

## *In Sloane Street*

CONSTANCE FENIMORE WOOLSON

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“WELL, I’ve seen the National Gallery, and *that’s* over,” said Mrs. Moore, taking off her smart little bonnet and delicately drying with her handkerchief two drops which were visible on its ribbons. “And I think I’m very enterprising. You would never have got *Isabella* to go in such a rain.”

“Of course not. *Isabella* likes to stay at home and read *Memorials of a Quiet Life*; it makes her feel so superior,” answered Gertrude Remington.

“Superior?” commented Mrs. Moore, contemptuously. “Mary would not have gone, either.”

“No. But Mary—that’s another affair. Mary would not touch the *Memorials* with the tip of her finger, and she wouldn’t have minded the rain; but she doesn’t care for galleries. With her great love for art, she prefers a book, or, rather, certain books, about pictures, to the pictures themselves. For she thinks that painters, as a rule, are stupid—have no ideas; whereas the art critics—that is, the two or three she likes—really know what a picture means.”

“Better than the painters themselves?”

“Oh, far!” answered Miss Remington. “Mary thinks that the work of the painters themselves is merely mechanical; it is the art critic—always her two or three—who discovers the soul in their productions.”

“The only art critics I know are Mrs. Jameson and Ruskin,” remarked Mrs. Moore, in a vague tone, as she drew off her closely fitting jacket by means of a contortion.

“To Mary, those two are Tupper and *Sandford and Merton*,” responded Miss Remington. “And I agree with her about Ruskin; all his later books are the weakest twaddle in the world—violent, ignorant, childish.”

But Mrs. Moore’s interest in the subject was already exhausted. “It’s too dreadful that we’re forced to be at sea on Christmas day,” she said, complainingly. “Philip ought to have done something—arranged it in some other way. At home, already they are busy with the presents and everything. And by the 22d the whole house will be fragrant with the spices

and the fruit and the wine for the plum-pudding. If we could only have some oysters, it would not be quite so dreadful. But I have not seen anything I could call an oyster since I came abroad." She sat poised on the edge of the sofa, as though she intended to rise the next moment. Her small boots, splashed with mud, were visible under her skirt.

"The oysters are rather dwarfish," replied Gertrude Remington. "But as England is the home of the plum-pudding, I dare say you can have that, if you like; we could anticipate Christmas by a week or two."

"There's an idea! Do ring." (To the entering servant.) "Oh, Banks, I should like to speak to Mrs. Sharpless for a moment. She is out? Then send up the cook."

"Mrs. Pollikett, mum? Yes, mum," answered Banks, disappearing.

Presently they heard a heavy step coming up the stairs. It stopped outside the door while Mrs. Pollikett regained her breath; then there was a knock.

"Come in," said Mrs. Moore. "Oh, cook, we have taken a fancy to have a plum-pudding, as we shall be at sea on Christmas day! Do you think that you can give us a good one to-morrow night for dinner? Or, if that is not possible, the day after?"

"Hany time, mum; to-day, if you like," responded Mrs. Pollikett, with the suggestion of a courtesy—it was little more than a trembling of the knees for a moment. She wore a print gown, and a cap adorned with cherry ribbons; her weight was eighteen stone, or two hundred and fifty-two pounds.

"To-day? How can you possibly have it to-day? It's afternoon already," said Mrs. Moore, surveying the big woman (as she always did) with fascinated eyes.

"I've one on hand, mum," replied cook, with serene pride. "And an hexcellent one 'tis. 'Twere made a little over a year ago, and the materials being hof the best, 'tis better now than 'tever was; they himprove with keeping, mum. It's large, but what's left you can take with you in a tin box. With care 'twill be as good as hever another year, if you don't require to heat it all now, mum."

Mrs. Moore gave a gasping glance at Miss Remington. Then

she laughed, putting the veil which she held in her hand to her lips, to hide in part her merriment.

"I'll let you know later, cook," she said. "I'll send word by nurse."

And Mrs. Pollikett, unconscious of ridicule, calmly withdrew. Amy Moore put her head down upon the pile of sofa cushions beside her, and ground it into them as if in desperation.

"Plum-pudding a year old, and warranted to keep another year! Hard as a stone, of course, and black as lead. Think of ours at home! Think how light it will be, almost like a *soufflé*! And its delicate color and fragrance!" She took up her jacket, lifted her bonnet, and pinned the little lace veil to it with the long bonnet-pin; then, still laughing, she rose. On her way to the door her eyes caught sight of a figure which was passing the window outside. "There is Philip going out again. How he does slouch!"

"Slouch?" said Miss Remington, inquiringly. She also had seen the figure from her chair by the fire.

"I don't mean slouch exactly; I mean that he is so bent. Curiously enough, it isn't his back either. But up at the top of his shoulders behind, between there and the head, there's a stoop, or rather a lunge forward. But there's no hollow; it's a roll of flesh. The truth is that Philip is growing too stout."

"That bend you speak of is the scholar's stoop," observed Miss Remington.

"I suppose you mean writer's. He could stand when he writes, couldn't he? But probably it's too late now. How do *you* manage to be always so tremendously straight, Gertrude?"

"Don't you know that spinsters—those at least who have conquered the dejection of their lot—are always straight-backed?" said Miss Remington. "Their one little pride is a stiff spine and light step. Because, you know, the step of their married contemporaries is sometimes rather heavy."

"You think you can say that because I happen to weigh only ninety-eight pounds," answered Amy Moore. "But let me tell you one thing—*you* overdo your straightness; your shoulders in those tailor-made dresses you are so fond of look as though they were moulded of iron plate. You'd be a great deal more attractive and comfortable to look at, Gertrude, if you had a few

cozy little habits, nice homelike little ways. You never lounge; you never lean back against anything—that is, with any thorough enjoyment. Who ever saw *you* stretched out lazily in a rocking-chair by the fire, with a box of chocolate creams and a novel?”

Miss Remington laughed. “But if I don’t care for chocolates?”

“That’s just what I am saying; if you cared for them, you’d be much more cozy. A tall thin woman in a tailor-made gown, with her hair dragged tightly back from her face, and all sorts of deep books—why, naturally, all men are afraid of her.”

“Are you kind enough to be still thinking of matrimonial hopes for me?” inquired Miss Remington.

“Oh no! For what would become of Philip then?” said Philip’s wife. “You are his chief incense-burner; you’re awfully valuable to me just for that.” She was opening the door as she said this; she went out, closing it after her.

Left alone in the large room, Miss Remington took a newspaper from the table by her side, and vaguely glanced at its page. Her eyes rested by chance upon a series of short lines, each line beginning with a capital letter, like a poem. It was headed “Commercial Matters,” and the first four lines were as follows:

“Wool is weaker.  
Leather is slow.  
Hides are easy.  
Rice is low.”

Presently the door opened, and Philip Moore entered.

“Oh, you’ve come back,” she said, letting the paper drop to her lap.

“Only went to the corner to put a letter in the box.”

“Very wet still, isn’t it?”

“Very.”

Moore sat down before the fire, extended his legs, and watched the combat between the heat and the dampness of his trousers.

After a while Miss Remington remarked, “We’ve been to the National Gallery since lunch.”

He made no answer.

"We had intended to go to Highgate also," she went on; "but it was too wet for so long a drive."

"To Highgate?"

"Yes. To George Eliot's grave."

Moore's gloom was lightened for the moment by a short laugh.

"You think that's absurd," said his companion.

"Well—yes. Thoughts suitable for the occasion were to have been the attraction, I suppose. But if you can conjure them up in one place, why can't you in another, and save your cab fare? It was your idea, I know—the going to Highgate. Amy is not devoted to such excursions."

"I suppose it was my idea," answered Gertrude. "I thought you liked George Eliot," she went on, after a moment.

"Do you mean her ghost? How can I like a person I have never seen?"

"I mean her books."

"The first two, perhaps," answered Moore, frowning impatiently. "I suppose I may have said so once—ages before the flood, and you never forget anything, you are merciless about that. But women's books—what are they? Women can't write. And they ought not to try."

"What *can* you mean?"

"What I say," answered Philip Moore. "Children's stories—yes; they can write for children, and for young girls, extremely well. And they can write little sketches and episodes if they will confine themselves rigidly to the things they thoroughly know, such as love-stories, and so forth. But the great questions of life, the important matters, they cannot render in the least. How should they? And when in their ignorance they begin, in addition, to preach—good heavens, what a spectacle!" Happening to look up and see the expression of his companion's face, he added, laughing: "*You* need not be troubled, you have never tried. And I'm thankful you haven't. It would be insupportable to me to have any of my personal friends among that band."

"No, I have never tried," Gertrude answered. She hesitated a moment, then added, "My ambition is all for other people."

"You mean my things, of course. I should like you much better if you had never read a word of them," responded

Moore, his impatience returning. "After they're once done I care nothing about them, they are no longer a part of me; they are detached—gone. By the time they're printed—and that is when *you* get hold of them—I'm taken up with something else, and miles away. Yet you always try to drag me back."

Miss Remington bit her lip, a slight flush rose in her cheeks. But it faded as quickly as it had come, and her companion did not see it; he was staring at the fire.

He was a man of forty-five, with heavy features and thick dark hair. His eyes and head were fine. His forehead wore almost habitually a slight frown. He was somewhat under medium height, and his wife's description of his figure and bearing was true enough.

But Gertrude Remington saw him as he once was—the years when he had been full of life and hope and vigor. She also saw another vision of him as he might be now, perhaps, as he would be (so she told herself) under different influences. It was this possible vision which constantly haunted her, troubled her, tossed her about, and beckoned her hither and thither. She was three years younger than Philip, and she had known him from childhood, as her father's house was next to the house of the elder Philip Moore, in the embowered street of the Massachusetts town which was the home of both. When Philip married, he brought his little wife, the golden-haired, blue-eyed Amy, home to this old house, now his own, owing to the death of his father, and the intimacy of the two families had continued. It was almost a matter of course, therefore, that Miss Remington should be one of the party when the Moores came abroad for six months, their second visit to the Old World. Amy was twelve years younger than her husband, and nine years younger than Gertrude Remington.

To Moore's accusation, "You always try to drag me back," Gertrude had replied in a light tone: "That is because one doesn't stop to think. 'Never talk to an author about his books.' I saw that given somewhere as a wise maxim only the other day."

"I saw it too, and in the very review in which you saw it," replied Moore, in a sarcastic tone. "But you have not given the whole quotation; there was more of it. 'Never talk to an author about his books unless you really believe (or can make

him feel you believe) that they are the greatest of the great; he will accept *that!*' In your case there is no hypocrisy, I exonerate you on that score; you really do think my things the greatest of the great. And that's the very trouble with you, Gertrude; you have no sense of proportion, no discrimination. If I had believed you, I should have been a fool; I should have been sure that my books were the finest of the century, instead of their being what they are—and I know it, too—half failures, all of them." He got up, went to the window, and looked out. Then he left the room.

Miss Remington lifted the newspaper from her lap, and again perused unconsciously the same column. This time her eyes rested on the second four lines:

"Beans are steady.  
Sugars are down.  
Truck is in good demand.  
Sweet-potatoes are firm."

This last item brought Florida to her mind, and she thought for a moment of the gray-white soil which produces the sweet-potatoes; of the breezy sweep of the pine-barrens, with their carpet of wild flowers; of the blue Florida sky. Then she put down the sheet (it was an American paper), rose, and going to the window in her turn, looked out. It was the 13th of December. The autumn had been warm, and even now it was not cold, though the air was damp and chilling; fine gray rain had been falling steadily ever since the sluggish daylight—slow and unwilling—had dawned over vast London. The large house was in the London quarter called S.W.; it stood at a corner of Sloane Street, and these American travellers were occupying, temporarily, its ground-floor; it was literally a ground-floor, for there was only one step at the outer door. Miss Remington surveyed Sloane Street. Its smooth wooden pavement was dark and slippery; the houses opposite had a brown-black hue—brown in the centre of each brick and black at its edges; a vine was attached to one of these dwellings, and its leaves, though dripping, had a dried appearance, which told of the long-lasting dusts of the summer. Omnibuses, with their outside seats empty, and their drivers enveloped in oil-skins,

constantly succeeded each other; the glass of their windows was obscured by damp, and their sides bore advice (important in the blackest of towns) about soap; each carried on its top something that looked like a broomstick, from which floated mournfully a wet rag. Among the pedestrians, the women all had feet that appeared to be entirely unelastic, like blocks of wood; they came clumping and pounding along, clutching at their skirts behind with one hand, and holding an open umbrella with the other; the clutch was always ineffectual, the skirts were always dragged. These women all wore small black bonnets; and the bonnets attached to the heads of the poorer class had a singularly battered appearance, as though they had been kicked across the floor—or even the street—more than once. Hansom cabs passed and repassed. The horse belonging to those which were empty walked slowly, his head hanging downward; the horse of those that carried a fare moved onward with a gait which had the air of being rapid, because he continually turned his high-held nose to the right or the left, according to the guidance of his driver, making a pretence at the same time of turning his body also; this last, however, he never really did unless compelled, for it would have been one step more. Huge covered carts, black and dripping, devoted (so said the white lettering on their sides) to the moving of furniture, rolled slowly by, taking with cynical despotism all the space they required, like Juggernauts. A red-faced milk-woman appeared, wearing a dirty white apron over her drabbed short skirt, with indescribable boots, and the inevitable small battered black bonnet. The gazer, finding the milk-woman more depressing even than the hansom cab-horses, turned and went to a fourth window, which overlooked the narrow street at the side of the house. Here the battered stone pavement held shallow pools of yellow water in each of its numerous depressions. On the opposite corner a baker's shop displayed in its windows portly loaves, made in the shape of the Queen's crown—loaves of a clay-colored hue, and an appearance which suggested endurance. There were also glass jars containing lady's-fingers of immemorial age, and, above these, a placard announcing "Mineral Waters." Next came a green-grocer's stall, with piles of small, hard, dark green apples. Miss Remington imagined a meal composed of one of

the clay-colored loaves, the mineral waters, the lady's-fingers, and the hard apples. A hideous child now appeared, with a white face streaked with dirt, and white eyelashes; it wore a red feather in its torn wet gypsy hat, and it carried a skipping-rope, with which, drearily, it began to skip, after a while, in the rain. A younger child followed, equally hideous and dirty; it was sucking an orange as it trailed after its sister. Neither of the two looked hungry; but, oh! so unhealthy, so depraved. Miss Remington gave it up; she returned to her place by the fire.

Ten minutes later the door opened, and Mrs. Moore came in, freshly dressed. She drew an easy-chair forward and seated herself, putting out two dainty little shoes towards the blaze.

"Those English people upstairs are too ghastly," she announced. "They do nothing but drink tea."

"They have the best of it, then," answered Miss Remington. "For probably they like it, and perhaps it is good. Whereas what we want—the coffee—is atrocious."

"Just wait till I get home," responded Amy, drumming noiselessly on the arm of her chair with her finger-tips, the motion drawing sparkles from her diamond rings. "I have only found one place in Europe where the coffee is as good as ours, and that is Vienna. But as regards tea, they do keep at it, that family upstairs. First, they all drink it for breakfast. Then again with luncheon. Then it goes in a third time at five or six, with piles of bread-and-butter. Then they have it in the evening after dinner. And if they go to the theatre or anything of that sort, they have a cup after they come home. In addition, if any one has a cold, or is tired, or has been out in the rain, there are extra supplies ordered. I should think it would make them nervous enough to fly."

"It doesn't appear to," answered Gertrude. "We look far more nervous than they do. They are remarkably handsome, and pictures of health each one."

"I am sure *I* don't want to look like them," responded Amy.

Miss Remington made no reply. Amy's firm belief that she had still the beauty of twelve or fifteen years before always rankled a little in the older woman's mind. Amy had been a very pretty girl, the pet of a large family circle, who thought that she had conferred a wonderful favor when she gave her hand to

Philip Moore. Through the years which had passed, they had never concealed this opinion. And sometimes it was apparent also that Amy (in her own mind at least) agreed with them. At present her beauty was gone; in appearance she was insignificant. Her small figure was wasted, her little face was pallid, her blue eyes had lost their bright color, and the golden hair had grown ominously thin.

Presently she began again. "When one is abroad, if it rains, one is ended; one can't get up home occupations in deadly rooms like these; at least I can't. To-night there is *Cavalleria*, but between that and this nothing. Have you any books?"

"I have *Vapour* upstairs. Shall I get it?"

"That analytical thing? I hate analytical novels, and can't imagine why any one writes them. Why don't you talk? You're as dumb as an owl."

"What shall I say?"

"Anything you like. Why people write analytical novels will do as a starter."

Miss Remington, who was embroidering, lifted her eyes. "I suppose you could tell me a great deal about Philip's disposition, couldn't you? All sorts of queer unexpected little ins and outs; oddities; surprises; and trip-you-up-in-the-dark places?"

"I rather think I could," answered Amy, laughing.

"And well as I and all our family believe that we know him, I dare say you could astonish us with details and instances which would show him in lights which we have never suspected?"

"Of course I could."

"Well, if all that you know should be carefully written down, it would be a study of Philip's character which would be very interesting to those who think they know him. My idea is that the persons who write analytical novels, and those also who like to read them, are interested in the study of character generally, as you and I are interested in Philip's in particular."

Amy yawned. "But they put such *little* things in those novels—such trifles!"

"When Philip refused to buy that exquisite little drawing of Du Maurier's that was for sale in Bond Street the other day—refused, though he was longing for it, simply because he had said that he would not buy another article of any kind or description, not even a pin, as long as he was abroad—was

it not as vivid an example of his obstinacy (especially as that unexpected check from home had made it perfectly easy for him to indulge his longing) as if he had refused a Senatorship because he had said some time that he would never live in Washington?"

"Oh, I hope he has not said *that!*" answered Mrs. Moore. "Because if he has, he will stick to it, and I shall have endless trouble to persuade him out of it. For there is nothing I should like better than to live in Washington—I've been thinking of it for a long time. He need not have anything to do with the government, you know."

"And when he flung that footstool of yours through the window into the garden last spring, breaking all the glass, wasn't that as much an instance of uncontrollable temper as if he had knocked a man down?"

"The footstool was the embroidered velvet one," answered Amy, "and it was completely spoiled—out all night in the rain. I have to have footstools, because I'm so short; I can't stretch my legs all over the room, as you can. I was sitting in the study for an hour or two that day while they were sweeping the drawing-room, and I told Rosa to bring me one; and then when I went out, I forgot it, and there it staid. But it was a very little thing, I am sure, to be so furious about."

"If it had happened only once, yes," answered Gertrude, smiling. "But I seem to have heard before of footstools forgotten in the middle of the floor in the study, and its master coming in after dark in a hurry, and not expecting to find them there."

"Ten times. Ten times at least," responded Amy, gleefully. "It's the funniest thing in the world. There's a perfect fatality about it."

The door opened, and a little boy and girl came in. They were very beautiful children, although slender and rather pale. They went to their mother and kissed her, climbing to her lap and the arm of her chair.

"A story!" demanded the boy. "About the dog who had a house up in a tree."

"No," said the girl. "About Wolla Kersina, the fairy."

"But it isn't story-time," answered Mrs. Moore. "If you have them now, there'll be none when you go to bed."

Fritz and Polly considered this statement thoughtfully; they decided to wait until bedtime.

“Come on, Poll; let’s play water-cure,” said the boy.

“Well,” answered the girl, assentingly. She went to a closet and drew out a box, from which she took forty small china dolls, arrayed in silks and laces. “Here’s the passhints,” she said, arranging them on the floor.

“I’m the head doctor,” said the boy. “Is the passhints ready?” he inquired, in a gruff tone. Kneeling down, he extended his forefinger menacingly towards the first doll. “Good-morning. How are yer? You have a turrible fever, an’ you must take twenty baths, and a sitz and a pack, before eating a *mossel*.”

“Fritzy Moore, she’ll die with all that,” said the girl, indignantly, rescuing the doll. “That’s Grace Adelaide, and she’s delicate.”

Fritz went on to the next one. “Fer you, a shower-bath, and needles, and the deuce, every five minutes.”

“I’ve no appetite, doctor,” said Polly, speaking in a very weak voice for a doll whom she drew from the line. “I’ve been rather anxious because my ten children” (here she hustled forward rapidly ten of the smaller dolls) “have all had typhoid fever most *dangerously* for more than *three* years.”

“Vegetubble baths and the *mind*-cure,” ordered Fritz.

“I’m going to play I’m a lady who has come with her child to call on a passhint,” said the girl. She took a large doll from the closet, drew her own lips tightly together, and, speaking in a melancholy voice, said: “I’m *very* sorry, Maud Violet, that we accepturred Mrs. Razzers’s invitation to stay to dinner at this water-cure, for Mrs. Razzers isn’t very rich; I don’t think she has got more than twenty-five cents; and so we must be very careful. Eat just as little as you *possibly* can, Maud Violet, an’ say ‘no-thank-yer’ to everything, just ‘cep’ meat and potatoes.” Dragging the doll by its hand, she walked with dignified steps towards the side window, where she seated herself on the floor with her back against the wall, the doll by her side. “No-thank-yer,” she said, as if speaking to a servant; “no soup. (Maud Violet, say ‘no-thank-yer!’)”

Mrs. Moore, meanwhile, had glanced towards the table. “French again? Why are you forever reading French books?”

“Aren’t they the cleverest?”

"They have so many s'écraais—he or she s'écraïd—as I always translate that 'shriek,' they go shrieking all down the page," answered Amy. She made a long stretch and took two paper-covered volumes from the table. "Lemaitre? Who is he? Oh, it isn't a novel. And this other one is that Bashkirtseff thing! The most perfectly unnatural book I have ever read."

"I thought it so natural."

"Mercy!"

"I don't mean that it was natural to write it for publication, or even, perhaps, to write it at all; I referred to the ideas, merely. If some invisible power should reproduce with exact truthfulness each one of our secret thoughts, do you think we should come out of it so infinitely better than Marie Bashkirtseff?"

"What extraordinary notions you invent! If I thought that Polly would ever have such ideas as that girl's— But she won't. You spinsters are too queer. You are either so prudish that one can't look at you, or else you're so emancipated that Heaven alone knows what you'll say next! It all comes from your ignorance, I suppose."

"Yes; that answer is always flung at us," responded Gertrude, holding her embroidery at arm's-length for a moment, in order to inspect it critically.

Polly, having overheard her name, had come to her mother's knee. "Want me, mamma?"

"No. Go back to your play."

"We're not playing. Fritz won't."

"'Cause you're so selfish with your old dolls," said Fritz. "You said they was passhints. Then you came an' yanked 'em all away."

Polly made a face at him. Fritz responded with another, and one of preternatural hideousness, rolling his eyes up to the whites, and stretching out his tongue. This seemed to soothe him, for he demanded, after the effort was over:

"Where's the Noah's ark? You get it, and we'll play crocodile."

"I had happened to read the *Life of Louisa Alcott* just before I began the Bashkirtseff journal," Gertrude went on. "What a contrast! It is true that the Russian girl was but twenty-four when she died, but one feels that she would have been the same at fifty. Miss Alcott worked all her life as hard as she possibly could, turning her hand to anything that offered, no

matter what; and her sole motive was to assist her parents and her family, those who were dear to her; of herself she never thought at all. Marie Bashkirtseff's behavior to her mother and aunt showed indifference, and often scorn; her one thought was herself—her own attractions, her own happiness, her own celebrity, and the persons who could perhaps add to the latter two. Her egotism—”

“Children, what *are* you about?” interrupted Mrs. Moore, turning her head; for Fritz and Polly were lying on the floor flat upon their stomachs, and in this position wriggling in zig-zags across the room, with low roars, directing their course towards the animals of Noah's ark, who were drawn up in a line before the sofa.

“We're crocodiles,” called Fritz. “We're 'vancing to *scrunch* 'em!”

“Polly, get up instantly; look at your nice white frock! Fritz—Oh, here's Christine at last. Christine, do see to the children,” said Mrs. Moore.

The German nurse, who had entered, lifted Polly to her feet and smoothed down her skirts. Fritz sprang up and rushed to the window, for he heard music outside; a street band composed of four men of depressed aspect had begun to play before the house the strains associated with the words:

“Ever be hap-pee,  
Wherever thou art,  
Pride of the pirate's heart—”

“How ridiculous to be tooting away in all this rain!” said Mrs. Moore, irritably.

“It isn't raining now, mamma,” called Polly, her nose also as well as Fritz's pressed against the pane.

“As it ees no rain, meeses, I might take de childrens to see dat leedle boy at Norteeng Hill?” suggested the nurse, respectfully.

“Has it really stopped?” answered Mrs. Moore, turning to look. “Well, perhaps it would be better for them to go out. Put on their cork-soled shoes and their water-proofs, and you must be back by five o'clock, or half past—not later.”

“I veel at mine vatch look, and take de train shoost in time

to be back at half past five," answered Christine, in her earnest, careful fashion. "It ees not much meeneets to Norteeng Hill."

She put the animals back in the ark, and placed it, with the box of dolls, in the closet.

"Take this shilling and give it to that dreadful band. Tell them to go away immediately," said Mrs. Moore.

"Yes, meeses." And taking the children with her, Christine left the room, softly closing the door behind her.

"I do wish Philip *would* go to Washington," said Mrs. Moore, after some minutes of silence.

The band had ceased its wailed good wishes for the pride of the pirate's heart; the room without the chatter of the children seemed suddenly very still; a coal dropping from the grate made a loud sound.

Miss Remington did not answer.

"It's the very place for me," pursued Amy. "There are all sorts of people there—foreigners and Southerners as well as Northerners. Not the seven deadly families, always the same, month after month, that we everlastingly have in New Edinburgh. I love variety and I love gayety, and I especially love dinner parties. I should like to dine out five nights in the week, and have friends to dine with us the other two. I don't see, after all, why we shouldn't go this very winter," she went on, with animation. "I have all these lovely new things from Paris, you know. Think of their being wasted in New Edinburgh!"

"They won't be wasted," said Gertrude. "Everybody will profoundly admire them."

"Profoundly criticise, you mean. Because they are all plain-looking themselves, they think it frivolous to care for looks; and because they are all dull and serious by nature, they think nobody ought to be gay; it's a good strong position, and I dare say they believe it's a moral one! Philip fancies that New Edinburgh is perfect, simply because he has his library there. But books can be moved, can't they? And it is his duty to remember *me* now and then. I suppose he can't appreciate that I have any such needs, because his mother and his five sisters are so different. Dear me! if girls could only know! They never think, when they marry, about the mother and sisters. But no matter what a husband may be as a man out in the world among men,

when he thinks of his wife's requirements he seldom gets much beyond what his mother and sisters did and had. Of course Philip's sisters don't long for Washington. Imagine them there! But that's no reason for *me*."

"Philip himself would be a lion in Washington," said Gertrude, her face looking obstinate as she threaded her needle.

"You mean among the literary set? I should not care to have anything to do with *them*, and Philip wouldn't either. I know, because whenever I do succeed in forcing him out, he always likes my kind of people ever so much better. I suppose it wouldn't be hard to get a furnished house as a beginning; one with a good dining-room? But, dear me! what is the use of planning? I might as well be old and stupid and ugly! Philip will stick to New Edinburgh, and stick to New Edinburgh. *You* will like that; you adore the place, with its horrid clubs, and papers read aloud, and poky old whist!"

"I don't think Philip cares for New Edinburgh in itself," answered Miss Remington. "But he has the house, and it is a large place, with all the ground about it. And you know he has spent a great deal in alterations and improvements of many sorts, including all the new furniture."

"And I suppose you charge me with that? But I maintain that I'm not extravagant in the least," said Amy. "I must have things about me dainty and pretty, because I have all those tastes; I was born with them, and they are a part of me; people who haven't them, of course don't understand the necessity. But there's one thing to be said; there is no merit in going without the things one doesn't care for. Philip's sisters are perfectly willing to live forever with nailed-down carpets, hideous green lambrequins and furniture, because they don't know they are hideous. But just attack them on what they *do* care for—their Spanish and German lessons, their contributions to the 'Harvard Annex,' and the medical colleges for women, and there would be an outcry! As to money, Philip could easily make ever so much more a year, if he chose; those syndicate people do nothing but write to him."

"But you would not wish to see him descend to a lower grade of work, would you?" Gertrude's voice was indignant as she said this; but she kept her eyes on her work, and drew her stitches steadily.

"I don't know what you call a lower grade. *I* call it a lower grade to keep us in New Edinburgh, and a higher grade to give us a nice home in Washington—as it's Washington I happen to fancy. Philip *could* make this larger income; even you acknowledge that. Well, then, I say he ought. Other men do—I mean other authors. Look at Gray Tucker!"

"*Philip* to write in the style of Gray Tucker!"

"Now you're furious," said Amy, laughing. "But I'm afraid Philip couldn't do it even if he should try; he hasn't that sort of knack. Of course you are scornful; but, all the same, I can tell you plainly that *I* like Gray Tucker's books ever so much; they're easy to read, and they make one laugh, and I think that's what a novel is for. Everybody reads Gray Tucker's books, and they sell in thousands and thousands."

Miss Remington remained silent for several moments. Then, in a guarded voice, she said, "But if Philip has not that sort of knack, as you call it, surely you would not advise him to tie himself down at so much a year to produce just so many pages?"

"Why not?—if the sum offered is a good one."

"Just so many pages, whether good or bad?"

"They needn't be bad, I suppose. I don't see why he shouldn't keep on writing in the same style as now, but produce more. It simply depends upon his own determination."

"It isn't purely mechanical work, you know," answered Miss Remington.

"Your face is as red!" said Amy, watching her with amused eyes. "There is nothing so funny as to see you get in a rage about Philip. It's a pity he doesn't appreciate it more. Now, Gertrude, listen to me for a moment. I am not in the least frivolous, though you always have a manner that seems to show that you think I am. I have more common-sense than Philip has; I am the practical one, not he. What *is* the use of his persistently writing books that nobody reads, or, at least, only a very few? To me it seems that a man can have no higher aim than to do splendidly for his own family—for the people that belong to him and depend upon him. I am his wife, am I not? And Fritz and Polly are his children. To give his wife the home she wishes, to educate his children in the very best way, and lay up a good generous sum for them—I confess this seems to

me more important than the sort of fame his books may have in the future when we're all dead. For as to fame in the *present* there is no question, that hangs over the volumes that sell; the fame of to-day belongs always to the books that are popular. I know you don't think I'm clever at all; whether I am or not, that's my opinion."

"You're only too clever," said Gertrude, rolling up her work. "If there is any word I loathe, it's that lying term 'popular.'"

"Your eyes are brimming over, you absurd creature!" said Amy, not unkindly. "Yet somehow," she added, as Gertrude rose, "it only makes you look stiffer."

"Oh, do forget my stiffness!" said Miss Remington, angrily. She crossed the room, and began to rearrange the sofa cushions and chairs which the children had pulled about.

The door opened and Philip Moore came in.

"I thought you were writing?" said his wife.

"I can't write on a toilet table or the mantel-piece. Where are the children?"

"They have gone to Notting Hill to see Walter Carberry."

"Did they go by the underground?"

"Yes; Christine, you know, has the whole line at her fingers' ends. She once lived for two years at Hackney."

"Hackney?"

"Well, perhaps it was Putney. Such names! Imagine living at Tooting, or Barking, or Wormwood Scrubs! And then they talk to us about *our* names! But I have something to show them; I saw it in the *Times* yesterday, cut it out, and put it in my purse; here it is. Listen: 'November 28th, at St. Peter's Church, Redmile, Leicestershire, by the Rev. James Terry, rector of *Claxby-cum-Normanby-le-Wold*, Lincolnshire, Algernon Boothby, Esquire, to Editha, daughter of the Rev. J. Trevor Aylmar, rector of *Carlton-Scroop-cum-Normanton-on-Cliffe*, Lincolnshire.' There now! What do you say to that?"

"I don't like their going by the underground," said Moore.

"With Christine they are safe," answered his wife. "Where are our seats to-night?"

"Oh, I forgot to tell you, I've taken a box, after all. I met Huntley and Forrester, and asked them to join us."

"That is just like you, Philip. If I had not happened to ask, you would never have told me at all! Of course for a box I shall

dress more," Amy added. "I'll do it for a *box*. And I'd better go and get it done now, by-the-bye, as there is no light upstairs but dull glimmering candles." She rose. "I suppose you are superior to dress, Gertrude?"

"Superior or inferior, whichever you like," answered Miss Remington.

Mrs. Moore went out.

"Do you care about this opera?" inquired Gertrude, returning to the fire.

"Can't say I do," answered Moore. "But they tell me it's pretty, and I thought it might amuse Amy." He had taken an evening paper from his pocket—the *St. James's Gazette*; he began to look over the first page.

Gertrude sat down, took up a book, and opened it. "Amy wishes to live in Washington," she said.

"Yes, I know," replied Moore.

"Perhaps the fancy won't last," his companion went on. She closed the book (it was *Marie Bashkirtseff's Journal*), and with a pencil began to make a row of little rosettes on the yellow cover. "Washington life would not suit you, Philip," she said. "You do not enjoy society; it does not amuse you, but only tires you. That has been proved again and again. And you would not be able to avoid it, either. The circumstances of the case would force you into it. Why isn't New Edinburgh the best place, with your large house, and your library all arranged, and that beautiful garden, and the grove and brook for the children?"

"It's dull for Amy," Moore replied, still reading. "She has been very unselfish about it. I should like to give her a change, if I could. But the first step would have to be to sell the place, and a purchaser for a place of that kind is not easily found."

"You will never get back half that you have spent upon it. New Edinburgh doesn't seem to me so dull," Gertrude continued.

"Amy is so much younger than we are that her ideas are different," answered Moore. He cut open the pages of the *St. James* jaggedly with the back of his hand, turned the leaf, and went on with his reading.

Miss Remington made five more little rosettes in a straight line on the cover. "Why not at least stay until your new book is

finished," she said—"the one we all care so much about?" She hurried on, after this suggestion, to another subject. "Washington would only be safe for the children for part of the year. It would be necessary to take them away in April, and they could not return before November. That would be six months of travelling for you every summer—hotels, and all that. You have just said that you could not write on a mantel-piece," she added, forcing a laugh.

"It's very good of you to interest yourself so much in our affairs," said Moore, coldly. "The children would do very well in Washington in the winter; for the summer, I could look up some old farm-house in the mountains not very far away, where they could run wild. That would be even better for them than New Edinburgh. I should like it, too, myself."

"Then you have decided?" said Gertrude, quickly.

"Decided? I don't know whether I have or not," answered Moore.

Banks now appeared with a lamp and a large tea-tray. He placed the tray on a low table which stood in a corner, and drew the table towards Miss Remington; then he set out the cups and saucers in careful symmetry, and after waiting a moment to see if anything more was required, with noiseless step left the room. When the door was closed, Moore turned his head, glancing at the corpulent teapot, the piled sugar-bowl, the large plate covered with slices of bread-and-butter as thin as a knife blade, and arranged with mathematical precision.

"Do any of us ever touch it?" he inquired.

"Never," Gertrude answered. "Yet they send it in every afternoon in exactly the same way. It's a fixed rule, I suppose; like the house-maids always scrubbing the doorsteps on their knees, instead of using a long-handled scrubbing brush; and like the cold toast in the morning."

No more was said. She laid aside her pencil and the book, and took up a newspaper. It proved to be the same one she had had earlier in the day, and mechanically she read another four lines of the commercial poem:

"Grass seed is middling.  
Pork has movement.  
Lemons have reacted.  
Molasses is strong."

After a while, Amy came in. "When do you intend to dress?" she said to her husband as she sat down by the fire.

"I'm waiting for the children. They ought not to be out after dark."

"It isn't late; they will be here in a few minutes; Christine is like a clock." She lifted her silk skirt and shook it. "It is creased a little, in spite of all the care they took in packing it. But it's a perfectly lovely dress! You need not look up, Gertrude, with that duty expression, as though you were trying to think of something admiring to say; I don't dress for you; or for Philip either, for that matter; he hasn't a particle of taste. I dress for myself—to satisfy my own ideal. And *this* is my ideal of a costume for the opera (that is, if one has a box)—delicate, Parisian, pretty. Philip, do you know what idea came to me upstairs? I want to go home by the White Star Line, instead of the Cunard."

No answer came from behind the *St. James's Gazette*; Moore had found at last a paragraph that interested him.

"Philip. Philip, I say! Why don't you listen?"

"Yes," said Moore.

"You are reading still; you are not listening one bit. Wake up!"

"Well, what is it?"

"I want to go home by the White Star Line instead of the Cunard."

Moore's eyes had glanced at his wife over the top of the newspaper, but there was not full comprehension in his glance.

"When you're absent-minded like that, you look about sixty years old," said Amy. "You've taken to stooping lately, and to scowling. If you add absent-mindedness, too—dear me!"

Moore let his newspaper drop, keeping a corner of it in his left hand, while with his right he rubbed his forehead, as if to rouse himself to quicker modes of thought.

"*Must* I say it again?" inquired Amy, in resigned despair. "You and Gertrude will end by making me lose my voice. No matter what my subject is, yours is always another. I said that I wished to go home by the White Star Line instead of the Cunard."

"But we can't. Our cabins on the *Etruria* have been engaged for weeks," replied her husband.

"They can be changed. At this season there's no crowd."

“But why?”

“I want to see the other line for myself, with my own eyes, so that the next time we cross we can make an intelligent choice.”

“The next time? We needn’t hurry about that. And it’s too late to change now,” said Moore, returning to his paper.

“It isn’t in the least too late, if you cared to please me. And it’s a very little thing, I’m sure. Don’t you see that if we are to live in Washington, we must go away early every summer? We ought not to stay there a day after April, on account of the children. So, as I like going abroad better than any of the summer resorts, we shall be over here often. I don’t see why we should not cross every year. So far, the three times we have crossed already, you have kept me tied to the Cunards. But I think that’s narrow—to know only one line. It’s like the New Edinburgh narrowness. They always quote Boston, and go to Boston, as though New York didn’t exist. If you see about it immediately—to-morrow morning—I dare say you can arrange it. Promise me you will?”

“No; it’s too late; they wouldn’t do it. It’s unreasonable to ask it.”

A flush of anger rose in Amy’s thin little face. “I suppose you mean that I’m unreasonable? But if there’s anything I’m not, it’s that. I always have a motive for everything I do. You have not a single reason for holding to the Cunard, except the trouble it will be to change, while I have an excellent one for wishing to try the White Star. Unreasonable!”

Here there was a knock at the door, and Banks appeared with a scared look in his eyes. “Please, sir, will you step out for a moment?” he murmured, but preserving his correct attitude in spite of his alarm.

Moore threw down his paper, and hurried into the hall, closing the door behind him. Amy, however, had instantly followed him.

A policeman standing at the street door delivered his message: “There is a child injured at the underground station. Don’t know how bad it is. The nurse said it lived here at this number.”

“Good God!” said Moore. And pushing by the man, he ran down the street towards the station.

Amy, who had overheard where she stood at the end of the

hall, gave a gasp, and leaned for an instant against the wall. Then she too, bareheaded, darted out, and rushed down the lighted street. Miss Remington now appeared at the sitting-room door; seeing the policeman, and catching from Banks the words "child" and "station," she ran back, seized a shawl of her own which was lying on a chair, and then followed the others, Banks accompanying her, but hardly able to keep up with her swiftness.

The Sloane Square Station was near. The stairway leading to the tracks at this station is one of the longest possessed by the underground railway; it does not turn, but goes straight down, down, as if descending to the bowels of the earth. The wicket at the bottom was open, and Gertrude ran through it and out on the lighted platform. There was a group at a distance; something told her that it surrounded the injured child. But before she could reach it, her eyes caught sight of Philip Moore leading, or trying to lead, Amy in the opposite direction, away from this group. Gertrude joined them, speechless.

"It's some other child," said Philip, as she came up. "From our house, apparently. Belongs to that family above us, I suppose. Amy, do come this way; come into the shadow. Think of those poor people who will be here in a moment, and don't let them see you crying."

But Amy seemed incapable of listening. He put his arm round her, and half carried her down the platform towards the deep shadow at the end.

"There is nothing the matter with any of *us*, Amy. Polly and Fritz are safe, and will be here soon. Don't cry so."

But the shock had been too great. Amy could not stop. She clung to her husband in a helpless tremor, sobbing: "Don't leave me, Philip. Stay with me! Stay with me!"

"Leave you?" He kissed her forehead in the darkness. "I'm not dreaming of leaving you. Aren't you more to me than all the world?" He soothed her tenderly, stroking her hair as her head lay on his breast—the thin golden hair, artificially waved to hide its thinness.

Gertrude stood beside them in silence. After a minute she held out the shawl.

"Yes," said Philip, "I am afraid she has already taken cold, with her head bare, she is so delicate." There was deep love in

his eyes as he drew the soft folds closely round his little wife, and lifted a corner to cover her bowed head. Then, still keeping his arm about her, he turned her so that she stood with her back toward the distant group, and also toward the stairway by which the other parents must descend.

They came a moment afterwards, poor things! But the noise of an arriving train on the other side covered the sounds that followed—if there were any. Philip, glancing over his shoulder, saw the child borne into one of the waiting-rooms, whose door was immediately shut upon the gazing crowd.

Now came a train on their side—the one from Notting Hill. It stopped, and Christine, composed and cool, emerged, holding Fritz's arm firmly with one hand, and Polly's with the other.

"Don't stop to kiss them now," said Moore; "let us get away from here. Christine, take the children home as fast as possible." He followed the surprised nurse (surprised, but instantly obedient), supporting Amy up the long stairway directly behind Polly's little legs and the knickerbockers of Fritz.

Gertrude ascended behind them. She too was bareheaded; but no one had noticed that. At the door of the station stood Banks. Composedly he presented Philip Moore's hat.

The injured child recovered, though not for many long months. The Moores, however, left the house the next day, for the accident had made the place unpleasant to Amy. They went to the Bristol, Burlington Gardens.

On the passenger lists of the White Star steamer *Teutonic*, January 6, 1892, were the following names: "Philip Moore and wife; two children and nurse. Miss Remington."

Gertrude Remington does not keep a diary. But in a small almanac she jots down occasional brief notes. This is one of them: "New Edinburgh, February 20, 1892. Philip and A. gone to Washington. House here closed."