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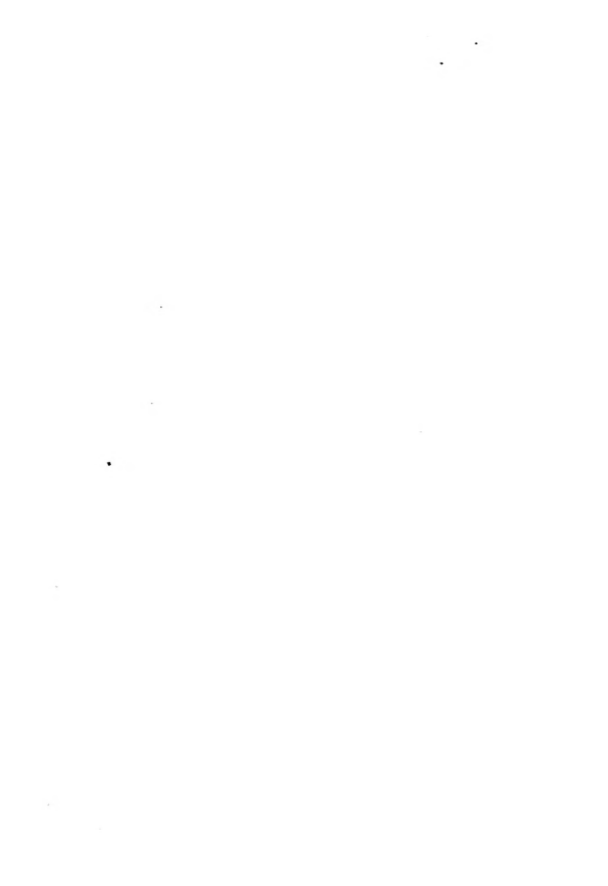
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FIVE O'CLOCK TEA







“WILL YOU ANSWER MY QUESTION, AMY?”

FIVE O'CLOCK TEA

Farce

BY

W. D. HOWELLS

ILLUSTRATED



NEW YORK

HARPER AND BROTHERS

1894

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Harper's "Black and White" Series.

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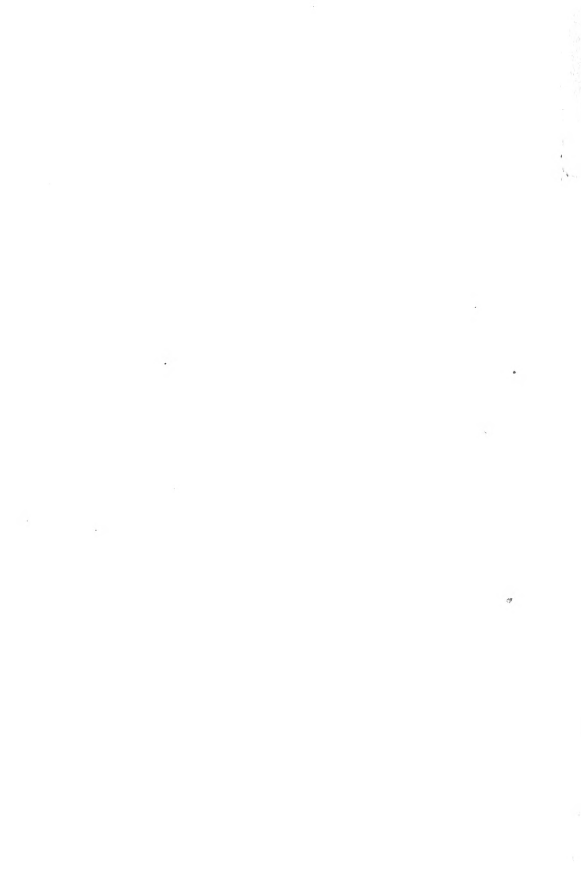
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ILLUSTRATIONS

“ ‘WILL YOU ANSWER MY QUESTION, AMY?’ ” *Frontispiece*

“ MRS. SOMERS, POURING A CUP OF TEA: ‘ THAT
MAKES IT A LITTLE MORE DIFFICULT ’ ” *Facing page 32*



FIVE O'CLOCK TEA

I

MRS. SOMERS; MR. WILLIS CAMPBELL

MRS. AMY SOMERS, in a lightly floating tea-gown of singularly becoming texture and color, employs the last moments of expectance before the arrival of her guests in marching up and down in front of the mirror which fills the space between the long windows of her drawing-room, looking over either shoulder for different effects of the drifting and eddying train, and advancing upon her image with certain little bobs and bows, and retreating from it with a variety of fan practice and elaborated courtesies, finally degenerating into burlesque, and a series of grimaces and "mouths" made at the responsive reflex. In the fascination of

this amusement she is first ignorant, and then aware, of the presence of Mr. Willis Campbell, who on the landing space between the drawing-room and the library stands, hat in hand, in the pleased contemplation of Mrs. Somers's manœuvres and contortions as the mirror reports them to him. Mrs. Somers does not permit herself the slightest start on seeing him in the glass, but turns deliberately away, having taken time to prepare the air of gratification and surprise with which she greets him at half the length of the drawing-room.

Mrs. Somers, giving her hand: "Why, Mr. Campbell! How very nice of you! How long have you been prowling about there on the landing? So stupid of them not to have turned up the gas!"

Campbell: "I wasn't much incommoded. That sort of pitch-darkness is rather becoming to my style of beauty, I find. The only objection was that I couldn't see you."

Mrs. Somers: "Do you often make those pretty speeches?"

Campbell: "When I can found them on fact."

Mrs. Somers: "What can I say back? Oh! That I'm sorry I couldn't have met you when you were looking your best."

Campbell: "Um! Do you think you could have borne it? We might go out there."

Mrs. Somers: "On second thoughts, no. I shall ring to have them turn up the gas."

Campbell: "No; let me." He prevents her ringing, and going out into the space between the library and drawing-room, stands with his hand on the key of the gas-burner. "Now how do I look?"

Mrs. Somers: "Beautiful."

Campbell, turning up the gas: "And now?"

Mrs. Somers: "Not *half* so well. Decidedly pitch-darkness is becoming to you. Better turn it down again."

Campbell, rejoining her in the drawing-room: "No; it isn't so becoming to you; and I'm not envious, whatever I am."

Mrs. Somers: "You are generosity itself."

Mrs. Somers: "You promised not to recur to that subject without some hint from me. You have broken your promise."

Campbell: "Well, you wouldn't give me any hint."

Mrs. Somers: "How can I believe you care for me if you are false in this?"

Campbell: "It seems to me that my falsehood is another proof of my affection."

Mrs. Somers: "Very well, then; you can wait till I know my mind."

Campbell: "I'd rather know your heart. But I'll wait." After a pause: "Why do you carry a fan on a day like this? I ask, to make general conversation."

Mrs. Somers, spreading the fan in her lap, and looking at it curiously: "I don't know." After a moment: "Oh yes; for the same reason that I shall have ice-cream after dinner to-day."

Campbell: "That's no reason at all." After a moment: "Are you going to have ice-cream to-day after dinner?"

Mrs. Somers: "I might. If I had company."

Campbell: "Oh, I couldn't stay after hinting. I'm too proud for that." He pulls his chair nearer and joins her in examining the fan in her lap. "What is so very strange about your fan?"

Mrs. Somers: "Nothing. I was just seeing how a fan looked that was the subject of gratuitous criticism."

Campbell: "I didn't criticise the *fan*." He regards it studiously.

Mrs. Somers: "Oh! *Not* the fan?"

Campbell: "No; I think it's extremely pretty. I like big fans."

Mrs. Somers: "So good of you! It's Spanish. That's why it's so large."

Campbell: "It's hand-painted, too."

Mrs. Somers, leaning back, and leaving him to the inspection of the fan: "You're a connoisseur, Mr. Campbell."

Campbell: "Oh, I can tell hand-painting from machine-painting when I see it. 'Tisn't so good."

Mrs. Somers: "Thank you."

Campbell: "Not at all. Now, that fellow—cavalier, I suppose, in Spain—making love in that attitude, you can see at a glance that *he's* hand-painted. No *ma-*

out? With a Peak & Freaan?" She advances beseechingly upon him. "Come, I will give you a cup at once."

Campbell: "No, thank you; I would rather have it with the rest of the bores. They'll be sure to come."

Mrs. Somers, resuming her seat on the sofa: "You are implacable. And I thought you said you were generous."

Campbell: "No; merely magnanimous. I can't forget your cruel frankness; but I know *you* can, and I ask you to do it." He throws himself back in his chair with a sigh. "And who knows? Perhaps you were right."

Mrs. Somers: "About what?"

Campbell: "My being a bore."

Mrs. Somers: "I should think *you* would know."

Campbell: "No; that's the difficulty. Nobody would be a bore if he knew it."

Mrs. Somers: "Oh, *some* would, I think."

Campbell: "Do you mean me?"

Mrs. Somers: "Well, no, then. I don't believe you would be a bore, if you knew

it. Is that enough? or do you expect me to say something more?"

Campbell: "No, it's quite enough, thank you." He remains pensively silent.

Mrs. Somers, after waiting for him to speak: "Bores for bores, don't you hate the silent ones most?"

Campbell, desperately rousing himself: "Mrs. Somers, if you only knew how disagreeable I was going to make myself just before I concluded to hold my tongue!"

Mrs. Somers: "Really? What were you going to say?"

Campbell: "Do you actually wish to know?"

Mrs. Somers: "Oh no; I only thought you wished to tell."

Campbell: "Not at all. You complained of my being silent."

Mrs. Somers: "Did I? I was wrong. I will never do so again." She laughs in her fan.

Campbell: "And I complain of your delay. You can tell me now, just as well as two weeks hence, whether you love me enough to marry me or not."

Mrs. Somers: "You promised not to recur to that subject without some hint from me. You have broken your promise."

Campbell: "Well, you wouldn't give me any hint."

Mrs. Somers: "How can I believe you care for me if you are false in this?"

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Campbell: "Oh, I can tell hand-painting from machine-painting when I see it. 'Tisn't so good."

Mrs. Somers: "Thank you."

Campbell: "Not at all. Now, that fellow—cavalier, I suppose, in Spain—making love in that attitude, you can see at a glance that *he's* hand-painted. No *ma-*

chine-painted cavalier would do it in that way. And look at the lady's hand. Who ever saw a hand of that size before?"

Mrs. Somers, unclasping the hands which she had folded at her waist, and putting one of them out to take up the fan: "You said you were not criticising the fan."

Campbell, quickly seizing the hand, with the fan in it: "Ah, I'm wrong! Here's another one no bigger. Let me see which is the largest."

Mrs. Somers, struggling not very violently to free her hand: "Mr. Campbell!"

Campbell: "Don't take it away! You must listen to me now, Amy."

Mrs. Somers, rising abruptly, and dropping her fan as she comes forward to meet an elderly gentleman arriving from the landing: "Mr. Bemis! How very heroic of you to come such a day! Isn't it too bad?"

II

*MR. BEMIS ; MRS. SOMERS ; MR. WILLIS
CAMPBELL*

Bemis: "Not if it makes me specially welcome, Mrs. Somers." Discovering Campbell: "Oh, Mr. Campbell!"

Campbell, striving for his self-possession as they shake hands: "Yes, another hero, Mr. Bemis. Mrs. Somers is going to brevet everybody who comes to-day. She didn't *say* heroes to me, but—"

Mrs. Somers: "You shall have your tea at once, Mr. Bemis." She rings. "I was making Mr. Campbell wait for his. You don't order up the teapot for one hero."

Bemis: "Ha, ha, ha! No, indeed! But I'm very glad you do for two. The fact is"—rubbing his hands—"I'm half frozen."

Mrs. Somers: "Is it so very cold?" To Campbell, who presents her fan with a bow: "Oh, thank you." To Mr. Bemis: "Mr. Campbell has just been objecting

to my fan. He doesn't like its being hand-painted, as he calls it."

Bemis: "That reminds me of a California gentleman whom I found looking at an Andrea del Sarto in the Pitti Palace at Florence one day—by-the-way, *you've* been a Californian too, Mr. Campbell; but you won't mind. He seemed to be puzzled over it, and then he said to me—I was standing near him—'Hand-painted, I presume?'"

Mrs. Somers: "Ah! ha, ha, ha! How very good!" To the maid, who appears: "The tea, Lizzie."

Campbell: "You don't think he was joking?"

Bemis, with misgiving: "Why, no, it never occurred to me that he was."

Campbell: "You can't always tell when a Californian's joking."

Mrs. Somers, with insinuation: "*Can't* you? Not even adoptive ones?"

Campbell: "Adoptive ones never joke."

Mrs. Somers: "Not even about hand-painted fans? What an interesting fact!" She sits down on the sofa behind the lit-

tle table on which the maid arranges the tea, and pours out a cup. Then, with her eyes on Mr. Bemis: "Cream and sugar both? Yes?" Holding a cube of sugar in the tongs: "How many?"

Bemis: "One, please."

Mrs. Somers, handing it to him: "I'm so glad you take your tea *au naturel*, as I call it."

Campbell: "What do you call it when they don't take it with cream and sugar?"

Mrs. Somers: "*Au unnatural*. There's only one thing worse: taking it with a slice of lemon in it. You might as well draw it from a bothersome samovar at once, and be done with it."

Campbell: "The samovar is picturesque."

Mrs. Somers: "It is insincere. Like Californians. Natives."

Campbell: "Well, I can think of something much worse than tea with lemon in it."

Mrs. Somers: "What?"

Campbell: "No tea at all."

Mrs. Somers, recollecting herself: "Oh, *poor* Mr. Campbell! Two lumps?"

Campbell: "One, thank you. Your pity is so sweet!"

Mrs. Somers: "You ought to have thought of the milk of human kindness, and spared my cream-jug too."

Campbell: "You didn't pour out your compassion soon enough."

Bemis, who has been sipping his tea in silent admiration: "Are you often able to keep it up in that way? I was fancying myself at the theatre."

Mrs. Somers: "Oh, *don't* encore us! Mr. Campbell would keep saying his things over indefinitely."

Campbell, presenting his cup: "Another lump. It's turned bitter. *Two!*"

Bemis: "Ha, ha, ha! Very good—very good indeed!"

Campbell: "Thank you kindly, Mr. Bemis."

Mrs. Somers, greeting the new arrivals, and leaning forward to shake hands with them as they come up, without rising: "Mrs. Roberts! How very good of you! And Mr. Roberts!"

III

MR. and MRS. ROBERTS and the OTHERS

Roberts: "Not at all."

Mrs. Roberts: "Of course we were coming."

Mrs. Somers: "Will you have some tea? You see I'm installed already. Mr. Campbell was so greedy he wouldn't wait."

Campbell: "Mr. Bemis and I are here in the character of heroes, and we had to have our tea at once. You're a hero too, Roberts, though you don't look it. Any one who comes to tea in such weather is a hero, or a—"

Mrs. Somers, interrupting him with a little shriek: "Ugh! How hot that handle's getting!"

Campbell: "Ah, I dare say. Let me turn out my sister's cup." Pouring out the tea and handing it to Mrs. Roberts. "I don't see how you could reconcile it to your No. Eleven conscience to leave

your children in such a snow-storm as this, Agnes."

Mrs. Roberts, in vague alarm: "Why, what in the world could happen to them, Willis?"

Campbell: "Oh, nothing to *them*. But suppose Roberts got snowed under. Have some tea, Roberts?" He offers to pour out a cup.

Mrs. Somers, dispossessing him of the teapot with dignity: "Thank you, Mr. Campbell; *I* will pour out the tea."

Campbell: "Oh, very well. I thought the handle was hot."

Mrs. Somers: "It's cooler now."

Campbell: "And you won't let me help you?"

Mrs. Somers: "When there are more people you may hand the tea."

Campbell: "I wish I knew just how much that meant."

Mrs. Somers: "Very little. As little as an adoptive Californian in his most earnest mood." While they talk—Campbell bending over the teapot, on which Mrs. Somers keeps her hand—the others form a little group apart.

Bemis, to Mrs. Roberts: "I hope Mr. Roberts's distinguished friend won't give us the slip on account of the storm."

Roberts: "Oh no; he'll be sure to come. He may be late. But he's the most amiable of Englishmen, and I know he won't disappoint Mrs. Somers."

Bemis: "The most unamiable of Englishmen couldn't do that."

Roberts: "Ah, I don't know. Did you meet Mr. Pogis?"

Bemis: "No; what did he do?"

Roberts: "Why, he came—to the Hibbens's dinner—in a sack coat."

Mrs. Roberts: "I thought it was a Cardigan jacket."

Bemis: "*I* heard a Norfolk jacket and knickerbockers."

Mrs. Somers: "Ah, there is Mrs. Curwen!" To Campbell, aside: "And without her husband!"

Campbell: "Or any one else's husband."

Mrs. Somers: "For shame!"

Campbell: "You began it."

Mrs. Somers, to Mrs. Curwen, who approaches her sofa: "You are kindness

itself, Mrs. Curwen, to come on such a day." The ladies press each other's hands.

IV

MRS. CURWEN and the OTHERS

Mrs. Curwen: "You are goodness in person, Mrs. Somers, to say so."

Campbell: "And I am magnanimity embodied. Let me introduce myself, Mrs. Curwen!" He bows, and Mrs. Curwen deeply courtesies.

Mrs. Curwen: "I should never have known you."

Campbell, melodramatically, to Mrs. Somers: "Tea, ho! for Mrs. Curwen—impenetrably disguised as kindness."

Mrs. Curwen: "What shall I say to him?"

Mrs. Somers, pouring the tea: "Anything you like, Mrs. Curwen. Aren't we to see Mr. Curwen to-day?"

Mrs. Curwen, taking her tea: "No, I'm his insufficient apology. He's detained at his office—business."

Campbell: "Then you see they don't *all* come, Mrs. Somers."

Mrs. Curwen: "All what?"

Campbell: "Oh, all the—heroes."

Mrs. Curwen: "Is that what he was going to say, Mrs. Somers?"

Mrs. Somers: "You never can tell what he's going to say."

Mrs. Curwen: "I should think you would be afraid of him."

Mrs. Somers, with a little shrug: "Oh no; he's quite harmless. It's just a little way he has." To Mr. and Mrs. Miller, Mr. and Mrs. Alfred Bemis, and Dr. Lawton, who all appear together: "Ah, how do you do? So glad to see you! So very kind of you! I didn't suppose *you* would venture out. And you too, Doctor?" She begins to pour out tea for them, one after another, with great zeal.

V

*DR. LAWTON, MR. and MRS. MILLER, YOUNG
MR. and MRS. BEMIS, and the OTHERS*

Dr. Lawton: "Yes, I too. It sounded very much as if I were Brutus also." He stirs his tea and stares round at the company. "It seems to me that I have met these conspirators before. That's what makes Boston insupportable. You're always meeting the same people!"

Campbell: "We all feel it as keenly as you do, Doctor."

Lawton, looking sharply at him: "Oh! *you* here? I might have expected it. Where is your aunt?"

VI

MRS. CRASHAW and the OTHERS

Mrs. Crashaw, appearing: "If you mean me, Dr. Lawton—"

Lawton: "I do, my dear friend. What company is complete without you?"

Mrs. Somers, reaching forward to take her hand, while with her disengaged hand she begins to pour her a cup of tea: "None in *my* house."

Mrs. Crashaw: "Very pretty." Taking her tea. "I hope it isn't complete, either, without the English painter you promised us."

Mrs. Somers: "No, indeed! And a great many other people besides. But haven't you met him yet? I supposed Mrs. Roberts—"

Mrs. Crashaw: "Oh, I don't go to *all* of Agnes's fandangoes. I was to have seen him at Mrs. Wheeler's—he is being asked everywhere, of course—but he didn't come. He sent his father and mother instead. They were very nice old people, but they hadn't painted his pictures."

Lawton: "They might say his pictures would never have been painted without them."

Bemis: "It was like Heine's going to visit Rachel by appointment. She wasn't

in, but her father and mother were; and when he met her afterwards he told her that he had just come from a show where he had seen a curious monster advertised for exhibition—the offspring of a hare and a salmon. The monster was not to be seen at the moment, but the showman said here was monsieur the hare and madame the salmon.”

Mrs. Roberts: “What in the world did Rachel say?”

Lawton: “Ah, that’s what these brilliant anecdotes never tell. And I think it would be very interesting to know what the victim of a witticism has to say.”

Mrs. Curwen: “I should think you would know very often, Doctor.”

Lawton: “Ah, now I should like to know what the victim of a compliment says!”

Mrs. Curwen: “He bows his thanks.”
Dr. Lawton makes a profound obeisance, to which Mrs. Curwen responds in burlesque.

Miller: “We all envy you, Doctor.”

Mrs. Miller: “Oh yes. Mrs. Curwen

never makes a compliment without meaning it."

Mrs. Curwen: "I can't say that quite, my dear. I should be very sorry to mean all the civil things I say. But I never flatter gentlemen of a certain age."

Mrs. Miller, tittering ineffectively: "I shall know what to say to Mr. Miller after this."

Mrs. Crashaw: "Well, if you haven't got the man, Mrs. Somers, you *have* got his picture, haven't you?"

Mrs. Somers: "Yes; it's on my writing-desk in the library. Let me—"

Lawton: "No, no; don't disturb yourself! We wish to tear it to pieces without your embarrassing presence. Will you take my arm, Mrs. Crashaw?"

Mrs. Bemis: "Oh, let us all go and see it!"

Roberts: "Aren't you coming, Willis?"

Campbell, without looking round: "Thank you, I've seen it."

Mrs. Somers, whom the withdrawal of her other guests has left alone with him: "How could you tell such a fib?"

Campbell: "I could tell much worse fibs than that in such a cause."

Mrs. Somers: "What cause?"

Campbell: "A lost one, I'm afraid. Will you answer my question, Amy?"

Mrs. Somers: "Did you ask me any?"

Campbell: "You know I did — before those people came in."

Mrs. Somers: "Oh, *that!* Yes. I should like to ask *you* a question first."

Campbell: "Twenty, if you like."

Mrs. Somers: "Why do you feel authorized to call me by my first name?"

Campbell: "Because I love you. Now will you answer me?"

Mrs. Somers, dreamily: "I didn't say I would, did I?"

Campbell, rising, sadly: "No."

Mrs. Somers, mechanically taking the hand he offers her: "Oh! What—"

Campbell: "I'm going; that's all."

Mrs. Somers: "So soon?"

Campbell: "Yes; but I'll try to make amends by not coming back soon—or at all."

Mrs. Somers: "You mustn't!"

Campbell: "Mustn't what?"

Mrs. Somers: "You mustn't keep my hand. Here come some more people. Ah, Mrs. Canfield! Miss Bayly! So very nice of you, Mrs. Wharton! Will you have some tea?"

VII

MRS. CAMPBELL, MISS BAYLY, MRS.
WHARTON, and the OTHERS

Mrs. Wharton: "No, thank you. The only objection to afternoon tea is the tea."

Mrs. Somers: "I'm so glad you don't mind the weather." With her hand on the teapot, glancing up at Miss Bayly: "And do you refuse too?"

Miss Bayly: "I can answer for Mrs. Canfield that *she* doesn't, and I *never* do. *We* object to the weather."

Mrs. Somers, pouring a cup of tea: "That makes it a little more difficult. I can keep from offering Mrs. Wharton some tea, but I can't stop its snowing."

Miss Bayly, taking her cup: "But

you're so amiable; we know you would if you could, and that's quite enough. We're not the first and only, are we?"

Mrs. Somers: "*Dear*, no! There are multitudes of flattering spirits in the library, stopping the mouth of my portrait with pretty speeches."

Miss Bayly, vividly: "Not your *Bramford* portrait?"

Mrs. Somers: "My *Bramford* portrait."

Miss Bayly, to the other ladies: "Oh, let us go and see it too!" They flutter out of the drawing-room, where Mrs. Somers and Campbell remain alone together as before. He continues silent, while she waits for him to speak.

VIII

MRS. SOMERS; MR. CAMPBELL

Mrs. Somers, finally: "Well?"

Campbell: "Well, what?"

Mrs. Somers: "Nothing. Only I thought you were—you were going to—"

Campbell : " No ; I've got nothing to say."

Mrs. Somers : " I didn't mean that. I thought you were going to — go." She puts up her hand and hides a triumphant little smile with it.

Campbell : " Very well, then, I'll go, since you wish it." He holds out his hand.

Mrs. Somers, putting hers behind her : " You've shaken hands once. Besides, who said I wished you to go?"

Campbell : " Do you wish me to stay?"

Mrs. Somers : " I wish you to — hand tea to people."

Campbell : " And you won't say anything more?"

Mrs. Somers : " It seems to me that's enough."

Campbell : " It isn't enough for me. But I suppose beggars mustn't be choosers. I can't stay merely to hand tea to people, however. You can say yes or no now, Amy, as well as at any other time."

Mrs. Somers : " Well, no, then—if you wish it so much."

Campbell : " You know I don't wish it."

Mrs. Somers: "You gave me my choice. I thought you were indifferent about the word."

Campbell: "You know better than that, Amy."

Mrs. Somers: "Amy again! Aren't you a little previous, Mr. Campbell?"

Campbell, with a sigh: "Ah, that's for you to say."

Mrs. Somers: "Wouldn't it be impolite?"

Campbell: "Oh, not for *you*."

Mrs. Somers: "If you're so sarcastic, I shall be afraid of you."

Campbell: "Under what circumstances?"

Mrs. Somers, dropping her eyes: "I don't know." He makes a rush upon her. "Oh! here comes Mrs. Curwen! Shake hands, as if you were going."

IX

MRS. CURWEN; MRS. SOMERS; MR. CAMP-
BELL

Mrs. Curwen: "What! is Mr. Campbell going, *too?*"

Mrs. Somers: "Too? *You're* not going, Mrs. Curwen?"

Mrs. Curwen: "Yes, I'm going. The likeness is perfect, Mrs. Somers. It's a speaking likeness, if there ever was one."

Campbell: "Did it do all the talking?"

Mrs. Curwen: "It would—if Mrs. Roberts and Dr. Lawton hadn't been there. Well, I must go."

Campbell: "So must I."

Mrs. Somers, in surprise: "*Must* you?"

Campbell: "Yes; these drifts will be over my ears directly."

Mrs. Curwen: "You poor man! You don't mean to say you're *walking?*"

Campbell: "I shall be, in about half a minute."

Mrs. Curwen: "Indeed you shall not!"

You shall be driving—with me. I've a vacancy in the coupé, and I'll set you down wherever you like."

Campbell: "Won't it crowd you?"

Mrs. Curwen: "Not at all."

Campbell: "Or incommode you in any way?"

Mrs. Curwen: "It will oblige me in every way."

Campbell: "Then I will go, and a thousand thanks. Good-by again, Mrs. Somers."

Mrs. Curwen: "Good-by, Mrs. Somers. Poor Mrs. Somers! It seems too bad to leave you here alone, bowed in an elegiac attitude over your tea-urn."

Mrs. Somers: "Oh, not at all! Remember me to *Mr.* Curwen."

Mrs. Curwen: "I will. Well, Mr. Campbell—"

Mrs. Somers: "Mr. Campbell—"

Campbell: "Well?"

Mrs. Curwen: "To which?"

Campbell: "Both."

Mrs. Somers: "Neither!"

Mrs. Curwen: "Ah! ha, ha, ha! Mr. Campbell, do you know much about women?"

Campbell: "I had a mother."

Mrs. Curwen: "Oh, a *mother* won't do."

Campbell: "Well, I have an only sister who is a woman."

Mrs. Curwen: "A sister won't do, *either*—not your own. You can't learn a woman's meaning in that way."

Campbell: "I will sit at your feet, Mrs. Curwen, if you'll instruct me."

Mrs. Curwen: "I shall be delighted. I'll begin now. Oh, you needn't really prostrate yourself!" She stops him in a burlesque attempt to do so. "And I'll concentrate the wisdom of the whole first lesson in a single word."

Campbell, with clasped hands of entreaty: "Speak, blessed ghost!"

Mrs. Curwen: "Stay! Ah! ha, ha, ha!" She flies at Mrs. Somers and kisses her. "You can't say I'm ill-natured, my dear, whatever I am!"

Mrs. Somers, pursuing her exit with the word: "No, merely atrocious." A pause ensues, in which Campbell stands irresolute.

MRS. SOMERS ; MR. CAMPBELL

Campbell, finally : " Did you wish me to stay, Amy ? "

Mrs. Somers, airily : " I ? Oh no ! It was Mrs. Curwen. "

Campbell : " Then I think I'll accept her kind offer of a seat in her coupé. "

Mrs. Somers : " Oh ! I thought, of course, you'd stay—at *her* request. "

Campbell : " No ; I shall only stay at yours. "

Mrs. Somers : " And I shall not ask you. In fact, I warn you not to. "

Campbell : " Why ? "

Mrs. Somers : " Because, if you urge me to speak now, I shall say— "

Campbell : " I wasn't going to urge you. "

Mrs. Somers : " No matter ! I shall say it now without being urged. Yes, I've made up my mind. I can't marry a flirt. "

Campbell : " I can, Amy. "

Mrs. Somers : " Sir ! "

Campbell : " You know very well you sent those people into the other room to keep me here and torment me— "

Mrs. Somers : " *Now* you've *insulted* me, and all *is* over. "

Campbell : " To tantalize me with your loveliness, your beauty, your grace, Amy ! "

Mrs. Somers, softening : " Oh, that's all very well— "

Campbell : " I'm glad you like it. I could go on at much greater length. But you know I love you dearly, Amy, and why should you delight in my agonies ? But only marry me, and you shall delight in them as long as you live, and— "

Mrs. Somers : " You must hold me very cheap to think I would take you from that creature. "

Campbell : " Confound her ! I wasn't hers to give. I offered myself first. "

Mrs. Somers : " She offered you last, and—no, thank you, please. "

Campbell : " Do you really mean it ? "

Mrs. Somers : " I shall not say. Or, yes, I *will* say. If that woman, who seems to have you at her beck and call, had not

intermeddled, I might have made you a very different answer. But now my eyes are opened, and I see what I should have to expect, and—no, thank you, please.”

Campbell: “And if she hadn’t offered me—”

Mrs. Somers, drawing out her handkerchief and putting it to her eyes: “I was feeling kindly towards you—I was such a little fool—”

Campbell: “Amy!”

Mrs. Somers: “And you knew how much I disliked her.”

Campbell: “Yes, I saw by the way you kissed each other.”

Mrs. Somers: “Nonsense! You knew that meant nothing. But if it had been anybody else in the world but her, I shouldn’t have minded it. And now—”

Campbell: “Now—”

Mrs. Somers: “Now all those geese are coming back from the other room, and they’ll see that I’ve been crying, and everybody will know everything. Willis—”

Campbell: “*Willis?*”

Mrs. Somers: “Let me go! I must

bathe my eyes! You stay here and receive them! I'll be back at once!" She escapes from the arms stretched towards her, and out of the door, just before her guests enter from the library, and Campbell remains to receive them. The ladies, in returning, call over one another's heads and shoulders.

XI

MR. CAMPBELL and the OTHERS

Mrs. Roberts: "Amy, it's *lovely!* But it doesn't *half* do you justice."

Young Mrs. Bemis: "It's too sweet for *anything*, Mrs. Somers."

Mrs. Crashaw: "Why did you let the man put you into that ridiculous seventeenth-century dress? Can't he paint a modern frock?"

Mrs. Wharton: "But what exquisite coloring, Mrs. Somers!"

Mrs. Miller: "He's got just your lovely turn of the head."

Miss Bayly: "And the way you hold

your fan — what character he's thrown into it!"

Mrs. Roberts: "And that fall of the skirt, Amy; that skirt is *full* of character!" She discovers Mr. Campbell behind the tea-urn. He has Mrs. Somers's light wrap on his shoulders, and her fan in his hand, and he alternately hides his blushes with it, and coquettishly folds it and pats his mouth in a gross caricature of Mrs. Somers's manner. In rising he twitches his coat forward in a similar burlesque of a lady's management of her skirt. "Why, where is Amy, Willis?"

Campbell: "Gone a moment. Some trouble about—the hot water."

Lawton: "Hot water that you've been getting into? Ah, young man, look me in the eye!"

Campbell: "Your glass one, Doctor?"

Young Mr. Bemis: "Why, my dear, has your father got a glass eye?"

Mrs. Bemis: "Of *course* he hasn't! What an idea! I don't know what Mr. Campbell means."

Lawton: "I've no doubt he wishes I had a glass eye—two of them, for that

matter. But that isn't answering my question. Where is Mrs. Somers?"

Campbell: "That was my sister's question, and I did answer it. Have some tea, ladies? I'm glad you like my portrait, and that you think he's got my lovely turn of the head, and the way I hold my fan, and the character of my skirt; but I agree with you that it isn't half as pretty as I am."

The Ladies: "Oh, what shall we do to him? Prescribe for us, Doctor."

Campbell: "No, no! I want the Doctor's services myself. I don't want him to give me his medicines. I want him to give me away."

Lawton: "You're tired of giving yourself away, then?"

Campbell: "It's of no use. They won't have me."

Lawton: "Who won't?"

Campbell: "Oh, I'll leave Mrs. Somers to say."

XII

MRS. SOMERS and the OTHERS

Mrs. Somers, radiantly reappearing: "Say what?" She has hidden the traces of her tears from every one but the ladies, by a light application of powder, and she knows that they all know she has been crying, and this makes her a little more smiling. "Say what?" She addresses the company in general rather than Campbell.

Campbell, with caricatured tenderness: "Say yes."

Mrs. Somers: "What does he mean, Doctor?"

Lawton: "Oh, I'm afraid he's past all surgery. I give him over to you, Mrs. Somers."

Campbell: "There, now. She wasn't the last to do it!"

Mrs. Somers, with the resolution of a widow: "Well, I suppose there's nothing else for it, then. I'll see what can be

done for your patient, Doctor." She passes her hand through Campbell's arm, where he continues to stand behind the tea-table.

Mrs. Roberts, falling upon her and kissing her: "Amy, you don't *mean* it!"

Mrs. Bemis, embracing her in turn: "I never can believe it."

Mrs. Crashaw: "It is ridiculous! What, Willis?"

Mrs. Miller: "It does seem too nice to be true."

Bemis: "You astonish us!"

Roberts: "We never should have dreamed of it."

Young Mr. Bemis: "You *must* give us time to realize it."

Mrs. Wharton: "Is it *possible*?"

Miss Bayly: "*Is* it possible?" They all shake hands with Mrs. Somers in turn.

Roberts: "Isn't this rather sudden, Willis?"

Campbell: "Well, it is—for Mrs. Somers, perhaps. But *I've* found it awfully gradual."

Mrs. Somers: "Nonsense! It's an old story for both of us."

Campbell : " Well, what I like about it is, it's *true*. Founded on fact !"

Mrs. Roberts : " Really? I *can't* believe it !"

Campbell : " Well, I don't know whom all this charming incredulity's intended to flatter, but if it's I, I say no, *not* really, at all ! It's merely a little *coup de théâtre* we've been arranging."

Lawton, patting him on the shoulder : " One ahead, as usual."

Mrs. Somers : " Oh, thank you, Doctor ! There are two of us ahead now."


Lawton : " *I* believe you, at any rate. Bravo !" He initiates an applause in which all the rest join, while Campbell catches up Mrs. Somers's fan and unfurls it before both their faces.

THE END

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