major Cadwallader Hunter was glad to hear these damaging details, because it was evident that the Englishman was taken with Mrs. Loveland's niece. The self-appointed bear-leader wanted his bear for more important girls.

It was not till nearly dinner-time that he was able to make his report to Loveland. Meanwhile, during his leader's absence, the bear had found out some things for himself, and had forgotten Major Cadwallader Hunter. Val had felt the need of another constitutional, and seeing his namesake's niece struggling with a wind-blown rug, had tucked it round her feet. They were pretty feet, and Val was very fastidious about a woman's feet. These were even prettier, and many sizes smaller than Miss Coolidge's, therefore he was glad that a next-door chair stood empty for the moment. He begged so meekly to sit down and talk for a little while, that his mother, could she have heard him, would have trembled lest he might be sickening for something. But he had talked for more than a "little while," and then had been forced to go because the owner of the next-door chair came back and hovered suggestively.

Loveland had only just got up, and was taking his leave when Major Cadwallader Hunter arrived from the Music-room, where he had been gleaning facts. "She is a Miss Dearmer," he announced.

"Oh, I know that already," Val returned, ungratefully. "She told me herself."

"Lesley Dearmer."

"I hadn't got as far as the Lesley yet." Val laughed lightly, for he had had a delightful conversation with Miss Dearmer. That cleft in her chin had not proved a trap to catch the unwary, whom it tempted to expect a merry wit. And while Loveland sat beside her, she had flung bright thought after bright thought, carelessly as a cashier in a bank shovels out gold for other people's purses. He had never met a girl like Miss Dearmer. No wonder she could write stories. But he felt it was far more suitable that she should entertain the Marquis of Loveland.

"Of course you must do exactly as you please," said Cadwallader Hunter, "but from what I've learned, I fancy you can pass your valuable time better on this trip than in the society of Miss Dearmer."

"What do you mean?" Val flashed out at him.

"Oh, only that it's just as I thought. She and her aunt are ordinary, provincial little people, with no money or connections. They live in the southwest, near a city called Louisville. These ladies, aunt and niece, have been 'doing' as much of Europe as they could afford, and are now returning to their native wilds, where they'll probably stay for the remainder of their respectable, colourless lives."

The picture was not alluring, and Loveland's face fell.

"Mr. and Miss Coolidge are at your table," said Cadwallader Hunter, "and I've just been arranging to sit there, too, so I can introduce you this evening at dinner. You'll be next Miss Coolidge, and opposite, you'll have a very nice girl, a Miss Fanny Milton, who admires Englishmen. Her mother is a youngish woman with a temper. She doesn't get on well with her husband, but he is a very rich man who must give a dot of at least five hundred thousand to his daughter. These people are friends of mine, and will be very pleased to know you."

Loveland did not doubt the last statement, nor did he feel grateful to his benefactor, this general provider of charming, rich young ladies. He was sulkily regretting that Miss Dearmer was poor and provincial, and altogether impossible as the future Lady Loveland.

CHAPTER SEVEN

Guide, Philosopher and Friend

"Well," said the girl, "what do you think of things?"

"I think," answered Loveland, "it's a beastly shame we're not put at the same table."

"I mean of things in general."

"I prefer to think of you in particular."

"It wouldn't pay," said the girl, with one of her whimsical smiles.

Loveland looked at her sharply. "What makes you say that?" he wanted to know.

"Because it's true."

"Why do you insinuate that I only want to do things that pay?"

"I told you I wrote stories, didn't I? Well, to write stories, one must make a study of Man. I do. And I never found it dull yet."

"I'm glad you don't find it dull where I'm concerned," said Val. "But I'm not glad you consider me a swine."

"Lucky I've just been in England, and heard other Englishmen talk," said the girl. "If not, I should hardly understand that pretty expression."

"So you've been making a study of other Englishmen? What did you think of us?"

"That you, as a race, are very tall and tweedy. And that you aren't precisely dissatisfied with yourselves."

It was the next morning, and they were pacing up and down the long white deck. Loveland had joined Miss Dearmer as she walked, and she had not been repellent in her manner. Yet somehow her friendliness did not encourage him to increasing conceit. Even before she had made that little remark about studying Man, he had vaguely felt that she read him as if he were a cypher of which she had found the key.

"I hope you met the right kind of men," he said.

"You mean, men like you? You see, I know who you are, now."

"Who told you anything about me?"

"Miss Milton."

"Oh, you know her – daughter of the white-faced woman, pretty, blushy little thing who sits at my table?"

"Yes. We were travelling in England at the same time, and met often at hotels."

"What did Miss Milton say about me?"

"Do you really want to know?"

"Yes. I'm not a coward."

"She said she wondered if you were going over to our country to try and marry an American girl."

"By Jove! Well, supposing I do try, what's your opinion? Do you think I stand a good chance of bringing it off?"

"It's rather soon for me to judge."

"You seem to have made up your mind quickly about some of my other qualities. About my wanting to do things which pay, for instance."

"You haven't forgiven me that? It might pay to 'try' and marry an American girl."

"Well," admitted Loveland on an impulse, "no matter how much I might want to, I couldn't marry one if it didn't pay."

"Now you are being frank," replied Miss Lesley. "I like people to be frank."

"So do I," said Loveland, "when that doesn't mean being disagreeable, as it generally does from one's relations, especially one's maiden aunts."

"England expects that every aunt will do her duty."

"Luckily *you're* not my aunt, so please don't do yours if it's unpleasant. But couldn't we be frank – and friends? I should like most awfully to have you for my friend. You could be no end valuable to me, you know, about giving me good advice, if you would."

She laughed. "I dare say. But could you be valuable to me?"

Loveland wished that he might dare to be dangerous; but the idea of having her for a friend, into whose pink shell of an ear he could pour confidences, really attracted him – since her value, not being cash value, could be realised by him in no other way. And, of course, if she would promise to be his friend, it would be caddish to make love to her. He felt very virtuous as he laid down this rule for himself.

"I'll let you study me as much as you like, and put me into your next story."

"As the villain?"

He looked rather blank. His conception for himself was always the part of hero.

"But after all, it's usually baronets who're villains – in stories and plays," she went on. "A Marquis – you are a Marquis, aren't you – may perhaps be a fellow being."

"Please treat me as such, then," said Loveland.

"I will, anyway till further notice. Now you may begin to tell me frank things, and I'll give you frank advice about them, as a friend."

"How I wish you were rich!" exclaimed Loveland, thinking aloud, as he did sometimes.

"How do you know I'm not? Oh, of course Major Cadwallader Hunter found out for you. He would! He's the sort of man who takes a worm's eye view of the world, and of women and wealth. But never mind if I'm not rich."

"I do mind. I shouldn't want you for a friend if you were."

"You wouldn't – oh! Well, now you are being still franker, aren't you?"

"You said you liked people to be frank."

"Ye – es."

"I haven't offended you, have I?"

"No. I'm just getting used to you. It's quite interesting. What do you want my advice about? Other girls, I suppose?"

"It may come to that," Loveland admitted.

"Anyone in particular, at the moment?"

"Well, supposing I were forced to marry money, for the sake of – of – my estates and all that, is there anyone on board you'd recommend?"

"You've two very eligible girls at your table."

"Yes. But hang it all, it's too much of a good thing having them at one's elbow like that, you know. If only it were you, instead – "

"On the principle of having the poor always with one. But for that you'd have to change and sit at mine. We're all poor there, I think. It's the Ineligible's Table, for both sexes. Would you care to come?"

"I'd care to, but I couldn't afford it," said Val. "I must stop where I am and take the goods the gods provide."

"You mean the dining-room steward who arranged the seats."

"What else did Miss Milton say about me?"

"That you were very good-looking – as we're being frank."

"I hope you agreed with her?"

"Oh, yes, I had to. Your looks are so obvious – so much a part of your stock-in-trade, if you don't mind my saying so, it would be silly to deny that the shop windows are well decorated. It

was apropos of your marrying that she spoke. I said a handsome man oughtn't to be driven into the obscurity of marriage, by necessity. He ought simply to be supported by the nation, become a sort of public institution, and be the pride of his country; be sent, beautifully got up, to walk in Parks, and dance at balls, and make life pleasant for girls."

"Thank you. Anything else?"

"From Miss Milton or me?"

"From you."

"Nothing more from me. The rest was silence."

"From Miss Milton, then?"

"Let me see. She said it seemed as if you'd bought your eyelashes by the yard, and been frightfully extravagant."

"Wish I could pawn them!"

"If you marry as you intend, you won't need to."

"I say, I'm afraid you're frightfully sarcastic," said Loveland, who had never had an American girl for a friend before, and found that having one kept his hands full. "You think I'm a beast to marry a girl for her money."

"First catch your hare."

"You mean I mayn't get one to take me."

"One never can tell. There have been slips between cup and lip."

"Although I'm poor, I can give my wife a lot of things a woman likes to have."

"Second best things."

"Oh, come! You haven't stopped to think what they are."

"I've stopped to think that love's the best thing – the thing a girl cares most for a man to give her."

"It seems to me that all the girls I know would be pretty well satisfied with the right to walk into a dining-room behind a Duchess, and –"

"Do you? What a lot you've got to learn about girls."

"I don't think I have," said Val. "I think I know most of it."

"About life, then, and about yourself."

"Oh, I know nearly all there is to be known about them."

"You really do need a friend," laughed the girl.

"To keep me from being bored?"

"To keep you from heaps of things."

"Well, go on being my friend, and giving me good advice, please," said Loveland. "There's Miss Coolidge, too. She's a beautiful creature. Are there many other girls in the States as beautiful as she?"

"As beautiful, but few more beautiful."

"Any beautiful ones richer?"

"I'm not up in that kind of statistics. Major Cadwallader Hunter is."

"Yes. But I don't care for the fellow. I'd rather take counsel with you. Do you know Miss Coolidge?"

"No."

"I wish you did."

"Would you like me to use my influence with her?"

"I should like you to use your influence with me to keep me up to the mark. She's rather hard to talk to. So different from you."

"She knows her value. She's 'worth' several millions, as we say in America. (I wish we didn't!) Why should she worry to make herself agreeable? She can get all the attention she wants without bothering. Whereas, we poor girls have to work hard, if we want to be popular in spite of our poverty."

"I suppose there's something in that," said Loveland, too deeply absorbed in his own affairs not to take her in earnest. And the girl would have liked to turn a scornful shoulder upon him, if his voice had not been so nice, and if he had not been so handsome. As it was, she wanted to turn upon herself, because she knew that she was influenced by the nice voice, the clear features, and the black-lashed blue eyes. "He is a perfectly worthless young man," she reflected savagely, yet she did not tell him, as he deserved, that she had reconsidered and would not after all undertake the extra hard work of being his guide, philosopher and friend.

"It will be an experience for me," she thought. And she remembered that she had summed up his character from the first. The revelations he had just made of his inner self ought not now to surprise her.

So the days went on. And the pair remained friends; a state of affairs which took more of Val's time than he should have spared from his real ambitions.

Loveland had tried at intervals to be nice to Miss Coolidge and Miss Milton, and he met other pretty girls to whom he felt obliged to be agreeable, because Major Cadwallader Hunter said that they were heiresses. But it is difficult to be equally nice to five or six charming young women at once and within a comparatively limited area, when you have not made up your mind which of them you want to marry, or whether you will not in the end throw them all over to marry someone else whom you have not yet seen. And it is a particularly difficult task when you would prefer to be nice to someone else whom you have already seen.

Besides, Lord Loveland thought too much of himself to pretend love-making successfully when, so far from being in love, he was considerably bored. Each girl he knew on the ship bored him in her own separate way, except his friend Miss Dearmer, to whom he went frequently for good advice about the others. Perhaps if he had not known her, the other girls, or some of them, would not have bored him. But as it was, they were occasionally tiresome in his eyes when he would have liked to be with Lesley instead; and though Lord Loveland was clever, he was not clever enough to hide his feelings. Sometimes, so sure was he of their forgiveness if he wanted it, he was downright rude; and there is nothing a nice American girl forgives less easily than rudeness which springs from a man's self-conceit.

At first, all the girls had admired Loveland, not only because he had a title, but because he was himself; and some of the younger ones, like Fanny Milton and Madge Beverly, had been inclined to regard him as a starry Paladin. Fanny said he was "so handsome, it almost hurt," and that she "could hardly talk to him for gazing at his Gibson chin." But when the more sophisticated Eva Turner, Elinor Coolidge, Kate Wood and a few others realised that their starry Paladin was impudently inspecting them all with a view to the possible purchase of the most satisfactory, each began to hate him secretly with forty-woman power. Secretly, because there was a kind of glory in him as an asset, and a rivalry for the asset, just as there might be among smaller girls with only one doll – an unlovable but expensive doll – to play with. Not one of the number would sacrifice all right in the doll, and give it up to her companions.

They were worldly, though good-hearted, girls to whom Major Cadwallader Hunter had introduced his prize, and they foresaw that handsome Lord Loveland would be petted, perhaps fought for, in Society, when he had left the little world of the *Mauretania* for the bigger world of New York. There would be an advantage in having known him first in case he should become the "rage," as he was sure to do, if not too insufferably rude and offensive. Thinking of this, each girl clung to her share of him, and refrained from trampling on the expensive doll, as, for her pride's sake, she ached to do. Nor did Elinor Coolidge and Fanny Milton and the rest speak their true feelings frankly out to one another. Each wished her friends to believe that he was nice to her alone, that his insolence was charmed into lamb-like docility in a duet with her; for in that way self-respect could be maintained and jealousy aroused.

Val was unaware of the hatred, but conscious of the rivalry, and was altogether kept very busy. He forgot to Marconi to his mother that he had sailed on the *Mauretania*, as Jim Harborough had thought he might forget. As for writing, he had not a moment for any such sedentary employment. Once or twice he did make up his mind to begin a letter to Lady Loveland; but, when he could get a few minutes off duty, it seemed such a waste of time not to go and ask for good advice from Lesley Dearmer, that somehow pen was never put to paper.

And so at last came the day for landing.

CHAPTER EIGHT

Hail to the Land: Goodbye to the Girl

The *Mauretania* passed the noble statue of Liberty enlightening the world, and Loveland admired her impersonally, but felt that had she been a live millionairess he would not have dared propose to her.

Then, presently, the hugeness of the great city loomed monstrous, mountainous in purple shadow against such a blue sky as Italy and New York know.

A crowd was massed on the dock to welcome the *Mauretania* and her passengers; and for the first time since he had left England, Val felt a vague homesickness stirring in his breast. Almost everyone else on board seemed to have at least one handkerchief-waving friend, and some had half a dozen, but all the smiling eager faces looking up were strange to his eyes. There was no one for him; and he had a sudden, queer sensation of not being at home in the world. This, in spite of invitations from everybody he had met on the ship – except one: the One who mattered.

Mr. Coolidge and several other fathers and uncles of pretty girls had asked him to make their house his home; but he had taken Jim Harborough's advice to heart, and excused himself warily. His idea was to let New York society pass before his eyes in review, before risking a premature entanglement. To this course he committed himself in cold blood. Since he could not have Lesley Dearmer, all that mattered to him in a girl was decent manners, decent looks, and – many millions.

He should have rejoiced that it was time to land, and have felt keen to set to work upon the business which had brought him across the sea, but he was in no mood to rejoice at anything; and it was Lesley Dearmer's fault.

He had planned a moonlight farewell for the night before, but Lesley thwarted him by talking the whole evening long with a sporting youth, whom Val wrathfully stigmatised in his mind as suffering from motor bicycle face, bridge eye, clutch knee and tennis elbow. Then when she had tired of her flirtation she went to bed.

Next morning it was only as the *Mauretania* neared her slip that the girl appeared again. Without seeming to notice Loveland she stood leaning her elbows on the rail, not far from him. It occurred to Val that after all it was a matter of no importance to her that their lives were to be lived apart. And the separation was at hand. He had thought of this hour, but now it was here. He was going to lose her. Tomorrow, and all the tomorrows, he would have no sweet, merry, mysterious-eyed friend to advise him and listen half-amused, half in earnest, to his confidences.

Suddenly his heart felt like a large, cold boiled beetroot in his breast. He went and stood behind the girl, dumb with a strange new misery he could not understand, and, as though she had heard the "unerring speech" of his silence, she turned.

At first her beautiful brown eyes flashed a laughing challenge at him, as if they said, "Wouldn't you like to make me think you really care? But I don't think it, and won't. And neither do you care. We've both been playing."

Then, something in his look softened hers. She smiled kindly, though not wholly without guile.

"Aren't you excited?" she asked.

"Why should I be excited?" he grumbled.

"Because – well, you're a soldier, and know what war is like. I've heard that the most exciting thing which can happen is a call to make a *sortie* in the middle of the night, in the midst of a dream – and on an empty stomach. But I should think the call to a matrimonial *sortie* – "

"On an empty purse?"

"Yes; when it's a question of selling yourself to fill it."

"I don't mean to sell myself. I shall still belong to myself and to one other. I won't say who that other is, for I've pretty well told you already."

"It's no use pretending not to understand. I know what you want me to *think* you mean."

"If I never knew before how much I do mean it, I know now, when I've got to say 'goodbye.'"

"You needn't say it."

"You've tried hard to keep me from saying it, haven't you? But look here, Lesley – do look at me. I'm awfully cut up at leaving you."

"You're not to call me Lesley."

"You can't prevent my calling you Lesley to myself."

"You'll soon forget the name."

"Never. I can never forget you – worse luck. The thought of you is going to come between me and – other things."

"The thought must learn better manners. Not to 'butt in,' as we say over here. Oh, it will soon be tamed. You'll have so much to do."

"I hope I shall," said Loveland. "I say, are you going to forget me as soon as we're parted?"

The girl was silent for a moment. Then she laughed. Yet her laugh had not quite the frank lightheartedness which was usually one of its charms. "I shall make a note of you for my next story but one," she answered.

"You're not very kind."

"Are you sure you deserve kindness?"

"I'm sure I want it – from you."

"How you have always got what you wanted in your life, haven't you – one way or another?"

"Life wouldn't be worth living if one didn't."

"Oh, it's not much good saying to you that that's a selfish way of looking at life. But you've never had any lessons, and I suppose you never will have. You'll go on getting what you want, and taking it for granted that you ought to get it, till the end."

"I hope so, sincerely," said Val, without shame. "But I shan't get one of the things I want most, unless you promise to write to me."

She shook her head. "I can't promise that. I wouldn't if I could. As for getting your news, I shall read it in the papers, which are sure to chronicle all Lord Loveland does and says, and a lot he doesn't do or say. The Louisville papers will have things about you, copied from New York, in the Sunday editions. Yes, I shall be able to read about you every Sunday – lots of things you wouldn't tell in letters if I let you write. I shall see rumours of your engagement, then an announcement. I wonder if it will be the survival of the prettiest; Miss Coolidge – or if you'll be knocked down – on your knees – to a higher bid?"

"You're not letting me get much pleasure out of my last moments with you," he complained, his blue eyes really pathetic. "Do you despise me, after all?"

She looked up at him. "Only one side of you," she answered, a little sadly. "But – you're rather like the moon. We see only one of her sides. The other we have to take on faith. Perhaps it's silly of me, yet sometimes – in some moods – I do take your other side on faith."

"What is there, – on that side?" he asked, eagerly.

"I don't know. And I'm sure you don't. You probably never will. For the light shines so brightly on the one turned towards the world. Now it *must* be 'goodbye.' There's my dear little aunt – who's been on deck ever since we passed Governor's Island – looking for me."

"Are these to be our last words together, then?" Val had a sickening pang. He had not known it was going to be as bad as this. And it wouldn't have been so bad, if she had seemed to care more.

"Yes, they must be the last, unless just a snippy 'goodbye, very pleased to have met you,' as we leave the ship. I wish you the best luck. Shall I say 'Thine own wish, wish I thee'?" She spoke in a hard, bright tone, just poisoning like a bird on the wing, before flitting to her aunt.

"Don't forget me. Think of me sometimes," Loveland implored, as he wrung the little hand she held out. And perhaps never in his life had there been so much true feeling in his voice.

"I will think of you sometimes," she said, as if mechanically repeating the words.

"Try and think the best of me."

"Yes. I'll try to do that, too. Goodbye."

But he would not let her hand go. It seemed to him that he could not – although he knew he must. It was all he could do to keep back a plea that she would love him, that she would marry him, even though the crumbling walls of Loveland Castle fell. But instead he stammered, "Am I never to see you again? Can't you stop in New York for a few days, and let me call on – on you and your aunt – just to break the blow of parting?"

"No, we can't stop," she said. "We've been away from home too long already. We have lots to do. You know I work for my living."

"Those stories! Yes. But couldn't you write them in New York?"

"No, I couldn't, indeed. Aunt Barbara and I start for Louisville this afternoon. We live not far away."

"Mayn't I go with you to the train?"

"What! desert valuable friends whom it's your duty to cultivate – if you're to have flowers in the garden of your future?"

"I'd desert anyone or anything for you."

"Thank you. I believe you really mean that – this minute."

"I – "

"No. Don't protest. Sufficient for the minute is the meaning thereof. I must go – I *want* to go – while you still mean it all. And I'd rather not see you again, because I'd like to keep the memory of you as you look and are in this minute – nothing less. It will seem afterwards to justify our temporary partnership, in case I ever ask myself – Why?"

And before he could answer she was gone.

He dared not follow, and instantly lost sight of her in the crowd that poured to the rail to greet the waiting crowd below. Afterwards, on the dock, he saw her again, but only at a distance, for her aunt's luggage had been marked "D," that it might chaperon Miss Dearmer's, and enable the two ladies to keep each other company during the tedious time of waiting.

From the far off stall under the big letter "L," Loveland gazed sadly at the back of his lost friend's head, her face, either by accident or design, being turned from him. His boxes were long in coming, and as it happened that none of his ship-acquaintances were "L's," he had no one to talk to, nothing pleasanter to do than look at Miss Dearmer's back and gradually lose hope of her relenting.

She had brought a little camp-stool for her aunt, and that lady sat facing Loveland, her eyes so destitute of interest when now and then they strayed in his direction, that he began to believe her niece had never mentioned his existence. More than once he had pictured Lesley describing her aunt's distinguished namesake; had fancied Mrs. Loveland asking questions; and wished that he might hear the answers. The lady's indifference was not flattering to his self-esteem; but Mrs. Loveland did not look a woman to claim a relation because he was a peer.

Lesley's aunt was a little woman with dove-grey hair, folded like dove's wings that slanted softly down her forehead, covering her ears. Hers was a gentle face, with eyes that gazed kindly, and somehow impersonally, out upon the world. She had the air which many American mothers wear, of having contentedly stepped aside from the fore-front of life in favour of a younger generation, and of having lost interest in herself as a separate entity.

Lesley and Mrs. Loveland all got their luggage dumped down under letter "D," before a single "L" box had appeared. Then, when Val's did come, and the property of other impatient "L's" at the same time, the outside world was lost to view. Loveland got hold of a good-natured Custom House man, who, considering the indubitable fact that he was dealing with a British subject, and believing

the "Britisher's" statement that he was merely on a visit to America, made no unnecessary trouble. He was in a hurry, like everybody else, and did little more than casually open the leather portmanteaux, the cabin trunk, the hat box, and the fitted suit-case glittering with coronets, which constituted Lord Loveland's luggage.

Very few minutes were wasted in the examination, though Americans all around were suffering severely. Nevertheless, when his keys were in his hand again, and Val was ready to separate himself and his belongings from the seething mass of anxious "L's," Miss Dearmer and her aunt had vanished off the face of the dock.

CHAPTER NINE

Foxham Redivivus

Loveland tried to put thoughts of the girl out of his head as he drove through the exciting streets of New York, which seemed to him colourful and strange as a vast flower-garden, sown regardlessly. But, despite the rush and roar of "elevated trains" above his head, the swift whirr of electric trams to left, to right, of him on a level, and the bizarre effect of the "sky-scrapers," which turned long thoroughfares into shadowed valleys, he could not throw open his mind to the rush of new impressions. This brilliant New York made him feel after all a person of comparatively small importance. He began to repent having refused invitations, for instead of bumping dolefully to a hotel, in a cab which was the least modern thing New York had shown him, he might now be spinning uptown in any one of half a dozen hospitable ten-thousand-dollar motor cars. In his isolation he regretted the Coolidges, and even Cadwallader Hunter who had pressed him to spend a day or two at his flat; however, he was consoled by the reflection that he had decided wisely, and that wisdom would be its own reward. It was better not to lend himself to anyone until he had seen everyone, and decided to whom he would permanently belong.

When the bear had refused the hospitality of its leader's cage, Cadwallader Hunter had suggested a quiet new hotel, uptown and near his apartment. But the bear did not know that it was a bear, and had tired of dictation. Loveland had heard of the Waldorf-Astoria, and he had not heard of the quiet new hotel. Men he knew, who ran over to New York on such errands as his own, stopped at the Waldorf-Astoria, or Holland House, or the Plaza, and Val, who believed that the best was only just good enough, would not risk hiding his light under a bushel. True, he had very little money, but he had plenty of invitations and was certain to have more. A couple of days at the most expensive hotel could not break him; and Jim and Betty Harborough's millionaire friends would probably expect him to be conspicuous. Now was the tide in his affairs which must be taken at the flood, and he could not afford to let his future relations-in-law (whoever they might be) learn to despise him.

Loveland's intention had been to ask for a small room, high in situation and low in price; but once inside the immense, red-brown building, which looked vast enough to hold half New York, pride tied his tongue. Pretty girls, beautifully dressed, and prosperous-looking men, with facial expressions as supercilious as his own, were standing within earshot; and Loveland could not resist satisfying an impulse of boyish vanity. He announced to a superior gentleman at a desk that he wanted a good room with a bath. His charming voice and "English accent" attracted the Americans near him, and under his mask of indifference Loveland was aware of the attention he excited.

The superior gentleman thought for a moment and consulted a book. Then he said that he had no single rooms with baths disengaged at present, but that there was a suite consisting of bedroom, bath and parlour; just one suite, and that probably would be gone in another minute.

The hint of rivalry decided Loveland. "Very well. I will take it," he said. "Here's my card, if you wish to know to whom you are letting your rooms," he went on haughtily, in response to a sharp glance from shrewd, experienced eyes. And the hotel clerk read aloud, "Marquis of Loveland."

At this, everyone who had not been staring at the handsome, arrogant young Englishman, began to stare, and Loveland was not displeased.

"My luggage will be here soon, I hope," he said, showing several metal discs about which his ideas were rather vague. The clerk answered civilly that the trunks ought to arrive in half an hour or so, and a smart youth in livery was told off to show Lord Loveland his rooms.

They were very luxurious rooms, almost too luxurious, and Loveland experienced a faint qualm as it occurred to him that he had neglected to ask the price. "But they can't come to more than five or six pounds a day at the worst," he thought, hopefully.

He had brought his suit-case in the cab, and as the letters of introduction were in a little portable writing-desk contained among the fittings, he got out the packet to read over the addresses. All the friends to whom Jim and Betty were commending him lived in New York, and Cadwallader Hunter had said that most New Yorkers were at home in November. Loveland was just deciding that the letters had better reach their destination before night, when his baggage appeared, looking not much the worse for wear.

Now was the moment when the inestimable Foxham would be really missed. On shipboard there had been little to unpack; but the contents of the portmanteaux must have been rudely stirred on the dock, and ought immediately to be rescued by an expert. Loveland touched an electric bell in his bedroom, demanded of an unexpectedly responsive telephone that the hotel should produce a valet; and criticised the product adversely when it came.

Luncheon time was near, and Val was hungry, but he would not leave wardrobe and jewellery to the discretion of a strange servant. In a mood swinging towards impatience, he sat down on a cushioned sofa to watch the valet's proceedings.

The larger of the two noble portmanteaux was opened; the neat square of gold-braided and coronetted brown velvet, with which Foxham always covered the contents of each box, was removed; and a pile of clothing was deftly excavated.

Loveland's face changed from attention to surprise, then to bewilderment. "By Jove!" he exclaimed, "those don't look like my things." Then springing up alertly he began to toss over the pile as the hotel valet deposited it upon the bed, to toss it over as a haymaker tosses hay. But, in the midst, he drew back his hand as if he had inadvertently touched pitch. "Jove!" he stammered again.

"Wrong luggage, sir?" ventured the servant.

Loveland did not reply. He did not even hear, for his thoughts had taken a trip of record quickness across the sea, and were already in London, chasing a mystery. But, if the valet had stopped to think, an answer would have been unnecessary. The keys fitted the portmanteaux; and there were the big initials and the small coronets which distinguished Lord Loveland's property from the vulgar trunks of the common herd.

Had Foxham gone mad? For the moment Loveland could think of no other explanation. The portmanteau was filled with discarded garments, many of which Loveland had given to Foxham at parting. Other things were there, too, which Val dimly remembered having actually seen on the person of Foxham, and it was from the touch of these contaminated remnants that he recoiled in disgust.

"Open the other portmanteau," he directed, flushed now, and anxious-eyed.

The hotel servant obeyed. Another neat square of brown velvet was whisked away, and piles of shirts were revealed; but, save for a deceitful top layer, they were not Loveland's shirts. They might have been bought ready-made in the Edgware Road; probably had been – by Foxham. There was underclothing also; but not the pale pink, blue and heliotrope silk variety affected by Foxham's master.

"Now the hat box," Loveland went on, almost sure that he was talking in his sleep. For it was unbelievable that he would not soon wake up to find that this was a bad dream.

There were hats in the hat box; Foxham's hats, perhaps; certainly not Lord Loveland's. And in the boot box which came next were boots, but boots which had lost all claim to self-respect; boots which even Foxham would have found it difficult to give away.

Only the Custom House official's good nature and haste, and Loveland's complete absence of mind on the dock had delayed discovery until this moment, but now that the secret was out, there seemed nothing to do, if not to rage helplessly.

Loveland spluttered a few colourful words, but was still too bewildered by the catastrophe to become volcanic. The eruption would follow later.

"What shall I do with the things, sir?" the valet wanted to know.

"Do with them?" repeated Loveland, exasperated by the creature's calmness. "Pitch 'em into the fire – get rid of them anyhow, out of my sight, and be quick about it. I've been robbed, by my own man."

Loveland seemed to hear these words spoken by an unknown voice, as if they had been uttered by a stranger, and instantly he accepted them as the solution of the mystery.

That was it! Foxham had robbed him. Foxham had not gone mad. Foxham was simply a scoundrel.

There was too much method in the planning of this trick, even for madness.

The careful arrangement of the cabin luggage, with all the right things in the right places, except for the jewel-case containing tie pins, sleeve links and shirt studs, which for five days Loveland had believed to have been stowed away somewhere else by mistake. The packing of the portmanteaux and boxes with a nice judgment as to their proper weight and the neatness of top layers; all this was too well thought out to be the work of a lunatic.

No wonder Foxham had not asked for wages in arrear. No wonder he suddenly developed a defunct grandfather with an eccentric will. From the moment he heard of the proposed trip to America, he must have been quietly planning this *coup*, a *coup* worth making for the sake of the brand new wardrobe, to say nothing of the jewellery. And hot with rage, Loveland ran over in his mind the contents of that missing jewel-box. The pearl studs which Lady Kitty Manning had given him on his last birthday – each one of the three worth fifty pounds, if it was worth a shilling. How he wished he had sold the things, as he had been tempted to do, and would have done, if they had not been the gift of a pretty woman! The diamond and enamel sleeve-links, too, and the sapphire buttons; a hundred pounds more in Foxham's pocket. Then the cravat pins, in two long rows on a white velvet background: Loveland could see them, as he had seen them last – a cherished collection representing not only so many golden sovereigns, but so many queens of beauty, the charming givers.

What a rogue to send his master off to a strange country, stripped practically naked; and how the master longed to have the rogue within kicking distance, instead of safe across the sea.

Forgotten faults of Foxham's flashed back into his memory; small slynesses winked at, or condoned; rumoured "airs" assumed in the servants' hall at country houses; fibs found out and overlooked, because no other valet had Foxham's skill and resourcefulness. Still – who would have expected such depravity?

If this blow had fallen on some other man, Loveland would have laughed, and chaffed him; but he was far from seeing his own predicament as a laughing matter. He was like a knight of old who, having journeyed to a far land to joust for a great prize, finds himself robbed of his armour. How was he to fight on the tilting ground of society, and bear away a millionairess, when his sole possessions consisted of what he stood up in, and the contents of a suit-case and a cabin trunk?

Luckily Foxham had not been able to annex his master's letter of credit; but Val had uses for the hundred and fifty pounds other than buying a new outfit. How he wished now that he had not played Bridge quite so often on board ship, emptying his pockets of spare cash. The scrape he was in was as hard to win out of as a black London fog; and while groping for light, a mild question from the hotel valet did not sweeten his temper.

"Am I really to carry all these things away, sir?"

"Oh, go to the devil and take them with you!"

The servant – lest he remember that he had been born a man, and retaliate – bolted towards safety, with a leaning tower of Foxham's garments on his arm. It was nobody's business how he meant to dispose of them; and a second later he would have passed the danger line, had not a page boy selected that identical instant to knock at Lord Loveland's door.

Man and youth collided. The top-heavy pile of clothing crumbled into ruin, Foxham's loathed shirts and waistcoats blotting out the threshold. What the valet said, long habits of servitude rendered inaudible, but what Loveland said might have been heard at the end of the corridor. And there were

listeners nearer: Major Cadwallader Hunter and a companion who "represented" one of New York's leading newspapers.

CHAPTER TEN

The Valley of Disappointment

Major Cadwallader Hunter had been somewhat doubtful of his wisdom in paying this uninvited call. He had hinted that he might drop in at the Waldorf to see how Lord Loveland got on, and had not been encouraged to do so. But Tony Kidd of "New York Light" was a pretty good excuse for persevering, and he certainly had been badly in want of an excuse.

Having cast himself for the part of bear-leader it was imperative that Society should know who led the bear, whether the bear recognised his position or not.

Had he, like Loveland, been merely a guest in America, he would have left the ship's dock when Lord Loveland left, and have been able to show all whom it concerned at the Waldorf-Astoria that Loveland was his property. But he was subjected by the dreaded Custom House officials to treatment very different from that meted out to the Englishman, being baited and bullied as if he were a bear instead of a bear-leader.

The detention, however, proved a blessing in disguise, for it gave him Mr. Anthony Kidd of "Light." The journalist, sent down by his paper to meet the *Mauretania*, had just exhausted the available supply of home-coming millionaires when he spied Major Cadwallader Hunter, and carelessly culled him by the way, as worth a short paragraph at the bottom of a column.

Cadwallader Hunter was glad of a paragraph anywhere, but thought he saw his way to one higher up, perhaps even with a headline. So he happened to mention "a connection of his," the Marquis of Loveland who had been on board, though, for reasons, the noble name did not appear on the passenger list, and Mr. Kidd took the bait. Loveland was described by his alleged cousin as a "dear boy," so handsome, so clever; one of the oldest peerages in England, et cetera, et cetera; in the Grenadier Guards, don't you know, and all that sort of thing. Had gone on ahead to secure rooms at the Waldorf-Astoria, though invitations had been showered upon him by the best people on board ship. As soon as he could escape with life and luggage Cadwallader Hunter intended to pay a friendly call and inspect Lord Loveland's new quarters.

Of course Mr. Kidd wanted to call, too, and get a "story" for his paper. But at this suggestion the bear-leader shook his head. Charming fellow as Loveland was when you knew him, he was rather a difficult man to approach, and had some ridiculous prejudice against American pressmen. Certainly, unless influence were brought to bear, he would refuse to see Mr. Kidd; but Cadwallader Hunter would like to do "Light" a good turn, and give the paper a chance for a "scoop." He would take Mr. Kidd under his wing, and use his persuasive powers to obtain some sort of an interview.

Perhaps there was more confidence in his manner than in his mind as he made this offer, for the bear's leader had already seen the bear's claws; but the risk was worth running. And when, arrived at the Waldorf, he had talked for a few minutes with pleasant condescension to a hotel clerk, his self-esteem had so risen that he no longer dreaded a cold reception.

Nor did he receive one. His welcome was, on the contrary, far warmer than he had expected, and the hot blast of Loveland's wrath swept him back a step or two, so that he trod hard upon Tony Kidd's most pampered toe.

A difficult young man to approach, indeed!

The representative of "New York Light" was a brilliant journalist with a keen sense of humour, and a headline jumped into his head as Cadwallader Hunter stamped upon his toe. "A Difficult Young Man to Approach." He thought he saw his way to something rather choice for tomorrow morning's "Light."

Somehow, between valet and page, the wild litter of shirts, trousers, boots, and other horrors reminiscent of Foxham, was re-built into a tower more leaning than before. Then, while the valet

scuttled away with his trailing, sliding load, the page remained behind and courageously announced the visitors.

Perhaps if Foxham had spared him a few of his favourite tie pins, or if the blow of his loss had not caught him on an empty stomach, Loveland might have seen the humour of the situation as Tony Kidd saw it. But everything was against him in a black world; and his late shipmate's intrusion with a stranger was the one last drop in a bitter cup which he refused to swallow.

Never had Cadwallader Hunter's handsome bear looked less handsome or more dangerous than he looked as he stood blocking the way to his den, at bay against fate and against his leader.

"My dear fellow, what has happened to upset you?" exclaimed Cadwallader Hunter, warned by Loveland's expression that the only hope lay in getting the first word.

"Upset me?" echoed Val, glaring blue fire so vindictively that Kidd expected his introducer to be the next one "upset." "My d – d valet has stolen all my clothes, and made me a present of his own, that's all."

"How shocking!" sympathised Cadwallader Hunter.

"Well, yes, it is rather a shock," returned Loveland drily, "and if you don't mind, I think I'd better ask you to let me get over it alone."

"Oh! certainly, I quite understand," purred the banished courtier. But Kidd was making mental notes, and Cadwallader Hunter strove to retain his reputation as a valued cousin. "Just a minute or two, dear boy, and we'll take ourselves off. This is Mr. Kidd, from one of our most important papers – "

"Happy to see him another time," snapped Loveland. "Just now I'm in no temper to entertain strangers."

"But at least," Cadwallader Hunter protested, "you mustn't look on me as a stranger, my dear fellow – and if there's anything I can do – "

"My dear fellow," Loveland flung back at him, in angry mimicry, "if you keep on, I'm more likely to look on you as a bore. The one thing you can do for me is to go, and take your newspaper friend with you. Good morning."

And the bear shot back into his den, banging the door.

"The British Lion before his midday meal," remarked the representative of "New York Light." "Another minute, and he'd have snatched a free lunch – Kidd with Hunter Sauce! But serve me up on toast if he hasn't got sauce enough of his own."

"He comes of a hot-tempered family." Cadwallader Hunter explained his English relative.

"I should say they'd been hot ever since William the Conqueror," commented Mr. Kidd. "Good family to keep away from when you haven't got your gun. I forgot mine this morning."

But he had not forgotten his stylographic pen.

The moment that the door had slammed, Loveland's ears tingled with the consciousness that not only had he been guilty of a very rude act, but a particularly stupid one.

He had never liked Cadwallader Hunter, had lately grown tired and sick of him, and detested him cordially now, for a peppery second or two; yet all this did not do away with *noblesse oblige*. Nothing could excuse forgetfulness of one's obligation, the obligation to be a gentleman; and Loveland was irritably aware that he had forgotten it.

He reminded himself that a great liberty had been taken with him at an inopportune moment, that he was not used to having liberties taken with him at the best of times, and that Cadwallader Hunter deserved all he had got for coming up to him uninvited, with a stranger – a newspaper man – in tow. Still, Val was not happy, and if he had not been too stubbornly proud to yield to his first impulse, he would have flung open the door and run after his visitors with apologies. But no; he would not do it. A bad precedent to make with a person like Cadwallader Hunter, he said, excusing himself. The Major would take advantage of it; and as for the journalist, he – Lord Loveland – stood on purple heights so lofty that he need fear no spiteful yapping of dogs on lower levels. Nothing could drag him

down to their depths; and as his idea was that American newspaper men were no slaves to truth, he told himself that this one would probably have lied in any case.

With such thoughts vaguely stirring in his mind, and assured that Cadwallader Hunter's past civility had been entirely for what he could get, Loveland tried to re-establish friendly relations with his own conscience; but the uneasy pricking would not stop. It drove him up and down, in and out of one beautifully furnished room to another, in irrepressible restlessness, and a presentiment of worse things to come than he had yet suffered.

He had meant, when his unpacking was done, to dress and lunch in the restaurant, whose fame had reached even the dining-room of the Guard's Club. But that was before the Nightmare. Now he did not want to look at his fellow-beings or be looked at; and he pressed his electric bell viciously to order luncheon sent up.

It came presently, and would have been delicious to a man without a grievance, but Loveland's grievance was so gigantic that it had crowded out his appetite; and scarcely knowing what he ate, he went through course after course, brooding on his wrongs, and pondering the chances of revenge.

Useless to waste money in cabling instructions for Foxham's arrest, he reflected. The wretch, who had planned everything so well, would long ago have taken himself out of harm's way, and it would be like setting Scotland Yard to look for a very small, rusty needle in a haystack as big as England and the Continent, to expect the thievish valet to be found. Months ago, in an expansive moment, when Loveland had nothing better to do than listen while his boots were being laced, Foxham had confessed that at one time he had been an actor, "in a humble way." His speciality had been quick disguises, "lightning changes"; and he had been successful in a "turn" done at provincial music halls. Loveland could imagine Foxham disguising himself very well, and being almost as good an actor as he had been a valet. He was perhaps masquerading now as a Salvation Army Preacher, or a Beauty Specialist; or setting up as a grocer on the money got by the betrayal of his master.

No, Loveland decided, he need not hope to punish Foxham. His time might be better employed in planning the reconstruction of his own wardrobe.

A man, even a Marquis, can live without tie pins or a change of shirt studs, but he cannot live without such clothes as Society expects of him. Loveland thought with almost passionate regret of his tailor's achievements, lost to him for ever, and with anxiety of the difficult matter it would be to replace them.

The hundred and fifty pounds represented by his letter of credit could not be spared for American tailors and bootmakers; that went without saying. These persons would have to trust him. But – were American tailors and bootmakers of a trusting nature? Loveland had somehow got the impression that they were not, and that even if you were a Duke – much less a Marquis – and flaunted a copy of Burke under their noses, they would still want some native millionaire to guarantee them against loss.

Cadwallader Hunter was not a millionaire (this was the one damaging statement he had voluntarily made against himself) but he knew millionaires and was known by them; and with a pang of selfish regret, even sharper than his first remorse, Loveland repented his wastefulness in throwing away such a friend. If he had not slammed the door almost upon Cadwallader Hunter's high, thin nose, he might now have summoned him by telephone, and have got him to trot about introducing the Marquis of Loveland to the best tailors in New York. Of course, the Major would not accept the snub as final: he was not that sort of person; but it was beneath the Loveland dignity to insult a man and then ask a favour of him. The only thing for Val to do was to wait until he had collected other friends more solid, more valuable, than Cadwallader Hunter, and as soon as possible tell the tale of his misfortunes. Of course, everybody would be delighted to help Lord Loveland; and, by the way, there was Mr. Coolidge who could be approached, if worst came to worst.

But worst had not yet come to worst, and as Val's spirits rose with a mingling of good food and bright hopes, he decided against Coolidge as a refuge for the present. In spite of all, he would stick to

his guns and not forgather further with the *Mauretania* people until he had seen what Harborough's letters produced. He could get on for a day or two, and meanwhile there were things to do.

When he had been cheered by luncheon, and soothed by cigarettes, he sent for a motor taxicab. The afternoon was still young, and so full of sparkle and gayety that life seemed worth living after all; therefore Lord Loveland had begun to value himself almost as highly as ever, by the time his smart little automobile pulled up in front of the bank.

It was a stately bank, well worthy of its London connection; and he handed in his visiting card and letter of credit, with the air of one entitled to receive unlimited sums. The cashier, however, having looked at him, the card, and the letter, did not appear to be impressed. Instead of replying in words to Loveland's demand for twenty pounds, he walked away with the letter of credit in his hand, and vanished behind a swing door. Loveland thought that he had probably gone to fetch the manager, who would perhaps desire to see in person a titled client of some importance. But after a short delay the cashier returned alone, and having strolled back to his place behind the grating, there stood silent for a moment.

"I'm rather in a hurry," said Loveland. "I suppose there'll be no red tape about my getting twenty pounds? I want it this afternoon."

The cashier smiled a dry smile, and his voice sounded dry as he answered. "I don't know about the red tape, but I'm sorry to tell you we have no instructions from London to pay."

"What?" cried Val, reddening with annoyance. Several people writing cheques or waiting for money at the counter, looked up and continued to look. "You have no instructions?"

"No instructions to pay," repeated the cashier, putting on the last word an emphasis which sounded offensive to Loveland's ears, though he hastily assured himself that it could not possibly have any such meaning.

"This is very inconvenient," said Val, to whom Bridge and tips on shipboard had left exactly seventeen shillings, three pence halfpenny.

"I'm sorry for that," remarked the cashier, still more formally, more unsympathetically, and – one might almost have said – more disrespectfully, than before.

Loveland, though inclined to storm, reflected a moment. He had intended to sail on the *Baltic*, which was due to leave English shores only yesterday, and might not arrive at New York for seven or eight days. He had not given anyone notice – not even his mother – that he had changed his intention, and very likely the London papers had paragraphed him as a passenger on the *Baltic's* next trip. Nevertheless, he could not quite understand how that fact excused his London bank's delay in instructing their New York correspondents. They had had plenty of time to arrange his affairs before his sudden departure in the *Mauretania*, and by not doing so they were likely to make him a great deal of unnecessary trouble.

Again he thought of Cadwallader Hunter. In this instance, too, the man might have been useful.

"Well, I don't see why I should be made to suffer because the London and Southern Bank puts off till tomorrow what it ought to have done a week ago," said Loveland, beginning to be arrogant, though looking boyish, with his flushed face, and his white scar glimmering on its background of clear, ruddy-brown. "I must have some money, you know."

The cashier did not reply to this challenge, and his eyes expressed no interested consideration of the matter.

"You had better see your manager and explain the circumstances," pursued Val.

"It would be useless. We could not pay without instructions."

"I daresay I might manage with ten pounds till you could get an answer, if you choose to be so ridiculously over-cautious," Loveland insisted, loftily. "But in that case you must cable at once."

"You will no doubt be willing to pay for the message in advance?" suggested the cashier.

"Certainly not," said Val, no longer trying to keep his temper under control. "You've seen my card. Isn't that enough for you?"

"Business is business," quoted the bank employ  , still unruffled, still blind to Lord Loveland's importance, cold to his necessities.

"And decency's decency," stormed Val, careless now who looked or listened, and in a mood to wreck all American institutions.

"Yes, it's as well never to forget that," the cashier hinted, significantly. "Sorry we cannot accommodate you at present."

"I'm hanged if you ever get the chance again," retorted Val, snatching his letter of credit from the counter. "I shall myself send a cable to the London and Southern which will make you repent your pig-headedness." And with this ultimatum he strode to the door, as if on the way to sign a death-warrant.

"By his looks, that will be an expensive cable, and make the wire mighty hot," Val heard a man chuckle as he passed, and there was a spatter of laughter, which (for his eyes) painted the opposite sky-scrapers bright scarlet.

"Beastly America! Beastly Americans!" he muttered. "I suppose this is their way of resenting the existence of aristocracy."

Lord Loveland had a good deal to learn yet about America – and also about that important member of the aristocracy, himself.

As he returned to his motor cab, which had been "taxing" away violently since he left it, he wondered if he would have enough money to pay for it. But, what if he hadn't? He could tip the chauffeur, and the hotel would do the rest. Also the hotel would put down the cash for a dozen cablegrams. Oh, the sting of these pin-pricks would last no longer than the poison of mosquito-bites! Once Jim Harborough's friends began to rally round him, and vie among each other for his society, as the Mauretians had done, New York would be his to play with. Patience, then, and shuffle the cards. As he had heard someone say on shipboard, "Faint heart never won a game of poker."

It was thus he smoothed away the sulky frown which suited neither his face, nor the gentle Indian-summer sunshine. Then, trying to forget the first snub man had ever dared to deal him, he flashed here and there in his motor cab, making a house to house distribution of Jim's envelopes and his own visiting cards, according to home custom when armed with letters of introduction.

The sky flamed with sunset banners – Spanish colours – long before he had finished his round and was ready to return to the Waldorf. There, his idea of a suitable present to the chauffeur left him with the American equivalent of eight or nine shillings in his pocket. But, as he had expected, the hotel paid for his afternoon's motoring. So cheerfully did it pay that he sent off an unnecessarily long and extremely frank cablegram to his London bankers which they ought to receive on opening their doors next morning. He thought that it would rather wake them up, and that in consequence of their response to New York – certain to flash immediately along the wires – he would receive an apology from the rude wretch who had insulted him that afternoon. But nothing would induce him to forget or forgive. He had informed the London bankers that his business must be diverted into another channel, which they were invited to suggest.

When Loveland found himself alone again in his luxurious suite of rooms, with the November night coming on, and no amusement on hand (unless he chose to stare down from his high windows at the blaze of astonishing jewels which festooned the immense blue dusk with light and colour) he half wished once more that he had not been so cautious in the matter of accepting invitations. After all, it wouldn't have compromised his future, if he had gone to dine with the Coolidges, or Spanish-eyed, flirtatious Mrs. Milton and her gentle little daughter Fanny. A dinner with them – or even with the dullest people who had invited him – would have been preferable to an undiluted dose of his own society on this first night in a strange land. However, it was too late to reconsider now with dignity (though he was childishly confident that any of his American acquaintances would have been entranced, had he suddenly changed his mind) and the next best thing to dining with friends would be to watch the coming and going of gay New York in the Waldorf-Astoria restaurant.

He dressed and went down about eight, therefore, looking forward to the novelty of the unknown.

CHAPTER ELEVEN

The Discovery of Lord Loveland by America

It was a brilliant scene into the midst of which Loveland plunged.

Society begins to dine earlier in New York than in London; therefore at eight o'clock dinner was in full swing. There was scarcely an empty table; and many of the women being in hats and semi-evening dress, the red and gold restaurant suggested to the newcomer a living picture of Paris.

He had had the forethought to telephone down and order a table to be kept for him, and informing an interrogative waiter that he was Lord Loveland he learned that his place would be found at the far end of the room.

It looked a very far end indeed, gazing across an intervening sea of flowerlike hats, charming faces, and jewelled necks that glimmered white under film of lace and tulle; but Loveland was not shy. Among all the men who protected the charming faces, his sweeping, faintly supercilious glance did not show him one whose physical advantages he need envy. He rather enjoyed his progress, winding on and on along narrow paths between rose-burdened tables, with lovely eyes lifting to his as he passed by. He wondered if any pair of those eyes was destined to look down his own table at Loveland Castle some day. Well, they should be beautiful eyes to deserve the honour! the thought slipped vaguely through his head, and then his own eyes brightened with the light of recognition.

There, at a large table decorated with white and purple violets, sat Elinor Coolidge, her father, Mrs. Milton and Fanny, and two men whom Loveland had never seen before. Standing, and bending slightly down to talk in a confidential tone with one of these men, was Major Cadwallader Hunter.

His back was turned towards Loveland, who recognised him instantly, however, by the set of his high, military shoulders, and the bald spot on his head which Lesley Dearmer had likened to the shape of Italy on the map. He seemed to listen with deep interest to what one of the seated men was saying, and then to chime in eagerly with some addition of his own. Everyone at the table was absorbed in the conversation between these two, and as Loveland came nearer, he saw that the expression of all the faces, including those of the three ladies, was so grave as to appear out of keeping with the liveliness of the scene. Suddenly, however, Loveland caught Fanny Milton's eye. She started, and blushed scarlet. The slight, involuntary movement she made drew Miss Coolidge's attention: and Elinor, seeing the direction in which Fanny's eyes were turned, sent a glance that way.

Loveland, within bowing distance now, met the glance, and returned it, smiling. He was annoyed that Cadwallader Hunter should be with the party, even though evidently not of it. Yet, after all, he said to himself, perhaps it was as well. He did not mean to apologise to Cadwallader Hunter, for he thought his own rudeness more or less justified by the liberty the other had taken; but he had already made up his mind that, the next time he met the man, he would act as if nothing disagreeable had happened. As to Cadwallader Hunter's readiness to snatch at the olive branch, Loveland had not the slightest doubt of it. He thought he had only to hold out a hand for the Major to kiss it, grovelling.

Elinor Coolidge did not blush at the sight of Lord Loveland as Fanny Milton did, but her beautiful face changed curiously. Its cameo-clear lines hardened, her lips were pressed together, and her large eyes narrowed, gleaming like topazes between their dark lashes, as the lights from the shaded candles on the table lighted sparks in their yellow-brown depths.

The thought flashed into Loveland's head that the quick change in her face meant jealousy of Fanny Milton. He had noticed more than once on shipboard that she had seemed jealous of Fanny, and now that deep blush of the younger girl's at sight of him, had probably vexed her. He could not attribute the hardening of the beautiful features to any other cause, and as of the two it was wise to prefer Elinor and her millions to Fanny and her thousands, he let his first look, his first words, be for the Coolidges, father and daughter.

"How d'you do?" he asked, pausing at the table.

Instead of answering, or putting out her hand to him as he expected, Elinor almost convulsively grasped the sticks of a delicate little fan which lay beside her plate. She shot a topaz glance at one of the two new men, then let her eyes under raised brows seek and hold her father's.

Lord Loveland was at once surprised and puzzled by this extraordinary reception. "Can Cadwallader Hunter have told them all some lie to set them against me?" he asked himself. But it was no more than a passing thought. It was incredible that Miss Coolidge should believe anything against him.

At the sound of Loveland's voice, Cadwallader Hunter straightened up in haste and turned round, looking suddenly stiff and wicked as a frozen snake.

He stared into Loveland's eyes, his own like grey glass; and an unpromising smile depressed the corners of his thin lips.

"Oh, that's it, is it?" thought Val, with the carelessness of a man used to dominating situations. "He's afraid I'm not going to speak to him, and he daren't speak first for fear of being snubbed again. Well" – and Val felt pleasantly magnanimous – "I'll give him a lead. How are you?" he asked, with the patronising tone his voice unconsciously took when he spoke to this man.

Then he could hardly believe his eyes which told him that Cadwallader Hunter had turned a contemptuous shoulder upon him, darting disgust in a venomous glance.

"This is the – person we were speaking of," he said to the dark, clean-shaven man towards whom he had been bending (he seemed always to be bending towards someone) when Loveland came up. "Shall we have him turned out?"

Mr. Coolidge half rose in his seat, losing his characteristic stolidity. "No, no," he returned, in a low, decided voice, "there must be no scene here, for the ladies' sake. Keep quiet, everybody."

"You're right, Coolidge," returned the dark, smooth-faced man.

Then the latter fixed his eyes on Loveland with a stare under a frown; and the other new man stared also; but the three women looked away, trying in vain to think of something easy and natural to say to each other. A slight, nervous twitching which occasionally disturbed the tranquillity of Mrs. Milton's camellia-white face became visible; Elinor Coolidge was pale and motionless; and Fanny's eyes swam in a lake of tears which she struggled to keep from over-flowing.

Again it struck Loveland that he was living in a dream; the gorgeous room; the crowd of well-dressed men and beautiful women; the hurrying waiters; the lights; the fragrance of flowers and food, and scented laces; the chatter of laughing voices subdued by distance; and more unreal than all, the table surrounded by the faces that he knew, faces he had expected to find smiling in friendship, now frozen into something like horror – horror at him, Lord Loveland, whom everybody had always wanted and admired.

It could not be true. It was not happening really. Things like this did not happen.

He stood for a moment, stupidly, like a boy in the school-room who has been bidden to stand up and be stared at as a punishment for some misdemeanour. He was almost inclined to laugh at the insolence of Cadwallader Hunter, as a lion might laugh at a fox terrier worrying his foot. It was on his lips to say, "What a tempest in a tea-pot! Surely you're not going to believe any idiotic tale that tuft-hunting ass may have trumped up about me?"

But he bit back the words. If they chose to champion Cadwallader Hunter in his silly grievance against a Marquis of Loveland, why, let them. They would be sorry afterwards – when it was too late. To sneer Cadwallader Hunter down as he deserved would be to make a disagreeable scene, and the business was squalid enough already. He would have thought better of the Coolidges, if not of the Miltons, mother and daughter; but he said to himself that none of them were worth even the shrug of the shoulders he gave, as with his head held gallantly high, he passed on towards his own table.

The little dramatic episode, if observed by any audience, had been played too subtly to be understood by those not concerned. Those seated nearest might have seen that, when a handsome

young man stopped to speak to some members of a party at a table, another man who did not belong to that party, had looked at him scornfully and whispered venomously; that then one or two others had spoken hurriedly, and that the handsome young man had stalked away apparently in disgust.

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