The Joy of Living

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By Sidney Gowing

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COUSIN ALICK

SYNOPSIS .- Disliking the prospect of a month's visit to her aus-tere aunt, Lady Erythea Lambe, at Jervaulx abbey, and her cousin, Alexander Lambe, Almee, vivacious daughter of the Very Reverend Viscount Scroope, meets a young man who laughingly introduces himself as "Billy," American. The two ride on his motorcycle, the "Plying Sphinx," and part. With Georgina Berners, her cousin, Almee sets out for Jervaulx. She forces Georgina to impersonate her at Jervaulx, and she goes on a holl-day. Aimee again meets Billy. He tells her his name is Spencer, and she gives hers as Amy Snookes, at present "out of a job." Billy offers to take her into partnership in sell-ing the Sphinx. In a spirit of madcap adventure, she accepts. The two proceed to the town of Stanhoe, taking separate lodgings in Ivy cottage. While Aimee is se-cretly visiting Georgina at Jervauls, the place is burgiarized, and the famous Lambe emeralds are stolen. Aimee escapes. Poller de-cide the thieves are "Jack the Climber" and "Calamity Kate," who travel on a motorcycle. Billy, who has shadowed Aimee to Jervaulx, follows the thieves. He is knocked out, but emerges from the fight with the Lambe emeralds. He meets Aimee, with the police in pursuit. In a secure hiding place, a cave among the crag pits, Almee tells him the whole story. He urges her that she make a frank confession to her father, but on reflec-tion both realize Aimee's good name has been compromised. Assuring Almee be has a plan to save her, Billy leaves her in the cave and, proceeding to Jervaulx, restores the emeralds to the astounded Lady Erythea. Billy tells a story that satisfies the police, refuses a reward and accepts a chauffeur's job from Lady Erythea. Aimee gets the place of parlor maid at Jervaulx.

CHAPTER XV-Continued.

"Ladies," he said gravely, "Miss Amy Snooks. Late of Scroope Towers." And took his leave.

Aimee said "good-evening" shyly, and seated herself. It occurred to her that she had never seen so many plain women gathered at one table. With the exception of the cook, they were all angular and scraggy. Pulling herself together with an effort, Aimee took a generous mouthful from a slice words the better, until she knew her window. ground. She seemed to detect an air of faint hostility in the others,

"What's the feedin' like at Scroope?" asked an elderly housemaid opposite her, in a bollow voice,

"They fare pretty good," said Aimee, with her mouth full of bread and butter, "but the place is dull. I been at home some time."

"You won't be 'ere long," said the pageboy regretfully, neglecting his tea to stare at her.

"Why not?" said Aimee with some pertness.

"You're a sight too good-lookin'," replied the page gloomly.

"Albert!" said the cook with austerity, "pass this cup o' tea an' don't talk rubbish!"

Aimee took refuge behind her stoneware teacup. She was aware of a crossfire of glances, so sour and sidelong, that the very milk seemed to

curdle in sympathy.

. . . . The morning sun, full of the promise of a fair day, shone through the windows of the long drawing room, Almee, in a snow-white cap and apron. was wielding a feather brush among priceless knick-knacks. Her manner of dusting was desultory,

"I wonder how long I can stick it?" she murmured in despondent tones, A Watteau shepherdess escaped destruction by a miracle,

"In all my life I never saw such a lot of frumps. And the taste it leaves iff one's mouth-it's awful. It's all very well sitting tight and saying nothing. I shall break out-I know I shall, unless I can see Billy soon."

She observed a large photograph of the Rev. and Hon, Alexander Lambe, in an ornate silver frame, standing on a table. Aimee recognized the portrait, and flicked at it viciously with the feather brush. She miscalculated, the portrait crashed on to the floor, When she picked it up the glass was shattered.

"That's torn it. All breakages come off my wages. I wish it had been his silly face!"

At that moment Miss Georgina Berners entered by one of the French windows. She was aware of a slimmer and more youthful figure than any she had yet seen in the household. Georgina made a point of always being civil to her hostess' servants.

"Are you the new parlor maid?" she said amiably.

Almee turned and faced her.

"Hullo, Georgie!" she exclaimed. Georgina, during the last three days, had suffered more than any placid soul should be called upon to endure. She stared wildly for a moment at the slim form in the cap and apron. Georgina had arrived at the breaking-point. She collapsed backwards into an armchair; a series of shrill whoops came from her; her hands beat the air.

"Georgina!" cried her cousin in a

"Honk! Honk! Honk!" said Georg-

Aimee had once heard a physician declare that sympathy and kindness merely made hysterics worse. It was time to change the treatment. She grabbed her cousin by the shoulders.

"Shut up that beastly row!" said teeth rattled. "Stop It! Do you want to get me handcuffed and put in the cells? Idiot !"

Georgina gasped, choked, and sat up. She clung to her cousin desper-

ately. "I will be quiet. I will," she said faintly. "Wh-wha-what does it mean,

Aimee? Why-?" "Try to behave like a reasonable be ing, and I'll tell you."

"Yes, yes! I'm better now, deer." Aimee inspected her and, judging the danger to be past, kissed her afat the windows she proceeded, as Billy would have phrased it, to put her cousin wise.

Georgina, having heard her to the end, pressed both hands pathetically to the sides of her head.

"And-you're living in the servants' hall?" she said feebly.

"It's no catch, I can tell you, Georgie. But one mustn't grumble, Billy's living at the garage-in a green uniform with brass buttons."

"That-that extraordinarily goodlooking young chauffeur?" said Georgina, staring at her. "Then he is-"

"Now don't get sentimental," said Aimee warningly, "Yes, he is not bad-looking, is he? Billy's great. If it hadn't been for him-" she checked explain?" herself. "Don't you see what an excellent arrangement it is, my being here-in spite of the little draw-

Georgina gave a sigh-positively of relief.

"It's better than having you wandering about the country, getting into have to come out soon, and then Lady Erythea-" "Yes, yes. Never mind Aunt. What

I want you to do, Georgie, is this-oh, bother! Look out!"

to the sideboard, began dusting busily, A step was heard on the gravel, and of thick bread and butter. The fewer Mr. Alexander Lambe entered by the a stranded but still dignified fish.

pale," he said in tones of concern. is delightful out of doors, the air is up the stairs. I'm sorry-Cousin." so balmy. Shall we-er-take a little walk in the rose-"

Alexander stopped short, and his features froze. He had caught sight



Aimee Flourished the Feather Brush in His Face.

of Almee's face, with the light full upon it, reflected in the mirror before her. He stared for a moment with remarkable intentness.

"Who is this?" he said sharply, stepping towards her. There was menace in his voice. "Who are you?"

Aimee, preparing to meet her destiny, turned composedly and faced him. She dropped him a small curtsey. "Please sir, the parlor maid," she

Mr. Lambe's eyes were nearly starting out of his head.

"Parlor maid? Yeu?" he said sternly. "You are the woman who drove that motorcycle. I could vouch for you anywhere. You are"-he shot the words out with extraordinary vehemence-"you are that abandoned creature, Calamity Kate! You are the woman who knocked me down!"

With unexpected agility he sprang forward and seized Aimee by the wrist. And with equal deftness she

wrenched herself free. "Am 1?" she said flercely. "Then keep your hands off me, or I'll do it

again. Do you hear me?" Aimee, thoroughly roused, flourished the feather brush in his face. Mr.

You'll give the whole show away!" | placed his thumb on the bell-push. | For I can see," he said, "that you have | "Aimee," he said sharply, "go outcourage."

go out quickly! I will deal with her." "What are you going to do?" gasped Georgina. Instead of obeying him she came forward, trembling.

"Go out! I am going to give this woman in charge!"

"In pity's name, don't do that!" Almee flercely, shaking her till her Georgina gulped, and struggled for done? Once the truth is told, you breath. "She-she is your kik-kik-Cousin Aimee!"

> Georgina dropped into a chair and began to cry. Alexander, taking his hand from the bell, wondered if she had suddenly become insane.

"Quite right," said Aimee. With the calm of despair she planted herself in front of him, her eyes deflant. "I am your kik-kik-Cousin Almee, And that's my cousin, Georgina Berners, I made her take my place here, because I thought it would be dull, and Dad insisted on my coming. So now call the you? I was there-two nights." fectionately. After a cautious glance police, Cousin Alick, and let's get it over."

It seemed to Alexander that he had lam. He stared from Almee to the gently sobbing Georgina. And then, as the door began to open, Mr. Lambe turned swiftly and caught the handle, preventing the intruder from entering. "Did you ring, miss?" inquired Mr. Tarbeaux's voice.

"A mistake," said Alexander, quickly. "I will ring if I want you." He closed the door, and peered searchingly at Almee.

"I do not understand what this means," he said coldly, "but it does not seem an occasion for the intrusion of servants. We are alone. Will you

Almee felt a sudden relief; a twinge almost of gratitude. She had not expected Alexander to do anything so sensible. "I'll make it clear if I can," she

sald, and, looking Alexander in the face with an angelically simple expression, she told him the tale from the all sorts of horrible scrapes. It will beginning, briefly, yet comprehensively. As she was speaking, Aimee watched Mr. Lambe's face. The waves of emotion that passed over his usually serene features made them interesting, suggesting some delicate in-Aimee seized her brush and, darting strument subjected to shocks for which it had never been designed, At the end be was gasping faintly, like

"And so," concluded Almee, "you see "Cousin Almee, you are looking it's a piece of my skirt the police have got. And it was I who tripped you Mr. Lambe passed a somewhat un-

steady hand across his forehead. He looked at Aimee, and then turned slowly to Georgina.

"Miss Berners—" he said. Georgina's answer was a sob. Immediately Aimee stepped across, raised her from her chair and, with an arm round her waist, faced Alexander.

"Stop! Not a word from you to Georgina!" she said defiantly. 'There's no one to blame but me. Everything she's done, I made her do. She wanted me to own up. All this, she's done to try and save me. Georgie's the best thing that ever happened." Alexander looked at Aimee.

"My dear child," he said gently, "I have only one wish and that is to help von."

Aimee's lips parted; she stared at him incredulously. She saw the most auman sympathy in the clean-shaven, priestly face; the kindlest light in his large eyes.

"Miss Berners," said Alexander, still more gently, "will you leave me with your cousin? I should like to speak to her alone. I will see you presently, if you will give me an opportunity." Georgina nodded brokenly, and

moved to the window.

"Georgie," whispered Almee quickly, as she passed, "meet me by the little arbor down the gardens in half an hour-it won't be safe here-after this."

Aimee and Alexander were left together, facing each other. There was an embarrassed pause.

"Tell me, Cousin," said Alexander, quietly, "why have you done this mad thing?" "Well," said Aimee, for once at a

oss, "I-you see-I was afraid of you, Alexander." She glanced up at him almost shyly. "I didn't want to come to Jervaulx. I thought it would suit Georgie much better than me." Alexander's firm lips twitched very

dightly. "I got fed up at home," continued

Aimee, desperately. "Everybody was so solemn. They drove me to it! I just did it on the impulse. And then I -things sort of happened-I-" She made an impatient, hopeless

gesture with her hands, 'Oh, what's the use of talking about it? It's done, and here I am in this wretched mess. Police after me, andeverything! You've found me out-

you can give me away. What are you going to do?" "There is only one thing to do," said Alexander. "Make a clean breast of

Aimee's lips tightened. "Come with me to Aunt Erythea." said Mr. Lambe soothingly. "I will acpanic. "For pity's sake don't do that. Lambe started back, a little pale. He can for you. There is no other way. Lousin. And—go quickly!"

"No," said Almee decisively, "It is

impossible." Alexander's eyes became keener, He

looked a little contemptuous. "Are you afraid?" he said. "Do you not see that you must face the consequences of this foolish thing you have

have nothing to fear from the police." "The police!" said Aimee scornfully. "I'm not afraid of the police. I'm not much afraid of Aunt Erythea. It isn't that at all. It's-the other thing."

"What other thing?"

Aimee looked at him with growing embarrassment,

"Oh!" she said at last, desperately, "have I got to put it in so many words? My staying at Ivy cottage! Didn't you understand what I told

Mr. Lambe, to her surprise, did not look forbidding or censorious. Instead, he looked a little puzzled. And in suddenly been transported into Bed- that moment Almee conceived a liking for Alexander.

"Now that I have seen you, and heard your story," he said, "I attach no importance to that incident, whatever."

"Ah," said Almee sadly, "but other people will, you see." Alexander suddenly flushed crimson, and he avoided Aimee's eye. But his

face grew peculiarly grim. "I have only this to say. That man-that Spencer-who dared to expose you to such a situation, is the culprit I wish to see. He deserves-'

Aimee's heel smote the floor. "Not a word against Billy! It's he who saved me, right from the beginning. He begged me to let him own But he has kept my secret, at his own risk, because I wanted it kept. He is a gentleman!"

Alexander winced. At that moment, out of the tail of her eye, Almee caught sight of a tall figure in overalls crossing the gravel-walk beyond the lawn.

"Here he is!" exclaimed Aimee. 'Let him answer for himself, if you want to see him."

She ran to the window and called recklessly: "Billy !"

Mr. William Spencer looked towards her, glanced quickly left and right to see if the coast was clear, and hurrled to join Aimee. He stepped in through the window.

"Billy," said Aimee, "this is my Cousin Alexander. And he's — he knows all about it. It seems this is

our finish, Billy." The two men turned and faced each other.

CHAPTER XVI

"They Must Be Told."

Mr. Lambe's serious eyes had become hard and penetrating as a pair of crystal lenses. They gave the impression of piercing the exterior of the man before him, and reading his mind. Alexander looked, at that moment. rather like an inquisitor of Torque-

mada's court. "You are Mr. William Spencer?"

said Alexander icily. "That's so. You don't know me? I guessed you wouldn't. But I remember you very well, though I never connected your name all now," said Billy calmly. "You were chaplain to the Tenth Rutlands, in 1918. Came from China to join 'em, I heard."

Mr. Lambe was silent. "I was a sub in the Ninety-seventh of the line, lying next the British Seventleth division at Arras," added Billy. "I remember you because you brought in six wounded who got left, after the raid on the pillboxes. Two of them were ours. You got the military brass."

Aimee stared at Alexander in blank amazement.

"That will do," interrupted Mr. Lambe impatiently. "We are not dealing with the war. Do you realize," he said in his grimmest tone, "the posltion in which you have placed this lady?"

Billy looked straight at him.

"You are Miss Scroope's cousin," he said quietly, "and a parson. I guess I'll take lying down, from you, anything you choose to say or do. Of course I realize it, and it's why I'm here. I've been a fool. I didn't seem to know. But I ought to have known."

"Things are so different, where I

He sighed.

belong. An' they were different in France-mighty different. But that's no excuse. I wish I'd broken my neck before I did such a fool thing. And here we are in the soup. I don't matter. And you don't matter either, parson. All that matters is Miss Scroope. Get me?"

"Come here," said Alexander. He took Billy by the arm, led him to the window, and turned him so that the sun shone full on his face. Mr. Lambe looked at Billy for some moments in silence, with a peculiar intentness.

"Mr. Spencer," sald Alexander, releasing him, "I will see you presently. I shall have something to say to you. company you. I'll do everything I For the moment, leave me with my

Billy nodded. He turned to Aimee with a smile.

"Don't you worry," he said quietly, 'the padre's white."

Billy disappeared with extreme suddenness through the window. Alexander came slowly up to Almee.

"That young man," he said, "has the heart of a child. It is a good thing to have. And rare, at his age. That does not alter the fact that your situation is dangerous, and even terrible. My decision is final," he said earnestly. "There is but one thing to do. The plain, honest course. Aunt Erythea must be told immediately. Then you will be safe."

"And I repeat it's impossible," returned Aimee quickly. "Can't you see? You understand. And Georgie understands. But there is one who will never understand. My father, the doesn't belong to our time. He'll con-



Aimee Seized His Hands in Hers.

sider only one thing-that his daughter has been disgraced before all the county. Her name a by-word among the rabble. That's how he'll take it. It will simply be Dad's finish."

Aimee sniffed miserably, "I never thought about it. But leorgie told me what it would mean to my father. And she's right. You

don't know Dad." Alexander had turned rather white. He walked to the door and back, in some agitation.

"It is some years since I have seen your father. But I knew him very well. And I believe you are right. This would be a heavy blow to him. But-it has got to be faced."

"And I will not let Dad face it!" said Aimee hotly. "I don't care, for myself. But I'm not going to have him made miserable-for all the par-

sons in the country!" "You have no choice. You do not suppose for a moment this thing can

be concealed and overcome!" Aimee turned to him with supreme confidence. "Of course I do. Billy will see it

through!" she said triumphantly. Alexander gasped. "I cannot countenance deceit. The whole thing is known to me-my position is impossible," he said.

should be abetting a lie," "There's no need for you to do anything at all. Nobody wanted you to butt in, Alexander. The secret is mine, not yours. Go to Aunt Erythea If you must!" said Almee bitterly. "Oh, I'm not complaining-I can see that you must. Only you'll do it without my sanction. . Go to her, and tell

her all you know about me." Alexander grouned. For awhile he was silent. The perspiration stood out on his forehead. The anguish in his face was so plain that even Aimee felt compunction.

Alexander sighed aloud, "I shall keep silence," he said. "It is impossible for me to betray a woman's secret without her consent-or to utter one word that may affect her reputation. But what will come of

"Ah!" said Aimee eagerly, "you need know nothing at all. Whatever happens, I'll keep you out of it."

"On the contrary! I implore you, whatever difficulty arises, to come to me. I-I will do all I can," He gutped. "I want to help you, Aimee." Aimee seized his hands in hers.

"Alexander," she cried breathlessly, 'I am sorry I knocked you down!" The next moment she had fled through the window.

Half an hour later Aimee, a somewhat furtive figure, was dodging to and fro on the path near the little arbor in the rose garden, keeping an anxious eye on all the approaches from the house. She was still feeling a little confused.

"Who would ever have dreamed he was such a good sort as that!" she said to herself. "It's a delirious sort of mess I've got them both into. I hope he won't jump on poor Georgie. Why on earth doesn't she hurry un? l other's convictions.

There she is-oh bother!-Alexander again!"

Aimee retreated out of sight into the arbor.

Georgina came slowly along the path, her countenance pale and downcast, like a recalcitrant novice who fears the Lady Superior. Mr. Alexander Lambe, looming through the forest of standard roses, quickly overtook her.

"Miss Berners!"

Georgina turned to him with frightened eyes,

"I wish to speak with you," said

Alexander with suppressed agitation. "Shall we be seated?" He led her to a rustic seat close against the arbor. "It distresses me," said Mr. Lambe earnestly, "to see, as I cannot help seeing, the effect this has had upon you. The shock to your sensibility, Let me set your mind at rest, as far as I can. I hardly dare to think how it will all end. But your cousin is as innocent as an infant of any real intent to deceive. She has behaved as inconsequently as a child-that is all. One-one must try to make allowances for her. She should be still at

school. That is what I think of her." "Yes," murmfired Georgina miserably, "but what must you think of-

"Of you!" said Mr. Lambe with strong feeling. "Your loyalty-your unflinching attachment to that young madcap, stirs my admiration. It is dreadful to think of what you must have suffered. Purely to protect Almee. You faced my aunt." Mr. Lambe clasped his hand and drew his breath in sharply. "Yes, you risked the displeasure of my aunt! Andof course, the police. For days this sword of Damocles has been hanging over your blameless head. You-you have not been guilty of deceit. No, no! Only of silence. I think you have behaved, on the whole, admirably."

"Oh!" gasped Georgia faintly, hardly daring to believe her ears, "you cannot mean it!" "I do mean it!" exclaimed Mr.

Lambe warmly. "Miss Berners, from the first hour I saw you, I was convinced of your-your essential goodness! It betrays itself in all that you do. Anything that is underhand or questionable, glides away from you-" proclaimed Mr. Lambe, with a sweeping movement of his hand, "as the turbid stream flows over the riverbed of white marble, leaving its purity unsullied. My admiration for you is greater, if that is possible, than

ever." Georgina's heart fluttered delight-

fully. "I think," continued Alexander, with growing enthusiasm, "that you exist to sacrifice yourself for others, Miss Berners. You have more than pletyyou have charity. It is one of the

sweetest qualities in a woman." Georgina turned to him with swim ming eyes. "Oh, Mr. Lambe!" she murmured

with delicious confusion. Alexander answered her with a hollow groan. She was startled at the sudden distress in his face.

"The question is not what I think of you," he said bitterly, "but what you think of me! You know the principles I profess, and that I impressed on you. Out of my own mouth I am condemned. How can you feel anything but contempt for me! I have consented to connive at this mad escapade of Almee's and all its consequences. To keep silent. To-to bolster it up," he said with a gulp. "I have passed my word."

"You have done that!" she cried eagerly. "Why, now that you are on her side, she may be saved from exposure after all! I think it is splendid of you—absolutely splendid!" "How can you think of me, but as a hypocrite? You do not mean, Miss

Georgina's eyes shone.

Berners, that you feel any respect for me now?" "Mr. Lambe, when I first knew you. I thought you my ideal as a churchman. I think so more than ever. When I was in trouble, and consulted you, I seemed to find you a little hard. Poor Aimee had enough to bear. But now." gasped Georgina, quite carried away, "I consider your conduct noble -really noble! I admire you more

than ever." "Miss Berners," said Alexander, husky with emotion, "if only you knew what a relief it is, that I have not forfelted your regard! I have only known you a few days, but your kindness, your sympathy-" his hand closed almost convulsively on hers-"Misa Berners, may I call you Aimee-I-J mean Georgina-!"

"Poof!" A stifled, explosive sound caused Mr. Lambe to start violently and look round him.

"Snooks! You're Aimee Scroope! Don't deny it!" said Diana, fiercely.

(TO BE CONTINUED.)

Thought for the Day.

One can be loyal to his own convictions without being intolerant of an-