

And then, because the world always appears a neutral-tinted place to me, without high lights of any kind, I rebuked myself for imagining that anything lively could ever come my way. "I could n't even look on at anything romantic nowadays," I thought, "I doubt if there *is* such a thing as romance; it's just a figment of youth. Come, Mrs. MacGill, I'll find your knitting for you," I said; "that will compose you better than anything else."

IV

Virginia Pomeroy

THE GREY TOR INN

WE had rather a nice half hour at Little Widger to-day, Sir Archibald and I. Of course we were walking. It is still incomprehensible to me, the comfort, the pleasure even, these people get out of the simple use of their legs. We passed Wishtcot and Wildycombe and then came upon Little Widger, not having known of its existence. The tiny hamlet straggles down a side hill and turns a corner, to terminate in the village inn, quaintly named "The Mug O' Cider." An acacia laden with yellow tassels hangs over the stone gate, purple and white lilacs burst through the hedges, and there is a cob-and-thatch cottage, with a daz-

zling white hawthorn in front of it and a black pig nosing at the gate.

Oh, the loveliness of that May noon, a sunny noon for once; the freshness of the beeches; the golden brown of the oaks; above all the shimmering beauty of the young birches! It was as if the sap had just brimmed and trembled into leaves; as if each drop had thinned itself into a transparent oval of liquid green.

The sight of Mrs. MacGill being dragged by Greytoria over a very distant hill was soothing in itself, or it would have been if I had n't known Miss Evesham was toiling up beside her. We were hungry and certain of being late to luncheon, so Sir Archibald proposed food of some sort at the inn. He had cold meat, bread and cheese, and a tankard of Devonshire cider, while I had delicious junket, clouted cream, and stewed apple. Before starting on our long homeward stroll we had a cosy chat, the accessories being a fire, a black cat, and a pipe, with occasional

incursions by a small maid-servant who looked exactly like a Devonshire hill pony, —strong, sturdy, stocky, heavy-footed, and tangled as to mane.

We were discussing our common lack of relatives. "I have no one but my mother and two distant cousins," I said.

The sympathetic man would have murmured, "Poor little soul!" and the too sentimental one would have seized the opportunity to exclaim, "Then let me be all in all to you!" But Sir Archibald removed his pipe and remarked, "Good thing, too, I dare say;" and then in a moment continued with graceful tact and frankness, "They say you can't tell anything about an American family by seeing one of 'em."

Upon my word, the hopeless candour of these our brethren of the British Isles is astonishing. Sometimes after a prolonged conversation with two or three of them I feel like going about the drawing-room with a small broom and dust-pan and sweeping

up the home truths that should lie in scattered profusion on the floor; and which do, no doubt, were my eyes as keen in seeing as my ears in hearing.

However, I responded meekly, "I suppose that is true; but I doubt if the peculiarity is our exclusive possession. None of my relatives belonged to the criminal classes, and they could all read and write, but I dare say some of them were more desirable than others from a social point of view. It must be so delicious to belong to an order of things that never questions itself! Breckinridge Calhoun says that is the one reason he can never quite get on with the men over here at first; which always makes me laugh, for in his way, as a rabid Southerner, he is just as bad."

There was quite an interval here in which the fire crackled, the black cat purred, and the pipe puffed. Sir Archibald broke the cosy silence by asking, "Who is this Mr. Calhoun whom you and your mother mention so often?"

The conversation that ensued was quite a lengthy one, but I will report as much of it as I can remember. It was like this:—

Jinny: Breckenridge Calhoun is my "childhood's friend," the kind of man whose estates join yours, who has known you ever since you were born; liked you, quarrelled with you, forgotten you, and been sweet upon you by turns; and who finally marries you, when you have both given up hope of finding anybody more original and startling. — By the way, am I the first American girl you've met?

Sir A.: Not the first I've met, but the first I've known. There was a jolly sort of schoolgirl from Indiana whom I saw at my old aunt's house in Edinburgh. There were half a dozen elderly tabbies pressing tea and scones on her, and she cried, just as I was coming in the door, "Oh, no more tea, please! I could hear my last scone splash!"

Jinny, shaking with laughter: Oh, how lovely! I am so glad you had such a pic-

turesque and fearless young person as a first experience; but as she has been your only instructress you have much to learn, and I might as well begin my duty to you at once.

Sir A.: You're taking a deal of trouble.

Jinny: Oh, it's no trouble, but a pleasure rather, to put a fellow-being on the right track. You must first disabuse your mind of the American girl as you find her in books.

Sir A.: Don't have to; never read 'em.

Jinny: Very well, then, — the American girl of the drama and casual conversation; that's worse. You must forget her supposed freedom of thought and speech, her rustling silk skirts, her jingling side bag or chatelaine, her middle initial, her small feet and hands, her high heels, her extravagant dress, her fortune, — which only one in ten thousand possesses, — her overworked father and weakly indulgent mother, called respectively poppa and momma. These are but accessories, — the frame, not the picture. They exist, that

is quite true, but no girl has the whole list, thank goodness! I, for example, have only one or two of the entire lot.

Sir A.: Which ones? I was just thinking you had 'em all.

Jinny: You must find out something for yourself! The foundation idea of modern education is to make the pupil the discoverer of his own knowledge. As I was saying when interrupted, if you remove these occasional accompaniments of the American girl you find simply the same old "eternal feminine." Of course there is a wide range of choice. You seem to think over here that there is only one kind of American girl; but if you would only go into the subject deeply you would find fat and lean, bright and dull, pert and meek, some that could only have been discovered by Columbus, others that might have been brought up in the rocky fastnesses of a pious Scottish home.

Sir A.: I don't get on with girls particularly well.

Jinny: I can quite fancy that! Not one American girl in a hundred would take the trouble to understand you. You need such a lot of understanding that an indolent girl or a reserved one or a spoiled one or a busy one would keep thinking, "Does it pay?"

Sir A., reddening and removing his pipe thoughtfully, pressing down the tobacco in the bowl: Hullo, you can hit out when you like.

Jinny: I am not "hitting out;" I get on delightfully well with you because I have lots of leisure just now to devote to your case. Of course it would be a great economy of time and strength if you chose to meet people halfway, or perhaps an eighth! It's only the amenities of the public street, after all, that casual acquaintances need, in order to have a pleasant time along the way. The private path is quite another thing; even I put out the sign "No thoroughfare" over that; but I don't see why you need build

bramble hedges across the common roads of travel. — Do you know what a "scare-cat" is?

Sir. A.: Can't say I do.

Jinny: It's a nice expressive word belonging to the infants' vocabulary of slang. I think you are regular "scare-cats" over here, when it comes to the treatment of casual acquaintances. You must be clever enough to know a lady or a gentleman when you see one, and you don't take such frightful risks with ladies and gentlemen.

During this entire colloquy Sir Archibald Maxwell Mackenzie, Baronet, of Kindarroch, eyed me precisely as if he had been a dignified mastiff observing the incomprehensible friskings of a playful, foolish puppy of quite another species. "Good Heavens," thinks the mastiff, raising his eyes in devout astonishment, "can I ever at any age have disported myself like that? The creature seems to have positively none of my qualities; I wonder if it really *is* a dog?"

"Do you approve of marriage, — go in for it?" queried Sir Archibald in a somewhat startling manner, after a long pause and puffing steadily the while.

"I approve of it entirely," I answered, "especially for men; women are terribly hampered by it, to be sure."

"I should have put that in exactly the opposite way," he said thoughtfully.

"I know you would," I retorted, "and that's precisely the reason I phrased it as I did. One must keep your attention alive by some means or other, else it would go on strike and quit work altogether."

Sir Archibald threw back his head and broke into an unexpected peal of laughter at this. "Come along out of doors, Miss Virginia Pomeroy," he said, standing up and putting his pipe in his pocket. "You're an awfully good chap, American or not!"

Mrs. MacGill

Sunday evening

THIS day has been very wet. I had fully intended to go to church, because I always make a point of doing so unless too ill to move, as I consider it fully more a duty than a privilege, and example is everything. However, after the fright I had yesterday, and the shaking, I had such a pain in my right knee that devotion was out of the question, even had my mantle been fit to put on (which it won't be until Cecilia has mended all the trimming), so I resolved to stay quietly in bed. After luncheon I could get no sleep, for Miss Pomeroy was singing things which Cecilia says are camp meeting hymns. They sounded to me like a circus, but they may introduce dance music at church services in New York, and make horses dance to it, too. Anything is possible to a people that

can produce girls like Virginia Pomeroy. One can hardly believe in looking at her that she belongs to the nation of Longfellow, who wrote that lovely poem on Maidenhood. Poor Mr. MacGill used to be very fond of it: —

“Standing, with reluctant feet,
Where the brook and river meet.”

Even if there were a river here (we can see nothing of the Dart from this hotel), one could never connect Miss Pomeroy with ‘reluctant feet’ in any way. She has quite got hold of that unfortunate young man. With my poor health, and sleeping so badly, it is very difficult for me to interfere, but justice to the son of my old friend will make me do what I can.

About half past five I came down and could see nobody. Mrs. Pomeroy suffers from the same tickling cough as I do, after drinking tea, and had gone to her own room. Cecilia was nowhere to be seen. I asked the waiter, who is red-faced but a Methodist, to

tell me where she was, and he told me in the Billiard Room. Of course I did n't know where I was going, or I should never have entered it, especially on a wet Sunday afternoon; but when I opened the door I stood horrified by what I saw.

Miss Pomeroy may be accustomed to such a place (I have read that they are called “brandy saloons” in America), but I never saw anything like it. There was a great deal of tobacco, which at once set up my tickling cough. Sir Archibald was holding what gamblers call a cue, and rubbing it with chalk, I suppose to deaden the sound. On a table—there were several chairs in the room, so it cannot have been by mistake—sat Miss Pomeroy and Cecilia. The American was strumming on a be-ribboned banjo.

“Oh, Mrs. MacGill, I thought you were asleep,” said Cecilia.

“I wish I were; but I fear that what I see is only too true. Pray, Cecilia, come away with me at once,” I exclaimed.