AN AMERICAN GIRL.

"Perhaps," she said, "perhaps your niece, Miss Octavia, will favor us."

Miss Belinda replied in a deprecatory and uncertain murmur.

"I—am not sure. I really don't know. Perhaps—Octavia, my dear."

Octavia raised a smiling face.

"I don't play," she said. "I never learned."

"You don't play!" exclaimed Lady Theobald. "You don't play at all!"

"No," answered Octavia. "Not a note. And I think I am rather glad of it; because if I tried, I should be sure to do it worse than other people. I would rather," with unimpaired cheerfulness, "let some one else do it."

There were a few seconds of dead silence. A dozen people seated around her had heard. Miss Pilcher shuddered; Miss Belinda looked down; Mr. Francis Barold preserved an entirely unmoved countenance, the general impression being that he was very much shocked, and concealed his disgust with an effort.

"My dear," said Lady Theobald, with an air of much condescension and some grave pity, "I should advise you to learn. I can assure you that you find it a great source of pleasure."

"If you could assure me that my f would find it a great source of plea might begin," answered the mi young person, still cheerfully; " I am afraid they wouldn't."

It seemed that fate had marked disgrace. In half an hour from th she capped the climax of her indiscr

The evening being warm, the windows had been left open, and in one of them, she stopped a moment out at the brightly moonlit grounds.

Barold, who was with her, paused

"Looks rather nice, doesn't i said.

"Yes," she replied. "Suppose we on the terrace."

He laughed in an amused fashion not understand.

"Suppose we do," he said. "B that's a good idea!"

He laughed as he followed her.

"What amuses you so?" she inquired.

"Oh!" he replied. "I am merely thinking of Lady Theobald."

"Well," she commented, "I think it's rather disrespectful in you to laugh. Isn't it a lovely night? I didn't think you had such moonlight nights in England. What a night for a drive!"

"Is that one of the things you do in America—drive by moonlight?"

"Yes. Do you mean to say you don't do it in England?"

"Not often. Is it young ladies who drive by moonlight in America?"

"Well, you don't suppose they go alone, do you?" quite ironically. "Of course they have some one with them."

"Ah! Their papas?"

"No."

"Their mammas?"

"No."

"Their governesses, their uncles, their aunts?"

"No," with a little smile.

He smiled also.

"That is another good idea," he said. "You have a great many nice ideas in America."

She was silent a moment or so, swinging her fan slowly to and fro by its ribbon, and appearing to reflect.

"Does that mean," she said, at length, "that it wouldn't be considered proper in England?"

"I hope you won't hold me responsible for English fallacies," was his sole answer.

"I don't hold anybody responsible for them," she returned, with some spirit. "I don't care one thing about them."

"That is fortunate," he commented. "I am happy to say I don't, either. I take the liberty of pleasing myself. I find it pays best."

"Perhaps," she said, returning to the charge, "perhaps Lady Theobald will think *this* is improper."

He put his hand up and stroked his moustache lightly, without replying.

"But it is *not*," she added, emphatically; "it is *not!*"

"No," he admitted, with a touch of irony, "it is not"

"Are *you* any the worse for it?" she demanded.

"Well, really, I think not—as yet," he replied.

"Then we won't go in," she said, the smile returning to her lips again.

CHAPTER XII.

AN INVITATION.

In the meantime, Mr. Burmistone was improving his opportunities within doors. He had listened to the music with the most serious attention, and on its conclusion he had turned to Mrs. Burnham, and made himself very agreeable indeed. At length, however, he arose and sauntered across the room to a table at which Lucia Gaston chanced to be standing alone, having just been deserted by a young lady whose mamma had summoned her. She wore, Mr. Burmistone regretted to see as he advanced, a troubled and anxious expression—the truth being that she had a moment before remarked the exit of Miss Belinda's niece and her companion. It happened oddly that Mr. Burmistone's first words touched upon the subject of her thought. He began quite abruptly with it:

"It seems to me," he said, "that Miss Octavia Bassett——."

Lucia stopped him with a courage which surprised herself.

"Oh, if you please," she implored, "don't say anything unkind apout her!"

Mr. Burmistone looked down in her soft eyes with a good deal of feeling.

"I was not going to say anything unkind," he answered. "Why should I?"

"Everbody seems to find a reason for speaking severly of her," Lucy faltered. "I have heard so many unkind things tonight, that I am quite unhappy. I am sure—I am *sure* she is very candid and simple."

"Yes," answered Mr. Brimstone, "I am sure she is very candid and simple."

"Why should we expect her to be exactly like ourselves?" Lucia went on. "How can we be sure that our way is better than any other? Why should they be angry because her dress is so expensive and pretty? Indeed, I only wish I had such a dress. It is a thousand times prettier than any we ever wear. Look around the room, and see if it is not. And as to her not having learned to play on the piano or to speak French—why should she be obliged to do things she feels she would not be clever at? I am not clever, and have been a sort of slave all my life, and have been scolded and blamed for what I could not help at all, until I have felt as if I must be a criminal. How happy she must have been to be let alone!"

She had clasped her little hands, and though she spoke in a low voice, was quite impassioned in an unconscious way. Her brief girlish life had not been a very happy one, as may be easily imagined, and a glimpse of the liberty for which she had suffered roused her to a sense of her own wrongs.

"We are all cut out after the same pattern," she said. "We learn the same things, and wear the same dresses, one might say. What Lydia Egerton has been taught, I have been taught; and yet what two creatures could be more unlike each other, by nature, than we are?"

Mr. Burmistone glanced across the room at Miss Egerton. She was a fine robust young woman, with a high nose and a stolid expression of countenance.

"That is true," he remarked.

"We are afraid of everything," said Lucia, bitterly, "Lydia Egerton is afraid

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"don't,

for pity's sake!"

He could not have hit upon a luckier speech, and also he could not have uttered it more feelingly than he did. It helped her to recover herself, and gave her courage.

"There," she said with a slight catch of the breath, "does not that prove what I said to be true! I was afraid, the very moment I ceased to forget myself. I was afraid of you and myself. I have no courage at all."

"You will gain it in time," he said.

"I shall try to gain it," she answered. "I am nearly twenty, and it is time that I should learn to respect myself. I think it must be because I have no self-respect that I am such a coward."

It seemed that her resolution was to be tried immediately; for at that very moment Lady Theobald turned, and, recognizing the full significance of Lucia's position, was apparently struck temporarily dumb and motionless. When she recoverd from the shock, she made a majestic gesture of command.

Mr. Burmistone glanced at the girl's face, and saw that it changed color a little. "Lady Theobald appears to wish to speak to you," he said.

Lucia left her seat, and walked across the room with a steady air. Lady Theobald did not remove her eye from her until she stopped within three feet of her. Then she asked a rather unnecessary question.

"With whom have you been conversing?"

"With Mr. Burmistone."

"Upon what subject?"

"We are speaking of Miss Octavia Bassett."

Her ladyship glanced around the room, as if a new idea had occurred to her and said:

"Where *is* Miss Octavia Bassett?"

Here it must be confessed that Lucia faltered.

"She is on the terrace with Mr. Barold."

"She is on——"

Her ladyship stopped short in the middle of her sentence. This was too much for her. She left Lucia, and crossed the room to Miss Belinda.

"Belinda," she said, in an awful undertone, "your neice is out upon the terrace with Mr. Barold. Perhaps it would be as well for you to intimate to her that in England it is not customary—that—Belinda, go and bring her in."

Miss Belinda arose, actually looking pale. She had been making such strenuous effort to converse with Miss Pilcher and Mrs. Burnham that she had been betrayed into forgetting her charge. She could scarcely believe her ears. She went to the open window and looked out, and then turned paler than before.

"Octavia, my dear," she said, faintly.

"Francis!" said Lady Theobald, over her shoulder.

Mr. Francis Barold turned a rather bored countenance towards them—but it was evidently not Octavia who had bored him.

"Octavia," said Miss Belinda, "how imprudent! In that thin dress—the night air! How could you, my dear, how could you?"

"Oh! I shall not catch cold," Octavia answered. "I am used to it. I have been out hours and hours, on moonlight nights, at home."

But she moved towards them.

"You must remember," said Lady Theobald, "that there are many things which may be done in America which would not be safe in England."

And she made the remark in an almost sepulchral tone of warning.

How Miss Belinda would have supported herself if the coach have not been announced at this juncture, it would be difficult to say. The coach was announced, and they took their departure. Mr. Barold happening to make his adieus at the same time, they were escorted by him down to the vehicle from the Blue Lion.

When he had assisted them in and closed the door, Octavia bent forward so that the moonlight fell full on her pretty, lace-covered head and the sparkling drops in her ears.

"Oh!" she exclaimed, "if you stay here at all, you must come and see us. Aunt Belinda, ask him to come and see us."

Miss Belinda could scacely speak.

"I shall be most—most happy," she fluttered, "Any—friend of dear Lady Theobald's, of course——"

"Don't forget," said Octavia, waving her hand.

The coach moved off, and Miss Belinda sank back into a dark corner.

"My dear," she gasped, "what will he think?"

Octavia was winding her lace scarf around her throat.

"He'll think I want him to call," she said, serenely. "And I do."

CHAPTER XIII.

INTENTIONS.

The position in which Lady Theobald found herself placed, after these occurrences, was certainly a difficult and unpleasant one. It was Mr. Francis Barold's caprice, for the time being, to develop an intimacy with Mr. Burmistone. He had, it seemed, chosen to become interested in him during their sojourn at Broadoaks. He had discovered him to be a desirable companion, and a clever, amiable fellow. This much he condescended to explain incidentally to her ladyship's self.

"I can't say I expected to meet a nice fellow or companionable fellow," he remarked, "and I was agreeably surprised to find him both. Never says too much or too little. Never bores a man."

To this Lady Theobald could make no reply. Singularly enough, she had discovered early in her acquaintance that her wonted weapons were likely to dull their edges upon the steely coldness of Mr. Francis Barold's impassibility. In the presence of this fortunate young man, before whom his world had bowed the knee from his tenderest infancy, she lost the majesty of her demeanor. He refused to be affected by it; he was even implacable enough to show openly that it bored him, and to insinuate by his manner that he did not intend to submit to it. He entirely ignored the claim of relationship, and acted according to the promptings of his own moods. He did not feel it at all incumbent upon him to remain at Oldclough Hall, and subject himself to the time-honored customs there in vogue. He preferred to accept Mr. Burmistone's invitation to become his guest at the handsme house he had just completed, in which he lived in bachelor splendor. Accordingly he installed himself there, and thereby complicated matters greatly.

Slowbridge found itself in a position as difficult and far more delicate, than Lady Theobald's. The tea-drinkings in honor of that troublesome young person, Miss Octavia Bassett, having been inaugurated by her ladyship, must go the social rounds, according to ancient custom. But what, in discretion's name, was to be done concering Mr. Francis Barold? There was no doubt whatever that he must not be ignored; and, in that case, what difficulties presented themselves!

The mamma of the two Misses Egerton, who was a nervous and easily subjugated person, was so excited and overwrought by the prospects before her that, in contemplating it when she wrote her invitations, she was affected to tears.

"I can assure you, Lydia," she said, "that I have not slept for three nights, I have been so harrassed. Here on one hand, is Mr. Francis Barold, who must be invited, and on the other hand is Mr. Burmistone whom we cannot pass over, and here is Lady Theobald, who will turn to stone the moment she sees him—though, goodness knows, I am sure he seems a very quiet, respectable man, and said some of the most complimentary things about your playing. And here is that dreadful girl, who is enough to give one cold chills, and who may do all sorts of dreadful things, and is certainly a living example to all respectable, well educated girls. And the blindest of the blind could see that nothing would offend Lady Theobald more fatally than to let her be thrown with Francis Barold: and how one is to invite them into the same room, and keep them apart, I'm sure I don't know. Lady Theobald herself could not do it, and how can we be expected to? And the refreshments on my mind, too, and Forbes failing on her tea-cakes, and bringing up Sally Lunns like lead."

That these misgivings were equally shared by each entertainer in prospective might be adduced from the fact that the same afternoon Mrs. Burnham and Miss Pilcher appeared upon the scene, to consult with Mrs. Egerton upon the subject.

Miss Lydia and Miss Violet being dismissed upstairs to their practising, the three ladies sat in the darkened parlor, and talked the matter over in solemn conclave.

"I have consulted Miss Pilcher, and metioned the affair to Mrs. Gibson,' announced Mrs. Burnham. "And really we have not yet been able to arrive at any conclusion."

Mrs. Egerton shook her head, tearfully.

"Pray don't come to me, my dears,' she said,—"don't, I beg of you! I have thought about it until my circulation has all gone wrong, and Lydia has been applying hot-water bottles to my feet all morning. I gave it up at half-past two, and set Violet to writing invitations to one and all, let the consequences be what they may."

Miss Pilcher glanced at Mrs. Burnham, and Mrs. Burnham glanced at Miss Pilcher.

"Perhaps," Miss Pilcher suggested to her companion, "it would be as well for you to mention your impressions."

Mrs. Burnham's manner became additionally cautious. She bent forward slightly.

"My dear," she said, "has it struck you that Lady Theobald has any—intentions, so to speak?"

"Intentions!" repeated Mrs. Egerton.

"Yes," with deep significance. "So to speak. With regard to Lucia."

Mrs. Egerton looked utterly helpless

"Dear me!" she ejaculated, plaintively. "I have never had time to think of it. Dear me! With regard to Lucia!"

Mrs. Burnham became more significant still.

"*And*," she added, "Mr. Francis Barold."

Mrs. Egerton turned to Miss Pilcher, and saw confirmation of the fact in her countenance.

"Dear, dear!" she said. "That makes it worse than ever."

"It is certain," put in Miss Pilcher, "that the union would be a desirable one, and we have reason to remark that a deep interest in Mr. Francis Barold has been shown by Lady Theobald. He has been invited to make her house his home during his stay in Slowbridge, and though he has not done so, the fact that he has not is due only to some inexplicable reluctance upon his own part. And we all remember that Lady Theobald once plainly intimated that she anticipated Lucia forming, in the future, a matrimonial alliance."

"Oh!" commented Mrs. Egerton, with some slight impatience, "it is all very well for Lady Theobald to have intentions for Lucia; but if the young man has none, I really don't that her intentions will be likely to result in anything particular. And I am sure Mr. Francis Barold is not in the mood to be influnced in that way now. He is more likely to entertain himself with Miss Octavia Bassett, who will take him out in the moonlight, and make herself agreeable to him in her American style."

Miss Pilcher and Mrs. Burnham exchanged glances again.

"My dear,' said Mrs. Burnham, "he has called upon her twice since Lady Theobald's tea. They say she invites him herself, and flirts with him openly in the garden."

"Her conduct is such," said Miss Pilcher, with a shudder, "that the blinds upon th side of the seminary which faces Miss Bassett's garden are kept closed by my orders. I have young ladies under my care whose characters are in process of formation, and whose parents repose confidence in me."

"Nothing but my friendship for Belinda Bassett," remarked Mrs. Burnham, "would induce me to invite the girl to my house." Then she turned to Mrs. Egerton. "But—ahem—have you included them *all* in your invitation?" she observed.

Mrs. Egerton became plaintive again.

"I don't see how I could be expected to do anything else," she said. "Lady Theobald herself could not invite Mr. Francis Barold from Mr. Burmistone's house, and leave Mr. Burmistone at home. And after all, I must say it is my opinion nobody would have objected to Mr. Burmistone, in the first place, if Lady Theobald had not insisted upon it."

Mrs. Burnham reflected.

"Perhaps that is true," she admitted cautiously, at length. "And it must be confessed that a man in his position is not entirely without his advantages—particularly in a place where there are but few gentlemen, and those scarcely desirable as——"

She paused there, discreetly; but Mrs. Egerton was not so discreet.

"There are a great many young ladies in Slowbridge," she said, shaking her head. A great many! And with five in a family, all old enough to be out of a school, I am sure it is flying in the face of Providence to neglect one's opportunities."

When the two ladies took their departure, Mrs. Burnham seemed reflective. Finally she said:

"Poor Mrs. Egerton's mind is not what it was—and it never was remarkably strong. It must be admitted, too, that there is a lack of—of delicacy. Those great, plain girls of hers must be a trial to her."

As she spoke they were passing the privet hedge which surrounded Miss Bassett's house and garden; and a sound caused both to glance around. The front door had just been opened, and a gentlemen in neat clerical garb, his guileless ecclesiastical countenance suffused with mantling blushes of confusion and delight. He stopped on the gravel path to receive the last words of Miss Octavia Bassett, who stood on the threshold, smiling down upon him in the prettiest way in the world.

"Tuesday afternoon," she said. "Now don't forget, because I shall ask Mr. Barold and Miss Gaston, on purpose to play against us. Even St. James can't object to croquet."

"I—indeed I shall be *most* happy and—and delighted," stammered her departing guest, "if you will be so kind as to—to instruct me, and forgive my awkwardness."

"Oh! I'll instruct you," said Octavia. "I have instructed people before, and I know how."

Mrs. Burnham clutched Miss Pilcher's arm.

"Do you see who *that* is?' she demanded. "Would you have believed it?"

Miss Pilcher preserved a stony demeanor.

"I would believe anything of Miss Octavia Bassett," she replied, "There would be nothing at all remarkable to my mind in her flirting with the Bishop himself? Why should she hesitate to endeavour to entagle the curate of St. James?"

CHAPTER XIV.

A CLERICAL VISIT.

It was indeed true that the Rev. Arthur Poppleton had spent the greater part of his afternoon in Miss Octavia Bassett's front parlor, and that Octavia had entertained him in such a manner that he had been beguiled into forgetting his clerical visits he had intendid to make, and finally committed himself by a promise to return a day or two later to play croquet. His object in calling had been to request Miss Belinda's assistance in a parochial matter. His natural timorousness of nature had indeed led him to put off making the visit for as long a time as possible. The reports he had heard of Miss Octavia Bassett had inspired him with great dread. Consequently he had presented himself at Miss Belinda's front door with secret anguish.

"Will you say," he had faltered to Mary Anne, "that it is Mr. Poppleton, to see *Miss* Bassett—Miss *Belinda Bassett*?"

And then he had been handed into the parlor, the door had closed behind him, and he found himself shut up entirely alone in the room with Miss Octavia Bassett herself.

His first impulse was to turn, and flee precipitately; indeed, he even went so far as to turn, and clutch the handle of the door; but somehow, a second thought arrived in time to lead him to control himself.

This second thought came with his second glanc at Octavia.

(To be Continued).

After all, the principal race troubles occur in paying the bets and walking home.

THE CHINESE MAIDEN.

Her skin was the color of saffron tea,
And her nose was as flat as flat could be,
And never were seen such beautiful eyes—
Two almond kernels in shape and size,
Set in a couple of slanting gashes
And not in the least disfigured by lashes.
An then such feet
You'd hardly meet
In the longest walk through the grandest street!
You might go seeking
From Nankin to Pekin
A pair so remarkably small and neat.

—*John G. Saxe.*

—When a young lady begins to manifest an interest in the arrangement of a young man's cravat he wants to be as careful as he can possibly be or he is gone.

"Won't you come into my parlor?"
Was the spider's cordial cry.
"No, I thank you," said his hearer,
"Don't you see I, too, am fly?"

—Like many a young man, nature begins her fall by painting things red.

The Kendals made a great hit in "A Scrap of Paper" in New York on Monday evening. It was their first appearance in America and the public and critics have nothing but praise to bestow upon them.

CURRENT TOPICS.

Some idea of the magnitude of the four new States may be had when it is stated that their area is about equal to that of all New England, New York, New Jersey, Pennsylvania, Delaware, Maryland, Virginia, West Virginia, Ohio, Kentucky and Indiana combined, and about three times as great as the British Isles.

More than half of the $2,000,000 subscribed on behalf of the Johnstown sufferers is still in the hands of the State Flood Relief Commission, and its members are at this late day discussing how best to distribute the fund while the people are suffering for the lack of the common necessaries of life. This Commission might easily take the first prize for incompetency at any township fair.

The total population of Spanish America including the West Indies and Brazil, is nearly equal to that of the United States being over 50,000,000, of whom not less than 5 per cent. are European subjects and not over 3,000 natives of the United States. There are about 500,000 savage Indians, confined to the interior of the continent of South America, and a few small tribes in Central America, numbering not more than 5,000 all told. Thus nearly every inhabitant of the two continents of Central and South America and the Antilles is a contributor, directly or indirectly, to the exports of the country in which he lives, and to a degree a consumer of imported merchandise.

Obscure and seemingly unimportant paragraphs and cablegrams are frequently finding their way into public print that in Crete the Christians are being persecuted by the unspeakable Turk. Particulars are seldom given, but it is known that horrible atrocities are from time to time perpetrated upon the unhappy people. To-day's cable contains the statement that further outrages have been committed. It is a queer commentary upon the boasted civilization of the 19th century that the Europeanpowers should quietly stand by while the cries of the people are so loud and despairing. Would that one-tenth the energy displayed in this country by Christian people in defaming one another were diverted to the succor of their brethren of Crete.

The Maritime Congress which is to open its sessions in Washington on the 16th inst., although lost sight of by the public in the commotion caused by the assembling of the Pan-American Congress, is one of great importance and more than likely will result in more practical benefit to the world than the other. The principal subjects for discussion will be: Marine signals in heavy weather and at night; restriction of draught for loaded vessels—a subject insisted upon by Great Britain, where such a restriction already prevails; the designation and marking of vessels; life-saving appliances and methods; qualifications for officers and seamen; lanes for ocean steamers on frequented routes; storm warnings; reporting and moving of wrecks and obstructions of navigation; uniformity in the system of buoys and beacons, and the establishment of a permanent international maritime commission. The Congress might also, if possible, adopt some means to stop the racing of the Atlantic liners across the ocean. They have already received warning of its dangers, but something more than warning is needed if calamity would be prevented.

A Good Samaritan.

I said, "Where are you going, Mr.——?" He said, "You know my old friend, Mr.——, in Hamilton." I said "yes." "Well,' he said, "he has been sick for a long time, and had to put a mortgage on his place last fall, thinking he would be well enough to pay it off by the time it came due. Poor fellow, he is about dead, and the mortgage due, and if the place is sold the family will be turned out of doors. I just thought I would run down this morning and cheer him up a little as he was leaving, that I would pay up that mortgage so he would know that his family would be comfortable when he was gone." He continued, "Our folks are building a big church and they wanted me awful bad to give them a big subscription; but I thought I could do the Master's work better in this way. I suppose they would be disappointed." And with that he left me for we were at Hamilton. "Well, I said to myself again, after he left, "that is a good man. I wish we had more like him. Still, he hasn't much of an eye to business, for it's a poor way to advertise. If he had given the money to the church he might have had his name in every paper from one end of Canada to the other and just what business he was carrying on and what an awful good man he was."—"*Tramp*" *in the Woodstock Sentinel-Review.*

Had Bad Experience.

Lawyer—"Do you understand the nature of an oath, madam?'

Witness—"Well, I should say I did. My husband took off the screens yesterday, and is putting up the stovepipes to-day."

After a Curtain Lecture.

"Joe, your wife looks as fresh as a morning glory."

"I wish she was a morning glory."

"Why so, Joe?"

"Because she'd shut up at night."

Very Verdant.

Hiram—I thought that if I lay down in the grass you couldn't find me.

City cousin (who had been hunting for him)—I did find it hard to distinguish you. The grass is so green.

Even the old-time suggestion of compelling railroad directors to ride on the cow-catcher of a locomotive, in order that their presence might insure the exercise of greater care by the train hands, would hardly avail in these days of recklessness and blundering. In the case of two recent accidents prominent railroad officials were among the passengers; and in one case their private car formed part of the equipment of the train. Evidently some more heroic remedy will have to be applied.

Gussie Cottlow, the musical prodigy of Chicago, is eleven years old. She played by ear at the age of 3, and at 4 by note. She is a prepossessing child of average height and size.