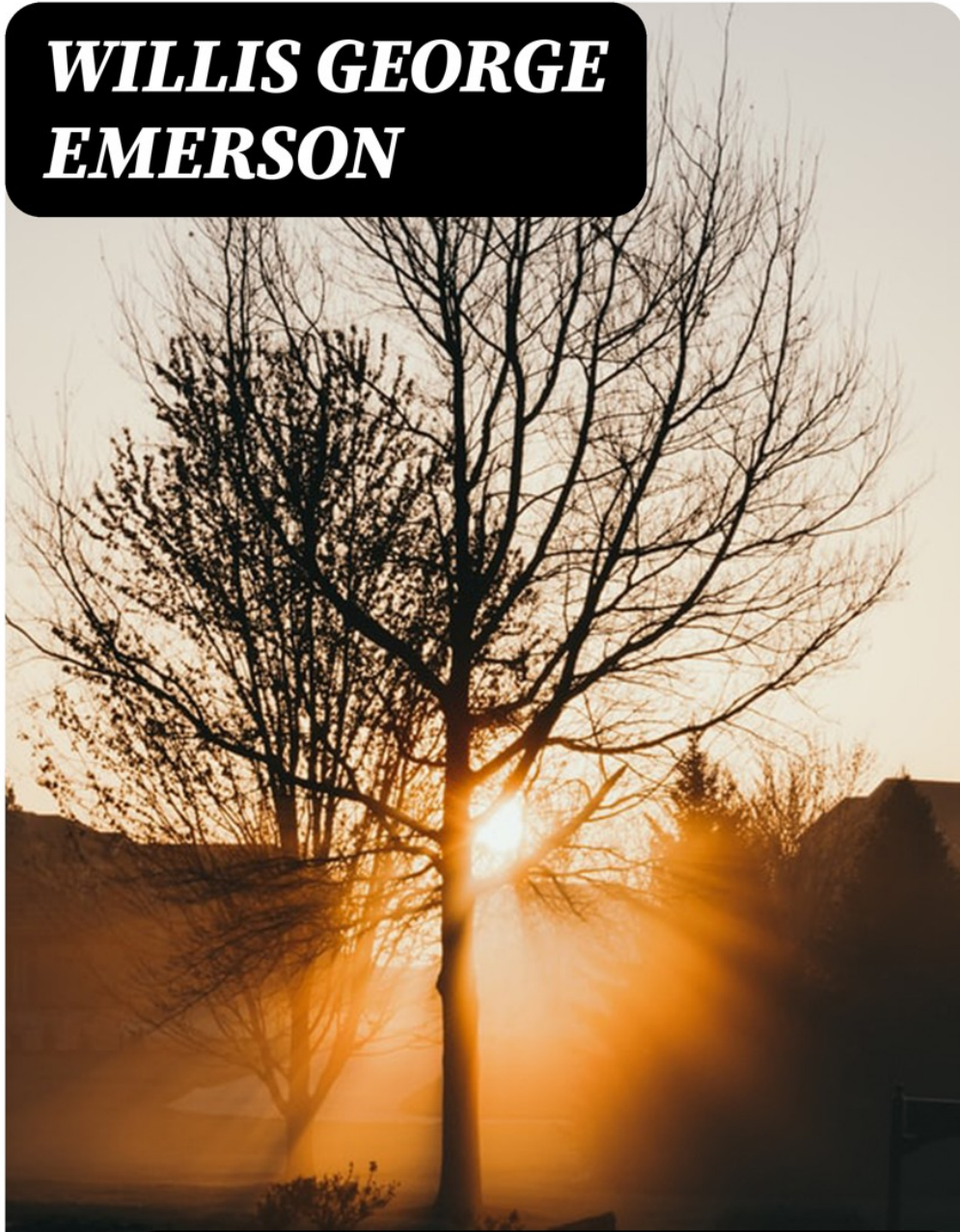


***WILLIS GEORGE
EMERSON***



***BUELL
HAMPTON***

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EMERSON***



***BUELL
HAMPTON***

Willis George Emerson

Buell Hampton

EAN 8596547052975

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Contact: DigiCat@okpublishing.info



TABLE OF CONTENTS

<u>CHAPTER I.—AT LAKE GENEVA</u>	
<u>CHAPTER II.—A CHANCE MEETING</u>	
<u>CHAPTER III.—A DECLARATION</u>	
<u>CHAPTER IV.—THE DEPARTURE</u>	
<u>CHAPTER V.—A FRONTIER BANKER</u>	
<u>CHAPTER VI.—MAJOR BUELL HAMPTON</u>	
<u>CHAPTER VII.—THE CATTLE KING</u>	
<u>CHAPTER VIII.—A COMMITTEE OF FIVE</u>	
<u>CHAPTER IX.—AN AFTERNOON DRIVE</u>	
<u>CHAPTER X.—HOME OF THE HORTONS</u>	
<u>CHAPTER XI.—DADDY'. CONSENT</u>	
<u>CHAPTER XII.—KANSAS PROHIBITION</u>	
<u>CHAPTER XIII.—MAJOR HAMPTON'. LIBRARY</u>	
<u>CHAPTER XIV.—THE SONG</u>	
<u>CHAPTER XV.—THE RETRACTION</u>	
<u>"HOME AGAIN."</u>	
<u>"AMENDE HONORABLE."</u>	
<u>CHAPTER XVI.—THE OLD VIOLIN</u>	
<u>CHAPTER XVII.—LENOX AVONDALE'. ARRIVAL</u>	
<u>CHAPTER XVIII.—A LOVE SONG</u>	
<u>CHAPTER XIX.—AN INVITATION TO JOIN</u>	
<u>CHAPTER XX.—A DINNER AT THE HORTONS</u>	
<u>CHAPTER XXI.—THE FOOT-RACE</u>	
<u>CHAPTER XXII.—THE ELECTION</u>	
<u>"FIFTY-FIVE TRUE MEN."</u>	
<u>"LATER."</u>	

CHAPTER XXIII.—A FORGED LETTER
CHAPTER XXIV.—REVERSING THE HIGHER COURTS
CHAPTER XXV.—ALMOST A TRAGEDY
CHAPTER XXVI.—REACHING A DECISION
CHAPTER XXVII.—THE HOT WINDS
CHAPTER XXVIII.—“THY WILL BE DONE”
CHAPTER XXIX.—JACK REDFIELD ARRIVES
CHAPTER XXX.—THE QUARREL
CHAPTER XXXI.—THE PASSING OF LORD AVONDALE
CHAPTER XXXII.—THE SILENCING OF GOSSIP
CHAPTER XXXIII.—A RIDE AMONG SUNFLOWERS
CHAPTER XXXIV.—THE PRAIRIE-FIRE
CHAPTER XXXV.—A BUCKING BRONCO
CHAPTER XXXVI.—A STARTLING REVELATION
CHAPTER XXXVII.—TRYING TO REMEMBER
CHAPTER XXXVIII.—TRUTH STRANGER THAN FICTION
CHAPTER XXXIX.—JUDGE LYNN HAS AN IDEA
CHAPTER XL.—THE CATTLE THIEF CAUGHT
CHAPTER XLI.—A ROSICRUCIAN
CHAPTER XLII.—A NEW-MADE GRAVE
CHAPTER XLIII.—UNDER THE QUIET STARS
THE END.

CHAPTER I.—AT LAKE GENEVA

Table of Contents

It was only a game of tennis that brought on this affair of love's entanglement.

Ethel Horton, with rich, maidenly flushes on her soft cheeks, played as she had never played before—played and won.

Athletic suppleness and vivacious buoyancy were emphasized in every movement of this intense American girl.

With heightened color, she contested the game, point by point.

It was thrilling sport, and her clever opponent was Lenox Avondale, an Englishman.

And while this exciting neck and neck game was in progress, her mother, Mrs. J. Bruce-Horton, was idly conversing with Mrs. Lyman Osborn on a wide veranda of the hotel that overlooked the blue waters of the lake.

"Really," she observed, leaning back in her easy chair, "Lake Geneva is not such a bad place, after all. One can get on here very well for a few days."

"Oh, yes," said Mrs. Lyman Osborn, as she seated herself languidly, and gazed across the blue waters, "yet I fancy that in time it would become quite dull for us, it is so thoroughly American. Let me push the cushions under your shoulder a little farther, dear."

"Thank you," replied Mrs. Horton, "that is more comfortable. What does Doctor Redfield say of my illness?"

“That in a week’s time we can continue our journey to the Southwest.”

“My dear husband,” murmured Mrs. Horton, reflectively, “how glad he will be to see Ethel! It has been four years since the child was placed in that fashionable London school; she was then only fifteen. Her dear father will hardly know her.”

“The thanks of all are due to you, my dear Mrs. Horton, for the educational advantages that Ethel has enjoyed.”

“Yes, my husband is so determined in his ideas; but I manage to spend as little of my time on the frontier, you know, as possible, and I certainly shall see to it that Ethel does not deteriorate under the influence of our stupid American ways. She is certainly a girl of rare gifts, and I could never have forgiven myself had she been educated in the States.”

“Quite right,” assented Mrs. Osborn, “your husband may stay with his herds of cattle, and my husband may stand at his bank counter, year in and year out, if it pleases them to do so, but you and I will take our annual trip to merry England,” and Mrs. Osborn laughed a ripple of indifference at the crude taste of their respective husbands.

Mrs. J. Bruce-Horton was a woman in her early forties. Her features were regular, and her complexion had a youthfulness not in keeping with her age. Her heavy brown hair was most becomingly arranged. Her neatly fitting suit of tweed,—a production of Redfern,—in keeping with the latest London style, admirably set off her rather stately figure. Her companion, Mrs. Lyman Osborn, was probably thirty-five, although in appearance she seemed much

younger. A pink and white skin, fair hair, and blue eyes combined in giving her a bewitching appearance.

They were returning from a trip to England, whither they had gone to bring home with them Ethel Horton, who had recently finished her education in a London school. At Chicago Mrs. J. Bruce-Horton had been taken suddenly ill; and Doctor Redfield had been recommended and summoned. On his advice they had come to Lake Geneva until Mrs. Horton sufficiently recovered to continue their journey to southwestern Kansas.

Mr. John B. Horton was known in the West as a great cattle baron. Soon after the war he married in Baltimore, and moved West to engage in the cattle business. His lonely dugout of frontier days had given way to one of the most palatial residences in the West. This beautiful home had been erected on the site of the dugout, near the line between Kansas and No-Man's-Land, and not far from the Cimarron River. Horton's Grove was known far and wide. Indeed, it was practically the only timber in that section of the country. In this grove two mammoth springs burst forth from the hillside, and formed a beautiful stream named Manaroya. Here, near the edge of the grove, and on the banks of the gurgling brook, less than three miles from Meade, Kansas, John Horton had erected his home.

With their accumulation of wealth had come an ambition on the part of Mrs. J. Bruce-Horton—as she inscribed her cards—to give her daughter Ethel all the advantages of a thorough education. Vassar had been thought of; but the banker's wife, Mrs. Lyman Osborn, had suggested that

foreign travel was indispensable in reaching a correct decision.

Captain Lyman Osborn was a veteran of the Union army, and was many years his wife's senior. He was engaged in the banking business at Meade, and divided his time between his duties at the bank, and his son, Harry, who was not more than five years of age. The father fairly idolized the boy, and, while he was with him, was quite content that his young wife should travel abroad—if that were her pleasure.

Against her husband's wishes and advice, Mrs. J. Bruce-Horton had selected a London school for their daughter, and since Ethel had been placed therein, she had spent a portion of each year in England, accompanied by her bosom friend, Mrs. Lyman Osborn. In many ways these two women were dissimilar, but their very dissimilarity seemed to bind them more closely together. They had both become tinctured with the weakness of title-worship, and perhaps the most cherished wish of Mrs. J. Bruce-Horton was that Ethel should marry into some titled English family.

"I do wonder," she sighed, "if there are any people desirable for one to know stopping at the hotel."

"Very doubtful," lamented Mrs. Osborn. "The fewer Americans we know the better for us when among our friends on the other side."

"Quite true," assented the other, devoutly.

"It is so embarrassing, when one is among one's English friends, to have American acquaintances intruding themselves. Oh, here comes Ethel!" observed Mrs. Horton.

“Oh, mamma!” cried Ethel, as she came running toward them, all out of breath, “our side won.”

“Why, Ethel, what have you been doing?” exclaimed her mother, as she held up her hands in amazement.

“I have just finished the jolliest game of tennis I ever played in my life; and my! did n’t we do them up!”

“Such language, Ethel; do you know—”

“Why, mamma, if you could have seen how we Americans vanquished two rum Englishmen you would have shouted ‘Hail Columbia’ and ‘The Star Spangled Banner’ forever!”

“Ethel, Ethel, such language is so unbecoming!”

“I know, mamma, but I am in America once more, and I feel in a ‘Hail Columbia’ sort of mood. There,” said she, “and there,” as she stooped and kissed her mother affectionately. “Now don’t scold me any more. My, but I am having lots of fun.”

Mrs. J. Bruce-Horton adjusted her glasses, which had been displaced by Ethel’s impetuous embrace, and inquired, “Did you say that there were some English families stopping at the hotel, Ethel?”

“Yes, mamma, the Countess Berwyn and Lady Somebody—I don’t remember her name—and her son and an English friend of his.”

“Not such an undesirable place to stop, after all,” remarked Mrs. Lyman Osborn.

“No, indeed!” exclaimed Mrs. J. Bruce-Horton. “But really, Ethel, you must be more particular. You must not speak so disrespectfully of our English friends. You know we have so many across the water.”

“Why, mamma, I am not disrespectful; I am only happy, and so glad that I am home again in my own country. Well, bye-bye, I must go and dress for dinner—Oh, yes, will Doctor Redfield be here this evening?”

“I presume so,” answered her mother, inquiringly, “but why do you ask?”

“Oh, nothing,” replied Ethel, and she hurried away—with her young face all aglow with happiness.

“Brimming over with animation!” said Mrs. Osborn, as she looked at the retreating form of the girl. “Together we must control spirited Ethel until she is safely anchored in the harbor of English nobility.”

“Yes, indeed, we must,” acquiesced Mrs. Horton; “and it is very kind of you to take so much interest in helping me.”

Ethel Horton was a tall and stately girl. She had laughing eyes, pouting red lips, and teeth that resembled the delicate tints of the conch-shell. Her intellectual forehead, slightly aquiline nose, radiantly youthful complexion, and wealth of dark brown hair, made her a creature beautiful to look upon.

“I wonder why Ethel inquired about Doctor Redfield,” mused Mrs. Horton, thoughtfully.

“Oh, it was nothing,” rejoined Mrs. Osborn, “still we must beware of these broad-shouldered men with blond mustaches. He really is quite attractive; however, Ethel is not sentimental, is she?”

“Good gracious, no!” responded Mrs. Horton, emphatically, “not in the least.”

“So much the better, then,” affirmed her companion; “it will be a great deal easier to work out a destiny that will be for her own good. We should be able to make a great match

for her, my dear. I will help you, and we shall not fail. Now we must find out about these English people.”



CHAPTER II.—A CHANCE MEETING

Table of Contents

WHEN Ethel returned to her mother after dressing for dinner, her tennis suit had been exchanged for an airy lace dress of soft material and such complete simplicity that it set off her youthful form to the very best advantage.

“By the way, mamma, Lady Avondale is the other Englishwoman stopping at the hotel. She and the Countess Berwyn are traveling together.”

“Lady Avondale!” exclaimed the mother, “did you say Lady Avondale? My dear friend, Lady Avondale!”

“How charmingly fortunate,” lisped Mrs. Lyman Osborn.

“Yes, indeed,” agreed Mrs. Horton, with unmistakable complacency, “how kind they were to us a year ago! You know, Ethel, we were entertained at Lady Avondale’s country-house a year ago, and oh, what a lovely estate they have, and how delightfully kind they were to us. We must send our cards at once.”

“Oh, here comes Doctor Redfield!” exclaimed Mrs. Osborn; and the three ladies turned toward a tall, broad-shouldered man of about thirty, who bowed politely as he approached them.

Dr. Jack Redfield, as he was familiarly called by his friends, although young in years, had nevertheless “won his spurs” in the medical profession. He had a lucrative practice in Chicago, and occupied a chair in one of the leading medical colleges. His head was of a Napoleonic cast. He had deep-set, expressive blue eyes, short brown hair, a rather

heavy blond mustache, and a square chin indicative of great strength of character. In physical proportions he seemed an athlete. His neatly fitting attire proved that he kept abreast with the conventionalities.

“How are you feeling this evening?” he asked, addressing Mrs. J. Bruce-Horton.

“Oh, much better, thank you.”

“I fear it is almost too cool for you here on the veranda, and I suggest the wisdom of your retiring to the parlors.”

“Oh, do you really think so, doctor? It is so very pleasant here, and yet it is very thoughtful of you to mention it. Perhaps,” continued Mrs. Horton, turning to Mrs. Osborn, “we had better go in.”

“I will accompany you,” said Doctor Redfield. “I think it best to change the medicine.”

“Will you come, Ethel?” asked Mrs. Horton, as they arose.

“No, mamma, it is so very pleasant out here, and you know that I am not ill.”

As the invalid and her companion moved away, Doctor Redfield turned to Ethel and said, “I trust you are enjoying your temporary sojourn at Lake Geneva.”

“Oh, very much, indeed,” replied Ethel, with a smile, “I think the rowing is simply grand, and the shady walks and drives are superb.”

“Of course as a summer resort,” said Doctor Redfield, “it may not compare with Bath or Brighton, but I doubt if the Lakes of Killarney or the scenery surrounding them surpass, in point of beauty, Lake Geneva.”

“You are quite an American, are n’t you?” said Ethel, laughingly.

“Intensely so,” replied Doctor Redfield.

“Well, we can’t quarrel on that point, for I am more in love with my own country than before I went abroad.”

“I beg pardon,” interrupted Mrs. Osborn, who had returned from escorting her companion to the parlors, “but Mrs. Horton is waiting for you, doctor.”

“Very well, I shall come at once,” he answered, while a flush of embarrassment overspread his face; then, turning to Ethel, he said, “I trust that Lake Geneva may continue to be as interesting during the next few days as it has thus far proved.”

“Thank you,” replied Ethel, and the doctor was led away by Mrs. Osborn.

In the meantime, Mrs. J. Bruce-Horton had sent her own and Mrs. Osborn’s card to Lady Avondale. Soon after Doctor Redfield concluded his professional call, Lady Avondale presented herself, and the titled Englishwoman and her American friends were profuse in their protestations of pleasure at the meeting.

After the dinner-hour, when Dr. Jack Redfield was leaving the hotel, he looked wistfully along the veranda in the hope of again seeing Ethel, but she had disappeared.

He was not only a skilful practitioner, but he knew the value of a patient like Mrs. J. Bruce-Horton, and when he had such an one on the road to recovery he was willing to humor her whims as much as the occasion permitted. As he walked toward the lake, down the graveled path so exquisitely bordered on either side with fragrant flowers, which were watered by frequent whirlabout fountains, each throwing its refreshing spray far over the lawn, a feeling of satisfaction

at his professional success, and of complete contentment with the whole world, elated him. This feeling might have been continued indefinitely but for a single incident—a fate-like incident—that changed the story of his life.

As he came to a turn in the path he found Ethel reclining on a rustic seat and looking out over the blue waters of the lake.

“I am not a highwayman,” said Ethel, jestingly, “but nevertheless I mean to waylay you.”

“Indeed!” said Jack, inquiringly.

“Yes, I wanted to ask you about dear mamma. You do not think she is dangerously ill, do you?”

“By no means,” replied Doctor Redfield, reassuringly, “her indisposition is rapidly giving way to my treatment, and I think that within a week she will have quite recovered.”

“Oh, thank you, doctor, I have been so worried about her.”

“With the assurance that I have given, you may cease worrying entirely,” said Jack as he turned to leave her.

“Why are you in such haste to go?” asked Ethel, coquettishly.

“I am not particularly in haste,” replied Jack, “but perhaps I interrupt your reverie.”

“Yes, but I want to be interrupted,” returned Ethel, laughingly.

“Very well,” said Jack, seating himself near her.

Jack Redfield was anything but a Beau Brummel. The idea of yielding himself to maiden sovereignty had never occurred to him. Indeed, his lack of homage to woman might almost have been interpreted as a poverty of

gallantry. Nevertheless, in the few days that he had been making professional calls on her mother, he had awakened to a knowledge of the fact that Miss Ethel interested him, to say the least. There was a wild dash of independence and of frankness about her that possessed a charm for him which he was unable to analyze.

As Jack looked out over the lake he was conscious that Ethel was studying him closely. Presently she said, "I cannot make myself believe that you are a physician."

"Indeed, why not?" interrogated Jack, much amused by her frankness. "You evidently expected me to perform a miracle in your mother's case, and, as I have failed to do so, you judge me harshly."

"Oh, no! not that," protested Ethel, "but then, I always fancied that doctors, who give bitter medicine, cut up people and saw bones, should be old and grim. Now, you don't look like a doctor at all to me."

"Well, as I have to make my living in the uncanny way that you have described, I must say that I am glad every one does not share your hasty judgment of me."

"Oh, thank you," said Ethel, "that's very well put. I know you think I am not very kind."

"No, I would hardly go as far as that," said Jack, "but I doubt my ability to hold my own in a conversation with you, much more than I would my skill in a surgical operation or a bad case of measles. I have faith that my treatment would be successful, but I have no faith that you would not vanquish me very quickly with your repartee and your direct way of putting things."

“Oh, what a refreshing compliment,” laughed Ethel. “I thought because you were a doctor that you were stoical and grim, but you really seem quite the reverse.”

“I am indeed surprised,” said Jack, “not at you, but rather at your impression of me. I did n’t know that I possessed the gift of being complimentary to ladies; in fact, the social side of my life has been very much neglected. My time has been so taken up with my studies and profession, that I have cultivated but little the ways and customs of the social world.”

“Well, you are different from some people I know—Dr. Lenox Avondale for instance—but then he is English and you are an American.”

“I am quite content to be an American, with all my stupidity in regard to social matters. He doubtless was reared among a titled aristocracy, and society is a second nature to him. I believe—pardon my frankness—that your life has been much the same, and that you will continue to dwell in a social atmosphere. From remarks made by your mother and her friend I doubt not that they have mapped out a great career for you.”

“I trust I am too loyal an American,” returned Ethel, proudly, “to take part in any career that is not entirely congenial to my own tastes, and your deductions as to yourself are quite incorrect. For my part, I think more of one who is noble and manly than I do of those English or American idlers, who think only of the latest fashions and who change their attire half a dozen times a day and are, even then, at a loss to know just what to do to kill time.”

Jack looked at Ethel as she was speaking, and he was conscious of a budding admiration for her that was quite a new feeling to him.

“Bravo,” said he, applaudingly, “those are grand sentiments. No one can say that they are un-American; but I fear that you are surrounded by conditions that may force you to change your views.”

“Oh, I assure you,” said Ethel, very earnestly, “I have the greatest admiration for workers, whether with the brain or with the hand. It is hardly fashionable, I suppose, to admit such views, but I can’t help my convictions.”

“I hope,” said Jack, “that you may have the courage of your convictions, but I am not blind. I have already discovered that which is marked out for you. If your mother and Mrs. Osborn were not occupied with Lady Avondale, this accidental meeting of ours would not have taken place.”

“A destiny marked out for me?” inquired Ethel, in surprise.

“Yes,” said Jack, and his voice shook a little as he spoke, “a destiny that does not lie along the line of brain-workers. It is along a highway burnished with titles, on the one side, and with wrecked hopes, broken hearts, and much unhappiness on the other.”

A silence followed. Presently he arose and quietly clasped her proffered hand. Over it he bowed in deepest respect. She was conscious that a strange, intense earnestness was moving this strong man. His every emotion said goodbye, but his lips spoke no word. He turned quickly from her and disappeared in the gathering twilight, and still, without

knowing why, she remained where he had left her—
watching, wondering, waiting.



CHAPTER III.—A DECLARATION

Table of Contents

LADY AVONDALE was very gracious to the Americans, flattering their vanity by presenting them to the Countess of Berwyn. On the following day, much to their gratification, she introduced them to her son, Dr. Lenox Avondale.

Doctor Avondale was, in fact, a rather distinguished personage. He was perhaps forty years of age, and while not an especially brilliant conversationalist, he talked quite fluently of the race-track, the chase, and kindred topics. Of the English army he knew much, having been appointed surgeon therein by Her Majesty. There he gained a wide reputation for skill in his profession. He was, however, decidedly blasé, and not even the usually alluring subject of out-door sports was sufficient to arouse in him more than a passing interest. He had a tendency to yawn at the dinner-table, and exhibited but little consideration for those occupying less exalted positions than himself. He cultivated a bored expression and complained a great deal about the “beastly American customs.” He had obtained an indefinite leave of absence from the Army and was thoroughly “doing the States.” His elder brother, Lord Avondale, had contracted an intermittent fever the year before, while in Australia. This fever had developed into serious complications, and his death was considered to be a question of only a short time, whereupon Dr. Lenox Avondale would succeed to the titles and estates, which are among the oldest in England. The estates, however, were so

heavily encumbered with debts that it had been considered necessary to cast about for some American heiress, who, in consideration of sharing the titles, would bring with her enough American dollars to relieve the property of its indebtedness; indeed, Lady Avondale's mission to America was to assist her son in this undertaking.

Mrs. J. Bruce-Horton, in conversation with Lady Avondale, had assured her that if Ethel married a suitable person she should receive three million dollars on her wedding-day, and perhaps twice that much at the death of her parents.

Lady Avondale explained about the sickness of Lord Avondale, her eldest son, and that she was daily expecting to hear of his death, at which time her dear son, Lenox, would succeed to his brother's titles and estates. To all appearances she was very frank and confiding with Mrs. J. Bruce-Horton; but she failed to say anything about the multitude of debts.

Mrs. Lyman Osborn seemed particularly to fancy Dr. Lenox Avondale, and he paid much attention to her. She assured her bosom friend, Mrs. Horton, that she was very proud of his attentions—not for herself, but because of the opportunity it gave to pave the way for “a most desirable match for dear Ethel.”

“You are a sweet, good creature; you are indeed,” said Mrs. J. Bruce-Horton, when in the privacy of their room. “I could not manage it, I certainly could not, without your assistance.”

“I don't believe we had better be in too great a hurry about starting home,” concluded Mrs. Osborn.

“Yes, I understand,” agreed Mrs. Horton, nodding significantly, “I think that my health will not permit me to start for a couple of weeks. But, really, have n’t you noticed, Lucy, what a deliciously wholesome foreign air there is about this place? With Lady Avondale and the charming countess here I could almost fancy that we were again in dear old England.”

“Oh, it is perfectly lovely,” rejoined Mrs. Osborn. “Dr. Lenox Avondale has invited me to go rowing this evening, and I certainly shall not miss the opportunity of pressing upon him the superiority of dear Ethel.”

“It is so good of you,” lisped Mrs. J. Bruce-Horton, “to take such a deep interest in the child. She is inclined to be rather wilful, and perhaps a little headstrong, but, by judicious management, I am sure that we can overcome her silly, girlish ideas.”

That afternoon Doctor Redfield called and found that Mrs. J. Bruce-Horton was very desirous that he should advise their remaining longer at the lake. He was not slow in making the suggestion. He wondered a little at the peculiar turn that affairs had taken, and the sudden attachment of his patient for Lake Geneva. However, he rightly attributed it to the presence of the English guests. When he left Ethel on the evening before, a strange feeling had come to him. He longed to see her, and he wondered if an hour of tender confidences would ever again be theirs. He remembered the pressure of the girl’s warm hand. It had thrilled him. Leaving the hotel in the afternoon, he hesitated a moment on the veranda in an uncertain frame of mind. Then he walked briskly down a path leading through a dense wood that

shaded the shore of the lake. An hour afterward he returned to the hotel, he having seen nothing of Ethel. On taking his leave, he saw Dr. Lenox Avondale, accompanied by Mrs. Lyman Osborn and Ethel, going toward the boat-house. Ethel recognized him, and he fancied that there was a warmth in her smile as she bowed.

Thus matters went on, day after day, for several weeks, until Mrs. Horton was pronounced entirely recovered. "We shall be leaving in a day or two," she observed to Doctor Redfield, "and, thanks to your skill, I am quite myself again."

When Jack had gone, Mrs. Osborn looked knowingly at Mrs. Horton, and said, "I think it is just as well that Doctor Redfield is not coming any more. Ethel has spoken several times of him, and has really exhibited more interest in him than I like."

"There is certainly no sentiment in Ethel," replied Mrs. J. Bruce-Horton, "and I feel sure, from what I have said to her, that she is favorably impressed with Dr. Lenox Avondale—still, one cannot be too careful."

While these two friends were thus plotting together, Dr. Jack Redfield was strolling along the beach with Ethel. His daily professional visits had been brightened with the anticipation of seeing her, and his heart had been gladdened by the belief that she, too, had looked forward, with more than passing interest, to his coming.

There are natures that blend and harmonize instantly. Friends are discovered—not manufactured or purchased, and congenial souls recognize one another by the restful influence that each imparts to the other. Ethel Horton and Dr. Jack Redfield each felt this kindred bond of sympathy

and mutual discovery. When such souls meet, they defy all social customs.

“I don’t know,” Ethel was saying, naively, “why your visits give me so much pleasure. Am I too frank in saying this?”

“Oh, no,” answered Jack, “I presume it is because you are so deeply interested in your mother’s recovery, but I should like to believe that this is not the only reason. I should like to feel that you entertain an interest in me personally, although you must repent of it after we separate to-day, for doubtless I shall drift entirely out of your life. Perhaps that is your wish, and perhaps it is best that it be so.”

A blush came to Ethel’s face. She walked on silently at his side.

“Don’t talk like that,” she finally said, in girlish reprimand, “it makes me think that you are disagreeable. I shall always remember you.” She laughed a little as she said this, and looked archly up at Jack.

“Remember me!” said Jack, as he turned toward her under the shading branches of an elm that stood near the shore of the lake. “Yes, I should like to believe that you would remember me, but you cannot. Not only is your destiny marked out for you, but even your friends have been chosen for you, and I am not on the list. No difference what your personal wishes may be at this time, you will soon forget me.”

There was an earnestness approaching sternness in his voice.

“You are very cross to-day,” said Ethel, sadly, “very cross, indeed. I could not forget you, even if I were to try,

and I do not think it kind of you to say so.”

“Are you quite sure?” inquired Jack, half rapturously.

She raised her eyes to his, and after a moment said, “I am sure. But what difference can it make to you? I shall never see you again.”

Jack could not reply at once. He turned partly away and looked out across the waters. As Ethel glanced at him she saw that his face was ashen. She feared that he was vexed and would again say something cross to her. She remembered the feeling that had come over her once before when she was with him. At the sight of his sad face her thoughts became those of pity; and she fell to wondering why friends have to part. She came close to his side, and, laying a hand on his arm, said, pleadingly, “You must not be angry with me to-day; indeed you must not. Why, your arm is shaking as if you were cold.”

“Yes,” replied Jack, in a low, trembling voice. “Oh, Ethel, Ethel, can you not see—can you not understand that I love you? My heart is beating for you with fierce hammer strokes through every fibre of my being. I have no words to express myself, but I know, yes, before God, I know that I love you better than my own life.”

Tears stood in Ethel’s eyes, and in their startled surprise Jack read that his impassioned declaration had been too sudden.

“Oh,” sobbed Ethel, as she bowed her head to hide her tears, “if daddy were only here.”

“Forgive me—forgive me for speaking, if I have offended you, but the thought of your going away from me, perhaps forever, quite unmanned me.” Lifting one of her trembling

hands, he kissed it passionately. "Forget me, Ethel, forget me to-morrow, if you will, but only tell me before we part that I am forgiven."

"No, no," said Ethel, between her sobs, "I am sure there is nothing to forgive. Oh, I cannot understand this strange feeling that has taken possession of me. If daddy were only here so I could talk to him. I am afraid to speak to mamma."

"Well, do not speak to her," said Jack, soothingly, "but when you reach your home tell your father, if you will, and, if you can give me your love, write me and I will come to you at once."

"It is good of you to say that," said Ethel, still sobbing, "I really believe I love you now."

Jack was about to throw to the winds all his good resolution of giving her time to decide, and he would have taken her in his arms then and there, and claimed her for his own forever, had not a colored boy from the hotel interrupted them.

"Beg your pardon, miss," said he, "but Mrs. J. Bruce-Horton wished me to say would you please come to her."

Jack dropped a piece of silver in the boy's hand, and said, "Please say to Mrs. Horton that Miss Ethel will come very soon."

They turned and walked slowly, side by side, along the path, in the now uncertain light, toward the hotel, enjoying love's first awakening. Presently Jack spoke.

"You will not forget me, Ethel, but you will write for me to come, will you not?" The soft pressure of the girl's small hand, which was resting contentedly in his, and her sweet, low words of assurance made Jack happy, and yet he was

conscious of the sadness of parting. As they neared the hotel he lifted her hand to his lips again and murmured, "Good-bye, Ethel, God bless you."

"Good-bye," she whispered; and her eyes were brimming with tears. "I shall not forget my promise, and I am sure daddy will be on our side."

Jack hurried down the walk, and Ethel stood on the veranda, looking after his retreating figure. A soft mist of awakened love overflowed her young heart and enveloped her.

She turned and went into the hotel—a woman; her girlhood had vanished with the awakening.



CHAPTER IV.—THE DEPARTURE

Table of Contents

WHEN Mrs. Horton and Mrs. Osborn learned from the messenger boy that Ethel was with Doctor Redfield their agitation became apparent. They agreed that the best thing to be done was to hasten their departure from Lake Geneva. They wisely decided not to mention the affair to Ethel; but they determined to be more careful and observant of her in the future. Before retiring, they determined to start for the Southwest on the following day.

Lady Avondale was blandly polite, and she assured Mrs. Horton that already she had learned to love Ethel, the dear child, as if she were her own daughter. "Lenox," she said, assuringly, "is taken with her, really he is quite attentive; have n't you noticed it, Mrs. Osborn?"

"I must admit," replied the intriguing Mrs. Osborn, "that he has expressed his admiration for her quite freely, while the dear boy's eyes betray an eloquence of feeling that cannot be doubted."

Had Mrs. Horton tried to give an explanation why she desired such an alliance, she would perhaps have floundered hopelessly in a sea of interrogation-points. Until she met Mrs. Osborn this Anglomania idea had never even been thought of by this otherwise sensible American

mother. There are natures that influence us, unconsciously to ourselves, in strange and mysterious ways. We meet a person, and instinctively we are impressed with some peculiarity that he or she possesses. We hardly know just what it is, nor do we even stop to analyze our feelings. This one peculiarity might outweigh, in our minds, a hundred glaring defects—defects which in others would be not only quickly noticed by us, but severely condemned. Hence, in our newly formed fondness, friendship, or whatever it may be, we practically become blind to faults.

Mrs. Horton had formed a strong attachment for this very clever woman. This power was not an unconscious one to Lucy Osborn. She had quickly discovered it, and she meant to profit by it,—not in a mercenary way, no, she would have scorned even the thought of such a thing, but in a social way; through an alliance for Ethel she would in some way build an altar for herself.

She experienced little love or sentiment for either Mrs. Horton or her daughter, but she determined to use them as a means to an end. In most things Mrs. Osborn would have been considered an average woman—no better, no worse. Her desire, her ambition, her mania, however, to enter into English social circles was paramount to all other considerations. It was the gaunt tigress of her nature, famishing with desire, ready with hidden tooth and claw to pounce upon every opposition.

“I can assure you, Lady Avondale,” said Mrs. J. Bruce-Horton, and she flushed deeply as she spoke, “that a marriage between my daughter and your son, when he shall