

# Lady Betty Across the Water

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## Chapter 9

MR. ESS KAY had a headache next morning and stopped in bed. She couldn't speak or be spoken to, and so we couldn't possibly ask her advice about going to Bailey's beach for a dip in the sea. Potter, whose proposal it was, said that this was perhaps providential, as she was almost certain to want me to stay in till I could be taken out officially. "But you don't need to know that," he added.

I looked at Sally, and she laughed, so I knew that I was to go.

"Oh, but what about bathing clothes?" I exclaimed on sudden thought.

"How stupid of me not to have remembered that I would want them before I left home or in New York!"

"I shook my head, sad at having to seem ungrateful. But how could I help it?"

"Well, they have this kind there, and so they do here. Everybody has it. My prettiest one is much like yours, only it's poppy colored. Katherine's is cornflower blue this year, and she's got a black one and a lilac one. When you see all the others prancing about in the same sort of things you won't feel a bit funny."

I was far from sure that I should attain to such a peaceful state of mind as not to "feel funny." But Sally had called me a baby, and I had to redeem myself from that aspersion at any price. So I tried to compose my countenance over a beating heart and think about other things on the way to the beach, as you do if you are going to the dentist's.

Potter went with us, though I supposed that when we came to the end he would bid us goodby and trot off to the place where the men bathed, wherever that might be. Our things had been taken on ahead by a servant or two, and we walked, as the day was perfect, and I was thankful to get a little exercise.

We met a great many people whom Sally and Potter knew, and just as Potter had said, "Here we are at Bailey's beach," that handsome Mrs. Pritchley and her stepdaughter, with Mr. Doremus came up. They called to us, so we stopped to speak, and I was pleased, because I'd been wanting to know them. We were introduced, and I was wondering what Mrs. Ess Kay would do if she could see us chatting with the Pritchleys in sight of all Newport when a little thin man, looking perfectly furious, with a striped bathing suit rolled up under his arm, came hopping along toward us as if he were a cricket ball that somebody had batted off the beach.

His panama hat was on the back of his head. His single eyeglass on his chain was flying out behind him in the breeze, and my first thought was how comical he looked. My second, as he came nearer, was something quite different.

"Why, Mohunsligh!" I cried.

He stopped hopping so abruptly that he stumbled and nearly fell down.

"Hello, Betty!" he growled, hauling off his hat as if he hated the bother of doing it. "Where did you spring from?"

"Home. Where on earth did you spring from?" I echoed.

"They've sprung me off their beastly beach," said he, glaring and sticking to his eyeglass. Then he almost waved his hideous little bathing suit at me. "Wouldn't let me bathe, the bouncers!"

"Wouldn't let you bathe?"

"No. Said: 'You can't get in here. This beach is for millionaires.' I'm blest if I don't shake the sand off my feet as soon as I can pack up and get out."

"No, no! Don't do that," I begged.

"There's some mistake perhaps."

"No, there isn't," said he. "I'm not a millionaire. But I did think I looked as if I could afford a bath."

"Sally, dear, do let me introduce my cousin, Lord Mohunsligh," I said in a great hurry.

Potter opened his eyes at the thin little man, and Mrs. and Miss Pritchley looked at him with interest.

"Do introduce us all," laughed Mrs. Pritchley, "and then we can sympathize with Lord—Lord—oh, but I can never learn to pronounce him!"

I introduced him to the mother and stepdaughter then, though I hadn't thought of its being necessary, and explained that my cousin, though spelled very elaborately, was pronounced Moomsligh.

It seemed to J. A. Stone, a civil war veteran, of Kemp, Tex., that a plot existed between a desperate lung trouble and the grave to cause his death. "I contracted a stubborn cold," he writes, "that developed a cough that stuck to me, in spite of all remedies, for years. My weight ran down to 130 pounds. Then I began to use Dr. King's New Discovery, which restored my health completely. I now weigh 187 pounds."

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along."

"I'm not sure but that I'd better. In if Mr. Parker thinks Mrs. Stuyvesant-Knox would want me to." I boun-dered on.

"She won't mind—not much, any-way, if we don't take you to the Casi-no without her," Sally tried to reassure me. But her eyes had begun to twinkle.

"Don't you think she might? There are a lot of letters I ought"—

"Now, child, out with it. Don't you like the bathing dress?"

"Oh, I admire it immensely," I stam-mered. "It's like a picture. But I can't see myself wearing it. That is, I can't bear to think of any one else seeing me wear it."

Sally went off into a fit of musical southern laughter. "You poor baby, I forgot the shock it might be to you if you're accustomed only to English bathing clothes. They certainly are the limit! Have you never been to Trouville or Ostend?"

"I shook my head, sad at having to seem ungrateful. But how could I help it?"

"Well, they have this kind there, and so they do here. Everybody has it. My prettiest one is much like yours, only it's poppy colored. Kath-erine's is cornflower blue this year, and she's got a black one and a lilac one. When you see all the others prancing about in the same sort of things you won't feel a bit funny."

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"Why, Mohunsligh! I cried."

leight—for if you'll point him out in time, that's what I shall call you, right under his nose. You see, this is a private beach. We all subscribe for our bath houses, but you'll be our guest, of course, and I'll put Mr. Pritchley's box at your service. He's gone off fishing for a few days. Only to think of the Earl of Mohunsligh being turned back. Delicious!"

"Can't say I thought of it that way till now," said Mohunsligh, pulling his wiry mustache and condescending to grin slightly at last. "But it's true I'm not a millionaire you know."

"You're an earl. You can't say you're not, for I read in the Flashlight only the other day that the Earl of Mohunsligh had sailed for America, though it couldn't be ascertained on what ship."

"Didn't know there was any particular reason why it should be ascer-tained," said Mohunsligh. "I've run over to visit a chap in California—dashed nice chap, too, but thought I'd have a shot at New York first, and blest if I could stand it. Never could stand being grilled since a sunstroke I got when I was serving in India."

"Dear me, who and what does a lord serve?" broke in Miss Pritchley, which surprised Mohunsligh and me both so much that he stared and I blushed. But she didn't, though no girl under Vic's age at least would think of cutting in like that with a stranger at home. Mohunsligh was delighted to be spoken to by her, though, one could see. His eyes brightened up and he smiled, looking straight at her as if she were a new and absolutely desirable kind of rifle.

"I say rifle because Mohunsligh is a great shot and would rather spend his money (what he has of it) on a new invention by way of a gun than anything else."

"Used to be in the army. I've chuck-led it now," he explained affably, be-ginning to look quite nice, for really, though small and wiry, with ginger colored hair and mustache and no col-ored eyes, Mohunsligh isn't an ugly man when you come to notice his nice, sharp features. He's only a distant cousin of mine and so old (he's nearly forty) that in the first years of our acquaintance he made himself agree-able by teaching me to ride on his foot, but I always liked him—when-ever I remembered his existence. Natu-rally, though, this hasn't been often, as one of his many eccentricities is to be continually prowling at the ends of the earth—anywhere where there may be animals to shoot. What kind he doesn't seem to care if they are only large enough. Once he was fond of tigers, but the last thing he had a fad for was polar bears, and he sent mother a skin, which makes the oak room smell strongly of camphor.

"I hope, anyhow, you're going to pay a good long visit to Newport," said Mrs. Pritchley.

"I meant to go back tomorrow morn-ing," replied Mohunsligh, "but per-haps I might stop on a bit longer."

"We'll give you some fun," volun-teered Miss Pritchley, looking frightful-ly pretty.

"Will you?" said Mohunsligh. "Jol-Washington Dave Op, to three doctors; was kept in bed for five weeks. Blood poison from a spider's bite caused large, deep sores to cover his leg. The doctors failed then 'Bucklen's Arnica Salve' com-pletely cured me," wrote John Wash-ington, of Bosqueville, Tex. For eczema, boils, burns and piles it is supreme. 25c. at A. L. Thornton's

"I like of you. I must think about it." Then he declined to remember that I was his little long lost cousin, asked when I'd arrived on this side the water and a few other things, but he looked more at Miss Pritchley than at me. I suppose it is difficult to be much excited about a person who has taken riding lessons on your foot.

Potter asked Mohunsligh where he was staying, and when he heard it was at a hotel he said his sister wouldn't allow that to go on. Lord Mohunsligh would have to come to the Moorings, that was settled, and his man must be told to pack up his things directly. Mignat's word be sent by messenger at once!

"Haven't brought a man, thanks awfully. Shed that habit long ago," said my cousin. "I've got precious little luggage, too; picked this thing up in a shop as I came along and they charged me the price of a lot for it. You're awfully good, you know, and all that, to offer to put me up, but I only came prepared to spend a night or two."

Then Potter insisted and blew all Mohunsligh's objections away one by one as if they had been threads of cobweb, still my cousin wouldn't give a definite answer, perhaps not under-standing American hospitality, or per-haps having other ideas which he pre-ferred. At all events we went to the bathing machines (which weren't bath-ing machines at all, but dear little houses without anything being decid-ed. The only invitation which Mohunsligh had really accepted was Mrs. Pritchley's, for her husband's bathing box.

She kept her word and called him "Lord Mohunsligh" in quite a high voice, just as we passed the man who had refused to let him go on to the beach before, but the man didn't seem impressed in the least. I think he didn't even recognize Mohunsligh as the same person, or if he did he pre-ferred very cleverly not to.

I had forgotten the horror of the bathing dress in my surprise at meet-ing Mohunsligh, but it fell over me again like a cloud as soon as I was shut up in the bathing box with those wisps of green silk. I wouldn't have the maid help me and wrestled with the ordeal alone. It took me some time, but when everything was on (there were only four things, counting the cap and smart little sandals I couldn't say to myself that the effect wasn't attractive. It was, and I did approve of myself in the quaint head-dress, which was more like a fetching silk toque with an Alsatian bow in front than a mere cap.

But the awful moment came when I was ready, with my hand on the door. I'm sure Joan of Arc must have felt like that when she had let her hair down and put on that graceful white dress of hers one sees in the pictures, to be burned. She may have been dimly aware that she was looking quite her best, as I was, but even that couldn't have buoyed her up much at the moment, and it didn't me.

As I stood hesitating, somebody knocked. I peeped out, and it was Sally—quiet, unassuming little Sally, with her middle aged airs—looking like one of Stan's gaily girl photog-raphs, in a short, low necked dress of bright poppy color, with silk legs as shiny as an archdeacon's, only with quite a different effect.

"Come on, my green Undine," said she, and I came, because she pulled me so suddenly that otherwise I should have fallen flat on my nose.

Having seen her dressed so much in my style, it wasn't quite as bad as before, and when I was out of my box—like one of those little barometer women that tell fair weather—there was Mrs. Pritchley in crimson and Car-olyn Pritchley in white, and lots of pretty women, all with the same lovely stockings. There hadn't been any standing about when we arrived, be-cause we were early, not having gone to the Casino first as the others had, and it was a relief to find them, or it was, until I had a great shock.

Instead of the men being away at a separate beach of their own, they were put with us, and kept popping out of boxes every minute, and run-ning up to talk to the girls they knew. Just as calmly as if they were in even-ing dress. My eyes almost came out of my head for an instant. Then I just swallowed hard and leaped over about five centuries of prejudice as if I were jumping across a tiny beck.

"Everything's a matter of custom," said I to myself, and in another minute I was racing gaily down to the water, hand in hand with Sally, as if we had been little girls with sand pails and shovels.

I expected to feel as if I had plunged into a million gallon bath of iced water, when I got out among the cream breakers, but, judging from the sensation, Americans have had their part of the Atlantic beautifully warmed from underneath with some patent heating apparatus. It would be just like them!

The sandy beach is so level you can patter out ever so far until you finally have to bob up and down for the roll-ing waves as if they were royalties.

I can swim a little, and Potter took me beyond the breakers. It was great fun under that arch of turquoise sky, with the sun dancing on the clear green water as if the millionaires of Newport had been sprinkling gold pieces. But the best of all was the floating platform about a hundred yards from the beach, where we sat and let the emeralds and pearls spray over us.

At home when you are at the sea your governess or some other person who thinks enjoyment ought to be measured off by rule sits on the shore looking at her watch, and when you have been in exactly twenty minutes she tells you to come out directly or you will catch a chill. I've always wondered what it would do to you if

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