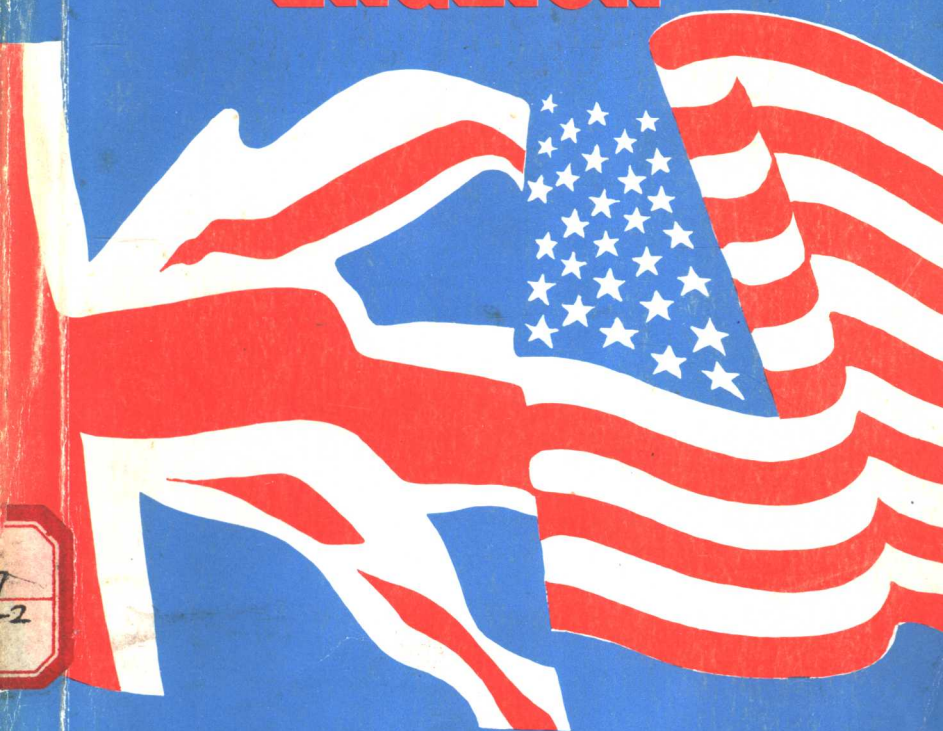


John Millington Ward

**BRITISH
AND
AMERICAN
ENGLISH**



BOOK 1

BRITISH
AND AMERICAN ENGLISH
BOOK ONE

Short Stories and Other Writings

A COMPARISON WITH COMMENTS
AND EXERCISES

JOHN MILLINGTON WARD



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THE PURPOSE OF THE BOOK

The book is intended:

- (1) as a reader for fifth-year and sixth-year students of English,
- (2) for students who have passed the examination for the Cambridge Lower Certificate but who need some further reading before tackling the Cambridge Proficiency Certificate, and
- (3) as a 'Refresher Course' for students who have completed their studies but do not want to lose the high standard they have achieved.

Half the material of the book is by British writers and half by American, and, at the end of each chapter, comments are made on all important differences between British-English and American-English. In this sense, and to this extent, the book is a comparison. It is not intended, however, to be a comprehensive study of Comparative Linguistics.

More than half the questions in all the exercises that follow each chapter have been especially designed to offer to students the opportunity of practice in speaking English which is vital in the study of the language but which is frequently lacking in many classrooms.

The comments (and footnotes) on words and other matters are made, of course, only once; thus, the American word *side-walk*, for example, is discussed in the Comments on Chapter 1 but not again in the Comments on Chapters 2 and 21, although the word appears again in both those chapters. You are strongly recommended, therefore, to begin the book at the beginning.

JOHN MILLINGTON WARD

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FOURTEEN SHORT STORIES

HER FIRST BALL

KATHERINE MANSFIELD

(British)

EXACTLY WHEN THE BALL BEGAN Leila would have found it hard to say. Perhaps her first real partner was the cab. It did not matter that she shared the cab with the Sheridan girls and their brother. She sat back in her own little corner of it, and the bolster¹ on which her hand rested felt like the sleeve of an unknown young man's dress suit; and away they bowled, past waltzing lamp-posts and houses and fences and trees. 5

'Have you really never been to a ball before, Leila? But, my child, how too weird²!' cried the Sheridan girls.

'Our nearest neighbour^c was fifteen miles away,' said Leila 10 softly, gently opening and shutting her fan.

Oh, dear, how hard it was to be 'different', like the others! She tried not to smile too much; she tried not to care. But every single thing was so new and exciting. . . Meg's tuberose, Jose's long hoop of amber,³ Laura's little dark head, pushing 15 above her white fur like a flower through snow. She would

C. WHENEVER THIS LETTER APPEARS IN THE TEXT, IT MEANS THAT A WORD OR EXPRESSION IS DISCUSSED IN THE COMMENTS THAT FOLLOW EACH STORY.

¹ arm-rest. (NOTE: The explanatory footnotes throughout this book give the meanings of words *as they are used in the stories*. These may not always be their ordinary meanings: a bolster, for example, is normally an under-pillow for a bed.)

² unnaturally curious.

³ string of yellow beads.

remember for ever. It even gave her a pang¹ to see her cousin Laurie throw away the wisps of tissue he pulled from the fastenings of his new gloves. She would like to have kept those
 20 wisps as a keepsake, as a remembrance. Laurie leaned forward and put his hand on Laura's knee.

'Look here, darling,' he said. 'The third and the ninth as usual. Twig²?'

Oh, how marvellous to have a brother! In her excitement
 25 Leila felt that if there had been time, if it hadn't been impossible, she couldn't have helped crying because she was an only child, and no brother had ever said 'Twig?' to her; no sister would ever say, as Meg said to Jose at that moment, 'I've never known your hair go up more successfully than it has to-
 30 night!'

But, of course, there was no time. They were at the drill hall³ already; there were cabs in front of them and cabs behind. The road was bright on either side with moving fan-like lights, and on the pavement^c gay couples seemed to float through the air;
 35 little satin shoes chased each other like birds.

'Hold on to me, Leila; you'll get lost,' said Laura.

'Come on girls, let's make a dash⁴ for it,' said Laurie.

Leila put two fingers on Laura's pink velvet cloak, and they were somehow lifted past the big golden lantern, carried along
 40 a passage, and pushed into the little room marked 'Ladies'. Here the crowd was so great there was hardly space to take off their things; the noise was deafening. Two benches on either side were stacked high with wraps.⁵ Two old women in white aprons ran up and down tossing fresh armfuls. And everybody
 45 was pressing forward trying to get at the little dressing-table and mirror at the far end.

¹ sharp feeling of pain.

² i.e. 'Do you understand?' (slang).

³ place used by the peace-time civilian army for training and drill—and occasionally lent for dances and so on.

⁴ quick run.

⁵ cloaks, coats, etc.

A great quivering¹ jet of gas lighted the ladies' room. It couldn't wait; it was dancing already. When the door opened again and there came a burst of tuning from the drill hall, it leaped almost to the ceiling.

50

Dark girls, fair girls were patting their hair, tying ribbons again, tucking handkerchiefs down the fronts of their bodices,² smoothing marble-white gloves. And because they were all laughing it seemed to Leila that they were all lovely.

'Aren't there any invisible hair-pins?' cried a voice. 'How 55 most extraordinary! I can't see a single invisible hair-pin.'

'Powder my back, there's a darling,' cried someone else.

'But I must have a needle and cotton. I've torn simply miles and miles of the frill³,' wailed a third.

Then, 'Pass them along, pass them along!' The straw basket 60 of programmes was tossed from arm to arm. Darling little pink-and-silver programmes, with pink pencils and fluffy tassels.⁴ Leila's fingers shook as she took one out of the basket. She wanted to ask someone, 'Am I meant to have one too?' but she had just time to read: 'Waltz 3. *Two, Two in a Canoe*. Polka 4. 65 *Making the Feathers Fly*', when Meg cried, 'Ready, Leila?' and they pressed their way through the crush in the passage towards the big double doors of the drill hall.

Dancing had not begun yet, but the band had stopped tuning, and the noise was so great it seemed that when it did begin to 70 play it would never be heard. Leila, pressing close to Meg, looking over Meg's shoulder, felt that even the little quivering coloured^e flags strung across the ceiling were talking. She quite forgot to be shy; she forgot how in the middle of dressing she had sat down on the bed with one shoe off and one shoe on and 75 begged her mother to ring up her cousins and say she couldn't go after all. And the rush of longing she had had to be sitting on the verandah of their forsaken up-country home, listening to

¹ shaking.

² top part of their dresses.

³ ornamental border on a dress.

⁴ bunch of threads (etc.), tied at one end, and hanging as an ornament.

the baby owls crying 'More pork' in the moonlight, was changed
 80 to a rush of joy so sweet that it was hard to bear alone. She
 clutched her fan, and, gazing at the gleaming,¹ golden floor, the
 azaleas,² the lanterns, the stage at one end with its red carpet
 and gilt³ chairs and the band in the corner, she thought breath-
 lessly, 'How heavenly; how simply heavenly!'

85 All the girls stood grouped together at one side of the doors,
 the men at the other, and the chaperones⁴ in dark dresses,
 smiling rather foolishly, walked with little careful steps over the
 polished floor towards the stage.

'This is my little country cousin Leila. Be nice to her. Find
 90 partners for her; she's under my wing⁵,' said Meg, going up to
 one girl after another.

Strange faces smiled at Leila—sweetly, vaguely. Strange
 voices answered, 'Of course, my dear.' But Leila felt the girls
 didn't really see her. They were looking towards the men. Why
 95 didn't the men begin? What were they waiting for? There they
 stood, smoothing their gloves, patting their glossy⁶ hair and
 smiling among themselves. Then, quite suddenly, as if they had
 only just made up their minds that that was what they had to
 do, the men came gliding over the parquet.⁷ There was a joyful
 100 flutter among the girls. A tall, fair man flew up to Meg, seized
 her programme, scribbled something. Meg passed him on to
 Leila. 'May I have the pleasure?' He ducked⁸ and smiled. Then
 came a dark man wearing an eye-glass, then cousin Laurie with
 a friend, and Laura with a little freckled fellow whose tie was
 105 crooked. Then quite an old man—fat, with a big bald patch on
 his head—took her programme and murmured, 'Let me see,
 let me see!' And he was a long time comparing his programme,

¹ shining, highly polished.

² type of flower.

³ gold-painted.

⁴ married or elderly women in
 charge of a girl or young un-
 married woman on social
 occasions.

⁵ *i.e.* she's under my protection
 and sponsorship.

⁶ very shiny.

⁷ flooring of wooden blocks
 fitted together like bricks to
 form a design.

⁸ bowed; bent his body politely.

which looked black with names, with hers. It seemed to give him so much trouble that Leila was ashamed. 'Oh, please don't bother,' she said eagerly. But instead of replying, the fat man wrote something, glanced at her again. 'Do I remember this bright little face?' he said softly. 'Is it known to me of yore¹?' At that moment the band began playing; the fat man disappeared. He was tossed away on a great wave of music that came flying over the gleaming floor, breaking the groups up into couples, scattering them, sending them spinning. . . .

Leila had learned to dance at boarding school.² Every Saturday afternoon the boarders were hurried off to a little corrugated³ iron mission hall where Miss Eccles (of London) held her 'select' classes. But the difference between that dusty-smelling hall—with calico⁴ texts on the walls, the poor terrified little woman in a brown velvet toque⁵ with rabbit's ears thumping the cold piano; Miss Eccles poking the girls' feet with her long white wand⁶—and this was so tremendous that Leila was sure that if her partner didn't come and she had to listen to that marvellous music and to watch the others sliding, gliding over the golden floor, she would die, or at least faint, or lift her arms and fly out of one of those dark windows that showed the stars.

'Ours, I think.' Some one bowed, smiled, and offered her his arm; and she hadn't to die after all. Some one's hand pressed her waist, and she floated away like a flower that is tossed into a pool.

'Quite a good floor, isn't it?' drawled⁷ a faint voice close to her ear.

'I think it's most beautifully slippery,' said Leila.

'Pardon?' The faint voice sounded surprised. Leila said it

¹ 'of yore' = (in old English) 'in days gone by'. Here the speaker means 'Have I seen your face before?'

² residential school; *i.e.* a school at which the students live.

³ iron shaped into narrow wave-like folds.

⁴ cheap cotton cloth.

⁵ sort of hat.

⁶ thin stick.

⁷ said slowly, with the sounds of the vowels made longer than usual.

again. And there was a tiny pause before the voice echoed, 'Oh, quite!' and she was swung round again.

140 He steered so beautifully. That was the great difference between dancing with girls and men, Leila decided. Girls banged into each other, and stamped on each other's feet; the girl who was gentleman always clutched you so.

The azaleas were separate flowers no longer; they were pink and white flags streaming by.

145 'Were you at the Bells' last week?' the voice came again. It sounded tired. Leila wondered whether she ought to ask him if he would like to stop.

'No, this is my first dance,' said she.

150 Her partner gave a little gasping laugh. 'Oh, I say,' he protested.

'Yes, it is really the first dance I've ever been to.' Leila was very excited. It was such a relief to be able to tell somebody. 'You see, I've lived in the country all my life till now. . . .'

155 At that moment the music stopped, and they went to sit on two chairs against the wall. Leila tucked her pink satin feet under and fanned herself, while she blissfully watched the other couples passing and disappearing through the swing doors.

'Enjoying yourself, Leila?' asked Jose, nodding her golden head.

160 Laura passed and gave her the faintest little wink; it made Leila wonder for a moment whether she was quite grown up after all. Certainly her partner did not say very much. He coughed, tucked his handkerchief away, pulled down his waistcoat,^c took a minute¹ thread off his sleeve. But it didn't
165 matter. Almost immediately the band started, and her second partner seemed to spring from the ceiling.

'Floor's not bad,' said the new voice. Did one always begin with the floor? And then, 'Were you at the Neaves' on Tuesday?' And again Leila explained. Perhaps it was a little strange
170 that her partners were not more interested. For it was thrilling. Her first ball! She was only at the beginning of everything. It

¹ very small.