

ENGLAND
TO
AMERICA

Margaret Prescott
Montague

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Title: England to America

Date of first publication: 1918

Author: Margaret Prescott Montague

Date first posted: Apr. 10, 2019

Date last updated: Apr. 10, 2019

Faded Page eBook #20190443

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[Source: Atlantic Monthly, September 1918]

ENGLAND TO AMERICA

BY MARGARET PRESCOTT
MONTAGUE

I

'Lord, but English people *are* funny!'

This was the perplexed mental ejaculation that young Lieutenant Skipworth Cary, of Virginia, found his thoughts constantly reiterating during his stay in Devonshire. Had he been, he wondered, a confiding fool, to accept so trustingly Chev Sherwood's suggestion that he spend a part of his leave, at least, at Bishopsthorpe, where Chev's people lived? But why should he have anticipated any difficulty here, in this very corner of England which had bred his own ancestors, when he had always hit it off so splendidly with his English comrades at the Front? Here, however, though they were all awfully kind,—at least, he was sure they meant to be kind,—something was always bringing him up short: something that he could not lay

hold of, but which made him feel like a blind man groping in a strange place, or worse, like a bull in a china-shop. He was prepared enough to find differences in the American and English points of view. But this thing that baffled him did not seem to have to do with that; it was something deeper, something very definite, he was sure—and yet, what was it? The worst of it was that he had a curious feeling as if they were all—that is, Lady Sherwood and Gerald; not Sir Charles so much—protecting him from himself—keeping him from making breaks, as he phrased it. That hurt and annoyed him, and piqued his vanity. Was he a social blunderer, and weren't a Virginia gentleman's manners to be trusted in England without leading-strings?

He had been at the Front for several months with the Royal Flying Corps, and when his leave came, his Flight Commander, Captain Cheviot Sherwood, discovering that he meant to spend it in England where he hardly knew a soul, had said his people down in Devonshire would be jolly glad to have him stop with them; and Skipworth Cary, knowing that, if the circumstances had been reversed, his people down in Virginia would indeed have been jolly glad to entertain Captain Sherwood, had accepted unhesitatingly. The invitation had been seconded by a letter from Lady Sherwood,—Chev's mother,—and after a few days sight-seeing in London, he had come down to Bishopsthorpe, very eager to know his friend's family, feeling as he did about Chev himself. 'He's the finest man that ever went up in the air,' he had written home; and to his own family's disgust, his letters had been far more full of Chev Sherwood than they had been of Skipworth Cary.

And now here he was, and he almost wished himself away

—wished almost that he was back again at the Front, carrying on under Chev. There, at least, you knew what you were up against. The job might be hard enough, but it wasn't baffling and queer, with hidden undercurrents that you couldn't chart. It seemed to him that this baffling feeling of constraint had rushed to meet him on the very threshold of the drawing-room, when he made his first appearance.

As he entered, he had a sudden sensation that they had been awaiting him in a strained expectancy, and that, as he appeared, they adjusted unseen masks and began to play-act at something. 'But English people don't play-act very well,' he commented to himself, reviewing the scene afterwards.

Lady Sherwood had come forward and greeted him in a manner which would have been pleasant enough, if he had not, with quick sensitiveness, felt it to be forced. But perhaps that was English stiffness.

Then she had turned to her husband, who was standing staring into the fireplace, although, as it was June, there was no fire there to stare at.

'Charles,' she said, 'here is Lieutenant Cary'; and her voice had a certain note in it which at home Cary and his sister Nancy were in the habit of designating 'mother-making-dad-mind-his-manners.'

At her words the old man—and Cary was startled to see how old and broken he was—turned round and held out his hand. 'How d' you do?' he said jerkily, 'how d' you do?' and then turned abruptly back again to the fireplace.

'Hello! What's up! The old boy doesn't like me!' was Cary's quick startled comment to himself.

He was so surprised by the look the other bent upon him, that he involuntarily glanced across to a long mirror to see if there was anything wrong with his uniform. But no, that appeared to be all right. It was himself, then—or his country; perhaps the old sport didn't fall for Americans.

'And here is Gerald,' Lady Sherwood went on in her low remote voice, which somehow made the Virginian feel very far away.

It was with genuine pleasure, though with some surprise, that he turned to greet Gerald Sherwood, Chev's younger brother, who had been, tradition in the corps said, as gallant and daring a flyer as Chev himself, until he got his in the face five months ago.

'I'm mighty glad to meet you,' he said eagerly, in his pleasant, muffled Southern voice, grasping the hand the other stretched out, and looking with deep respect at the scarred face and sightless eyes.

Gerald laughed a little, but it was a pleasant laugh, and his hand-clasp was friendly.

'That's real American, isn't it?' he said. 'I ought to have remembered and said it first. Sorry.'

Skipworth laughed too. 'Well,' he conceded, 'we generally are glad to meet people in my country, and we don't care who says it first. But,' he added, 'I didn't think I'd have the luck to

find you here.'

He remembered that Chev had regretted that he probably wouldn't see Gerald, as the latter was at St. Dunstan's, where they were reëducating the blinded soldiers.

The other hesitated a moment, and then said rather awkwardly, 'Oh, I'm just home for a little while; I only got here this morning, in fact.'

Skipworth noted the hesitation. Did the old people get panicky at the thought of entertaining a wild man from Virginia, and send an SOS for Gerald, he wondered.

'We are so glad you could come to us,' Lady Sherwood said rather hastily just then. And again he could not fail to note that she was prompting her husband.

The latter reluctantly turned round, and said, 'Yes, yes, quite so. Welcome to Bishopsthorpe, my boy,' as if his wife had pulled a string, and he responded mechanically, without quite knowing what he said. Then, as his eyes rested a moment on his guest, he looked as if he would like to bolt out of the room. He controlled himself, however, and, jerking round again to the fireplace, went on murmuring, 'Yes, yes, yes,' vaguely—just like the dormouse at the Mad Tea-Party, who went to sleep, saying, 'Twinkle, twinkle, twinkle,' Cary could not help thinking to himself.

But after all, it wasn't really funny, it was pathetic. Gosh, how doddering the poor old boy was! Skipworth wondered, with a sudden twist at his heart, if the war was playing the deuce with his home people, too. Was his own father going to

pieces like this, and had his mother's gay vivacity fallen into that still remoteness of Lady Sherwood's? But of course not! The Carys hadn't suffered as the poor Sherwoods had, with their youngest son, Curtin, killed early in the war, and now Gerald knocked out so tragically. Lord, he thought, how they must all bank on Chev! And of course they would want to hear at once about him. 'I left Chev as fit as anything, and he sent all sorts of messages,' he reported, thinking it more discreet to deliver Chev's messages thus vaguely than to repeat his actual care-free remark, which had been, 'Oh, tell 'em I'm jolly as a tick.'

But evidently there was something wrong with the words as they were, for instantly he was aware of that curious sense of withdrawal on their part. Hastily reviewing them, he decided that they had sounded too familiar from a stranger and a younger man like himself. He supposed he ought not to have spoken of Chev by his first name. Gee, what sticklers they were! Wouldn't his family—dad and mother and Nancy—have fairly lapped up any messages from him, even if they had been delivered a bit awkwardly? However, he added, as a concession to their point of view, 'But of course you'll have had later news of Captain Sherwood.'

To which, after a pause, Lady Sherwood responded, 'Oh, yes,' in that remote and colorless voice which might have meant anything or nothing.

At this point dinner was announced.

Lady Sherwood drew her husband away from the empty fireplace, and Gerald slipped his arm through the Virginian's,

saying pleasantly, 'I'm learning to carry on fairly well at St. Dunstan's, but I confess I still like to have a pilot.'

To look at the tall young fellow beside him, whose scarred face was so reminiscent of Chev's untouched good looks, who had known all the immense freedom of the air, but who was now learning to carry on in the dark, moved Skipworth Cary to generous homage.

'You know my saying I'm glad to meet you isn't just American,' he said half shyly, but warmly. 'It's plain English, and the straight truth. I've wanted to meet you awfully. The oldsters are always holding up your glorious exploits to us newcomers. Withers never gets tired telling about that fight of yours with the four enemy planes. And besides,' he rushed on eagerly, 'I'm glad to have a chance to tell Chev's brother— Captain Sherwood's brother, I mean—what I think of him. Only as a matter of fact, I can't,' he broke off with a laugh. 'I can't put it exactly into words, but I tell you I'd follow that man straight into hell and out the other side—or go there alone if he told me to. He is the finest chap that ever flew.'

And then he felt as if a cold douche had been flung in his face, for after a moment's pause, the other returned, 'That's awfully good of you,' in a voice so distant and formal that the Virginian could have kicked himself. What an ass he was to be so darned enthusiastic with an Englishman! He supposed it was bad form to show any pleasure over praise of a member of your family.

Lord, if Chev got the V.C., he reckoned it would be awful to speak of it. Still, you would have thought Gerald might have

stood for a little praise of him. But then, glancing sideways at his companion, he surprised on his face a look so strange and suffering that it came to him almost violently what it must be never to fly again; to be on the threshold of life, with endless days of blackness ahead. Good God! How cruel he had been to flaunt Chev in his face! In remorseful and hasty reparation he stumbled on, 'But the old fellows are always having great discussions as to which was the best—you or your brother. Withers always maintains you were.'

'Withers lies, then!' the other retorted. 'I never touched Chev—never came within a mile of him, and never could have.'

They reached the dinner-table with that, and young Cary found himself bewildered and uncomfortable. If Gerald hadn't liked praise of Chev, he had liked praise of himself even less, it seemed.

Dinner was not a success. The Virginian found that, if there was to be conversation, the burden of carrying it on was upon him, and gosh! they don't mind silences in this man's island, do they? he commented desperately to himself, thinking how different it was from America. Why, there they acted as if silence was an egg that had just been laid, and everyone had to cackle at once to cover it up. But here the talk constantly fell to the ground, and nobody but himself seemed concerned to pick it up. His attempt to praise Chev had not been successful, and he could understand their not wanting to hear about flying and the war before Gerald.

So at last, in desperation, he wandered off into descriptions of America, finding to his relief, that he had struck the right

note at last. They were glad to hear about the States, and Lady Sherwood inquired politely if the Indians still gave them much trouble; and when he assured her that in Virginia, except for the Pocahontas tribe, they were all pretty well subdued, she accepted his statement with complete innocency. And he was so delighted to find at last a subject to which they were evidently cordial, that he was quite carried away, and wound up by inviting them all to visit his family in Richmond, as soon as the war was over.

Gerald accepted at once, with enthusiasm; Lady Sherwood made polite murmurs, smiling at him in quite a warm and almost, indeed, maternal manner. Even Sir Charles, who had been staring at the food on his plate as if he did not quite know what to make of it, came to the surface long enough to mumble, 'Yes, yes, very good idea. Countries must carry on together—What?'

But that was the only hit of the whole evening, and when the Virginian retired to his room, as he made an excuse to do early, he was so confused and depressed that he fell into an acute attack of homesickness.

Heavens, he thought, as he tumbled into bed, just suppose, now, this was little old Richmond, Virginia, U.S.A., instead of being Bishopsthorpe, Avery Cross near Wick, and all the rest of it! And at that, he grinned to himself. England wasn't such an all-fired big country that you'd think they'd have to ticket themselves with addresses a yard long, for fear they'd get lost—now, would you? Well, anyway, suppose it was Richmond, and his train just pulling into the Byrd Street Station. He stretched out luxuriously, and let his mind picture the whole

familiar scene. The wind was blowing right, so there was the mellow homely smell of tobacco in the streets, and plenty of people all along the way to hail him with outstretched hands and shouts of 'Hey, Skip Cary, when did you get back?' 'Welcome home, my boy!' 'Well, will you *look* what the cat dragged in!' And so he came to his own front door-step, and walking straight in, surprised the whole family at breakfast; and yes—doggone it! if it wasn't Sunday, and they having waffles! And after that his obliging fancy bore him up Franklin Street, through Monroe Park, and so to Miss Sally Berkeley's door. He was sound asleep before he reached it, but in his dreams, light as a little bird, she came flying down the broad stairway to meet him, and—

But when he waked next morning, he did not find himself in Virginia, but in Devonshire, where, to his unbounded embarrassment, a white housemaid was putting up his curtains and whispering something about his bath. And though he pretended profound slumber, he was well aware that people do not turn brick-red in their sleep. And the problem of what was the matter with the Sherwood family was still before him.

II

'They're playing a game,' he told himself after a few days. 'That is, Lady Sherwood and Gerald are—poor old Sir Charles can't make much of a stab at it. The game is to make me think they are awfully glad to have me, when in reality there's something about me, or something I do, that gets them on the

raw.'

He almost decided to make some excuse and get away; but after all, that was not easy. In English novels, he remembered, they always had a wire calling them to London; but darn it all! the Sherwoods knew mighty well there wasn't anyone in London who cared a hoot about him.

The thing that got his goat most, he told himself, was that they apparently didn't like his friendship with Chev. Anyway they didn't seem to want him to talk about him; and whenever he tried to express his warm appreciation for all that the older man had done for him, he was instantly aware of a wall of reserve on their part, a holding of themselves aloof from him. That puzzled and hurt him, and put him on his dignity. He concluded that they thought it was cheeky of a youngster like him to think that a man like Chev could be his friend; and if that was the way they felt, he reckoned he'd jolly well better shut up about it.

But whatever it was that they didn't like about him, they most certainly did want him to have a good time. He and his pleasure appeared to be for the time being their chief consideration. And after the first day or so he began indeed to enjoy himself extremely. For one thing, he came to love the atmosphere of the old place and of the surrounding country, which he and Gerald explored together. He liked to think that ancestors of his own had been inheritors of these green lanes, and pleasant mellow stretches. Then, too, after the first few days, he could not help seeing that they really began to like him, which of course was reassuring, and tapped his own warm friendliness, which was always ready enough to be released.

And besides, he got by accident what he took to be a hint as to the trouble. He was passing the half-open door of Lady Sherwood's morning-room, when he heard Sir Charles's voice break out, 'Good God, Elizabeth, I don't see how you stand it! When I see him so straight and fine-looking, and so untouched, beside our poor lad, and think—and think—'

Skipworth hurried out of earshot, but now he understood that look of aversion in the old man's eyes which had so startled him at first. Of course, the poor old boy might easily hate the sight of him beside Gerald. With Gerald himself he really got along famously. He was a most delightful companion, full of anecdotes and history of the countryside, every foot of which he had apparently explored in the old days with Chev and the younger brother, Curtin. Yet even with Gerald, Cary sometimes felt that aloofness and reserve, and that older protective air that they all showed him. Take, for instance, that afternoon when they were lolling together on the grass in the park. The Virginian, running on in his usual eager manner, had plunged without thinking into an account of a particularly daring bit of flying on Chev's part, when suddenly he realized that Gerald had rolled over on the grass and buried his face in his arms, and interrupted himself awkwardly. 'But, of course,' he said, 'he must have written home about it himself.'

'No, or if he did, I didn't hear of it. Go on,' Gerald said in a muffled voice.

A great rush of compassion and remorse overwhelmed the Virginian, and he burst out penitently, 'What a brute I am! I'm always forgetting and running on about flying, when I know it

must hurt like the very devil!

The other drew a difficult breath. 'Yes,' he admitted, 'what you say does hurt in a way—in a way you can't understand. But all the same I like to hear you. Go on about Chev.'

So Skipworth went on and finished his account, winding up, 'I don't believe there's another man in the service who could have pulled it off—but I tell you your brother's one in a million.'

'Good God, don't I know it!' the other burst out. 'We were all three the jolliest pals together,' he got out presently in a choked voice, 'Chev and the young un and I; and now—'

He did not finish, but Cary guessed his meaning. Now the young un, Curtin, was dead, and Gerald himself knocked out. But, heavens! the Virginian thought, did Gerald think Chev would go back on him now on account of his blindness? Well you could everlastingly bet he wouldn't!

'Chev thinks the world and all of you!' he cried in eager defense of his friend's loyalty. 'Lots of times when we're all awfully jolly together, he makes some excuse and goes off by himself; and Withers told me it was because he was so frightfully cut up about you. Withers said he told him once that he'd a lot rather have got it himself—so you can everlastingly bank on him!'

Gerald gave a terrible little gasp. 'I—I knew he'd feel like that,' he got out. 'We've always cared such a lot for each other.' And then he pressed his face harder than ever into the grass, and his long body quivered all over. But not for long. In a

moment he took fierce hold on himself, muttering, 'Well, one must carry on, whatever happens,' and apologized disjointedly. 'What a fearful fool you must think me! And—and this isn't very pippy for you, old chap.' Presently, after that, he sat up, and said, brushing it all aside, 'We're facing the old moat, aren't we? There's an interesting bit of tradition about it that I must tell you.'

And there you were, Cary thought: no matter how much Gerald might be suffering from his misfortune, he must carry on just the same, and see that his visitor had a pleasant time. It made the Virginian feel like an outsider and very young, as if he were not old enough for them to show him their real feelings.

Another thing that he noticed was that they did not seem to want him to meet people. They never took him anywhere to call, and if visitors came to the house, they showed an almost panicky desire to get him out of the way. That again hurt his pride. What in heaven's name was the matter with him anyway!

III

However, on the last afternoon of his stay at Bishopsthorpe, he told himself with a rather rueful grin, that his manners must have improved a little, for they took him to tea at the rectory.

He was particularly glad to go there because, from certain

jokes of Withers's, who had known the Sherwoods since boyhood, he gathered that Chev and the rector's daughter were engaged. And just as he would have liked Chev to meet Sallie Berkeley, so he wanted to meet Miss Sybil Gaylord.

He had little hope of having a tête-à-tête with her, but as it fell out he did. They were all in the rectory garden together, Gerald and the rector a little behind Miss Gaylord and himself, as they strolled down a long walk with high hedges bordering it. On the other side of the hedge Lady Sherwood and her hostess still sat at the tea-table, and then it was that Cary heard Mrs. Gaylord say distinctly, 'I'm afraid the strain has been too much for you—you should have let us have him.'

To which Lady Sherwood returned quickly, 'Oh, no, that would have been impossible with—'

'Come—come this way—I must show you the view from the arbor,' Miss Gaylord broke in breathlessly; and laying a hand on his arm, she turned him abruptly into a side path.

Glancing down at her, the Southerner could not but note the panic and distress in her fair face. It was so obvious that the overheard words referred to him, and he was so bewildered by the whole situation, that he burst out impulsively, 'I say, what *is* the matter with me? Why do they find me so hard to put up with? Is it something I do—or don't they like Americans? Honestly, I wish you'd tell me.'

She stood still at that, looking at him, her blue eyes full of distress and concern.

'Oh, I am so sorry,' she cried. 'They would be so sorry to

have you think anything like that.'

'But what is it?' he persisted. 'Don't they like Americans?'

'Oh, no, it isn't that—Oh, quite the contrary!' she returned eagerly.

'Then it's something about me they don't like?'

'Oh, no, no! Least of all, that—*don't* think that!' she begged.

'But what am I to think then?'

'Don't think anything just yet,' she pleaded. 'Wait a little, and you will understand.'

She was so evidently distressed, that he could not press her further; and fearing she might think him unappreciative, he said, 'Well, whatever it is, it hasn't prevented me from having a ripping good time. They've seen to that, and just done everything for my pleasure.'

She looked up quickly, and to his relief he saw that for once he had said the right thing.

'You have enjoyed it, then?' she questioned eagerly.

'Most awfully,' he assured her warmly. 'I shall always remember what a happy leave they gave me.'

She gave a little sigh of satisfaction, 'I am so glad,' she said. 'They wanted you to have a good time—that was what we all wanted.'

He looked at her gratefully, thinking how sweet she was in her fair English beauty, and how good to care that he should have enjoyed his leave. How different she was too from Sally Berkeley—why she would have made two of his little girl! And how quiet! Sallie Berkeley, with her quick glancing vivacity, would have been all around her and off again like a humming-bird before she could have uttered two words. And yet he was sure that they would have been friends, just as he and Chev were. Perhaps they all would be, after the war. And then he began to talk about Chev, being sure that, had the circumstances been reversed, Sallie Berkeley would have wanted news of him. Instantly he was aware of a tense listening stillness on her part. That pleased him. Well, she did care for the old fellow all right, he thought; and though she made no response, averting her face, and plucking nervously at the leaves of the hedge as they passed slowly along, he went on pouring out his eager admiration for his friend.

At last they came to a seat in an arbor, from which one looked out upon a green beneficent landscape. It was an intimate secluded little spot—and oh, if Sallie Berkeley were only there to sit beside him! And as he thought of this, it came to him whimsically that in all probability she must be longing for Chev, just as he was for Sallie.

Dropping down on the bench beside her, he leaned over, and said with a friendly, almost brotherly, grin of understanding, 'I reckon you're wishing Captain Sherwood was sitting here, instead of Lieutenant Cary.'

The minute the impulsive words were out of his mouth, he knew he had blundered, been awkward, and inexcusably

intimate. She gave a little choked gasp, and her blue eyes stared up at him, wide and startled. Good heavens, what a break he had made! No wonder the Sherwoods couldn't trust him in company! There seemed no apology that he could offer in words, but at least, he thought, he would show her that he would not have intruded on her secret without being willing to share his with her. With awkward haste he put his hand into his breast-pocket, and dragged forth the picture of Sallie Berkeley he always carried there.

'This is the little girl I'm thinking about,' he said, turning very red, yet boyishly determined to make amends, and also proudly confident of Sallie Berkeley's charms. 'I'd like mighty well for you two to know one another.'

She took the picture in silence, and for a long moment stared down at the soft little face, so fearless, so confident and gay, that smiled appealingly back at her. Then she did something astonishing,—something which seemed to him wholly un-English,—and yet he thought it the sweetest thing he had ever seen. Cupping her strong hands about the picture with a quick protectiveness, she suddenly raised it to her lips, and kissed it lightly. 'O little girl!' she cried, 'I hope you will be very happy!'

The little involuntary act, so tender, so sisterly and spontaneous, touched the Virginian extremely.

'Thanks awfully,' he said unsteadily. 'She'll think a lot of that, just as I do—and I know she'd wish you the same.'

She made no reply to that, and as she handed the picture back to him, he saw that her hands were trembling, and he had

a sudden conviction that, if she had been Sallie Berkeley, her eyes would have been full of tears. As she was Sybil Gaylord, however, there were no tears there, only a look that he never forgot. The look of one much older, protective, maternal almost, and as if she were gazing back at Sallie Berkeley and himself from a long way ahead on the road of life. He supposed it was the way most English people felt nowadays. He had surprised it so often on all their faces, that he could not help speaking of it.

'You all think we Americans are awfully young and raw, don't you?' he questioned.

'Oh, no, not that,' she deprecated. 'Young perhaps for these days, yes—but it is more that you—that your country is so—so unsuffered. And we don't want you to suffer!' she added quickly.

Yes, that was it! He understood now, and, heavens, how fine it was! Old England was wounded deep—deep. What she suffered herself she was too proud to show; but out of it she wrought a great maternal care for the newcomer. Yes, it was fine—he hoped his country would understand.

Miss Gaylord rose. 'There are Gerald and father looking for you,' she said, 'and I must go now.' She held out her hand. 'Thank you for letting me see her picture, and for everything you said about Captain Sherwood—for *everything*, remember—I want you to remember.'

With a light pressure of her fingers she was gone, slipping away through the shrubbery, and he did not see her again.

IV

So he came to his last morning at Bishopsthorpe; and as he dressed, he wished it could have been different; that he were not still conscious of that baffling wall of reserve between himself and Chev's people, for whom, despite all, he had come to have a real affection.

In the breakfast-room he found them all assembled, and his last meal there seemed to him as constrained and difficult as any that had preceded it. It was over finally, however, and in a few minutes he would be leaving.

'I can never thank you enough for the splendid time I've had here,' he said as he rose. 'I'll be seeing Chev to-morrow, and I'll tell him all about everything.'

Then he stopped dead. With a smothered exclamation, old Sir Charles had stumbled to his feet, knocking over his chair, and hurried blindly out of the room; and Gerald said, '*Mother!*' in a choked appeal.

As if it were a signal between them, Lady Sherwood pushed her chair back a little from the table, her long delicate fingers dropped together loosely in her lap; she gave a faint sigh as if a restraining mantle slipped from her shoulders, and looking up at the youth before her, her fine pale face lighted with a kind of glory, she said, 'No, dear lad, no. You can never tell Chev, for he is gone.'

'Gone!' he cried.

'Yes,' she nodded back at him, just above a whisper; and now her face quivered, and the tears began to rush down her cheeks.

'Not *dead!*' he cried. 'Not Chev—not that! O my God, Gerald, not *that!*'

'Yes,' Gerald said. 'They got him two days after you left.'

It was so overwhelming, so unexpected and shocking, above all so terrible, that the friend he had so greatly loved and admired was gone out of his life forever, that young Cary stumbled back into his seat, and crumpling over, buried his face in his hands, making great uncouth gasps as he strove to choke back his grief.

Gerald groped hastily around the table, and flung an arm about his shoulders.

'Steady on, dear fellow, steady,' he said, though his own voice broke.

'When did you hear?' Cary got out at last.

'We got the official notice just the day before you came—and Withers has written us particulars since.'

'And you *let* me come in spite of it! And stay on, when every word I said about him must have—have fairly *crucified* each one of you! Oh, forgive me! forgive me!' he cried distractedly. He saw it all now; he understood at last. It was not

on Gerald's account that they could not talk of flying and of Chev, it was because—because their hearts were broken over Chev himself. 'Oh, forgive me!' he gasped again.

'Dear lad, there is nothing to forgive,' Lady Sherwood returned. 'How could we help loving your generous praise of our poor darling? We loved it, and you for it; we wanted to hear it, but we were afraid. We were afraid we might break down, and that you would find out.'

The tears were still running down her cheeks. She did not brush them away now; she seemed glad to have them there at last.

Sinking down on his knees, he caught her hands. 'Why did you *let* me do such a horrible thing?' he cried. 'Couldn't you have trusted me to understand? Couldn't you *see* I loved him just as you did—No, no!' he broke down humbly, 'Of course I couldn't love him as his own people did. But you must have seen how I felt about him—how I admired him, and would have followed him anywhere—and *of course* if I had known, I should have gone away at once.'

'Ah, but that was just what we were afraid of,' she said quickly. 'We were afraid you would go away and have a lonely leave somewhere. And in these days a boy's leave is so precious a thing that nothing must spoil it—*nothing*,' she reiterated; and her tears fell upon his hands like a benediction. 'But we didn't do it very well, I'm afraid,' she went on presently, with gentle contrition. 'You were too quick and understanding; you guessed there was something wrong. We were sorry not to manage better,' she apologized.

'Oh, you wonderful, wonderful people!' he gasped. 'Doing everything for my happiness, when all the time—all the time —'

His voice went out sharply, as his mind flashed back to scene after scene: to Gerald's long body lying quivering on the grass; to Sybil Gaylord wishing Sallie Berkeley happiness out of her own tragedy; and to the high look on Lady Sherwood's face. They seemed to him themselves, and yet more than themselves—shining bits in the mosaic of a great nation. Disjointedly there passed through his mind familiar words—'these are they who have washed their garments—having come out of great tribulation.' No wonder they seemed older.

'We—we couldn't have done it in America,' he said humbly.

He had a desperate desire to get away to himself; to hide his face in his arms, and give vent to the tears that were stifling him; to weep for his lost friend, and for this great heartbreaking heroism of theirs.

'But why did you do it?' he persisted. 'Was it because I was his friend?'

'Oh, it was much more than that,' Gerald said quickly. 'It was a matter of the two countries. Of course, we jolly well knew you didn't belong to us, and didn't want to, but for the life of us we couldn't help a sort of feeling that you did. And when America was in at last, and you fellows began to come, you seemed like our very own come back after many years, and,' he added, a throb in his voice, 'we were most awfully glad to see you—we wanted a chance to show you how England felt.'

Skipworth Cary rose to his feet. The tears for his friend were still wet upon his lashes. Stooping, he took Lady Sherwood's hands in his and raised them to his lips. 'As long as I live, I shall never forget,' he said. 'And others of us have seen it too in other ways—be sure America will never forget, either.'

She looked up at his untouched youth out of her beautiful sad eyes, the exalted light still shining through her tears. 'Yes,' she said, 'you see it was—I don't know exactly how to put it—but it was England to America.'

[The end of *England to America* by Margaret Prescott Montague]