

**A CHANCE  
ACQUAINTANCE**

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A Chance Acquaintance by W. D. Howells

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**W. D. HOWELLS**

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*A Chance Acquaintance.*

BY

W. D. HOWELLS.



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## A CHANCE ACQUAINTANCE.

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### I.

#### UP THE SAGUENAY.

N the forward promenade of the Saguenay boat which had been advertised to leave Quebec at seven o'clock on Tuesday morning, Miss Kitty Ellison sat tranquilly expectant of the joys which its departure should bring, and tolerantly patient of its delay; for if all the Saguenay had not been in promise, she would have thought it the greatest happiness just to have that prospect of the St. Lawrence and Quebec. The sun shone with a warm yellow light on the Upper Town, with its girdle of gray wall, and on the red flag that drowsed above the citadel, and was a friendly lustre on the tinned roofs of the Lower Town; while away off to the south and east and west wandered the purple hills and the familit plains in such dewy shadow and effulgence as would have been enough to make the heaviest heart glad. Near at hand the river was busy

with every kind of craft, and in the distance was mysterious with silvery vapors; little breaths of haze, like an ethereal colorless flame, exhaled from its surface, and it all glowed with a lovely inner radiance. In the middle distance a black ship was heaving anchor and setting sail, and the voice of the seamen came soft and sad and yet wildly hopeful to the dreamy ear of the young girl, whose soul at once went round the world before the ship, and then made haste back again to the promenade of the Saguenay boat. She sat leaning forward a little with her hands fallen into her lap, letting her unmastered thoughts play as they would in memories and hopes around the consciousness that she was the happiest girl in the world, and blest beyond desire or desert. To have left home as she had done, equipped for a single day at Niagara, and then to have come adventurously on, by grace of her cousin's wardrobe, as it were, to Montreal and Quebec; to be now going up the Saguenay, and finally to be destined to return home by way of Boston and New York;—this was more than any one human being had a right to; and, as she had written home to the girls, she felt that her privileges ought to be divided up among all the people of Ericcreek. She was very grateful to Colonel Ellison and Fanny for affording

her these advantages ; but they being now out of sight in pursuit of state-rooms, she was not thinking of them in relation to her pleasure in the morning scene, but was rather regretting the absence of a lady with whom they had travelled from Niagara, and to whom she imagined she would that moment like to say something in praise of the prospect. This lady was a Mrs. Basil March of Boston ; and though it was her wedding journey and her husband's presence ought to have absorbed her, she and Miss Kitty had sworn a sisterhood, and were pledged to see each other before long at Mrs. March's home in Boston. In her absence, now, Kitty thought what a very charming person she was, and wondered if all Boston people were really like her, so easy and friendly and hearty. In her letter she had told the girls to tell her Uncle Jack that he had not rated Boston people a bit too high, if she were to judge from Mr. and Mrs. March, and that she was sure they would help her as far as they could to carry out his instructions when she got to Boston.

These instructions were such as might seem preposterous if no more particular statement in regard to her Uncle Jack were made, but will be imaginable enough, I hope, when he is a little described. The Ellisons were a West Virginia family who had