

THINGS I LIKE IN THE UNITED STATES

BY PHILIP GIBBS

SOME Englishmen, I am told, go to the United States with a spirit of criticism, and search 'round for things that seem to them objectionable, taking no pains to conceal their hostile point of view. They are so hopelessly insular that they resent any little differences in social custom between American and English life, and sum up their annoyance by saying, "We don't do that sort of thing in England"! Well, that seems to me a foolish way of approach to any country, and the reason why some types of Englishmen are so unpopular in France, Italy, and other countries where they go about regarding "the natives," as they call them, with arrogance in their eyes, and talk, as an English officer, not of that type, expressed it to me, "as though they had bad smells at the ends of their noses." I am bound to say that during my visit to the United States I found much more to admire than to criticize, and, perhaps because I was on the lookout for things to like rather than to dislike, I had one of the best times of my life—in some ways the very best—and came away with respect, admiration, and gratitude for the American people. There are so many things I like in their character and way of life that I should be guilty of gushing if I put them all down, but, although I have no doubt they have many faults, like most people in this world, I prefer to remember the pleasant, rather than the unpleasant, qualities they possess, especially as they left the most dominant impression on my mind.

I think every Englishman, however critical, would agree that he is struck at once, on his first visit to America, by the clean, bright, progressive spirit of life

in the smaller towns beyond the turmoil of New York. I have already described the sensational effect produced upon one's imagination by that great city, and have given some glimpses of various aspects of the social life which I had the good fortune to see with untiring interest; but I confess that the idea of living in New York would affright me because of its wear and tear upon the nerves, and I think that the "commuters" who dwell in the suburbs have good sense and better luck. The realities of America—the average idea, the middle-class home, the domestic qualities upon which a nation is built—are to be found more deeply rooted in the suburbs and smaller towns than in the whirligig of Manhattan Island to which a million and a half people, I am told, come every day, and from which, after business or pleasure, they go away. To me there was something very attractive in the construction of such places as Rye, Port Chester, Greenwich, and Stamford, an hour away from New York, and many other townships of similar size in other parts of the United States. I liked the style of their houses, those neat buildings of wood with overlapping shingles, and wide porches and verandas where people may sit out on summer days, with shelter from the sun; and I liked especially the old Colonial type of house, as I think it is called, with a tall white pillar on each side of its portico, and well-proportioned windows, so that the rooms have plenty of light, and as much air as the central-heating system permits—and that is not much.

To English eyes accustomed to dingy brick houses in the suburbs of big cities, to the dreary squalor of some new little town which straggles around a filthy

railway station, with refuse-heaps in undeveloped fields, and a half-finished "High Street," where a sweetstuff-shop, a stationer, and an estate agent establish themselves in the gloomy hope of business, these American villages look wonderfully clean, bright, and pleasant. I noticed that in each one of them there were five institutions in which the spirit of the community was revealed—the bank, the post-office, the school, the church, and the picture-palace. The bank is generally the handsomest building in the place, with a definite attempt to give it some dignity of architecture and richness of decoration. Inside, it has marble pillars and panels, brass railings at the receipt of custom, a brightly burnished mechanism for locking up the safe, a tiled floor of spotless cleanliness. The local tradesman feels secure in putting his money in such a place of dignity; the local lady likes to come here in the morning (unless she has overdrawn her account) for a chat with the bank manager or one of his gentlemanly assistants. It is a social rendezvous dedicated to the spirit of success, and the bank manager, who knows the private business and the social adventures of his clients, is in a position of confidence and esteem. He is pleased to shake the finger-tips of a lady through the brass railing, while she is pleased to ask him, "How do you like my new hat?" and laughs when, with grave eyes, he expresses sympathy with her husband. "Twenty years ago he was serving behind the counter in a dry-goods store. Now he has a million dollars to his credit." Everybody brightens at this story of success. The fact that a man starts as a butcher-boy or a bell-boy is all in his favor, in social prestige. There is no snobbishness, contemptuous of humble origin, and I found a spirit of good-natured democracy among the people I watched in the local bank.

Competing with the bank in architectural dignity is the village post-office, generally of white stone, or wood, with the local Roll of Honor on the green outside, and, inside, a number of picture-

posters calling to the patriotism of the American people to support the Liberty Loan—the fifth when I was there. Small boys at the counter are buying thrift stamps. Chauffeurs who have driven down from country houses are collecting the letters of the family from lockers, with private keys. College girls are exchanging confidences at the counters. I liked the social atmosphere of an American post-office. I seemed to see a visible friendliness here between the state and the people. Then there is the school, and I must say that I was overwhelmed with admiration for the American system of education and for the buildings in which it is given. England lags a long way behind here, with its old-fashioned hotchpotch of elementary schools, church schools, "academies for young gentlemen" — the breeding-ground of snobs—grammar-schools, and private, second-rate colleges, all of which complications are swept away by the clean simplicity of the American state school, to which boys of every class may go without being handicapped by the caste system which is the curse of England. If the school to which I went at Montclair, or another at Elizabeth, New Jersey, or another at Toledo, is at all typical of American schools generally (and I think that is so), I take my hat off to the educational authorities of America and to the spirit of the people which inspires them.

The school at Montclair was, I remember, a handsome building like one of the English colleges for women at Oxford or Cambridge, with admirably designed rooms, light, airy, and beautiful with their polished paneling. The lecture-hall was a spacious place holding, I suppose, nearly a thousand people, and I was astonished at its proportions when I had my first glimpse of it before lecturing, under the guidance of the head-mistress and some of the ladies on her committee. Those women impressed me as being wise and broad-minded souls, not shut up in narrow educational theories, but with a knowledge of life and human

nature, and a keen enthusiasm for their work. At Toledo I saw the best type of provincial school, and certainly as an architectural model it was beyond all words of praise, built in what we call the Tudor style, in red brick, ivy-covered, with long oriel windows, so that it lifts up the tone of the whole town because of its dignity and beauty. Here, too, was a fine lecture-hall, easily convertible into a theater, with suitable scenery for any school play. It was a committee of boys who organized the lectures, and one of them acted as my guide over the school-building and showed me, among other educational arrangements, a charming little flat, or apartment-house, completely furnished in every detail in bedroom, sitting-room, and kitchen, for the training of girls in domestic service, cookery, and the decoration of the home. Here, as in many other things, the American mind had reached out to an ideal and linked it up with practical method. Equally good were the workshops where the boys are trained in carpentry and mechanics. . . . Well, all that kind of thing makes for greatness in a nation. The American people are not, I think, better educated than English people in the actual storing-up of knowledge, but they are educated in better physical conditions, with a brighter atmosphere around them in their class-rooms and in their playgrounds, and with a keener appreciation, in the social influences surrounding the school-house, of the inherent right of every American boy and girl to have equal opportunities along the road to knowledge and success. It is this sense of opportunity, and the entire absence of snob privileges, which I liked best in these glimpses I gained of young America. . . .

I mentioned another institution which occupies a prominent place in every American township. That is the picture-palace. It is impossible to overrate the influence upon the minds and characters of the people which is exercised by that house of assembly. It has become part of the life of the American people more

essentially than we know it in England, though it has spread with a mushroom growth in English towns and villages. But in the United States the picture-palace and "the silent drama," as they call it, are more elaborately organized, and the motion pictures are produced with an amount of energy, imagination, and wealth which is far in excess of the similar efforts in England. A visit to the "movies" is the afternoon or evening recreation of every class and age of American citizenship. It is a democratic habit which few escape. Outside the picture-palace in a little town like Stamford one sees a number of expensive motor-cars drawn up, while the lady of leisure gets her daily dose of "romance" and while her chauffeur, in the gallery, watches scenes of high life with the cynical knowledge of a looker-on. Nursemaids alleviate the boredom of domestic service by taking their children to see the pictures for an hour or two, and small boys and girls, with candy or chewing-gum to keep them quiet, puzzle out the meaning of marvelous melodrama, wonder why lovers do such strange things in their adventures on the way to marriage; and they watch with curiosity and surprise the ghastly grimaces of "close-up" heroines in contortions of amorous despair, and the heaving breasts, the rolling eyes, and the sickly smiles of padded heroes, who are suffering, temporarily, from thwarted affection. The history of the world is ransacked for thrilling dramas, and an American audience watches all the riotous splendor and licentiousness of Babylon or ancient Rome, while Theda Bara, the movie queen, writhes in amorous ecstasy, or poisons innumerable lovers, or stings herself to death with serpents. Royalists and Roundheads, Pilgrim Fathers and New England witches, the French Revolution and the American Civil War, are phases of history which provide endless pictures of "soul-stirring interest"; but more popular are domestic dramas of modern life, in which the luxury of our present civilization, as it is imagined and

exaggerated by the movie managers, reveal to simple folk the wickedness of wealthy villains, the dangers of innocent girlhood, and the appalling adventures of psychology into which human nature is led when "love" takes possession of the heart.

It is impossible to say what effect all that has upon the mentality of America. The utter falsity of it all, the treacherous sentiment of the "love" episodes, and the flaming vice of the vicious, would have a perverting influence on public imagination if it were taken seriously. But I suppose that the common sense of American people reacts against the absurdity of these melodramas after yielding to the sensation of them. Yet I met one lady who told me she goes every free afternoon to one of these entertainments, with a deliberate choice of film-plays depicting passion and caveman stuff, "in order to get a thrill before dinner to relieve the boredom of domesticity." That seems to me as bad as the drug-habit, and must in the long run sap the moral and spiritual foundations of a woman's soul. Fortunately, there is a tendency now among the "movie merchants" to employ good authors who will provide them with simple and natural plots, and in any case there is always Charlie Chaplin for laughter, and pictures of scenery and animal life, and the news of the week depicting scenes of current history in all parts of the world. It would be absurd as well as impossible to abolish the film-picture as an influence in American life, and I dare say that, balancing good with bad, the former tips the swing, because of an immense source of relaxation and entertainment provided by the picture-palace in small communities.

What appealed to me more in my brief study of American social life outside New York was another popular institution known as the roadside inn. In some way it is a conscious endeavor to get back to the simplicity and good cheer of old-fashioned times, when the grandfathers and grandmothers of the present

generation used to get down from their coaches when the horses were changed, or the snow-drifts were deep, and go gladly to the warmth of a log fire, in a wayside hostelry, while orders were given for a dinner of roast duck, and a bowl of punch was brewed by the ruddy-faced innkeeper. It is a tradition which is kept fresh in the imagination of modern Americans by the genius of Charles Dickens, Washington Irving, and a host of writers and painters who reproduce the atmosphere of English life in the days of coaching, highwaymen, romance, and roast beef. The spirit of Charles Dickens is carefully suggested to all wayfarers in one roadside inn I visited, about an hour away from New York and frequented by motor parties. It is built in the style of Tudor England, with wooden beams showing through its brick-work, and windows divided into little leaded panes, and paneled rooms furnished with wooden settles and gate-leg tables. Colored prints depicting scenes in the immortal history of Mr. Pickwick brighten the walls within. Outside there swings a sign-board such as one sees still outside country inns standing on the edge of village greens in England. I found it a pleasant place, where one could talk better with a friend than in a gilded restaurant of New York, with a jazz band smiting one's eardrums; and the company there was interesting. In spite of the departure of coaching days which gave life and bustle to the old inns of the past, the motor-car brings travelers and a touch of romance to these modern substitutes.

There were several cars standing outside the inn, and I guessed by the look of the party within that they had come from New York for a country outing, a simple meal, and private conversation. "Better a dinner of herbs where love is—" Under the portrait of Mr. Pickwick in a quiet corner of one of the old-fashioned rooms a young man and woman sat with their elbows on the table and their chins propped in the palms of their hands, and

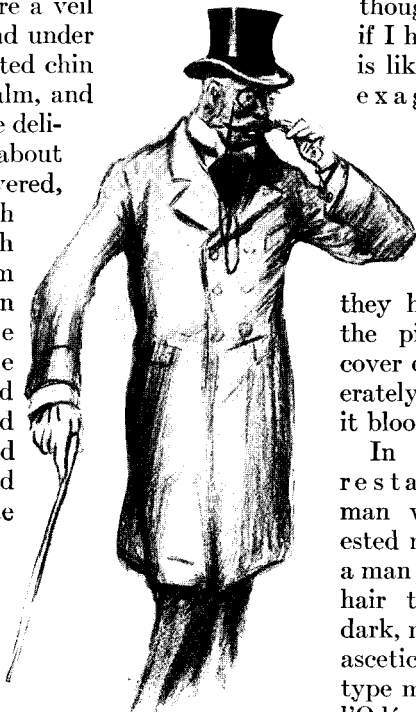
their faces not so far away that they had any need to shout to each other the confidences which made both pairs of eyes remarkably bright. The young man was one of those square-shouldered, clean-shaven, gray-eyed fellows whom I came to know as a type on the roads to Amiens and Albert. The girl had put her dust-cloak over the back of her chair, but still wore a veil tied 'round her hat and under her chin—a little pointed chin dug firmly into her palm, and modeled with the same delicacy of line as the lips about which a little smile wavered, and as the nose which kept its distance, with perfect discretion, from that of the young man opposite, so that the waiter might have slipped a menu-card between them. She had a string of pearls 'round her neck which would certainly have been the first prize of any high-wayman holding up her great-grandmamma's coach, and, judging from other little signs of luxury as it is revealed in Fifth Avenue, I felt certain that the young lady did not live far from the heart of New York

and had command of its treasure-houses. . . . Two other groups in the room, sitting at separate tables, belonged obviously to one party. They were young people for the most part, with one elderly lady whose white hair and shrewd, smiling eyes made all things right with youthful adventure, and with one old foggy, bland of countenance and expansive in the waistcoat line, who seemed to regard it as a privilege to pay for the large appetites of the younger company. Anyhow he paid for at least eight portions of chicken okra, followed

by eight plates of roast turkey and baked potatoes, and, not counting sundries, nine serves of deep-dish pie. The ninth unequal share went, in spite of warnings, protests, and ridicule from free-spoken companions, to a plump girl with a pigtail, obviously home from college for a spell, who said: "I guess I sha'n't die from overeating, though it's the way I'd choose if I had to quit. An appetite is like love. Its dangers are exaggerated, and seldom fatal." This speech, delivered in all solemnity, aroused a tumult of mirth from several young women of grown-up appearance—at least they had advanced beyond the pigtail stage—and under cover of this one of them deliberately "made up" her face till it bloomed like a rose in June.

In another corner of the restaurant sat a lonely man whose appearance interested me a good deal. He was a man of middle age, with black hair turning white and very dark, melancholy eyes in a pale, ascetic face. I have seen his type many times in the Café de l'Odéon on the "Latin" side of Paris, and I was surprised to find it in a roadside inn of the United States. A friend of mine, watching the direction of my

gaze, said, "Yes, that is a remarkable man—one of the best-known architects in America, and, among other things, the designer of the Victory decorations of New York." He came over to our table and I had a talk with him—a strange conversation, in which this man of art spoke mostly of war, from unusual angles of thought. His idea seemed to me that peace is only a preparation for war, and that war is not the abnormal thing which most people think, but the normal, because it is the necessary conflict by which human character and destiny are shaped.



SOME ENGLISHMEN GO TO
THE UNITED STATES WITH
A SPIRIT OF CRITICISM

He seemed to think that the psychology of the world had become twisted and weakened by too much peace, so that the sight of armless or legless men was horrifying, whereas people should be accustomed to such sights and take them for granted, because that, with all pain and suffering, is the price of life. I disagreed with him profoundly, believing that war, in ninety-nine cases out of a hundred, is unnecessary and due to the stupidities of people who are doped by spell-words put upon them by their leaders; but I was interested in getting this viewpoint from a man whose whole life has been devoted to beauty. It seemed to me the strangest paradox.



I LIKED ESPECIALLY THE OLD COLONIAL TYPE OF HOUSE

A roadside inn in the United States is a good place for the study of psychology and social habits in America. One custom which happens here during winter and summer evenings is a local dance given by some inhabitant of the neighborhood who finds more spaciousness here for a party of guests than in his own homestead. The rugs and chairs are put away, and the floor is polished for dancing. Outside, the inn is decorated with colored lamps and lanterns, and a bright light streams through the leaded window-panes across the road from New York. The metal of many machines sparkles in the shadow world beyond the lanterns. Through the open

windows, if the night is mild, comes the rag-time music of a string-band and the sound of women's laughter. Sometimes queer figures, like ghosts of history, pass through the swing-doors, for it is a fancy-dress dance in the inn, and there is a glimpse of Columbine in her fluffy white skirt, with long white stockings, and with her hand on the arm of a tall young Pierrot, while a lady of the court of Marie Antoinette trips beside the figure of a scarlet devil, and a little Puritan girl of New England (two hundred years ago) passes in with Monsieur Beaucaire in his white-satin coat and flowered waistcoat and silk stockings above buckled shoes. I like the idea and the customs of the roadside inn, for it helps to make human society sweet and friendly in villages beyond the glare of America's great cities.

To study a people, however, one must see them in their homes, and I was fortunate in having friends who took me into their home life. When I went there it was



THE SOCIAL ATMOSPHERE OF AN AMERICAN POST-OFFICE

at a time when American homes were excited and happy after the armistice, and when the soldiers who had been "over there" were coming back, with victory and honor. In many homes of the United States, scattered far and wide, there was not happiness, but sorrow, because in the victory march up Fifth Avenue there would be for some of the onlookers one figure missing—the figure of some college boy who had gone marching away with smiling eyes and a stiff upper lip, or the figure of some middle-aged fellow who waved his hand to a group of small children and one woman who turned to hide her tears. There were empty chairs in the home-

steads of the United States, and empty hearts on armistice day—and afterward. But I did not see them, and I thought of the many homes in England desolated by the appalling sacrifice of youth, so that in every town, and in every street, there are houses out of which all hope in life has gone, leaving behind a dreadful dreariness, an incurable loneliness, mocking at victory.

There was one home I went to where a mother of cheery babes waited for her man with an eager joy she did not try to hide. The smallest babe had been born while he was away, a boy baby with the gift of laughter from the fairy godmother, and there was great excitement at the



THE PICTURE-PALACE HAS BECOME PART OF THE LIFE OF THE AMERICAN PEOPLE

thought of the first interview between father and son. All the community in the neighborhood of this house in Westchester County took a personal interest in this meeting when "the Major" should see his last-born, and when the wife should meet her man again. They had kept his memory green and had cheered up the loneliness of his wife by making a rendezvous of his house. She had played up wonderfully, with a pluck that never failed, and a spirit of comradeship to all her husband's friends, especially if they wore khaki and were far from their own folk. One was always certain of meeting a merry crowd at cock-tail-time. With some ceremony a party

of friends were conducted to the cellar to see how a careful housewife with a hospitable husband got ahead of prohibition. . . . Then the Major came back, a little overwhelmed by the warmth of his greeting from old friends, a little dazed by the sharp contrast between war and peace, moved to his depths by the first sight of Peter, his boy baby. One day at dinner he described how he had heard the news of Peter in the war-zone. He bought a bottle of champagne to celebrate the event—it was the only bottle to be had for love or money—and went 'round to the mess to call a toast. There were many officers, and the champagne did not give them full glasses,

but in a sparkling drop or two they drank to the son of this good officer and good comrade.

I was glad to get a glimpse of that American home and of the two small girls in it, who had the habit, which I find pleasant among the children of America, of dropping a bob-courtesy to any grown-up visitor. The children of America have the qualities of their nation, simplicity, common sense, and self-reliance. They are not so bashful as English boys and girls, and they are free from the little constraints of nursery etiquette which make so many English children afraid to open their mouths. They are also free entirely from that juvenile snobbishness which is still cultivated in English society, where boys and girls of well-to-do parents are taught to look down with contempt upon children of the poorer classes. I sat down at table many mornings with a small boy

and girl who were representative, I have no doubt, of Young America in the making. The boy, Dick, had an insatiable curiosity about the way things work in the world, and about the make-up of the world itself. To satisfy that curiosity he searched the *Children's Book of Knowledge*, the encyclopedias in the library, and the brain of any likely person, such as the Irish chauffeur and gardener, for scraps of useful information. In games of "twenty questions," played across the luncheon-table, he chose mountains in Asia, or rivers in Africa, or parts of complicated engines, putting the company to shame by their ignorance of geography and mechanics. For sheer personal pleasure he worked out sums in arithmetic when he wakened early in the morning. His ambition is to be an engineer, and he is already designing monster airplanes, and electrical machines of fantastic purpose—like, I suppose,



THEY HAD COME FROM NEW YORK FOR A COUNTRY OUTING AND A SIMPLE MEAL

millions of other small boys in America. The girl, aged eight, seemed to me the miniature representative of all American girlhood, and for that reason is a source of apprehension to her mother, who has to camouflage her amusement at this mite's audacity, and looks forward with a thrill of anxiety and delight to the time when Joan will put her hair up and play hell with boys' hearts. Joan has big, wondering eyes, which she already uses for cajolery and blandishment. Joan has a sense of humor which is alarming in an elf of her size. Joan can tell the most almighty "whoppers," with an air of innocence which would deceive an angel. Joan has a passionate temper when thwarted of her will, a haughty arrogance of demeanor before which grown men quail, and a warm-hearted affection for people who please her which exacts

forgiveness of all naughtiness. She dances for sheer joy of life, lives in imagination with fairies, screams with desire at the sight of glittering jewels and fine feathers, and weeps passionately at times because she is not old enough to go with her mother to dinner in New York. In another ten years, when she goes to college, there will be the deuce of a row in her rooms, and three years later New York will be invaded by a pair of hazel eyes which will complicate still further the adventure of life east and west of Fifth Avenue.

Those two young people go forth to school every morning, from a country house in Connecticut, in a "Flivver" driven by the Irish chauffeur, with whom they are the best of friends. Now and again they are allowed the use of the Cadillac car, and spread them-



A FANCY-DRESS DANCE AT THE INN -



ONE WAS ALWAYS CERTAIN OF MEETING A MERRY CROWD

selves under the rugs with an air of luxury and arrogance, redeemed by a wink from Dick, as though to say, "What a game—this life!" and a sweep of Joan's eyelashes conveying the information that a princess of the United States is about to attend the educational establishment which she is pleased to honor with her presence, and where she hopes to be extremely naughty to-day, just to make things hum. This boy and girl are good and close comrades between the times they pull each other's hair, and have a profound respect for each other in spite of an intimate knowledge of their respective frailties and sinfulness. Joan knows that Dick invariably gets his sums right, whereas she invariably gets them wrong. She knows that his truthfulness is impregnable and painful in its deadly accuracy. She knows that his character is as solid as a rock and that he is patient up to the point when by exasperation she asks for a bang on the head, and gets it. Dick knows that Joan is more subtle in imagination than he can ever hope to be, and that she can twist him 'round her little finger when she sets out deliberately thereto, in order to get the first use of the new toy which came to him

on his birthday, the pencil which he has just sharpened for his own drawing, or the picture-book which he has just had as a school prize. "You know mother says you mustn't be so terribly selfish," says Joan, in answer to violent protests, and Dick knows that he must pay the price of peace. He also knows that Joan loves him devotedly, pines for him when he is away, even for a little while, and admires his knowledge and efficiency with undisguised hero-worship, except when she wants to queen it over him, for the sake of his soul. I think of them in a little white house perched on flower-covered rocks, within sight of the Sound through a screen of birch-trees. Inside the house there are some choice old bits of English and Italian furniture bought by a lady who knows the real from the false, and has a fine eye for the color of her hangings and her chintz-covered chairs. On cool nights a log fire burns in a wide hearth, and the electric lamps are turned out to show the soft light of tall, fat candles in wrought-iron torches each side of the hearthstone. Galli-Curci sings from a gramophone between Hawaiian airs or the latest rag-time; or the master of the house—a man of all the talents



WHIRLED OFF TO SCHOOL EVERY MORNING IN STATE

and the heart of youth—strikes out plaintive little melodies made up “out of his own head,” as children say, on a rosewood piano, while the two children play “Pollyanna” on the carpet, and their mother watches through half-shut eyes the picture she has made of the room. It is a pretty picture of an American interior, as a painter might see it. . . .

In New York, as in London, it is the ambition of many people, I find, to seek out a country cottage and get back to the “simple life” for a spell. “A real old place” is the dream of the American business man who has learned to love ancient things after a visit to Europe, or by a sudden revolt against the modern side of civilization. The “real old place”

is not easy to find, but I met one couple who had found it, not more than thirty miles or so from Madison Square, yet in such a rural and unfrequented spot that it seemed a world away. They had discovered an old mill-house, built more than a hundred and fifty years ago, and unchanged all that time except by the weathering of its beams and panels, and the sinking of its brick floors, and the memories that are stored up in every crack and crevice of that homestead where simple folk wed and bred, worked and died, from one generation to another. The new owners are simple folk, too, though not of the peasant class, and with reverence and sound taste they decline to allow any architect to alter the

old structure of the house, but keep it just as it stands. In their courtyard, on a Sunday afternoon, were several motor-cars, and in their parlor a party of friends from New York who had come out to this little old mill-house in the country, and expressed their ecstasy at its quaint simplicity. Some of them invited themselves to supper, whereat the lady of the mill-house laughed at them and said, "I guess you'll have to be content with boiled beans and salad, because my man and I are tired of the fattened calf and all the gross things of city life." To her surprise there was a chorus of, "Fine!" and the daintiest girl from New York offered to do the washing-up. Through an open door in the parlor there was a pretty view of another room up a flight of wooden stairs. In such a room one might see the buxom ghost of some American Phœbe of the farm, with bare arms and a low-necked bodice, coiling her hair at an old mirror for the time when John should come a-courting after he had brushed the straw from his hair.

I went into another country cottage,

as old as this one and as simple as this. It stands in a meadow somewhere in Sleepy Hollow, low-lying by a little stream that flows through its garden, but within quick reach, by a stiff climb, through silver beeches and bracken, and over gray rocks that crop through the soil, to hilltops from which one gazes over the Hudson River and the Sound, and a wide stretch of wooded country with little white towns in the valleys. Here in the cottage lives a New York doctor and his wife, leading the simple life, not as a pose, but in utter sincerity, because they have simplicity in their souls. Every morning the doctor walks away from his cottage to a railway which takes him off to the noisy city, and here until five of the evening he is busy in healing the sufferers of civilization and stupidity—the people who over-eat themselves, the children who are too richly fed by foolish mothers, business men whose nerves have broken down by worry and work for the sake of ambition, society women wrecked in the chase of pleasure, and little ones, rickety, blind,



I LIKED THE GREETING OF THE TRAIN CONDUCTOR

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or diseased because of the sins of their parents. The little doctor does not deal in medicine and does not believe in it. He treats his patients according to his philosophy of natural science, by which he gives their human nature a chance of freeing itself from the poison that has tainted it and getting back to normal self-healing action. He has devised a machine for playing waves of electricity through his patients, by means of which he breaks up the clogging tissue of death in their cell life and regenerates the health of the cell system. He has made some startling cures, and I think the cheerful wisdom of the little man, his simple, childlike heart, and the clean faith that shines out of his eyes, are part of the secret of his power. He goes back to his country cottage to tend his flowers and to think deeper into the science of life up there on the hilltop which looks across the Sound among the silvery beeches, where in the spring there is a carpet of bluebells and in the autumn the fire of red bracken. In spring and summer and autumn he rises early and plunges into a pool behind the shelter of trees and bushes, and before dressing runs up and down a stone pathway bordered by the flowers he has grown, and after that dances a little to keep his spirit young. ... I liked that glimpse I had of the American doctor in Sleepy Hollow.

And I liked all the glimpses I had of American home life in the suburbs of New York and in other townships of the United States. I liked the white wood-

work of the houses, and the bright sunlight that swept the sky above them, and the gardens that grow without hedges. I liked the good-nature of the people, the healthiness of their outlook on life, their hopefulness in the future, their self-reliance and their sincerity of speech. I liked the children of America, and the college girls who strolled in groups along the lanes, and the crowds who assembled in the morning at the local station to begin a new day's work or a new day's shopping in the big city at their journey's end. They had a keen and vital look, and nodded to one another in a neighborly way as they bought bulky papers from the bookstall and chewing-gum from the candy-stall and had their shoes shined with one eye on the ticket-office. I liked the greeting of the train conductor to all those people whose faces he knew as familiar friends, and to whom he passed the time o' day with a jesting word or two. I liked the social life of the American middle classes, because it is based, for the most part, on honesty, a kindly feeling toward mankind, and healthiness of mind and body. They are not out to make trouble in the world, and unless somebody asks for it very badly they are not inclined to interfere with other people's business. The thing I liked best in the United States is the belief of its citizens in the progress of mankind toward higher ideals of common sense; and after the madness of a world at war it is good to find such faith, however difficult to believe.

CAPTIVE

BY HAZEL HALL

MY spirit is a captive bird
That beats against its cage all day,
Until its winging strength is whirled
Vainly away.

My spirit learns its impotence
Only when Night has blurred its bars—
Wings seem a strange impertinence
Before the stars.