

home from Cambridge we chaffed a good deal among ourselves about Miss Melissa Easterbrook. Bernard took quite my view about the spectacles and dress. He even drew on an envelope a fancy portrait of Miss Easterbrook, as he said himself, "from documentary evidence." It represented a typical schoolmarm of the most virulent order, and was calculated to strike terror into the receptive mind of ingenuous youth on simple inspection.

At last the day came when we were to go to Liverpool. We arrived at St. Pancras in very good time, and looked about on the platform for a tall and hardfaced person of transatlantic aspect, arrayed in a dove colored dress and a pair of gray spectacles. But we looked in vain; nobody about seemed to answer to the description. At last Bernard turned to my wife with a curious smile: "I think I've spotted her mother," he said, waving his hand vaguely to the right. "That lady over yonder—by the door of the refreshment room. Don't you see? That must be Melissa." For we knew her only as Melissa already among ourselves; it had been raised to the mild rank of a family witticism.

I looked in the direction he suggested and paused for certainty. There, irresolute by the door and gazing about her timidly with inquiring eyes, stood the prettiest, tiniest, most shrinking little western girl you ever saw in your life—attired, as she said, in a dove colored dress, with bonnet to match, and a pair of gray spectacles. But oh, what a dove colored dress! Walter Crane might have designed it—one of those perfect traveling costumes of which the American girl seems to possess a monopoly; and the spectacles—well, the spectacles, though undoubtedly real, added just a touch of piquancy to an otherwise almost painfully timid and retiring little figure. The moment I set eyes on Melissa Easterbrook, I will candidly admit, I was her captive at once; and even Lucy, as she looked at her, relaxed her face involuntarily into a sympathetic smile. As a rule, Lucy might pose as a perfect model of the British matron in her ampler and maturer years—"calmly terrible," as an American observer once described the genus; but at sight of Melissa she melted without a struggle. "Poor, wee little thing, how pretty she is!" she exclaimed with a start. You will readily admit that was a great deal, from Lucy.

Melissa came forward tentatively, a dainty blush half rising on her rather pale and delicate little cheek. "Mrs. Hancock?" she said in an inquiring tone, with just the faintest suspicion of an American accent in her musical, small voice. Lucy took her hand cordially. "I was sure it was you, ma'am," Melissa went on with pretty confidence, looking up into her face, "because Mrs. Wade told me you'd be as kind to me as a mother, and the moment I saw you I just said to myself, 'That must be Mrs. Hancock, she's so sweetly motherly.' How good of you to burden yourself with a stranger like me! I hope indeed I

won't be too much trouble."

That was the beginning. I may as well say, first as last, we were all of us taken by storm "right away" by Melissa. Lucy herself struck her flag unconditionally before a single shot was fired, and Bernard and I, hard hit at all points, surrendered at discretion. She was the most charming little girl the human mind can conceive. Our cold English language falls, in its roughness, to describe her. She was petite, mignonne, graceful, fairylike, yet with a touch of Yankee quaintness and a delicious espièglerie that made her absolutely unique in my experience of women. We had utterly lost our hearts to her before ever we reached Liverpool; and, strange to say, I believe the one of us whose heart was most completely gone was, if only you'll believe it, that calmly terrible Lucy.

Melissa's most winning characteristic, however, as it seemed to me, was her perfect frankness. As we whirled along on our way across England she told us everything about herself, her family, her friends, her neighbors and the population of Kansas City in general. Not obtrusively or egotistically—of egotism Melissa would be wholly incapable—but in a certain timid, confiding, half child-like way, as of the lost little girl, that was absolutely captivating. "Oh, no, ma'am," she said, in answer to one of Lucy's earliest questions, "I didn't come over alone. I think I'd be afraid to. I came with a whole squad of us who were doing Europe. A prominent lady in Kansas City took charge of the whole lot. And I got as far as Rome with them, through Germany and Switzerland, and then my money wouldn't run to it any further; so I had to go back. Traveling comes high in Europe, what with hotels and fees and having to pay to get your baggage checked. And that's how I came to want an escort."

Bernard smiled good naturedly. "Then you had only a fixed sum," he asked, "to make your European tour with?"

"That is so, sir," Melissa answered, looking up at him quizzically through those pretty gray spectacles. "I'd put away quite a little sum of my own to make this trip upon. It was my only chance of seeing Europe and improving myself a little. I knew when I started I couldn't go all the round trip with the rest of my party, but I thought I'd set out with them anyway and go ahead as long as my funds held out, and then when I was through I'd turn about and come home again."

"But you put away the money yourself?" Lucy asked, with a little start of admiring surprise.

"Yes, ma'am," Melissa answered sagely. "I know it. I saved it."

"From your allowance?" Lucy suggested from the restricted horizon of her English point of view.

Melissa laughed a merry little laugh of amusement. "Oh, no," she said; "from my salary."

"From your salary?" Bernard put in, looking down at her with an inquiring glance.

"Yes, sir; that's it," Melissa answered, all unabashed. "You see, for four years I was a clerk in the postoffice." She pronounced it "clurk," but that's a detail.

"Oh, indeed!" Bernard echoed. He was burning to know how, I could see, but politeness forbade him to press Melissa on so delicate a point any farther.

Melissa, however, herself supplied at once the missing information. "My father was postmaster in our city," she said simply, "under the last administration—President Blanco's, you know—and he made me one of his clerks of course when he'd gotten the place, and as long as the fun went on I saved all my salary for a tour in Europe."

"And at the end of four years?" Lucy said.

"Our party went out," Melissa put in confidentially. "So when the trouble began my father was dismissed, and I had just enough left to take me as far as Rome, as I told you."

I was obliged to explain parenthetically, to allay Lucy's wonderment, that in America the whole personnel of every local government office changes almost completely with each incoming president.

"That's so, sir," Melissa assented, with a wise little nod. "And as I didn't think it likely our folks would get in again in a hurry—the country's had enough of us—I just thought I'd make the best of my money when I'd got it."

"And you used it all up in giving yourself a holiday in Europe?" Lucy exclaimed, half reproachfully. To her economic British mind such an expenditure of capital seemed horribly wasteful.

"Yes, ma'am," Melissa answered, all unconscious of the faint disapproval implied in Lucy's tone. "You see, I'd never been anywhere much away from Kansas City before; and I thought this was a special opportunity to go abroad and visit the picture galleries and cathedrals of Europe, and enlarge my mind and get a little culture. To us a glimpse of Europe's an intellectual necessary."

"Oh, then, you regarded your visit as largely educational?" Bernard put in with increasing interest. Though he's a fellow and tutor of King's, I will readily admit that Bernard's personal tastes lie rather in the direction of rowing and football than of general culture; but still, the American girl's point of view decidedly attracted him by its novelty in a woman.

[To conclude next week.]

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