

Celebrity, the Volume 01 eBook

Celebrity, the Volume 01 by Winston Churchill

The following sections of this BookRags Literature Study Guide is offprint from Gale's For Students Series: Presenting Analysis, Context, and Criticism on Commonly Studied Works: Introduction, Author Biography, Plot Summary, Characters, Themes, Style, Historical Context, Critical Overview, Criticism and Critical Essays, Media Adaptations, Topics for Further Study, Compare & Contrast, What Do I Read Next?, For Further Study, and Sources.

(c)1998-2002; (c)2002 by Gale. Gale is an imprint of The Gale Group, Inc., a division of Thomson Learning, Inc. Gale and Design and Thomson Learning are trademarks used herein under license.

The following sections, if they exist, are offprint from Beacham's Encyclopedia of Popular Fiction: "Social Concerns", "Thematic Overview", "Techniques", "Literary Precedents", "Key Questions", "Related Titles", "Adaptations", "Related Web Sites". (c)1994-2005, by Walton Beacham.

The following sections, if they exist, are offprint from Beacham's Guide to Literature for Young Adults: "About the Author", "Overview", "Setting", "Literary Qualities", "Social Sensitivity", "Topics for Discussion", "Ideas for Reports and Papers". (c)1994-2005, by Walton Beacham.

All other sections in this Literature Study Guide are owned and copyrighted by BookRags, Inc.



Contents

Celebrity, the Volume 01 eBook.....	1
Contents.....	2
Table of Contents.....	4
Page 1.....	5
Page 2.....	6
Page 3.....	7
Page 4.....	9
Page 5.....	11
Page 6.....	13
Page 7.....	15
Page 8.....	17
Page 9.....	18
Page 10.....	19
Page 11.....	21
Page 12.....	22
Page 13.....	23
Page 14.....	25
Page 15.....	27
Page 16.....	29
Page 17.....	30
Page 18.....	32
Page 19.....	34
Page 20.....	36
Page 21.....	38
Page 22.....	39

Table of Contents

Section	Table of Contents	Page
Start of eBook		1
CHAPTER I		1
CHAPTER II		2
CHAPTER III		10
CHAPTER IV		16



Page 1

CHAPTER I

I was about to say that I had known the Celebrity from the time he wore kilts. But I see I shall have to amend that, because he was not a celebrity then, nor, indeed, did he achieve fame until some time after I had left New York for the West. In the old days, to my commonplace and unobserving mind, he gave no evidences of genius whatsoever. He never read me any of his manuscripts, which I can safely say he would have done had he written any at that time, and therefore my lack of detection of his promise may in some degree be pardoned. But he had then none of the oddities and mannerisms which I hold to be inseparable from genius, and which struck my attention in after days when I came in contact with the Celebrity. Hence I am constrained to the belief that his eccentricity must have arrived with his genius, and both after the age of twenty-five. Far be it from me to question the talents of one upon whose head has been set the laurel of fame!

When I knew him he was a young man without frills or foibles, with an excellent head for business. He was starting in to practise law in a downtown office with the intention of becoming a great corporation lawyer. He used to drop into my chambers once in a while to smoke, and was first-rate company. When I gave a dinner there was generally a cover laid for him. I liked the man for his own sake, and even had he promised to turn out a celebrity it would have had no weight with me. I look upon notoriety with the same indifference as on the buttons on a man's shirt-front, or the crest on his note-paper.

When I went West, he fell out of my life. I probably should not have given him another thought had I not caught sight of his name, in old capitals, on a daintily covered volume in a book-stand. I had little time or inclination for reading fiction; my days were busy ones, and my nights were spent with law books. But I bought the volume out of curiosity, wondering the while whether he could have written it. I was soon set at rest, for the dedication was to a young woman of whom I had often heard him speak. The volume was a collection of short stories. On these I did not feel myself competent to sit in judgment, for my personal taste in fiction, if I could be said to have had any, took another turn. The stories dealt mainly with the affairs of aristocratic young men and aristocratic young women, and were differentiated to fit situations only met with in that society which does not have to send descriptions of its functions to the newspapers. The stories did not seem to me to touch life. They were plainly intended to have a bracing moral effect, and perhaps had this result for the people at whom they were aimed. They left with me the impression of a well-delivered stereopticon lecture, with characters about as life-like as the shadows on the screen, and whisking on and off, at the mercy of the operator. Their charm to me lay in the manner of the telling, the style, which I am forced to admit was delightful.



Page 2

But the book I had bought was a success, a great success, if the newspapers and the reports of the sales were to be trusted. I read the criticisms out of curiosity more than any other prompting, and no two of them were alike: they veered from extreme negative to extreme positive. I have to confess that it gratified me not a little to find the negatives for the most part of my poor way of thinking. The positives, on the other hand, declared the gifted young author to have found a manner of treatment of social life entirely new. Other critics still insisted it was social ridicule: but if this were so, the satire was too delicate for ordinary detection.

However, with the dainty volume my quondam friend sprang into fame. At the same time he cast off the chrysalis of a commonplace existence. He at once became the hero of the young women of the country from Portland, Maine, to Portland, Oregon, many of whom wrote him letters and asked him for his photograph. He was asked to tell what he really meant by the vague endings of this or that story. And then I began to hear rumors that his head was turning. These I discredited, of course. If true, I thought it but another proof of the undermining influence of feminine flattery, which few men, and fewer young men, can stand. But I watched his career with interest.

He published other books, of a high moral tone and unapproachable principle, which I read carefully for some ray of human weakness, for some stroke of nature untrammelled by the calling code of polite society. But in vain.

CHAPTER II

It was by a mere accident that I went West, some years ago, and settled in an active and thriving town near one of the Great Lakes. The air and bustle and smack of life about the place attracted me, and I rented an office and continued to read law, from force of habit, I suppose. My experience in the service of one of the most prominent of New York lawyers stood me in good stead, and gradually, in addition to a heterogeneous business of mines and lumber, I began to pick up a few clients. But in all probability I should be still pegging away at mines and lumber, and drawing up occasional leases and contracts, had it not been for Mr. Farquhar Fenelon Cooke, of Philadelphia. Although it has been specifically written that promotion to a young man comes neither from the East nor the West, nor yet from the South, Mr. Cooke arrived from the East, and in the nick of time for me.

I was indebted to Farrar for Mr. Cooke's acquaintance, and this obligation I have since in vain endeavored to repay. Farrar's profession was forestry: a graduate of an eastern college, he had gone abroad to study, and had roughed it with the skilled woodsmen of the Black Forest. Mr. Cooke, whom he represented, had large tracts of land in these parts, and Farrar likewise received an income from the state, whose legislature had at last opened its eyes to the timber depredations

Page 3

and had begun to buy up reserves. We had rooms in the same Elizabethan building at the corner of Main and Superior streets, but it was more than a year before I got farther than a nod with him. Farrar's nod in itself was a repulsion, and once you had seen it you mentally scored him from the list of your possible friends. Besides this freezing exterior he possessed a cutting and cynical tongue, and had but little confidence in the human race. These qualities did not tend to render him popular in a Western town, if indeed they would have recommended him anywhere, and I confess to have thought him a surly enough fellow, being guided by general opinion and superficial observation. Afterwards the town got to know him, and if it did not precisely like him, it respected him, which perhaps is better. And he gained at least a few warm-friends, among whom I deem it an honor to be mentioned.

Farrar's contempt for consequences finally brought him an unsought-for reputation. Admiration for him was born the day he pushed O'Meara out of his office and down a flight of stairs because he had undertaken to suggest that which should be done with the timber in Jackson County. By this summary proceeding Farrar lost the support of a faction, O'Meara being a power in the state and chairman of the forestry board besides. But he got rid of interference from that day forth.

Oddly enough my friendship with Farrar was an indirect result of the incident I have just related. A few mornings after, I was seated in my office trying to concentrate my mind on page twenty of volume ten of the Records when I was surprised by O'Meara himself, accompanied by two gentlemen whom I remembered to have seen on various witness stands. O'Meara was handsomely dressed, and his necktie made but a faint pretence of concealing the gorgeous diamond in his shirt-front. But his face wore an aggrieved air, and his left hand was neatly bound in black and tucked into his coat. He sank comfortably into my wicker chair, which creaked a protest, and produced two yellow-spotted cigars, chewing the end of one with much apparent relish and pushing the other at me. His two friends remained respectfully standing. I guessed at what was coming, and braced myself by refusing the cigar,—not a great piece of self-denial, by the way. But a case meant much to me then, and I did seriously regret that O'Meara was not a possible client. At any rate, my sympathy with Farrar in the late episode put him out of the question.

O'Meara cleared his throat and began gingerly to undo the handkerchief on his hand. Then he brought his fist down on the table so that the ink started from the stand and his cheeks shook with the effort.

"I'll make him pay for this!" he shouted, with an oath.

The other gentlemen nodded their approval, while I put the inkstand in a place of safety.

“You’re a pretty bright young man, Mr. Crocker,” he went on, a look of cunning coming into his little eyes, “but I guess you ain’t had too many cases to object to a big one.”



Page 4

“Did you come here to tell me that?” I asked.

He looked me over queerly, and evidently decided that I meant no effrontery.

“I came here to get your opinion,” he said, holding up a swollen hand, “but I want to tell you first that I ought to get ten thousand, not a cent less. That scoundrelly young upstart—”

“If you want my opinion,” I replied, trying to speak slowly, “it is that Mr. Farrar ought to get ten thousand dollars. And I think that would be only a moderate reward.”

I did not feel equal to pushing him into the street, as Farrar had done, and I have now but a vague notion of what he said and how he got there. But I remember that half an hour afterwards a man congratulated me openly in the bank.

That night I found a new friend, although at the time I thought Farrar’s visit to me the accomplishment of a perfunctory courtesy to a man who had refused to take a case against him. It was very characteristic of Farrar not to mention this until he rose to go. About half-past eight he sauntered in upon me, placing his hat precisely on the rack, and we talked until ten, which is to say that I talked and he commented. His observations were apt, if a trifle caustic, and it is needless to add that I found them entertaining. As he was leaving he held out his hand.

“I hear that O’Meara called on you to-day,” he said diffidently.

“Yes,” I answered, smiling, “I was sorry not to have been able to take his case.”

I sat up for an hour or more, trying to arrive at some conclusion about Farrar, but at length I gave it up. His visit had in it something impulsive which I could not reconcile with his manner. He surely owed me nothing for refusing a case against him, and must have known that my motives for so doing were not personal. But if I did not understand him, I liked him decidedly from that night forward, and I hoped that his advances had sprung from some other motive than politeness. And indeed we gradually drifted into a quasi-friendship. It became his habit, as he went out in the morning, to drop into my room for a match, and I returned the compliment by borrowing his coal oil when mine was out. At such times we would sit, or more frequently stand, discussing the affairs of the town and of the nation, for politics was an easy and attractive subject to us both. It was only in a general way that we touched upon each other’s concerns, this being dangerous ground with Farrar, who was ever ready to close up at anything resembling a confidence. As for me, I hope I am not curious, but I own to having had a curiosity about Farrar’s Philadelphia patron, to whom Farrar made but slight allusions. His very name—Farquhar Fenelon Cooke—had an odd sound which somehow betokened an odd man, and there was more than one bit of gossip afloat in the town of which he was the subject, notwithstanding the fact that he had never honored it with a visit. The



gossip was the natural result of Mr. Cooke's large properties in the vicinity. It has never been my habit, however, to press a friend on such matters, and I could easily understand and respect Farrar's reluctance to talk of one from whom he received an income.

Page 5

I had occasion, in the May of that year, to make a somewhat long business trip to Chicago, and on my return, much to my surprise, I found Farrar awaiting me in the railroad station. He smiled his wonted fraction by way of greeting, stopped to buy a newspaper, and finally leading me to his buggy, turned and drove out of town. I was completely mystified at such an unusual proceeding.

“What’s this for?” I asked.

“I shan’t bother you long,” he said; “I simply wanted the chance to talk to you before you got to your office. I have a Philadelphia client, a Mr. Cooke, of whom you may have heard me speak. Since you have been away the railroad has brought suit against him. The row is about the lands west of the Washita, on Copper Rise. It’s the devil if he loses, for the ground is worth the dollar bills to cover it. I telegraphed, and he got here yesterday. He wants a lawyer, and I mentioned you.”

There came over me then in a flash a comprehension of Farrar which I had failed to grasp before. But I was quite overcome at his suggestion.

“Isn’t it rather a big deal to risk me on?” I said. “Better go to Chicago and get Parks. He’s an expert in that sort of thing.” I am afraid my expostulation was weak.

“I merely spoke of you,” replied Farrar, coolly,—“and he has gone around to your office. He knows about Parks, and if he wants him he’ll probably take him. It all depends upon how you strike Cooke whether you get the case or not. I have never told you about him,” he added with some hesitation; “he’s a trifle queer, but a good fellow at the bottom. I should hate to see him lose his land.”

“How is the railroad mixed up in it?” I asked.

“I don’t know much about law, but it would seem as if they had a pretty strong case,” he answered. He went on to tell me what he knew of the matter in his clean, pithy sentences, often brutally cynical, as though he had not a spark of interest in any of it. Mr. Cooke’s claim to the land came from a maternal great-uncle, long since deceased, who had been a settler in these regions. The railroad answered that they had bought the land with other properties from the man, also deceased, to whom the old gentleman was alleged to have sold it. Incidentally I learned something of Mr. Cooke’s maternal ancestry.

We drove back to the office with some concern on my part at the prospect of so large a case. Sunning himself on the board steps, I saw for the first time Mr. Farquhar Fenelon Cooke. He was dressed out in broad gaiters and bright tweeds, like an English tourist, and his face might have belonged to Dagon, idol of the Philistines. A silver snaffle on a heavy leather watch guard which connected the pockets of his corduroy waistcoat, together with a huge gold stirrup in his Ascot tie, sufficiently proclaimed his tastes. But I



found myself continually returning to the countenance, and I still think I could have modelled a better face out of putty. The mouth was rather small, thick-tipped, and put in at an odd angle; the brown eyes were large, and from their habit of looking up at one lent to the round face an incongruous solemnity. But withal there was a perceptible acumen about the man which was puzzling in the extreme.



Page 6

“How are you, old man?” said he, hardly waiting for Farrar to introduce me. “Well, I hope.” It was pure cordiality, nothing more. He seemed to bubble over with it.

I said I was well, and invited him inside.

“No,” he said; “I like the look of the town. We can talk business here.”

And talk business he did, straight and to the point, so fast and indistinctly that at times I could scarcely follow him. I answered his rapid questions briefly, and as best I knew how. He wanted to know what chance he had to win the suit, and I told him there might be other factors involved beside those of which he had spoken. Plainly, also, that the character of his great-uncle was in question, an intimation which he did not appear to resent. But that there was no denying the fact that the railroad had a strong thing of it, and a good lawyer into the bargain.

“And don’t you consider yourself a good lawyer?” he cut in.

I pointed out that the railroad lawyer was a man of twice my age, experience, and reputation.

Without more ado, and before either Farrar or myself had time to resist, he had hooked an arm into each of us, and we were all three marching down the street in the direction of his hotel. If this was agony for me, I could see that it was keener agony for Farrar. And although Mr. Farquhar Fenelon Cooke had been in town but a scant twenty-four hours, it seemed as if he knew more of its inhabitants than both of us put together. Certain it is that he was less particular with his acquaintances. He hailed the most astonishing people with an easy air of freedom, now releasing my arm, now Farrar’s, to salute. He always saluted. He stopped to converse with a dozen men we had never seen, many of whom smelled strongly of the stable, and he invariably introduced Farrar as the forester of his estate, and me as his lawyer in the great quarrel with the railroad, until I began to wish I had never heard of Blackstone. And finally he steered us into the spacious bar of the Lake House.

The next morning the three of us were off early for a look at the contested property. It was a twenty-mile drive, and the last eight miles wound down the boiling Washita, still high with the melting snows of the pine lands. And even here the snows yet slept in the deeper hollows. unconscious of the budding green of the slopes. How heartily I wished Mr. Farquhar Fenelon Cooke back in Philadelphia! By his eternal accounts of his Germantown stables and of the blue ribbons of his hackneys he killed all sense of pleasure of the scene, and set up an irritation that was well-nigh unbearable. At length we crossed the river, climbed the foot-hills, and paused on the ridge. Below us lay the quaint inn and scattered cottages of Asquith, and beyond them the limitless and foam-flecked expanse of lake: and on our right, lifting from the shore by easy slopes for a mile at stretch, Farrar pointed out the timbered lands of Copper Rise, spread before us

like a map. But the appreciation of beauty formed no part of Mr. Cooke's composition, —that is, beauty as Farrar and I knew it.

Page 7

“If you win that case, old man,” he cried, striking me a great whack between the shoulder-blades, “charge any fee you like; I’ll pay it! And I’ll make such a country-place out of this as was never seen west of New York state, and call it Mohair, after my old trotter. I’ll put a palace on that clearing, with the stables just over the knoll. They’ll beat the Germantown stables a whole lap. And that strip of level,” he continued, pointing to a thinly timbered bit, “will hold a mile track nicely.”

Farrar and I gasped: it was as if we had tumbled into the Washita.

“It will take money, Mr. Cooke,” said Farrar, “and you haven’t won the suit yet.”

“Damn the money!” said Mr. Cooke, and we knew he meant it.

Over the episodes of that interminable morning it will, be better to pass lightly. It was spent by Farrar and me in misery. It was spent by Mr. Farquhar Fenelon Cooke in an ecstasy of enjoyment, driving over and laying out Mohair, and I must admit he evinced a surprising genius in his planning, although, according to Farrar, he broke every sacred precept of landscape gardening again and again. He displayed the enthusiasm of a pioneer, and the energy of a Napoleon. And if he were too ignorant to accord to nature a word of praise, he had the grace and intelligence to compliment Farrar on the superb condition of the forests, and on the judgment shown in laying out the roads, which were so well chosen that even in this season they were well drained and dry. That day, too, my views were materially broadened, and I received an insight into the methods and possibilities of my friend’s profession sufficient to instil a deeper respect both for it and for him. The crowded spots had been skilfully thinned of the older trees to give the younger ones a chance, and the harmony of the whole had been carefully worked out. Now we drove under dark pines and hemlocks, and then into a lighter relief of birches and wild cherries, or a copse of young beeches. And I learned that the estate had not only been paying the taxes and its portion of Farrar’s salary, but also a considerable amount into Mr. Cooke’s pocket the while it was being improved.

Mr. Cooke made his permanent quarters at the Lake House, and soon became one of the best-known characters about town. He seemed to enjoy his popularity, and I am convinced that he would have been popular in spite of his now-famous quarrel with the railroad. His easy command of profanity, his generous use of money, his predilection for sporting characters, of whom he was king; his ready geniality and good-fellowship alike with the clerk of the Lake House or the Mayor, not to mention his own undeniable personality, all combined to make him a favorite. He had his own especial table in the dining-room, called all the waiters by their first names, and they fought for the privilege of attending him. He likewise called the barkeepers by their first names, and had his own particular corner of the bar, where none dared intrude, and where he could almost invariably be found when not in my office. From this corner he dealt out cigars to the deserving, held stake moneys, decided all bets, and refereed all differences. His name

appeared in the personal column of one of the local papers on the average of twice a week, or in lieu thereof one of his choicest stories in the “Notes about Town” column.

Page 8

The case was to come up early in July, and I spent most of my time, to the detriment of other affairs, in preparing for it. I was greatly hampered in my work by my client, who filled my office with his tobacco-smoke and that of his friends, and he took it very much for granted that he was going to win the suit. Fortune had always played into his hands, he said, and I had no little difficulty in convincing him that matters had passed from his hands into mine. In this I believe I was never entirely successful. I soon found, too, that he had no ideas whatever on the value of discretion, and it was only by repeated threats of absolute failure that I prevented our secret tactics from becoming the property of his sporting fraternity and of the town.

The more I worked on the case, the clearer it became to me that Mr. Farquhar Fenelon Cooke's great-uncle had been either a consummate scoundrel or a lunatic, and that our only hope of winning must be based on proving him one or the other; it did not matter much which, for my expectations at best were small. When I had at length settled to this conclusion I confided it as delicately as possible to my client, who was sitting at the time with his feet cocked up on the office table, reading a pink newspaper.

"Which'll be the easier to prove?" he asked, without looking up.

"It would be more charitable to prove he had been out of his mind," I replied, "and perhaps easier."

"Charity be damned," said this remarkable man. "I'm after the property."

So I decided on insanity. I hunted up and subpoenaed white-haired witnesses for miles around. Many of them shook their heads when they spoke of Mr. Cooke's great-uncle, and some knew more of his private transactions than I could have wished, and I trembled lest my own witnesses should be turned against me. I learned more of Mr. Cooke's great-uncle than I knew of Mr. Cooke himself, and to the credit of my client be it said that none of his relative's traits were apparent in him, with the possible exception of insanity; and that defect, if it existed in the grand-nephew, took in him a milder and less criminal turn. The old rascal, indeed, had so cleverly worded his deed of sale as to obtain payment without transfer. It was a trifle easier to avoid being specific in that country in his day than it is now, and the document was, in my opinion, sufficiently vague to admit of a double meaning. The original sale had been made to a man, now dead, whom the railroad had bought out. The Copper Rise property was mentioned among the other lands in the will in favor of Mr. Farquhar Fenelon Cooke, and the latter had gone ahead improving them and increasing their output in spite of the repeated threats of the railroad to bring suit. And it was not until its present attorney had come in and investigated the title that the railroad had resorted to the law. I mention here, by the way, that my client was the sole heir.



Page 9

But as the time of the sessions drew near, the outlook for me was anything but bright. It is true that my witnesses were quite willing to depose that his actions were queer and out of the common, but these witnesses were for the most part venerable farmers and backwoodsmen: expert testimony was deplorably lacking. In this extremity it was Mr. Farquhar Fenelon Cooke himself who came unwittingly to my rescue. He had bought a horse,—he could never be in a place long without one,—which was chiefly remarkable, he said, for picking up his hind feet as well as his front ones. However he may have differed from the ordinary run of horses, he was shortly attacked by one of the thousand ills to which every horse is subject. I will not pretend to say what it was. I found Mr. Cooke one morning at his usual place in the Lake House bar holding forth with more than common vehemence and profanity on the subject of veterinary surgeons. He declared there was not a veterinary surgeon in the whole town fit to hold a certificate, and his listeners nodded an extreme approval to this sentiment. A grizzled old fellow who kept a stock farm back in the country chanced to be there, and managed to get a word in on the subject during one of my client's rare pauses.

“Yes,” he said, “that’s so. There ain’t one of ’em now fit to travel with young Doctor Vane, who was here some fifteen years gone by. He weren’t no horse-doctor, but he could fix up a foundered horse in a night as good as new. If your uncle was livin’, he’d back me on that, Mr. Cooke.”

Here was my chance. I took the old man aside, and two or three glasses of Old Crow launched him into reminiscence.

“Where is Doctor Vane now?” I asked finally.

“Over to Minneapolis, sir, with more rich patients nor he can take care of. Wasn’t my darter over there last month, and seen him? And demned if he didn’t pull up his carriage and talk to her. Here’s luck to him.”

I might have heard much more of the stockraiser had I stayed, but I fear I left him somewhat abruptly in my haste to find Farrar. Only three days remained before the case was to come up. Farrar readily agreed to go to Minneapolis, and was off on the first train that afternoon. I would have asked Mr. Cooke to go had I dared trust him, such was my anxiety to have him out of the way, if only for a time. I did not tell him about the doctor. He sat up very late with me that night on the Lake House porch to give me a rubbing down, as he expressed it, as he might have admonished some favorite jockey before a sweepstake. “Take it easy, old man,” he would say repeatedly, “and don’t give things the bit before you’re sure of their wind!”



Page 10

Days passed, and not a word from Farrar. The case opened with Mr. Cooke's friends on the front benches. The excitement it caused has rarely been equalled in that section, but I believe this was due less to its sensational features than to Mr. Cooke, who had an abnormal though unconscious talent for self-advertisement. It became manifest early that we were losing. Our testimony, as I had feared, was not strong enough, although they said we were making a good fight of it. I was racked with anxiety about Farrar; at last, when I had all but given up hope, I received a telegram from him dated at Detroit, saying he would arrive with the doctor that evening. This was Friday, the fourth day of the trial.

The doctor turned out to be a large man, well groomed and well fed, with a twinkle in his eye. He had gone to Narragansett Pier for the summer, whither Farrar had followed him. On being introduced, Mr. Cooke at once invited him out to have a drink.

"Did you know my uncle?" asked my client.

"Yes," said the doctor, "I should say I did."

"Poor old duffer," said Mr. Cooke, with due solemnity; "I understand he was a maniac."

"Well," said the doctor, while we listened with a breathless interest, "he wasn't exactly a maniac, but I think I can safely say he was a lunatic."

"Then here's to insanity!" said the irrepressible, his glass swung in mid-air, when a thought struck him, and he put it down again and looked hard at the doctor.

"Will you swear to it?" he demanded.

"I would swear to it before Saint Peter," said the doctor, fervently.

He swore to it before a jury, which was more to the point, and we won our case. It did not even go to the court of appeals; I suppose the railroad thought it cheaper to drop it, since no right of way was involved. And the decision was scarcely announced before Mr. Farquhar Fenelon Cooke had begun work on his new country place, Mohair.

I have oftentimes been led to consider the relevancy of this chapter, and have finally decided to insert it. I concluded that the actual narrative of how Mr. Cooke came to establish his country-place near Asquith would be interesting, and likewise throw some light on that gentleman's character. And I ask the reader's forbearance for the necessary personal history involved. Had it not been for Mr. Cooke's friendship for me I should not have written these pages.



CHAPTER III

Events, are consequential or inconsequential irrespective of their size. The wars of Troy were fought for a woman, and Charles VIII, of France, bumped his head against a stone doorway and died because he did not stoop low enough. And to descend from history down to my own poor chronicle, Mr. Cooke's railroad case, my first experience at the bar of any gravity or magnitude, had tied to it a string of consequences then far beyond my guessing. The suit was my stepping-stone not only to a larger and more remunerative practice, but also, I believe, to the position of district attorney, which I attained shortly afterwards.



Page 11

Mr. Cooke had laid out Mohair as ruthlessly as Napoleon planned the new Paris; though not, I regret to say, with a like genius. Fortunately Farrar interposed and saved the grounds, but there was no guardian angel to do a like turn for the house. Mr. Langdon Willis, of Philadelphia, was the architect who had nominal charge of the building. He had regularly submitted some dozen plans for Mr. Cooke's approval, which were as regularly rejected. My client believed, in common with a great many other people, that architects should be driven and not followed, and was plainly resolved to make this house the logical development of many cherished ideas. It is not strange, therefore, that the edifice was completed by a Chicago contractor who had less self-respect than Mr. Willis, the latter having abruptly refused to have his name tacked on to the work.

Mohair was finished and ready for occupation in July, two years after the suit. I drove out one day before Mr. Cooke's arrival to look it over. The grounds, where Farrar had had matters pretty much his own way, to my mind rivalled the best private parks in the East. The stables were filled with a score or so of Mr. Cooke's best horses, brought hither in his private cars, and the trotters were exercising on the track. The middle of June found Farrar and myself at the Asquith Inn. It was Farrar's custom to go to Asquith in the summer, being near the forest properties in his charge; and since Asquith was but five miles from the county-seat it was convenient for me, and gave me the advantages of the lake breezes and a comparative rest, which I should not have had in town. At that time Asquith was a small community of summer residents from Cincinnati, Chicago, St. Louis, and other western cities, most of whom owned cottages and the grounds around them. They were a quiet lot that long association had made clannish; and they had a happy faculty, so rare in summer resorts, of discrimination between an amusement and a nuisance. Hence a great many diversions which are accounted pleasurable elsewhere are at Asquith set down at their true value. It was, therefore, rather with resentment than otherwise that the approaching arrival of Mr. Cooke and the guests he was likely to have at Mohair were looked upon.

I had not been long at Asquith before I discovered that Farrar was acting in a peculiar manner, though I was longer in finding out what the matter was. I saw much less of him than in town. Once in a while in the evenings, after ten, he would run across me on the porch of the inn, or drift into my rooms. Even after three years of more or less intimacy between us, Farrar still wore his exterior of pessimism and indifference, the shell with which he chose to hide a naturally warm and affectionate disposition. In the dining-room we sat together at the end of a large table set aside for bachelors and small families of two or three, and it seemed as though we had all the humorists and storytellers in that place.

Page 12

And Farrar as a source of amusement proved equal to the best of them. He would wait until a story was well under way, and then annihilate the point of it with a cutting cynicism and set the table in a roar of laughter. Among others who were seated here was a Mr. Trevor, of Cincinnati, one of the pioneers of Asquith. Mr. Trevor was a trifle bombastic, with a tendency towards gesticulation, an art which he had learned in no less a school than the Ohio State Senate. He was a self-made man,—a fact which he took good care should not escape one,—and had amassed his money, I believe, in the dry-goods business. He always wore a long, shiny coat, a low, turned-down collar, and a black tie, all of which united to give him the general appearance of a professional pallbearer.

But Mr. Trevor possessed a daughter who amply made up for his shortcomings. She was the only one who could meet Farrar on his own ground, and rarely a meal passed that they did not have a tilt. They filled up the holes of the conversation with running commentaries, giving a dig at the luckless narrator and a side-slap at each other, until one would have given his oath they were sworn enemies. At least I, in the innocence of my heart, thought so until I was forcibly enlightened. I had taken rather a prejudice to Miss Trevor. I could find no better reason than her antagonism to Farrar. I was revolving this very thing in my mind one day as I was paddling back to the inn after a look at my client's new pier and boat-houses, when I descried Farrar's catboat some distance out. The lake was glass, and the sail hung lifeless. It was near lunch-time, and charity prompted me to head for the boat and give it a tow homeward. As I drew near, Farrar himself emerged from behind the sail and asked me, with a great show of nonchalance, what I wanted.

"To tow you back for lunch, of course," I answered, used to his ways.

He threw me a line, which I made fast to the stern, and then he disappeared again. I thought this somewhat strange, but as the boat was a light one, I towed it in and hitched it to the wharf, when, to my great astonishment, there disembarked not Farrar, but Miss Trevor. She leaped lightly ashore and was gone before I could catch my breath, while Farrar let down the sail and offered me a cigarette. I had learned a lesson in appearances.

It could not have been very long after this that I was looking over my batch of New York papers, which arrived weekly, when my eye was arrested by a name. I read the paragraph, which announced the fact that my friend the Celebrity was about to sail for Europe in search of "color" for his next novel; this was already contracted for at a large price, and was to be of a more serious nature than any of his former work. An interview was published in which the Celebrity had declared that a new novel was to appear in a short time. I do not know what impelled me, but I began at once to search through the other papers, and found almost identically the same notice in all of them.



Page 13

By one of those odd coincidents which sometimes start one to thinking, the Celebrity was the subject of a lively discussion when I reached the table that evening. I had my quota of information concerning his European trip, but I did not commit myself when appealed to for an opinion. I had once known the man (which, however, I did not think it worth while to mention) and I did not feel justified in criticising him in public. Besides, what I knew of him was excellent, and entirely apart from the literary merit or demerit of his work. The others, however, were within their right when they censured or praised him, and they did both. Farrar, in particular, surprised me by the violence of his attacks, while Miss Trevor took up the Celebrity's defence with equal ardor. Her motives were beyond me now. The Celebrity's works spoke for themselves, she said, and she could not and would not believe such injurious reports of one who wrote as he did.

The next day I went over to the county-seat, and got back to Asquith after dark. I dined alone, and afterwards I was strolling up and down one end of the long veranda when I caught sight of a lonely figure in a corner, with chair tilted back and feet on the rail. A gleam of a cigar lighted up the face, and I saw that it was Farrar. I sat down beside him, and we talked commonplaces for a while, Farrar's being almost monosyllabic, while now and again feminine voices and feminine laughter reached our ears from the far end of the porch. They seemed to go through Farrar like a knife, and he smoked furiously, his lips tightly compressed the while. I had a dozen conjectures, none of which I dared voice. So I waited in patience.

"Crocker," said he, at length, "there's a man here from Boston, Charles Wrexell Allen; came this morning. You know Boston. Have you ever heard of him?"

"Allen," I repeated, reflecting; "no Charles Wrexell."

"It is Charles Wrexell, I think," said Farrar, as though the matter were trivial. "However, we can go into the register and make sure."

"What about him?" I asked, not feeling inclined to stir.

The Celebrity

"Oh, nothing. An arrival is rather an occurrence, though. You can hear him down there now," he added, tossing his head towards the other end of the porch, "with the women around him."

In fact, I did catch the deeper sound of a man's voice among the lighter tones, and the voice had a ring to it which was not wholly unfamiliar, although I could not place it.

I threw Farrar a bait.

"He must make friends easily," I said.



“With the women?—yes,” he replied, so scathingly that I was forced to laugh in spite of myself.

“Let us go in and look at the register,” I suggested. “You may have his name wrong.”

We went in accordingly. Sure enough, in bold, heavy characters, was the name Charles Wrexell Allen written out in full. That handwriting was one in a thousand. I made sure I had seen it before, and yet I did not know it; and the more I puzzled over it the more confused I became. I turned to Farrar.



Page 14

“I have had a poor cigar passed off on me and deceive me for a while. That is precisely the case here. I think I should recognize your man if I were to see him.”

“Well,” said Farrar, “here’s your chance.”

The company outside were moving in. Two or three of the older ladies came first, carrying their wraps; then a troop of girls, among whom was Miss Trevor; and lastly, a man. Farrar and I had walked to the door while the women turned into the drawing-room, so that we were brought face to face with him, suddenly. At sight of me he halted abruptly, as though he had struck the edge of a door, changed color, and held out his hand, tentatively. Then he withdrew it again, for I made no sign of recognition.

It was the Celebrity!

I felt a shock of disgust as I passed out. Masquerading, it must be admitted, is not pleasant to the taste; and the whole farce, as it flashed through my mind,—his advertised trip, his turning up here under an assumed name, had an ill savor. Perhaps some of the things they said of him might be true, after all.

“Who the devil is he?” said Farrar, dropping for once his indifference; “he looked as if he knew you.”

I evaded.

“He may have taken me for some one else,” I answered with all the coolness I could muster. “I have never met any one of his name. His voice and handwriting, however, are very much like those of a man I used to know.”

Farrar was very poor company that evening, and left me early. I went to my rooms and had taken down a volume of Carlyle, who can generally command my attention, when there came a knock at the door.

“Come in,” I replied, with an instinctive sense of prophecy.

This was fulfilled at once by the appearance of the Celebrity. He was attired—for the details of his dress forced themselves upon me vividly—in a rough-spun suit of knickerbockers, a colored-shirt having a large and prominent gold stud, red and brown stockings of a diamond pattern, and heavy walking-boots. And he entered with an air of assurance that was maddening.

“My dear Crocker,” he exclaimed, “you have no idea how delighted I am to see you here!”

I rose, first placing a book-mark in Carlyle, and assured him that I was surprised to see him here.



“Surprised to see me!” he returned, far from being dampened by my manner. “In fact, I am a little surprised to see myself here.”

He sank back on the window-seat and clasped his hands behind his head.

“But first let me thank you for respecting my incognito,” he said.

I tried hard to keep my temper, marvelling at the ready way he had chosen to turn my action.

“And now,” he continued, “I suppose you want to know why I came out here.” He easily supplied the lack of cordial solicitation on my part.

“Yes, I should like to know,” I said.

Thus having aroused my curiosity, he took his time about appeasing it, after the custom of his kind. He produced a gold cigarette case, offered me a cigarette, which I refused, took one himself and blew the smoke in rings toward the ceiling. Then, raising himself on his elbow, he drew his features together in such a way as to lead me to believe he was about to impart some valuable information.



Page 15

“Crocker,” said he, “it’s the very deuce to be famous, isn’t it?”

“I suppose it is,” I replied curtly, wondering what he was driving at; “I have never tried it.”

“An ordinary man, such as you, can’t conceive of the torture a fellow in my position is obliged to go through the year round, but especially in the summer, when one wishes to go off on a rest. You know what I mean, of course.”

“I am afraid I do not,” I answered, in a vain endeavor to embarrass him.

“You’re thicker than when I used to know you, then,” he returned with candor. “To tell the truth, Crocker, I often wish I were back at the law, and had never written a line. I am paying the penalty of fame. Wherever I go I am hounded to death by the people who have read my books, and they want to dine and wine me for the sake of showing me off at their houses. I am heartily sick and tired of it all; you would be if you had to go through it. I could stand a winter, but the worst comes in the summer, when one meets the women who fire all sorts of socio-psychological questions at one for solution, and who have suggestions for stories.” He shuddered.

“And what has all this to do with your coming here?” I cut in, strangling a smile.

He twisted his cigarette at an acute angle with his face, and looked at me out of the corner of his eye.

“I’ll try to be a little plainer,” he went on, sighing as one unused to deal with people who require crosses on their t’s. “I’ve been worried almost out of my mind with attention—nothing but attention the whole time. I can’t go on the street but what I’m stared at and pointed out, so I thought of a scheme to relieve it for a time. It was becoming unbearable. I determined to assume a name and go to some quiet little place for the summer, West, if possible, where I was not likely to be recognized, and have three months of rest.”

He paused, but I offered no comment.

“Well, the more I thought of it, the better I liked the idea. I met a western man at the club and asked him about western resorts, quiet ones. ‘Have you heard of Asquith?’ says he. ‘No,’ said I; ‘describe it.’ He did, and it was just the place; quaint, restful, and retired. Of course I put him off the track, but I did not count on striking you. My man boxed up, and we were off in twenty-four hours, and here I am.”

Now all this was very fine, but not at all in keeping with the Celebrity’s character as I had come to conceive it. The idea that adulation ever cloyed on him was ludicrous in itself. In fact I thought the whole story fishy, and came very near to saying so.

“You won’t tell anyone who I am, will you?” he asked anxiously.



He even misinterpreted my silences.

“Certainly not,” I replied. “It is no concern of mine. You might come here as Emil Zola or Ralph Waldo Emerson and it would make no difference to me.”

He looked at me dubiously, even suspiciously.



Page 16

“That’s a good chap,” said he, and was gone, leaving me to reflect on the ways of genius.

And the longer I reflected, the more positive I became that there existed a more potent reason for the Celebrity’s disguise than ennui. As actions speak louder than words, so does a man’s character often give the lie to his tongue.

CHAPTER IV

A Lion in an ass’s skin is still a lion in spite of his disguise. Conversely, the same might be said of an ass in a lion’s skin. The Celebrity ran after women with the same readiness and helplessness that a dog will chase chickens, or that a stream will run down hill. Women differ from chickens, however, in the fact that they find pleasure in being chased by a certain kind of a man. The Celebrity was this kind of a man. From the moment his valet deposited his luggage in his rooms, Charles Wrexell Allen became the social hero of Asquith. It is by straws we are enabled to tell which way the wind is blowing, and I first noticed his partiality for Miss Trevor from the absence of the lively conflicts she was wont to have with Farrar. These ceased entirely after the Celebrity’s arrival. It was the latter who now commanded the conversation at our table.

I was truly sorry for Farrar, for I knew the man, the depth of his nature, and the scope of the shock. He carried it off altogether too well, and both the studied lightness of his actions and the increased carelessness of his manner made me fear that what before was feigned, might turn to a real bitterness.

For Farrar’s sake, if the Celebrity had been content with women in general, all would have been well; but he was unable to generalize, in one sense, and to particularize, in another. And it was plain that he wished to monopolize Miss Trevor, while still retaining a hold upon the others. For my sake, had he been content with women alone, I should have had no cause to complain. But it seemed that I had an attraction for him, second only to women, which I could not account for. And I began to be cursed with a great deal of his company. Since he was absolutely impervious to hints, and would not take no for an answer, I was helpless. When he had no engagement he would thrust himself on me. He seemed to know by intuition—for I am very sure I never told him—what my amusement was to be the mornings I did not go to the county-seat, and he would invariably turn up, properly equipped, as I was making my way with judge Short to the tennis court, or carrying my oars to the water. It was in vain that I resorted to subterfuge: that I went to bed early intending to be away before the Celebrity’s rising hour. I found he had no particular rising hour. No matter how early I came down, I would find him on the veranda, smoking cigarettes, or otherwise his man would be there with a message to say that his master would shortly join me if I would kindly wait. And at last I began to realize in my harassed soul that all elusion was futile, and to take such holidays as I could get, when he was off with a girl, in a spirit of thankfulness.



Page 17

Much of this persecution I might have put up with, indeed, had I not heard, in one way or another, that he was doing me the honor of calling me his intimate. This I could not stand, and I soberly resolved to leave Asquith and go back to town, which I should indeed have done if deliverance had not arrived from an unexpected quarter.

One morning I had been driven to the precarious refuge afforded by the steps of the inn, after rejecting offers from the Celebrity to join him in a variety of amusements. But even here I was not free from interruption, for he was seated on a horse-block below me, playing with a fox terrier. Judge Short had gone to town, and Farrar was off for a three days' cruise up the lake. I was bitterly regretting I had not gone with him when the distant notes of a coach horn reached my ear, and I descried a four-in-hand winding its way up the inn road from the direction of Mohair.

"That must be your friend Cooke," remarked the Celebrity, looking up.

There could be no doubt of it. With little difficulty I recognized on the box the familiar figure of my first important client, and beside him was a lady whom I supposed to be Mrs. Farquhar Fenelon Cooke, although I had had no previous knowledge that such a person existed. The horses were on a brisk trot, and Mr. Cooke seemed to be getting the best out of them for the benefit of the sprinkling of people on the inn porch. Indeed, I could not but admire the dexterous turn of the wrist which served Mr. Cooke to swing his leaders into the circle and up the hill, while the liveried guard leaned far out in anticipation of a stumble. Mr. Cooke hailed me with a beaming smile and a flourish of the whip as he drew up and descended from the box.

"Maria," he exclaimed, giving me a hearty grip, "this is the man that won Mohair. My wife, Crocker."

I was somewhat annoyed at this effusiveness before the Celebrity, but I looked up and caught Mrs. Cooke's eye. It was the calm eye of a general.

"I am glad of the opportunity to thank you, Mr. Crocker," she said simply. And I liked her from that moment.

Mr. Cooke at once began a tirade against the residents of Asquith for permitting a sandy and generally disgraceful condition of the roads. So roundly did he vituperate the inn management in particular, and with such a loud flow of words, that I trembled lest he should be heard on the veranda. The Celebrity stood by the block, in an amazement which gave me a wicked pleasure, and it was some minutes before I had the chance to introduce him.

Mr. Cooke's idea of an introduction, however, was no mere word-formula: it was fraught with a deeper and a bibulous meaning. He presented the Celebrity to his wife, and then invited both of us to go inside with him by one of those neat and cordial paraphrases in

which he was skilled. I preferred to remain with Mrs. Cooke, and it was with a gleam of hope at a possible deliverance from my late persecution that I watched the two disappear together through the hall and into the smoking-room.



Page 18

“How do you like Mohair?” I asked Mrs. Cooke.

“Do you mean the house or the park?” she laughed; and then, seeing my embarrassment, she went on: “Oh, the house is just like everything else Fenelon meddles with. Outside it’s a mixture of all the styles, and inside a hash of all the nationalities from Siamese to Spanish. Fenelon hangs the Oriental tinsels he has collected on pieces of black baronial oak, and the coat-of-arms he had designed by our Philadelphia jewellers is stamped on the dining-room chairs, and even worked into the fire screens.”

There was nothing paltry in her criticism of her husband, nothing she would not have said to his face. She was a woman who made you feel this, for sincerity was written all over her. I could not help wondering why she gave Mr. Cooke line in the matter of household decoration, unless it was that he considered Mohair his own, private hobby, and that she humored him. Mrs. Cooke was not without tact, and I have no doubt she perceived my reluctance to talk about her husband and respected it.

“We drove down to bring you back to luncheon,” she said.

I thanked her and accepted. She was curious to hear about Asquith and its people, and I told her all I knew.

“I should like to meet some of them,” she explained, “for we intend having a cotillon at Mohair,—a kind of house-warming, you know. A party of Mr. Cooke’s friends is coming out for it in his car, and he thought something of inviting the people of Asquith up for a dance.”

I had my doubts concerning the wisdom of an entertainment, the success of which depended on the fusion of a party of Mr. Cooke’s friends and a company from Asquith. But I held my peace. She shot a question at me suddenly:

“Who is this Mr. Allen?”

“He registers from Boston, and only came a fortnight ago,” I replied vaguely.

“He doesn’t look quite right; as though he had been set down on the wrong planet, you know,” said Mrs. Cooke, her finger on her temple. “What is he like?”

“Well,” I answered, at first with uncertainty, then with inspiration, “he would do splendidly to lead your cotillon, if you think of having one.”

“So you do not dance, Mr. Crocker?”

I was somewhat set back by her perspicuity.



“No, I do not,” said I.

“I thought not,” she said, laughing. It must have been my expression which prompted her next remark.

“I was not making fun of you,” she said, more soberly; “I do not like Mr. Allen any better than you do, and I have only seen him once.”

“But I have not said I did not like him,” I objected.

“Of course not,” said Mrs. Cooke, quizzically.

At that moment, to my relief, I discerned the Celebrity and Mr. Cooke in the hallway.

“Here they come, now,” she went on. “I do wish Fenelon would keep his hands off the people he meets. I can feel he is going to make an intimate of that man. Mark my words, Mr. Crocker.”



Page 19

I not only marked them, I prayed for their fulfilment.

There was that in Mr. Cooke which, for want of a better name, I will call instinct. As he came down the steps, his arm linked in that of the Celebrity, his attitude towards his wife was both apologetic and defiant. He had at once the air of a child caught with a forbidden toy, and that of a stripling of twenty-one who flaunts a cigar in his father's face.

"Maria," he said, "Mr. Allen has consented to come back with us for lunch."

We drove back to Mohair, Mr. Cooke and the Celebrity on the box, Mrs. Cooke and I behind. Except to visit the boathouses I had not been to Mohair since the day of its completion, and now the full beauty of the approach struck me for the first time. We swung by the lodge, the keeper holding open the iron gate as we passed, and into the wide driveway, hewn, as it were, out of the virgin forest. The sandy soil had been strengthened by a deep road-bed of clay imported from the interior, which was spread in turn with a fine gravel, which crunched under the heavy wheels. From the lodge to the house, a full mile, branches had been pruned to let the sunshine sift through in splotches, but the wild nature of the place had been skilfully retained. We curved hither and thither under the giant trees until suddenly, as a whip straightens in the snapping, one of the ancient tribes of the forest might have sent an arrow down the leafy gallery into the open, and at the far end we caught sight of the palace framed in the vista. It was a triumph for Farrar, and I wished that the palace had been more worthy.

The Celebrity did not stint his praises of Mohair, coming up the drive, but so lavish were his comments on the house that they won for him a lasting place in Mr. Cooke's affections, and encouraged my client to pull up his horses in a favorable spot, and expand on the beauties of the mansion.

"Taking it altogether," said he, complacently, "it is rather a neat box, and I let myself loose on it. I had all these ideas I gathered knocking about the world, and I gave them to Willis, of Philadelphia, to put together for me. But he's honest enough not to claim the house. Take, for instance, that minaret business on the west; I picked that up from a mosque in Algiers. The oriel just this side is whole cloth from Haddon Hall, and the galleried porch next it from a Florentine villa. The conical capped tower I got from a French chateau, and some of the features on the south from a Buddhist temple in Japan. Only a little blending and grouping was necessary, and Willis calls himself an architect, and wasn't equal to it. Now," he added, "get the effect. Did you ever see another house like it?"

"Magnificent!" exclaimed the Celebrity.

"And then," my client continued, warming under this generous appreciation, "there's something very smart about those colors. They're my racing colors. Of course the



granite's a little off, but it isn't prominent. Willis kicked hard when it came to painting the oriel yellow, but an architect always takes it for granted he knows it all, and a—"



Page 20

"Fenelon," said Mrs. Cooke, "luncheon is waiting."

Mrs. Cooke dominated at luncheon and retired, and it is certain that both Mr. Cooke and the Celebrity breathed more freely when she had gone. If her criticisms on the exterior of the house were just, those on the interior were more so. Not only did I find the coat-of-arms set forth on the chairs, fire-screens, and other prominent articles, but it was even cut into the swinging door of the butler's pantry. The motto I am afraid my client never took the trouble to have translated, and I am inclined to think his jewellers put up a little joke on him when they chose it. "Be Sober and Boast not."

I observed that Mrs. Cooke, when she chose, could exert the subduing effect on her husband of a soft pedal on a piano; and during luncheon she kept, the soft pedal on. And the Celebrity, being in some degree a kindred spirit, was also held in check. But his wife had no sooner left the room when Mr. Cooke began on the subject uppermost in his mind. I had suspected that his trip to Asquith that morning was for a purpose at which Mrs. Cooke had hinted. But she, with a woman's tact, had aimed to accomplish by degrees that which her husband would carry by storm.

"You've been at Asquith sometime, Crocker," Mr. Cooke began, "long enough to know the people."

"I know some of them," I said guardedly. But the rush was not to be stemmed.

"How many do you think you can muster for that entertainment of mine? Fifty? I ought to have fifty, at least. Suppose you pick out fifty, and send me up the names. I want good lively ones, you understand, that will stir things up."

"I am afraid there are not fifty of that kind there," I replied.

His face fell, but brightened again instantly. He appealed to the Celebrity.

"How about it, old man?" said he.

The Celebrity answered, with becoming modesty, that the Asquithians were benighted. They had never had any one to show them how to enjoy life. But there was hope for them.

"That's it," exclaimed my client, slapping his thigh, and turning triumphantly to me, he continued, "You're all right, Crocker, and know enough to win a damned big suit, but you're not the man to steer a delicate thing of this kind."

This is how, to my infinite relief, the Celebrity came to engineer the matter of the housewarming; and to him it was much more congenial. He accepted the task cheerfully, and went about it in such a manner as to leave no doubt in my mind as to its ultimate success. He was a master hand at just such problems, and this one had a

double attraction. It pleased him to be thought the arbiter of such a worthy cause, while he acquired a prominence at Asquith which satisfied in some part a craving which he found inseparable from incognito.

Page 21

His tactics were worthy of a skilled diplomatist. Before we left Mohair that day he had exacted as a condition that Mr. Cooke should not appear at the inn or in its vicinity until after the entertainment. To this my client readily pledged himself with that absolute freedom from suspicion which formed one of the most admirable traits of his character. The Celebrity, being intuitively quick where women were concerned, had surmised that Mrs. Cooke did not like him; but as her interests in the affair of the cotillon coincided with those of Mr. Cooke, she was available as a means to an end. The Celebrity deemed her, from a social standpoint, decidedly the better part of the Mohair establishment, and he contrived, by a system of manoeuvres I failed to grasp, to throw her forward while he kept Mr. Cooke in the background.

He had much to contend with; above all, an antecedent prejudice against the Cookes, in reality a prejudice against the world, the flesh, and the devil, natural to any quiet community, and of which Mohair and its appurtenances were taken as the outward and visible signs. Older people came to Asquith for simplicity and rest, and the younger ones were brought there for these things. Nearly all had sufficient wealth to seek, if they chose, gayety and ostentation at the eastern resorts. But Asquithians held gayety and ostentation at a discount, and maintained there was gayety enough at home.

If any one were fitted to overcome this prejudice, it was Mrs. Cooke. Her tastes and manners were as simple as her gowns. The Celebrity, by arts unknown, induced Mrs. Judge Short and two other ladies to call at Mohair on a certain afternoon when Mr. Cooke was trying a trotter on the track. The three returned wondering and charmed with Mrs. Cooke; they were sure she had had no hand in the furnishing of that atrocious house. Their example was followed by others at a time when the master of Mohair was superintending in person the docking of some two-year-olds, and equally invisible. These ladies likewise came back to sing Mrs. Cooke's praises. Mrs. Cooke returned the calls. She took tea on the inn veranda, and drove Mrs. Short around Mohair in her victoria. Mr. Cooke being seen only on rare and fleeting occasions, there gradually got abroad a most curious misconception of that gentleman's character, while over his personality floated a mist of legend which the Celebrity took good care not to dispel. Farrar, who despised nonsense, was ironical and non-committal when appealed to, and certainly I betrayed none of my client's attributes. Hence it came that Asquith, before the house-warming, knew as little about Farquhar Fenelon Cooke, the man, as the nineteenth century knows about William Shakespeare, and was every whit as curious. Like Shakespeare, Mr. Cooke was judged by his works, and from these he was generally conceded to be an illiterate and indifferent person of barbarous tastes and a mania for horses. He was further described as ungentlemanly by a brace of spinsters who had been within earshot on the veranda the morning he had abused the Asquith roads, but their evidence was not looked upon as damning. That Mr. Cooke would appear at the cotillon never entered any one's head.

Page 22

Thus it was, for a fortnight, Mr. Cooke maintained a most rigid seclusion. Would that he had discovered in the shroud of mystery the cloak of fame!