

## CHAPTER VIII

### REAPPEARANCE OF MR. CARMYLE—AND GINGER

#### I

**W**HEN Sally left Detroit on the following Saturday, accompanied by Fillmore, who was returning to the metropolis for a few days in order to secure offices and generally make his presence felt along Broadway, her spirits had completely recovered. She felt guiltily that she had been fanciful, even morbid. Naturally men wanted to get on in the world. It was their job. She told herself that she was bound up with Gerald's success, and that the last thing of which she ought to complain was the energy he put into efforts of which she as well as he would reap the reward.

To this happier frame of mind the excitement of the last few days had contributed. Detroit, that city of amiable audiences, had liked "The Primrose Way." The theatre, in fulfilment of Teddy's prophecy, had been allowed to open on the Tuesday, and a full house, hungry for entertainment after its enforced abstinence, had welcomed the play wholeheartedly. The papers, not always in agreement with the applause of a first-night audience, had on this occasion endorsed the verdict, with agreeable unanimity hailing Gerald as the coming author and Elsa Doland as the coming

star. There had even been a brief mention of Fillmore as the coming manager. But there is always some trifle that jars in our greatest moments, and Fillmore's triumph had been almost spoilt by the fact that the only notice taken of Gladys Winch was by the critic who printed her name—spelt Wunch—in the list of those whom the cast "also included."

"One of the greatest character actresses on the stage," said Fillmore bitterly, talking over this outrage with Sally on the morning after the production.

From this blow, however, his buoyant nature had soon enabled him to rally. Life contained so much that was bright that it would have been churlish to concentrate the attention on the one dark spot. Business had been excellent all through the week. Elsa Doland had got better at every performance. The receipt of a long and agitated telegram from Mr. Cracknell, pleading to be allowed to buy the piece back, the passage of time having apparently softened Miss Hobson, was a pleasant incident. And, best of all, the great Ike Schumann, who owned half the theatres in New York and had been in Detroit superintending one of his musical productions, had looked in one evening and stamped "The Primrose Way" with the seal of his approval. As Fillmore sat opposite Sally on the train, he radiated contentment and importance.

"Yes, do," said Sally, breaking a long silence.

Fillmore awoke from happy dreams.

"Eh?"

"I said 'Yes, do.' I think you owe it to your position."

"Do what?"

"Buy a fur coat. Wasn't that what you were meditating about?"

"Don't be a chump," said Fillmore, blushing nevertheless. It was true that once or twice during the past week he had toyed negligently, as Mr. Bunbury would have said, with the notion, and why not? A fellow must keep warm.

"With an astrakhan collar," insisted Sally.

"As a matter of fact," said Fillmore loftily, his great soul ill-attuned to this badinage, "what I was really thinking about at the moment was something Ike said."

"Ike?"

"Ike Schumann. He's on the train. I met him just now."

"We call him Ike!"

"Of course I call him Ike," said Fillmore heatedly. "Everyone calls him Ike."

"*He* wears a fur coat," Sally murmured.

Fillmore registered annoyance.

"I wish you wouldn't keep on harping on that damned coat. And, anyway, why shouldn't I have a fur coat?"

"Fill . . .! How can you be so brutal as to suggest that I ever said you shouldn't? Why, I'm one of the strongest supporters of the fur coat. With big cuffs. And you must roll up Fifth Avenue in your car, and I'll point and say 'That's my brother!' 'Your brother? No!' 'He is, really.' 'You're joking. Why, that's the great Fillmore Nicholas.' 'I know. But he really is my brother. And I was with him when he bought that coat.'"

"Do leave off about the coat!"

"'And it isn't only the coat,' I shall say. 'It's

what's underneath. Tucked away inside that mass of fur, dodging about behind that dollar cigar, is one to whom we point with pride . . .'"

Fillmore looked coldly at his watch.

"I've got to go and see Ike Schumann."

"We are in hourly consultation with Ike."

"He wants to see me about the show. He suggests putting it into Chicago before opening in New York."

"Oh no," cried Sally, dismayed.

"Why not?"

Sally recovered herself. Identifying Gerald so closely with his play, she had supposed for a moment that if the piece opened in Chicago it would mean a further prolonged separation from him. But of course there would be no need, she realized, for him to stay with the company after the first day or two.

"You're thinking that we ought to have a New York reputation before tackling Chicago. There's a lot to be said for that. Still, it works both ways. A Chicago run would help us in New York. Well, I'll have to think it over," said Fillmore, importantly, "I'll have to think it over."

He mused with drawn brows.

"All wrong," said Sally.

"Eh?"

"Not a bit like it. The lips should be compressed and the forefinger of the right hand laid in a care-worn way against the right temple. You've a lot to learn, Fill."

"Oh, stop it!"

"Fillmore Nicholas," said Sally, "if you knew what pain it gives me to josh my only brother, you'd be sorry for me. But you know it's for your good. Now run along and put Ike out of his misery. I know

he's waiting for you with his watch out. 'You *do* think he'll come, Miss Nicholas?' were his last words to me as he stepped on the train; and oh, Fill, the yearning in his voice. 'Why, of *course* he will, Mr. Schumann,' I said. 'For all his exalted position, my brother is kindness itself. Of course he'll come.' 'If I could only think so!' he said with a gulp. 'If I could only think so. But you know what these managers are. A thousand calls on their time. They get brooding on their fur coats and forget everything else.' 'Have no fear, Mr. Schumann,' I said. 'Fillmore Nicholas is a man of his word.'"

She would have been willing, for she was a girl who never believed in sparing herself where it was a question of entertaining her nearest and dearest, to continue the dialogue, but Fillmore was already moving down the car, his rigid back a silent protest against sisterly levity. Sally watched him disappear, then picked up a magazine and began to read.

She had just finished tracking a story of gripping interest through a jungle of advertisements, only to find that it was in two parts, of which the one she was reading was the first, when a voice spoke.

"How do you do, Miss Nicholas?"

Into the seat before her, recently released from the weight of the coming manager, Bruce Carmyle of all people in the world insinuated himself with that well-bred air of deferential restraint which never left him.

## II

Sally was considerably startled. Everybody travels nowadays, of course, and there is nothing really remarkable in finding a man in America whom

you had supposed to be in Europe : but nevertheless she was conscious of a dream-like sensation, as though the clock had been turned back and a chapter of her life re-opened which she had thought closed for ever.

“ Mr. Carmyle ! ” she cried.

If Sally had been constantly in Bruce Carmyle's thoughts since they had parted on the Paris express, Mr. Carmyle had been very little in Sally's—so little, indeed, that she had had to search her memory for a moment before she identified him.

“ We're always meeting on trains, aren't we ? ” she went on, her composure returning. “ I never expected to see you in America. ”

“ I came over. ”

Sally was tempted to reply that she gathered that, but a sudden embarrassment curbed her tongue. She had just remembered that at their last meeting she had been abominably rude to this man. She was never rude to anyone without subsequent remorse. She contented herself with a tame “ Yes. ”

“ Yes, ” said Mr. Carmyle, “ it is a good many years since I have taken a real holiday. My doctor seemed to think I was a trifle run down. It seemed a good opportunity to visit America. Everybody, ” said Mr. Carmyle oracularly, endeavouring, as he had often done since his ship had left England, to persuade himself that his object in making the trip had not been merely to renew his acquaintance with Sally, “ everybody ought to visit America at least once. It is part of one's education. ”

“ And what are your impressions of our glorious country ? ” said Sally rallying.

Mr. Carmyle seemed glad of the opportunity of

lecturing on an impersonal subject. He, too, though his face had shown no trace of it, had been embarrassed in the opening stages of the conversation. The sound of his voice restored him.

"I have been visiting Chicago," he said after a brief travelogue.

"Oh!"

"A wonderful city."

"I've never seen it. I've come from Detroit."

"Yes, I heard you were in Detroit."

Sally's eyes opened.

"You heard I was in Detroit? Good gracious! How?"

"I—ah—called at your New York address and made inquiries," said Mr. Carmyle a little awkwardly.

"But how did you know where I lived?"

"My cousin—er—Lancelot told me."

Sally was silent for a moment. She had much the same feeling that comes to the man in the detective story who realizes that he is being shadowed. Even if this almost complete stranger had not actually come to America in direct pursuit of her, there was no disguising the fact that he evidently found her an object of considerable interest. It was a compliment, but Sally was not at all sure that she liked it. Bruce Carmyle meant nothing to her, and it was rather disturbing to find that she was apparently of great importance to him. She seized on the mention of Ginger as a lever for diverting the conversation from its present too intimate course.

"How is Mr. Kemp?" she asked.

Mr. Carmyle's dark face seemed to become a trifle darker.

"We have had no news of him," he said shortly.

"No news? How do you mean? You speak as though he had disappeared."

"He has disappeared!"

"Good heavens! When?"

"Shortly after I saw you last."

"Disappeared!"

Mr. Carmyle frowned. Sally, watching him, found her antipathy stirring again. There was something about this man which she had disliked instinctively from the first, a sort of hardness.

"But where has he gone to?"

"I don't know." Mr. Carmyle frowned again. The subject of Ginger was plainly a sore one. "And I don't want to know," he went on heatedly, a dull flush rising in the cheeks which Sally was sure he had to shave twice a day. "I don't care to know. The Family have washed their hands of him. For the future he may look after himself as best he can. I believe he is off his head."

Sally's rebellious temper was well ablaze now, but she fought it down. She would dearly have loved to give battle to Mr. Carmyle—it was odd, she felt, how she seemed to have constituted herself Ginger's champion and protector—but she perceived that, if she wished, as she did, to hear more of her red-headed friend, he must be humoured and conciliated.

"But what happened? What was all the trouble about?"

Mr. Carmyle's eyebrows met.

"He—insulted his uncle. His uncle Donald. He insulted him—grossly. The one man in the world he should have made a point of—er——"

"Keeping in with?"



"Yes. His future depended upon him."

"But what did he do?" cried Sally, trying hard to keep a thoroughly reprehensible joy out of her voice.

"I have heard no details. My uncle is reticent as to what actually took place. He invited Lancelot to dinner to discuss his plans, and it appears that Lancelot—defied him. Defied him! He was rude and insulting. My uncle refuses to have anything more to do with him. Apparently the young fool managed to win some money at the tables at Roville, and this seems to have turned his head completely. My uncle insists that he is mad. I agree with him. Since the night of that dinner nothing has been heard of Lancelot."

Mr. Carmyle broke off to brood once more, and before Sally could speak the impressive bulk of Fillmore loomed up in the aisle beside them. Explanations seemed to Fillmore to be in order. He cast a questioning glance at the mysterious stranger, who, in addition to being in conversation with his sister, had collared his seat.

"Oh, hullo, Fill," said Sally. "Fillmore, this is Mr. Carmyle. We met abroad. My brother Fillmore, Mr. Carmyle."

Proper introduction having been thus effected, Fillmore approved of Mr. Carmyle. His air of being someone in particular appealed to him.

"Strange you meeting again like this," he said affably.

The porter, who had been making up berths along the car, was now hovering expectantly in the offing.

"You two had better go into the smoking room," suggested Sally. "I'm going to bed."

She wanted to be alone, to think. Mr. Carmyle's

tale of a roused and revolting Ginger had stirred her.

The two men' went off to the smoking-room, and Sally found an empty seat and sat down to wait for her berth to be made up. She was aglow with a curious exhilaration. So Ginger had taken her advice! Excellent Ginger! She felt proud of him. She also had that feeling of complacency, amounting almost to sinful pride, which comes to those who give advice and find it acted upon. She had the emotions of a creator. After all, had she not created this new Ginger? It was she who had stirred him up. It was she who had unleashed him. She had changed him from a meek dependent of the Family to a ravening creature, who went about the place insulting uncles.

It was a feat, there was no denying it. It was something attempted, something done: and by all the rules laid down by the poet it should, therefore, have earned a night's repose. Yet, Sally, jolted by the train, which towards the small hours seemed to be trying out some new buck-and-wing steps of its own invention, slept ill, and presently, as she lay awake, there came to her bedside the Spectre of Doubt, gaunt and questioning. Had she, after all, wrought so well? Had she been wise in tampering with this young man's life?

"What about it?" said the Spectre of Doubt.

### III

Daylight brought no comforting answer to the question. Breakfast failed to manufacture an easy mind. Sally got off the train at the Grand Central station in a state of remorseful concern. She declined

the offer of Mr. Carmyle to drive her to the boarding-house, and started to walk there, hoping that the crisp morning air would effect a cure.

She wondered now how she could ever have looked with approval on her rash act. She wondered what demon of interference and meddling had possessed her, to make her blunder into people's lives, upsetting them. She wondered that she was allowed to go around loose. She was nothing more nor less than a menace to society. Here was an estimable young man, obviously the sort of young man who would always have to be assisted through life by his relatives, and she had deliberately egged him on to wreck his prospects. She blushed hotly as she remembered that mad wireless she had sent him from the boat.

Miserable Ginger! She pictured him, his little stock of money gone, wandering foot-sore about London, seeking in vain for work; forcing himself to call on Uncle Donald; being thrown down the front steps by haughty footmen; sleeping on the Embankment; gazing into the dark waters of the Thames with the stare of hopelessness; climbing to the parapet and . . .

“Ugh!” said Sally.

She had arrived at the door of the boarding-house, and Mrs. Meecher was regarding her with welcoming eyes, little knowing that to all practical intents and purposes she had slain in his prime a red-headed young man of amiable manners and—when not ill-advised by meddling, muddling females—of excellent behaviour.

Mrs. Meecher was friendly and garrulous. *Variety*, the journal which, next to the dog Toto, was the thing she loved best in the world, had informed her on the

Friday morning that Mr. Foster's play had got over big in Detroit, and that Miss Doland had made every kind of hit. It was not often that the old *alumni* of the boarding-house forced their way after this fashion into the Hall of Fame, and, according to Mrs. Meecher, the establishment was ringing with the news. That blue ribbon round Toto's neck was worn in honour of the triumph. There was also, though you could not see it, a chicken dinner in Toto's interior, by way of further celebration.

And was it true that Mr. Fillmore had bought the piece? A great man, was Mrs. Meecher's verdict. Mr. Faucitt had always said so . . .

"Oh, how is Mr. Faucitt?" Sally asked, reproaching herself for having allowed the pressure of other matters to drive all thoughts of her late patient from her mind.

"He's gone," said Mrs. Meecher with such relish that to Sally, in her morbid condition, the words had only one meaning. She turned white and clutched at the banisters.

"Gone!"

"To England," added Mrs. Meecher.

Sally was vastly relieved.

"Oh, I thought you meant . . ."

"Oh no, not that." Mrs. Meecher sighed, for she had been a little disappointed in the old gentleman, who started out as such a promising invalid, only to fall away into the dullness of robust health once more. "He's *well* enough. I never seen anybody better. You'd think," said Mrs. Meecher, bearing up with difficulty under her grievance, "you'd think this here new Spanish influenza was a sort of a tonic or somep'n, the way he looks now. Of course," she

added, trying to find justification for a respected lodger, "he's had good news. His brother's dead."

"What!"

"Not, I don't mean, that that was good news, far from it, though, come to think of it, all flesh is as grass and we all got to be prepared for somep'n of the sort breaking loose . . . but it seems this here new brother of his—I didn't know he'd a brother, and I don't suppose *you* knew he had a brother. Men are secretive, ain't they!—this brother of his has left him a parcel of money, and Mr. Faucitt he had to get on the Wednesday boat quick as he could and go right over to the other side to look after things. Wind up the estate, I believe they call it. Left in a awful hurry, he did. Sent his love to you and said he'd write. Funny him having a brother, now, wasn't it? Not," said Mrs. Meecher, at heart a reasonable woman, "that folks *don't* have brothers. I got two myself, one in Portland, Oregon, and the other goodness knows where he is. But what I'm trying to say . . ."

Sally disengaged herself, and went up to her room. For a brief while the excitement which comes of hearing good news about those of whom we are fond acted as a stimulant, and she felt almost cheerful. Dear old Mr. Faucitt. She was sorry for his brother, of course, though she had never had the pleasure of his acquaintance and had only just heard that he had ever existed; but it was nice to think that her old friend's remaining years would be years of affluence.

Presently, however, she found her thoughts wandering back into their melancholy groove. She threw herself wearily on the bed. She was tired after her bad night.

But she could not sleep. Remorse kept her awake.

Besides, she could hear Mrs. Meecher prowling disturbingly about the house, apparently in search of someone, her progress indicated by creaking boards and the strenuous yapping of Toto.

Sally turned restlessly, and, having turned, remained for a long instant transfixed and rigid. She had seen something, and what she had seen was enough to surprise any girl in the privacy of her bedroom. From underneath the bed there peeped coyly forth an undeniably masculine shoe and six inches of a grey trouser-leg.

Sally bounded to the floor. She was a girl of courage, and she meant to probe this matter thoroughly.

“What are you doing under my bed?”

The question was a reasonable one, and evidently seemed to the intruder to deserve an answer. There was a muffled sneeze, and he began to crawl out.

The shoe came first. Then the legs. Then a sturdy body in a dusty coat. And finally there flashed on Sally's fascinated gaze a head of so nearly the maximum redness that it could only belong to one person in the world.

“Ginger!”

Mr. Lancelot Kemp, on all fours, blinked up at her.

“Oh, hullo!” he said.