

Christina Grant & Smith

Smith:

Too bad they spelt your aunt's name with an 'F'

Christina:

Oh, that's always happening. It's not really sensible when you come to think of it, to spell a name with two small "f's."

Smith:

It's one of our incomprehensible English whimsies (*pause*). Are you going to Wadi Halfa and back for the trip, or on to Khartoum?

Christina:

Oh, just for the trip. It's all so picturesque, and I love donkeys and all the beads and things. (*She takes a large plaster scarab out of her bag*).

I bought this yesterday. The man said it was a real sacred scarab. Is it?

(*Smith examines it*)

Smith:

The curious thing is that you couldn't buy one of these in Birmingham if you tried.

Christina:

Oh, is that where it comes from?

Smith:

I've always understood they were made in Birmingham for the export market, but it *may* be Sheffield.

Christina:

(*Downhearted*)

I paid five piastres for it.

Smith:

Anyway, it's a lovely specimen. So *naïve*, if you know what I mean.

(There are noises off from the gangway. The beadsellers can be heard among them.

Christina goes to have a look)

Christina:

Somebody else is coming on board. I wonder if it's her?

Smith:

You expecting a friend?

Christina:

Oh, no. I meant Mrs Mostyn. She's on her honeymoon. You must have read about her: Kay Ridgeway. Her father was the great financier. They say she's the richest girl in England.

Smith:

That must be very bad for her.

Christina:

She's not only rich. She's absolutely lovely! And she's just made a romantic marriage.
(*Ecstatically*)

Think of being rich, and lovely, and having everything in the world you want!

Smith:

I'd rather not think of it. It makes me feel sick.

Christina:

There have been pictures of her in all the papers.

Smith:

(*Furiously*)

Why should there be? Why should anyone want to look at pictures of an idle, useless girl who's never done a hand's turn in her life? Faugh! Why not pictures of decent factory girls going to their day's work?

Christina:

(*Amused*)

Who'd want to look at pictures of them? I wouldn't.

Smith:

Do you despise the workers of the world?

Christina:

Not at all. I'm one myself. I work in an office in Edinburgh as a shorthand typist. But wouldn't want pay good money for a paper to look at pictures of shorthand typists or factory girls.

Smith:

You've no proper sense of the dignity of labour.

Christina:

Do you do such an awful lot of work yourself:

Smith:

(*Disconcerted*)

I'm studying conditions at the moment. I intend to work extremely hard.

Christina:

Well, maybe when you do, you'll understand that there's such a thing as romance. And when a rich girl like Kay Ridgeway, who might have married anybody, marries a young man with no money at all and very good-looking, and they're on their honeymoon and going to be on the same boat – well, it's just too thrilling for words.

Smith:

I see. You've got what use to be called the novelette mind.

Christina:

(*Placidly*) There's no call to be rude.