

**DIPLOMATIC
DISENCHANTMENTS
: A NOVEL**

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Diplomatic Disenchantments: A Novel by Edith Bigelow

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EDITH BIGELOW

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**DIPLOMATIC
DISENCHANTMENTS**

A Novel

**BY
EDITH BIGELOW**



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DIPLOMATIC DISENCHANTMENTS

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CHAPTER I

JAMES FREEMAN SOMERVILLE, the distinguished professor of political economy at a certain New England university, was sitting alone in his study. The hour was eight o'clock in the evening, the season early summer. He had lately finished his evening meal, and was engaged in sipping from time to time some delicious black coffee which stood in a Doulton cup on the table beside him. When he was not sipping, he was blowing a whiff from an excellent cigar; when doing neither, he was comfortably meditating upon his own affairs. For thirty years he had been an ardent free-trader, and for twenty he had preached the doctrine from a professorial chair. Class after class of more or less promising young men had been turned off by the university, carrying with them, Somerville fondly hoped, the germs of those noble theories which would one day blossom gloriously, convincing the nation—even its manufacturers—that “commerce should be as free as the airs of heaven.”

This hope lived on in the heart of the worthy apostle of free trade, even when he received the crushing blow dealt by the recent election of a protectionist President. The tariff was to him what the wrongs of Poland are to a Pole who is not obliged to live in his native land; it made an entertaining grievance for Somerville to indulge in when the world went too smoothly with him.

This evening, however, he was not eager for discussion. In fact, if the truth were known, he was thinking not of his hobby, but of his two dearest possessions—his wife and his daughter.

He was realizing that Nannie was twenty years old, and very pretty; that at that age, and with that prettiness, she had a right to think of marriage; and that in the university town where her lot was cast there were not many young men who were worthy to call him father-in-law.

The subject of these meditations was not far off. For several moments before the professor discovered it, a fresh, smiling face was regarding him from the half-opened door. When the fond father saw it at last, he laughed indulgently.

"Come in, Nannie," he said. "What do you want?"

The door opened wide enough to admit a slim figure in a neat white gown. With a sudden swoop, Nannie Somerville reached her father and alighted on his knee. There are some faces so radiant with

health and good humor that these enviable qualities seem contagious. Nannie's countenance brought light and fragrance and color into the dingiest place. Her skin was as fine in texture and as lovely in tint as it had been in her childhood. Her smile was illuminated by perfect teeth, and punctuated by two delicious dimples. No wonder that her father looked not only affectionately but admiringly at her as he drew her to his breast.

"Oh, papa," she said—alas, she pronounced it *popper!*—"mamma's got something tremendous to tell you! She's coming now—don't tell her I said any thing! but I'm so excited!"

There was hardly time for this unsatisfactory explanation when the door opened again, and Mrs. Somerville entered. It was evident that Nannie had inherited her height and fresh coloring from the professor. Her mother was small, pale, and old-maidish in manner. Her dresses always suggested the country school-mistress (which indeed she had been). Her tone in speaking was as even as that of Nannie was diversified. There was no extravagance of gesture, no emphasis now on one word, now on another, such as Nannie indulged in; but what that quiet voice said was of the first importance in the household; and a command uttered by those thin lips at once became a law.

"Professor," began the little lady, "I have just received a letter—one containing an impor-