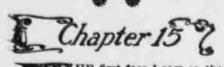
Lady Betty Across the Water

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rived in Chicago was Mr. Brett's. He was waiting to help me at

looked as fresh as if t hadn't spent eighteen hours in the if I did it must have been excitement, as I'd written half the night and dreamed desperately the other half about Potter Parker-dressed like one of those red Indians they have for cigar signs in New York-pursuing me with a jeweled tomahawk.

Mr. Brett had insisted on my telegraphing to Sally before we left New York to say I was coming and asking her to meet the train; therefore we were surprised not to find her at the station. I was rather anxious, and so, I could see, was Mr Brett. He thought he had better not drive in a cab with me to the friend's house where she was staying, but he told me the name of a hotel where he would go at once and made me promise that I would send him a line by the cabman to say whether everything was well with me.

headache or perhaps is out of town for Hale's maid told you she'd gone to the day," said he "It can't be anything else. Still I shall be a little uneasy till I bear And you know I hold myself absolutely at your service."

"What about your friend whose business you've come to attend to?" I interfere with that, whatever hap-

"Oh, I can attend to both Interests," be assured me, "without neglecting either. I shan't need to let one interfere with the other. And remember, I won't stir out of my hotel till I've had your note."

Bereft of him. Chicago overawed me and took my breath away. It is a good thing I saw New York first, for if I'd come straight from England with only menrales of peaceful London to support me through the ordeal, I don't left it might have affected my

It was a long drive, though, and as I off? had time to calm down I saw that grumbers of the huge buildings are no-Isly designed and very magnificent in accoration, untring a splendid effect in spite of their vant size rather than because of it. And such shops too! They're like the fairy palaces in nurse used to tell me about, as big as whole cities, where you could get any-

thing you wanted just by wishing. At last we stopped before a large, handsome house with a lawn round at and no fence. The house was stone in front, but had brick sides, which gave it a queer effect, yet somehow tween us in a few minutes. Now 1 m didn't spoil it, and wherever there free again, and my idea in any case wasn't a porch it had broken out in bow windows.

ran up the four or five steps to ring the front door bell. In a minute a maid came who could have been very smart looking if she had only worn a Broper can.

"Is Miss Woodburn stopping here?" I asked.

"No, she isn't," returned the young woman, with a glint of the eye which seemed to say she would perish sooner than call any one "Miss."

"Are you sure?" I persisted, my heart preparing for a plunge bootward.

"I guess se," said the girl with a superior but not ill natured smile. "She was stuying with us, but she went day be back, because she's gone to take care of a friend who's real sek way back in Dhio somewhere."

"Way back in Ohio somewhere!" The words were like a knell for all my dopes. I didn't know what was to beof me now.

i am sorry," I said. "Do you know! if a telegram came for Miss Woodburn yesterday?"

woman, all in one word, but her face brightened. Suddenly she was looking I know a man who will give me one at me like a long lost friend. "I guess for the day for next to nothing. And you're expected. Mrs. Hale, that's the I'll bring you one of those silk things went to meet your train, but may be cago today." she didn't recognize you or else she I was as pleased as Punch. As Caro got caught at the bridge. Anyhow, Pitchley said when she was engaged, she hasn't come back yet. I guess I felt I was "going to have the time

all ready for you." "I can't do that, though I'm very grateful indeed to Mrs. Hale," I said. hundred. I-I have other plans. I'll just scribble a little note to tell her so and

thank her, then I must go." "She'll just never forgive me if I let yon," protested the young woman.

I began to be a little afraid that I might be detained by well meant force, but when I had written a letter to Mrs. Hate tsqueezing Vivace under one arm and sitting at a desk in a bright, charming drawing room where three

ate departure was practically a mat- ed change. I begged him to let me go ter of life or death.

So instead of writing my news to surprised when he heard that a lady spoil the happiest day of his life. was waiting in the drawing room of ting there. I should have felt rendy never amused myself half as well. to die if he had looked bored, but he

didn't a blt. I teld him all my adventures and about the dogs and cats and birds, and train. He said I looked fresh, too, but then I asked what on earth I should back to New York," I said gloomily, "and cable to my brother. I could stop at some pension and wait till I heard-a quiet pension Mrs. Stuyvesant-Knex wouldn't be likely to know about."

"You alone in a New York boarding house!" exclaimed Mr. Brett. "Never." "Then could you find me a Chicago

"There'd be nothing to choose besucrest something better. Only-I don't know how you'll take it Wouldn't than anything else until your future plans are settled?"

"Of course," said I, "but that's impossible now."

"I'm not so sure. I think-in fact I "Miss Woodburn probably has a know, where she is. You say Mrs. Ohio, to take care of a sick friend. I can tell you where that friend lives and her name, because I have relatives in the neighborhood. I don't often go there, but I've heard from them of Miss Woodburn's visits. My cousins asked. "I mustn't be so selfish as to have a farm, and I was wondering whether you could content yourself boarding with them for awhile, so near Miss Woodburn you could see her every day?"

"Oh, I should love it," I cried. "But would they have me?"

"They would be happy to have you. I know. The only question is, would you be happy? They're simple folk. with simple ways, such as you would expect of my people, Lady Betty, but they've hearts of gold."

"Like yours," I thought, but I didn't foud of simple ways, and I asked no fine trains like that stop at the

"It will take us about twelve hours to get there," he answered.

"Us?" I echoed. "Why, you can't"-"I can if you'll let me," said be, growing red. "I've finished my business in Chicago already and"-

"What, while I was away?" "It was a short affair, though

"But I thought you weren't going to wave the hotel till I wrote?"

"I didn't need to. My friend came to me, and we fixed up everything be was to drop in on my Ohio cousins. You see, twelve hours' traveling is I told the cabman to wait and then nothing to us Americans, and they wouldn't like it if I didn't just say 'how do you do' when I'm so near."

"Oh, well, if that's really true and you aren't doing ft only to help me," said I, with a sigh of relief. "I was afraid you were. I shouldn't mind the journey a bit if you were with me, but I do hope we'll have the same kind of ticket this time. Do get mine like yeurs, won't you?"

His eyes had a beautiful expression. in them as he thanked me and said. he would do the best he could, only I couldn't exactly make it out.

"The best train to take would be this evening," he went on. "That would before yesterday. I don't think she'll give my cousins, Mr. and Mrs. Trowbridge, plenty of time to get ready for you, too, for I'll wire them that you're coming. But how could you pass the day? Would you-let me show you the sights of Chicago?"

"Would I? It would be the best of fun. Oh, I am glad I came, after all." "Then that's settled. I'll send off that telegram and one or two others and come back with an automobile Don't look like that, please, Lady Betty. "Yes, indeed," replied the young It isn't going to cost me all I've got to hire one. They're cheap here; besides indy of the house here, sent the tele with take windows to wear over your gram on, and Miss Woodburn tele | head and face, so no one will see that graphed back about you. Mrs. Hale Lady Petty Bulkeley is 'doing' Chi-

you'd better come in. Your room is of my life." And it was fun. I shall never forget that day of mine in Chicago with Mr. Brett if I live to be a

> The best fun of all was the Chinese in a queer street where there are some wanted to go into them, but Mr. Brett wouldn't take me. To get to the res-

Persian cats, six Japanese spaniels of expensive looking greenback things, and a number of birds played about but he laughed when he saw my stand what they really are or their the figor) I contrived to persuade the frightened face and said the dinner point of view, but you will, Lady hospitable creature that my immedi- didn't really cost all that, he only want-

halves with everything, as I'd invited myself in a way, but he told me I Mr. Brett I went back with it to him, lidn't understand American customs like a bad penny. He must have been yet and asked if I had the heart to

I couldn't resist telling him it was his hotel and hurried in to see me sit- the happiest of mine, too-that I had

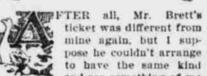
"Not even in Newport?" said be. "Not even in Newport," I repeated. "It was delightful there, and everybody was kind and charming to me, but you see I had no real friends like do now. "I suppose I shall have to go you to go about with, and that makes the greatest difference, doesn't it?"

His eyes lit up again at that, and I could see the blood mounting under his brown skin.

"All the difference in the world," he answered in a low voice. Then he looked as if he were going to say something else, but shut his lips tight together and didn't. One wouldn't dare speak out the truth like this to a rich man one might be supposed to be trytween. No. Lady Betty, but I can ing to marry. I remember enough of what mother and Vic have told me about proper behavior in a debutante you rather be near Miss Woodburn to know that. But I've never wanted to talk in such a way to any man except Mr. Brett, which is lucky, as he always understands me, and that's one reason why it's pleasanter to be with him than any other person I've ever



Chapter 16



and see something of me on the journey, because, as I'd asked him, he would have done it if possible. We went back part of the way we had come the night before, in the same grand kind of train, as far as Cleveland, which we reached in the mornsay it. I said instead that I was ing quite early. We got out there, for where the place was and if it was far village near which Mr. Brett's cousins live, and he said the best thing we could do would be to drive to the farm in a motor car. It was about forty miles away, but with a good car, which he could easily get, we wouldn't be more than two hours, allowing for bad roads. If we didn't take a motor, we should have to walt half the morning for a glow train and then have t drive at the end of six or seven miles in some kind of a country conveyance.

When I hesitated, thinking of expense, Mr. Brett explained that among his many other occupations be had once acted as a chauffeur, therefore, knowmg the tricks of the trade and being a sort of professional himself, he could always hire a motor at a nominal price. This settled my doubts. We drove in a cab to a hotel, where he left me with Vivace, while he went to search for . car. Presently he came back with a smart gray thing which matched my clothes, and not only was there gray chauffeur to go with it, but a gray bolland coat for me, and a gray silk hood, with a lace curtain, t do think they do things well in America.

I looked forward to seeing the country between Clevelard and Arista which is the name of the town negrest to the Valley farm, because except for the drives I had had near Newport 1 knew nothing at all of the real country in America. I had an idea that we should pass some fine country houses and see a number of pretty little

nestling villages. The name of Aristo was rather ho pressive and classical sounding, I on the way pretty girls driving or riding, and good looking, well groomed men such as I had met always to the country round Newport. But as we went on and on I was disappointed The scenery itself was lovely, rich and peaceful, with groves of maple trees which would have been quite new to me if I hadn't seen a few in the east. But the villages were blots rather than beauty spots, and we saw only peasants and farm people.

Mr. Brett was driving the car, with me beside him, while the chauffeur sat behind, and I made some such remark to him before I stopped to remember that his relatives were farm people. I could have bitten my tongue then, but

he didn't seem to be offended. "Outside the towns in the west there are few of what you would call gentlefolk." he said, with just the faintest emphasis of good natured scorn for restaurant, where we had dinner. It's English prejudice; "nor are there any 'country houses' as you understand the famous pawnshops, it seems, and I name in England. Here people live in ine country to till the land and to live by tilling it, yet they don't call themselves 'peasants,' either. It isn't that they're snobbish and want to seem to be what they are not, don't think that for a moment. But they-well, I won't try to describe them. Many people from the old world would never understand what they really are or their Betty. You are quick and sympathetic

and intelligent, and wheat I ask you to define for me the difference between the farmers of Ohio, as typified by my cousins and their neighbors in Summer county, I shall be surprised if you don't exactly hit the nail on the head. They'll surprise you a little at first, I maybe you won't know what to mean of them. But I count on you to see the point in spite of all your traditions." "What have my traditions got to do with it?" I asked.

"Walt and see." I laughed. "Well, I only wish I knew what my traditions are," said L "I suppose I ought to know, but I don't think I do."

"You may feel them pricking up and down your spine for a bit, while you're getting used to a new order of things at the Valley farm," answered Mr. Brett. "And yet I don't know. I shall be enormously interested in watching the effect upon you before I-have to say goodby."

I forgot everything else he had been saying when I heard that last sen-

"Will you have to say goodby soon?"

I asked him in a crestfallen voice. He didn't speak for a minute, perhaps on account of a series of bumps

At last he said, "To tell you the truth, Lady Betty, I should like to stop and pay my cousins a little visit, but-I don't know if I have a right

they be delighted to keep you?" "Perhaps. I hope so. But what about you?"

"Oh, why not?" I asked. "Wouldn't

"If it depended one bit on me, you'd make a long visit."

"Wouldn't you really mind seeing me banging around-sometimes? Just at meals, you know-or to take you a drive once in awhile?"

I looked at him merrily through my tale window, for I felt happy and lighthearted, and the world seemed such a very nice place to live in at that me-

"Do you truly need to have me answer that question?" I asked. "If you do, we can't be real friends as 1 thought, after all."

"You say that because you are kind -too kind to have reflected enough perhaps. An accident—the happiest accident in the world for me-has given me a chance to see something of you, Lady Betty, but do you understand that only by an accident could a rough fellow like me have any place at all in your life, no matter Now small or temporary? I don't want to take advantage of that sweet kindness of yours, which is partly all your own and partly the essence of your youth and innocence."

"Now, you are making me very cross," said I. "I won't bear you talk so. You may laugh at me, because we've known each other such a short time, but really and truly you are the best friend I've ever had. I wouldn't lose you for any one or anything in the world, and I don't mean to, unless you get tired of me-so,

"Tired of you! Good heavens, I tired of you!"

"Very well, then," said I ffippantly, "so far as I'm concerned you needn't say 'goodby' to the Valley farm until you feel the first symptoms coming

"Lady Betty," remarked Mr. Brett, "I wonder if there's another girl like

you in the world?" "According to my mother, there isn't

another so vexing." I replied. We both laughed, and then be suddenly said, "Here is Aristo." I stared about wildly.

where?" I asked. He laughed a great deal more. "Why, you're looking right at the postoffice-

and the grocery and dry goods store." Sure enough, there was a brown wooden building at the top of a dusty hill we were just climbing; but there was nothing else anywhere, except a clear brown creek and some sweet smelling

mendows with a white horse gazing in a bored way over rather a queer fence, and some cows asleep under a clump of maple trees on our side of a goung birch grove.

"Where's the rest of it?" I went on. "Where are the other shops and the houses and the people?"

"Oh, the other shops and the house aren't built yet, but they may be any time, and then the people will come But the fact that they haven't come yet doesn't prevent this from being Aristo. thought, and I had visions of meeting But you mustuit think this is the only place you will have to do your shop ping when you're at the Valley farm. Wait till you see Hermann's Corners. There's a great emperium there, and you'll ruffle the feelings of half the ladies of Summer county if you don't fall in lare with it and its proprietor, Whit Walker. Promise yea'll let me be the first one to introduce you to both ?" We were in a sweet and gracious

country now. It looked as if Mother Nature would never allow any of her children who obeyed her to be poor or unhappy here. As we whizzed along the up and down road between billowing meadows of grain we could see here and there a farmhouse showing between trees or peering over the brow of a rounded hill, but there was none where I longed to stop until we came in sight of a dear, old, red brick house -really old, not what some Americans call old. It was set back several hundred yards from the road and an avenue of magnificent maples—each one a great green temple-led up to the comfortable, rose draped porch which sheltered the door. There was an old fashioned garden on one side, with a running flame of hollyhocks hemming it in. The background was a dark green oak and maple grove, and in a clover meadow beyond the garden was a colony of beehives. It looked an ideal, story book place, and I wished it





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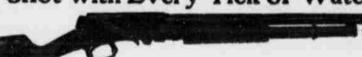
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