

"Half a
Truth"

by
"Rita"

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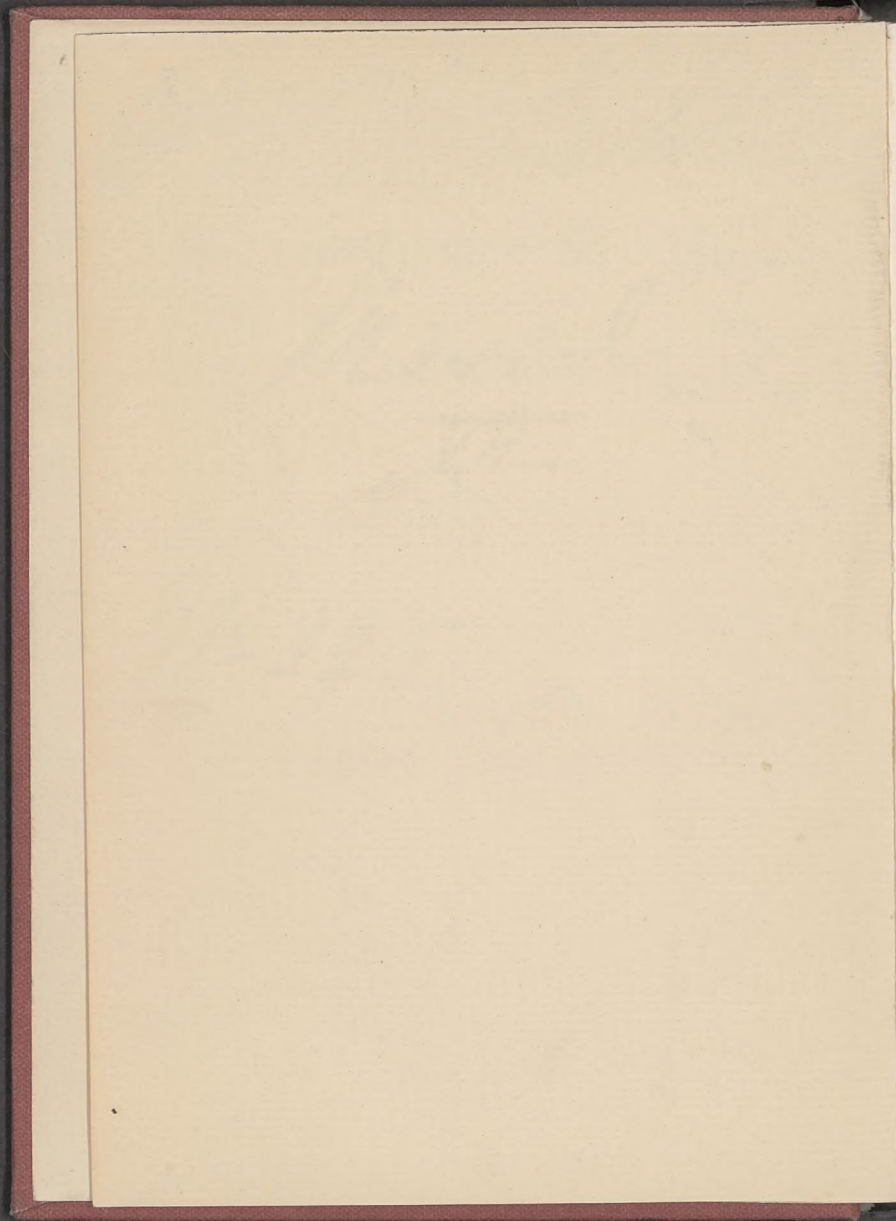
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VII

N^o 225.

A quite readable,
quite amusing
story but very,
very unlikely.

Reread 1918.



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"HALF A TRUTH"

BY

"RITA"

AUTHOR OF "SOULS," "QUEER LADY JUDAS,"
"CALVARY," ETC.

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1911.

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V

"A lie which is half a truth is ever the blackest of lies."

TENNYSON.



“HALF A TRUTH.”

I.

PATRICK JOHN MADISON, of Louisville, U.S.A., sat in his study parlour brooding over a letter that represented a portion of that day's mail.

He had read it three times. The first time with incredulity; the second with composure; the third with a self-conscious attempt at taking good fortune as his due. For why shouldn't this luck have befallen him? It was but the coping-stone of success; the sign-manual of his deserts. True, it seemed almost incredible that such luck should have descended upon a mere American citizen. But the fact of its having so descended proved that the goddess of Chance possesses discriminating faculties.

Patrick John Madison had but just retired from the arduous duties of an enormous tannery business. He had turned it into a company of which he was director and manager. It spelt more dollars than its unfragrant obligations deserved. He was a very wealthy man, and now to his wealth was added this windfall of a landed estate and a title, through deaths of direct heirs and confusion of intermarriages. Madison—a distant American

cousin—was not quite clear as to how it had all come about. But he had a conviction that the lawyers must be right, for lawyers never make mistakes in tracing families. Families of any note or importance, that is to say.

He laid the many-paged legal document down on the table by his side. The old worn, comfortable, and capacious table at which he had worked out schemes, and evolved projects, and laid stone after stone of his material pillar of wealth. Then he rose and looked at himself in the mirror over the fireplace. It showed a massive head of thick iron-grey hair; a face at once shrewd and determined; clean-shaven lips and chin; an alert, well-knit figure, rigorously kept within due proportions of muscular slimness. As the representative of forty-eight years of hard work, and hard thinking, John Patrick Madison had nothing to be ashamed of. His instincts were masterful; his brain steady and foreseeing; his passions well under control, and his ambitions—self-centred.

Nature had built for him success, and now he was prepared to accept it.

Sir Patrick Madison, or Mount-Madison, whichever it was. How good it sounded! How much better than the familiar "Boss" Madison or "old Pat" of his familiars and associates. What a queer lot they were! What a queer life it had been! Well, it was over now. All the bustling, hustling, self-centred, money-making schemes. *He had got there*—at last.

He turned from the pleasing vision of masterful energy given back by the mirror, and commenced to pace the room with slow, irregular steps. He was about to face an unpleasant duty, and he had to make up his mind how to set about it. "It'll be a surprise, I guess," he muttered. "Wonder how she's going to take it?"

A disturbed look overcast his face, clouding its previous elation. Nothing in this life means unalloyed pleasure, even accession to a fortune and a title. In Patrick John Madison the alloy was already at work.

"What'll she say? Queer the whole business, I guess. Lord above! if a man only knew when he married what sort of crank a woman really *is*, precious few of us would see a decade of matrimonial life! There's only two sorts of women. The one is for ever dragging you down, the other is all for raisin' you up. Poor Octavia! It isn't altogether her fault, but she's been the drag on my wheel, and that's the truth—straight."

He sighed wearily, and took up the letter that had dated so great a change in his affairs. "I'd best read it to her," he said. "But I don't suppose she'll take it in this side of Christmas!"

He left the room, and went across a wide passage and opened another door. It led into a cheerful, well-furnished sitting-room with long windows that opened on a wide wooden verandah. Steps led down into a garden glowing now with blossom and fragrance of early summertime. There was no one in the parlour, but in the verandah beyond a stout, indolent-looking woman was rocking herself in a rocking-chair. She was barely forty years of age, but looked much older by reason of a general heaviness of appearance, and indifference to dress.

A strain of Creole blood accounted, perhaps, for the indolence and obesity which marred a face and figure still handsome enough to attract attention.

She glanced casually at her husband's face and went on rocking. He came close up to the chair and stood regarding her with stern, disapproving eyes.

"I've got some news for you, Octavy," he said. "If you're not too sleepy to hear it?"

She turned lazy brown eyes on his eager face. "News? That so? Well——"

"It'll take something outside o' half an hour to explain," he answered. "Unless you can jump straight at a conclusion. I've had a letter from a firm of lawyers in Ireland. They say I'm next o' kin, and therefore heir to an estate and property over there. It means a tidy lot o' money besides—a—well—a title!"

The woman sat up very straight and alert, resting a hand on each arm of the rocking-chair.

"Lord sakes, Patrick, *do* tell! You're not kiddin' me?"

He winced. "No, I'm telling you the plain truth. It's been a big surprise to me. Guess my family haven't ever troubled much about me. Thought I wasn't to be reckoned with. But there's been a heap o' deaths, one after the other, and now they can't find anyone nearer than myself. I've been corresponding with these lawyers some months past, and I could prove all they wanted, and get certificates of birth and marriage and all that. Now they say my case is clear enough to satisfy 'em, and if I like I can go right along over to the old country, and take up my position as a British landowner just as soon as ever I like."

The woman's eyes had opened wider and wider. She stopped rocking in sheer astonishment at the news.

"Say it again, Patrick," she entreated. "Say it again. I'm trying to understand. Does it mean *more* money? Another sort of life? If so——"

"If so—of course, you'll object to it," said her husband sarcastically. "I expected that. But you'll have to

pull yourself together, I can tell you. I'm going over to England soon as ever I can settle up here. And that won't take long. Matt Tallassee would buy this place—just as it is—furnishings and all. The company must appoint a new director, and I'll only draw a salary for the future. I guess a man can't have too big an income in that played-out old country we're goin' to. Mine'll stand to about ninety thousand dollars a year."

"But why must we leave *here?*?" asked Octavia plaintively. "I'm sure I'm quite content. And the climate suits me. I guess I'll never be able to stand England. They don't heat their houses properly, and you don't see the sun for more than a month in the whole year."

It was such a long speech, that she sank back in the chair exhausted by her unusual energy. Her husband dragged up another chair opposite, and seated himself with resignation.

"Now look here, Octavia," he said. "Just you try and get your mind around the situation. It means a big thing——" He paused, and then repeated: "A *big* thing. Sort o' change that wants working up to. You can't take it lolling about in a rocker, and dressing yourself like a rag-time chorus girl. You've got to wake up. Do you hear, Octavia Madison? *To wake up.* To live a high-class, foot-in-the-stirrup, aristocratic kind o' life. Mix with lords and ladies. Get right up into the good old first-class British Society."

"Ireland's in Britain then?" remarked Octavia vaguely.

"I guess so. A pretty considerable slice of its ill-gotten possessions. I'm not kindly disposed to the country," he added. "Still, I'm going over open-minded. These lawyer chaps say it's a pretty bit o' property. A park and a castle, and huntin' and fishin'. And the income

been accumulatin' owin' to the last owner bein' a minor, and so——"

"A miner! What sort o' mines are there in a *park*?" demanded Octavia.

"Minor—o—r," explained her husband. "Under age, it means. Lord, Octavia, you *are* ignorant! However you're going to turn into a titled gentleman's lady and live up to a position of importance gets over me!"

"I'll try my best, Patrick," she said meekly. "Reckon I can get along as well as most folks. If we're to live in a *castle*, I s'pose there'll be folks to do things for us? We haven't no need to worry about chores and all that."

"You—haven't need to worry about anything," said her husband ironically. "I guess I can hire a good maid over in New York to dress you, and fix up your hair, and look after you on the boat——"

"Boat!" she echoed, her eyes wide and terrified. "You don't mean to say I've to go over to Britain in a *boat*!"

"Steamer, of course; big as an hotel, they say. You can have a state-room to yourself, and practise being a lady of title on the voyage. It will be lovely for you, don't you fear. Only there's one thing. You'll have to learn to dress yourself. I can't have Lady Madison going around in a bed-gown and curlin' pins all the time."

Octavia, Lady Madison, put up one fat white hand to her forehead. "I declare I've forgot again," she murmured, and pulled out the offending "waver," releasing a soft dark lock of hair that fell into a crisp, unnatural curl. Then she glanced at her wrapper; a white cambric, none too clean, and open at the throat by reason of missing buttons.

"It's comfortable," she sighed. "And I never could

abide corsets. You used to say my figure didn't need them, Patrick John."

She reverted to the old name as she reverted to the old memory of far-off days. Days of early wedded love; days when her beauty and herself had been all-important. Whatever there was to her in the memory or its allusion, her husband betrayed no answering sentiment. He rose abruptly and pushed back his chair, and then went over to the wooden railings of the verandah and stood leaning his arms on them, looking away into the green vista of the garden.

"That reminds me, Octavy," he said harshly. "There's something else to be settled between us before we leave this country. I may as well tell you straight away now, and get it over."

He gave her a direct, half-defiant look. It seemed as if inward apprehension were behind it, and sought disguise by sheer force of bravado.

She met it with the slow, indolent gaze he knew so well, and hated so bitterly. Then a swift rush of colour flooded the pale olive of her cheek.

"I guess it's about that old quarrel of ours?" she said.

"It's a matter of fifteen years since we spoke of *that*," he answered. "Fifteen—years."

He turned and looked again at the mist of gold and green stretching into leafy distance.

"You were ridin' straight for ruin and disgrace," she went on. "And I—well, I saw the respectable road was the best in the long run, and I—just held on. If I'd listened to you and divorced you *then*, well, you'd not be the prosperous and wealthy man you are to-day, Patrick."

"Wouldn't I?" He laughed grimly. "Do you really

think, Octavy, that your sticking out for what you called your *rights* made such a difference in my prospects?"

"It made you a respected American citizen," she said.

Again he laughed. "Good old stock cant," he said bitterly. "The American citizen is always virtuous, respected, God-fearing; true and just in all his dealings. Never a thought astray from his wife and family——"

He stopped abruptly.

"Curse it all, woman! Why couldn't you have given me a son? All my life would have been a thanksgiving instead of a regret."

The lazy rocking went on again. A sigh lifted the corners of the ripe red lips that once had met and responded to kisses, ardent as youth and young love could make them.

"What's the good o' sayin' that now?" she answered. "It's the only fault you could bring against me, and maybe you were as much to blame as I. Anyhow, I didn't live a double life, and forget all the sacred relationship that——"

"Stop that!" he thundered, turning round on her so abruptly that she almost fell out of the chair. "*Sacred* relationship! What was there sacred in our union? Hot-blooded youth and short-lived passion, and then long, aching, empty years that had to be lived through, borne with somehow. I slaving at money-getting from sheer weariness of life. Piling up dollars whose touch I loathed—and for what? For *what*, I ask you? No one to inherit them. No one to whom they could be a joy and a glory."

Her slow, languid laugh fell across that impassioned speech like a taunt.

"Aren't you forgetting—something?" she asked. "I

reckon some o' them dollars did a mighty lot o' good. You needn't suppose I'm forgetting you had *two* homes, Patrick Madison."

He was silent.

"I've borne it all," she continued, "as women bear such things. I'm not the first wife that's been deceived. I sha'n't be the last. Oh! You're pretty kind o' beasts, you men! Taking the best of a woman's life, her beauty, her youth, her intelligence, and then—because Nature's hard on her, or she don't care to respond to physical passion, you turn her off for someone else! It's nothing but that—nothing! The feelin' you men call love!"

Patrick Madison was still silent. The reproaches were not unfounded, neither were they new. But to explain—that was beyond his power. He was a man of strong passions, yet healthy instincts. He had loved ardently, wearied quickly, and then endured in silence his self-wrought martyrdom. That temptation had beset him was not unnatural. That he had struggled, fallen, been discovered, and awarded fresh and more prolonged martyrdom was the history of his private life.

The world knew nothing. His reputation was unblemished. But Octavia had known. Octavia, from her niche of indolent luxury, had raged with alternate jealousy and indecision. At last she broke silence. Then a truce had been signed. The offender had died, or left the country; the injured wife agreed to bury the hatchet. Why the subject should have sprung to life now at this critical moment was just one of those unpreventable circumstances that make matrimonial life so surprising.

Patrick John Madison was searching his brain for just the right thing to say. It must be said, and said both

diplomatically and decidedly. What on earth had possessed him to lose his temper?

"Octavia," he began, "if we're going to start a new life it means saying good-bye to the old. It means I'm not an American citizen, a man of business, a man whose sole notion of a hemisphere is bounded by Wall Street. With my dollars, with this inheritance, we can live a brand-new glorified sort o' life. You'll be a lady of title, able to go to Court if you please, and have English duchesses sitting around in your parlour. There ain't nothing in the way of dress, jewels, luxury that you can't have if you want them."

He looked at the indolent face and saw it was flushed and eager, almost beautiful in this new excitement.

"You like the idea?" he questioned.

"I guess it'll bear thinking of," she said.

"Think of it as much as you please. These are the facts. A castle to live in; a title to bear; wealth to help 'em out, and nothing to do or worry about for the rest o' your days."

"Sounds mighty good."

"It is good," he said emphatically. "I don't know that I could have pictured out anything better. But——"

She sat up quietly. "I expected there'd be a 'but' to it," she said. "All *that*, kind o' means something *conditional*."

"Not exactly conditional," said her husband. "It's more take or leave, as you please. If you prefer not to go to Britain, and would rather live here, I'll arrange anything you wish; besides coming over every year to see you."

"Thank you," she said sarcastically. "You're mighty considerate, Patrick John. But what if I say I've sort o'

fixed up in my own mind that I'd like a spell o' real aristocratic life, like I've read of in the English novels?"

"You think you'd be—happy?" he said hesitatingly.

Her red lips curled. "Come to that—happiness ain't o' our making, or giving. Something else has a say to *that*. No—I don't expect to be happy. But I'm curious to see what that old country is like. And being curious, and being a woman, it just amounts to this. I'm coming along o' you, Patrick John, and that's my say in the matter. Now I guess we've talked enough. I'm that tired I could sleep straight away this very minute."

"Sleep? If you're not the greatest ever! Well, don't settle off just this minute, for I've one thing more to say. The last—and the most important."

She looked at him with lazy surprise. "Well——"

He seated himself again. "You were by way of being very religious once, Octavia. Mind?"

She nodded. "Guess I'm regenerate still. I've not gone back on it."

"No—I put that up to you. You're downright kind and charitable—and forgiving."

"I've had something to forgive," she said coldly. "Is there going to be anything more?"

"I only wanted to ask you if it comes into Christian principles to let the—innocent—suffer for the guilty?"

The sleepy eyes grew strangely alert.

"Meaning me, Patrick John?" she asked.

He shook his head. "No—not exactly, Octavy. You and I sort of squared things ten years back. And I've kept my part of the bargain."

"Yes—because the creature died, and you couldn't help yourself. No use in making a merit out of necessity."

"There may have been more merit than you account for. In matrimony there's usually one that keeps alive even if the other sloughs off," he said somewhat coarsely. "And isn't it natural to want sympathy and companionship, leaving love out of the question?"

She only looked at him in the languid, amused manner he so hated.

"There's no use making the same rules fit men and women," he went on hurriedly. "God made them different, and different they'll be so long as the world lasts. To come to the point, then——"

"Ah—there's a point! I was wondering——"

"Of course there's a point. You say you've made up your mind to come to England with me?"

"That's so."

"Then—it's only fair to tell you that someone else is coming too. Someone to whom I owe a duty. Someone whom I love better than anything in life!"

She looked at him in the same odd fashion. "You mean your daughter?" she said.

Patrick Madison started. "My God! how did you know *that*?" he exclaimed.

She smiled mysteriously. "I've known it a pretty long spell," she said. "I'm not always asleep, Patrick John."

He rose and pushed aside the chair.

"Then since you know so much, you'd best know all. I mean to take the girl to England. I mean to give her her place in my household. I mean to acknowledge her before the world. That's—that's all, Octavia."

"All?" she questioned. "What about me?"

The chair began to rock once more in the old monotonous way. Madison felt as if every high-strung nerve

in his big frame shook and quivered in unison. With an effort he laid hands on self-control.

"About you?" he said. "Doesn't your religion tell you that this is a case for mercy and not judgment; for pity, not condemnation? The poor child knows nothing except that she is my child—and——"

"And on the other side she's to be *our* child. Daughter and heiress of Patrick John Madison, or is it Sir Patrick——"

"And—Lady Madison," he interposed, with a quiet smile.

She stopped rocking again. "It sounds real pretty," she said softly. "Do you reckon I'm goin' to consent?"

Madison's face had grown strangely pale. "I think you are," he said. "You're lonely too, Octavia."

"Ah!" she cried suddenly, and burst into tears. "I am—God knows I am! But I can't play up to motherhood with a stranger, Patrick."

"You'll learn to love her soon enough," he said quietly. "She's the sort that makes you feel you can't help yourself."

"Makes a man, perhaps. Women aren't so easy won over. Well, I don't wish to go against you, Patrick. Not now—seeing that everything's changed for good and all. But I must see the girl first. You can bring her around—and——"

"No!" he said imperatively. "She shall never come here. You can meet her in New York. We sail from there."

"I mightn't like her. I might feel as if even Christian duty couldn't draw me that way."

"I've no fear of that."

"*Half a Truth.*"



"Seems queer you should be set on it. A girl too. If it had been a boy——"

The colour rushed back to Madison's face. "It's getting nigh post time, and I've a heap of letters to write," he said abruptly. "I'm to take it that you'll do as I wish, Octavia?"

"I'm to take it that you've treated me as a blind fool, and now I'm to be a dumb one," she cried furiously. "I—your lawful wife—am only fit to play second fiddle to your intrigues and passions. I'm to keep this secret of yours—I'm to adopt this bastard child? Why should I? I say again—why should I?" What claim has she on me?"

"Only—that I love her and she is—motherless," he said slowly.

The woman was silent for a moment. Her outburst of temper was quelled by feminine emotion and feminine regret. At last she rose and stood upright. Her tall, shapeless figure revealed against the rosy sunset struck afresh on her husband's critical eyes as the shapeless and untidy presentment of a woman to whom he was bound by law and honour—whom he, in his heart, criticised and disliked. That was all the marriage bond had come to mean on his side. That it might mean anything else on hers he did not stop to consider.

They stood silently regarding each other. Near, yet whole worlds apart in feeling, or comprehension. The woman broke the silence at last.

"I've lost your love," she said. "I've lost all the beauty for which you cared. I haven't a rag of self-esteem to cling to since I knew, and condoned your life. Perhaps if I do this thing to please you, you'll like me a little better. We can't be husband and wife ever again—I know that. But we might be—friends?"

"Yes," he said more gently than he had yet spoken. "And I'll see that your life is as safe and happy as your new position demands. I'm grateful for your doing this thing I've asked you. It'll help me to right a wrong that's long weighed on my conscience. For that I'm your debtor, Octavia, and I sha'n't forget it."

"Are you so sure you *are* righting the wrong?" she asked. "Seems to me you're adding another to it."

"How? What do you mean?"

"You're putting the child in a false position. You're going to cheat folks over the other side into believing her your legitimate daughter, and all the time I'll know, and you'll know—that it's a lie."

"It shall be the truth if—if I say it is," he answered with the dogged, stubborn determination that had frightened her weaker nature again and again.

Then he touched her hand. "Don't you worry about what's going to happen on the other side," he said. "Just let you and I stand together over this deal. Partners again—isn't that it, Tavy?"

The old look, the long-forgotten nickname, brought the quick tears to her eyes again.

"Partners in sin, Patrick," she said sadly. "But even that's better than division."

And as she spoke the red sun of the south went down on the terms of that strange bargain.

II.

NEW YORK in mid-June. New York red-hot, and dusty, and airless. With the best houses closed, and Fifth Avenue a desert, and the restaurants crowded with muslin shirt-waists, and alpaca coats, and straw hats.

Yet to Octavia Madison, knowing nothing of fashion or "seasons," it was a city of splendid wonders. The towering sky-scrapers, the huge "stores" where one might idle away hours in luxurious shopping, the cool, dim rooms of her suite at the Waldorf—all these things were a joy unto her. Possibly because they were also a novelty. She lazed through a couple of days, supported by rocking-chairs and iced water and strange delicious food served in their private sitting-room. Tall and elegant young ladies called on her by her husband's directions, bringing corsets and costumes in "out sizes," and marvellous millinery in boxes. And she was laced and suspended and petticoated and gowned until her breathing difficulties lost themselves in admiring wonder at her changed and glorified contour.

On the third evening her husband ordered a carriage and drove with her through Central Park. She was conscious of splendid indolence, draped in pale, cool muslin, and an exquisite hat with a drooping orange-coloured feather sweeping around her dark coils of hair. Conscious of admiring glances from loungers whom necessity tied to offices and business pursuits, but whom her ignorance mistook for the *élite* of New York Society.

The carriage swept along through leafy aisles, with glimpses of miniature lakes and rocky heights, over the level road, and on to the north, where Morning-side showed its range of battlemented wall and elevated plateaux.

Here the coachman turned into a quiet road and drew up before a large square building of semi-conventual appearance.

Madison touched his wife's hand. "We get out here." She looked surprised. "Is this the school?"

"Yes," he said. "I thought you'd best see her here first. I've said we're taking her to Europe end of the month. She—she expects you."

Without a word Octavia rose and followed him up the steps and then into the building.

A prim, gentle-looking woman in a Sister's dress of wimple and gown admitted them. She left them in a bare, sparsely furnished room, saying she would fetch Miss Madison.

"What is her name? You never said!" exclaimed Octavia quickly.

"Doreen," he answered.

His face was pale, and his eyes had a strained, anxious look. "Remember you're her stepmother," he added.

"It isn't likely I'd forget," she said.

Then the door opened, and there rushed in that incomplete and exquisite marvel of American production, the young American girl. Slim as a sylph, tall, graceful, with a perfection of feature and colouring that spoke of Nature's best workmanship, the young, glorious, beautiful thing stood one moment in the doorway; then she rushed forward and flung her arms round Octavia's neck.

"Oh, you dear!" she exclaimed. "Fancy you coming to see *me!* Oh! I've been just crazy ever since father told me I was to go to Europe with you! Sha'n't we have a good time! But—he never said how beautiful you were!" she added, drawing back a few steps. "You're going to love me, aren't you, although I'm not really your daughter? But I'll be every bit as good as if I were!"

Octavia stood as if overwhelmed by this rapid torrent of affection. She took in the slender grace and charm of the exquisite young creature to whom she had promised

a home and motherhood. She felt her heart thrill; and something new and vivid and passionate woke to birth in that moment.

"I think you'll just *be* my daughter," she said. "As for love—it wouldn't be hard to love you, I guess."

The girl gave a little soft cry and turned to her again. "If that isn't just too sweet—mother," she said, and caught her hand, and then her father's, and kissed first one and then the other, and then flung herself into Madison's arms and hugged him with fresh enthusiasm.

"You're a bad man; it's six whole months since you've been to see me! But no matter! We'll be together now for ever and always, won't we? Say, mother darling, isn't it like a perfectly beautiful dream, our going over the great big ocean together, and my seeing England, and then living at father's wonderful castle? It's almost too splendid to realise! I keep thinking of it every minute, and yet it seems as if I must be asleep and this only a dream. I have to pinch myself to make sure. Am I awake, and are you my dear, beautiful, queenly mother that I've dreamt of ever since I can remember? Always like you she was, with that grand sort of figure, and lovely eyes soft and dark, and oh—so tender. Father—why didn't you ever say how beautiful she was?"

Beautiful! Queenly figure! Octavia drew herself up and wondered if the girl was "kidding" or really in earnest. If she looked beautiful and queenly to those young, critical eyes, well—she wouldn't grudge herself the price or the pains of that new "*corset symétrique*," whose bones and steels encased her so emphatically. As for Madison, he was looking at her with new eyes. The eyes of an awakened sleeper. Since his child could see

only beauty and tenderness in this indolent, unwieldy woman—why, the beauty and the tenderness must exist—somewhere.

He sat down and drew the girl onto his knee. "Now tell me, Doreen," he said, "are you packed up, and straight? Your trunk can come by express, but I want to take you back to New York with us now."

"To-night; right straight away?"

"Right straight away. You'll have as much as you can do to get fixed up for the voyage. We're going on the thirtieth—this is the fifteenth. I engaged a room for you at the hotel to-day. So just you tell Sister Marcel that you're coming away to-night."

"They will be very sorry," said the girl. "They're so fond of me, dad."

"I guess so. But other folks are the same. I can't do without my little girl any longer."

She dimpled and smiled, and kissed him again, and then sprang up. "Well, I'll go and tell the Sisters. The other boarders are all gone except me and Rosa Schmidt. I'm afraid she'll fret a bit. We were room-mates, you know. Poor Rosa! It doesn't take much to make her cry, but it's stopping her once she begins that's the trouble."

She flew off then, and presently a tall, black-gowned Sister, the head of the school, appeared. She and Madison drew aside and discussed business, while Octavia sat in dumb wonderment, reminding herself that she was beautiful, and that a young, warm-hearted, lovely child had called her "mother."

It all meant the price of forgiveness. But surely forgiveness was letting her off cheap.

In about ten minutes the girl returned, holding by

the hand a reluctant figure with dishevelled hair and red eyes.

"This is Rosa Schmidt, father," she announced. "She's awfully cut up about my leaving. Couldn't she stay with me a few days as we're not sailing till the thirtieth? It would sort of break the parting, you see."

Madison looked with small favour at the angular figure and freckled face of the girl. "Red eyes, and hair the colour of a wharf rat." That was how he summed her up. But the fact of her being Doreen's friend, and heart-broken at her loss, appealed to his sympathy.

"I guess she can come along if she likes," he said. "But not to-night."

"To-morrow, then?" exclaimed Doreen. "Say, Rosa, to-morrow, if the Sisters will let you; and of course they will. It's hard to have no home to go to, and no real holidays."

Rosa dried her eyes and smiled mirthlessly. "I guess I'm just broken-hearted," she said. "But it's real good of you, Mr. Madison, to ask me. I haven't ever stayed at an hotel. I should think it was real exciting."

"Well, come along and see," said Madison dryly. "I'll send the carriage round for you to-morrow morning, if Sister Marcel don't object?"

Evidently the Sister Superior didn't object. The school would be free of all pupils for a time, and rest and peace had corresponding temptations. Matters being settled, they rose to depart. An affair of time, as Doreen had still to bid farewell to various Sisters, and then to the domestic staff, before she was free to leave. Rosa Schmidt shed more tears, and grew more like a drenched water-rat than ever; but at last the farewells were over, and

Doreen and her small "grip" took their place in the carriage and were driven away to the city.

After a few moments' silence the girl broke out into excited comments. The lovely river, the view of the opposite shores, even historic Claremont came in for girlish rhapsodies.

"I guess England won't have anything so beautiful as this to show us," she concluded, and her father, like a true American citizen, capped the observation with, "I guess not."

It seemed to Doreen that life was turning on an enchanted pivot for her as day succeeded day. Her outfit was a succession of "dreams" in the shape of fairy garments, and dainty gowns, and hats that made her look more and more "fashion-platy."

Octavia's maid brushed and dressed her vivid hair, and packed her trunks, under joint supervision of herself and Rosa. They were taken to wonderful restaurants, and given ice-creams in any quantity, and Rosa became possessed of "candy," and discarded hats, and uncared-for gowns until she felt that the loss of a schoolfriend was almost a blessing in disguise.

On one eventful Sunday evening Madison proposed to take them to Coney Island. They would drive there, dine there, and see the sights and illuminations. It was not exactly "class" to do such a thing. But New York Society had as yet nothing to say to the Madisons, being itself out of town, and arranging week-ends and house-parties at Newport and Long Island and other fashionable summer resorts. The floating population left behind amused itself unfashionably, and with a hilarious freedom from restraint.

In the lightest of light suitings and a straw hat, Patrick John Madison, millionaire, and baronet of the United Kingdom, feasted the schoolgirls at the big restaurant, and then strolled with them to Luna Park, and watched the dancing, and looked in at the side-shows, toboggan slides, and merry-go-rounds with a sudden sense of youthful enjoyment in things long missed and now recognised as of value. The innocent delight and perpetual excitement of the girls added to his sensitive reception of all this free and careless gaiety.

True, it held an atmosphere of hooliganism, of *bourgeoisie*, of something that "gilded duke and belted earl" would have despised as only fit for the coarser-fibred multitude; but still, it stimulated his long quiescent senses. In the girls' innocent enjoyments his own youth relived itself.

It was Doreen who suggested going in to an entertainment designated "The Devil's Thumb," and explained by a Mephistophelean-looking figure on a platform. Madison hesitated at first. But an assurance that the show was perfectly harmless to body, mind, and morals, overcame his scruples. He and the girls passed behind a curtain, and found themselves in a small, dark hall half filled by an expectant audience. They groped their way to seats, and awaited results.

Presently a stage became visible. It was faintly illumined by red lights. Two figures advanced from either side and proceeded to dance a wild Macabre sort of jig, that ended in the flinging off of garment after garment of attire, and left them as representative specimens of anatomy. This not being exciting enough, the skeletons proceeded to dislocate themselves, and tossed an arm here and a leg there with joyous impartiality, finally taking

back the discarded limbs and skulls and vanishing into outer darkness at the moment of reunion.

The girls trembled, and held each other's hands. It was horrid, but exciting.

"I didn't notice a Thumb—specially—did you?" whispered Rosa.

"No—perhaps that's to come," said Doreen.

The curtain went up again on a marionette show. A queer effect of natural-sized heads and dwarf bodies. It was quaint, but not specially exciting. Then again the curtain fell. Weird music sounded from afar. A voice cried, "Pass on, ladies and gents. Pass on to the mystic cavern. Keep to your left, and follow the red light."

Everyone rose. Madison found himself impelled, none too gently, in a direction opposite to what he remembered as the entrance.

"Keep close to me, girls," he said quickly. "Doreen, hold on to my arm. Don't let us get separated."

It was easier said than done. The passage became narrower and narrower, forcing them into single file. A red light showed in the distance, but as soon as they reached it, it vanished. In the unexpected gloom, shrieks, and laughter, and screams took the place of previous pushing and struggling. Then suddenly Doreen found herself plunging into a sand drift. She struggled on. The light showed again. She was treading firm ground once more. No—not *firm*. What on earth was happening now? The planks were *moving*, quivering under her in a horrible uncanny fashion. She fell forward. Her hand clutched an arm. Her father's—anyone's. It did not matter in that moment of terror. Then a pandemonium of sound broke loose. Shrieks, yells, whistles, cat-calls; all that hooligan ingenuity could invent in the way of

noise. The girl was terrified. Her feet slipped on the horrible moving stairway. Every step seemed an added insecurity. She clutched the arm more tightly.

"Oh, dear! I'm so frightened! What a horrible place. Oh! can't we get out of it?"

"We'll be out in a moment," said a voice, not her father's, but for that she did not care. Her hand was taken, and tucked under an arm; a strong protecting arm.

"Hold on to me," said the voice again. "You can't fall. Here—we're on firm ground again. Look!"

She looked, and then shrieked in wildest terror. Before her was a cave, its background of glowing red and sulphurous flames, and from out of it peered a Devil's face, horned, evil, grinning. As hideous and terrifying a presentment as American ingenuity could originate. The head seemed poised on a trunk, misshapen and stunted. From this an arm extended itself. An arm to which was attached a hand, minus all fingers save one gigantic Thumb.

Many of the women shrieked, but they would not go on, would not pass the horrible thing. An imperative voice from behind ordered them to advance. The entrance was just before them. Sick with fear Doreen closed her eyes, and clinging desperately to that protecting arm felt herself borne swiftly, steadily on. Then at last came a breath of air, a flash of light, and she found herself standing in a wide gateway, amidst a laughing, shouting crowd, who declared the show—"Just *the* greatest thing in the whole caboozelum!"

Doreen looked at the arm she was holding. It was not representative of the grey summer suiting of her father. She lifted her head and straightened her crushed hat.

"Why——"

"Don't mind," said the stranger cheerfully. "I'm pleased to have been of any use to you."

The girl glanced in bewilderment from him to the hustling crowd.

"Dad!" she gasped. "Oh! I've lost him!"

"If he was in the crowd he must be somewhere about. We'll soon find him."

He drew her a little aside from the crush of people.

"Stand here, on this step," he said. "Then you'll see better."

Doreen obeyed, but natural curiosity prompted her to glance at the face of her rescuer. It was a young face, with a firm mouth and deep-set grey eyes. The colouring was fair, the features regular. Loose waves of dark brown hair gave a certain softness to the high brow; the expression of the eyes was kindly as well as humorous. He was very tall. Doreen felt her own five foot six quite insignificant.

"I must thank you," she said bashfully. "I was so frightened. But I thought I was holding father's arm."

"A natural mistake in the darkness," said the stranger. "That wasn't quite the sort of place young—young ladies ought to go to," he added significantly.

"We didn't know. It was my fault. I made dad take us in. Oh! there he is! I see him, and Rosa. Goodness! what does she look like?"

She bubbled into girlish laughter at sight of Rosa's battered hat, and wide-open, staring eyes.

"Thank you so much," she added hurriedly. "I can get to them now."

He lifted his straw hat, and she hurried to where Madison was standing, scrutinising the passing figures with anxious eyes. She related her adventure, and in his re-

lief he forgot to enquire as to her rescuer's whereabouts or personality. But the fright had upset the girls, and annoyed him, and he insisted on their leaving as soon as the carriage could be found.

This was a matter of some difficulty; but at last they were driving back under the warm June sky, leaving an irregular chain of lights and a low thunder of brass bands and kettle-drums behind them.

"I guess I'll never go there again," exclaimed Madison. "Unless by myself."

"Oh, but it was lovely, father, except for that one thing," said Doreen. "Wasn't it, Rosa?"

"I'm so skeered I can't find it in me to agree with you, dearie," said Rosa Schmidt, taking off her hat and regarding it ruefully. "I'm real grieved about this," she went on. "You only gave it me to-day, and I can't ever wear it again. The brim's all broken up. Look!"

"Never mind," said Doreen cheerfully. "You can have that burnt straw one with the poppies. It'll suit you better. That's been wobbling over your left ear the whole time."

"I think we'd better not say anything about this to your mother," said Madison suddenly. "She's so nervous. And she was dead set against our coming here."

"Very well, dad, although I'm the worst in the world at keeping a secret."

Madison looked into the bright, frank eyes, and was silent. He fell into a brooding, melancholy mood about which their soft girlish chatter played inconsequently. It played and rippled about this adventure most of the time. Rosa was curious, and Doreen a little exhilarated by the event.

"You say you don't know what he was like?" per-

sisted Rosa. "D'you mean you wouldn't remember him supposin' you met again?"

Doreen fancied she might do that, if it wasn't a case of years. But in all probability it would be never.

"I guess I'd have taken more account of anyone who'd helped *me*," said her friend. "Specially a young man. Grown up, and all that. Was he tall, Doreen?"

"I—Yes—I think so."

"Taller than you?"

"Oh, I should say. A head or more. I remember because my face just rested against his shoulder—once."

"How romantic!" exclaimed Rosa.

The exclamation roused Madison from his reverie.

"What is romantic?" he asked quickly.

"My adventure," said Doreen.

"I shouldn't call it *that*," he said. "Only a sort of—chance. You thought you were with me, didn't you?"

"Oh, yes—until we got out of that awful place and into the light."

"Well, let it rest at that," he said quietly. "Young girls like you, and Rosa there, best quit thinking of 'adventures' yet awhile."

"Very well, father," said Doreen meekly.

III.

DOREEN stood on the deck of a big steamer, watching the waving handkerchiefs and fluttering flags of the crowd on the dock. It seemed to her that one half of New York must have come to see the other half off.

It was early morning, barely ten o'clock. Her step-mother had gone to see what a "state-room" was like, in

company with her new maid and an obsequious steward. Doreen and her father remained on deck watching the coming of late arrivals, or fussy friends, or officious journalists on the look-out for a last "story," or a millionaire's parting words.

It was all new, exciting, wonderful! The steamer itself was so large that Doreen had marvelled it could float. The bustling crowd, the summery dresses, the flowers that mark any American farewell or "send-off" had each and all the significance of novelty. She had no flowers either to carry or pin into her bodice. It struck her as significant.

"There's no one we know there, father," she said.

He followed her glance.

"My friends are mostly Louisville folk. I know hardly anyone in New York," he said.

"But you came here so often?"

"Business; and to see you. Wall Street isn't given to sentimental farewells, and—I guess I've got you now for good and all."

She slipped her hand through his arm. "Yes, dad, it's just heavenly to think of it! For good and all, and always. Why——"

"What is it?" he asked quickly, for her hand suddenly slipped away, and she leant forward eagerly, to look down at the landing-stage.

"Someone I—I thought I knew. I think he's coming on board. There—look, dad; with the straw hat, that tall man! It's the one who helped me in the crowd when I lost you that night at Coney Island."

Madison looked where she pointed. He noted a tall figure shouldering a determined way through the throng of passengers and their friends.

"I believe he's coming on board!" exclaimed Doreen. "Yes—he's through now, and on deck. Father, I may speak to him, mayn't I?"

Madison frowned. "No need that I can see," he said curtly. "And—Oh! that settles it," he added. "He's second class."

Doreen's face showed disappointment. The tall figure had asked a question of a uniformed official. Then turned off and walked down the deck, past the dividing rail which marked the forward portion of the level from the aft deck, and disappeared.

"I suppose he's not as rich as we are," said Doreen sadly. "Do—do *nice* people go second class, father?"

"I guess they have to, sometimes," said Madison curtly. He felt annoyed. He had not thought about the stranger since that occurrence, and he had not imagined Doreen would remember him. It was a coincidence that he should be on the same ship, going to the same country. He wondered if the man was English. Then the bell sounded, and greater confusion arose. Late-comers dashed up the sloping stage. Friends began last "good-byes," and good wishes. The signals and wavings from the balcony of the steamship offices grew more frantic and excited. The great steamer glided quietly away from her stopping-place, and a space of water suddenly showed beside what had been the black flooring of the dock.

They were off.

Doreen drew a quick breath. She clasped her hands and looked at the space of water widening and deepening every moment. Her bright face grew suddenly grave. "Dad," she said, "think if someone we loved *very* much was there; where those folk are, and we were going away—away like this, and saw the space separating us, and

knew we couldn't speak or touch hands for long, long years! Oh! wouldn't it be just terrible?"

"What makes you think such things, child?" he asked wonderingly.

"I don't know. One can't tell why thoughts come, can one? We just feel they're *in* us, all of a sudden."

"You've no call to think like that. It's not as if you're leaving anyone you love very much behind you. I guess Rosa's consoled herself with candy by now. And the Sisters can't afford to love a changing crowd of schoolgirls. And—there's no one else?"

"No," she said—"Not for me. But I wasn't thinking only of myself, you know."

"Come right away and look at the harbour. I'll show you our Big Girl presently. You haven't seen her yet."

"What—the Liberty? Oh, I've always wanted to see her! Is she really so big, father? A girl at school said it was the most wonderful statue in the world."

"I suppose it is. It stands for a big thing. Oh! you won't see it this side of half an hour, so don't worry. There's New Jersey and Staten Island to come first."

"It is all beautiful!" cried the girl, looking from the blue of the bay to the blue of the sky.

The massive architecture of the city was rapidly passed. Its great pile of irregular buildings; its towers and steeples that mark the sky-line. Landmark after landmark was greeted and acclaimed by enthusiastic patriots, while the little tugs panted and puffed alongside their majestic companion.

To Doreen it was all a wonder and a joy.

She was going out from all these wonders, but she felt she would return again. Life was only an opening flower, but she dreamt of its fragrance and colour and

Staten Island comes after -

*Jersey
City
&
Coast*

beauty. Of something vague and dim that made the joy and pride of womanhood, and while her eyes feasted on every passing change of scene, her mind was busy with other outlines and colours, shaping themselves into form, and wholly inexplicable.

Bedloes Island at last showed itself afar off, with its towering figure gilded by the sunshine. Almost everyone rushed to the side to bid the goddess farewell, and a few enthusiasts chanted the "Starspangled Banner."

After the Liberty was passed there was a general move to deck-chairs, and stewards handed round chicken broth and biscuits. Madison went to look after his wife, but Doreen remained gazing out at the coast-line and the islands, and wondering what the real landless ocean would be like.

After awhile she left her side of the vessel and walked round to the other. She glanced at the little curtained windows of the deck state-rooms, and remembered she had not yet seen the interior of the great steamer. She walked slowly round the huge funnels and looked up at the captain's bridge, and then went on again until stopped by a railing and a barred entrance.

As she glanced across, someone came to the opposite side of the barrier and looked at her. He took off his hat, and she waved her hand.

"Oh! it *is* you!" she cried unthinkingly. "How funny to meet again like this! Are you going to England too? I wish you were on our side. Couldn't you come to this deck?"

He shook his head.

"Not even to walk on it—sometimes?" she persisted.

"No," he said. "Like heaven and hell, there's a

great gulf fixed. The gulf of what one sort of person can afford and another can't. I'm not sure that you're not breaking a regulation by speaking to me."

"I don't care if I am," she said. "It's stupid to see someone you know in the same place, and only a little thing like that between, and to say we mustn't even say 'How d'ye do?'"

"Ah, you're young yet," he said. "You haven't learnt what it means to be out of it, because you're not born to millionairism, or—any other of the world's good things," he added bitterly.

The girl looked puzzled. She had no standard by which to judge poverty. It had never been near to her in any shape or form.

"I want you to know my father," she said. "He might do something to help you—if—you want help?" she added suddenly.

"I don't," he said quietly. "I've a profession that does *that* for me. It's not the sort of one that makes millionaires of men, but at least it enables them to keep body and soul together."

"Are you an American?" she asked quickly.

"No. I'm from Canada. Quebec is my native State. And I'm going to the mother-country in order to study her a little bit. Then I shall write of what I find there, and of her mistakes in treating us so coldly and indifferently. We who are the loyalest and most loving of her colonies."

"You *write*?" exclaimed Doreen. "Oh! how wonderful! All my life I've thought nothing could be so wonderful as to make books. Of course, I've not read many. The Sisters didn't wish us to, but in holiday times I got

hold of Dickens, and Louisa Alcott, and I just loved them. What sort of books do you write? Stories?"

"Yes," he said. "Stories of bad and good, and mad and sad folk that live in a cruel world, and know the hardships and sorrows of it all. Stories that an innocent little maid wouldn't understand; done in my play-time. I work also."

"What sort of work?"

"Designing buildings, and rich people's houses. It's called architecture."

"I'm afraid I don't know anything about that," said Doreen.

"One wouldn't expect it. Why, you haven't left school yet, have you?"

"Oh, yes. Father says I needn't go any more. I can have special teachers for the showy things. I've learnt all the necessary ones."

He smiled. "Then you've made good use of your time. But now—we've talked long enough, don't you think? I'm sure your father wouldn't care for you to be seen conversing with a second-class passenger. I know who he is. Sir Patrick Madison, of the great firm of Madison, Tallasse, and Co., Louisville. Ah!"—he stopped.

Madison was standing there by Doreen's side, staring with wrathful eyes at the speaker. Doreen glanced from one to the other. She saw no reason for anger.

"Father, this is the gentleman who saved me from being crushed in the crowd that night at Coney. I—don't know his name," she added.

"It's too insignificant to mention," said the stranger, raising his hat.

"I'm pleased to be able to thank you for your services

to my daughter," said Madison, looking anything but pleased.

"There's nothing to thank me for," returned the other. "There's only one thing worse than rendering a *service*, and that's being thanked for it. Good morning."

He lifted his hat again and turned away.

Doreen turned a scarlet cheek and astonished eyes to her father. "Why—how strange!" she exclaimed. "He didn't seem to want to know you."

"Hasn't much manners, that's clear," answered Madison. "Well, we can drop him now for good and all. You've no need to go on being grateful once you've acknowledged it, Doreen. Come along to your mother now. She wants you to help arrange her state-room. I'm going to see about the table seats."

He took her arm, and they turned back to their own quarters.

Doreen found Octavia lying back amidst a pile of pillows, while Marie, the French maid, was unpacking her cabin trunk, and hanging up skirts and silk petticoats, and other useless steamship fripperies in a wardrobe. The state-room was part of a suite, with a second one adjoining, and a bath, and tiny boudoir. Doreen was enraptured. Everything was so fresh, and pretty, and compact. She was to have the upper berth, Octavia explained, and the girl laughed amusedly over the idea of climbing up into its narrow proportions.

"I only hope I sha'n't be ill," went on Octavia. "I daresay I shall. I've never been on the sea before, and the stewardess says everyone suffers on a first voyage."

"What did you want me for, darling?" asked Doreen.

"Well, about your clothes. There's another wardrobe in the next room. Your father says he won't use it.

You can hang your gowns there, I reckon. Your trunk is under this sofa."

"Is that father's room?" asked Doreen.

"Yes. You and I sleep here."

"But I've only brought two dresses," said Doreen. "Father said I shouldn't want more." She stared at the half-dozen more or less elaborate gowns the maid had hung up.

"Why, mother, you've got one for every day," she said. "You'll never wear them."

The maid shook out the folds of a black lace gown with sudden petulance.

"I haf told that to Madame. One evening-dress, I say, and those lace blouses for change, and the serge coat and skirt for the deck. Quite sufficient. This lovely peach satin it will spoil in the sea-air, and if it chances Madame suffers the *mal-de-mer*, then all will be to just fold up again, and put in that cabin-box!"

"Never mind, Marie," said Doreen. "Mother is never quite sure what gown she will want, so it's as well to have a supply. Isn't that so, darling?" she added caressingly.

"You always seem to understand me, child," said Octavia, looking adoringly at the bright young face. "I'm sure I don't know what I'd do if it weren't for you."

Doreen laughed. "Why, just what you've done all these sixteen years," she said. "Oh, mother, you must come on deck. It's perfectly lovely. And the sea is quite smooth. No one could possibly be ill. The people all sit around on deck-chairs, and father's had ours put on the sunny side, and you'll be as comfortable as anything, tucked up in a rug, and a veil round your hat, and the last thing of Mrs. Atherton's to read. Doesn't that appeal to you?"

Octavia sighed. "Well, I guess I'm pretty comfortable here," she answered. "I don't seem to want to move till luncheon time. Now, child, just fix up your things before your father starts upsetting his state-room, and then you might put those books in the little parlour there."

"One calls it a boudoir, Madame," corrected Marie.

"I guess I haven't come aboard a transatlantic liner to speak foreign languages," said her mistress.

"What are those funny things—there?" exclaimed Doreen suddenly.

"They is life-belts, for in case of the shipwreck," said Marie.

Doreen looked at the odd apparatus with keen interest. She wanted to draw one out and fix it on to see how it looked, but Octavia declared it would make her nervous. As it was, the idea took hold of her and upset any preconceived vision of comfort. She questioned Marie as to previous voyages. Had she ever been in a shipwreck?

The maid declared such a catastrophe was unlikely. "It happens not in the big liners as this. Nevare haf I heard of such a thing. There is sometimes a fog, and the chance of a wrong boat collisoning, but—one need not fear. It is not often that happen. They blow the foghorns all the time."

"Oh! don't tell us any more, Marie!" exclaimed Doreen. "It frightens Madame. She will not be happy any more if you go on like this, and she must be happy if I am. For it's all new and beautiful, and delightful, and we're just going to have the time of our lives. Aren't we, darling?"

Octavia looked at the lovely young creature dancing as it were over the brittle egg-shells of past tragedy. It

had been so easy to pity her, and to love her, but now a warning voice seemed to sound even amidst the love and the pity. Ignorant of her history, of her fate, of what lay behind, of what might be before her in the future, this young, happy soul appealed to her as nothing in life had ever appealed.

She could not explain how one glance, one word, had broken down self-erected barriers of preconceived dislike, of jealous hatred. Yet that miracle had been performed. Down, far down, in her sluggish, half-awakened nature some strong passion had slept. This child had awakened it. She had not only aroused the maternal protective instinct, never yet called forth by Nature, but she had set afire a slumbering memory. Again and again, as Octavia looked at the girl's radiant face, had that memory haunted her afresh. There was no meaning in it as yet. Only a sense of discomfort that set an old affection vibrating. As the girl went energetically to work over the unpacking of her trunk, as she passed to and fro between the state-rooms, as she flung laughing glance or jesting word to Marie, or her stepmother, Octavia watched her wonderingly.

Marie finished her work at last, and went off to her dinner with the other maids, and valets, and nurses. Doreen with deft fingers unfolded and folded garments, planned places and receptacles for feminine odds and ends, and finally came back to Octavia and insisted she must leave her cushioned comfort for the deck.

"You'd better do it now while it's smooth," she said, as she fastened the small, neat hat and close-folding veil round Octavia's massive coils. "Oh, mother, I *do* think you've just the loveliest hair in the world! I wish mine was dark. I hate this ruddy brown half-and-half sort of

thing. Seems as if someone hadn't made up their mind what colour it *was* to be, doesn't it?"

"I knew someone once with hair like that," said Octavia, as she rose slowly from the sofa, and took the serge coat Doreen held out to her.

"Did you? Who was it?"

"No matter. She died long ago."

"Died! Oh! I'm sorry I asked. I suppose you were fond of her?"

"Fond?" The indolent eyes flashed, the whole face seemed suddenly to glow with fierce passion. "I reckon I loved her as I've never loved a living soul, Doreen."

"I wonder," said the girl, "what it feels like to love anyone like that? Do you suppose I shall ever know, mother?"

"I guess so. It's a thing most women have to reckon with."

"Not—not men?" asked Doreen.

"*Men!*" answered Octavia, with fierce scorn. "I'm not sure whether men are the fools that women think them, or the fools that women make them."

Doreen looked puzzled. "I always thought they were ever so much better than *us*," she said.

"You'll have time to change your opinion. Girls mostly begin with ideals, formed from novels and pieces in the theatre. That's all they know about men until it's too late to make use o' the real knowledge."

"But father?" pleaded the girl. "Surely father's a good man; and he loves us?"

"You think so?"

"Why, sure," said Doreen emphatically. "He's just the best and kindest ever was. Look at all this. I reckon no one in the whole ship is fixed up so elegantly. He

doesn't seem to care anything for what it costs, only that we should have a real good time! If he didn't love us——"

"There, that'll do," said Octavia sharply. "I'm going on deck."

IV.

THE bright, monotonous days slipped by. The routine of steamer life was a level continuance of eating, sleeping, resting in deck-chairs, and stated promenades at stated times. The weather was good, and the sea kind, and no one suffered more than slight indisposition.

Octavia kept her state-room for the whole of the second day "out." After that she would come on deck about soup time, be tucked up in her chair, and read one of her stock of novels, or indulge in gentle dozes until luncheon. Occasionally she would have her own meal brought up to her, and spend the afternoon as she did the morning. She was not much interested in her fellow-travellers, although many of them took a lively interest in her, by reason of her beauty, and her title, and her appurtenance of wealth.

Possibly the most interested in the trio was a very pretty, very smart, and very popular personage, by name Lady Lucille Altamont, wife of the Honourable Gerald Altamont, who had been doing the States in company with some half-dozen "pals" and associates as smart, as popular, and scarcely less wicked than herself. Lady Lucille, or "Luce" as her friends called her, had brilliant red hair like burnished copper, and green eyes with dark, curling lashes. She always wore long green earrings to match the eyes, and the earrings were the most

noticeable things about her, and had been paragraphed and snapshotted in every newspaper in the States. She had been interviewed several times, and had told the interviewers that she hated America, and thought the men boors and the women parrots. All of which had delighted the reporters, and been the groundwork of countless newspaper "stories." The real truth was that Lady Lucille's reputation had preceded her, and the best American Society had agreed it was a little too thick even for America.

What Lady Lucille had expected in the way of obsequious millionaires and country-house invitations had not happened. What she did *not* expect—viz. cold-shouldering and an impersonal indifference to her gowns, her jewels, and attractions—she found. Consequently she abused New York, and voted Washington "slow," and Chicago "a vile hole."

She had stayed at an hotel on Long Island instead of at one of the luxurious country palaces she had *not* been invited to. She had had to hire a yacht instead of finding one placed at her disposal, and when she went West hadn't even a private car or a "special" to boast of.

She was too hard up to throw money about, and no one she met or got introduced to seemed disposed to do it for her. Therefore America as a whole was black-balled, and she was returning to England in a very bad temper indeed.

Then one day she discovered that the chair labelled Sir Patrick Madison belonged to an American millionaire just going over to take upon himself the responsibilities of landed estate in Ireland. By judicious use of eyes and ears she soon found out that Lady Madison was not a

representative American woman. Certainly not smart, or in the "set" who made or marred social positions in that enlightened country.

Lady Lucille began to wonder if she was worth cultivating. She liked the look of the man, though he gave himself away as an American citizen with every word he spoke. Then there was the pretty, simple child. The true type of slim sylph, and lovely colouring, and be-ribboned "door-knockers" that marked the unemancipated schoolgirl. After two days of espionage and judicious questioning, Lady Lucille resolved to make the attempt. Opportunities were never hard to find on a steamboat.

When she noted that Lady Madison was not going down to lunch, she ordered the steward to bring her up a grape fruit and some grilled chicken, and dropped casually into the chair next but one to Octavia's. It really was Doreen's, but as she was in the dining saloon there seemed no need to point out the fact.

"It is much pleasanter to have one's luncheon here than in that stuffy saloon," observed the Englishwoman graciously; and Octavia, ignorant of who the speaker was, merely answered, "I guess so."

Then Lady Lucille plunged recklessly into conversation. She narrated her experiences of the States; alluded casually to Royalties; spoke of missing the London season, and running down to Goodwood and Cowes, and made incidental mention of various "places" belonging to her husband's family. Chief and most important being Knolesworth Chase, which was let at present to a foreign Prince. All of this astonished Octavia very much. Also it interested her considerably, for the English aristocracy were as yet an unknown quantity, and had only been introduced to her notice in the pages of popular fiction.

This lovely and elegant and aristocratic person was therefore doubly interesting by reason of her resemblance to a type of "smart wickedness," and her gracious affability to herself.

Bit by bit Octavia's simple story was elucidated. Her husband's rise to fortune; his unexpected inheritance; and her own absolute ignorance of European methods or traditions.

"But we don't call Ireland, Europe," said Lady Lucille gently.

"Don't you?" said Octavia. "I thought the other side was all Europe. We always say 'going to Europe' or 'doing Europe' over here."

Lady Lucille, being an Earl's daughter, and knowing what a boarding-school education meant, laughed indulgently.

"Oh, we all hate geography," she said. "It's such a bore to learn, and then so little use, as the books have it."

"But I s'pose, you being titled and all that, had a very superior education," observed Octavia.

Lady Lucille sipped some iced water hurriedly. "Titled—and all that," struck her as distinctly quaint.

"Oh! of course, I had heaps of governesses, and then finished up in Paris. But I'm sure I don't remember a thing. I sing a little, and, of course—languages and all that were second nature, because my nurses and governesses were either French or German. That's the best way to learn. I should advise you to have a French governess for your little girl, and a German maid. She'll learn much quicker than at school."

"But Doreen's finished schooling!" exclaimed Octavia. "She's gone sixteen. I don't expect her father intends giving her any more education. At least, he hasn't said so."

"No more education! Oh, nonsense! Why, she's a perfect child. And, of course, as she'll be an heiress you'll expect her to make a good match. All mothers look for that," she added, with vivid remembrance of certain impecunious relatives who had asked her to "bring along a millionairess or two, on the return journey," by way of assisting deserving poverty and a decreasing rent-roll.

Octavia was silent for a moment; her eyes on the distant sky-line, where blue met blue in dim perspective.

"I haven't thought of that, my lady," she said hesitatingly. She had a vague idea that Earls' daughters were so addressed in novels dealing with aristocratic life.

Lady Lucille smiled. "Then you are very unlike most mothers," she said. "And, pardon me if I say so, but it's not necessary to call me *that*. We're equals in a way, you see. I'm always addressed as Lady Lucille."

"It sort of sounds too familiar to use your Christian name straight off," said Octavia. "Oughtn't I to use your married title?"

"My husband's only an Honourable," explained Lady Lucille. "I know these things are very puzzling to Americans. But you'll get used to them. I shall be very happy to give you any hints, if you need them."

"I expect I shall," drawled Octavia languidly.

"The London season will be nearly over. I'm afraid I can't do much for you this year. But I suppose you won't be taking a town-house yet? I understand your husband's property is in Ireland?"

"That's so, my—I mean, Lady Lucille. It's Castle Derg, in some queer-sounding place. Bally—I know is in it."

"It mostly is—in Irish places," said Lady Lucille, miling.

This was the most original and refreshing piece of humanity she had as yet met, on American ground—or off it.

"I don't know what it'll be like living in a castle" (she pronounced it *cassel*), continued Octavia. "Kind o' tires me thinking of it. I ain't been used to grandeur, only comfort."

"It's possible to combine the two, if you make up your mind," said the new mentor. "Get someone else to do the entertaining and all that, and you just show yourself when you feel inclined. That's the way."

"Entertaining!" gasped Octavia, sitting straight up in her deck-chair. "Lord sakes! you don't mean to say I shall have to *entertain* folks? Oh! ma'am, I couldn't do it!"

"Nonsense! It's as easy as A B C. Especially in Ireland, where there's lots of huntin' and shootin' and fishin' and all that, and such a free and easy life. I must talk to Sir Patrick about it. I've got a little huntin' box of my own buried away in Ireland. When I was a child, I used to ride the colts bare-back, and get up at five o'clock in the morning to race the stable-boys! Ah! my dear Lady Madison, what it is to be young!"

"I guess you're not much over—thirty—by the look of you," said Octavia bluntly.

"Thirty!" Lady Lucille crimsoned to the edge of her grey motor-veil. "My dear woman, I'm barely twenty-seven!"

"Three years'll soon pass. Have you any family?"

"No—thank goodness!" snapped Lady Lucille, annoyed at the brusque reception of a palpable misstatement. She was so accustomed to flattery and adulation that a blunt truth ranked as the worst form of blundering.

“Aren’t you *sorry?*” demanded Octavia, sinking back on her head-cushion. “I should think you ought to be. There’s naught in life so lovely as havin’ a little child of your own—your *very* own. Lord above! the tears I’ve shed, the prayers I’ve wasted——”

Lady Lucille opened pale, opalescent eyes. “*Wasted*—but you’ve got a daughter——”

Octavia was conscious of a blunder. Had Patrick said that Doreen was to be called her daughter, or her stepdaughter? She couldn’t recall.

Fortunately, at that moment some of the luncheon-sated passengers came tumbling through the archway by which her chair was placed, and hailed Lady Lucille uproariously, as her intimates were wont to do. She rose, and with a careless nod to her newly-made acquaintance, took herself off in company with several choice spirits to play bridge in the saloon.

Octavia remained wrapped in meditations.

She had learnt that her position held responsibilities. She who had been too lazy to control her “coloured girls,” who had never given a luncheon-party or a dinner-party, except by her husband’s directions, and in an hotel dining-room, she had been told that it would be her duty to “entertain” in her own house. True, the house was a Castle, and there would, of course, be servants; proper, intelligent servants, not stupid coloured “helps.” Still——

The thought was too stupendous to follow out. She closed her eyes, and fell asleep and dreamt she was sitting on a rocky tower, looking down at a sort of race-course where every known and unknown quadruped was tearing frantically along in order to catch up a radiant figure mounted on a bright red horse, and with clouds of

green hair floating behind her. Awakening from this phantasmagoria with a sudden start, she was confronted by the stern and somewhat angry face of her husband.

"I wish, Octavia, you'd learn to shut your mouth if you must drowse on deck," he said harshly. "Why don't you go to your state-room if you feel sleepy?"

"I don't get air enough there," she said. "Say, Patrick, sit down here, will you? I've got something to tell you. You can smoke. I sha'n't mind."

He sat down on the adjoining chair. "Doreen is playing deck-quoits with some kids over there," he said. "I was taking a walk around. Now, what is it? for I hate sitting down."

"Have you noticed that strange-looking lady with the green hair—I mean the red hair, and the green eyes?"

"Well, she's the right sort, I guess. Real British, high-trained, *ex-clusive*, coroneted nobility."

"I know that," drawled Octavia.

"She don't cotton to Americans," continued Madison. "Hates 'em like poison. Guess she warn't just fell down to and worshipped our side; it's riled her in consequence."

"Well, she was sittin' in that very chair, and talkin' to me all lunch-time," drawled Octavia.

"What?" Madison dropped a match, and turned astonished eyes on his wife. "You don't say?"

"It's true. She was that affable and charmin'. Seemed to know all about us too."

"My!" ejaculated Madison. "Why, Octavia, if she takes us up we're made. There ain't nothin' she can't get. I heard it from the captain himself. She sits at his table, you know, and doesn't she make things hum. Lively! She's the limit, I guess."

"She has a—I can't just recall how she named it—

shootin' or huntin' house, no—box—that was it, over in Ireland. Couldn't be a real box though, could it? What queer sayin's they have, those folk. Don't seem as if we ever could ha' belonged to them—once?"

"It's too far off now to reckon with," said Madison, as he lit his cigar and began to take in slow, thoughtful whiffs of its costly fragrance. "What more did Lady Altamont say?"

"Well, for one thing it appears it's not right to call her Lady Altamont. She's an Earl's daughter, and they don't seem to have to reckon with their husbands' *names*. She said I was to call her Lady Lucille, and yet not 'My lady,' becoss' we were equals."

She pronounced the word with self-satisfied emphasis, and felt repaid for conversational effort by the puzzled gravity of her husband's face.

"I guess there'll be a tidy lot to learn for both of us," he said. "But if we get taken up by the right sort it'll soon be plain sailing. I call it surprising kind of this Lady—Lucille—to take notice of you."

"Comes to that, I guess I'm as good as she," said Octavia. "Ha'n't I a title, and as for money—why, you're a millionaire, and most folk here know it."

"Oh, the dollars are right enough. It's not *that*. Existence ain't goin' to be without complications, if we want to get our run for our money. I've been keepin' eyes and ears open, and I tell you, Octavia, life over there at Castle Derg is going to be a big thing. A big thing."

She closed her eyes wearily.

"Then she was right about—entertaining," she said presently.

"I guess so. But it can be done very easy. You get

someone to stay with you who sort o' knows the ropes, and she manages it straight away. Only wants a free hand, and her own 'pals' asked along with her."

"But how shall we know the right person to ask?"

"I'll find that out this side o' six months. I've been talking to an Irishman in the smoking-room. Captain Mallory—retired. Reg'lar good sport, and what he don't know about horses isn't worth speaking of. He offered to set my stables right and I as good as accepted. He's quite a well-known man; hunts every season. And lives only ten or twelve miles from Castle Derg, so he's really a neighbour. I declare, Octavia, if you aren't going to sleep again! My! You're the limit. How d'you reckon you're going to play the part of a lady of title with a whole castleful of guests, and servants, and huntin' men, and women? For that's what it's goin' to be according to Captain Mallory."

Octavia made no remark or any movement.

Possibly she thought she had better secure all the rest possible to the immediate moment, seeing that the Fates were at work to create disturbance and banish peace and leisure from out her future existence.

V.

EVERY day life became a bigger puzzle to Octavia Madison. She sat in her deck-chair and watched the passing show almost as a child might have watched its first pageant.

These brilliant women for ever jesting and laughing with any man save their own husbands. These drawling youths and carelessly dressed sporting-looking men who

were all either titled or related to titles, and had been shooting game in America's virgin forests, or fishing America's grand rivers—what did they represent of that old world and new life for which she was bound?

And now one of them had stepped out of her fence of exclusiveness and come into the lines of friendliness with her insignificant self. For the outward change in circumstances had not yet opened out any answering change in the new Lady Madison's personality.

She thought her own thoughts; looked out on everything with lazy, wondering eyes. She saw the flirtations—the little intrigues and petty schemes; the feasting and rioting of loose-livers—and steady drinkers. The slackening grip on mind and manners inseparable from everyday association. In fact all the queer physical and moral relaxation of those who "go down to the sea in ships." Atlantic liners for choice!

To Madison himself the voyage was glorified by the self-introduction and increasing attentions of Lady Lucille, and such of her friends as she made known to the American millionaire. A dance on deck and a concert in the saloon gave opportunity for the display of gowns and accomplishments.

Doreen joined in the one and listened to the other with no little wonderment, for she was new as yet to fashionable *décolletism*, and the risky fantasies of musical comedy ditties such as Lady Lucille and her circle favoured.

To Madison it seemed that the old country for which he was bound must be even smaller and more evenly located than he had imagined, seeing that almost everyone to whom he was introduced or made acquaintance with knew of his "Castle," and had either places of their

own, or friends with places of their own in the surrounding counties. "A trifle of a matter of fifty miles or so, we wouldn't be counting *that* anything in Ireland," his friend, Captain Mallory, said ingratiatingly.

Madison was getting used to being addressed as Sir Patrick, to being hailed as a popular asset in the smoking-room colloquies, and an apt pupil at bridge, under the joint tutelage of Lady Lucille and Chris Kennaway, her chosen "pal" and escort for the time being. He lost a good deal of money to his fair teacher during the process, but that was a matter of no importance. The lessons he learnt were a thousand times more valuable. For Madison was a keen observer and a shrewd calculator. The sense of unknown responsibilities weighed heavily upon him, though no one would have guessed it. He wanted to study folk to whom titles and ancestry were a natural happening. There was nothing to his mind so attractive as Lady Lucille's cool little insolent ways and speeches. She seemed to mock at everyone and everything. She said things so *risqué* and outrageous, that he wondered how a woman of acknowledged social position could ever have known of them. She played havoc with all preconceived ideas of feminine delicacy and reserve, and yet she was adored, and courted, and surrounded as was no other woman on the boat. He felt her curious fascination steal over himself when she chose to exert it. He studied her from a point of self-knowledge and of curiosity, and then assuring himself of dislike, became one of her reluctant slaves before the voyage of seven days was an ended incident.

On the last night she and her party sat up on deck drinking champagne and liqueurs, and talking their shibboleth of fashionable slang and scandals until Madi-

son was fain to hide bewilderment under a mask of indifference.

He had learnt that this was the wisest method of dealing with social problems.

Yet to-night, as he leant back in his chair and watched these strangely fascinating *mondaines*, he wondered uneasily how it all came so natural. That brilliant wit, the shafts of satire, the give-and-take, the half-uttered, fully-comprehended *double entente*, how puzzling it was to him as an outsider. Yet he told himself nothing had beaten him yet. Why should social problems? At least, it should be possible to make his own mark as an exponent of dry American humour. Of its kind it was as good as and far more subtle than English, judging from what he had heard.

"Reckon I'll keep my independence and make them sing small yet," he muttered. "I ain't been likened to Jay Gould for nothing."

He was feeling particularly unamiable. Lady Lucille had ignored him the whole evening, except for a request that he'd order up the drinks they were now indulging in. Of course, that meant he was to pay for them. Not that *that* fact troubled him. He had won in every rubber of bridge to-night and he was only giving them back their own in a different coinage. But he hated to be overlooked and treated as an outsider. Above all, he hated Chris Kennaway, with his languid drawl, and his insolent phrases, and the way of asking to have Americanisms explained as if they meant a foreign language. All these things were so many stings to Madison's newly-acquired sensitiveness. Besides, all these people had a way of alluding to Doreen as a child, an unfledged schoolgirl. Madison considered her fully educated, and fully qualified

to take her place in the social world of Europe. Around her centred all his pride and hopes. She could gain for him what he could not gain for himself, and he meant her to do it. Through her he would build up a new family, a new race. But he felt he must walk warily at first. Social pitfalls were on every side, and as yet he had only secured a half-promised guidance—hampered by conditions.

At last the party showed signs of breaking up. The morrow would see them at Southampton, and then scattering right and left to various London hotels or private houses. Districts meant nothing as yet to Madison. Piccadilly, and Park Lane, and Grosvenor Square had as yet no higher designation than London in its general sense. But he had made judicious enquiries as to "best hotels," and been recommended to the Carlton. He had written out a telegram for rooms which would be despatched on arrival. Also he had told Lady Lucille that he would be in town for some weeks before departing for Ireland. He wanted to look about him, and see the best of England first.

"Very well. I daresay I'll look you up," said his cicerone indifferently. "Don't make friends with all the hotch-potch you'll be thrown with. Every sort go to the Carlton. Foreign notabilities without a half-penny, and Chicago pig-stickers, and kerosene—or is it paraffin?—millionaires. I don't know what your particular 'find' was, Sir Pat. I didn't ask you."

The thought of his tan-yards and trade secrets sent a sudden hot thrill through Patrick Madison's frame. He replied vaguely. "Business—I'm director of a big company in Louisville."

To be called "Sir Pat" by that cool, slighting voice

made him conscious of shame in his own antecedents, and yet of annoyance that he should feel ashamed of either labour or its rewards at the mere look and tone of a woman. How he had despised women! How treated them as mere toys of necessity, or appendages of the respectability of family life. Yet this one could humiliate him, anger him, and crush him into supreme insignificance by a look or a word. He told himself it was only a trick, an art. An asset of the rank and distinction of which Britishers made so much, and upheld so precariously. Yet that art and that trick were capable of making the rain and sunshine of his days. And their speedy withdrawal lent to this last evening a peculiar meaning.

As she rose from her chair he also stood up. The rest of the party were stumbling more or less unsteadily in the direction of the stairway. They were all talking and laughing noisily. Lady Lucille had a deck state-room, and had merely to pass along the passage.

She held out her hand to him. It was the first time she had so far condescended.

"So long!" she said, stifling a yawn. "Mind you're to ask me to your Castle in Erin-go-bragh for the hunting season. Berkeley Square will always find me. It hasn't been half bad fun, has it?"

Madison tried to stammer that it had been "the time of his life." He'd never forget her ladyship's kindness.

She laughed contemptuously. "Oh, my dear man, when will you learn that only our servants and our tradesmen 'my lord' and 'my lady' us? Certainly you Americans *do* want some training!"

Madison bit his under lip. "We can't play up to the empty foolishness of what you call etiquette all the time."

"Now don't get riled," she said, pausing at the entrance way. "I mean us to be friends. Come to lunch with me—on Sunday—will you? Just yourself. I want a business talk. American railroads, you know. Two o'clock—91, Berkeley Square. Can you remember?"

"I guess I can. I shall be real pleased to come, Lady Lucille."

"No one else ever says my name the way you do," she said, laughing. "I guess I'll miss you—Sir Pat." And with a wave of her hand she disappeared down the passage.

Madison stood still and watched till her door closed. Then he, too, turned and went to his own quarters, turning over many things in his mind, and one of them was not American railroads.

Doreen had felt herself somewhat neglected since her father had taken to bridge, and smart folk. Octavia spent most of her time in slumber. Besides, even when awake she was not a very brilliant conversationist. The girl had made friends with some young compatriots, who had initiated her into the mysteries of deck quoits and fixed up impromptu swings, and confided to her the things they were going to do, and the astonishing amount of sight-seeing they expected to get through in a month's visit to the other side. But the steamer girls were either older or younger than Doreen, and none of them quite fitted into that groove of fond and admiring docility sacred to Rosa Schmidt.

Sometimes the girl hung over the railings of division and watched the queer crowd of returning Irish, or deported foreigners congregated on that lower deck. Often, too, she cast wistful glances towards that debarred second

class. But rarely did she catch sight of the tall figure and broad shoulders of her Coney Island friend. She wondered where he hid himself; how he employed his time.

Day followed day, and at last came the hour of arrival and disembarkation. Then she caught sight of him in the docks. But it was impossible to catch his eye or get any signs of recognition.

"I expect he's forgotten me," she sighed. "Of course, he's a man and I'm only a schoolgirl. I've not even put up my hair. It isn't likely he's ever thought a second time about me."

And thus the matter rested. Drifting and plunging into a maelstrom of new and vivid experiences, and so mingling and mixing itself up with them, that at last it got stranded on a tiny rock of memory, and there remained.

London took them at once into a wide embrace of interests. Octavia accepted them through the medium of carriages in the Park and about the larger and more fashionable thoroughfares. Doreen and her father pursued technical knowledge through varied channels of Abbey, Cathedral, and Museum.

Madison considered London dwarfed and insignificant by comparison with New York and Washington. As for the narrow, muddy strip of water designated a "river," he held it to be an ancient geographical error which later historians had been too ashamed to rescind!

"I guess they meant a creek," he told Doreen, and the girl, with vivid memories of the Hudson and Haarlem, agreed that was the only conclusion to arrive at. She studied the Boadicea Statue on Westminster Bridge with

deep interest by reason of the fascination of the name and the presentment of a chariot. Things which she and Rosa Schmidt had recently discussed through the medium of a handy guide to English history.

On Sunday she insisted on being taken to the Abbey for service, and did more English history during the monotonous delivery of a sermon by an elderly Dean.

At the entrance of the Carlton, her father casually mentioned an engagement to luncheon. Doreen's eager "Where?" obliged the truth from him.

"But didn't she ask mother or me?"

"I'd have told you if she had," answered Madison.

"What time will you be back? What am I to do all the afternoon?" asked the girl disconsolately. "Mother never goes out till after tea. Three long hours to get through. And I wanted to go to the Park."

"Oh, I'll be back long before tea. No—I'm not going up," he added, as the lift-boy stood waiting. "Now good-bye, child."

He turned and went out past obsequious hall-porters, and strolled on towards Piccadilly, wondering how it was that he had found it so impossible to tell Octavia of that engagement. He had meant to do so over and over again. Yet here, at the last moment, he found himself strolling along in an excited and expectant frame of mind, and without apparent reason for declining the elevator's invitation. He ought to have gone up to the private sitting-room. He ought to have seen Octavia in the common courtesy of the day's routine. Yet he had felt an invincible repugnance to fulfilling so simple a duty.

Of late he had been studiously courteous in all small obligations where his wife was concerned. He owed her that, he knew. And it was the little things that counted

so much with women. A gift, a flower, a caress, and they were at your feet. As he thought of flowers his eye was arrested by a window glowing with floral tributes of rose, and lily, and orchids. He paused. The door was open though it was Sunday. The name above was significant of a reason. Jew and Gentile hold different opinions as to Sabbatarian significance. He entered, and purchased a delicate cluster of mauve orchids, and took them away with him.

A clock pointed to the quarter to two. He hastened his steps; turned down Berkeley Street, glanced contemptuously at its insignificant houses, and marvelled at waiting motors and coroneted carriages standing before their insignificance. Then he came to the Square. He found the number he desired, and rang the bell. A liveried servant showed him upstairs to a cool, dim drawing-room where some half-dozen or more people were standing or sitting. In the midst he recognised Lady Lucille. She wore a white gown and a large black picture hat. At his name she turned quickly, and at first sight of her strange eyes and bizarre colouring, Madison was again conscious of the foolish schoolboy effect she had so often produced on him. He stammered a greeting, and awkwardly presented his flowers. The little group smiled and exchanged glances. Lady Lucille laughed and threw aside the covering paper.

"Are you introducing American customs over here?" she said. "It almost makes me sentimental. Flowers and luncheons always go together."

"And partings," murmured Chris Kennaway, who had caught the paper in his hand.

Lady Lucille tucked the orchids into her belt. "I

must introduce you to my husband," she said. "Here, Jerry—this is my American friend."

A short, thick-set man, who might have been a jockey or a groom in right of any special distinction, came forward from the little group, and held out his hand.

"How do?" he said. "Going to make a long stay over this side?"

"Why, Jerry, don't you remember I told you Sir Patrick is to become a naturalised Briton?" exclaimed his wife.

"Sorry. Got a wretched memory," muttered the Honourable Gerald Altamont.

Madison bowed, and then was pushed aside by a whirlwind in petticoats, who rushed into the room and then rushed round the circle apologising for being late, and greeting everyone with the same voluble smile.

He wondered who she was. She had the largest bust and the smallest waist he had ever seen united.

She was exquisitely dressed, and wore powdered cheeks and geranium-coloured lips. She was altogether strange and startling, and proved to be the wife of a newly knighted actor-manager, who numbered third-rate Royalties among his intimates, and who lent his theatre for public charities at least six times every season.

The startling lady was addressed as "Tags." She called everyone by their Christian names and talked so much that it seemed useless to attempt conversation. Amidst general confusion Madison found himself going downstairs in the wake of his hostess, and then was steered into a dining-room, where strips of Venetian point and pale pink roses emphasised a table, and seemed an apology for very little food, and that not

particularly well cooked or served. It happened that the *chef* was sulking over a long-delayed salary, and therefore vented his displeasure in the most pointed fashion. But there was plenty of champagne and so much conversation that the absence of viands was not remarked. Evidently Lady Lucille did not trouble her head about them.

Madison sat at her right hand, and stifled the pangs of American hunger by help of her smiles and a liberal supply of crisp toast. Now and then she addressed him, but as she never waited for a reply, but skimmed off on the current of every passing jest or whispered innuendo, it seemed scarcely necessary to listen. Everyone talked at once. It was all new, bewildering, extraordinary. The season's matches and catches; the opera; the last new comedy, the last new *divorcée*. All this, which only meant—"tout ce qu'il y a de plus naturel" to this special coterie, was so much French idiom to Madison. He was annoyed to find himself ignored. No one troubled to address him, and if he attempted to speak to Lady Lucille he got no satisfactory response. The meal ended up with iced melon and liqueurs, and Turkish coffee. After which most of the guests departed. Madison wondered if his hostess recollected the reason for his being there? She speedily set his mind at rest.

"Come up to my den and have a smoke," she said. "I want to hear your plans."

Madison followed her upstairs, and into a small room furnished chiefly with divans, and Cairo screens, and tiny tables. The atmosphere was heavy with scents of tobacco and incense. A dim light filtered through rose-coloured blinds.

Lady Lucille threw herself down on one of the divans

and piled up some green cushions behind her vivid head. She pointed to the opposite seat, and then lit a cigarette. Madison hated to see women smoke, but somehow the fact of "Lady Luce" doing it justified the action.

He followed her example, and then waited for her to open the conversation.

"Where did you go?" she asked him.

"The Carlton. I thought you said——"

"Oh! did I send you there? Made any friends yet?"

"Why—no," he said slowly. "I've been busy showing Doreen around. She wanted to see the famous places—those she'd read of."

"Good heavens! Have you actually been sight-seeing with a schoolgirl? How extraordinary; and half London looking out for a 'tip' for the Stock Exchange!"

"I haven't come over to do business—at least, not unless something special comes around. I guess I'm tired of Wall Street. I don't feel like taking chances now."

"How awfully lucky you've been," grumbled Lady Lucille. "Think of us poor paupers over here, not knowing where to turn for the next thou', and owing twice as much as we can ever pay!"

"Is that so?" exclaimed Madison. He glanced around at the evidences of wealth and comfort even in this tiny corner. He remembered the liveried footmen, the crested silver, and exquisite glass, the costly wines and liqueurs. How were these things got except by money?

"Paupers!" he echoed. "That's amusing. I guess you're a long way off the parish rates, Lady Lucille."

"Am I?" She blew a cloud of smoke from her cruel red mouth. "A snake's mouth," someone had called it, and certainly it could distil venom of the subtlest and most poisonous description. "That's all you know. Why,

sometimes I don't know how to get a sixpence. Jerry's so extravagant, and so mean. He doesn't care what he spends on himself, but as for me——"

Madison looked astonished at her frankness. But he deemed it expedient to say nothing—as yet.

"What I wanted to see you about," she went on, "is simply this. I take it you have certain ambitions—of course you must, it's only natural. I also take it that you would wish your daughter to have a position worthy of your—family—and your wealth. Now all this isn't as easy as it sounds. In fact, it's not easy at all. Americans aren't as popular over here as they used to be. Even those we take up have to learn our ways, and fall in line with our views of life. They can't afford to be exclusive. Money can get most things, Sir Pat, but it takes more than money to get you into the right sort of Society."

"I don't know that I want to get into Society over here," said Madison cautiously.

"Ireland is more difficult and more exclusive," said Lady Lucille. "I know, because I've Irish relatives. You'll find, my dear man, that you'll want a friend at Court, at least to start you. Surely you'd like to see Doreen presented, and marrying a title?"

He flushed to his temples. "Like it," he said. "It's just what I mean her to do. She's as pretty as a picture, and she'll be as rich as I choose to make her."

"Well, that's what I'm leading to. Your ambitions naturally centre round this pretty child. But I can't see a possible chaperon for her in your good wife."

The slighting, contemptuous tone hurt him, and yet he was too ashamed to show his feelings.

"Of course," she continued. "Men always rise to a position and are accepted in it as women can never be

accepted. Your daughter under her mother's—no, step-mother, isn't it?—influence will be nobody. Under mine——" She glanced cautiously at his impassive face.

"Yours?" he faltered.

"It could be arranged."

Again he was silent, taking stock of ambition. Seeing scheme after scheme evolve itself. Doreen was young. Doreen was pliable. She might find a family to which his name and wealth could attach themselves. Something worthy of mention in the golden book of the Peerage, the god at whose feet of clay he was prepared to fall down. He drew a deep breath and laid down his extinct cigarette.

"Is it a deal you're after?" he said coolly. "Of course, a lady of your rank and position doesn't tack on to folks of our sort unless there's something to be got out of it. Business is business, though *this* is a sort I'm new to, and haven't quite made up my mind about. Still, if your ladyship will say straight out what you can do, and what you want for doing it, I daresay we can pull it off."

And Lady Lucille, Earl's daughter, and future Countess, spent the next half-hour in discussing in plain, blunt terms what she would do for these *nouveaux riches*, and what she would condescend to accept for so doing it.

Patrick Madison considered himself a pretty 'cute hand at a bargain, but even Patrick Madison acknowledged that he was no match for a British peeress.

VI.

LADY LUCILLE called at the Carlton the following day, and found Octavia in her usual condition of blissful idleness awaiting the hour for carriage exercise.

She had apparently one conception of the London season. That it was *de rigueur* to show oneself in the Park at a certain hour. It gave her extraordinary pleasure to see that crowd of well-dressed women and well-groomed men; that endless string of carriages and motor-cars. Sometimes a significant crest, or an unusually imposing coronet, gave her a pleasurable sensation of being one of the social stars by reason of meeting in the same firmament. She also noted the attention that Doreen unconsciously attracted. Her fresh young beauty, attired with due regard to youth and prevailing modes, could not pass unobserved even amongst so much beauty and so much fashion.

Of course, the carriage, and horses, and coachman lacked just that stamp of "private" which would have given significance to the livery and the cockades; but as Octavia was blissfully ignorant of such significance, and thought one equipage very like another, that fact did not trouble her at all.

When Lady Lucille was announced, she was engaged in studying the effects of a new hat, which had presented quite a balancing feat in the art of adjustment. Seated

in a deep, low lounge-chair, she was contemplating the result in a mirror that acted as wall-panel. When she heard the name of her steamship acquaintance, she rose to greet her with a cordiality that was genuine enough to surprise the unemotional visitor.

Doreen was seated at the window looking out at the busy thoroughfare beyond. She had never liked Lady Lucille. She had an instinctive feeling that she was treacherous and untrustworthy. As she looked at her now, an epitome of art of the highest quality, she felt more than ever distrustful. Not even the sweet smile and radiant greeting deceived her. Doreen possessed youth's quick insight and her sex's gift of intuition, in an unusual degree. The enthusiasm which had made her accept Octavia was completely wanting in her greeting of this lovely and fashionable *mondaine*.

"She doesn't like me," thought Lady Lucille. "No matter. She'll have to give in to what's arranged for her."

Then she seated herself, and purred insincerities and learnt how completely the Madisons had been left alone as yet. No callers—no invitations—only the routine of hotel life and that daily outing in the Park. Lady Lucille started her campaign by asking them to dinner the following week.

"Sir Patrick—and yourself," she emphasised.

"Not Doreen?" enquired Octavia innocently.

Lady Lucille raised delicately pencilled eyebrows.

"My dear woman! Doreen isn't *out*. She must be content to wait a year or two before she can go to parties and entertainments. We are very strict over here as to what the *jeune fille* may or may not do. Not like you dear free-and-easy Americans who leave your 'buds' to blossom as they please."

Octavia looked perplexed. "I don't see," she said, "why Doreen can't come to a private house to dinner. It's not like a ball, or a restaurant party!"

Lady Lucille laughed. "You're so quaint," she said. "But you'll soon understand. Social life over this side always puzzles Americans at first. But you're so adaptable it'll be quite delightful to teach you. Hasn't Sir Patrick told you about my willingness to introduce your daughter next season? We talked it over yesterday."

"Did you see my husband yesterday?" asked Octavia.

"Why, yes. He lunched with me. Hasn't he told you?"

Doreen turned quickly from her place by the window. "Oh, mother! I quite forgot. He asked me to tell you, but you were lying down, and then you had your luncheon sent in, and it all went out of my head before I saw you again."

"And you've not met since?" questioned Lady Lucille. "How fashionable you are! It's quite unusual for me to see my husband more than once a week—sometimes not so often."

Octavia was silent. She had seen Madison the previous night at dinner. But he had made no mention of where he had lunched.

"I guess he didn't think of telling me," she said. "Oh! I'm forgetting your English fashions. You'll have some tea, my—Lady Lucille, won't you?"

Her guest nodded, and then turned to Doreen. "And what do you do with yourself?" she asked. "What do you think of London?"

"I hardly know—yet," said the girl. "It's very large and crowded, and the people look somehow different from our New York folk, especially in the streets,"

"Different? Well, we are, you know."

"Not so smart; not so alert," continued Doreen. "Kind of tired and bored. I've not seen a happy-looking face anywhere. If they smile it's just a sort of twitch of the lip, as if someone pulled a string inside of them and the face muscles acted at its direction."

Lady Lucille stared. "What an odd idea! I had no notion you were so observant!"

"Oh! Doreen's real 'cute," drawled Octavia. "She's got enough sense for six though she looks such a kid."

"What are you going to do about finishing her education?" asked the visitor. "I know of an excellent school in Paris. Six months there would work wonders!"

"School!" exclaimed Doreen. "I've finished school. I guess I don't want any more lessons. I'm going to Ireland next month, and the only thing I intend to practise is riding. I mean to hunt all winter. I learnt to ride at a riding-school, but that's not the real thing, is it?"

"Hunt!" exclaimed Lady Lucille. "Why, my dear girl, it needs a lot more than riding-school experience to hunt in Ireland. You've got to begin at it as soon as you can walk alone. And even then you stand a good chance of breaking your neck before you finish!"

Octavia turned from the tea-table. "If that is so I guess you ain't going to do it, Doreen. Your neck's too good to risk. Sugar, my lady?"

"No—thanks," snapped Lady Lucille, taking the tea-cup from the large, shapely hand. "And do please try and master that little technicality, will you? Surely my name doesn't present abnormal difficulties?"

Octavia had not the remotest idea what "abnormal" meant, but she felt crushed and stupid before the flashing glance and contemptuous words of her visitor. An

Earl's daughter still presented some vague and alarming social difference from previous standards. This brilliant, bizarre creature who knew Royalty and had every title and its prerogatives at her finger-tips, half terrified and abashed her. She sank back, imperilling the carefully adjusted poise of the new Gainsborough model, and then cast an appealing look at Doreen.

The girl came forward and seated herself near the tea-table.

"It's very kind of you, Lady Lucille," she said, "to trouble about us and what we're going to do with ourselves. I don't know why you should."

Lady Lucille stared at the frank young speaker. Was she going to be troublesome? It had never occurred to her that any difficulty to her schemes might arise from this unimportant source. She drank her tea and put down the cup.

"I have taken a friendly interest in you all from the time we crossed," she said. "And your father has asked me to—educate—your mother and yourself in the mysteries of what your new position will demand, and how you are to comprehend them."

"Educate——" faltered Doreen.

"It *is* quite an education, the art of fitting yourself for social responsibilities. It's no use being merely rich, or good-looking, if you are perpetually making blunders, as is the way with your good mother and yourself."

"And father?" questioned the girl.

"Oh! a man is different. He's always excused. But it rests with you both to advance his interests and help him in many ways."

Doreen looked at her stepmother, and Octavia met the glance.

"I'm sure her ladyship means kindly," she said. "Only—do we *want* to get into Society?"

"Perhaps father does," said Doreen, remembering little hints, and rebukes, and criticisms that of late had surprised her.

"He certainly does, and he certainly will," said Lady Lucille, drawing on her pale grey *suede* gloves as signal of departure. "The question is, do you and your daughter mean to impede him or to help him, Lady Madison?"

"Why, of course, we'll do just whatever he wishes," said Octavia calmly. "I guess we'd *have* to," she added. "Patrick John Madison is a masterful man. What he means to do, he does. Where he means to get, he gets."

"Then—everything's settled," said Lady Lucille, rising and pushing back her chair. "And I'll expect you to dinner next Tuesday, Lady Madison. I think my father, the Earl of Woldshire, will be charmed with you. He adores Americans."

Octavia rose slowly and took the outstretched hand. She felt a little bewildered at the idea of meeting an Earl. She had a vague idea he would wear jewelled garters, and a sword, and a coronet mounted on a velvet cap. But she merely said she would be pleased to meet "his grace," and Lady Lucille let the error pass to laugh at it afterwards, as her motor purred away to Piccadilly and the Corner, and then drew up beside the railings that she might greet Chris Kennaway, and tell him what "screaming fun" she'd been having over those new and disgustingly rich people she had taken up.

"You're going through with it, then, Luce?" said her Platonic friend. "You've been jolly quick. Not taking any chances this time?"

"Why should I? They're absolutely unknown now,

but next year plenty of us will be glad to leave pasteboard and accept dinner invitations."

"Only that one daughter, isn't there?" enquired Chris. "Are you going to marry her out of hand? Because, if so, you could do me a good turn."

She flashed a quick glance at him. "I don't see it that way. They'll want a title."

"And you want to keep all the plunder your side?"

"Chris, you're positively coarse! You know perfectly well you're no good as a match. And American girls aren't fools. They want their money's worth in some shape."

"This girl's young enough to be sentimental. I don't see why I shouldn't have a look in. I'm in a beggarly rotten position. Duns on all sides. It'll have to be a case of marrying money, or the Bankruptcy Court, inside of another twelve months. You spoil my one chance in Chicago. I think it's a bit thick to try it on again."

"Don't talk nonsense!" she said sharply. "You know you'd hate to be married. At least, just yet. Besides, of course, I mean to help you—if I can. Come round to-night and we'll talk it over."

"All right," he said. "Why—here they come! Quite presentable, aren't they? That girl gets prettier every day."

He lifted his hat as the Madisons' carriage swept by. The object of his admiration gave him a very stiff little bow.

"Mother," she said, "doesn't it seem queer that Lady Lucille is always around with that young man; never with her own husband?"

"I guess it's an English fashion," said Octavia. "Most of the women here seem taken up with young chaps more like their sons than their lovers."

"Lovers!" Doreen's eyes widened. "Surely married women don't have *lovers*, mother? It would be wicked."

"My dear, there's lots of that sort o' wickedness in Society, and out of it," said Octavia. "I've read it in the papers our side, and every English novel is full of it. I guess Society isn't none too virtuous for all it pretends."

"But if she isn't a—a nice sort of woman, why should we make a friend of her?" persisted Doreen.

"Your father seems set on it. I s'pose he has his reasons. He's level-headed enough to trust by now, I imagine. If he's making up to her ladyship it's for your sake, not for his own."

"I wish he wouldn't do it, then. Do you think I might tell him so?"

"Oh! I do b'lieve that's the Queen coming along!" exclaimed Octavia excitedly. "Do keep your head out of the way, child! I want to have a good look at her. I mean to bow if I catch her eye."

In a moment the Gainsborough hat was nodding excitedly at the back of a passing carriage, and Octavia was so elated that for the rest of the drive she could talk of nothing else.

"I'm sure she noticed us! I caught her smilin' quite friendly as she passed. Oh! Doreen, I'd love to know her. If we went to Court we'd get asked to the Palace, sure. Your father told me that the Van Loos and the Coppertons knew her and her husband quite intimate. He stayed at Mrs. Van Loo's place once. She took it from a bankrupt Earl, and ran it like a Royal palace."

Doreen sighed. "Oh! mother," she said, "whatever shall I do if you get turned into a fine lady, with notions like the Van Loos'? I didn't suppose we came over to Europe for *that!*"

"My dear, it strikes me that neither you nor I know exactly *what* we did come over to Europe for! Anyhow, it's not going to make me different. Don't you fear that. All the same, it's as good as a play to look on at the life here."

The carriage was making its third tour of the Row, and Doreen was getting a little tired of seeing the same bored faces under vivid hats, and the various gowns chronicling the same fashion in endless reiteration.

"What an odd sort of life," she thought. "In the mornings they ride here; in the afternoons they drive here. On Sundays they walk here." Between times there would be luncheons, and teas, and dinners, and theatres and balls to wind up the day. Week after week of the season's duration they had to follow the same routine, and year after year that routine had continued with little variation. And what was the use of it?

She asked herself that as she watched the long procession. It made her feel suddenly tired and old. A shadow dimmed her bright young face. She felt a sudden longing for wide spaces and deep woods, for the song of birds and the sparkle of rippling rivers! For something that was *real*, and simply beautiful. She wished their stay in London was over. That their new home was ready to welcome them. That——

A voice close beside her arrested her attention. The carriage had come to a standstill in the crowded mile.

"Why, Miss Madison, you look as grave as if this was a funeral procession," drawled the remembered voice of Chris Kennaway. He was leaning over the rail. She was sitting at the side nearest to him.

"I'm rather tired," she said.

Octavia turned her stately head and smiled at the young man.

"I'm real glad to see you again, Mr. Kennaway," she said. "Why haven't you been to call as you said you would?"

"I've been so frightfully busy," said the young man. "You see, Lady Madison, bein' away so long left lots of things to see to. And I thought Sir Patrick was to look me up. At least, he said so."

"I guess he's been pretty busy too," said Octavia. "Seein' lawyers, and fixin' up things this side."

"When do you go to Ireland?" asked Kennaway.

"I don't know. He hasn't said yet. But I think it's just lovely over here. Lady Lucille's been around to-day to ask us to dinner. I s'pose you'll be there too?"

"What day?" asked the young man.

"Next Tuesday," said Doreen.

"Sorry I'm engaged. Are *you* to be there?" he asked the girl suddenly.

"No," she said. "Lady Lucille thinks I'm too young to go to her grown-up parties."

"Or too pretty?"

She blushed vividly.

"Never mind," he went on. "There's plenty of time for you. Don't be in a hurry to join the slaves of the treadmill. How wonderful to be able to blush like that. I've forgotten how, and I'm only twenty-four. But I think I spent so much time doing it in my first season that I'd no colour left for the second. Ah—your man's moving on. May I come and see you, Lady Madison?"

"Of course," said Octavia. "I'm in most afternoons before I take my drive. Come to-morrow."

"I will," he said, and lifted his hat as they swept on.

"I guess Luce isn't going to bag all the transatlantic tricks," he murmured to himself, as he turned out of the Park and sauntered slowly to his rooms in St. James's Street.

VII.

"WHAT made you ask him, dearie?" enquired Doreen, as they turned out of the Park. "Perhaps Lady Lucille won't like it."

"He seemed to want to come," said Octavia simply.

"You can never tell what those people really mean," said the girl. "Besides, he could have called any time this last week had he wanted to."

Octavia regarded her with sleepy wonder. "How 'cute you're gettin', Doreen. I s'pose you get that way of readin' people's motives from your father. I only see them as they seem."

"Well, Lady Lucille and that friend of hers seem to me very insolent, and very insincere. I can't tell how I know it. It's the way they strike me. And it's only because dad's so rich that they bother their heads about us."

"But his money doesn't do *them* any good," said Octavia.

"They might want to borrow some. I heard someone say on the boat that Mr. Kennaway hadn't enough for his 'tips.'"

"That might be just meanness. They don't go in for tipping this side. I read in a book that at most of the big country houses owned by titled folk they put up printed notices saying no one is to give the servants more than half a dollar."

"Perhaps those books aren't written by people who've ever stayed at such houses," observed Doreen.

Octavia considered the suggestion. It savoured of more worldly wisdom than she had credited the girl with possessing. Then she began to wonder why that young man had hinted at an invitation. Could it be that——

She glanced at Doreen's lovely, grave face, and her heart ached with jealous fears. How long would she be allowed to keep her in safe shelter of home love? How long or short a time before a crowd of suitors would be clamouring for her young beauty, and her dowry of dollars?

There was something painful, almost sacrilegious in the thought. She felt as if she wanted to hide the girl away in some safe retreat. To hide her from these bold eyes and approving glances. Young, pure, innocent. What woman with a woman's heart and a woman's knowledge of life could desire to see all this smirched and spoilt by man's rough touch, and coarse passions?

"If I had my time back I'd never marry," she murmured half aloud, and the girl hearing the odd statement turned surprised eyes on the speaker.

"Oh, mother! And—have lost dad!" she exclaimed.

"Don't you make a god of any man—even your own father," said Octavia. "They ain't worth it. Take my word for it. I know. And I say again, they ain't worth it!"

Doreen relapsed into puzzled silence. Her stepmother was becoming a surprise as well as an interest.

When they reached the Carlton, an attendant informed them that a gentleman was waiting to see them. He was in the lounge. A card was presented to Lady Madison. She read:

Mr. Standish M'Caughen.

*Urris, M'Caughen, and Swilley.
Dublin.*

"I don't know who it is," she said, handing the card to Doreen. "Go and see, child. I guess it's your father he wants."

Doreen took the card and went into the palm-shaded retreat, where tea had given place to smoking and *aperatifs*, or forthcoming diners.

Many curious eyes looked up at the slight girlish figure standing and scanning the various groups with that cool indifference to cause and effect natural to her nation. She was wondering how she was to make out whom, amongst them, the card in her hand represented.

Suddenly a solitary figure caught sight of her expectant attitude, and noted also the card in her hand. He rose with alacrity, born of long waiting, and came quickly forward.

"Have I the honour of addressing Lady Madison?" he said, in a voice that held rich and ingratiating inflections, foreign as yet to the girl's ears.

"I am Doreen Madison," she said. "Sir Patrick's daughter. Are you—Mr. Standish M'Caughen?"

"I am," he answered. "I had to come over on a matter of business, and my partners suggested I should call on your father. Our firm has done business with the family for many generations. They said here he was out, but that Lady Madison was expected every minute, so I—well, I waited."

He was so frank, and delightful, and friendly that

Doreen's young enthusiasm kindled at once. Here was a real Irishman, a representative of the land and people to which she was going, and about whom her fancy had circled in many an imaginative flight.

"Oh! I'm so glad you did!" she said eagerly. "Will you come upstairs and see mother? I think father may be in now. He generally gets here by seven o'clock."

She led the way to the lift, and they were shot up to the Madison sitting-room. But Sir Patrick had not returned yet, so Doreen set herself to entertain the stranger while Octavia was being dressed for dinner.

"Now, please, tell me what Ireland's like?" she said. "And about father's Castle—and, oh! *everything!* I'm just dying to go there. I'm sure it will be perfectly lovely!"

"Oh! it's the finest country in the world, everyone knows that," said Standish M'Caughen. "And your father's property—it's in one of the finest counties. As for the Castle——" he hesitated a moment. "Well, of course, castles in Ireland are a bit—a bit off colour just now. I mean in the way of repairs, and—well, repairs."

"Oh, but father can soon put that right," said Doreen hopefully. "You mean, of course, he'll have to get workmen to repaint and redecorate it?"

"We don't exactly re-*paint* castles; not in Ireland," announced Mr. M'Caughen indulgently. "No—it's more a question of building them up again when they're worth it. Mostly they're not. Then the owners just run up a convenient modern residence, with a dozen or so spare bedrooms, and a couple of bathrooms for English visitors. They find it a better plan."

Doreen's countenance fell. "Oh, but I want to *live* in our Castle," she said. "I've thought of nothing else ever since I knew father had one. I'd be real hurt if he

didn't repair it. Anyone can have a modern house, with bathrooms; but a castle with towers, and bastions, and dungeons—why—that would be just too lovely for words!"

"It would, no doubt, to a romantic young lady like yourself. But, you see, we older folk—why, it's comfort and convenience, as I said before, that we look for. I take it that your father's about my own years? Fifty-two, I am."

"Are you really?" exclaimed Doreen. "I thought you were quite young——"

"Well, there's only one thing younger than an Irishman, and that's an Irishwoman," laughed the lawyer. "It's just temperament, my dear. We keep young hearts, and can laugh at most of our troubles. It's that way."

"Oh! here's father at last!" exclaimed Doreen, jumping up as Madison entered. "Father dear, this is your lawyer from Ireland. Mr. Standish M'Caughen. He's been telling me all about your place and your Castle!"

"How are you, Sir Patrick? Welcome to the old country. Sure, they're all dying with curiosity to get sight of you over there, and the pretty girleen you're bringing us. It's many a long day since there was anything bright and young like that about Mount Madison!"

Madison shook hands with his visitor, and gave a quick, direct look into the merry blue eyes. "It was good of you to take the trouble of coming over," he said.

"Well, when you began talking of a month or two, we thought it best to have a personal interview. There's a power of matters to look into and settle up. So I——"

"Excuse me," interrupted Madison. "But I can't spare you any time now. I've barely ten minutes to dress for dinner. Can you dine with us, or will you look in later?"

"I'm not dressed for company," said M'Caughen.

"Oh! have dinner sent up here, father, for me and Mr. M'Caughen!" exclaimed Doreen. "I hate that restaurant below! I'll take care of Mr. M'Caughen until you're through. Will you stop now?" she asked the lawyer laughingly.

"Stop? I'll be delighted, if I'm not inconveniencing you, Sir Patrick?"

"Oh! I guess not; it's a good suggestion. I've nothing special to do this evening, and I'm anxious to learn something as to the extent and condition of my property."

"Oh, that won't take so long to explain," said the Irishman, with a subtle enjoyment of American adaptability. "It's—well, it's——"

But Madison was off to put himself into the hands of the hotel valet.

"It's what?" asked Doreen, unpinning her broad-brimmed hat and throwing it on an adjoining table.

"It's the other matters, I was going to say."

"Oh! deeds and things, I suppose? Never mind them! Tell me more about the Castle. Why did you call it Mount Madison just now?"

"Because the house is named that."

"House? Is it a house, then—after all? Oh! I could cry my eyes out with disappointment."

"Ah, my dear young lady, don't be doing that. It would be a shame to spoil such beautiful eyes with crying! And you're too quick at jumping to conclusions. The Castle is *there*, sure enough, but I'm afraid it won't do to live in. You see——"

"Oh! I don't care how dilapidated it is, so long as it's *there!*" cried Doreen. "I reckon it would have been a bit hard to come all this way only for an ordinary

house. And after telling Rosa Schmidt too, and asking her to come over next year for a long spell! I couldn't have borne it, Mr. Standish M'Caughen!"

"Ah, well, you must work your father up, and have the old place put into decent condition. I don't expect there's much he'll refuse you. You're the only one, aren't you, Miss Doreen? I'm glad you've an Irish name, by the way. It was premonition on your godparents' part, whoever they were."

Doreen laughed. "I never thought about it," she said. "Except that it's uncommon. Oh! here is my—mother! Seems as if I'd all the introducing to do, doesn't it? Mother darling, father's lawyer from Ireland. He's going to dine with me by ourselves up here, and afterwards he'll tell us all about the Castle, and what has to be done to it."

Octavia took the lawyer's extended hand, and then sank into the nearest chair. He looked admiringly at the beautiful face and massive figure.

"A fine woman, and a lovely girl," he thought. "Begorra, Patrick Madison's a man to be envied! A millionaire too! What luck there is going round, and yet—none of it ever gave me a look in!"

"I've met many of your countrymen over our way," said Octavia graciously. "Mostly they're policemen, or bar-keepers. It sounds quite nat'ral to hear you talk."

Standish M'Caughen was somewhat taken aback by this frank announcement. "I—I believe a great many of the lower-class Irish do go over to America," he said. "But I hope, Lady Madison, you won't confound birth and worth in this manner, or you'll be offending all your neighbours. There's no prouder race on God's earth

than the Irish; none to whom family honour and family dignity appeal so strongly!"

Octavia looked a little alarmed. "I—I only spoke of the class I'd known. It seemed to me there was something in your voice, or accent, familiar. I guess all folk who come from the same country speak alike. You'd have known I was an American right away, wouldn't you?"

"I certainly should. And your daughter too, though she has an Irish name. A very uncommon one."

"'Twas her father's choice, I guess," said Octavia. "Doreen, where *is* your father? It's just eight o'clock, and he said we were to dine at half-past seven."

"I'm afraid I delayed him," said M'Caughen.

"Oh, it's not of any consequence so long as he hasn't to wait for *me*! That always riles him. Ain't it queer, Mr.—I forget your name—that a man finds fault with his wife for the very thing he reckons she'll excuse in himself? Are you married?"

"No," he said, smiling. "I've been content to watch my friends' failures in that line."

At that moment Madison entered, followed closely by the waiter who attended their private room.

"Order what you like, Mr. M'Caughen," he said. "Champagne, whisky. It *is* whisky you favour in your country, I've heard."

"There's worse things, Sir Patrick. You'll come round to my way of thinking when once you're on your own land, and your foot in the right stirrup. But as I'm in a young lady's company to-night I'll take a young lady's wine, and champagne'll be the name of it, if she pleases?"

"Oh! I never drink wine at all. No American girl does," said Doreen.

"And is that so? Well, well, now——"

He opened the door for Octavia and her gorgeous train of orchid-mauve satin. Sir Patrick followed his wife.

"I'll be with you in half an hour," he said. "I'll cut the sweets, and we'll have coffee sent up here."

Standish M'Caughen came back into the sitting-room, and stood looking thoughtfully out of the window while the preparations for dinner went on.

"They're amazing!" he said. "I've heard Americans can play up to anything, but—these—all of them seem to take naturally to big things. The Carlton, and private suites, and champagne flowing. And Castle Derg—Holy powers! what will they be saying when they see Castle Derg!

True to his word, Madison came upstairs in little more than half an hour.

"Oh, dad! I've had the loveliest time!" exclaimed Doreen. "I don't think I've ever laughed so much in my life! The funny stories Mr. M'Caughen's been telling me! And—Oh! *do* think! Your Castle's got a *haunted* room! An old lady walks through it wringing her hands and moaning, and Mr. M'Caughen has *seen* her. It always means misfortune to the family, he says."

"It does that," said Standish M'Caughen. "And a sad enough story hangs around it all. But I'm not going to frighten the dear child by repeating it. Your health, Sir Patrick. Sure, may I never drink it in a worse vintage, or under more inauspicious circumstances. And here's to you, Lady Madison, and Miss Doreen too—God bless her! Good luck to us all this day."

He drained the glass and set it down with a wistful glance at the empty bottle. Pommery Sec—at the modest hotel figure of seventeen shillings—didn't fall to his lot every day, or, indeed, every year for the matter of that,

"These Americans, God help us! Where do they get the dollars from over there?" (He was saying in his heart.)

"Now, I guess this is goin' to be a business talk," said Madison, when the waiters had withdrawn. "So, Octavia, you and Doreen can just retire to your own apartments. And, Doreen, you fetch me that leather desk of mine, top drawer of the bureau. It's got all the papers and letters you sent me," he added, turning to M'Caughen.

"I'm regretful that you're banishing the ladies," said the Irishman, as he took his coffee. "But I'll hope to see them another time. Maybe in Dublin itself. You'll all be staying there for a few days to see the beautiful city, and the parks, and the buildings. Sure, they're as fine as London, every bit."

"I'm not what one would call impressed with London," said Octavia, in her new grand manner. "It's much smaller than I imagined. Kind o' makes me homesick too. At least, the food does. Times I just long for a clam chowder, or a taste o' maple syrup. They don't have anything to replace them, not to *my* mind."

"London—small!" gasped the lawyer. "Why, my dear madam, it's the biggest city in the world bar none. With a population of six million souls more or less. You really can't have seen more than a few miles of it, for your daughter says——"

But Doreen's entrance with the leather desk interrupted further statistics, and Octavia, having finished her coffee, rose and wished the visitor "good night."

He shook hands with her warmly, being still impressed by her opulent style of beauty, no less than by the glitter

of her new diamond necklace. A gift from Madison on their arrival.

Then he said a few more charming playful words to Doreen, and at last settled down to the serious business which had excused his visit.

He found in Patrick Madison a shrewd and hard-headed man. Very different from the easy-going, "don't-be-bothering-me" sort of clients to whom he and his firm were accustomed. For Patrick Madison had conquered much, and achieved much, and was now consolidating the active audacities of youth with the mature, cold judgment of middle age.

He had not made many friends, or squandered his intellectual powers on poor and unsatisfactory pursuits. He knew himself equipped for the sharpest battle of his life. Holding but one trump card, yet that a strong one—Money. It should win this new game as it had won others. It should buy him just the things he desired, and the things that were useful. It should open desirable doors, and close undesirable ones. It should shape tools for his use, all the while the tools imagined they were shaping him. And one of the first, and one of the most dreaded, had been the man with whom he was now closeted in the cool friendliness of personal interests.

Every document necessary had been already forwarded and verified. He had retained copies of various registrations. But there was no one to question his claim or oppose it. That—was not what he feared. It was merely a loose thread. Yet one which could unravel a whole scheme, if it occurred to anyone to pull it in the wrong direction.

Only once during the long interview had there been

the faintest hint that the thread would be detached. He had been waiting for the moment, and was prepared.

"I took it from your letters, Sir Patrick, that Miss Doreen was your daughter by the present Lady Madison. She says that she is only her stepdaughter."

"That's so," answered Madison.

"I'm to conclude that you were twice married, but that Miss Doreen is your only child?"

"Yes——"

The lawyer made a few notes.

"Miss Doreen is sixteen years of age, she tells me. You married your present wife, then, in 18—. You have the copy of that marriage?"

"Unfortunately not. It was at a registrar's office in New Orleans, where I was staying on business. The office was burnt down and the registers with it."

"Don't they send copies to the State Department?"

"I guess so; but in this instance they were late in forwarding the duplicates, and the books were lost irrecoverably."

"Well, it's not material," said the Irishman, accepting a cigar at the critical moment. "Of course, you might have had three or four wives, but it's the present one, and the present heiress that you account for. I'm sorry it doesn't happen to be an heir; but, no matter, there's time enough. That beautiful wife of yours may give us a surprise yet."

Madison frowned slightly. Then he laughed and pressed the whisky on his companion. The ordeal was over. The danger mark was passed. He breathed freely once again.

"As to the property now, Mr. M'Caughen. Tell me exactly what it's worth, and what it's like."

The Irishman drained his glass and set it down.

"As to what Irish property's worth," he said. "That's a matter entirely dependent on your tenants. They may choose to pay rents—or they may *not*. If they don't pay you can't live, and if you make them pay you *won't* live! That's about the way of it, and that's why all the fine old places in Ireland are left deserted and uncared for, while the priests run the country and sap the intelligence of the community at large."

"Can't it be stopped?"

"Can you stop a leak in the Atlantic Ocean?" asked M'Caughen.

"I'm not discussing impossibilities."

"No, but I'm introducing them by way of aiding your judgment. There's no one in the living world can understand the Irish people, not even the Irish people themselves. They're lovable, and patient, and hard-working, too, when the fit takes them, but apply English rules and judge them by English standards, and you're lost in the bogs of amazed helplessness!"

He shook his head mournfully, and then poured out a libation to the proud independence and cherished ideals of his native land.

Madison joined him. "Well, I'm not English," he said. "And I guess I've tackled tougher jobs, and handled more *contrary* critters in my time than even Ireland's going to show me."

The lawyer looked at the stern, capable face with wondering admiration.

"Well, here's luck to you, Sir Patrick," he said. "All the same——"

But Madison was gathering up the scattered papers, and putting them back in his desk.

"It's just gone twelve," he said. "And I never do business after midnight."

VIII.

CHRIS KENNAWAY chose the next afternoon for a call. He found Octavia and Doreen having tea before their drive.

He accepted a cup, and made himself as pleasant as he could. He was determined to get an invitation to Ireland in November, and have a month's hunting out of the millionaire.

Having found out that Doreen could ride, he asked why she didn't show herself in the Park in the mornings, and initiated her stepmother and herself into the mysteries of hired hacks, and livery-stable grooms. Doreen was enchanted with the idea. Her mornings were more or less monotonous, but this seemed a desirable way of spending them.

Chris offered to arrange the matter for her, and to come round as escort, if she would permit.

Octavia thought it a kindly attention and raised no objections.

"I suppose your habit is all right, though, Doreen?" she said suddenly. "The Park ain't the same as a New York riding-school."

"Oh, I think it'll do," said the girl. "I've seen all sorts of queer figures on horseback in the early morning, when father and I have passed through. Mostly they wear linen jackets and riding-skirts, don't they, Mr. Kennaway?—And straw hats too."

"You're quite right," said the young man. "That's what they're wearing this season. Smartness has gone

out, and sloppiness come in. You'd be safer to wear a covert coat, or one of those linen things, if you have one, than the best affair of Doré's or Wolverhausen's."

"I'm so glad!" exclaimed Doreen. "I thought they looked so comfortable and cosy. You needn't be afraid of me, Mr. Kennaway. I can ride."

"I'm sure of it. You look it. I—I suppose you want the Row? Because there's lots of other parks; quieter, and all that, don't you know?"

"Oh, yes! I'm going to the Park. I've longed to ever since I came over."

"And I was thinking you might like some tickets for Hurlingham, Lady Madison. There'll be some awf'ly good polo next Saturday. You might drive down and have tea there. I'll get you tickets. It's rippin' fun, as well as being one of *the* things to do. Saturday and Sunday are so infernally slow in town!"

"I suppose it's because the shops are shut," said Octavia. "It's no wonder you folk over here are poor. The time you waste! Why, you don't seem to stir to do anything till the day's half over. And then your early closing, and general holidays. My husband says if he gets to a City office at nine o'clock there ain't a soul there except the office boy. Over our side the men begin work at that time."

"Yes. You're quite too wonderfully energetic! I can't imagine how you do it!"

"Oh! I guess I can't get around as spry as I used to," said Octavia. "But one thing, there ain't no need to. Once Patrick made his pile, he said I was to have hired help, and laze as much as I like. I didn't say no."

Then the carriage was announced, much to Kennaway's regret, as it stopped further confidences.

"Can I take you anywhere?" asked Octavia, as she drew on her gloves. "There's a back seat to the victoria, and you're welcome to it, if it would be any convenience."

Chris shuddered.

A back seat in a hired victoria, even though the turnout was faultless! When would Americans learn the A B C of English etiquette?

He refused the offer politely, but accompanied them to the carriage, and stood a moment to remind Doreen of the engagement for the morrow.

It was a little unfortunate that Lady Lucille Altamont's victoria and high-stepping thoroughbreds should happen to pass at that same moment. Chris did not notice it, but the lovely lady saw him, and saw the lingering leave-taking. The blood rushed to her ivory brow, and a very fury of rage shook her.

"What's he doing there? How *dare* he call without telling me!" she thought, and for a second's space was near pulling the check-string and calling her tame cat to account. But the horses were trotting very quickly, and as the flush died out she remembered it would look rather marked if she did stop. The footman knew enough already. One had to be prudent nowadays with so many divorce scandals in the air. So she sat still, and was driven to a smart "at home," where a host of adorers swarmed around her and helped to make her forget the absence of one. Chris should have been here too, but Chris had taken it into his head to go to that fashionable livery-stable out of which he got occasional commissions, and tell the proprietor how he had arranged for riding-hacks and groom for an American millionaire's daughter. By this means he postponed his own long-overdue ac-

count, and gave the proprietor an opportunity to recoup himself by what he could add on to Madison's bill.

Americans always paid up. It was foolish of them; but also it was convenient for other people, who had more debts than cash to settle them.

It was late before he turned his footsteps to Buckingham Gate, and then he learnt that Lady Lucille had left some half-hour or so before his arrival.

As he had dined with her the previous night he considered he was "off duty" for this evening, and took a taxi back to his club, and then wrote to say how vexed he had been to miss her, and did she intend to do Hurlingham on Saturday?

"I must know *that*," he said. "I wish the Madison woman wasn't such a fool. If I tell her not to say who gave her the tickets she'll want to know the reason, and then ten to one she'll blurt it out to Luce. If she thinks I'm trying for a bit 'on my own,' she'll be as nasty as they make 'em. Confound women! A fellow can't call his soul his own once—once they've put in a claim for it!"

Lady Lucille received his note that night, and observed the omission of his afternoon's *rencontre*. She wondered if it was intentional. She remembered their conversation in the Park. Did he really intend having a try for the American heiress?

She had not yet got tired of him, and it hurt her *amour propre* to see him giving the first hint of weariness.

"And after all that American trip cost too!" she muttered furiously. "Men are the most ungrateful beasts! The more you do for them the less thanks you get!"

She indited an angry and indiscreet epistle to the recreant, and then, on second thoughts, tore it up, and

resolved to telephone to him in the morning instead. She would tell him to come round to luncheon. It was her massage day, so she would be fresher and less jaded than she felt to-night.

But Chris was already out in the Row with Doreen when the telephone bell rang. She could get no answer.

At twelve o'clock she rang again. He had just returned from his ride, and answered that he was engaged to lunch at the club. He had kept the evening free. Hadn't she had his note?

Lady Lucille snapped: "I'm engaged to-night. Good-bye," and rang off.

Chris whistled. "In a wax as usual. I'd better let her cool down. I'm a bit tired of these scenes she's so fond of making. God! what fools we are to meddle with women! Her sort at least."

He got out of his riding "togs," and had a shower-bath, and then lounged off to meet the self-invented friend, and discuss scandal and sport in the indolent, slangy fashion peculiar to England's golden youth of this generation.

Meanwhile, Doreen was in a flutter of delight. The ride had been just lovely. The Row, with herself in it and part of it, an experience as novel as it was exciting. She rode far better than most of the fair equestrians, and looked the loveliest, freshest thing in the Lady's Mile. She had attracted so much attention that Chris Kennaway was flattered at his choice of a debutante, and though many of his acquaintances tried to stop him for an introduction, he neither stopped nor introduced.

"Oh, do you think I'll be fit to hunt this winter if I ride every day?" asked the girl eagerly. "I suppose one couldn't practise leaping here, though?"

"Well—hardly," he said, smiling. "But, as I said yesterday, there's other places we could go. Richmond, or Wimbledon, or Barnes. You'd get a bit of real ridin'. This regulation speed is a bore. You never get a chance of trying your paces."

"Would the man know how to get to Richmond or Wimbledon?" asked Doreen, indicating the stolid groom a few yards in the rear.

"I daresay. But, look here, couldn't I go? I'm as fond as you of a good gallop."

"I couldn't expect you to give up so much time to me," said Doreen ingeniously. "Besides—Lady Lucille mightn't like it."

He looked at her quickly. Was she, after all, more far-seeing than the average *ingénue*, or could she possibly have heard—anything?

"Lady Lucille?" he echoed. "Why, it's nothing to do with her! She's only a friend. My actions don't concern her at all."

"Don't they?" said Doreen. "It seemed to me that on the boat they did; very much. She always kept you close to her side, and we all thought you sort of belonged to her."

He bit his lip. The phrase went home with a sudden irritating touch of truth. "She's an old friend, and I was looking after her on the voyage. That's all."

"And have you to look after her in the Park too?" questioned Doreen. "For I've seen you together most times I've been there."

Again he felt disconcerted.

"But that's only natural. You meet everyone you know in the season. Everyone that counts—that's to say."

"Of course, she counts; and—you," said Doreen,

glancing at his slight, well-groomed figure, and wondering what gave that air of distinction to so many men this side.

He met her glance. "In a way we do. It's rather boring, and one gets jolly sick of the routine. But it's part of the Thirty-nine Articles of Society."

Doreen looked puzzled. "Does one have to learn them?" she asked.

"Oh, no. They're a sort of 'fluff' that we pick up along the road. It comes easier to some than to others."

"Fluff's only useless nonsense," said Doreen. "I shouldn't trouble to pick it up."

"You wouldn't," he answered. "You're young, and true, and have ideals. You naturally want life to be like that girl in the sampler has it—'One glad, sweet song.' But it isn't a song, and it's not sweet, and very little of it is glad."

"You say that as if you *knew*. Are you really only twenty-four years old?" asked the girl, as they turned their horses towards the Corner.

"Yes—and a few more months added. It's the months that count, you know. It makes me sad to think how much they can hold, and how impossible it is to get away from them!"

"But why should you want to get away from them? They hold obligations, duties, things of importance."

"That's the worst," said Chris Kennaway. "The obligations of duty are a sort of disease. The only thing of importance is just to be unimportant."

"Oh! that's nonsense!" said Doreen bluntly. "Being nobody when you might be somebody. Foregoing all the great and splendid things for sake of—well—just selfishness, I guess."

"My dear young lady, when you're twenty-four and some months, you'll not talk about doing great and splendid things. First of all there are none to do. Second, if there were, there isn't anyone who could do them. Third and last, if they were done the world would first stone us, and then put us into a lunatic asylum without option of a fine."

"I guess you're trying to bluff me," said Doreen. "I can't believe you mean all that. Of course, I'm only a girl, and pretty ignorant of the way you live over here. But it can't mean all wasted time, and wickedness?"

"No—not all. Occasionally a kind Fate sends a breath of youth and purity across the stifling atmosphere, and we feel healthier and better for it. I feel like that this morning."

"I'm glad of that," she said quietly. "I shouldn't like to think I'd helped you to waste two more hours."

"I'd never waste any if you'd help me."

The girl turned her large, lovely eyes on his face. Then she smiled. "You look real serious, Mr. Kennaway. I wonder if you *mean* that?"

"Heart and soul I mean it!"

"I rather think you're trying to pay compliments. But I wouldn't if I were you. Lady Lucille thinks I'm only a schoolgirl. But I'm not a fool like Rosa Schmidt. All that sort of talk doesn't please me at all. She'd just love it. But there——"

"I haven't the honour of knowing the young lady," said Kennaway crossly. "A friend of yours, I suppose?"

"Just the dearest thing. But, oh! so stupid!"

"Like to unlike typifies most friendships."

"There you go again!"

"It's hard to avoid pitfalls. Are you too young, or
"Half a Truth."

too ingenuous to believe a man sometimes means what he says?"

"A *man*—oh, yes. But you're only a boy—intellectually, and usefully, and as things that count stand for men."

"Well, I'm—surprised!" exclaimed Chris. "You're the most candid specimen of your kind I've ever come across! I suppose you've formed your ideal of manhood already?"

"Why, certainly I have. He would be big, and strong, and kind, and helpful. And he would always mean to *do* things—and do them. And he wouldn't pay court to other men's wives, or talk fool talk with a girl by way of flattering her. And——"

"Thank you!" interrupted Kennaway stiffly. "That will do for the present. If you intended to crush my insignificance with the weight of unromantic imagination, you've done it—very successfully."

"Oh! I hope you're not offended!" exclaimed the girl penitently. "I daresay you meant to be entertaining. Perhaps I'm too—stupid—to understand you."

"I should leave it at that," he said, laughing in spite of himself. "Only it wouldn't be true. You're too clever *not* to understand me, if there was anything in me to understand."

"I expect there is, if you'd only let it come out," said Doreen. "But perhaps you thought I was only the ordinary silly schoolgirl who likes to be paid compliments and made feel of importance."

"I never thought that—I assure you."

"I'm glad. Of course, you don't know me well enough yet to—to place me. American girls aren't a bit like those over here. I think they've twice as much sense,

and heaps more independence. Don't think me rude, I'm only frank."

"I like frankness, and I like you. Don't you think we might be friends?"

"Well, that depends," said Doreen doubtfully. "I never had a man friend. And——"

"You said I was a boy a few moments ago."

"Oh, so I did. You happened to look young just that minute."

"I'm getting rapidly older. See what an effect you've had on me. Oh! we shall be at the Carlton in another five minutes! Am I to take you out again?"

"Why, yes. I don't mind," she said frankly. "It's of considerable importance that I should practise riding every day."

"That settles it," he answered quickly. "And I tell you what—let's go early. Nine o'clock or so. And we'll get away to Barnes and those sort of places, where we can have a run on the commons. You'd enjoy that!"

"I guess it would be more like the *real* thing," she said. "Oh, by the way, Mr. Kennaway, do stop my saying 'I guess' so often. I've noticed they don't ever do it over here."

"It's a distinctive American qualification," he said gravely. "And your spirit of independence should make you stick to it."

"Do you like it, then?"

"I guess I like anything you say, Miss Columbia," he answered, laughing.

IX.

WHEN Doreen told her father that she had been riding in the Row with Chris Kennaway, and was going out to Barnes Common, and Richmond Park, and other places under the same escort, he gave the matter grave consideration.

That Lady Lucille's tame cat should be annexed by his daughter lent peculiar poignancy to facts connecting that lovely lady with his own projects. He had no fears about Doreen. Her head was screwed on right enough, and the true American spirit of independence forbade too much parental restraint. He therefore treated the matter as unimportant.

Chris Kennaway seemed to have no business or employment, so he might as well devote his time to Patrick Madison's daughter as to anyone or anything else.

Besides, as the Castle was situated in a good hunting country, it was necessary for Doreen to be a good horsewoman. However, the next morning he made a point of rising early and seeing her off, and bidding Kennaway take good care of her.

The young man eagerly promised that. And as Madison watched the handsome young couple canter gaily off in the bright morning sunshine, he was conscious of pride and compunction strangely mingled.

He felt instinctively that a time would come when

wills would clash, and strength meet strength in an unequal conflict. She was so like himself, and none knew Patrick Madison better than Patrick Madison.

He had not reasoned out any definite scheme, nor weighed any definite peril. But he knew he must move warily, and, above all, make no enemies. Then all that swarming tide of hopes and ambitions, of suppressed youth, of denied enjoyments, swept over the barriers of prudence.

"Anyhow, I'm going to live at last," he said, as he seated himself at the breakfast-table and glanced at the pile of correspondence awaiting attention.

One letter was from M'Caughen, asking him if he could not run over to Ireland for a few days, just to see what wanted doing to the house and grounds. Then the work could be carried out at once.

Madison pondered over the suggestion. It seemed sensible. If he was going to have Lady Lucille and her friends over for the hunting, the Castle must be put into proper order. He looked at his list of engagements. Pretty full up to Tuesday next. That was the day of Lady Lucille's dinner-party for them. Suppose he left on Wednesday, and spent the rest of the week in Ireland, leaving Octavia and Doreen here?

He drafted out his answer to that and various other letters, rang for the stenographer, gave her his instructions, and then dressed and started for the City with a view of impressing the Exchange by a sudden fall in New York securities. A millionaire's freak could always mar or make a market.

Meanwhile Octavia lazed through her toilet, and discussed some intended shopping with Marie. She was still

in her morning robe, a combination of Japan, Regent Street, and Paris, when a card was brought to her.

"The lady says she has an appointment with you, Madam," said the attendant.

Octavia read the name in bewilderment:

Mademoiselle Perigueux.

Parisian (Diplômée).

"French?" She turned to Marie. "Is it from the dressmaker, do you think?"

"*Peut-être*; but perhaps, Madame," translated Marie.

"Show the young lady in here," said Octavia.

And presently there entered a fashionable-looking, middle-aged woman, dressed with that effect of making the best of Nature's defects and Time's rough handling, so eminently characteristic of the French woman.

Octavia looked from the card to the visitor. "I don't know your name," she said. "Are you from Bond Street?"

"*Non*, Madame. I come at the recommendation of Lady Altamont, of Berkeley Square. I am to be the *instructrice* of your young daughter, so I was informed. The appointment was for twelve o'clock to-day, to see Monsieur and Mademoiselle. I am told they are both gone out, so I ask for you—Madame Madison, is it not?"

"*Lady Madison*," corrected Octavia. "I suppose my husband forgot, and my daughter is out riding. But you can tell me what you want, I guess."

"Want?" repeated the lady, rather puzzled. "It is not what I want. It is whether Madame thinks I am capable of being the instructress of her daughter. I have

the highest testimonials to present to Monsieur Sir Patrick. Miladi Lucille, she say I am to accompany the family to Ireland, and complete the education of Mademoiselle, whom I had hoped to have the pleasure to see."

"Oh—I understand now," said Octavia. "You are a governess. I believe my husband did say something about it."

"Finishing governess. Languages and deportment," corrected Mademoiselle Perigueux. "Mademoiselle is an Américaine, I believe?"

"We are all Americans. Do you want to live with us? In the Castle, I mean? Or just come in to teach Doreen at certain hours?"

"I, of course, expect to reside—to live with the family. It is usual. What is done in this country. I have my *appartement*, my leisure hours. I take my luncheon with the family. The *petit déjeuner* and my dinner—to myself, if not otherwise convenient. I instruct Mademoiselle, and speak French with her all the time. I accompany her walks if it is desired."

"I guess she won't care for that," said Octavia. "My daughter kind o' considers herself grown up and independent."

"At sixteen? I am told she is not more old than sixteen. *Mais impossible*, Madame! She is still the *jeune fille*, as one says. Not finished; not out. It is necessary she learn how to comport herself in this country. It is not America, Madame. Our young *demoiselles* are most carefully trained and educated for their future position in the great world. I am told your daughter is an heiress; pretty, and charming, and will marry a title. Well, for that she must, of necessity, learn her duties. And especially the French language."

"She learnt that at school, I guess," said Octavia. "But do sit down and let's talk it over. You see, this is my first visit to *Eu-ropé*, and things seem a bit puzzlin'. I ain't stuck on sight-seein', nor yet on Society, but my husband, Sir Patrick John Madison, he's crazy for Doreen to be real high-toned. I reckon that's why you've been looked up, Mademoiselle—— I could never get my tongue around your name. You must excuse."

She leant back, and again took a leisurely survey of the Frenchwoman.

"About your livin' with the family, now," she went on. "I didn't know that was usual over here. I guess they're pretty topsy-turvy in their ways. Our side, folks don't have school-marms sittin' around in their parlours. But if Lady Lucille says it's right, well, I guess it must be. I'm real sorry my daughter ain't here to see you. Can you wait awhile? She's out ridin' with a young man, a friend of Lady Lucille's, but I guess she'll be in alongside o' noon. As you've taken the trouble to call you may as well hang on a bit longer."

Mademoiselle raised hands of horror. "*Mais*, Madame, this is *affreux*, what one says. All that is of the most improper! Your daughter out riding with a *jeune homme*! Alone—unchaperoned?"

"What's that?" enquired Octavia. "There was a groom went along with them."

"A groom, but, of course! But not her father; not you?"

"I guess I'm not exactly the figure for a saddle horse," said Octavia. "Besides, I never did ride, nor Sir Patrick John, as far as I know."

Mademoiselle shrugged her shapely shoulders. "*Eh bien*, I cannot understand. It is your *affaire*, of course,

but to me it seems altogether wrong to allow a *jeune fille* to go about alone with a young man."

"Oh, he's a mere boy! He don't count," said Octavia. "He's a sort o' pet lamb of Lady Lucille's. We met him on the boat comin' over. I guess Doreen wouldn't waste a thought on *him*. She's too sensible."

"Sensible! And that young man with a reputation all that is most atrocious. *Mon Dieu!* The *affaire* gets bad from worse!"

Octavia looked uneasy. "How do *you* know anything about Mr. Kennaway's reputation, if you're only a French governess?" she asked.

"I have much acquaintance with *le beau monde*. I go to houses of Park Lane and Berkeley Square. I teach the daughters of the *haute noblesse*. It is not unnatural that I hear scandals, rumours. The *pot au feu* of Society seethes and boils over into *publicité*. But I am discreet. I say nothing, though I hear—much."

"You've just been tellin' me a scandal," observed Octavia.

Mademoiselle Perigueux coloured. "Oh, that was only a hint of indiscretion. I . . . I could not refrain from warning you, Madame. It is not right, it is not *convenable*, believe me, that a young girl, a pretty girl, a girl who is what one calls a 'catch,' be allowed so much liberty as this daughter of yours. One does it not in this country, and already I feel so warm an interest in you that I tell you so. To be warned is to be armed, as one says."

"I daresay you mean kindly," said Octavia, "but it ain't likely we're going to change *our* opinions, just because we've come to this old country. And if you're

going to live with us, Mad'merzelle, it'll be a case of your learnin' our ways, not us takin' to yours."

"*Mais, quelle dame impossible!*" thought the French-woman. "Well may they have dollars, these Américaines. Of a truth they have need of them to gild their vulgarity!"

But she deemed it best to temporise. Had not Miladi Lucille said—"Get in there; you must. I'll see you have the biggest salary you've ever had in your life"?

And when Miladi Lucille said "must," it meant must. It was plain that this *bourgeoise* Américaine was not the *persona grata* of the establishment. She would wait on and see the young lady who was so self-willed, and who rode out with young men of risky reputations, and yet had a *dot* surpassing that of any pupil she had ever marplotted into matrimony. For she was not bad at that rôle, and certain mothers of troublesome daughters had come to be grateful for her skilful assistance.

So she rose quietly, and said that if Madame was engaged at her *toilette*, she would wait in the *salon* adjoining for her daughter, and make her acquaintance.

Octavia, who was tired with the long discussion, agreed eagerly.

Thus it happened that when Doreen ran into the sitting-room about half-past twelve, she saw a stranger there. She paused in the doorway, rather surprised at the intrusion. Mademoiselle Perigueux took in her singular beauty and grace at one rapid glance. She rose, smiling cordially.

"Mademoiselle Madison, is it not?"

"Yes," said the girl, advancing into the room. "And you?"

"I introduce myself as a friend of Lady Lucille Altamont's. She and your good father, Sir Patrick, have de-

sired that I take the future charge of you, Mademoiselle, until such time as your education is finished and you make your *début* in Society."

"Oh-h!" Doreen's frank young face clouded suddenly. She drew off her gauntlets and threw them on the table, and then seated herself by the window.

"I can't quite understand this," she said. "I'm done with schools, and tasks, and I as good as told father so. I don't see what business it is of Lady Lucille's to send you around?"

"That is not a very *convenable* speech for a young lady," said Mademoiselle Perigueux. "And it shows, Mademoiselle, that you do need to be instructed in good manners; to fit yourself for the great position that one day may be yours."

"You mean when I'm mistress of the Castle? Oh! but that can't be for half a century. Father's quite spry and young. I guess he doesn't intend sending in his checks for a considerable time."

"I know not anything about the Castle," said Mademoiselle Perigueux. "I allude to the probable marriage you will make. An alliance worthy of your father's wealth, and of Miladi Lucille's chaperonage. She tells me you will be her *affaire* next season."

"That's very kind of her," said Doreen. "But I guess she hasn't reckoned with me as first person singular in this nominative case. No, Mademoiselle, there won't be any alliances as far as I'm concerned until I just feel that way myself. As for having a governess—well, if father says so I guess I'll just have to give in. It's lucky for you I know French and like it, though I dare say you'll say I have 'the accent *atroce*.' My French

teacher always said that. When are you going to start teaching me?"

"It was to be soon as one could arrange, I believe."

Doreen rose. "Look here, Mademoiselle. There's one thing I'd like to say, and this is my first chance of saying it. Why do you French people make such complaints of the way we speak your language, when not one of you can speak *ours*? Your English is sort of upside down, even when you get your words right. But if I was your pupil and spoke French with the words one way and the sense another, I guess there'd be some talk about it!"

Mademoiselle Perigueux rose, her face scarlet, and her mouth compressed.

"*Mais, c'est affreux; c'est impossible!* Nevare have I had so much insult! I—who have taught Princesses of the Blood Royal, daughters of Dukes and Earls, and you—only an American *jeune fille* of no station, no name but of the trade commercial, you to say I know not how to speak your horrible *bourgeois* language!"

"I thought that would rile you," said Doreen quietly. "But it's a weight off my mind. I didn't like to say it to the Sœur Léonic, she was so sweet and kind. But you not being formally engaged as yet, I thought it wouldn't matter."

"Wouldn't matter!" gasped Mademoiselle. "That is worse than before. You are very rude, and then instead of saying 'I beg the pardon,' you——"

"But I didn't mean to be rude. I only stated a plain fact. There's no need to ask pardon for that. Oh! by the way, Mademoiselle, can you ride? Because when we go to Ireland I shall simply *live* in the saddle."

"Ride? No, I do not ride. I have nevare been asked to do so," said the Frenchwoman huffily. "And, if I am

to be your *gouvernante*, Mademoiselle, it shall be for me to say what you do, or shall not do. To regulate your hours, and actions, and behaviour."

Doreen looked at her gravely for a moment. "I guess you'll have your work cut out for you, then, Mademoiselle. *Comprenez vous? L'œuvre coupé pour vous-même. C'est bon Américain, ça! Dites à Miladi Lucille, whom I like—not at all—and who likes me a little less.*"

"I should not so insult Miladi," snapped Mademoiselle. "I wait next on Monsieur, your father. I shall tell him——"

"Oh, no!" exclaimed Doreen. "That would be real mean. Besides, if I set my mind dead against having you for a governess, father would be sure to go sides with me. He always does, in the end. Now let's talk about something agreeable for a change."

"You are a most surprising young lady," gasped Mademoiselle Perigueux.

"I thought I was quite ordinary. Look here—are you going to *wait* for father? Like as not he won't be home before this evening. And I must go and change my habit now. Shall I give him a message?"

The Frenchwoman looked doubtful. The affair was not managing itself at all as she had intended. Would it be better to temporise?

"I will write to him," she said. "My services are much of demand, and this is a matter to arrange with all haste."

"Very well; there's paper, and pens, and all that on the writing-table over there. I'll see father has your letter. Oh! better write it in English. *Il ne comprend pas votre langue. Adieu.*"

"Au revoir, Mademoiselle. J'espère que ce n'est pas adieu."

As the girl left the room, Mademoiselle Perigueux went over to the table and opened a large, stamped-leather blotter lying there. She drew a sheet of note-paper towards her and then took up a pen. As she did so her eyes fell on the white blotting-paper. She noted that it was a fresh sheet, and free from blots and marks save for one corner where there were a line or two of writing and a signature, and something like figures. With an instinct of curiosity, that had served her on many occasions, she detached the sheet, and after a hasty glance round the room, went over to the long glass wall-panel and held it up.

The letters stood out clear and unreversed. Without the least difficulty she read their meaning.

A cheque had evidently been blotted here. A cheque payable to "Lady Lucille Altamont," and signed "Patrick J. Madison."

Mademoiselle gave a little gasp. So that was how the affair marched? She had suspected it. The written figures of the amount were undecipherable, but the numerals ran into three noughts, prefaced by either a 1—or a 2.

In any case she had found out that Sir Patrick Madison had written out a cheque for Lady Lucille that very day. Why?

She folded the sheet of blotting-paper rapidly and put it into her pocket. She returned to the table and wrote her note, and blotted it elaborately on the fresh, blank page. Then she closed the cover and left the envelope there, addressed to "Sir Patrick Madison, Bart. Hotel Carlton."

X.

WHEN Madison came home that evening he found the note and read it attentively.

The salary asked was somewhat exorbitant, but then he remembered that it promised to turn Doreen into a finished example of what Society and wealth demanded.

"The money-grabbers don't seem to lose much time over here, any more than they do in the States," he thought, with grim amusement.

"But I'll give them a run for their money, I guess."

Then he sent for Doreen and talked the matter over with her. It was a case for quick decision, and the girl saw in a moment that it would be her turn to give in. She fought the position as long as she could, but the inevitable had faced her from the moment she had seen her father's face.

"And look here, in a way this is mighty convenient," he concluded. "I find I must run over to Ireland after all. I am going next Wednesday. Soon as this function of the Altamonts' is through. I may be absent a week, I can't say yet. Well, this French madam had better come here right away and look after you. Your mother ain't much account as a *chaperone*, and I can't have you runnin' wild as you've been doing. 'Tisn't to my credit, nor to yours. You've got to stand up to a big thing, Doreen, and you'll have to learn how to do it. I guess

you're a bit undisciplined as this French Mam'zelle says——"

"Oh, dad!" burst out Doreen—"Don't say you're going to Ireland without *me!* Oh! you'll just break my heart! I've counted on being with you over there, and seeing our Castle together. And now—well—I call it real cruel of you!"

Madison looked perturbed. Doreen followed up the first effect by a second attack—including tears.

"Oh! *couldn't* I come too? I wouldn't be any sort of trouble, and we could have the loveliest time looking over things, and seeing to our towers, and bastions, and drawbridges, and all that. Oh! dad, *do* say yes! I'll cry—my eyes—out—while you're away! I just can't be left with a cross, horrid old Frenchwoman, and no one to take my part."

"Your mother," said Madison.

"Well—she's just the sweetest ever. But then she hasn't got your energy and attractiveness. Oh! I can't bear you to go right away like you said!"

She burst into sobs and Madison felt helpless. He tried to temporise, but Doreen had irresistible arguments. Before her tears and her pleading he gave way. Besides, she promised dutiful acceptance of Mademoiselle Perigueux, if only that accomplished lady's advent might date from their return.

"I just *couldn't* do anything when you were over there, father. I'd be thinking and longing all the time. Indeed, I shouldn't be surprised if it took me to run right away and get to Ireland by myself. Then—what would you say?"

"I should be very angry," he answered, stroking the

bright hair that flooded his breast. "I wish you weren't so self-willed, Doreen, or I—so weak!"

"You *weak!*" she lifted astonished eyes to the strong, rugged face. "Why, I guess a grizzly bear's only a kitten to you. Dad, you're just as strong and *fine* as ever a man ought to be. Weak? It's not weak to *love*, I guess. Not like we love one another."

"I hope not," said Madison passionately. "I'd be sorry to think so. I want to be good to you, my little girl. I want to make your life sure, and fine, and something to be proud of. To make amends——"

He broke off abruptly, and lifted her from his knees. "Well, I'll think it over, child," he said. "Send your mother here now. I want to speak to her."

Doreen left the room with alacrity. She knew her cause was won.

She found Octavia in the first stage of dressing for dinner. That stage being represented by a tea-gown, and a "rest."

"I can't get up. Tell him to come right in. What's he want, Doreen?"

"I think it's to talk about that French governess," said the girl.

"Why—you've been crying, child! Do tell. Is it that you don't want her? I can't say I cottoned to her myself."

"No, it's not that," said Doreen. "Father's going away to Ireland next week, and I said it 'ud just break my heart if he didn't take me along with him."

"And—will he?"

"Yes. I think so. Only for a few days, dearie. You won't mind, will you?"

"It wouldn't be of much use if I did," said Octavia. "What you want to do, and what your father wants to do, isn't usually put to me as being any concern of mine."

Doreen looked conscience-stricken. "Oh! but, mother dear, you mustn't think *that!* We do consider you; only—well, you know, you aren't enterprising, are you?"

"I've had to take a back seat all my life, and it ain't likely anyone's goin' to put the reins into my hands now. But don't you worry, child. It's the way things happen. Some of us drive the team, and some of us are driven. Now run along and tell your father I'm resting, but he can come around and talk if he wants to."

Doreen gave the message, and then went away to her own room. She felt sure her stepmother would not oppose the Irish project; therefore she might consider it settled.

She bathed her red eyelids, and re-plaited her hair, and then got into a fresh white muslin gown for dinner. Dining in the restaurant was always an experience she enjoyed.

"I expect that old Frenchwoman won't let me do it when she comes here," she thought. "So I guess I'll make the most of my liberty. Oh! why can't they let me alone? I hate the idea of being educated, and disciplined, and made into a fashion-plate. However, I've still got the rides, and Hurlingham on Saturday. Then only three days and I'll be in lovely, lovely Ireland, that I've dreamt of and longed to see ever since I knew we had a castle there!"

At dinner no mention was made of Mademoiselle Perigueux. But Doreen felt sure that her father had given in to her entreaties, and that she would accompany

him to Ireland. After dinner he went away to the smoking-room, and Octavia and Doreen retired to their own quarters.

Doreen wished often that she could be taken to a theatre or a music-hall. The evenings were so long, and Octavia usually fell asleep over her book as soon as she started to read it. The girl could only amuse herself by looking out at the lighted streets and hurrying crowds, and wondering about the people, or making up stories about them. The shabbily dressed ones, and the poor, pale match-sellers, or loafing beggars, interested her most. With so much money in the world, how was it that people could suffer from poverty and want? It had been the same in New York, that rich and wonderful city. And here was another even richer and more wonderful. Surely there must be a mistake somewhere. In Governments, or Monarchies?

Would Ireland be the same? That lovely fairy island dropped like a jewel into the lap of the sea. She had read of it as such, and pictured it as even more beautiful than such description.

She liked to think of it as her country. Hers by right of blood, and race, and now by inheritance. She was glad she had an Irish name. Mr. M'Caughen had said it just suited her, and that when she had got a twist of the brogue into her American tongue, no one would take her for anything but a real Irish girl.

Then she took out "Penelope's Irish Experiences," and read it for the second time, revelling in descriptions and adventures, until her eyes grew sleepy and she told herself the morrow would see her one day nearer to the goal of her ambitions.

Hurlingham was an astounding glimpse of the great world and its amusements to Octavia and Doreen.

The rows and rows of waiting carriages, and constantly arriving motors. The amazing toilets; the beautiful women; the numbers of men. How came it, she wondered, that so many Englishmen never seemed to have anything to do but amuse themselves; to idle around in the Park, or come to places like this? Didn't they ever work?

She resolved to ask Chris Kennaway next time she saw him.

He was one of the polo players to-day, but she hardly expected he would find her out in all this crowd.

She and her mother sauntered slowly along. Octavia intent on finding a seat. Doreen, alert and curious, and full of suppressed excitement.

"Why, there's Lady Lucille!" she exclaimed at last. "Oh, mother, did you ever see anything so lovely! Like Undine, isn't she?"

Octavia had no idea who or what Undine was, but she acknowledged that Lady Lucille looked "spry enough for anything." She was dressed all in pale, misty green, her hat was a marvel of ostrich plumes, and the well-known jade earrings trailed from ear to shoulder. The warm red of her hair had tints and glints of gold cunningly introduced by the *coiffeur's* art. She looked very perfect and very wonderful, and was surrounded by a crowd of men.

Doreen wondered if she would notice her mother or herself. She did at last, when Chris had lost the match for his side, and the lovely lady discovered that she was dying for some tea. The fact brought her close to where

Octavia and Doreen were sitting under the shade of a large elm-tree.

She stopped in amazement. "*You*—here? How in the world——"

Octavia held out a large, well-gloved hand. "How are you, Lady Lucille?" she said affably. "Guess you didn't expect to see me here, did you?"

"I did not," said Lucille, shaking hands rather coldly. "Nor your daughter. I see you're determined to throw over our insular prejudices."

"Well, you see, Mr. Kennaway was kind enough to send us the tickets—vouchers, I think he called 'em—and he seemed to think it would amuse us to come here. I guess it has. Those little ponies are real 'cute. Running about like mad, and then standing still to let the men hit those balls about. It seems a silly sort o' game to play on a hot afternoon. But you just seem to love to play games over here when the thermometer's eighty in the shade, and sensible folk 'ud be eating ice-cream under the trees."

Lady Lucille turned to one of her escort. "Not a bad idea. Tommy, see if you can get us some ices, will you? This lady is a friend of mine—from America."

She introduced Octavia and Doreen to the young man, and then to an elderly, military-looking individual with a red face and stiff grey moustache. Then seats were found, and presently ices arrived, and the young man whom she addressed as "Tommy," but had introduced as Lord Sallust, began to talk to Doreen.

Lady Lucille was pondering over Octavia's admission to these sacred precincts. What right had Chris Kennaway to send vouchers to these people, and without telling her? They were her affair, not his. And she did not

intend to let anyone else run them. Meanwhile the old General, who had been in India most of his life, was drawing out Octavia on the subject of America. He expressed great interest in that country.

"I've always meant to go there, Lady Madison," he said. "I've the feeling that it's the land to teach us big things, and how to do them. Yes, we need such lessons. We crawl where you jump. It takes a good deal to make us jump."

"I don't know about that," said Octavia. "You could get along all right if you weren't so afraid of doing anything different to what you've been accustomed to do for a hundred or more years. Now we're not given to grooves. We just love anything new and startling. We take risks for chance of what may be before them. You kind o' hold back for sake of what you *know* has been behind 'em."

"I daresay you're right. We're too fond of comfort and too afraid of losing it. But after all, money's the only thing that can give it."

"Money's the only thing that can give anything," interrupted Lady Lucille. "The trouble with this country is that we haven't half enough to go round!"

"So we beg, borrow, or steal it," said the General, laughing. "Shockingly immoral, and yet painfully true. Poverty's an ugly thing, though. I wish there was a way of levelling the money in the world. I suppose now, Lady Madison, that your husband has a natural instinct for success. I must ask him for a tip. Would he be generous enough to give it?"

"He ain't generous. But he's just," said Octavia. "And I guess he'd give tips for what they meant to *him*,

just as you folk give small change for what you want of *us!*"

Her frankness was rather disconcerting, and the General glanced at Lucille to see how she took it. She was too clever to show she had noticed the remark.

Octavia followed her glance towards the crowded lawn near the club-house.

"A beautiful sight," she said. "I never thought to be seein' it, when I read in novels how English Society passed its time."

"Do you accept novels as an educational element?" enquired the General.

"I guess folks must know what they write about," she answered. "Miss Braddon and Ouida, now. They seem to ha' got right inside the sort o' life, and houses, and people I've been seeing on this side. Lady Lucille, I guess, might just ha' stepped right out o' the covers of 'Moths,' or 'Friendship.'"

Lady Lucille's eyes flashed angrily.

"My dear woman," she said, in her iciest and most sarcastic tone, "you do me too much honour. Everyone knows that Ouida only drew her Society types as she drew her Society Guardsmen—from imagination."

"Then she wasn't far off from the real thing," said Octavia.

Meanwhile Doreen was being entertained by a novel type of young England and its effete aristocracy.

Having explained that "polo bored him to tears," and that he hated balls, and loathed sport, it seemed to Doreen that there wasn't much left in life to interest him. It turned out, however, that he had a passion for music. The new school.

"I mean the school that is at once the art of Im-

pression and Expression," he explained. "There are ballads so exquisitely simple they can only be expressed by crude discords. And there are poems—grand, rhythmic, sublime words—that seem to demand the sacrifice of one's very soul in order to give them interpretation."

"I've never heard any of that sort," said the girl gravely.

"I hope you will. I have a studio set aside for the pursuit of abnormal harmony in its fullest beauty. That is where I compose. Occasionally I throw it open to the limited few who can appreciate me. I have not many friends, and only a few hundred acquaintances. Lady Lucille is one of the friends."

"And does she go to your limited parties?" asked Doreen.

"Of course. She loves music. Haven't you heard her sing?"

"Once—on the boat coming over."

"Ah, then you can judge?"

"It was a coon song," said Doreen.

"Even a coon song holds mystery and meaning," said the young man. "The mystery of dark, subtle souls; of passion losing itself in desire; of strange, entangling fancies. And through it all burns the glow of a summer night, and the throbbing of discordant strings. Lucille would have expressed all that while the great steamer bore you over the pulsing ocean, and life lost itself in amazing subtleties."

Doreen looked at him for a moment, and then gave vent to a peal of genuine girlish mirth.

"I guess I never heard anyone talk like that before," she said. "It's real wonderful! How ever did you learn to do it?"

The young Marquis turned a pale and disgusted face away from her radiant laughter.

Learn to do it! Oh! these Americans, with their crudities, and vulgarities, and absolute ignorance of the artistic side of civilisation!

"I did not need to *learn* it," he said coldly. "It is natural to me to express myself in beautiful language, because I have beautiful thoughts."

"Oh—I understand," murmured Doreen. "Please forgive me for laughing. You remind me so of a young man I saw once in New York in a play. He talked just like that. He was called a *dude*. And he used to cross his legs and then stumble over them! Screamin', it was. Rosa Schmidt and I nigh killed ourselves with laughing!"

The young man rose abruptly. "Lady Lucille," he said, "isn't it time I looked for your motor? You said you wished to leave at half-past six."

"Yes—*do*," she answered. Then she turned to Octavia again.

"By the way, I sent you that French governess, as I said. I suppose you've engaged her?"

"I believe Sir Patrick has told the foreign lady she can come—on trial," said Octavia.

"On trial!" Lady Lucille stared.

"Heavens! what an impossible person you are! Made-moiselle Perigueux is not a *servant*. She is accomplished, sought after, and connected with the *haute noblesse* of France. It is an honour to have her in your house. She will give your daughter the polish and *finesse* that she needs. You know I'm going to introduce her next season?"

"It's very kind of you, I'm sure," murmured Octavia.

"But perhaps I'll know more people by then, and Doreen can go to parties and things along with me."

"Parties—and things. Good heavens!" murmured Lady Lucille helplessly.

"There's very good society in Ireland, so I'm told," continued Octavia. "And I could go to the Court in Dublin, and introduce Doreen. My husband's lawyer was explaining it. He says it's as good as going to the London ones. Not so much riff-raff, and less formality."

General Spearman subsided into his chair in suppressed convulsions. Lady Lucille's face was a study in the inexpressible.

She leant forward at last. "Now, look here, Lady Madison," she said severely. "I can't have you floundering into Irish bogs when you might be planting yourself on firm ground of my selecting. I told your husband I meant to be a friend to you all, and so I will. But please understand that I'm not going to set you afloat in a country that's riddled with debts, and hasn't an aristocracy worth thinking of. They're all paupers, and the only possession left them is their pride. You just leave them alone and trust to me. I've arranged to come over to you for the hunting, and then I'll take you thoroughly in hand. Your husband wishes it—for Doreen's sake. All you have to do in the meantime is to keep yourself to yourself. There are things people can do, and things they can't. Society is the hardest thing to understand for an outsider. Especially for Americans. They can't master the A.B.C. of precedence any more than the meaning of titles. Well, that's where I come in. You'll have a position worth speaking of, and be able to marry your daughter to a Duke if you please, if you'll just trust yourself to me."

Octavia was silent. The General, in a state of extinguished mirth, glanced from the mentor to the pupil. Doreen, who had listened in grave astonishment, bent suddenly forward.

"Cheer up, mother," she said. "You're not bound to accept Lady Lucille's offer if it don't appeal to you. I reckon we could get along very well without Society. It don't seem to make folk any happier. As for marrying Dukes——"

"The motor's here, Lady Lucille," said the voice of Lord Sallust at her elbow.

"Very well." She rose slowly, and stood for a moment looking at the impossible mother and daughter whose social education she had undertaken. They seemed more utterly ignorant, and more particularly hopeless, than the average *bourgeois* millionaires who flamed meteor-like over London and Paris, and Fifth Avenue and Newport, at stated seasons. She almost regretted her promise and her bargain. The man was sensible, and adaptable too, but these women——

"Well, I must be going," she said brusquely. "I've half a dozen things on for to-night. Don't forget Tuesday; eight-fifteen. My father is looking forward to meeting you."

Then she nodded and turned abruptly away. The General bowed and followed. Lord Sallust looked undecided as to whether he would do the same. Finally, he sank into the chair vacated by Lady Lucille.

"Have you ordered your carriage? Do you know where to find it?" he asked. "There's hundreds waiting, and it's not easy to find out your own, unless you've fixed a place."

Octavia glanced at the crowd. "Oh, I guess there's

no special hurry," she said. "I sort of expect Mr. Kennaway to look us up. He said he'd come round to the tea-place when he'd changed."

"Chris Kennaway?" asked the young man.

"Yes. Do *you* know him?"

"Everyone knows him. He's by way of being a popular favourite, if you know what that is?"

"I guess he's generally tied to Lady Lucille's apron-strings," observed Octavia. "I'm surprised he hasn't shown up before now."

"He has the true sense of duty—evidently."

"What is that?" asked Doreen, with interest.

"Avoidance of it where it is unpleasant."

"Surely you wouldn't call Lady Lucille an unpleasant duty?" exclaimed the girl.

"Not so long as she monopolises Chris," he answered. "But when he turns defaulter she visits her wrath on undeserving outsiders."

"I thought she was in a bad temper this afternoon," said Octavia, yawning openly. "Say, Doreen, I think we may as well be gettin' home. I guess I'll have to miss my rest before dinner."

"Oh—here *is* Chris!" exclaimed Lord Sallust. "How are you, Chris? What d'you mean by giving us the slip this afternoon? I'm not fond of playing second fiddle in an orchestra of limited liabilities."

Kennaway nodded him a careless greeting, and then shook hands with Octavia and Doreen. "What did you think of the polo?" he asked.

They expressed frank opinions. Then Octavia again suggested finding the carriage, and getting back to town.

Kennaway walked with her to the entrance, and Sallust

accompanied Doreen. He looked critically at the slim, graceful young figure, the mirthful face.

"By way of being a beauty, and an American heiress too. Wonder if I've a chance? I'll have to cave in soon or late, if only to satisfy the sharks and the Jews. I'll ask Luce how much is on these stakes. She wouldn't be troubling her head about such people if there wasn't something to make."

And he told the girl that he hoped to meet her again. Also that he was giving a musical afternoon at his studio on the thirtieth of the month. He would send her mother and herself an invitation.

"I'd just love to come, if I'm here," said Doreen. "But I'm going to Ireland next week. I may stay there altogether. It depends on the Castle."

"What is the name of your father's Irish property?" enquired Tommy.

"Castle Derg," answered the girl. "I'm just dying to see it! I suppose there are lots of castles in England?" she added.

"A few," said the young Marquis. "I believe I was born in one myself. It's let now—furnished. A South African Jew has hired it to entertain his friends of the front row of the ballet."

"Gracious! Fancy *letting* a castle!" exclaimed Doreen. "Didn't it *hurt* you? I'm sure I'd never allow father to let ours."

"Possibly you wouldn't need to. Americans, and South African Jews, and Oil Kings are the only people nowadays who can run castles. So we let them have ours on lease, and when they've helped pay off our mortgages we drop them back into that green-backed obscurity out of which they arose."

Doreen turned grave eyes on him. "You mean you make use of our money, and ignore ourselves? I wonder why we are such fools as to let you."

"I was never good at conundrums," said Lord Sallust.

XI.

DOREEN was sitting in Octavia's room watching Marie as she put the finishing touches to the "*ravissante toilette*" worn in honour of Lady Lucille's dinner-party.

On a less majestic figure, or in contrast to less brilliant colouring, the vivid orange tints of satin, showing through misty lace and chiffon, might have seemed too striking. But they suited Octavia, as did her diamonds.

Doreen was in ecstasies. "You're as fine as any duchess of the lot!" she exclaimed. "I guess father will be real proud when he walks into the room alongside of you."

Octavia smiled delightedly. She loved flattery, and she loved Doreen. The combination made her radiant.

"And the best of it, it's all *real*," continued the girl, pressing warm young lips to the flushed cheek, guiltless even of powder. "It's not many of the great ladies you'll meet who can say that!"

"It is a virtue, but not to say—an advantage," observed Marie, as she brought a lace handkerchief and fan to her mistress. "Myself, I should like that colour toned down with *poudre de riz*, or *veloutine*. It would be softer; more *comme il faut*."

"Nonsense!" said Doreen. "Let her be her own beautiful, natural self."

Octavia rose slowly from her seat before the mirror.

"I do hope, Marie," she said, "that this gown won't *burst*. I feel kind o' suffocated in it. And I begged Madame Léontine to allow room for dinner."

"Madame's figure looks all of the most *superbe!*" exclaimed Marie. "That long corset effect is just what it has required. Fortunately she has the height; the air commanding."

"I think it's want of air that's troubling me," said Octavia. "I'd rather be in my tea-gown this minute than screwed into all these bands and buckles!"

"Perhaps you'll get used to the compression presently," said Doreen.

"I'm sure I dursn't eat a morsel," lamented Octavia. "And I'm to go in to dinner with the Earl of Woldshire. He'll think I'm sort o' puttin' on airs at his daughter's table, and I can't tell him I ain't got room for crowdin'. I guess it wouldn't be etiquette."

"Oh! *Mon Dieu*, Madame! Do not think to say such things to a gentleman of the *haute noblesse!*" cried Marie. "You must—what one says—resign yourself to your obligations. *Il faut souffrir pour être belle.*"

"You always say that. But it don't help me to sustain this new waist measurement," complained her mistress.

"Father's ready!" exclaimed Doreen, as a sharp knock came at the door. She rushed forward and opened it.

"Dad, *do* come right in. Isn't she just a picture? I guess you'll feel real proud walking into Lady Lucille's drawing-room with her on your arm."

"She looks all right," said Madison indifferently. "I wonder, Doreen, if we *do* arm going into drawing-rooms? I don't b'lieve it's the custom over here. Not when you're announced, anyway. I've dined at Lady Lucille's before now, and they only armed the ladies down to dinner."

"*Mais oui*, that is so. I could have told Mad'm'selle," said Marie.

"Well, if I was her husband, and she was my wife, I'd be as proud as a king taking her in along of me!" exclaimed Doreen. "Seems too horrid the way feelings get put aside just for outside show."

Octavia was drawing on her gloves, and passively accepting comments. She was disappointed at Madison's cool rejoinder to Doreen, but after all, she told herself, a man's wife is always taken for granted by the man. The faculty of admiration is invariably lost when the depreciating familiarities of married life begin. A husband's eyes see beyond the mere laces and satins and outward adorning that the world accepts as a feminine asset.

"I guess we'd better be off," said Madison. "The carriage was here ten minutes ago."

He kissed Doreen and told her not to be lonesome, and then he and his wife went out to the elevator, and were conducted with due servility to the waiting carriage.

Doreen felt suddenly lonely and very solitary. Her mind was concerned with the curious indifference that marked the relations between her father and stepmother.

"She's sort of afraid of him, and yet she loves him," thought the girl. "But he—though he's so kind and good—he don't seem to care a cent about *her*; whether she's happy, or what she does, or how she gets along in this strange new life. Perhaps he's too busy getting things settled. Perhaps it will be different when we're in Ireland and in our own real home. Oh! how I just long for *that!* Come in—what is it?"

A knock at the door had disturbed her reverie.

"A gentleman to see you, miss," said a waiter, ushering in Chris Kennaway.

Doreen sprang to her feet. "Oh—this *is* good of you! I was so lonesome I was just going to cry. But why aren't you at the dinner-party?"

"What dinner-party?" asked Kennaway, putting down his hat, and taking her hand.

"Lady Lucille's."

"I wasn't asked. I'm in disgrace." He smiled at the bright, wondering face. "Oh! it doesn't trouble me, I assure you. But it suddenly occurred to me that you'd said how long the evenings were. And I thought you might like to go to the Hippodrome, or a music-hall. George Robey, or Harry Lauder, you know."

"I'd just love it!" exclaimed the girl. "Well, now, I call that perfectly sweet of you, Mr. Kennaway, to think of it. Will you wait till I get my cloak? I s'pose I couldn't wear a hat?"

"You could. But you'd be asked to take it off. So it's as well to go without it. I've got a taxi waiting," he added. "Just throw a scarf or something over your head. I suppose your people won't mind? You'd better leave a message for them."

"I'll tell Marie," said Doreen.

She came back in five minutes, her face a little grave.

"Marie says that it's not *convenable* that I go out alone with a young *monsieur*," she said. "Do you think I ought to?"

"You would—in America?"

"Oh, rather! We don't hold with formal restrictions over there."

"Then why alter your opinions? Do you think I'm not to be trusted?"

"Trusted!" The girl laughed. "Why, of course. I'd as soon go anywhere with you as with—father."

"*Half a Truth.*"

"You're not very flattering."

"Do you want me to say things that aren't true? That's about what flattery amounts to."

"No, Doreen," he said. "Just say what you think, and what you mean. Even that's better than I deserve."

They started off in the taxi and went to the Hippodrome. Doreen was enchanted, and lost her heart to the quaint little French clown, with his whistle, and his red nose, and his clever antics.

"I believe you're going to take him off to New York," said Chris. "The manager of your Hippodrome there has offered him a salary that would make a Prime Minister's heart rejoice. They say he's going as soon as his contract here expires. It's hard on us the way your people buy up our artists, our writers, our star actors and actresses. You seem to think the Almighty Dollar will get everything you lack, and all you want."

"But the people needn't go, if they don't want to," said Doreen.

"No—they needn't—but they do. Money is a terrible power, you know. It takes some moral strength to resist it."

Doreen considered the problem for a moment what time performing ponies and monkey grooms trotted round the arena.

"I can't understand money being so much thought of," she said at last.

"You will when you know its value. Think of having the world at your service. Its beauty, its wonder, its enjoyment, its art."

"Oh, that reminds me!" she said quickly. "You know Lord Sallust?"

"Tommy? Why, yes. Everyone knows him. You met him at Hurlingham."

"I thought he was just the quaintest thing I'd struck yet! He talked a lot about music."

"Yes—he's mad on it. He really plays and sings very well—for an amateur."

"He told me he had a studio. I thought only photographers had studios. Not Marquises and titled folk."

Chris laughed. An interval of the orchestra proved useful for conversational purposes.

"Sallust's studio is one of the wonders of London," he said. "It's all scarlet and black—in two divisions. He says the scarlet side is for his vicious moods, and the black for his virtuous ones. You ought to see it; and yet—no—I think you oughtn't."

"Why?" asked the girl.

"Because he belongs to a rotten set, and decent women don't countenance it. All that gab about art and culture and the senses is so much bluff, to hide the real thing."

"It's rather hard of you to abuse one of your own friends behind his back."

"I never said Tommy was a friend."

"Well, he's in your set. Hand and glove with Lady Lucille and all those strange, wonderful people I've been told are the only ones in London worth knowing."

"Possibly because they haven't a virtue to their credit. A craze for pleasure, a craze for excitement, and a craze for bridge. That is the sum total of their lives."

"Isn't it your life too?" asked Doreen.

"I seem to have dropped into it—somehow."

"You seem quite suited to it," said the girl quietly. "I can't just fancy you doing any work, or anything useful."

The young man laughed rather mirthlessly. "I can't fancy it myself," he said. "But is it my fault—altogether? We who claim rank as a birthright are educated from infancy to its disillusion. Unwritten laws have been made for us; a false standard has been set for us. The only two commandments we are supposed to keep are—'Thou shalt do no work,' and 'Thou shalt pay debts of honour.' Women have a third—'Thou shalt not be found out.'"

"It sounds very horrid," said Doreen suddenly. "I can't believe anyone is obliged to do anything they feel is wrong, and don't want to do!"

"Race-horses are bred to run for high stakes—yet they get 'pulled,'" said Chris sententiously.

"And you and Lord Sallust are in the race, I suppose? What are you running for?"

It was on Kennaway's lips to say "matrimonial stakes," but he hesitated. After all, this girl was fresh and innocent and unworldly, and he wanted her to think better of him than he did of Tommy Sallust.

"Sport—I guess," he said at last. "Or because we're put on to run, and have to make some sort of pace."

"I told your friend he reminded me of a dude I'd seen in a play in New York," observed Doreen. "But I don't know what you remind me of."

"Well, that sounds as if I was original—like yourself, Doreen."

"I notice you've called me that—twice," said the girl.

"Do you mind? It comes natural. Somehow you're not a bit 'Miss Madison.'"

"Oh, I don't mind," she said frankly. "You see, life over here is all new and strange, and folks seem awfully interesting. I like them to show me what they are, and

to say how we strike them. I don't believe they understand us a bit. They just say—"Oh! American!" and whether we come from New York, or Chicago, or Boston, or Canada, they think it's all the same."

"Of course it isn't," said Chris. "Anyone who's been over to America knows how tremendously one State differs from another State in—glory. And how jealous each is of its own prestige."

"That's so," said Doreen. "Father's often told me. He's from Louisville, and not a bit like a New Yorker. Don't you think he looks every bit as fine, and as aristocratic, as any of the men this side?"

"Yes. I admire him very much," said Kennaway. "Only I have a feeling he'd be very hard and relentless—if he chose."

"Not to anyone he loved," said the girl.

"He's very fond of you. Anyone could see that. And I don't wonder. You're awfully fascinating, you know."

"Am I?" said Doreen. "Somehow that don't seem to apply. I should call Lady Lucille fascinating. But I know nothing of the world, or—Society; or how to twirl men around my little finger, same as she does."

"That's not fascinating," said Chris. "It's vanity and coquetry."

"And do men like women who are vain and coquettes?"

"Of course not. But sometimes they're foolish enough to get entangled with them, and they just drift until one day they wake up to find the smooth green pasture means a bog."

"There's lots of bogs in Ireland," observed Doreen inconsequently. "Oh—to think I'm really, *really* going there at last! It makes me perfectly wild!"

"Is there nothing to regret over here?" he asked meaningly.

"No—not a thing. I just hate the hotel, and I'm sick to death of shopping and driving in the Park day after day, seeing the same faces. I long to get away from it all. To something wide, and clean, and sweet. Besides, I've heard the Irish are so amusing. Over here I've never laughed since I came, 'cept at something I made up myself."

"I'm sure your friends would be distressed to know they had bored you so much," said Chris Kennaway huffily.

She gave him a quick look.

"Oh! but I haven't any friends—not as I count. You and I hit it off pretty well, but it takes a great deal to make one feel real friendly. Don't you think so?"

Chris consulted his programme.

"Do you think you've had enough of this?" he asked. "It's eleven o'clock."

"Gracious! Why, they'll be back from the dinner-party, won't they?" exclaimed Doreen.

"Probably. Shall we go?"

They drove back to the Carlton under the stars. The girl chattering eagerly over her evening's enjoyment; the young man silent and thoughtful. It was plain to him that Doreen Madison was as unlike any previous experience of *débutante*, or *ingénue*, as he could possibly imagine. Plain, too, that attentions and compliments made no impression on her. He felt a vague annoyance at her expressed delight in getting away from London, which also meant getting away from him. Her enthusiasm about everything Irish was a further grievance. She might take it into her head to fall in love with some rol-

licking young fox-hunter, some penniless squireen. All that money to go to the good of a bankrupt country! It was disgusting.

Then the hansom stopped, and he handed the girl out.

"Won't you come in?" she asked quickly.

"No, thank you," he said stiffly. "It's rather late. I—I hope your father won't mind my having called for you——"

"Oh, not he. Why should he?" laughed the girl, to whom conventionalities were so much thistledown. "He'll think it very kind of you to have given me such a lovely time. Thank you, ever so much."

They shook hands, and she went up to the sitting-room. No one was there. So she went to Octavia's bedroom to tell Marie of her return. To her surprise her stepmother was sitting in a chair, wrapped in a dressing-gown, her eyes red and swollen with weeping. Marie stood by administering salts, and consolation, as best she could.

"Gracious! What's the matter?" exclaimed Doreen.

"Oh, my dear!" burst forth Octavia. "It's been such a failure! Oh, dearie me, what to do I don't know. I reckon your father'll never forgive me, and the Earl there and all, and such a dear old gentleman as he was, with side-whiskers and the merriest blue eyes. Fairly twinkled, they did. And we were gettin' on so well and dinner about half through, when something went 'crack' at my back, and the whole seam split right up, lining and whalebone and all! I'd kept tellin' Marie it was too strained. Well, Doreen, the *relief* I can't tell you, but everyone heard the noise, and the Earl, he took up his serviette and tucked it in the back of my gown, and helped me out of my chair, and how I got out of that room never

shall I know. And your father lookin' daggers and pistols at me, and Lady Lucille laughin' fit to kill. Was ever anything so unfortunate, and such a grand party as it was? Most everyone had a title when they was announced. Made my head sort of reel tryin' to remember them. And I refusin' soup, and just playin' around with the fish, and the *entrays*. It was eatin' a *sorbey*, as they called it, that did it. Well, there 'tis now. They'll never ask me again, I guess. And that old Earl so nice and so interested about Louisville. I just *had* to tell him 'bout the tan-yard, and how I'd used to live in a little wooden house and do 'chores' myself, as we couldn't afford a help! It was lovely—talkin' to anyone so affable and courtly, and who you felt took a real interest in you—not sneerin' and haughty, like his lady daughter."

She wiped her eyes. Doreen tried to console her. "It might have happened to anyone," she said. "What a shame that your whole evening was spoilt! Couldn't Lady Lucille's maid have sewn your gown up again?"

"Sewn it up! Look at it!" cried Octavia despairingly. "It will mean a whole new bodice. Sha'n't I just talk straight to that beast Léontine. I told her 'twas two inches too small all the time, and she promised to let it out. And now see what's come of it!"

Doreen poured out lavish sympathy. "Still—it wasn't your fault, dear," she said. "And, of course, they'll ask you again. It was only an accident. I've often wondered women didn't burst out of their gowns when I've seen them walking or driving. Where's father? Didn't he come back with you?"

"I reckon he was too ashamed," answered Octavia. "He just gave me one look—like murder—and then went on talking and laughing to that red-haired hussy, as if

nothing in the world mattered except her. Oh! Doreen, don't you ever get married till you find a man that a woman can trust. Mostly they're just full of silliness and wickedness, and don't care if they break our hearts once they're tired."

"Father isn't tired of you, and I won't let him break your heart," said Doreen. "Come, come, dear, don't go on like this. Do you know Mr. Kennaway called for me thinking I'd be lonely, and took me to the Hippodrome, and gave me just a lovely time? Wasn't it kind of him to think of it? He said Lady Lucille had treated us like children who mustn't play with the 'grown-ups,' and he guessed we'd find something else to amuse ourselves with."

"Yes—it was kind," said Octavia. "Though I guess Lady Lucille will be mad if she hears he's gotten around with you. She didn't half like his gettin' us those tickets for Hurlingham. All I hope is," she added suddenly, "that she won't go tryin' to make a fool of your father. He mayn't be very kind, or very considerate these times, but I reckon he's my husband, and I want him to run straight."

She put her handkerchief to her eyes again.

At the same moment the door opened, and Madison looked in. He gave one glance at the offender.

"If you ain't just the limit, Octavia Madison," he said.

XII.

DOREEN sat on the deck of the Irish mail-boat. A clear sky overhead, a mass of silvered foam below, and before her the long, sweeping roll of the Channel waters.

She refused to go to a cabin. Wrapped in a warm rug, she sat and gazed at the silvered track of the moon, and now and again spoke softly to Madison of the joy and expectation that thrilled her young heart.

She wondered her father was not more enthusiastic, but supposed men took these things differently.

The first sight of the Irish coast greeted her in the soft dawn of a summer's morning. Kingstown harbour, with that rose light transforming its dingy houses, was a thing of beauty which her eyes welcomed delightedly. The waiting cars, the strange-sounding Irish voices thrilled her. They were to stay that day in Dublin, and Standish M'Caughen had promised to show them "the sights." Rooms were awaiting them at the Gresham, and although Doreen declared she wouldn't go to bed, and couldn't sleep, a persuasive chambermaid induced her to do both. At nine o'clock she rose and bathed and dressed herself, and then descended to the coffee-room. Madison was there and M'Caughen also. He had come to breakfast by way of being in time. Doreen greeted him warmly, and having decreed that no horrid business was to be talked while she was present, got as much ancient and modern Irish history out of him as was possible between draughts of hot coffee, and mouthfuls of ham and eggs, and buttered toast.

"I've ordered a special jarvey for you, Miss Doreen," he said, when the meal was finished. "He's the best driver in Dublin, and the little mare could trot down the side of Nelson's Column itself if the fancy took her, and divil a stumble!"

He proved right, for the car flew along the busy thoroughfares, dodging trams and skidding over tram-lines and twisting in and out of the traffic in a manner

that threatened perpetual collisions, yet evaded them just at the critical moment. To Doreen the "outside car" was a magical vehicle, and she insisted her father must have one for their own private use at the Castle.

M'Caughen's quiet—"There is one there, already—" was a pleasant assurance.

"Can't we go over Dublin Castle?" was her next enquiry as they reached Cork Hill.

"We can. It's open to the public. But I'd rather you didn't waste time to-day. I want you to get out to Howth. I think you'll find that more interesting."

Madison looked with grave scrutiny at the famous pile of buildings, significant of threefold use; a citadel, a seat of government, and a court of judicature.

To this had lately been added a grave scandal, which had convulsed the Irish capital, and amazed the English.

He turned to the lawyer. "I'd like to see the Record Tower," he said. "Is it possible?"

"It's rather a seething pot just now," replied M'Caughen—"with the jewel scandal on every tongue. You could only see the outside, unless you were taken in by some Court official."

"Has nothing been discovered—yet?" asked the American eagerly.

"Not likely," said M'Caughen gloomily. "Plenty's *said*, but nothing's done. That's very much our way."

Madison gave a short, contemptuous laugh. "You mean that you allow a thief to take away historic jewels from a strong-room, supposed to possess responsible guardians, and yet—are afraid to take active proceedings for his discovery?"

M'Caughen shrugged his shoulders. "Oh! there'll be fuss enough presently," he said. "It was often talked of,

the careless way those orders were kept. I've seen them in a glass case myself when I know the statute of the order commands that they should be preserved in a steel safe in the strong-room."

"Isn't such indifference criminal on the part of an important official, in an important office?"

"It is. That's what everyone is saying. The room was open to the public all day. Seven different persons had latch-keys to admit them. I hope there will be a public enquiry, for I think myself there were too many had access to the place. There should have been one responsible custodian, and then the matter would lie in a nutshell. Now—it'll just be 'everyone's business is no one's blame.' But don't let's talk of it, Sir Patrick. The matter is being looked into, take my word. If it's kept dark for the present, it's only because strong pressure has been applied. A title's a mighty handy thing to have about you—sometimes."

The car turned and took them up Dame Street, and Lord Edward Street, and M'Caughen pointed out where the poet Maugan was born. Then Christ Church Cathedral stayed their progress, and they visited the crypt, and the Synod Hall, and twisted back to St. Patrick's Park to see that noted Cathedral. Then back to the principal thoroughfares, and into the Phoenix Park, for hurried glimpses of official residences, and the Viceregal Lodge, and the spot sacred to martyrdom and ruffianism. It was unknown history to Doreen, and let some fresh light into Madison's republican views on Irish matters. Finally they drove out to Howth at a speed which brought them there by lunch-time, and the jarvey was told to refresh himself and his little steed for a couple of hours.

M'Caughen would have them see the old Abbey, and

the Lighthouse. Then they strolled through the Castle grounds, and Doreen heard the old legend originating with a visit of Queen Elizabeth, and her anger at being denied Irish hospitality. She stood under the venerable old tree connected with the traditions of the house, and wondered if it was really true that whenever a branch fell a member of the family died. Standish M'Caughen assured her that such was the case, and that the fall of the tree itself would mean the extinction of the whole race.

Being still unfatigued and indefatigable, they next went up Slieve Martin, and Doreen was shown the cairn said to be that of a King of Ireland, in the time of Julius Agricola. Perched upon the highest point of the hill, her wondering eyes took in the magnificent view. The wide sweep of the bay, the blue, misty slopes of the Wicklow hills, and the venerable ruins of the Abbey.

"Is our Castle anything like *that?*" she asked M'Caughen, as she gazed down at the square tower and ivied walls of Howth. "Oh! I hope it is! That's just the very sort of thing I've been picturing and dreaming of all this time."

The lawyer's genial face grew grave.

"It was," he said—"once."

"But not now? Oh—I'm real pained to hear it."

"Well, you see, Cromwell had a hand at it to begin with. And though 'twas built up, and repaired, and restored, it gradually fell into neglect. And for the last hundred years or so no one has thought of doing anything to it at all. So——"

"You mean it's not habitable?" said Madison sharply.

"Well—I shouldn't say it would be a very comfortable abode myself," answered the Irishman. "But, of

course, the house is right enough. And it's adjacent," he added.

"I don't want a house," lamented Doreen. "Oh! father dear, you'll build up the Castle again, won't you, and let us live in it as the kings and chieftains of Ireland did in olden times?"

"I reckon we'd best see how much of it there's left before we talk of rebuilding it," said Madison grimly.

And something in his face hushed Doreen's remonstrances, and left her strangely quiet and subdued.

That evening the senior partner, Mr. Urris, dined with them as well as Standish M'Caughen. He was an elderly man, as far as any Irishman is elderly, and even more genial and entertaining than his partner.

To Doreen, the contrast between them and the Englishmen she had met and observed, was remarkable.

She wondered her father did not unbend more in this genial atmosphere; but Madison was curiously formal. It almost seemed as if he was on guard and afraid of slip or accident.

The two Irishmen were equally delighted with the pretty American girl; her freshness and quaintness, above all her enthusiasm respecting everything Hibernian. It was Mr. Urris, however, who threw the first pebble at that airy fairy fabric of illusion the girl had been weaving into shape.

"I wouldn't be counting too much on the Castle, Miss Madison," he said—"Not as a place of residence. It's picturesque, and looks well just as it stands. The old walls green and ivy-covered, and the arched doorway, and the haunted tower, and all that. But it's got a good many years of neglect to answer for. Of course, if Sir

Patrick chooses to put it into order again, it would be very imposing. But speaking for myself, I should prefer Mount Madison House, as we call it, to the Castle itself."

Doreen's bright face fell. All that she had written to Rosa Schmidt of dungeons and bastions, keeps and towers, and drawbridges recurred to her. It seemed cruel to have to fall back upon "Mount Madison House."

"Don't take it so much to heart, Miss Doreen," said Standish M'Caughen. "Maybe we can fix it up yet just as a summer residence. Only I'd advise an Irish architect and English workmen, if it's in a hurry you are. The one thing the people here can't understand is that to-morrow won't serve as well as to-day, and next week even better!"

"That wouldn't suit me at all," said Madison sternly. "I can't put up with delay and procrastination."

"Ah, that's why you're turning us into such a fine race over in your country," said Mr. Urris. "Take the Irishman away from his primogenital influences, and he becomes a different being. Why, your own great-grandfather, Sir Patrick, who was the first of the family to go to the New World, was a confirmed idler and rascalion as long as he lived on his father's acres, and could get a leg over any hunter that was begged, or borrowed, or smuggled into the stables. By the way, talking of stables, do you hunt?"

"No—I do not," said Madison. "But I've been told that the property is in a hunting district."

"It's pretty well all they live for down there," said Standish M'Caughen. "You'll have to do it, Sir Patrick, if you want to get on with your neighbours. Oh! it's the finest thing in the world. You'll catch it up easy as walking, once you throw a leg over an Irish horse. It

comes natural to them, the darlings. And Miss Doreen there, I know she can ride. She'll be lepping hedges and ditches with the best of them this coming winter."

"Indeed I will," said Doreen. "If I'm to lose my Castle, at least I'll have a good hunter, and show myself at every meet that's going."

"There's true Irish for you now!" exclaimed M'Caughen. "Isn't it wonderful, Sir Patrick, how the blood speaks out in a family? Your progenitors all came of a fine hunting stock. Ne'er a one of them but finished his life with a broken neck sooner than die in his own bed. The girleen there has the fine spirit. Many's the gallop we'll have together, if you're honouring me with an invitation to your house-parties."

"Of course, of course," said Madison. "But I'd no idea you were such—such a sportsman."

"Faith, 'tis second nature to an Irishman, Sir Patrick. Wait till you know us a bit better, as the old woman said when the fox ran into her kitchen. Why, my dear man, the verb 'To Hunt' is the only bit of grammar they trouble to learn in your county. The M.F.H. doesn't live very far from Mount Madison. You'll like him. Mr. Gerald Roche of Kilbride is his name. He's a favourite everywhere. Pity it is to think he's neither chick nor child to take up the property after him, leave alone the kennels! But there 'tis, Sir Patrick. The old families dying out, and nothing to replace them."

Which, perhaps, was a somewhat tactless remark for an Irishman under the present circumstances.

The next afternoon Doreen and her father departed under the escort of Standish M'Caughen.

It was a grey day, with occasional showers of soft,

insistent rain. The country looked somewhat dismal, and Doreen was a little puzzled by the small, mean cottages, the untidy gardens, the long, flat stretches of pasture, fading into the arms of misty hills.

Her father criticised it keenly. The ragged fences, the poor-looking houses, and weedy cattle contrasted unfavourably with the great grain districts of his own land, or the trim order of English pastures, and the careful cultivation of English country.

"Ah, you mustn't be blaming us," said M'Caughen cheerfully. "Maybe it was our help that made America the grand country she is, but we couldn't work in both places at once."

They dropped into political matters, and Doreen contented herself with watching the flying landscape. Thus, with the help of papers and magazines, she passed the first part of the journey. Then came a change of trains, a long wait at a dreary junction, and finally a characteristic go-as-you-please crawl on a small by-line towards their destination.

"We've a six-mile drive when we get to Ballyduff," remarked M'Caughen. "I wrote them to have a car for us, though I wasn't sure if there was anything in the stables fit to go, Sir Patrick."

Madison nodded wearily. He was not impressed by the monotonous landscape, rendered more depressing by the heavy rain.

"It rains considerable in this country, I've been told," he remarked.

"Well, it does," agreed M'Caughen. "But it keeps everything fresh and green, and a bit of soft weather hurts no one. And 'tis the Irish girls have the lovely

complexions. You'll be envying them, Miss Doreen, for all you're like a melting peach yourself."

Doreen laughed. "Oh—I'm not afraid of rain. I like it. Only I wish the sun had chosen to come out to-day."

The train drawled along; stopping at insignificant stations for interchange of greetings with departing or incoming passengers, who seemed much confused by parcels and baskets, and ragged, bare-headed children. Doreen experienced a shock at such poverty-stricken conditions, but the sound of the brogue, and the queer greetings and remarks, were still a joy to her ears. The intimacies and animadversions of the Irish tongue unfolded all their wonders, and left her breathless with laughter.

"It's like as if they were all friends," she exclaimed.

"Well, that's partly the case, saving when they're enemies. Even then they'd sooner start abuse than remain silent," said M'Caughen. "They've a way of their own of amusing themselves; it's certainly not a selfish one."

Madison lit a cigarette, and proclaimed himself a bit tired of Irish trains. "I reckon I'll set on a special before long," he added. "This sort of thing would give me nerves."

"But you'd want an engine for it," said the lawyer. "And I doubt if the officials would give you one. It would necessitate altering time-tables, and might agitate the signalmen into comparative activity."

"They'll be better for that. I ain't used to folk goin' to sleep over their work."

M'Caughen looked at the purposeful face, and found himself wondering how a thriftless and none too respectable ancestry had ever produced so energetic a descendant. But he told himself also, that too sudden an introduction

of American methods would lead to trouble in the district, besides making the new baronet unpopular.

At long last the train drew up at a miserable little station, and the tired travellers got out. They were not overburdened with luggage. Madison having merely a portmanteau, and Doreen a small leather trunk. Standish M'Caughen had put his Gladstone bag into the carriage. These were disinterred by the guard, and on enquiry it was ascertained that a car was waiting, and a cart had been sent for "the trunks."

The car stood just outside the station gates; a shock-headed lad of some fifteen or sixteen years was holding the head of a small, restless brown mare, who seemed to think that perpetual motion of some sort was the meaning of equine existence.

The boy touched his ragged cap, and looked curiously at the new arrivals. M'Caughen addressed him as Patsy, and asked the reason of his appearance.

"Sure, Michael's got a touch of the rheumatiz, yer honour, and he sint me instead. Welcome to Ireland, miss," he added, with a smile to Doreen.

She nodded gaily and said, "Thank you, Patsy." Then she put her foot on the step and sprang up to the seat.

The little mare taking this as a signal for departure made a plunge forward, drawing forth much bad language from the boy for her want of manners.

Madison took the opposite seat, and M'Caughen jumped up by Doreen "by way of balance," as he said. The boy got up somehow into the driver's place, and they were off.

The rain had ceased now, and all the air was filled with scents of moist earth and meadow-sweet. The rifted sky showed blue between soft clouds. The sun was near

setting over a far-off line of hills. All the low-lying country was green with uncut grass. Small fields of ripening grain and potato patches showed amidst the mean little homesteads. Then the car turned off between groves of trees, and they drove under natural avenues, and then along a rough, winding road with high banks on either side.

"There seem no houses," said Doreen.

"Oh! there are, scattered around. We're not far off Mr. Roche's. He has the kennels, you know, and then there's Cragganock where the D'Arcy McGuires live, and Sir John Creagh's place. There's young folk there, Miss Doreen; company for you."

"And where's Castle Derg?"

"Oh! that's miles yet. We'll be at Mount Madison first. There's a housekeeper there, and I told her to get in some help, and have dinner ready for us."

"But can't I see the Castle before dinner? Oh, do let me. It'll be dark afterwards, and I just *can't* wait till to-morrow morning."

"Well, we'll see," said M'Caughen soothingly. "I'm loath to disappoint you, but faith, Miss Doreen, all said and done the Castle would wait very well till the morning, or the day after for the matter of that."

"You don't understand how I feel about it," said the girl. "I expect it's the feudal spirit. You do inherit things of that sort, I guess?"

"You seem to, at all events," said M'Caughen. "I'm wondering if your enthusiasm will outlast your first year's experience of Ireland?"

"I'm certain sure it will," she said.

XIII.

M'CAUGHEN turned suddenly to Madison. "Your land begins here, Sir Patrick," he said. "That farm under the hill there is rented by one of your tenants. A decent man enough too. Larry Doyle is his name. Beyond the hill there's a stretch of bog, not much good for anything but a bit of peat. Then there's a few small farms, all under cultivation, and acres of grazing. They get a lot of Kerry cattle hereabouts. The village we're coming to adjoins your park. We pass through the main street. If news of your coming has gone round they'll be looking out for you."

News evidently had "gone round," as news does in out-of-the-way Irish districts. Women stood in groups with children in their arms, or holding on to their skirts. Men in shirt-sleeves and strange head-gear looked eagerly at the car, and their new landlord. A faint murmur went round. A few hats and hands waved—"Welcome, your honour." But no great enthusiasm was evinced.

Curiosity was rife, and comment, and surmise; but the fact of "Amuriky" in the background lent reticence to outward demonstration.

Doreen smiled gaily and waved her hand, but Madison only surveyed the ragged crowd with disfavour.

The village was poor and dirty, and the mean little

shops did not promise much in the way of rental. But landed property had, as yet, only vague significance for a man who had been a worker by choice, and a financier by instinct and decision.

The lodge was the next intimation of importance. The car stopped, and a tidy-looking woman came out and opened the big iron gates. She dropped a curtsy.

"Welcome home, your honour," she said. "And blessings on the young lady. Sure, 'tis she has the happy face—God bless her!"

"How are you, Mary?" asked M'Caughen. "They're expecting us at the house, I suppose?"

"They are, your honour. Mrs. Donnelly was in a fine moither when she got your tiligram. But Mickey Gall, the butcher, had bin after killin' a calf o' Moriarty's yesterday, and the young hins was comin' on fine, so I'm thinking yez won't be starved anyway."

"There's your *menu* all set out, Sir Patrick," laughed the lawyer. "When ye're miles from a big town, and dependent on local butchers, it's a case of 'needs must' more often than not."

Madison said that was to be expected, and gazed curiously around. They were speeding through a wide avenue bordered by thickly-planted trees. The road was grass-grown and ill-kept, and wound and turned in devious ways as if to delay any prospects of the house till the ultimate moment. Suddenly it burst into view, above a stretch of green lawn. It was a wide white house with a stone terrace leading by steps to the lawn. The drive circled round, and the car drew up at the steps.

Doreen looked up at the blank plastered space, the narrow windows, the open door showing the hall beyond. Not a vestige of Castledom here!

A stout, genial-looking woman in a black stuff gown and a white embroidered apron, came to the doorway.

"There's Mrs. Donelly, Sir Patrick. Your housekeeper," said M'Caughen.

Madison sprang down from the car, and went slowly up the shallow stone steps.

"Pleased to see you, Mrs. Donelly," he said cordially, and held out his hand.

"Welcome home, Sir Patrick. Sure, I'm delighted to see you. And the young lady too," she added, as Doreen reached her father's side. "It's sorry I am that I'd such short notice to prepare things for ye, but I've done my best. And how's yourself, Mr. M'Caughen? It's long enough since you've given us a look in. This way, Sir Patrick. I've just prepared the library, and the bedrooms, as Mr. M'Caughen said, for help I couldn't get. But as it's only for a few days maybe you'll not be so particular. When you and your good lady settle in, and bring your own staff o' servants, things'll be better."

"Yes, don't trouble," said Madison, looking round the big, square hall with its painted walls, and curious decorations of foxes' brushes and heads, and whips, and fishing tackle, and shelves of old china. A big mahogany table stood in the centre, and some fine old carved chairs and a leather-covered lounge completed the furniture.

The fireplace was deep and wide, and a bright glow of turf and coal commingled threw out cheery reflections. It was quite unlike anything Madison had seen in New York, or in England. But it made instant appeal to him with its sense of home comfort, and ancient rights, and present ownership.

The library was a pleasant room, on one side of which were bookcases. The walls were hung with old prints,

and the big bay window looked over the lawn to a flower-garden bounded by groups of laurels.

The table was spread for dinner, and a small fire glowed in the open grate, which stood on iron feet in the centre of the fireplace. A large silver bowl of many-coloured dahlias made a spot of colour on the white cloth, on which silver, and glass, and dishes of fruit were set indiscriminately.

"Ah, I'm glad we're to dine here," said Standish M'Caughen. "The dining-room is a big, dreary barracks, Sir Patrick, unless 'tis filled with a couple of dozen jolly fox-hunters and as many pretty women. That's what used to be in the old times. I hope you're going to bring them back again. Now, Mrs. Donnelly, just show the bedrooms, and when we've washed off the dust of the day, it's not ourselves will be faulting any sort of dinner that's eatable."

Up a broad, uncarpeted staircase, and across a wide corridor, and then into two rooms, furnished in plain old mahogany and faded chintz, that would have looked bare and dreary enough but for the welcoming fires.

"I had them lit soon as ever I had your tiligram, Mr. M'Caughen," said the genial housekeeper. "Pouring with rain it's been this week past, and I afraid o' my life the place 'ud be damp, though the sun does be shining in here every day whin there's any to shine."

"I do hope it's going to shine now," said Doreen gaily. "Father, this must be my room. I like that look-out over the hill—and—why, what's *that*——" she cried breathlessly, seizing the housekeeper's arm and drawing her to the window.

There was a dull red glow in the sky; it touched a range of hill-tops, and threw a vivid illuming light on a

small loch or lake of green, dull water lying at the foot of the hills. But what had attracted the girl's eyes was a queer jumble of broken towers, ivied buttresses, loop-holes, walls. All dyed a strange blood-red colour in the waning light.

"Is it the—Castle?" she gasped breathlessly.

Mrs. Donnelly followed her gesture. "That?" she said. "Sure, and it is, miss. The old ruins. They say 'tis misfortunate to see them when they're red like that," she added. "Don't be looking at them, miss darlin'. No one wants a hint of ill-luck to be befallin' the new family. Sure, the old ones had their share. God save us from harm!"

She crossed herself, and tried to draw Doreen aside from the window, but the girl seemed fascinated.

"How long since it was lived in, Mrs. Donnelly?" she asked.

"What?—the ould ruins, miss? A matter of a hundred years, or more. Sure, it's an ill place, and best left to itself and the crows and the bats. Why, what's troublin' you, darlin'? Your sweet face is as white as me apron!"

Doreen turned away. Her eyes were full of tears.

"I've seen it at last—*our* Castle—and only a ruin, and with an ill name to it! Mrs. Donnelly, I feel just too bad to *live!*"

"Lord save us, me dear darlin' child! Don't be talkin' like that. Sure, the Castle's nothin'. The house and the park it is that counts. And grand days we'll be havin' here, once Sir Patrick sets things right. For I hear he has the money all safe and sound from Ameriky, and it's just money the Madisons have needed these generations past."

But Doreen subsided into a low chair by the fire and wept silently. Mrs. Donnelly grew distressed. She had reckoned with disappointment as regarded the house, but to take on like this about a "dirty ould ruin" fit only for the bats and owls, and with a bad name to it too; that was more than she could understand.

"There, there, miss darlin', now give over cryin'," she entreated. "And as ye've brought no maid, I'll just send up a tidy slip o' a girl I got in from the village to wait on ye. She'll do all you tell her, and happy to do it. Nora Driscoll's her name. She'll be here in a jiffy, and unpack your trunk for ye. I must be seein' after the dinner. The cook's no great shakes to speak of, and the things'll be boiled to rags, or burned to cinders, if I'm not at her elbow all the time."

Doreen dried her eyes, and unpinned her hat, while the good woman bustled off to call the little maid. She came so quickly that it was plain the summons had been expected. She poured out hot water, and unstrapped the trunk, and then stood looking at the tray with wondering eyes.

"Am I to take out yer clothes, miss?" she asked. "Sure, they're so lovely I'm afraid to be handlin' thim."

Doreen turned from the washhand-stand to the pretty dark-haired girl in neat print gown and apron.

"Yes, please," she said. "Your name's Nora, isn't it?"

"It is—miss."

"I'm real glad of that," said Doreen. "I just love the name of Nora. Have you been a lady's maid before?"

"Arrah, no, miss, I have not. But Mrs. Donnelly, she tould me I'd only have to bring ye hot water, and brush yer hair, and yer dresses, and button yer boots, and sure,

that's aisy to learn. And maybe if I suited ye ye'd take me on, miss, whin ye come to live here?"

"Why, I certainly will," said Doreen. "If you suit me. And I'm sure you'll try. How old are you, Nora?"

"I'm turned seventeen, miss, this last St. Patrick's Day."

She carefully took out a muslin and lace gown, and laid it on the bed.

Doreen threw aside her towel, and unfastened the ribbon that tied her heavy plait.

"You'll find a morocco case with my brushes just below that tray, Nora. I'm not going to change my dress. Father said I needn't. But you can brush my hair for me. I expect dinner's most ready by now. And oh! I'm just as hungry as ever could, Nora."

She threw on a white dressing-jacket, and sat down before the glass. Nora found the dressing-case, and marvelled again at ivory fittings, and a hand mirror, and all the dainty toilet accessories that to Doreen were second nature. She brushed the lovely soft hair with tender care and outspoken admiration.

Doreen meanwhile scrutinised her little maid's face in the mirror, and took an immediate fancy to its charming colouring, and the beauty of the black-lashed eyes. She encouraged the girl to talk, and Nora was nothing loath to do it. Wasn't all the village agog about the rich American claimants who had come to take possession of Mount Madison?

Presently a gong sounded weird and loud throughout the house.

"Is that for dinner?" asked Doreen.

"I'd not be takin' on meself to say what it was for,

miss," answered the little maid. "Seein' as how I niver heard sich a hulloballooshin' in all me life before. But there's quare ways wid company, I was tould. Will I go down and ask what's the manin' of it, miss?"

"Oh, I guess it's to say dinner's ready," laughed Doreen. "And I'm sure father and Mr. M'Caughen won't be sorry. Now, Nora, you're to unpack that trunk while I'm downstairs. Hang up the dresses in that press, and put the underclothes in that bureau. The gloves and handkerchiefs in the top small drawer. Do you think you understand?"

"Sure, an' I do, miss, ivery wurd of it. Though they did be sayin' that I'd niver make out what ye'd be talkin' about, for Amur'kin was a sort o' forrin tongue. Narra a bit. Your English is just beautiful, miss."

"Why, of course!" exclaimed Doreen. "It's the same language as yours, only with a different *accent*. Now get those clothes put right away, and I sha'n't want you any more till to-morrow morning."

"Won't you be needin' to have your hair brushed at bedtime, miss?"

"Oh! no, I can do that myself. I s'pose there's a bell fixed somewhere, if I do want you?"

"Sure, an' there is, miss, right nigh the bed there. Just handy for ye."

Dinner was awaiting them. Mrs. Donnelly doing butler and parlour-maid all in one. She apologised for an un-replenished wine-cellar, and proposed whisky from the one store in the village as a substitute.

"And sody-water? There's plenty o' that, Sir Patrick."

"I guess we'll get along with it for to-night," said her

new master. "Suppose you don't run to ice in these parts, Mrs. Donelly?"

"Ice? Sure, and we don't, sir. Things like thim has to be ordered from the town, and comes in by the train."

"Well, I guess there'll be an ice-house fixed up here afore long," said Madison. "Sorry I didn't bring a refrigerator along with us, and the patent for making your own ice. America takes some beating, I guess, Mr. M'Caughen."

"Things are, of course, anything but ship-shape as yet, Sir Patrick. But with your enterprise there'll soon be nothing left to complain of."

Madison glanced round the room, softly illumined now by wax candles and the glow of the fire. He had dispensed with a watery soup yclept "clear," and dined on rather tough roast veal, and then equally tough chicken, but the potatoes were delightful, and the peas tasted of fresh mint lost in their own tender greenness. The whisky was mellow and good, and the fruit had come from well-cared-for strawberry beds and sheltering glass.

On the whole, he was not ill-pleased with affairs. When dinner was over he proposed a stroll and smoke on the terrace. Doreen eagerly welcomed the idea.

M'Caughen made her run up for her coat and hat. The evening was damp after so much rain, he declared.

Then she joined her father and himself, and the stars came out, and the moon showed above the hills in a sky of velvet depths, and all the lovely peace and stillness of the quiet land breathed its spell upon them.

Doreen, drinking it all into her eager young soul, grew more in love with Ireland every moment.

XIV.

"FATHER," said Doreen, "I tell you straight, I'm not going back to London. I'll just stay here till you and mother are finished with your fine friends. Oh! I'll be as good as good—and ten million times happier than I've been in that great lonely hotel."

It was two days later. Two days of exploring and explaining. Of alternate wonder and delight. Doreen had been all over her "Castle." A huge square of battered stonework stood for the ancient banqueting hall, a broken stairway led down to what were once the dungeons; and a tower with slits for windows represented the only habitable room left in the building. Doreen was so enchanted with the ruin, that she now came to the conclusion it was far better to own an ancient historic landmark of its description than a Waring and Gillows attempt at restored mediævality. There were countless nooks and corners, crumbling walls, broken turrets, an ancient moat filled in now by fallen stones and felled trees, and overgrown with the lush green vegetation of damp and sunless years. Then there was a courtyard that she peopled with knights, and chieftains, and minstrels, and bold soldiery; suggestions of "ladies' bowers" where fair faces had looked forth on tourney and tilt, or watched the advance of savage hordes of depredators. In the hands of Standish M'Caughen, Castle Derg lost no element

of poetry and romance, and Doreen began to agree with him that it would be a thousand pities to disturb its serene senility by such vandalism as repairs and restoration.

Madison himself had not thought twice about it. Better build a new castle at once if a castle was needed than meddle with this extraordinary relic of past ages.

"But, indeed, why build at all?" suggested M'Caughen. "It will be all the same if you *call* your house a castle. Faith, there's plenty of us does that in Ireland without as much reason."

Madison had studied his house with vague reminiscences of Fifth Avenue mingling with a glimpse of historic Windsor. A tower to each wing would be effective. Also useful for a projected flagstaff carrying the American flag and the green harp of Ireland when the family were in residence. With the rapidity of the American mind, he wrote that night to a Dublin architect, and himself sketched a plan of what he deemed needful and possible in the way of exterior and interior alterations.

"And it must all be ready by December," he concluded. "I trust to you, M'Caughen, to see to that. I'm going to fill the house for Christmas, and it's *got to be ready*."

"I'll do my best," said the lawyer. "But try and recollect, Sir Patrick, that Irish ways and American methods are somewhat different."

"I reckon we wake you up when you come over to us, so it's not unnatural I should have a try what I can do on your own ground. The stuff's *in* you. It only wants bringing out."

"Exactly," said M'Caughen dryly. "It's the bringing out that's the difficulty."

It was at the end of this brief dialogue that Doreen had struck in with her announcement of remaining at Mount Madison.

They were sitting on the lawn waiting for tea, which Mrs. Donnelly was preparing to set out there. It was a warm, lovely evening. They sat in the shade of a big chestnut-tree and looked out at the green and copper tints of the avenue, and the emerald-hued slopes of the park. The air was heavy with scents of roses, and sweet pea, and old-fashioned stocks. Above their heads was the deep velvety blue of the Irish sky, and everywhere the rich, lovely green of the Irish country.

"Just too perfectly sweet for words," murmured Doreen. "And *ours*. Oh! to think of it, dad! Our very own. Isn't it good?"

Madison glanced at the lovely young face, and his firm lips closed tightly. "Ours." She was claiming possession so naturally and innocently, and yet— Ah! that *yet*.

"You haven't said that I can stay," she continued. "Bet I guess you're making up your mind to it, all the same. It's not as if I was any good over in town. I can't go to parties and things same as you and mother do. And I scarcely ever see *you*, father. And it was most awful lonesome nights, shut up in that horrid Carlton. Now here—I'd just *live* every minute of the day. And there'd be lots of riding. And I could learn to drive an outside car! I'd have just a perfectly splendid time!"

"But you must have someone to look after you," said her father. "I'd have to send that French Mam'zelle over, and I guess she won't be struck."

"Why shouldn't she?" exclaimed Doreen. "She's

only a governess all said, and they have to be with their pupils whether they like it or not. Oh—she'll come along right enough, father, if she gets a big salary. Mother said she just jumped at the money."

"But will you study; get yourself polished up like she said was necessary?" asked Madison.

"Yes. If I can stay here."

"I reckon I'll miss you in town," he said. "But I don't know that you're not wise. This sort of place, and this sort of life, seem more nat'ral and healthful than that of cities."

"You're right, Sir Patrick. Leave the child here, and let her get her fill of air, and Nature, and freedom. They're better than balls and parties any day. Ah! here's tea, thanks be to goodness! I'm as dry as a limekiln this minute."

Mrs. Donelly came out carrying a tea-tray, and followed by Nora with another containing cake, and soda-bread, and strawberries, and thick yellow cream.

As the housekeeper was arranging the cups, a sound of horse's feet made them all turn round.

"Visitors? Glory be to goodness!" exclaimed Mrs. Donelly.

"Why—it's Captain Mallory! God bless my soul! Is he back here?" said Standish M'Caughen.

"Mallory!" echoed Sir Patrick. His thoughts flew back to the liner; to bridge parties; to a persuasive voice, and a half-forgotten promise. Even as he gathered the threads together, the visitor had dismounted and thrown the bridle of his fine bay horse to Patsy, who had appeared mysteriously from a garden-bed he was supposed to be weeding. Then he came gaily up to the group round the table.

"Well, Sir Patrick, so there you are! Welcome to Ireland, and to your own home! Ah, M'Caughen, glad to see you—and Miss Madison—your servant. How are ye all? Well, I needn't ask. You look fine. You see, Sir Patrick, I haven't forgotten my promise. I heard you were down here for a few days, and said I, 'Well, I'll call over and see them, and have a look at the stables the same time.'"

He shook hands all round, and then seated himself on one of the wicker chairs set under the trees.

Madison welcomed him heartily. He had taken a liking to him on the boat, as indeed most people did, for Jack Mallory had all the *bonhomie*, and aplomb, and humour of his countrymen, as well as their usual aptitude for debt, and passion for horse-flesh.

Doreen poured out tea, and handed plates of strawberries. The three men plunged into talk of hunting. Horse-shows, and bargains, and "crocks," and all the mysteries of stable-yard and loose-boxes.

"Now, Captain Mallory, you've got to find something for me pretty soon," exclaimed Doreen. "I'm just mad for a good gallop. I want to go right around the whole of father's estate. I haven't seen half of it yet."

"I've got the very thing for you then, Miss Madison," said the Captain. "The bay yonder. He'll carry a lady beautifully. Gentle as a lamb, and takes his fences neat as a bird on the wing."

"He's rather a large horse for a lady, isn't he?" asked Madison, glancing over to where Patsy was leading the "lamb" up and down the gravelled pathway.

"Large, is it? Well, that's a sign of breeding, you know. Miss Madison can try him if she likes. I'll just

tell the boy to clap a lady's saddle on him, and if she doesn't say she might be rocking in an armchair, I'm no judge of mounts."

"Oh, may I try him? How lovely!" cried Doreen. "I'll slip on a skirt, and have a canter round the park. I never rode such a *big* horse, as father says, but if you say he's all right, why——"

"I give you my word he's that," said Mallory. "And a real bargain. I'd let you have him for—a hundred pounds, Sir Patrick? And that's not what any dealer, or owner for the matter o' that, would be saying."

"It's not a question of price," said Madison. "But safety and surety. I can't risk my little girl's neck, you know. And she hasn't had much experience."

"Sure, the Irish blood in her stands for that," said Mallory cheerfully. "Anyone can see she's the born Diana. She'll be setting all the country by the ears next hunting season."

"Well, let's have a look at the animal," said Madison, rising from his chair. "Unless you'll have some more tea?" he added.

"Thank you, no. I've drunk off a couple of cups already."

He led the way towards the beautiful, showy animal, and began pointing out its varied good qualities.

"After all, he may be a bit large for the young lady," he said doubtfully. "But what about yourself, Sir Patrick? He's just built for you. Do a day a week all the season, and then be worth as much as you're giving."

He seemed to take it for granted that the bay was a sure purchase.

"I—well, I guess I'm not much of an equestrian,"

said Madison slowly. "I've not had time, or opportunity, or practice. And I'm a bit stiff now. One can't take to hunting at my time of life. If I could just get a quiet trot now and then, or see a meet from a distance, that would about suit me. In the States we ain't so keen on hunting and all that as you are over here."

"Oh, but you'd pick it up," cried Mallory. "And with a fine figure like yours, Sir Patrick, 'tis a sin and shame to you not to be on a horse's back every day of your life. Can you look at this beauty and not long to be astride him? Woa, Brian! Woa, old boy—steady there!"

For the beauty began to plunge and rear, and Patsy was as much in the air as on the ground. Brian O'Lynn's master seized the reins and steadied the horse with a word and a touch. He really was a fine-looking animal, though not exactly up to his "lamb-like" description. However, he permitted the affront of a lady's saddle, and when Doreen appeared, and patted his velvet muzzle and looked love into his beautiful eyes, he surveyed her with that marvellous intelligence of the horse who knows something of human limitations.

Captain Mallory mounted the girl, and then, with some instinct of compunction, led the horse up and down to get used to her, so he said. But Doreen was keen to be off, and the bay knew it and answered her hint with rapture. He had been hunted for a season in Galway by a famous horsewoman, and favoured the sex for that reason. Finally, after many injunctions not to pull him on the curb, the Captain allowed the girl to trot off alone, and the horse behaved so beautifully that she brought him back with raptures.

"The gentlest mouth!" she declared. "Oh! Captain

Mallory, he's just a dream. I'd love to hunt with him!"

"I'm afraid he'd be a bit too self-willed for you, Miss Madison. I'm trying to persuade your father to have him. I've got my eye on another, a chestnut filly she is; small and compact; good stock. Her mother was a famous racer. I'll bring her round to-morrow. My boy can ride her and I'll take Brian, if you don't mind, and we'll try a fence or two. Sure, you're a born horsewoman, Miss Madison, anyone could see that. But I'd like to be going out with you a few times. There's just a hint of uncertainty in your hands. And I can see your father's nervous. Small wonder, and you his only child, and an heiress at that. But I'll be as careful of you as if you were the Empress of Austria herself. I've seen my father showing her the country when I was a lad. 'Twas she was the fine rider, and the beautiful woman. God rest her soul! 'Tis a sad history."

Madison looked at him with renewed interest. A man whose father had hunted with Empresses must surely be worth knowing. He had no exact information as to Mallory's position in the county, but that carelessly thrown out hint convinced him he was all right.

"Do you know, Captain," he said. "I've a mind to buy that horse for myself. He's rather too much for my daughter. You said a hundred pounds?"

"Guineas, wasn't it?" suggested the Captain cautiously.

"Oh, well, I guess it's pretty much the same."

"Not quite," interposed M'Caughen. "In Ireland it's more customary to knock off the price of a horse than to add on. But you know what Kipling says——"

Mallory threw him a quick glance. "Well, I'm not

one to spoil a bargain," he said. "Pounds it shall be. When would you like him sent round, Sir Patrick?"

"I thought you were to ride him here to-morrow? Couldn't he be left then?"

"Certainly. But you'll have to exercise him, or he'll be no good for the season. Shall we look round the stables now? I hope there's a decent box. He's a mighty particular gentleman, is Brian O'Lynn."

"What a lovely name!" said Doreen, gathering up her skirt, and walking beside the bay and its owner. "I think it's real mean of you, father, to take him away from me. His action is just too lovely for words. And what I want to know is, how are *you* going to ride him?"

"I shall take lessons in town," said Madison.

"Go to a military barracks, that's the best way," exclaimed Mallory. "And go every day once you begin. Don't stop for stiffness, or soreness, or falls, or anything. Just *go*. A couple of months of it, and Brian will be just child's play."

A faint gleam of excitement came into the American's face. There seemed something vivid and hazardous about this new recreation. But that it offered risk and promised interest, gave it sufficient attraction for him.

The stables were not in a very reputable condition. The paved yard was some distance from the house, and most of the doors were off their hinges, unpainted and tenantless. A couple of untidy men were lounging about, and made a show of activity as the party approached. Patsy, who was employed in the joint capacity of stable help and gardener's boy, loitered about in the rear.

A box was found that at least had a safe door and a reputable manger. It was fairly clean, and Mickey, the

groom, promised it should be in fit condition for its new occupant by the morrow.

The Captain then went the round of the boxes, condemning and suggesting, while Madison made rapid notes and agreed to have them put in order at once. With the curious meekness of those unlearned in stable matters, he agreed that the Captain should look out a hunting stud for him by Christmas-time, and have the latest improvements in loose-boxes and stalls introduced. All to be superintended by himself. Mallory was in his element. He thought of his coming importance, his big commissions, the run of the stables for himself and friends. Above all the advantages accruing from ruses with dealers, fenced tightly away from personal transactions with the millionaire. The only drawback to his content was the presence and shrewd innuendoes of Standish M'Caughen. "Never trust your best friend to choose a horse for you," was a maxim of the lawyer's, and he happened to know a thing or two about the sporting Captain that was not altogether in his favour. But he said nothing definite, and Mallory could only hope that he would be content to abide by such reticence.

The inspection over, they all strolled back to the terrace, and Madison began explaining structural alterations, and plans for refurnishing and decorating his mansion.

The Captain agreed with most of his projects. He seemed surprised that the new owner did not intend to come into residence till Christmas. "There's plenty of habitable rooms that you could use," he said. "And believe me, Sir Patrick, it's a million chances to one you'll ever get the work done, if you're not on the spot yourself to superintend it."

"I shall employ an English firm, and have a good foreman to look to the work," said Madison. "And as my daughter insists on staying in Ireland, I daresay I'll be over here every month myself. Why—I'm giving them nearly six months. In New York they'd run up a whole house in that time."

"In New York? No doubt. But you're not expecting express delivery methods here, are you?"

"I guess I'll make them hustle," said Sir Patrick grimly. "I haven't patience with your slack ways."

"Why—dad——" Doreen turned her face to him, the ripple of a smile on the parted lips. "You said that as if you were in America. And you know you're not, and you'll have to do in Ireland as the Irish do. Isn't that so, Mr. M'Caughen?"

"I'm afraid it is," he answered. "But we must hope for the best."

He looked at the strong face and cool bearing of the new owner of Mount Madison, and wondered if he was in the presence of one of those "Makers of Men" for whom the New World is famed.

XV.

A WEEK later Doreen was alone in the great dreary house. Mademoiselle Perigueux was to arrive on the morrow, but for this night the girl was mistress of herself and her surroundings and an adoring household, who would never have dreamt of gainsaying a wish or whim of her heart.

With a view to leaving architects and decorators unimpeded, Doreen had turned the small dressing-room next

her bedroom into a boudoir for herself, and decided to have her meals there, and use it as a study as well. Then she asked Mrs. Donelly to arrange a room for the French governess whose advent she dreaded, and having a long summer evening to get through, ran down to the stables and begged Mickey to saddle her little mare. She would have a gallop round the park.

"Will you be wantin' me, miss?" enquired the groom.

"Oh, no. I sha'n't go far and Rosemary is as safe as a tame donkey."

Rosemary was the little mare selected by Captain Mallory, and paid for by Madison. She had no vices, and was only just wilful enough to be interesting. She and her young mistress had taken an immediate fancy to one another, and after half a dozen rides Doreen felt as at home on her back as in a rocking-chair.

It was near sunset when she sprang into the saddle and cantered gaily down the drive, watched by the admiring eyes of Mrs. Donelly and Nora from the house, and Patsy and Mickey Muldoon from the terrace.

"A raal beauty, and a credit to us all," said Mickey.

"Sure, she rides like a bird on the wing," answered Patsy, with some confusion of metaphors.

The girl herself was in the heyday of content. The beautiful little horse, the easy motion, the exhilarating sense of freedom and liberty were a sort of intoxication. She longed to sing and shout and laugh aloud for sheer joy of life, and a beautiful world, and such good things as had befallen her in it.

Rosemary seemed as exhilarated as her mistress. She capered and pricked her ears in playful fashion, and began to dance down the avenue in a manner peculiar to herself. Doreen laughed and encouraged her. She

was absolutely fearless, and she loved the pretty, dainty creature too well to check her harmless tricks. One rousing gallop round the park calmed them both for a time. Then Doreen turned towards the lodge gates, mindful of a message for Mary Rooney.

The sight of the gates suddenly inspired her to go farther. She gave the message, and then asked the woman to open them. A moment later she was cantering down the road in the direction of the little lake which lay at the foot of the hill. She had not been so near to it before, and when she followed the track through the woods, discovered that she was approaching a ruined chapel. A low stone wall surrounded it, and from her more elevated position Doreen could look over and into the space of a deserted and dreary churchyard. Some of the graves bore headstones; some a wooden cross; but most of them were mere mounds overgrown with grass and weeds.

The girl drew rein, and sat looking silently at the desolate place. Suddenly she caught sight of a solitary figure standing beside one of the mounds. It was that of a man. His back was towards her. He had removed his hat and was looking down at the grave with bent head. Something in the attitude of the figure, the melancholy of the place, touched the girl's young heart with sudden sadness.

"He must be mourning for someone—someone who lies buried there," she thought.

Even as she thought it she saw the man stoop and pick something from the grave and put it to his lips. Then he turned, and caught sight of the watcher by the wall.

The sunrays penetrating the boughs above his head shone with illuminating light on his uplifted face. Doreen

almost started. She knew that sweep of brown hair, those strong features, that tall figure. She was looking back at her rescuer of Coney Island, the second-class passenger of the steamboat. Whether he recognised her as immediately, she could not be sure. But at all events he turned from the grave and came towards the wall.

Then she greeted him. "I knew you at once! Fancy your being *here!* Do you remember me?"

"Why—of course," he said.

He leant against the low broken wall, and looked at the bright young face.

"It might be a book story, mightn't it?" he said. "Only that I knew I was bound to see you sometime. I've come down from Dublin about the architectural work of your father's property."

"No—is that really true? But——"

"Oh, I'm not an important person. The head of the firm will be here to-morrow. He orders and plans, I—carry out. I came over with introductions to him, and they were good enough to get me into the firm at once, and then this order came along. They think my knowledge of American methods will be a help."

"I thought you were Canadian?"

"I was born in Quebec. Yes. But I've worked in the States. I was with a New York firm before I came over here."

"It seems just wonderful, doesn't it?" said Doreen. "Think of Coney Island, and Rosa Schmidt, and how scared I was, and then seeing you on the boat, and now meeting again *here!*"

"Surprising—isn't it?" he said, with a smile.

"I—well——" She drew in her breath, and as her hand relaxed the reins, Rosemary sidled impatiently.

"I'm riding too," observed the stranger. "My horse is fixed up there, the other side of the chapel. I came here on a pilgrimage. May I bring him alongside?"

"Why, of course," she said. "I'm all alone. I'll be glad to have you ride with me."

"I'll be round straight away," he said.

He joined her so quickly that she had scarcely re-adjusted her mind to an acceptance of the seemingly impossible. He—of all people, to be here! To be employed in the work of her new home; to be within sight, and hearing, and association! It certainly did seem surprising.

"Where were you going?" he asked, as he brought a weedy-looking grey up to the dainty skirmishing of the chestnut mare.

"I don't know. I merely came out for a ride. I never was here before. I didn't know of that chapel."

"It's only a ruin now. In the graveyard beyond lie some of my father's people. I promised him to go there, and see that the graves were in order. I'm afraid they're far from it. The whole place is in that state of destitute neglect so characteristic of this country."

"I suppose the people can't help being poor," said Doreen.

"It seems so. But it's not the poverty that distresses me. It is the masterly inactivity, and slovenly habits, and general don't-care-if-I-do-or-I-don't of the nation at large, that come as a shock to more enterprising minds."

"Where are you staying?" asked Doreen.

"I'm boarding with a family who are too genteel to pretend they take boarders. There are two maiden sisters, and a brother who is a fox-hunter and a drunkard.

Mr. Raeburn—for whom I work—sent me there; ostensibly as a friend, officially as a paying guest, which seems to be a new way of evading the qualifications of our old friend the boarding-house lady. Let me mention that the place is called Dumdrum, which is significant. It is situated an Irish mile from your father's place, technically termed the Big House. This animal was lent by the fox-hunting brother. I am to make a trial trip on him, previous to possessing him as a dead bargain."

Doreen laughed. "I shouldn't call him *that* at any price. You must get something better."

"You—have certainly had a find," he said, glancing over the chestnut.

"Yes, isn't she a treasure!" exclaimed Doreen. "A Captain Mallory got her for me. He's to furnish our stables. Oh! I've just thought of something. There's a lovely bay horse doing nothing. Why shouldn't you ride him? He's got to be exercised, and I guess it might as well be you as a stableman to do it."

"I expect your father would have something to say to that. He hasn't forgotten that I came over second class, though you refused to take count of the degradation."

"As if it mattered," said Doreen. "Oh, by the way, tell me your name? I can't keep on not calling you anything."

He laughed. "What a truly Irish speech! Well, my name is Connell—without the 'O'; and its prefix is—I'll give you three guesses."

Doreen pursed up her pretty lips. "If it's Irish I'll say—Patrick."

"No."

"Then—Standish?"

"No."

"Michael would be too commonplace," she went on. "And you don't look like a Harry, or a Tim, or—oh! I'll give it up."

"It's Barry," he said. "How does that suit you?"

"I like it." She gave him a frank direct glance. "Yes, it *does* suit, I think. Barry Connell. But why was the 'O' dropped?"

"We've no need for anything superfluous in America. And it was to America my people emigrated in the long ago. However, I'm glad to say they prospered."

"Do you mean to stay over this side now you've come?" asked Doreen.

"Only for a year or two. I want to take a look round at British methods, and industries. I hardly think they'll appeal to me from what I've seen and heard."

"But such a short time?"

"I'm used to doing a good deal in a short time. I was not brought up to drift."

"You look—energetic," said the girl, smiling. "Like father. You and he would agree as far as work is concerned."

"Is he here? Sir Patrick, I mean?"

"No. He left yesterday, but he's coming back in a month."

"And are you all alone at Mount Madison?"

"Yes. But to-morrow a French lady is coming to take charge of me, and finish my education."

"I thought you were quite a finished product of the States," he said, smiling. "Didn't you have a good time in London? I saw you driving in the Park, and looking like a fairy princess."

"That's throwing bouquets,"* said Doreen, laughing. "But, indeed, I was bored to death. Always dressing up, and driving around that Row, as they call it. I begged father to leave me here so as to get out of it all. I didn't want a horrid French governess, but it appears I'm not enough educated yet."

"We never are," said her companion. "But the best teacher is Life. You know it's said every man has two educations. The one he's given, and the one he gives himself. The *last* is the one that counts, and often as much by its failures as by its successes."

Doreen looked grave. "That sounds nice," she said. "But somehow one doesn't like to think of failure. Have you known it?"

"Often," he said bitterly. "I've had a pretty tough time, Miss Madison. That land yonder hasn't much patience in its methods, or much tenderness for strugglers. It's a great country, but an almighty cruel one—God forgive it!"

Something in his face checked the girl's response. It was so full of the pain of unexpressed and unexpressible things. And as yet, Life had only taught her that living was a joy, and that somewhere far above, beyond the blue and the stars, God dwelt in His heaven.

At the lodge gates Barry Connell suggested good-bye. But Doreen insisted he should come in and have a look round the house, so as to get an idea of what it was like.

The suggestion appealed to him, and the two rode up the avenue, greatly to the surprise of Mary at the lodge, who knew that the gentleman was a stranger in the neighbourhood, and marvelled how her young lady

* American slang—"paying compliments."

had come to be so friendly with him. The frank and easy methods of the American girl were new to her, as yet.

When they halted at what Doreen called the best interviewing point, the young architect took a long and sorrowful survey of the building. His chief had received instructions from Madison to turn the house into something as like a castle as was possible, and to do it in barely six months.

Connell was provided with as many sketches and plans of castles as he could stow into his travelling-trunk, but Mount Madison did not look a very hopeful subject for experiment.

"I wish he'd leave it as it is. It looks a very decent country mansion, but to pile up turrets and towers and flagstuffs and lancet windows, why, it will spoil the whole place, I guess. Couldn't you persuade your father just to add another wing, and keep to the old proportions?"

"But I want it made like the old Castle, the ruin over there," said Doreen. "Captain Mallory seemed to think it could be done."

"He knows a horse's points better than those of a house, I should say."

"I thought architects could build on any sort of a plan," said Doreen.

"Build, yes. But this is a case of wholesale structural alteration. If I could show you—but there—you wouldn't understand. Maps, and plans, and Euclid are beyond a girl's comprehension."

"I just love maps. I can make anything out of a map. So bring your plans around to-morrow morning, and see if I don't get through with them. Perhaps between us we could fix up something that would suit father, yet not spoil the house."

"Is he open to persuasion? He gave me the idea of being very determined."

"I guess he is. But if you can prove a thing isn't right he'll consider it. He wouldn't insist if he saw that your knowledge of architecture beat his, and I suppose it does."

"Well, I shouldn't turn this house into a castle if it was mine," said Connell. "And now, Miss Madison, I must be getting back. The Miss M'Cartneys will be so excited when they hear I've seen you. They talk of nothing else but Sir Patrick, and his family, and his fabulous millions. When they hear you've been left here alone they're sure to want to call on you."

"Call? But mother isn't here, and I'm not supposed to receive visitors."

"Irish people don't stand on ceremony, I believe. I've been in the country long enough to discover that."

"Oh, then, Mademoiselle the Ogress will have to play duenna," laughed Doreen. "Do you think French people can understand the Irish, Mr. Connell?"

"They ought to. They're both Gallic races. Who's this coming up?"

"That's—Mickey, the groom. Oh! wouldn't you like to see Brian O'Lynn before you go?"

"I should. But I'm trespassing on your time as well as on all the *convenances*. It's nearly eight o'clock. I must really say good night."

"Very well—if you must. But I think it's perfectly horrid that I can't ask you to supper, or anything."

He laughed gaily. What a child she was. So frank and sweet and irresponsible.

"Perhaps when the French ogress is here she will permit you to exercise hospitality," he said.

"Half a Truth."

He lifted his hat, but Doreen held out her hand. "Come early to-morrow," she said. "Ten o'clock, will you?"

"I shall have to come when Mr. Raeburn wishes. You forget I'm only second in command."

Then he lifted his hat again, and turned the weedy grey down the avenue.

Doreen gave up Rosemary to Mickey's charge, and went slowly into the house and up the stairs to her own room.

She stood at her favourite vantage point, and gazed at the ivied ruins.

"Nothing seems going to be a bit like what I wanted," she said regretfully. "I suppose it does take a long time to build a castle, and get it covered with ivy, and make it a beautiful mediæval-looking thing like the pictures of Lismore and Howth, and Malahide and Kylemore. But if father wasn't in such a hurry I guess Mr. Connell could plan it out for him and run it up in a couple of years."

Then she rang for Nora, and got out of her habit skirt, and went into her own little sitting-room for her simple supper.

She insisted Nora should wait on her "for company." She loved to hear the girl talk, and was keen on knowing the peculiarities as well as the advantages of the neighbourhood. Nora—or a friend, or a relative, or a friend's relative—seemed to hear all the local gossip, and to dispense it generally.

"Tell me, Nora," said the girl, between helps of strawberries and cream, "do you know a place called Dumdrum—I think it is?"

"Dumdrum? Sure, an' I do, miss. The Miss M'Cart-

neys have it. Quare ould maids they be. Skinflints. Sure, they count the purtaties for dinner and have a French cooking book by manes of deludin' thimselves into atin' scraps with a new sort o' name. An' they take lodger folk an' calls thim friends staying wid thim. Know thim! Everyone knows thim hereabouts. An' as for Miss Judy, she's the youngest, don't ye ever be lettin' her get a foot inside yer door, Miss Doreen, for if you do you'll find it hard work to get her on the outside again."

"But why?" asked Doreen.

"Why, is it? Sure, she's one o' thim sort that just stays on by the week, or the month, as the fancy takes her. Didn't she go to Mrs. Harrison, the doctor's wife, one Christmas Eve, an' the weather bein' bad they axed her to stop the night, an' hadn't she a comb-and-brush bag hanging under her petticoat and a nightgown rolled up in her skirt? She had, indade, miss. Polly Murphy, that was housemaid at Harrison's at the time, she tould me. And she stayed there six weeks, if you belave me, miss, an' only left whin one of the children caught the scarlet fever, an' the doctor just put her into his trap an' drove her home, sayin' it was deadly infectyus. And only mazles, after all. But he had to do it, for Mrs. Harrison was a young wife, an' delicate, an' sure Miss Judy worried her near to death. Oh! she's a holy terror, miss. She is, indade."

Doreen thought of Barry Connell at the tender mercies of "skinflints," and marvelled how he would get on.

"Tell me some more stories about Irish people, Nora," she said. "They strike me as very queer at first. I suppose I'll get used to them."

"Well, Miss Doreen, as to *that* you know best yourself. They do say we're a hard people to understand, an' it's the quare ways we have. Glory be! I wouldn't be sayin' anything one way or another. Sure, God made us, an' there we are! Lave it at that, miss."

"I suppose that's all I can do," laughed the girl. "But do go on, Nora. I could just listen to you all night. Aren't there any young people around? Girls like myself?"

"Why, of course, miss. There's the two Miss McGuires. Beautiful young ladies, and can ride to hounds with any man in the county. There's the doctor's wife I was tellin' ye of. But her gyurl isn't turned ten yet. Then there's Miss Celia Durrant, a raal beauty, and an heiress in a sort of a way. She lives with her father the other side of the village. He's a retired military major. He married money, and it's to go to the daughter. Sure, miss, an' there's heaps o' gintry besides. They'll all be comin' round an' lavin' their cyards soon as they know you're in the house."

"But I can't receive visitors, Nora. Mrs. Donelly must tell them so."

"Faith, miss, it's not Mrs. Donelly, nor twinty like her, will be kapin' visitors away if they've a mind to come. It's little ye know the Irish, miss. Sure, don't they say Eve was the mother o' us all an' sint her first descendants to Ireland? And iver since there's not a thing said or done or undone but we'll know the rasin why. The devil only knows how we does it, but——"

"Oh, there's Mrs. Donelly calling! Bother her!" said Doreen.

"Sure, an' 'tis no wonder, miss; look at the time!"

"And to-morrow that horrid Mademoiselle Perigueux

will be here," sighed Doreen. "And I'll have to behave. Oh, dear me, Nora, I wish I hadn't been born an heiress, though *then* I shouldn't be father's daughter. Oh!—bother Mrs. Donnelly!"

XVI.

MADemoiselle PERIGUEUX arrived the following afternoon in a shattered and miserable condition, occasioned by a rough crossing, and general confusion of trains and missing luggage.

She was in a very bad temper when her pupil met her at the little station, and the sight of the "car" which Doreen had brought as conveyance did little towards soothing her nerves, or reconciling her to this new situation. At first she refused to get into, or rather *onto* such a vehicle, but on hearing of a six-mile walk, she at last struggled up, and clutched frantically at the side and back of the seat by way of preserving her balance.

The French language was almost helpless to express her horror, her anger, and her sense of disgust with such a country. Doreen waxed indignant on her side, and vindicated and praised as lavishly as Mademoiselle criticised and abused.

They reached the house at last, and the sight of its blank outline, and curtainless windows, and bare expanses of white plaster was a further shock to the irritated Frenchwoman.

"*Mais, mon Dieu*, this is not a château!" she exclaimed. "Oh! but how it is ugly; *affreux*; all that is of the most horrible in architecture and desolation!"

"It is very representative of Irish architecture," said

Doreen. "And every country builds its houses to suit itself. You wouldn't expect West End London set right down in this sort of scenery, any more than you'd look for a New York sky-scraper in Grosvenor Square."

"Who are those gentlemen—over there?" enquired Mademoiselle Perigueux abruptly.

Doreen looked where she pointed. She saw her friend of the previous evening, and with him a short, grey-haired man.

"Oh! that must be the Dublin architect—Mr. Raeburn!" she exclaimed. "He's come about the alterations. Oh—Mademoiselle, excuse me. There's Mrs. Donnelly, she'll show you your room. I must speak to Mr. Raeburn."

She was off, and away, and shaking hands with the two strangers before Mademoiselle Perigueux could stop her. That indignant lady found herself being addressed by a smiling, buxom person who bade her "kindly welcome," and asked her to step inside.

The hall-table, littered with papers and plans, and Doreen's riding-whip and gloves, sent Mademoiselle buzzing again in futile deprecation of things Irish and haphazardous.

Mrs. Donnelly, pitying her for "a poor forrin crayture," was not greatly impressed by her complaints. She led the way upstairs, explaining that the young lady had decided on occupying the rooms on the first floor, as "the workmen would be muddlin' and upsettin' everything below."

Mademoiselle glanced contemptuously at her comfortable bedroom, with its cool chintzes and big sofa, and the writing-table in the window. There was no modern furniture, or any attempt at artistic effects. Neat, plain,

serviceable homeliness. However, she was so tired and hot and dusty that she felt thankful for even this "barracks," as she called it. Her dressing-bag was brought in, and hot water and kitchen soap left on the wash-hand stand. Then the door closed, and she was at liberty to repair the ravages of sea and train and jaunting-car.

When she had succeeded in restoring her complexion and hair to something like their normal condition, and had attired herself in a cool, dark blue linen gown, she went to the window to look out on the lawn and general surroundings. The view was beautiful enough to salve wounded feelings and general discontent. She heard voices, and saw Doreen and the two architects standing by a tea-table which Mrs. Donnelly was spreading with manifold good things.

Mademoiselle deemed it as well to descend and take up the reins of management. But Doreen had established herself at the table, and was already pouring out tea when she reached the lawn.

"Ah, Mademoiselle, there you are. How nice and clean you look! Let me introduce you—Mademoiselle Perigueux—Mr. Raeburn—Mr. Connell. There's a chair there. Do French people drink tea? I don't know. I'm just learning to like it."

"*Mais*—what manners!" thought Mademoiselle. "And to introduce *me* to *ces messieurs*, instead of them to me. Oh—these *Américaines!*"

Very stiffly she acknowledged the bows and the offer of a chair, and then remarked that she had been long enough in England to like tea. Only not too strong.

Doreen slashed hot water into her cup, talking all the time, and manifesting supreme indifference towards her governess's frigid attitude. The two men seemed delighted

with the charming American. A French governess was a mere appendage of youth, and a sop to the Cerberus of propriety.

They ignored her efforts to break in on mutual good understanding as to the technicalities of architecture, and alterations, and effects.

"And it's possible—*really* possible? Do say? Oh! Mademoiselle, fancy, we can have the towers either side, and a raised front, and this terrace will have a balustrade and big stone vases all piled with flowers, and lovely green creeping things! It will be just perfectly lovely. I'm getting so excited I don't know how I'm going to *wait* for it all to be finished. I'd like to go to sleep and wake up to find it all done, the same as Aladdin's bride found her palace. How long do you think it's going to take, Mr. Raeburn?"

"Six or eight months," said the Dublin architect. "And that only means the outside walls and roofs. Most of the interior alterations will have to come afterwards."

"Father'll be just mad with impatience," said the girl. "Couldn't you have night shifts, same as they do in the States? That would save time."

Mr. Raeburn laughed. "All very well in a town, Miss Madison, with gas or electric light to work by. How are you going to get that *here*?"

"Oh, I forgot. But father's going to have his own dynamo. He says he simply can't stand these old smelly lamps and dripping candles!"

"You will then destroy all the old distinguished character of the place," exclaimed Mademoiselle Perigueux. "It will be neither chateau nor mansion. *Ni l'un, ni l'autre!*"

"*N'importe!*" said Doreen gaily. "I guess that's

our affair. And if father's satisfied, nothing else counts. When can you send off your—design—don't you call it, Mr. Raeburn? I'm writing to-night, and I'll tell dad what you say."

The sound of wheels disturbed reply, and a queer, shabby-looking vehicle which was neither car nor carriage suddenly appeared in the drive.

"But—who then arrives? You receive not visitors, Doreen!" exclaimed Mademoiselle Perigueux.

The girl was gazing in undisguised amazement at the two figures who had descended from the equipage. They were coming straight towards the group on the lawn.

"It's the Miss M'Cartneys, as I live!" exclaimed Barry Connell. "I warned you, Miss Madison."

But Doreen could only gaze in silent astonishment. Dresses of antique flowered silk, flounced in the fashion of early Victorian days, bonnets almost as ancient, set atop of queer, dark brown "fronts," loose ends of scarves and lace, and tight two-buttoned gloves. These made up the toilet and appearance of the two queer old ladies, one of whom was smiling affably at the young mistress of Mount Madison.

"How do you do, my dear Miss Madison? Patsy said it was you in the white dress. We've just called round as near neighbours, you know, and hearing you were left all alone here." She extended a hand.

"I'm Miss M'Cartney, of Dumdrum," she announced. "And this is my sister Judy. Ah, Mr. Connell, how's yourself? Did you give Miss Madison our messages?"

"I'm afraid I—forgot," murmured Barry Connell, handing his chair to the quaint speaker.

Mr. Raeburn fulfilled the same duty for Miss Judy, a

sharp-featured lady with piercing black eyes and a highly coloured complexion.

"Doreen!" exclaimed Mademoiselle Perigueux sharply.

The girl started, and resumed responsibilities. She introduced her governess, and then offered tea.

"Thank you, my dear," said the eldest Miss M'Cartney. "But may I suggest you have some fresh made for us? Me sister and I aren't strong in the digestion, and we can only drink fresh-made tea. China for preference."

"I'll go to the house and order it," said Connell hurriedly, as he took the tea-pot from Doreen. She met his amused eyes.

"Why—it's the cheapest Ceylon, and boiled and heated up over and over again at their own table," he whispered.

Meanwhile Mademoiselle Perigueux was being attacked in Irish-French by Miss Judy.

"J'ai etay à France un temps, Mad'mselle. J'ai l'enjoyée beaucoup."

Mademoiselle rattled off a rapid sentence which was incomprehensible, but which conveyed that her young charge was not expecting visitors during the absence of her parents. Seeing the remark was ignored, she repeated it in lucid English.

"Oh, but you mustn't look on *us* as visitors," said Miss Judy, helping herself liberally to cake and bread and butter—"to save so much handling," she explained. "We're old friends of the Madison family. Why—we used to look on this as quite a second home when we were girls. Did we not, Jane?"

"We did," mouthed her sister with an anxious look at the tea-table.

"And Sir John—he was your father's predecessor—

Miss Madison, he was that fond of us we might have been his own daughters. No children, poor man, and a great trouble that was to him. He lent us hunters and carriages, and anything at all we wanted. It was a sad day for us, Miss Madison, when we lost our good friend—sad indeed."

"A second father," echoed the younger sister. "How is it you have strawberries, me dear child? A second crop, I suppose?"

"I'm sure I don't know," said Doreen, hailing the approach of Mrs. Donnelly and fresh tea. "They're brought in twice a day from the garden."

"Ah, there now. Allow me, my dear. I'm an older woman than you, and may be privileged to pour out my own tea to my own liking."

Miss M'Cartney sat herself at the table as the house-keeper put down the tea-pot. "Ah, Mrs. Donnelly! And how are ye? Hearty and well, I'm sure. Changed times and changed ways in these parts. Ah! little we thought to see the old house and the beautiful place going to the American Continent for heirs!"

She shook her head dismally, and poured out tea for herself and her sister, adding liberal allowance of cream and sugar. Mademoiselle stared aghast at such freedom, and made an inward resolution that in future she would preside at the tea-table, and take good care to keep strange visitors in their place. The two men begged to be excused on plea of business, and walked away, leaving the group under the beech-trees to entertain themselves.

The old ladies finished the tea and the cake, and then settled themselves into the most comfortable chairs and proceeded to cross-examine the young Madison heiress

on her life, her bringing-up, her father's and mother's history, and various other interesting topics.

Doreen lost patience at last, and became virulently American. "I guess I know *now*," she said, "why folk say we're like you Irish. It's because you're so extraordinarily *curious*. I reckon you beat us. No one I've ever met in America ever asked so many questions first time of calling round on a stranger."

The two old ladies regarded their pert young hostess with amazed and outraged eyes.

"*Curious?*" exclaimed Miss Jane.

"Curious?" echoed Miss Judy. "It was——"

"Only interest. A kind and friendly interest——" said Miss Jane.

"That prompted our questions," added Miss Judy.

"Well, I've nothing more to tell you," said Doreen wearily. "I never asked father what his money was invested in, nor bothered my head about mother's maiden name. Nor do I know what a suite of rooms at the Carlton costs, nor do I want to answer any more questions. I go for a ride every evening after tea, and I see Mickey bringing round my little mare, and she does so hate waiting!"

It was as plain a hint as she could give. It shocked Mademoiselle Perigueux by its bluntness, and awoke the visitors to a sense of the length of time occupied by their visit.

They requested stiffly that their "carriage" should be ordered. A shout to Patsy from Doreen produced that vehicle so quickly it was plain the horse had not been taken out of the shafts, as they had requested should be done.

"Have you had him fed and rested?" enquired Miss Judy, as she looked at the sorrowful animal.

"Troth an' indade, miss, I didn't venture to take him out o' the shafts. I was afear'd he'd drop dead with the surprise of it," announced Patsy.

Doreen laughed in spite of herself. Patsy's sayings were always an unmixed joy to her.

"Oh, poor old thing!" she cried piteously. "I do hope he's had something to eat?"

"He has that, miss," said Patsy. "He's ate his fill; nosebag and all."

He dangled a dilapidated article by a strap, as the weird driver shambled up from the stableyard.

The Miss M'Cartneys ignored juvenile impertinence, and commenced their farewells.

"I hope you and Mam'zelle there will come round to see us at Dumdrum, Miss Madison. Me sister and I will be delighted. Any afternoon. Good-bye now. *Au revoir*, Mam'zelle."

"*Adew!*" echoed Miss Judy. "*Jusko la dernier foi,*" she added, with fine confusion of meaning as to a next visit. Then they struggled into their chariot, and were driven off down the avenue.

"Never to be asked *inside* the house! There's manners for ye!" exclaimed Miss Jane.

"Manners, indeed? 'Tis none at all they have; either the girl, or the Frenchwoman. I'm thinking she won't be much acquisition in these parts, Jane."

"You're right, Judy. I was thinking the same. And to go pulling the place to pieces like they're talking of doing. Not good enough for Americans? The idea! Cocking themselves up with importance, and everyone in the county knowing it was just an outside sort of cousin this man only was, and his money made in trade, I've no doubt."

"The girl is simply odious!" exclaimed Miss Judy. "Spoilt, pert, stuck up. There's for ye with American liberty and equality now!"

"But we must put up with her. Let's be prudent, me dear. 'Tis a fine house to get the run of, and we must be in with the family. I'm just dying to see what Sir Patrick's wife is like."

"Like the daughter, I suppose. Only older—and stouter. I'm told all American women lose their figures at thirty. I wonder if it's the ice-water?" she added thoughtfully.

"That was a fine little horse the girl was waiting to ride," said Miss Jane presently. "Where did she get it now? 'Tis but a week since she came to the place."

"Maybe she had him sent down from London, or Dublin. I wonder whether she'll be huntin' this winter?"

"Of course. There's not a blessed thing else to do. Judy, dear, I could see that French *bonne* was impressed by me brocade. It mayn't be the latest fashion, but it 'ud be hard to beat the mytarial."

"It would that," said Miss Judy. "Now here's the lodge. I want a word with Mary Rooney. Stop a minute, will ye, Timothy?" she called to the coachman.

He obeyed. Mrs. Rooney came out, dropping a curtsy of discretion. The Miss M'Cartneys were "county" and well-known.

"And how are ye, Mary?" enquired Miss Jane eagerly, bending down to gossip in a mood of curiosity and caution commingled. "Ye're looking fine. Great times these, and great changes. Ah! for the old days. We'll never see them back again!"

"Well, Miss M'Cartney, I'm not one to quarrel with prisint times. Sure, there's worse goin'. Ye've seen the

young lady at the house, I suppose? Isn't she the darlin', an' a raal beauty too. Sure, we wanted some o' that sort, I'm thinkin'."

"Oh, she's well enough," deprecated Miss Jane. "But no manners, Mary. No manners at all. Just a free-and-easy American hoyden. She won't be popular in the county at all."

"Oh, well, I don't know, miss. The gintlemen seem to take to her, anyway."

"Gentlemen! Who? Who has called on them?" exclaimed Miss Judy eagerly.

"Why, thin, Captain Mallory has been there often enough. I've heard it's he has got the handlin' of the stables. A fine job it is, too. For Sir Patrick, he knows nothing about horses. Nothing at all, Miss M'Cartney. And he lets the Captain choose just what he likes, and pays his price. And—well—we knows what goes into the daler's pockets, miss; and who takes the difference. Not that I'd be for sayin' anything agin the Captain; a raal gintleman an' wid the pleasant wurrd for iveryone. But Tom Tracey, he giv me the wink whin it came to two saddle horses and a jinnet for the cyar, an' money down on the spot too. An' loose-boxes an' stalls to be turned upside down, an' Mickey beyant not a voice in the matter. Only—'The Captain says—the Captain orders.' Well, well, they knows their own bizness, of coorse. But that's the way of it, Miss M'Cartney."

"Have you heard what's going to be done to the house, Mary?" enquired Miss Judy mysteriously.

"Hurrd—is it, miss? Why, the talk of it 'ud fill a newspaper. There's archytexts and workmen comin' from Doblin, an' they do say from England. Not but what it'll be a good thing for the village, seein' they must have

places to slape in, an' food to ate. And Mrs. Donelly, she's bin axin' me could I take a lodger, an' a pound a week I'm to git for it. I could do very well wid that, miss, though Sir Patrick's payin' me five pounds more than Sir John did. I thought it was only my duty to ask that, miss, seein' he's by way o' bein' an Amerikin, an' sure, we know 'tis just rowlin' in money they be over there."

"Indeed, you did right, Mary," said Miss Jane. "And now good day to ye. Drive on, Timothy."

Timothy signified to the weary steed that it might proceed. Then Miss Jane turned eagerly to her sister.

"You see, Judy, me dear, we were wise to get our foot in at once. There's money flowing out o' the very doors of Mount Madison. We may as well get something in the shape of entertainment and hospitality."

"Why not?" said Miss Judy. "And I was thinking, Jane, we might accommodate some of those work-people. There's the lodge. We could fix up a couple of bedrooms there, and another over the stable loft. Sure, Tim wouldn't mind where he slept, if 'twas in the stables themselves."

So the Wheel rolled on. The Wheel of lucre and greed. Wherever the shadow of the millionaire fell there hovered, too, the darker shadow of self-interest and rapacity. For whatever wealth may bring, it is never an unmixed blessing to its owner.

XVII.

DOREEN was reading a letter from her stepmother. It was long and full of interesting details, and the girl was alternately astonished and amused at its contents.

"I miss you very much, specially when I go driving," wrote Octavia. "They say here the season's breaking up, but seems to me the Park is as full as ever. Some more friends of Lady L. have called. They're all very much like her. They just come in, and hop about and drink tea, and then go off somewhere else. And I'm that confused over their names. But I'd like to tell you about that party of Lord Sallust's. It was quaint. I never saw such a room. Black and red; and great Indian and African figures set about with bowls of flowers, and electric lights in their eyes. I was skeered. And he—Lord Sallust—dressed like a Japanese, or was it Indian? I'm sure I don't know. And little pages handed tea and coffee and ices, and such queer folk. The women dyed and painted, like so they were on the stage, and talking the queerest kind of talk. And there was music. Lord Sallust sings just beautiful, and someone with long hair played a fiddle, only they called it a violin. And someone else stood up and talked poetry. I guess that was funniest of all! And that woman with the small waist and big bosom and scarlet-red lips, she was there in dead white silk with fringes, and a black hat like a cart-wheel. And they were all

"Half a Truth."

cackling and screaming fit to kill. Then Lady Lucille said she'd sing, and she went to the pianar (there were *two*). She sang that coon song, same as she did on the boat; and really, Doreen, I got that riled I couldn't sit still, and it came to me sudden like that I'd give her a lesson. So I got up and went over to Lord Sallust, and, 'My lord,' I says, 'will you let me show you how a coon song ought to be sung?' And he smiles and, 'Of course, my dear Lady Madison,' he says. And sort of conducted me to the pianar in the black part of the room. Told folks to be quiet and listen attentive, and sort of picture to themselves a plantation and a moonlight night, and the coon lover serenading his mistress under the stars. 'No, my lord, she wasn't *that*,' I said. 'There's no talk of master or mistress with black folk, among themselves.' And everyone laughed fit to kill. Well, I sat down. It's long enough since I played a pianar, Doreen, but somehow it all just came back. I forgot the queer folk sitting around, and where I was, and everything but just the dear old days in Kentucky and the way I've heard them coons singing nights in the South. I did it as I used to when I was a girl and your father was courting me. And when I stopped—that friend of yours—Chris Kennaway—came up, and there was a sort of mist in his eyes. 'Heavens, Lady Madison,' he says, 'what a *magnificent* voice. Why have you been hiding your light under a bushel all this time?' And, my word, Doreen, there was such applause I felt real silly. And who should be standing in the archway listening, but your father. Dumb-struck he seemed to find it was *me* there was all the fuss about, and Lady Lucille looking just savage. She came up afterwards in that cold, sneering way of hers. 'I *congratulate* you, Lady Madison,' she said. 'It was so good one almost

could believe it was the *real* thing.' Now what did she mean, Doreen? Surely not that *I* was a coon. That would be too funny. But then, the ignorance of Europeans about us in America, it's just surprising.

"And now good-bye for the present. I do hope you and the French school-marm are hitting it off. Don't let her forget her place, though. Kisses and love from your lonely and none-too-happy
MOTHER.

"P.S.—I forgot to say that Mr. Kennaway asked *most* particular after you. And he seemed real sorry you hadn't come back to London. Lady Lucille was so rude to him I'd like to have slapped her!"

"Well, the idea! Mother *singing* at a London party! Mother with a voice. I declare if it isn't the most surprising thing that's happened yet," said Doreen, as she folded the many closely written sheets together. "Ah, *bon jour*, Mademoiselle. You are not so *exacte*, as one says; punctual, you know. I've had such a long letter from mother. Madame, my *mère*. She seems awful lonesome without me. Do you think I ought to go back and cheer her up a bit?"

"Go back! *Retourner à Londres*—across that Channel so horrible? *Mais non. Certainement non! Vraiment*, Doreen, you are the most—what shall I say?—changeable girl. Never do you know from day to day what it is you want to do."

"You're quite wrong. I *do* know; but you never want me to do it. One whole month we've been here, and I'm getting so bored. You seem to have no idea, Mademoiselle, of how an American girl is accustomed to be treated. If it wasn't for Rosemary I'd be ready to jump into the first train and go right off to mother this minute."

"You are placed under my charge, and it is my duty to see you conduct yourself with propriety."

"Propriety? I'm sick of hearing that word! I don't wonder French wives are all immoral when once they get their freedom. It is the reaction after unnatural training when they were girls."

"How *dare* you say such things, Doreen? How can you, a *jeune fille* of sixteen years——"

"Seventeen—next month," interrupted Doreen.

"That is of no importance; even seventeen. What can you know of life and morality—more especial of French morality?"

"There isn't any. So I've heard," said Doreen.

"For shame, Mademoiselle! You should not let yourself say such things atrocious. Never have I had a pupil so ill-mannered; so self-willed. If it was not that I had promised your good father——"

"To look after his troublesome daughter for a good salary, *jamais—jamais* would I be here! I know it by heart, Mademoiselle. You have said it so often."

Mademoiselle Perigueux drank her coffee in silence. She had only come to this hateful dull Irish village because of the generous salary, and because of a little unexplained understanding between herself and Lady Lucille. But already in one month's experience she had learnt that Doreen Madison was anything but the pliable, teachable, meek *jeune fille* to whom she was accustomed.

That the meek ones were as refractory and wild beneath the surface as Doreen showed herself above it, never occurred to her. They had presented the orthodox regulation pattern demanded by Society; they had married well, and under due direction. That was all that mattered. For aching hearts, and empty lives, and soul-

less bargains, and broken vows Mademoiselle cared nothing. They—did not come under her jurisdiction. They were not her concern. French methods were distinctly the best, and it had been her duty to explain that in so momentous a subject as marriage, a girl could not possibly choose for herself. That was for her parents and guardians to do for her. Doreen presented supreme indifference to the subject. A silent battle waged perpetually between herself and her teacher. The only way the girl could escape was by ordering Rosemary and galloping off under the care of Patsy or Mickey.

She had not deemed it necessary to inform Mademoiselle Perigueux that the escort was often supplemented by a third person. Neither had it occurred to Mademoiselle to remark on the frequent absences of Brian O'Lynn. Her ignorance of stable matters and her indifference to horses kept her away from either the stables or the horses. Once Doreen was mounted and off, she troubled no more about her until she returned. And the girl felt no inclination to take her into her confidence.

Meanwhile the work of alteration went on rapidly, under the joint supervision of Barry Connell, an English foreman, and a staff of workmen. General confusion and the necessary accumulation of building materials made the greater portion of the house and the terrace quite unapproachable. No more visitors came, and, as Mademoiselle had decreed it would not be *comme il faut* for a young girl to return calls in the absence of her parents, Doreen did not pay that expected visit to Dumdrum. But Captain Mallory came round occasionally to see how the new loose-boxes were progressing, and made himself so agreeable to Mademoiselle that she offered no objection to his staying to luncheon or tea. She had heard he was

a widower, and that he lived in a fine old Irish mansion. Also he was *vrai Catholique*, so they had that in common. The ready courtesies and flatteries of the Irish tongue were new to her, and she took Mallory's compliments as a personal tribute to herself.

This amused Doreen greatly, and was also communicated to Octavia, who said nothing, but thought the more.

She was growing very weary of London. She had asked Madison to take her over to Ireland and let her stay there with Doreen. But this he refused.

"The house hasn't a habitable room," he said. "And you'd only be in the way. Besides, Doreen wouldn't be talking French all the time if you were there. And Mademoiselle Perigueux guarantees to keep conversation on those lines. I want Doreen turned out as near the finished article as possible. You'd just spoil her."

"Well, I don't know how I'm goin' to get along till Christmas without a sight of her," lamented Octavia. "I think it's cruel to expect it, Patrick."

"You can come over to Paris with me next month. That'll amuse you, I guess. They say it's the American woman's idea of Paradise."

"I reckon I wouldn't want Paradise to be so gay, or so wicked," announced his wife. "I'm sick of shops and streets, and all the foolish talk I hear. It's come to me somehow, Patrick, that it's not what life was *meant* for. It ought to be a better thing; a more serious thing. We ha'n't no right to think only of ourselves and our pleasure and amusement. And that's all we seem to do here."

"What's taken you? Got religion?" asked Madison. "It's what women take to as a rule when they're too old for lovers. I s'pose you've been loafing around these

cathedrals, or listening to Father Addler at the Oratory, and now you want to sell all you have and give it to the poor. But as you don't happen to have anything 'cept what I give you, you'll have to sacrifice yourself for duty. Marriage is a protection sometimes. Specially when priests get foolin' around a silly woman."

"Oh! I know you never give a serious thought to the next world. You're only concerned with this. And yet the other's so near, Patrick. A turn of the street, a collide with a motor, a fall off your horse, and *this* is all over. And you're face to face with——"

"Hang it all!" exclaimed Madison irritably. "I guess I didn't come in here for a sermon. Can't think what's come to you, Octavia. You're not feeling sick?"

"No," she said resignedly. "But I'm none too happy. I never have been, Patrick, since—well, since you forsook me. I daresay 'twas my fault. I was only a sort o' servant, and losin' my looks, and too tired to dress up, or trouble 'bout my figure, or how my hair was done; and then I couldn't give you a child, and so I just lost you. Now—it's all too late. Life's got sort o' complicated. You seem to suit it better than I do. Oh! don't think I complain. Only I mayn't be altogether such a mindless fool as your fine friends think me."

Madison stared at her in mute amazement. What was happening to Octavia? Ever since that day when she had sung, and silenced all criticism by the beauty of her voice, she had seemed different.

What queer creatures women were! You never knew what they would do next.

The conditions of his married life had been revolutionised once for all. There was no going back. Neither did he wish to do it. There was a new order in things.

Men and women stood in a different position. The same standard wouldn't suit both. Perhaps Octavia had recognised the fact. But yet—he had always looked upon her as the old-fashioned type of woman. Purely domestic and commonplace; unaware that such a word as "complex" would describe her.

"I don't suppose anyone thinks you a mindless fool," he said at last. "Least of all—me. I haven't forgotten how generously you met me over a very difficult matter. It meant so much to me; and I was half afraid to ask you."

"You mean Doreen?"

"Yes. That you and she get on so well just amazes me. But I don't mean it unkind, Octavia, when I say it's better for her to have a spell to herself and get into a proper sort o' way of speaking and behaving."

"Oh! of course, I'm not a lady, if you mean that; it comes hard mincin' words and sayin' what you don't mean. Still—I don't think any harm has ever come to Doreen along o' me. And I know she likes having me to talk to. I suppose it don't occur to you, Patrick, that I'm a very lonely woman?"

"I've offered you any kind of pleasure or amusement you'd care to have."

"I know. But somehow I don't care to have it, and I kind o' clash with Lady Lucille. Oh! I'm not *jealous!* That was all dead and buried long ago. But I can't help seeing how taken up you are with her, and only nat'ral. You give me all you can. I guess no man could do more'n that."

"He can't," said Madison, looking at her curiously. Had he ever loved her? Loved her with the passion and recklessness of youth? It seemed impossible. Yet she was a handsome woman still in the opulent, lazy style of

her race. And good-hearted—that he knew. But it seemed extraordinary how very short a time her charm had endured for him. Then active life, audacity, ambition, had asserted stronger claims. He had consolidated them into a solid structure of success. And he was barely fifty years of age, and hale and strong as any man of forty.

The sense of irritation which Octavia always managed to awake in him, spoke out again as he looked at her patient face. Why couldn't she be content? He had given her everything he could. And what spirit of contrariety prompted this demand for Doreen? Doreen was not hers. She had no claim on her affection. Besides, he had a jealous fear of intervention between his love and his effort at atonement. He broke the long silence at last.

"Then—you don't want to come to Paris, Octavia?"

"No, Patrick. I want to go to Ireland."

He made an impatient movement. "I've told you the place is upside down. Only two or three rooms fit to use. And just a housekeeper, and some stupid Irish servants."

"Well," she said, with her slow, sweet smile, "haven't I known what it is to have *no* housekeeper and *no* servants, and a shack to live in?"

"Oh—thunder! Can't you forget those things? You certainly are a most exasperating woman, Octavia!"

"Maybe," she said calmly. "'Tisn't given us all to be hypocrites. I kind o' feel bad about this, Patrick. The girl is so young, and only that Frenchwoman to look after her, and I've heerd say you can't count on *their* morals with too much confidence. Did you know there was a New York acquaintance staying there? A young

man who's superintending the architect works; name o' Barry Connell."

Madison started. "No—I never heard. Who told you?"

"Why, Doreen, of course. She seems mighty friendly with him. They go ridin' together. He's always mentioned in her letters."

"Why didn't you tell me before?" exclaimed her husband sharply.

The calm, oxlike eyes surveyed him placidly. "'Tain't so often you give me the chance of having a word with you, and like as not I get Doreen's letter night post, and don't see you afore dinner-time next day."

"I wish to heavens you'd learn to speak decent English," he said irritably. "And as for keeping all this to yourself instead of telling me straight out, that's just the sort o' fool thing I might reckon on your doing. Doreen hasn't said anything to *me* about this fellow. I wonder could it be the same as came over with us in the boat? He was in the second class."

"Not much account, then?"

"I don't know. He was a well-spoken, well-set-up young chap enough. But I don't want him hanging around *my* daughter."

"I should ha' thought that a young man of good position, and not too much set on himself, would make the safest sort o' husband for—your daughter."

"What do you mean?" asked Madison, turning on her fiercely.

"I know what your ambition is reck'ning on, Patrick. But take care you don't spoil Doreen's life—as—as you've spoiled others. These feckless, idle popinjays that hang around Lady Lucille and her set aren't the sort o' men to reckon on as husbands."

"I'm not thinking of them in that light," he said. "I've sized them up long ago. They all think I'm a new man, and are keen on exploiting me. But I'm not a fool. It suits me to give them a run for their money. But I guess I know what side of the covert I'll land in."

Madison had been reading "Jorrocks," and was practising colloquialisms.

He left the room and went away to think over what Octavia had said. After all, why shouldn't she go to Ireland? It would leave him free and unshackled for these blank months when London was a desert, and Goodwood and Cowes, and then the moors and the various foreign "*Bads*" represented where everyone went who possessed any sort of self-respect—or was anyone. That he was an outsider and might find neither place nor welcome did not occur to him. True, he was not a magnate, like Rockefeller, or a Wall Street Star, like Vanderbilt, but he was rich enough to buy favours and repay assistance. Only—he was not quite sure yet of his purchase.

Lady Lucille had done very little, though she had promised largely. But next season he would have a town-house of his own, and Doreen should be presented. Her beauty and his wealth would surely bring him the notice he required, and the success he demanded. At present things were at a standstill. But he had much to learn, and he was acutely observant. Ireland might be a useful political card. There was no reason why he should not represent his county on the Unionist side. Meantime he was learning to ride without stirrups, and to take a hurdle without clinging to his horse's mane. He would fill the Irish stables, and entertain Lady Lucille and a few choice spirits for Christmas. He would shine before

them as a landed proprietor, who knew how things should be done, and whose 'cute American brains had turned a commonplace Irish house into an hotel of comfort and convenience. If Mount Madison, which was to be rechristened Castle Madison, didn't astonish them, then he had no faith in Irish architects and American dollars.

The thought of architects brought to his mind his wife's mention of that steamer acquaintance. It was odd that Doreen had said nothing about him in her letters.

It seemed a coincidence that Raeburn and Co., of Dublin, must needs send this man, of all men, to superintend the work of structural alterations. Half of July; August, September, October, November, December. He counted the months slowly, and again debated as to whether Octavia should be sent over to safeguard Doreen. He had little faith in the Frenchwoman. They were all *intrigantes* and time-servers. He could not stay there himself. Yes, perhaps Octavia might be useful. He would run over again the next week-end and take her with him. It would be a saving in many ways. The Carlton was ruinously expensive, and the estimates for work and alterations emphasised a considerable amount of his capital. Yet it would be money well spent, and the place would be for Doreen—and her children afterwards.

He sat down and wrote to the girl at once, telling her that he and his wife would be over the following week, and she must try to get some rooms ready for them.

Then he dressed, and went out to a theatre-supper with Lady Lucille and some of her very special smart friends.

XVIII.

"OH! what a treat it is to be just nat'ral and simple once again!"

Octavia—Lady Madison—leant back in the largest and easiest of the wicker chairs, and sighed with a serene content that was almost pathetic.

They had arrived the previous day, amidst a confusion of carts, and bricklayers, and workmen. They had found the house in that hopeless condition of upheaval necessitated by rebuilding. Doreen had given up her own large room to her stepmother, and found a smaller one at the end of the corridor for herself. She had deemed it best to keep to the arrangement of the little sitting-room for meals, as nothing downstairs was habitable, and yet Octavia had been delighted with everything. No discomfort troubled her. Simple food and plain cooking and Mrs. Donnelly as attendant seemed the happiest contrast to the Carlton, and a staff of foreign waiters, and the overladen *menus* of *table d'hôte*. Even Madison was not inclined to grumble, for circumstances were overruling, and he was too pleased with the expedition of his architects and their men to trouble about anything else.

The idea of the towers at either end of the square, white frontage pleased him greatly, and though installation of electric light and heating apparatus would not be feasible at present, there was all next year for that. He

merely wanted to use the house for a couple of months. To show Lady Lucille and her friends what he could do "on his own," and to impress the country generally during the hunting season. He had been a little brusque and off-hand with the subordinate architect. He made no secret of his surprise at coincidences, but Barry Connell was not a man to be easily set down. He knew as much of Madison's rise to fortune as was necessary. He disclaimed any inequality save that of wealth, and treated his employer with an easy indifference that defied patronage. He was his superior by right of education and intelligence. If he had to accept orders, he took care they should not proceed from ignorance or arrogance.

Doreen carried off the situation with equal coolness. She had not mentioned Mr. Connell, because she thought her father must have known he was Mr. Raeburn's assistant. That was all. And Madison made the usual masculine error of attributing female reticence to indifference. Pride withheld any questioning of Mademoiselle Perigueux. He would not allow that his daughter could do anything needing *espionage*. And Mademoiselle, who had seen nothing and was at present pleasantly flattered by the attentions of Captain Mallory, made no mention of anything except Doreen's studies, her increasing fluency, but still *bourgeois* accent, and a certain strain of wilfulness that possibly was an American inheritance, and therefore difficult to combat.

Madison visited his stables and contemplated Brian O'Lynn with a proud sense of ownership.

"Why don't you try him, father?" asked Doreen. "You say you've had a good month's practice. He's quite easy. I know; because Mr. Connell has ridden him. He says he's as nearly perfect as a horse can be."

"What right had Connell to ride my horse?" demanded Madison fiercely.

"Why, father, you're never *cross*? Didn't Captain Mallory say Brian must be exercised? And I told Mr. Connell I'd as soon he rode him as Mickey."

"Does he ride well?"

"Very well," answered Doreen. "You should see Brian take fences! It's just perfectly lovely. Come out with me after tea and see how you like him."

Madison agreed.

Not for the world would he have pleaded nervousness. But in reality, as he waited for the horses to be brought round, he was envying Doreen her indifference and composure. His wife, enjoying weak tea and sweet cakes in the cool shade of the garden, heard of his projected excursion with surprise. But as she looked at his well-knit, muscular frame, and strong hands, she felt assured that riding and jumping would come just as easy to him as other things.

It was with a new sense of pride and proprietorship that she watched the father and daughter trot off down the avenue. Mademoiselle Perigieux's eyes were envious. "Ah! if it only arrived that I could make the *promenade à cheval*," she said. "But I have in me the fear that makes one nervous. Yet Captain Mallory assures me I should look *magnifique* in the saddle, and would soon be at my ease."

"I wonder you don't try," said Octavia, as she went back to her chair and the shade of the chestnuts. "There's plenty of horses, isn't there? Get a quiet one to commence. Doreen says there's nothing to learn 'cept the way of holding the reins; or is it a curb? Something to do with the control of the animal anyway."

Mademoiselle, with longing thoughts of the handsome Irishman and the coming season when he had assured her "everyone that could sit a donkey would be following hounds," wondered if she could possibly screw up her courage to the pitch of mounting onto a horse's back, and allowing it to amble about with her. Something very quiet and tame, that would eat sugar out of her hand and never go any faster than she desired? But there was nothing, as yet, in the stables that seemed to come up to that standard, and she hardly fancied her employer would see fit to purchase a special mount for his daughter's governess.

"How long do you propose staying on here, Madame?" she asked suddenly.

"I? Why, right on, I guess. I think this park is just perfectly lovely. I haven't seen anything like it in Louisville. And most people I know in London are going away, so I may just as well stay here—now I've come."

"But the discomfort; the inconvenience?"

"I'm not so keen on grandeur that I'd fall out with any o' them," said Octavia. "I've got a nice apartment, and I think Mrs. Donelly is just a *dear*. I reckon I could listen to her talkin' all day."

"It is possible you will," said Mademoiselle. "They begin once these people, and one knows not when they will finish. And what a language of barbarity! *Mon Dieu!*"

"I like it. I can understand them right enough. Even at Dublin, after leaving the boat."

"Ah, that boat!" shuddered Mademoiselle. "It gives me the nightmares to think of having to go back again over that Channel of horrors!"

"I sat on deck with a good rug and never felt any

trouble," said Octavia. . . . "Who is this coming along, Mademoiselle? Do you know?"

"*That?* Oh, he is one of the architects. Monsieur Donnell—no, Connell—that is his name."

"Ah, Doreen wrote to me about him."

She looked curiously at the young man as he came towards her and raised his hat.

"Excuse me. I wanted a word with Sir Patrick."

"He's gone for a ride with my daughter," said Octavia. "Are you Mr. Barry Connell?"

"I am."

"I suppose it's nothin' I could do?" She glanced at the paper in his hands.

"Hardly," he said, smiling. "It's a question of elevation. I wanted to know if Sir Patrick really wished his towers so high that they could be seen from the park gates."

"Oh, I expect he does," said Octavia. "He sort o' wants the place to look important. And he wouldn't be likely to spoil it for a few feet of height, or a load or more extra bricks. But he'll be back inside of an hour and you could ask him."

He lifted his hat and turned away.

"A nice-spoken young man," said Octavia. "What do you do after tea, Ma'm'zelle? Walk——?"

"Sometimes. I find it very *triste* here. No one to talk to, for one counts not one's pupil as a companion. And no proper carriage, only that horror one calls an "outside car." And then the house in such condition. Truly I have made sacrifices for sake of your daughter, Madame."

"I reckon you counted it all into your salary," said Octavia, rising languidly from the chair. "I never heard

"*Half a Truth.*"

of any school-marm in America getting five hundred a year and all expenses. Seems a payin' concern this side. Well—I'm goin' to order that car to come round, and drive to the old Castle. Will you come, Mademoiselle?"

Mademoiselle at first refused, but then thought better of it. It would be something to do, and Castle Derg lay on the road to Mallory's place.

So the order was given and the sturdy jennet came round, driven by Patsy in new, neat livery, and very full of his own importance.

He regarded the two ladies with smiling doubt. "I'm hopeful the cyar will stand the pair o' yez," he said. "But I wouldn't take me oath av it."

"We don't desire to hear your opinions, *petit cocher*," said Mademoiselle Perigueux haughtily. "We only wish that you drive us with care, and not too much speed. And make not your animal gallop up the hills."

"I will not, your ladyship, if I can help it. But seein' the crayture's a will o' her own, I couldn't be houlding her back whin she sees a bit o' risin' ground."

"Oh! but I hope you can hold her back, Patsy," said his mistress. "You see, I'm new to cars, and to this country too, and I shouldn't like to face a runaway horse."

"Ye won't be facin' her at all, me lady," said Patsy affably. "Sure, ye just sit sideways, an' kape yer eyes in front av ye, an' divil a bit ye'll know it isn't trottin' she is. Will ye be gettin' up on the step, me lady, or do ye need a footstool to help ye?"

"I—I guess I can do it," said Octavia, seizing the rail either side of the seat and scrambling up less awkwardly than her figure promised.

Mademoiselle mounted on the other side, and then

the boy sprang up into his seat and told the jennet to "take it aisy." There was no need to sweat herself into a "lather of fermentation."

The little animal trotted gaily down the avenue and out of the gates, and then Patsy walked her up a "by-lane" as he called it, with an audibly expressed wish that they'd not be meetin' one o' thim motor-cyars, seein' the divil himself couldn't pass one way or the other if they did.

"We have a car of our own coming down next week," observed Octavia. "Sir Patrick says it's the best way o' gettin' about."

"Best way o' drivin' the horses mad," said Patsy. "We hates those whizzin', screechin' ould machines these parts. Dashin' to blazes, an' not a look behind to see whether ye're smashed to smithereens or drownin' in the ditch. No one wid sinse 'ud drive one whin there's good horseflesh an' dacint outside cyars to be had."

"Sorry you don't seem more set on them," said Octavia. "But you won't have to drive it. There's an experienced *chauffeur* coming from town with it."

"And where's the machine to stand? Have ye thought o' that, me lady?" demanded the boy. "There's no place in the stables at all."

"Sir Patrick said it was to go in the carriage-house," said Octavia. "Do be careful, Patsy! Isn't the horse going very fast? See how the car rocks."

"She do be steppin' out," said the boy. "But don't be afraid, me lady. There's no harm in her. She's just wishin' to get past the wather. There's a bridge here an' she don't like it. Signs on, I'm thinkin' she's been ridden by the 'little people.' It's just terror-s thruck she do be whin she's to cross a stream."

"Then why did you bring her this way?" asked Octavia, gazing apprehensively at the laid-back ears and odd plunging movements of the "fairy-ridden" animal.

"Sure, an' didn't ye say I was to take ye to the haunted Castle? (God betwane us an' harm!) There now, ye schamer, quiet wid ye—quiet! I'd best be leadin' her, yer ladyship. She'll not go over that bridge."

"Oh! do anything, if you can only stop her from kicking like that!" implored his mistress.

Mademoiselle was clinging terror-struck to the sides of the car, and wishing she had never consented to the drive. But Patsy sprang down and went to the head of the plunger, and coaxed, and patted, and finally led her over the fragile wooden bridge. Once across the water the jennet behaved herself again, and went at an even and safer pace along the narrow road which wound and twisted in the most unforeseen fashion. Finally it landed them at a broken fence. Beyond was a weed-grown track over which great trees twined and bent into natural arches.

"That's the ould avenue," said the boy. "If ye wants to get into the Castle ye just go straight along—a matter o' a quarter or half a mile—thin ye come to the entrance. I wouldn't be goin' into that same meself, not at this time o' night. There's quare things do be seen there, so I've heard."

"What sort of things?" asked Octavia, as she gazed through the dusky archway.

"The Lord knows, me lady. Ghosts, and sich-like. There was murdher done there once, ye know, me lady, in ancient times. 'Tis that's the rayson they calls it Castle Derg, manin' the Red Castle, as, av coorse, ye knows, seein' it's yer ladyship's own property."

"But why can't you drive us up to the house? I see a gate over there," asked Octavia.

"Drive ye? Would I be drivin' ye there afther sun-down, is it? Not for a bag o' gowld laid at me feet, me lady."

"What shall we do, Ma'm'zelle?" asked Octavia.

The Frenchwoman shuddered. "Oh—ask not that I wander through that dark, strange place, Madame! I have not the courage. And even then, what would one see? An old, ugly ruin. *C'est tout.*"

"But it's our Castle, and I guess I want to see it," said Octavia obstinately.

"Sure, an' ye can do that, me lady," said Patsy. "There's yer road, an' maybe nothin' will harm ye, bein' as ye are one o' the family, though forrin at that. Will I give ye a hand down off the cyar?"

Octavia debated with herself, and finally concluded she would get down and explore some portion, at least, of the avenue. She walked on and on until an opening in the trees showed her the hill on which the Castle had stood in olden times. It faced her now in the glow of the warm August sky, a ruin of former glory.

It looked very desolate. No song of bird or any sign of life enlivened the stillness. The natural terrace below the entrance was a wild riot of weeds and creepers, with here and there a blaze of colour from some patch of wild flowers. As Octavia looked up at the tower with its windowless arches, she was surprised to see a face looking out. A strange, white face, framed in white hair, and a shawl drawn close about the head.

"Someone else has come to have a look round," she thought. "I wonder who she is, anyway?"

She moved forward and came out from the shade of

the trees. Then she glanced up again at the aperture. There was nothing there.

"Perhaps she saw me, and is coming down. It was a woman, anyway."

She stood there at the foot of the long slope and waited, expecting to see someone come out of the arched entrance. But moment after moment passed and no one appeared. Octavia grew thoughtful.

"Of course, there's other ways of gettin' out of the place. I reckon I won't go in—not to-night. I'll get Doreen——"

She started. Close at her elbow, coming there without sound or warning, stood a strange figure. The figure of a woman with a shawl over her white hair. She was bent and aged, and her face was thin and very white, but her eyes glowed with a strange, wild light as she looked up into the calm, surprised face of Octavia.

"Who are ye?" she whispered. "And why do ye come to this evil place?"

"Evil?" echoed Octavia. "I guess I don't know anything about that! It's my place—at least it's my husband's. I just wanted to look around and see the Castle."

"The Castle!" said the woman. "An ill place, and ill luck to them as owns it. Murdher was done there, and the red stain is on its stones, and nothin' in the livin' wurld will wash thim clane agin. Sorrow it brought and sorrow it brings, and ne'er a one o' the race but has lived to regret the day it was his. There's a curse on it and thim that inherits it. I see the shadow o' pain and guilt above yer own head, and another that's young and innocent, and bears the curse o' shame. Some has brought guilt here, and some black shame and bitter

wrong, but ye, who have crossed sea and land, and have strange blood in yer veins, ye carry a saycret and a curse, and yer schemes shall fail, and yer heritage be wasted. And to the land from whence ye came ye shall return!"

"Good heavens! What do you mean, woman? Are you mad?" exclaimed Octavia, shrinking back from the uplifted hand that seemed menacing her.

"Mad? 'Tis what they always calls the wise ones as sees the future, and knows the workin' o' evil."

"But who are you? How can you know anything about me, or my family?"

"I'm one whose sowl is in torment, and whose heart has bin broke, and whose life is accursed. Poverty's mine, and the fear o' men and women. I eat the bread o' charity, and 'tis a bitter thing. A lost craythur I am, and my own name I've forgot, and hate is all that's left me."

"I'm real sorry for you!" exclaimed Octavia. "You ought to have a home, and some comfort. Will you come around to the house yonder—Mount Madison, you know? You shall have food and a bed, and I'll see what can be done for you. Why, it's just terrible to think you've neither friend, nor child, and you so old and helpless."

The sweet, drawling voice, the compassionate gaze seemed to act like a spell on the half-demented creature. She stood gazing at the kindly speaker as if seeking confirmation of her words.

"I'm more used to curses than kindness," she said. "But the God above bless you for thim wurds. A lost craythur thanks ye, lady; but it's not for her to accept the bread or shelter of the race she hates. Still, if ye'd give her a silver coin to buy bread, and kape the bit o'

life in her, she'll tell thim as works evil to spare ye. Aye—that will she this same blessed night."

Octavia took out her purse and poured its contents, gold and silver alike, into the withered hand.

"Poor soul!" she murmured again. "I wish you would let me help you. Money soon goes. I'd like to do you some real good. What is your name?"

The wrinkled fingers closed greedily on the money. For a moment the aged face looked fierce and avaricious.

"They calls me 'Wandering Kate,'" she said slowly. "There's no one hereabouts but knows me, and fears me too. For they say 'tis I've the Evil Eye. (More power to it.) And for fear I'd be puttin' the spell on thim, they gives me bite and sup whin I asks it."

"But surely there must be some place, some home where you could be taken in and end your days?" exclaimed Octavia. "Wouldn't your parish priest help you?"

"Praste, is it?" The woman's eyes blazed fiercely. "To hell wid thim all! A lyin', thievin', desayvin' set. Tellin' us they hould the keys o' heaven and purgatory, and kapin' us bound sowl and body in chains o' fear! Sure, isn't it they who've hounded me and persecuted me all on account of the one I loved, and him the other faith? Heretic, they called him. Then God bless heretics, say I, and the man who was mine, and whom they persecuted out o' sinse and rayson till he turned on one and spake the truth of what he was, and thin the evil came on us. Ah—the sad day!" She shuddered violently and drew the shawl over her face, her voice dying into sobs.

"They murdhered him," she went on, rocking her body to and fro in helpless abandonment. "Kep him in

the jail till he withered and died for want of the free air, and the beautiful earth he loved. And I—Oh! my heart broke entirely, and there I be—a wanderer and desolate, and prayin' for the death that niver comes!"

She dropped the shawl, and looked up at the warm evening sky with a face whose anguish spoke of a tortured soul.

"And I was the dacent woman once—and now the wand'ring outcast," she moaned, and then turned and moved away in the direction of the ruin.

"Where do you live—I mean sleep?" asked Octavia.

"Where the dead sleep, and the wicked fear to come," she answered; then, half turning her head, she muttered, "*Gho mauky dhea ghud*" ("The blessing of goodness upon you"), and tottered off into the woods.

Octavia remained motionless, watching the queer figure as it passed behind the low-growing bushwood.

"If—this isn't the queerest experience!" she murmured. "I suppose she's mad. But there was sense sometimes in what she said. I wonder if she lives there—in the ruins? I suppose she ought to be sent to a workhouse, or union, or whatever they call their institutions for the poor. Shall I tell Patrick? But the poor soul seemed to dread being put away. I wonder if anyone here knows her history?"

She went slowly and thoughtfully back to the waiting car. Patsy and Mademoiselle Perigueux looked at her curiously.

"Have ye been seein' anything, me lady?" asked the boy.

"A beggar woman," she answered. "A strange old creature, who seemed half crazy."

"Was it ould Mad Kate?" asked Patsy. "She does

be wanderin' about thim parts. Was she an ould, shakin' craythur, wid a white face an' a cloak drawn over the head av her, me lady?"

"Yes. Do you know anything about her?"

The boy crossed himself. "Everyone knows Crazy Kate," he said. "But she's an evil name, me lady, an' we don't like to be spakin' av her. The praste has set a curse on her, so 'tis said, an' 'tis best not to be too familiar wid thim sort."

He assisted Octavia to her seat, and jumped up to his own place.

Mademoiselle leant back and addressed her. "You, then, had an adventure, Madame?"

"I don't call an old beggar woman an adventure," said Octavia. "But it was a bit skeery—I reckon. Such a queer place, Ma'm'zelle, and this strange old freak suddenly comin' out of—well, I don't know where; and tellin' me just the queerest things. I felt sort of fermentin', I can tell you. One doesn't reckon with family history, and curses, and prophecies rolling down in a cascade of ex-pressive talk. Leastways, I hadn't expected it. Say, Ma'm'zelle Perigueux, are you a Roman Catholic?"

"*Moi? Mais oui*, but of course I am, Madame. I go to Mass every Sunday since I am here; and Doreen—she also."

"Doreen?" echoed Octavia. "I didn't know——"

"Oh, the child is not what one calls a good Catholic," said Mademoiselle. "Her instructors were a teaching Sisterhood, and her father forbade too strict religious observance. But she feels the need of it. She likes our Church; our ritual. Only she will not receive, and she will not confess. The parish priest, Father Foley, he has

called on me once. He desired to know if Sir Patrick was of our religion. I could not tell."

"I guess not," said Octavia. "So far as I know, Patrick hasn't any special conviction."

"But surely, Madame, he goes to some church; has some faith?"

"I can't say," said Octavia. "I b'lieve he went to some sort o' chapel down in Louisville. Presbyterian, I think that was, or Episcopal. I can't call to mind now. But he don't hold with ritual and outside show. That I do know."

"It is to me very terrible, the way you heretics talk of your responsibilities," said Mademoiselle. "You have cast off the true faith, and you don't even accept the obligations of another."

"Well, there's so many *true* faiths goin' around," observed Octavia, "that it takes some time to picture out which is the best. But, if you don't mind, Ma'm'zelle, we'll just drop this discussion. I'm not keen on argufying about creeds. I guess I've been put here by Someone, for some reason, and I hope He understands the reason, and accepts the responsibility. That's about as far as I've got—yet."

XIX.

DOREEN and her father came home about seven o'clock in high spirits, and perfect content with their respective mounts.

They had met Captain Mallory, and he had joined in the ride and given Madison a few hints as to Brian O'Lynn. But the horse had behaved perfectly, and his owner was

so pleased with him that he had been almost reckless in commissions of fresh purchases at the forthcoming Show.

"I shall not be in Dublin myself," he said. "I'm going on the Continent for August and September. I'll come back here for another look round about the beginning of October. I've been invited to some 'shoots,' but I'm no hand at a gun."

"Too busy making dollars to go in for sport, I suppose," said the Captain. "Yet you've some fine shooting out West. Wonderful country, America!"

"It is," said Madison. "Nothing to beat it, come to size it up all round."

"I wonder if you'll like settling down to our life here? Do you mean to give Ireland much of your attention?"

"I expect half the year," he said. "And the other half to London and New York. I must keep in touch with 'em both."

"You lucky dog!" sighed Mallory. "Not a soul over here has as many hundreds as you have thousands. Most of us live up to double our incomes and owe the rest."

"That's a sort of thing I can't understand," said Madison. "The poverty of Ireland as counterbalanced by its extravagance. I hear of nothing but debt and difficulty wherever I go. Seems to me you're all too slack in your methods. You go on living to-day as your fathers and grandfathers lived their times, but you sort o' forget that money melts in the handlin'."

"But don't forget that we haven't been left much of it to handle."

"There seems to be an almighty muddle over here," said Madison. "Politics, priests, and poverty, that sort o'

represents your far-famed Emerald Isle. No wonder you send shiploads of the raw article out to the States. It's the only place to make men of them."

"I think I agree with you there, in spite of patriotism. The one practical thing America does is to offer work and make the workers love it, both for what it means and what it does. Here they just loaf about, and put the blame of poor crops on the ill-tilled soil, or failing this, to the evil agency of the 'little people.' The professions are badly paid too, and there's so much disloyalty and discontent that no one has any heart to try to improve things."

"I can give a guess at the real reason of it all," said Madison. "Only in a Catholic country it doesn't do to start a religious controversy."

"Well, you're right there. I'm not too strict myself. But still, there's a sense of cords that bind and curses that stay. Talking of curses though, Sir Patrick, there's a queer enough story about your people. Did you ever hear it?"

Doreen turned her head quickly. She had been a silent listener to the previous discussion.

"Oh! what is it?" she asked eagerly. "Do tell."

"It's nonsense, of course," said her father. "I don't want to hear it, Mallory. I'm not superstitious, but neither am I fond of old women's tales and gossip. Whatever my ancestors did, I come here with a clean slate, and I guess I'll have no writing but my own on it!"

Mallory looked at the flashing eyes and confident face, and wondered if—after all—he had heard that story?

Dinner was over. They sat on the lawn drinking

coffee and watching the glowworms' light fairy lamps amidst the shrubs below.

Octavia had won her point. She was going to stay in Ireland and live the simple life. Also, she meant to use her new car in exploiting the famous beauties of the country. They would go to Cork, and Killarney, and Glengariffe, and up the Blackwater, and see the glens of Antrim, and all the queer castles and ruined abbeys, and, in fact, get to know the Irish of Ireland preparatory to becoming part of its landed gentry. She and Doreen would do all this; Mademoiselle Perigueux might come or stay behind as pleased herself. In slow, measured phrases she sketched out this plan, and Madison saw no reason to oppose it. The car was one of the best, and a good hill-climber. The chauffeur had a seven years' certificate unmarred by a single endorsement. Motoring was just the sort of thing to suit Octavia's indolence, so he merely remarked that she might expect to add another stone or two to her already discomfoting weight, and that there were a Court presentation and a London season to look forward to. Then he requested Mademoiselle Perigueux to come in and have a talk, as he intended leaving the next day.

Octavia and Doreen drew their chairs nearer.

"Tell me, dearie," said her stepmother. "You've visited the old Castle since you've been here?"

"Why—of course!" exclaimed Doreen. "At first father thought of rebuilding it, but then he concluded it would take too long, and never look like the real old thing it was in ancient times. Mr. Connell said we were right. It don't matter about how we pull this house about, but there's something about the other that just says 'Let me alone.'"

"Did you ever see anyone there when you went, Doreen?"

"No—never. I believe no one ever goes near it. They all say it's haunted, and that there's a curse on it! Did you see anything this afternoon?"

Octavia mentioned the old madwoman.

"It was just the queerest thing, Doreen. She made me feel sad and sorry, and yet half afraid of her. And she spoke so bitterly of the priests. I thought the Irish peasants looked up to their priests as sacred. That they wouldn't daresay a word against them."

"Nora says there's a great deal of unrest and disturbance throughout the country. The priests are not popular. Someone has been going from county to county, and district to district, and then he wrote a book of all he'd found out. And he proves that the priesthood is at the root of all the troubles of Ireland, especially the Jesuits. They meddle with everything. Private affairs and public. No one is free or let alone if he's a Catholic. He must confess, and he must do all that the priest says. And they take most of their money, poor things, and as Nora says, whether you're born or christened, or wedded or buried, it's paying for the privileges you are, all the time, to the priest. The first thing she asked me, mother, was if we were Catholics."

"And what did you say?"

"Well, it's funny, but I didn't know. I've gone to the Catholic Cathedral in New York, and I went to the chapel here with Mademoiselle, but I'm not a professed Catholic. Are you, or father?"

"No," said Octavia. "I don't rightly know what we call ourselves—'cept Christians."

"I should say that was enough," said Doreen. "But

do you think I ought to go to the Catholic chapel with Mademoiselle?"

"I guess not. I don't intend to have any holy Fathers, or Jesuits either, interfering with our concerns. Ma'm'zelle can do what she pleases, but now I'm here, Doreen, you've got to mind me, not her."

"I'm glad of that. I didn't like Father Foley's preaching at all. And he calls all Protestants, heretics."

"There's not more in a Protestant than the mind of the priest gives it," said Octavia. "It won't trouble us, my dear, to be called any sort o' fool name they choose, so long as we do our duty, and say our prayers, and just help the poor and the sick when we get the chance."

"I'm glad we had this talk," said Doreen. "It's been a trouble to me thinking of what sect I was, and whether it was a right or a wrong one. Of course, Mademoiselle is all for me to become *vrai Catholique*, as she calls it. I didn't quite know what she meant. Now I shall just tell her you don't wish it. Oh! dearie, I'm so glad I can't say that you're going to stay on here with me. I was afraid I was getting to hate Mademoiselle. She's so interfering, and so cross. The only time she's agreeable is when Captain Mallory's hanging around. And I'm sure he's only making fun of her half the time."

"Here they come," said Octavia. "I reckon, Doreen, we won't have any more religious talk afore them."

She relapsed into her usual attitude of silence and passivity, and Doreen kept her father to horsy subjects and the gallant deeds of Brian O'Lynn. They would have to accustom him to the motor. Captain Mallory had said he was not fond of them. "And he must get used to them, dad, before you ride him again," she said.

"I s'pose Mickey had best train him to it. He rides him without saddle or stirrups," she added.

"I must say I'm surprised, Patrick, at your taking up horse-ridin'," observed his wife.

"I might as well live out of Ireland as not ride when I'm in it. By the way, Doreen, wouldn't you like to go to the Horse Show? It's some time in August—twenty-second or twenty-third—I heard. You and your mother might run over to Dublin in the car. Put up at the Shelborne for a night or so. They say it's worth going to see—and Mallory will look after you."

"The Horse Show of Dublin is one great important event!" exclaimed Mademoiselle. "People in England go over for it, and it makes the sensation as of one Ascot. You would enjoy it—*vraiment*, Madame!"

Doreen smiled seraphically. "And I—*aussi*. And you, Mademoiselle, is it not so?"

"Of course, I should chaperon you, Doreen, when Madame was tired or indisposed."

"Even though I'm not out?" said the girl mischievously. "True, I shall be seventeen by then. Dad, has it occurred to a stern parent that he will soon have to celebrate a great event by a suitable gift?"

"It has not," said Madison, rising abruptly. "I take no count of birthdays."

"Ah, but this is a very special and particular sort of birthday," said Doreen. "I am grown up. A young person of importance, and I want—well, what do I want? A pearl necklace, I guess, or—a second hunter. Little Rosemary mustn't be worked too hard. Yes, that would be best. And may I choose it myself at the Show?"

"Do you think you are capable of that?" asked Madison doubtfully. "Better let Captain Mallory do it.

He's got an eye for a good thing. What he doesn't know about hunting and horse-flesh isn't worth knowing."

"It's always Captain Mallory," pouted Doreen. "Mr. Connell knows just as much, I guess, and is as fine a horseman."

"Maybe," said her father. "But I've engaged Mr. Connell to build my house, not to choose my horses. You'd best lay that to mind, Doreen."

Something in his voice, the cold glance of his eye, seemed to freeze Doreen's young heart, and crush out her pleasure in the promised gift.

Why was her father always so strange about this acquaintance? There seemed no reason why he should dislike Barry Connell, and yet she felt sure he did.

That night, when Nora was brushing out her young mistress's hair, she wondered at her unusual silence.

"You're tired, miss darlin', I'm thinkin'?" she said at last.

Doreen lifted her head and shook back the heavy hair. "No," she said. "I was only thinking, Nora, what a pity it is that the same people don't like the same people. It sort of roughens up the surface of life, and I do like it to be smooth."

"Was it the Frinch lady, miss?"

"No-o," said Doreen dubiously. "I think I'm getting used to her roughing things up. I don't mind her very much now I've got mother."

"Sure, 'tis she's the swate lady, an' kind-hearted as an angel. Marie, the maid, was sayin' how she fretted for ye, miss, all that time in London. Well, an' no wonder, seein' ye're all the childer she has."

"But I'm not her own child," said Doreen. "Though

we love each other quite as much as if I was. I do think she's good and sweet, Nora."

"Not her ladyship's own child?" repeated Nora. "Sure, that's strange hearin', miss. We all thought you was."

"No. I never saw her till just before we left America."

This sounded odd to Nora's ears. "Then her ladyship's yer father's second wife? Is that the way av it, Miss Doreen?"

"Yes—of course. My mother died when I was born, so father told me, and I was put out to nurse, and then placed with a lay Sisterhood, and educated and brought up by them. They're all I remember of any sort of home."

"Now think o' that!" exclaimed the little maid. "Glory be! there's strange happenings even in great families, miss."

"But it makes no difference," persisted Doreen. "She said I was to look upon her as a mother, and so I do. I'm just as glad as glad that she's going to stop here now. I don't think she liked the grand London folk any better than I did. By the way, Nora, there's something I was going to ask you. Oh! I remember! Do you know a poor half-mad woman who lives about here, near the old Castle?"

Nora stopped her hair-brushing. "Lord save us, miss, is it Crazy Kate ye're manin'?"

"Yes—I think that was the name mother told me. Wandering Kate, or Crazy Kate. Mother says she was in the tower and looking out of the window. And then she came down and told her the queerest things. Enough to scare one. Who is she, Nora?"

"The Lord between us an' harm! An' who indade,

but an evil-spoken craythur. Everyone's afeard av her, miss, for 'tis the evil eye she has, an' the prastes have cursed her an' set her outside o' the Catholic community. I wouldn't be seen talkin' to her, miss, not for all ye could offer me."

"How awfully superstitious you are in this country!" exclaimed Doreen. "What harm can a poor crazy woman do anyone?"

"I wouldn't like to say, miss. But there's ways wid thim people. I niver rightly got hould o' Kate's story. But she was married to a bad man, so they said, and he got tuk up for murdher or somethin'. He went to jail an' she followed him, an' she used to sit outside o' the walls and curse the magistrates, an' the jury, an' iveryone who had a hand in it. Then they arrested her, an' whin she got out o' prison she was quare-like in her head. She's niver been right since. That's all I knows, miss."

She laid down the ivory brush, and began to plait the long, soft strands of hair for the night.

"Ye mustn't be troublin' yer pretty head about vaygrints an' sich-like craythurs, miss dear. Sure, the country's full o' thim. Idle vagabonds wid the plausible tales, an' niver a day's good in any mother's son o' the lot. Whin the tourists an' the English folk sees thim they think 'tis poverty and misfortune has brought thim to beggary. Not a bit av it, Miss Doreen. 'Tis their own idleness an' the dhrink as does it."

"But if your priests are such a power as they say, why can't they prevent it?" asked Doreen.

"Sure, an' that's just what no one can answer, miss. An' for the matter o' that we're not allowed to discuss thim, nor the ways o' thim. But I've had a bit o' edica-

tion, miss, an' can read most any sort o' book, an' that's opened me eyes a bit. If the prastes had their way, we'd be as ignorant as we was in the days before the Rebellion."

"I suppose that's why Ireland is called a 'distressful country'?" said Doreen.

"Maybe 'tis so, miss. Many's the time I've thought I'd like to get away from it, an' go to Ameriky. A cousin o' mine is there; in New York it is, at an hotel; an' the wages she gits, an' the liberty, and the life av a lady she's tellin' me. If I was to lose this situation, miss, I'd be goin' out there. I would indade."

"Well, you mustn't go while I want you," said Doreen.

"Sure, an' I wouldn't do it, miss. An' there's Phelim M'Phaudeen, me sweetheart he is, an' working on one o' yer father's farms beyant, he's the dacint boy, miss; an' he'd be breakin' his heart if I left the country."

"Have you a sweetheart, Nora?" asked Doreen, looking with a girl's curiosity into the blushing face.

"Deed, an' I have, miss. Though I'd not be tellin' it to anyone but yerself. It's not often a gurl marries the man she fancies in this country. The matches is mostly made for us by our parents, or by the prastes. Sure, 'tis always a hand to bless an' a hand in yer pocket, wid that gintry."

"Yes, but about—Phelim? What a pretty name! Tell me, Nora, how it all came about."

"Well, then, miss, that's not so aisy. Sure, these things do be jist happenin'. We'd known each other school-days. Thin he went to England, harvestin'. Thin he came back an' got good work here. An' we was dancin' one night, he an' me an' some o' the boys an'

gurls o' the village. An' he sort o' looked into me eyes—an' thin—well, thin, miss, I felt 'twas all over. An' we was promised, an' sure, he's a dacint boy, as I said before, Miss Doreen. An' that's jist the way it is."

"Do you—love him, Nora?" asked the girl softly.

"I do, miss."

"How do you know? What tells you that you care for—for another person? So much, that you want to join your life to his?"

Nora regarded the grave young face thoughtfully. Then she smiled. "Ah, now, Miss Doreen, thim be questions there's no need to ask whin once ye're in love. Sure, no one can tell. It jist comes. An' if ye gives way to it, it gets sthronger an' sthronger. An' if ye don't give way, sure, yer heart jist *aches* fit to break itself. Either way ye're mighty uncomfortable, miss, an' none too happy. For there's always somethin' or someone to interfere. 'Tis thru love that niver runs smooth, miss; the other sort—well, well, that's not for us to be talkin' about. Sure, a lovely young lady like yerself will have plinty to pick an' choose from. An' no one to say ye nay. 'Tis different wid poor gurls like me, Miss Doreen."

Doreen made no reply. But long after Nora had left her she sat by the open window looking out at the quiet beauty of the night, and weighing in her mind the subtle meanings of life.

How quickly it educated one's powers of comprehension. How mysterious it was, and how wonderful. And how sad.

But that was because people made such wilful blunders. Looked only at the surface; judged only from one set standard. The difference in individuals demanded a difference in one's treatment of them. She thought of

the curious contrast presented by Lady Lucille and Octavia Madison. Of her father as contrasted with Chris Kennaway, or Captain Mallory. They possessed no common interest save just that of life, and the passage and progress of time. And then again there was another, and quite different type of man. One who stood for strength, and courage, and enterprise. One who said little about himself, but who instinctively impressed you with the idea that class distinction was all nonsense, and a man's worth was what meant the man, not his money or his rank.

He had certainly saved her life. She would have fallen, and might have been crushed to death that horrible time on Coney Island, but for him. And since—well, she thought of rides, and talks, and pleasant, humorous instruction in matters of "plans," and "sections," and "elevations." Nothing more. Only the pleasant, friendly intercourse of congenial minds in sympathy with all they saw, and heard, and touched. And then, like a douche of chill water drenching and drowning the seedlings of friendship, came the memory of cold, stern words—"I've engaged Mr. Connell to build my house, not to choose my horses."

How hateful it sounded. How perfectly horrid. And how strange it was that just those words should have erected a barrier between herself and this idolised father. For it showed him unjust and prejudiced.

Doreen could not endure to think of injustice; and as for prejudice—class prejudice—had she not come from a land of Liberty and Equality?

XX.

THAT Octavia Madison was not such a fool as she looked, or as her clever, self-willed husband imagined, was one of those surprising facts that never dawn upon people who apply the term "fool" indiscriminately.

Lady Lucille had applied it. Mademoiselle Perigueux had echoed it. Captain Mallory had regarded her as an insignificant appendage to the *entourage* of Mount Madison. But the first person to discover her real worth had been Doreen. The next, strange to say, was Barry Connell. That incident came about shortly after Madison's departure. She interviewed the young architect, and observed shrewdly that since there was so much to be done to the house, it would be best to complete the exterior, and not trouble about the interior until that was finished.

The truth was, she had no desire for a large house-party, and resolved that only half a dozen guest-rooms should be ready. But as she also wished to impress people with the house itself, she was anxious to see some resemblance to the imposing-looking building represented by the plans.

Connell agreed with her that this method was at once definite and time-saving. Together they made a tour of the interior of the house, and planned bed and dressing-rooms, and servants' quarters. The hall, with new decorations, and its own fine proportions, would serve as a comfortable lounge. Waring was sending down furniture

and carpets. The great chill drawing-room and the library lent themselves to the decorative art of the same firm. The dining-room was a long room with a fine open fireplace, and French windows opening on the stone terrace. The walls were panelled, and a deep velvety red paper showed between the panelling. Connell thought that it might remain, as a good background to old oak and modern antiques. By this means the house would be habitable and comfortable well within the time given.

Octavia selected her own rooms, and one for Doreen next to them. "I like to have you near me, child," she said. Then a small sitting-room for Mademoiselle Perigueux was fixed upon, and these apartments were to be repainted and furnished with all possible promptness. Meantime they would do motor tours, and see the famous Dublin Horse Show, and get to know Ireland.

Doreen followed her stepmother from place to place astonished at her commonsense and accurate taste.

"I like an old place to *look* old," she had said. "You keep it so, Mr. Connell. I've heard your furniture stores can make up modern things to suit most any style or any period. I reckon it won't be hard to do *that* here. Only go straight ahead, and let us get into our proper places, and used to 'em, before ever the rooks settle down on the cornfield!"

Connell had smiled at this frank translation of fashionable friends. If the smart visitors were "rooks," then assuredly the Madison cornfields were not going to afford them quite such a harvest as they imagined.

He took a great fancy to this homely, sensible person, whom her husband had ignored, and who seemed to be half afraid of him. True, she was not up to the standard of English or Irish aristocracy, but she was warm-hearted

and generous, and had an accurate sense of her new responsibilities and how best to meet them.

If anyone was disconcerted by Octavia Madison's sudden self-assertion, it was Mademoiselle Perigueux. This was not at all the sort of situation she had expected. The daughter was *difficile*, the mother obstinate, with that serene obstinacy impossible to affect. The intrigue, or whatever it was, that she had suspected between Sir Patrick and her lovely patroness was beyond her powers of espionage; at least for the present. Her position in the establishment was still defined by Lady Madison's obtuseness as that of the "school-marm" of transatlantic utility. True, she had a charming boudoir, and the occasional services of Lady Madison's French maid; that her duties were light, and her pupil both apt and intelligent; yet this was not sufficient. She had desired to be a person of importance in the household, ruling vulgarity and inferiority by sheer tyranny of *savoir faire*. But Doreen only laughed at her, and Octavia ignored her. Were it not for the large salary she received, and the hope that she might yet lay her finger upon the weak spot of the *intrigantes*, Mademoiselle would have thrown up the whole *affaire*, and left this so stupid, *bourgeois* Irish place to its equally *bourgeois* possessors.

Still, there had been one bright star on the horizon. Captain Mallory, the gallant and gay. As there was a mistress at Mount Madison, it had been possible to extend him some hospitality. An occasional luncheon or dinner; a run in the motor, which was a glorious 40 h. p.; then the delight of his attendance at the Horse Show, made up in some way for the astounding difference between expectation and realisation due to Lady Lucille, and five hundred pounds a year salary!

Doreen had enjoyed the Horse Show enormously. So had Octavia, in a placid and wondering mood. So had Captain Mallory, intent on bargains and commissions, and with almost unlimited credit as to purchase-money for hunters, and covert hacks. So, in an unobtrusive and wholly delightful fashion, had Barry Connell; forced to Dublin by business and able to get in a couple of days at the great annual function. So had Standish M'Caughen, who had hastened to pay his respects to Lady Madison and to place himself at her and Doreen's service.

They spent a week in Dublin, making use of the car by way of getting acquainted with the city and its beautiful environs. Octavia enjoyed everything in a serene and grateful fashion, due to the new discovery of life's pleasant possibilities. She found motoring an idyllic method of getting north, south, east, or west—at a moment's notice, and with little more trouble than consulting a map and making up her own mind. The chauffeur was skilful and careful; the car a "dream" of speed and comfort. The weather tranquil and sunny, and Ireland looking her best and loveliest as lake and river, mountain and glen, town and village gave themselves to inspection.

Certain things, of course, puzzled Octavia and saddened Doreen.

The terrible poverty of some districts; the slough of patient discontent in which people wallowed as tribute to the "will o' God," or the destiny of their country. The extraordinary ignorance; the still more extraordinary bigotry. The childish fear of the priest, and yet the blind obedience to his tyranny. The thrift and the drunkenness; the pride and the squalor. In fact, the whole sum of that Irish problem which a conquering race

has tried to solve since its conquest, and never has, and never will solve.

Sometimes the people would be civil and obliging to the visitors. Sometimes rude and surly. There would be mutterings of "thim blasted Amerykins, wid their dollars, an' their maneness"—and yet a servile acceptance of any gift, or *douceur*, those same Americans thought fit to bestow. There would be stories of distress, and confidences as to misfortune, that were humiliating to hear and difficult to help. There were the queerest households pigging together with poultry and pork as lodgers, and open drains before the cabin doors. There were beauty of scene, and beauty of women, and thriftlessness and extravagance all set side by side in a haphazard conjunction of congested districts, and non-paying properties. There were lordly and magnificent edifices, dedicated to the service of God, or the housing of priests and nuns, set amidst wretched villages and draining them of wage or savings for support. There was a never-lifted shadow of suffering and sorrow over one portion of the land, and a curiously contrasting prosperity over another. In fact, Erin showed herself to these new and astonished eyes as that exemplification of contrasts which is so typical of her condition.

Standish M'Caughen tried to explain it, even as the courage of Michael McCarthy* has tried to explain it. Neither quite succeeded.

Of what avail to preach peace and forgiveness and forgetfulness of past wrongs to such a people as the people of Catholic Ireland? Who can remove mountains of arrogance and ignorance, stupidity and falsehood? Who, indeed? (It is not a question to be answered in these

* "Five Years in Ireland." By Michael McCarthy.

pages, even by one who sympathises so deeply with the poor, long-suffering Irish people.)

The motor tours lasted for periods of ten days, or a fortnight, and took them to the principal places in the South and West of Ireland. By the end of September they returned to Mount Madison, and found their own rooms and their own portion of the house completed and prepared for them. Mrs. Donnelly had engaged servants; an army of gardeners and "helps" had worked creditable wonders in the grounds, and there was every hope that before the next three months were over the towers would be completed externally, and the new Castle standing capped and impervious, surveying its ruined predecessor.

Octavia was very pleased. She settled down to chatelaineship with no undue haste, but adopted a certain mild system of organisation by aid and counsel of Mrs. Donnelly, who had lived "in the best Irish families," and knew Irish ways.

That such ways were unduly improvident and wasteful, were not facts that an Irish housekeeper deemed worthy of explanation. More especially where money was no object, as seemed to be the case with the "new people."

They were still that to the village and county in general.

The said county had from time to time left cards, and put forth tentative feelers of hospitality to Lady Madison and her daughter. But as they were absent on their tour, the cards had not been returned, or the hospitality accepted.

However, it occurred one day to Octavia that certain duties and obligations fell to the share of a county lady. She had studied English novels to some purpose, and

imagined that what would suit one country would equally suit another. She summoned Doreen, and they consulted together as to visits to be returned, and acquaintances to be made. No entertaining was possible as yet. The household was not in a position for such responsibilities. Octavia turned over the sheaf of cards, sorted them with a view to local neighbourliness, and, attired in latest London fashions, ordered the car to set forth, accompanied by Doreen.

"You're seventeen, and you look quite grown up. I guess it's that cunning way of putting up your hair. It's not up, and it's not down, but it looks stylish."

Mademoiselle Perigueux had remonstrated. Doreen must not pay visits of ceremony. It was not *comme il faut*. Doreen listened; said nothing; went up to her room and dressed.

The first name on the list was that of the Misses M'Cartney, of Dumdrum. They were at home, and the visitors were shown into the drawing-room by a slatternly maidservant. The drawing-room was a terrible apartment; a confusion of dusty tables and broken-legged chairs; of scattered periodicals of long-past dates; of cabinets crammed with china; and a sofa covered with a bedraggled Bellagio rug and two or three dilapidated bead cushions.

Octavia looked amazed. "Why—Doreen," she said, "that girl's made a mistake! This ain't a drawing-room at all."

Doreen had heard enough about the Miss M'Cartneys to be quite sure it was. Barry Connell had a gift for humorous description.

Octavia seated herself carefully on the most secure-looking chair. Doreen chose a small wool-worked otto-

man for herself. Presently the sound of voices in audible whispers came to her ears.

"I will *not*, I tell ye. The kettle'll take half an hour to bile. They'll be goin' to other places. I see the cyard-case av her—'twas full."

"Nonsense, Bridget. You must bring in tea. Would we be letting ourselves down as not knowing what's proper to do? Go now, and tell Miss Judy. She's lying down, and I couldn't be waiting."

Then a sort of scuffle ensued; the door was thrown open, and Miss M'Cartney entered with a serene smile and a majesty of demeanour worthy of a queen receiving a subject.

She welcomed Lady Madison with cordiality, and a slight reference to the delay between her visit and this return of it. With Doreen she put on the friendliness of old acquaintanceship. Octavia was so overwhelmed by her extraordinary appearance and her majestic manners that she found it difficult to respond. The contrast between imperial dignity and poverty-stricken shabbiness as exemplified by the "ould families" of Ireland was as yet unknown to her.

She had known poor people who worked hard and lived simply. She had known comfortable middle-class people who prided themselves on their comfort and their middle-classness. She had viewed Society through the medium of Lady Lucille, and some of her smart acquaintances. But nothing in any of those experiences suited the present case.

When the second sister sailed in, in a shabby old brown cashmere, and proved herself as dignified as and no less extraordinary than the elder, Octavia gave up the puzzle and accepted them on their own merits.

After awhile they ceased being "company," and commenced to gossip as to their neighbours' affairs and peccadilloes. Octavia was warned against certain persons, and congratulated for the "calls" of others. She heard much of private matters, and hints of scandal, debts, and difficulties. She was frankly told that "everybody" considered that they were spoiling Mount Madison by adding those two "pepper-boxes" to either end. She was envied for a "princely income," like most Americans possessed, though better not to question *how* it was made, and in the same breath warned against a certain notorious county lady—the Honourable Mrs. Kilmurvey by name—who had a perfect genius for borrowing money, and incurring card debts—to gentlemen. "But indeed, we're all born gamblers, we Irish," concluded Miss Jane. "If it isn't horses, it's cards. Born in us, me dear Lady Madison. We can't help it. 'Tis said we only lose our old vices when we go to America."

"And that's because we take on so many new ones the others don't count any longer," supplemented Miss Judy.

Then Doreen coughed—a preconcerted signal—and Octavia rose, refusing gracefully that offer of tea which the recalcitrant Bridget had refused to serve. The two old ladies accompanied them to the hall door in order to examine the motor, and learn their next destination. It was a little unfortunate that it should be the residence of that very Mrs. Kilmurvey about whom they had been warned.

"Aren't they just the quaintest things?" laughed Doreen, as the car shot out between rickety gate-posts and barking dogs. "And Nora says they go everywhere, and are thought no end of in spite of being so poor and

shabby. I guess folk want some understanding this side, mother?"

"They do," said Octavia. "It's just as queer as can be. Class distinctions are a fair pinnacle, Doreen. Our side it's money tops it. Here—it's birth. Don't seem to make a cent's worth of difference whether you're shabby or poor, so long as you've got family at the back of you."

"That makes it all right for father, then," said Doreen.

Octavia gave her a sudden quick look. She said no more.

The mansion of the Honourable Mrs. Kilmurvey was of an imposing modern description. A footman opened the door, but his "not at home" was conclusive. Octavia discovered she had called on a wrong day, but, nothing deterred, went bravely on through her list, feeling she was acting up to her own sense of duty.

She ended up with the clergyman's wife. A crushed and faded person of some thirty years and scant popularity. For Ballydaff possessed a very small percentage of Protestants, and the church and vicarage were more remarkable for insignificance than popularity. Mrs. Martin was English, as was her husband; an elderly, scholarly man, devoted to archaic studies, and seldom going out of his own house or garden except for Sunday duties. Mrs. Martin was in the garden attending to her plants, when the motor stopped at the gate. She was rather flustered at receiving so important a personage as Lady Madison, but soon found that there was no need for nervousness. They sat in the shady garden, and tea was brought out, and the Reverend Henry Martin appeared at the same time, and was gratified to find that sittings in the little

church, and subscriptions to the organ fund and Sunday schools, were now within regions of probability. Mutual liking and respect formed a ready basis of friendliness, and Octavia's earnest desire to do anything to help in parish matters was a matter of congratulation after her departure.

Then, feeling somewhat fatigued, Lady Madison returned home and took a thoughtful survey of the altered frontage of the "big house." Was it true that people laughed at the imposing structure—called it "Pepper-box Castle"? Certainly the queer old Miss M'Cartneys had been frank and plain-spoken enough. Deep in her own heart Octavia had the American envy of and respect for "old names." For the *real* people, whose inheritance was that of noble ancestry and noble estates; who had no need to trouble as to their position or reception; who held the surety of centuries behind them and presented a serene indifference even to poverty.

In Ireland this seemed specially the case. The full-blown American might be as big a "boss" as he pleased in his own country, but let him face these scornful and haughty folk with their pride of race, and a heritage of great names, and that curious mixture of dignity and indifference, and where was he?

"Patrick won't like them, I guess," she said to herself. "And yet he daren't say anything. He's not the one to make things smooth, either, by a bid for popularity. I reckon that'll be my affair, and Doreen's. Goodness knows how we'd best set about it!"

XXI.

ANOTHER month glided swiftly by.

October set in wet and stormy, and interfered in some measure with the work at Mount Madison. One tower had been completed, and gave a curious lop-sided appearance to the house. Octavia lived principally in the library, where she read novels, received chance visitors, and got a more intimate acquaintance with things Irish and perplexing.

Madison wrote occasionally. He was in Paris. He was going to the South of France. He was at Nice, and thought of going on to Italy. He did not mention Monte Carlo, or the fact that Lady Lucille was staying at the Hôtel de Paris, and spent most of her time at the roulette-tables. Neither did he say that he had once "broken the bank" in the foolish parlance of those who are not aware that though the bank ceases to play for a space after a long run of ill luck, it is never *broken*. Neither was it necessary to inform his wife as to who had devoured the winnings like so much ice-cream. Such details were a man's own concern, and Sir Patrick Madison was credited with the purse of Fortunatus. He left Monte Carlo soon after that feat of closing the bank, and wandered through Italy, seeing Florence, Venice, Rome, Naples, and finding nothing in them to stay that curious unrest which had taken possession of him. Art was incomprehensible

to one who only knew a picture by its title, and deemed an undraped statue demoralising. As for the historic interest of old cities, what could that mean to a man for whom modern luxury and modern invention spelt the only meaning of life? He sent Doreen guide-books and picture cards, and sometimes wondered how she would have liked to be with him, and yet felt glad she was not. In his present state of restlessness and dissatisfaction she would have irritated—not soothed him. Girl as she was, there was an innate nobility and purity of mind evident in her mode of thought and action. She could not bear anything crooked or dishonest. When he had pitted his will against hers, he had discovered that she possessed some of his own clear-sightedness, as well as much of his own obstinacy. He wondered uneasily if a day would ever come when their wills would clash in serious strife, and love must either conquer or fall. Well, there was time and to spare for that. Both had much to learn, and something to do, ere a question of conflict was possible.

When it first dawned upon him that he was lonely and dissatisfied, and had taken up a false estimate of life, was on the occasion of receiving one of Doreen's gay, breezy letters. It showed so much genuine content with the simple things of life, with the humours of the people she called "hers," with the joy of her present open-air, casual existence, that it struck him she was more suited to these things than to social artifices. Yet it was the artifices he had desired for her. He had watched these supercilious, insolent fine ladies, with their curious slang, their haughty grace (which to plebeian minds spelt rudeness), their restless, brilliant lives, their familiarity with Court scandals, and he had thought they were enviable.

But were they?

He had come into very close quarters with one shining light in the galaxy of social stars, and she, though she knew the great world to her finger-tips, did not present it as altogether admirable. As guide, philosopher, and friend of his innocent young daughter she left much to be desired, or feared.

He took his burdened heart and worried brain to the peace and grandeur of the Swiss mountains. Life there sank to a comparative calm, alternating with a desperate energy that set him climbing peaks, and tramping forest paths, and motoring through dangerous passes.

Then the old weariness reasserted itself. He was sick of foreign food, foreign ways, foreign gabble. He resolved to go back to Ireland and see what progress had been made with his Castle. Hunting had commenced. He might go out with Doreen. She was eager and anxious, and only waiting for him to join her. Besides, it was time he made friends with the county. Doreen said people were calling every day. He had a stake in its interest; he desired popularity. Mount Madison would be his home for the greater part of the year. He ought to begin to show himself and make his position secure.

He told his courier-valet to pack up and take tickets for England.

The long journey was wearisome in the extreme. He thought of another journey; of a great steamer ploughing its steadfast way over rolling waters; a haunting presence; a laughing, insolent sorceress with eyes green as the sea waves. How he hated and distrusted her. And yet—how he longed to see her again.

He was a man unused to subtleties of passion; the perverse undercurrents of sex. His life had been too

arduous for light amorousities. In a measure he could understand love that caught and chained a man's youth, and wearied his manhood, for such had been his experience. But an alternate craving and loathing, a feeling that was at once desire and disgust, this was new, and disturbing, and incomprehensible. They had parted in anger, and since leaving Monte Carlo he had had no word of or from her. Now he felt that the quarrel had been senseless, and the silence was becoming unbearable. She had not told him of her movements or intentions. He knew she was coming to Ireland in November, and that her hunting-box, Shiel Lodge, was some eighteen or twenty miles distant from Mount Madison. Also she had accepted his invitation for Christmas, and agreed to bring some half-dozen chosen "pals" to celebrate the house-warming.

But perhaps she would alter her mind and throw him over at the last moment. She had done so with minor engagements. This might share the same fate. He tried to say her absence was a matter of indifference; to shake himself free from the obsession of memories, but with the monotonous clank of wheel and engine came the monotonous murmur of one name.

Madison arrived at Ballydaff station in the dusk of an October evening. He had stayed in Dublin to see Mr. Raeburn; had dined with that gentleman and a young official from the Castle, and heard something of the Office of Arms, and the noble order of St. Patrick.

The young official, with due appreciation of American importance, offered to show Madison over the Castle, and specially such portions as were not open to the general public. He accepted eagerly. All the curious *imbroglio*

of Royalty and State importance was full of interest to a democratic mind.

He gave up the next morning to his genial acquaintance, and wandered through the dreary pile of buildings representative of Ireland's allegiance to an alien Government. He saw the official residence of the Lord-Lieutenant; the Wardrobe Tower with its strong-room for the custody of Sword of State, and the Crown Jewels; the Presence Chamber, and the famous St. Patrick's Hall.

He alluded to the recent scandal. But the young official was shy of comment. "It was a mighty curious circumstance," he muttered; and when the 'cute American had seen how the Office of Arms could be entered from the Upper Castle Yard, and, moreover, learnt that the main lock of the door was *never locked* night or day, so that any of the seven latch-key possessors could enter at any time, he observed that Irish conceptions of honesty did greater credit to the nation than the individual might deserve.

"Won't there be any enquiry on the matter?" he asked. "Seems to me you're wasting considerable time doing nothing."

"There will, I expect; and then, of course, it will come out that the safe in which the jewels were kept was not in the strong-room, but in the library I've been showing you."

Madison glanced curiously about. The library was not an ordinary working-room, and he noted that one of its doors was quite close to the outer door; the door of the two locks and the seven latch-keys. The library was a mere waiting-room to the Office of Arms, and anyone who called on business, or out of curiosity, was shown in there to wait until some official came to him.

Madison's contempt for careless methods was not complimentary to Government custodians.

"Valuable jewels—Crown property left exposed in glass cases. Statutes disregarded. Everything handy for a thief. I reckon it's just the queerest stunt I've struck this side! What surprises me is the way you sort of hush it up. One would think you were *afraid* of the truth coming out."

"There are certain obligations," murmured the young official.

"Certain red-tape foolery," answered Madison. "Here's a dastardly thief sneaking off with national property, and none of your police or detectives dare lay a finger on him; at least, that's what I've heard."

The young official repented him of confidences, and changed the subject.

But Madison had found it interesting. It gave him food for thought as he weighed the advantages of a Dublin season, and the possible hospitality of the Lord-Lieutenant.

Doreen came in the motor to meet her father, and her delight and enthusiastic welcome did something to banish his gloom.

She chattered gaily of all matters concerned with the house, its alterations, and their neighbours' interest in them.

"I think Irish people are just lovely," she said. "They don't seem to mind our being all in a muddle. They come into the library, and have tea, and talk, and are as pleased as if they'd known us all our lives. The Darcy McGuires are just sweet—the girls, I mean. One is Moira, and one Ellen. They call her Nellie. They

say we must give a ball as a house-warming. Do let us, father. Irish people love dancing beyond anything except hunting. And everyone will come if you only say—'Bring any friends you like.' That saves calling on people before you invite them. I think you'll be surprised when you see the house. One tower is all finished. The other will be done about the end of November. And loads of lovely furniture have been sent down, and a special man to fix up the 'reception-rooms,' as they call them. We only use the library, but even that has had a new carpet, and big, lovely chairs, and deep red velvet curtains. Mother says it's just sublime. She's as happy as can be. Hunting's begun, and I'm just dying to go to a meet, but you said I wasn't till you came. Now you're here you'll come too, won't you? There's one next week, at Miltown, only eight miles away. Moira and Nellie McGuire are going, and I'm longing to see how Rosemary will behave. She's just a perfect angel to ride, and takes fences delightfully. Not very high ones. I've been careful about that."

"And how's Brian O'Lynn?" asked Madison.

Doreen's face clouded. "Since you said only Mickey was to ride him I've not taken much interest in him. A stableman is no sort of companion. I go by myself, or with Patsy."

"Is Mr. Connell still here?"

"Of course. Mr. Raeburn only superintends. Mr. Connell does the work, and sees to the men. My! he does keep them up to the mark."

"And what about the French lady?"

"Oh! she says I can speak quite fluently now. Only I shall never have a good accent. That comes of being an American, I suppose. I don't like her any better,

father. I could never *trust* her. Seems to me that she's always watching and spying on us."

"What nonsense! I'd like to know what there is to spy——"

"Of course, I don't *know*. I only say how she impresses me."

"What about your mother?"

"Oh—mother!" Doreen dimpled again. "She's just as serene as a summer sky. Goes on, and goes on, and takes no notice of what Mademoiselle does or says. She loves Mount Madison, and she loves Ireland; says she's going to settle down and end her days here. There's no place she'd rather die in."

"Die?" echoed her father.

"Oh! that's just her quaintness. She's just as well as well—and not half so stout. She walks more, and she goes up and down stairs at least *six* times a day. She says it's the most reducing thing for the figure ever was."

And when Madison walked into the warm and glorified hall, and there met his wife, he could not but acknowledge that Doreen had been right. She had improved in every way. Looked more alert; was less adipose, and had certainly learnt to talk.

They greeted each other very coolly and composedly. Then Lady Madison returned to the library, and Doreen took her father from room to room and place to place to show him the improvements. No doubt the modern Aladdin's lamp is money. What it can't do has yet to be discovered.

To American eyes the furnishing and decoration looked a little sombre. But Madison had been told the great firm could not err in matters of taste, and he was happily ignorant of anachronisms.

He went to his own room and found his valet unpacking, and supercilious as to lack of bathrooms. There was only one, and that at the end of the long corridor. Also, according to that gentleman, the servants' quarters were only fit for pigs.

Madison grew irritated. "If it don't suit you, you'd best clear out," he said. "I'm not so helpless I can't fix my own shirt studs, and brush my own clothes!"

The lordly gentleman was so taken aback that he became apologetic. It was too good a place to be sacrificed lightly. Then Madison dressed and went down to dinner in the great dining-room, and felt that he was indeed country squire and landed proprietor at last.

It next became necessary to make acquaintance with his neighbours. The genial M.F.H. was ready enough to welcome such an addition to the county, and the promise of handsome subscriptions. The Darcy McGuires and Sir John Creagh were also cordial, though critical. They had expected millionaire airs, but were agreeably surprised by shrewd commonsense; a suggestion of hidden force and a certain level-headed judgment of matters local and political. So things resolved themselves into a pleasing quiescence, and the day of the meet at Miltown dawned at last.

A first appearance in the hunting-field of a hunting county is a nervous affair for the *débutant*. Madison, in spite of military teaching, and private "spins" with the big bay, was horribly conscious of shaking hands and sinking heart. He envied Doreen the cool assurance of youth, and the cheerful company of Moira and Nellie McGuire. He was further disturbed by the appearance of Barry Connell, mounted on a creditable chestnut which had been lent him by Tom M'Cartney, and which seemed to have a sort of affinity for Rosemary. He was half in-

clined to ask him whether he was at liberty to forego his duties, but the approach of Sir John Creagh, and a rapid discussion as to "banks" and "razor-tops," old and reliable hunters, and risky three-year-olds kept him in a state of mystification.

Then the business of the day began.

To Madison it was soon a fevered dream in which Brian O'Lynn was racing, soaring, persisting, amidst a crowd of other flying animals, and shouting, excited riders. He lost sight of Doreen, who was being looked after and given leads by Barry Connell, to their mutual satisfaction. Hounds led on a close scent over a line of green banks, ploughed fields, fences; foiled once by straying sheep; now at fault, now dashing madly forward, and after them panting, shouting, floundering, bumping, the crowd of flip-pant jumpers, and steady goers, and impetuous youngsters.

Barry Connell glanced at Doreen. "Like it?" he smiled.

And her breathless: "Oh, just lovely," was eloquent of enjoyment.

Rosemary behaved beautifully after a little preliminary restlessness.

"I wonder how dad's getting on?" she said presently. "I don't seem to catch sight of him, anyhow."

"Oh! he's all right," said her escort, spurring forward to a chorus of proclaiming voices. "I think he chooses the road oftener than not."

Presently they checked and drew up near a wood. To the left lay a space of bog-land, giving little chance for hound or horse.

The McGuire girls joined Doreen and complimented her maiden effort. Sandwich cases and flasks were produced, and refreshment snatched during a waiting interval.

Mallory cantered up to Doreen with a caution as to possible "water," and a big ditch which might prove too much for Rosemary.

"Your father's doing fine," he said. "But I knew Brian could be trusted. You've but to show him a fence and he's over. Never forgets his legs. A real bargain he was, Miss Madison. I've another, but——" Then he rode off.

"I wonder how many more horses he'll want father to buy," laughed Doreen.

And Connell answered that that wasn't so important as the worth of the purchases. He had heard rumours of the Madison stables since the Horse Show.

"My Coolan Dhu is a gem," said Doreen. "I'm to try her next time. I wish——" She hesitated. She was nearly saying that she wished Connell could have choice of some of their collection. Tom M'Cartney's stables weren't much to boast of.

"Ah!—now they've got it!" exclaimed Connell excitedly. "Come on, Miss Doreen. Follow me carefully. I'll see you don't get bogged."

The day went on. Good and evil fortune alternating with its own mists and showers.

The fox got into a hole at last, and was given up, and though a gorse covert was drawn later, Rosemary proved too tired to enter into the spirit of things, and her young mistress jogged home in the failing daylight, elated and confident that there was nothing in the world to beat fox-hunting.

"Only I wish he'd always get away," she added. "One could have all the fun and excitement and yet not the cruelty on one's soul. I hate to see any dumb animal ill-treated, Mr. Connell."

"Then I hope you won't ever be in at the death, even for the honour of the brush," he said.

The Master had asked them all in to tea, and Doreen and Connell found themselves amidst an excited group in a big, fire-lit room. The table was laden with cold meats, and relays of poached eggs and buttered toast were served to hungry sportsmen.

Madison had come through his ordeal amazingly well, and felt that nervousness was a thing of the past. He made himself very agreeable to the various county folk, though they puzzled him immensely. It occurred to him to mention Shiel Lodge, and enquire as to its location. "Lady Lucille Altamont is a friend of mine," he explained.

Two or three men looked at him curiously. Their answers were guarded. "It's a ramshackle place near Carraghmore," he was told. "As for Lady Lucille—she keeps a rotten lot of screws there, and mostly borrows a mount. But she can ride."

"The devil wouldn't stay *her*," said Gerald Roche. "But she's merciless to her horses. Lamed my best hunter for me last season. Broke his knees all to pieces—and only laughed. Said 'twas the fortune of war. If she's a friend of yours, Sir Patrick, 'ware stables, or you'll not have a ha'p'orth to sell at the end of February."

Madison was silent. It was no news to him that Lady Lucille could put her friends to various uses and deemed apology superfluous.

One wasn't a green-eyed siren for nothing.

XXII.

HUNTING took a grip on Patrick Madison's mind and nature, and in spite of disasters, falls, and acquaintance with ditch and stream, he rarely missed a meet. Doreen alternated between the easy caution of Rosemary, and the excited eagerness of Coolan Dhu. So far she had escaped mishap, and become a recognised figure when hounds were out.

Time passed rapidly. There was so much to do, to see, to learn. And week by week the house grew to completion, and looked less a modern adaptation of ancient traditions than its architects had feared. Yet still people laughed, and "Pepper-box Castle" labelled the new structure as far as farm and village were concerned.

But among things that surprised Madison, none was so surprising as the popularity of Octavia. The county loved her quaint drawl, and her kindly, simple ways. The poor adored her as a synonym for generosity and helpfulness. Her housekeeper and her household alike approved her gentle suzerainship, and "the mistress" became a more general title than her own.

She even exerted herself to go to morning service every Sunday, partly for Doreen's sake, partly to please Mr. Martin and his wife, for Protestants were in a minority at Ballydaff. She had taken sittings, and had cushions,

and footstools, and prayer books, and hymn books sent in, and after expressing a gentle hope to Mrs. Martin that her husband didn't exceed a ten minutes' sermon as a rule, she managed to enjoy her Sunday mornings here quite as much as in Louisville. With no intention of setting a fashion or making humble little St. Nathaniel's more popular than St. Mary's, its imposing rival, Octavia, Lady Madison, had yet set a seal of distinction on the Reverend Henry Martin's church, and attracted a straggling congregation, to whom heretofore Sunday had been a matter of indifference.

The Martins themselves were very grateful, and very enthusiastic about her. The refreshing simplicity of Lady Madison's manners was only exceeded by the kindness of her heart. Such things appealed irresistibly to the Hibernian temperament, and while Doreen and her father popularised themselves with the sporting community of the county, Octavia's motor-car and Octavia's kindly smile had done their own work with a humbler circle of admirers.

Thus matters progressed until a fortnight of Christmas. Then one morning Octavia received a letter with the well-known crest and mystic monogram of Lady Lucille.

It was somewhat brusque, though couched in conventional phrases. It intimated that she had returned from the Riviera, and was ready for a "bit of hunting." Agreeably to their kind invitation, she intended favouring the Madisons with her presence for a month, as her own "shanty" wasn't habitable. She would trust to Sir Patrick for a couple of hunters, and was also bringing a few friends to enliven them all, as she knew the country well enough to doubt its capacity for doing so.

Octavia looked up from the closely covered sheets to her husband's impassive face. He had recognised the crest and the handwriting. "It's from Lady Lucille, Patrick. She wants to come down next week. She requires"—she turned to the careless scrawl—"two hunters for herself, and half a dozen bed and dressing-rooms. One would think this was an hotel."

"Let me see that letter," said Madison.

Octavia handed it. Doreen burst into indignation. "Oh, that horrid woman. She'll spoil everything! Father, *must* we have her here?"

Mademoiselle Perigueux delivered herself of a sharp rebuke, and deplored the difficulties of ever making Doreen into anything approaching a *mademoiselle de convenance*—even of the most ordinary.

Madison read the letter, conscious as ever of that thrill of elation and yet of anger which this woman could always arouse. "Of course she must come," he said. "I invited her long ago. There's plenty of room here. They'll wake up a little life in the place."

"Two hunters," echoed Doreen. "She sha'n't ride either of mine."

Her father threw her a sharp glance. "I can buy a dozen if I choose," he said. He thought of that lovely figure and wicked face by his side in fierce gallops, in wild triumphs of timber, and bank, and ditch, and wall, on to the final glory of death, and brush, and boastful achievements. Life looked a foxhunter's dream glorified by one presence.

He forgot her insolence, her rapacity. He thought only of the joy of receiving her as his guest. Of showing that he, too, could play the generous and hospitable host.

Of all he would arrange for her pleasure and amusement for the space of one glorious month.

The interior of Castle Madison (it was so named on note-paper and cards) was as perfect and comfortable as money and decorative taste could contrive. To himself it had seemed quite perfect. But the thought of critical eyes, of the appraising of more cultured taste, made him uneasy. Lady Lucille had enclosed a list of her party. Four men, including Chris Kennaway and Lord Sallust, herself, and one Mrs. Archie Lackland—a great "pal," so she wrote. He made a tour of rooms and summoned Mrs. Donnelly, and spent half an hour in anxious counsel with her.

"Six bed and six dressing-rooms? Sure, Sir Patrick, that's impossible. Three of them we could be contriving, though 'tis a sad waste; for why in the wurld can't a person slape and dress thimselves in one room? Well, the quality has queer ways as well I know, but sure, your honour knows that Mount Madison was never more than a gintleman's country-house, not a Royal pallus."

In the end Madison arranged that Lady Lucille and her friend, Mrs. Archie Lackland, should have the double rooms. The four men must content themselves with one apiece and make the best of the old bathroom. He had added another to the best suite in the first corridor. That was reserved for the ladies.

"I'll have all this altered soon as ever I can," he said discontentedly. "We'll clear out and go to Dublin for the season and then to London. By next year I'll have electric light, and a bathroom to each suite. Reckon we do know something about fixin' up our homes in the States."

He was alternately excited and troubled for the next

few days. He worried as to the household staff. Could a butler and two footmen cope with the responsibilities of a fashionable house-party? Would the fine ladies' maids and valets refuse to put up with the very indifferent domestic accommodation of his establishment? He had not expected to receive such a large party all at once, but he had not courage to write and say so to Lady Lucille.

Octavia took all his perturbation in her usual placid fashion. She keenly suspected that the place would be turned upside down by these fashionable visitors. She recalled Lady Lucille's words on the steamer as to getting "a capable person to see to the entertaining," and keep herself in the background. She was not at all desirous of taking a prominent position in the matter of this house-party, but she extracted some quiet amusement out of her husband's anxiety and bewilderment.

"He thinks all the world of that red-haired adulteress," she reflected. "Perhaps she'll prove more than he reckons with."

She wondered she was no longer jealous. Only indifferent. There had been a time when the thought of a rival would have stung her to bitter indignation. But of late she had come to a truer understanding, and therefore less respect, of man as an individual and a class. In neither instance was he reliable reckoned as an example of sexual fidelity. True—that *that* was the least, if not lowest, attribute of marriage. Coming from a country where divorce was as common as union, a bulwark of safety to most contemplated marriages, she had learnt to look calmly on divided households. Still, she had no ambition to share in such legal irregularities. Her husband and her home stood for importance to herself. Her

life was free in form if not in fact, and had become an agreeable interest. She resented the thought of disturbance. And she anticipated it.

Doreen was even more disturbed than her stepmother. She detested and distrusted Lady Lucille. She had an uneasy feeling that her advent boded no good. But she recognised the uselessness of saying so.

The weather had turned cold and rainy. She had been obliged to stay in the house, occupying herself with French translations, and dainty needlework intended for Christmas presents. She was a proficient in all sorts of embroidery and fancy stitching.

The party was expected on Christmas Eve, and everything was in readiness for its reception. Cork market and London Stores had furnished provisions and delicacies. Hothouse flowers rioted in every room. The glow of firelight and lamplight atoned for electrical deficiencies. Octavia thought that Lady Lucille must be hard to please if all this did not satisfy her. It was certainly a contrast to her own ramshackle and dilapidated Lodge. "Her place ain't naught but a kennel, and I'll tell her so if she finds fault here," she observed to Madison.

He answered her sharply that their guest was to be humoured, and Octavia had best keep a silent tongue if she'd nothing pleasant to say.

"Another thing," he added, "just you give up encouraging beggars loafing around here. I turned one dirty old wretch out of the avenue when I came up just now, and as for curses—you needn't go to the Bow'ry for selection. I told her if ever I caught her hangin' around my grounds again, I'd set the police on her."

"Oh, Patrick—a poor old beggar woman, and Christ-

mas-time too; and the waste of the kitchen would feed half a dozen families."

"That's your bad housekeepin'."

"If I say anything, Mrs. Donnelly only tells me it's the Irish way, or the way great families live. That I oughtn't to demean myself by noticing such things. All the same I don't like it. We may be rich. You say we are. But the way we're living is like pouring money into a well that ha'n't any bottom. Even big fortunes can't stand that for ever, Patrick."

"Don't be a fool," said her husband. "I reckon I know when to spend and when to save. And mind what I told you—no beggars—back or front doors. I can't abide these dirty Irish loafers."

"I was just wonderin' who that old woman could have been," said his wife uneasily. "Say what you may, Patrick, it does you more good to get blessings than curses."

"Then I may expect the limit, for what this old freak didn't call down on my head and house ain't worth mentioning," said Madison.

"I hope it wasn't Crazy Kate you met. They say she can put the evil eye on anyone who offends her."

"Evil tom-fools and rattle-snakes!" exclaimed Madison. "Don't talk rot, Octavia. You ought to have more sense. Now, wake up and listen. You've got to be very careful how you behave these times. I'm going to motor to the station and bring Lady Lucille and her friend back. The men can come in the brake. See those lazy servants keep an eye on the fires. And you and Doreen are to be dressed and in the library, and have tea ready to bring in soon as ever we arrive."

Octavia smiled. "You *are* funny, Patrick," she said.

"I guess I ha'n't read 'The Masserenes' for nothin'. Come to think of it, Lady Lucille might be twin sister to Lady Kenilworth. Stepped right out of fiction into fact."

Madison stared. Then he turned, and, smothering an oath, went up to his room to brush his hair and select a different tie. He remembered Lady Lucille's taste in colours.

But as he stood before the toilet-glass, and caught sight of his angry eyes, he heard also the echo of Octavia's words. What had she meant? Was it possible that——

A flush of sudden shame rose to his temples. The hand that fumbled with the slip-knot of green silk trembled visibly. He, too, had read "The Masserenes."

"Well, Sir Paddy, have you got over your sulks?"

Such was Lady Lucille's greeting to her host as they walked out of the little dark station to the waiting motor.

He was too amazed to answer; nor was there need, for she rattled on of the journey, the prospects of sport, and her wonder that a motor could do the "vile roads" around Ballydaff. Then she was in and nestling amongst rugs and cushions, omitting any ceremonies of introduction as unnecessary. Her friend, Mrs. Archie, followed her, and Chris Kennaway and Madison took the other two seats.

The chauffeur started the car and they were off through the dark, miry roads; the acetylene lamps throwing a brilliant stream of light before them.

"Is your house finished? Who's done the decorating?" asked Lady Lucille suddenly.

Madison stammered out that it was still far from complete, but he hoped she would find it as comfortable as Shiel Lodge.

Her scornful laugh paid tribute to the sarcasm. "It couldn't be worse," she said. "I hope your stables are full. I haven't brought anything over. I trusted to you. I knew if Jim Mallory saw to things they'd be all right. When's the next meet?"

"The twenty-sixth. St. Stephen's Day they call it here," said Madison.

"That's good hearing. Anyone else staying with you?"

"Why, no, of course not," he said in surprise. "Didn't you say you were bringing half a dozen friends? Our accommodation won't run to a bigger house-party yet."

"And how's the daughter? Getting on better with Mademoiselle Perigueux?"

"Yes. They seem quite good friends," he answered.

"Does she hunt?" asked Chris Kennaway.

"Why, yes. Goes to all the meets. They say there ain't a better horsewoman in the county. Doreen may have heard of nerves, but she don't reckon with them these times."

"You're as American as ever, Paddy," laughed Lady Lucille, dropping the ceremony of his title as she did most things. "I thought you'd have acquired some of your national brogue by now; but you haven't. You'd pass for a Yank anywhere."

"Your pardon, Lady Lucille," he said stiffly, "but you're in error there. I come from Louisville, and we don't reckon ourselves Yanks; not by a long chalk."

"Oh, Transatlantic distinctions are beyond me," exclaimed his tormentor. "An American is always an American. It may matter to you over your side whether you're of the Four Hundred, or the submerged Tenth, but you can't expect *us* to bother our heads about it."

"Why does a Democracy want an Aristocracy?" drawled Mrs. Archie suddenly.

"If you went over to the States you'd soon know," said Chris Kennaway. "The great rich folk aren't content with being merely rich. Like the fisherman's wife in the fairy-tale, each granted wish creates another. First they want money; then titles and crests; then estates and parks. You know the story of the Pittsburg millionaire who was so set on a park modelled on English traditions that he had a herd of tin deer planted down in it?"

Lady Lucille screamed appreciation. "Oh, Chris, how lovely! *Tinned* deer."

"Like those cows and things we used to see in the fields when we were travelling," explained Chris. "Whether it's to save the pasturage, or for advertisement, goodness knows."

"What a curious idea," exclaimed Mrs. Archie, a pretty, fast, and somewhat affected brunette, who was a noted bridge player, and derived most of her income from her successes.

Madison felt annoyed at their laughter, but he knew that tin cattle were an advertised fact in much of the local scenery between different States. The American advertiser is nothing if not enterprising, and Nature has so much waste ground that only unbusiness-like minds would cavil at utilising scenery.

He tried to turn the conversation to the safer topic of hunting, and kept it at that till the car swept in through the lodge gates and up the avenue.

Lady Lucille glanced with some curiosity at the broad, white front of the mansion and the two illuminated towers gleaming on either side. "Why—what on earth have you

done to the place, Paddy?" she exclaimed. "It looks a cross between the Crystal Palace and the 'Herald' Offices in New York!"

"When you see it by daylight——" began her host nervously.

Her insolent laugh cut across his words. She said something in French to Mrs. Archie, and then passed into the warmth and comfort of the hall.

She threw off her furs, and followed the footman to the library. What she had expected to find there of nervous, over-dressed womankind was not realised by the cloth-gowned, stately Octavia, or the trim, tailor-made Doreen. She stared at them as they shook hands; then she introduced her friend. Chris was already greeting Doreen with an amazed sense of young dignity. Then Madison entered and tea was brought in, and shortly after followed by the arrival of Lord Sallust and two other men, made known respectively as Sir Edward and Mr. Goring, but addressed always as Teddy and Bob.

Lady Lucille drank her tea and ate soda-cakes and other dainties, and chattered like a hungry rook, and was all the time wondering at the change effected in her hostess and her surroundings. For whatever Octavia Madison felt, she presented no appearance of nervousness or *mauvaise honte*. If she did not volunteer remarks, she at least responded to them, and that in a simple, yet unassuming fashion, which suited herself and her appearance and present attitude.

With the library and its appointments Lady Lucille could find no fault. Everything was harmonious, well planned, and in good taste. "*Pas mal du tout*," she muttered between sips of tea and mouthfuls of cake. "It's odd how adaptive they are—these people."

At last she put down her cup and requested to be shown her rooms. Madison glanced at his wife. Her smile was serene as ever. She touched the bell. "I guess Mrs. Donnelly will take you upstairs, Lady Lucille," she said. "I'm sorry you don't run to *suites* here as in our country, but I've done the best I can."

And when Lady Lucille saw her sumptuous and beautiful bedroom, and the dressing-room with its delicate colours, and hangings, and appointments, she acknowledged that the Madison "best" was several degrees better than that of Shiel Lodge.

XXIII.

THE house-party settled into its comfortable quarters, and made light of all else except its own amusements and desires.

There was hunting two or three times a week, and Lady Lucille found most of her Irish neighbours eager to welcome her return. She made nothing of bringing in a dozen or more with her to tea or dinner after a long day's run, and the lavish hospitality of Castle Madison became renowned. In the evenings they played bridge or pool in the billiard-room. Occasionally they indulged in what Tommy Sallust described as an "orgy of music." It really meant a piano recital of his own compositions rendered by himself.

Sometimes Lady Lucille sang, but Octavia could never be persuaded to do so. Neither would she play bridge. As soon as she found that there was no rigid etiquette requiring a hostess's presence, she retired to her own room, and left Madison to entertain the party or put up with its vagaries. Such vagaries not unfrequently lasted into the small hours of a non-hunting morning. Also they were productive of various unconventionalities, and what Mrs. Donnelly called "diversions," that in a lower grade of society would have called for police interference. Assuredly Sallust and the two young Gorings rarely went

to bed sober, and rumour had it that Mrs. Archie occasionally required to be directed to her own room.

From all this life Doreen was rigidly excluded. Occasionally she dined with the house-party, but if other visitors dropped in or were invited, she had to keep to her room, and the company of Mademoiselle Perigueux. That good lady chafed and grumbled at the state of affairs. She had tried to get an interview with Lady Lucille, but had been put off again and again.

In the second week of the visit, however, Mademoiselle watched her opportunity, and tracked that lady to her dressing-room between the hours of tea and rest, ere she dressed for dinner. Omitting the ceremony of knocking, the Frenchwoman opened the door and found her patroness lying on the couch before a blazing fire, smoking a Turkish cigarette.

She turned astonished eyes on the intruder. "You?—Pray, what do you want? Why didn't you knock?"

"I forgot. I was in haste. I wish to see you, Madame."

"Well?" questioned Lady Lucille lazily. "Here I am. What's the matter?"

"I want to know what it is you really desire of me in this situation, Madame. Because it is all of the most *triste*, the most insupportable. That girl—she is *impossible*. No one can make her do what she herself wants not to do. As for Madame Madison, she is beyond question *bourgeoise*, lazy, indifferent. And Monsieur——"

"Yes—go on."

"Monsieur is hard, cruel, self-willed what one says. He is mean too; *assez sordide*. With all of that money he watches every *sou* how it is spent. The whole *en-*

tourage is commonplace. I cannot explain to myself why I am put here."

"I told you; you are to get the girl under your thumb. Through her I shall rule her father. Do you mean to say——"

"I say that to get at or round that *jeune fille* is not an easy affair," said the Frenchwoman. "Besides, she does not like me."

"Sorry. But that's your business. You must make her like you."

Mademoiselle Perigueux shrugged her shapely shoulders. "Must? Do you think that so easy, Madame? You—whom she also detests."

"Girls are always idiots till marriage or a man knocks them into shape," said Lady Lucille. "It doesn't trouble me whether she likes or hates me. She'll have to knuckle down next year. That's sure."

She lit another cigarette and yawned openly. "Is this all you came to talk about?"

"Madame has not thought fit to honour me with her confidence. Madame knows I have brought other affairs—difficult affairs—to a conclusion; but this—it marches not at all. One is in the dark. One asks for some explanation."

"There is none," said Lady Lucille. "Not yet," she added.

The Frenchwoman was silent. She was debating a point in her own mind, and wondering whether the hour had yet arrived for a certain announcement. Lady Lucille threw her an impatient glance.

"Have you said all? for I am expecting Mrs. Lackland every moment."

Mademoiselle Perigueux hesitated. Then she glanced

from the lovely figure in its silk and lace transparencies to the beautiful room so specially prepared for her. "I have not said—all. Not yet, Madame. I require more money."

Lady Lucille raised herself on her elbow. "More money? Good heavens! You get five hundred a year, and everything except your dress. What on earth do you want more for?"

"I want to buy a horse," said Mademoiselle Perigueux.

"A horse! *You!* Why——" Then she laughed.

The laugh cut like a lash through feminine vanity. It turned an ally into an enemy.

"I see nothing so amusing in that," said Mademoiselle angrily. "I can ride. I have learnt as a girl. True, I am not what one would call a light-weight, but I know—I have seen—the horse that would carry me to admiration. And I wish to make his purchase. One cannot exist in this country except one rides to the chase. Doreen—she goes. One knows not what happens. It may be she receives the attentions of other *messieurs* than those one has acquaintance with. The duties I perform cannot be complete without that I also ride to the meets and make my observations."

"Oh—is that the way the cat jumps? You want a horse of your own? Well, the stables are full. Ask Sir Patrick to lend you one."

"There is not one there I would ride. I have seen my horse. I desire his purchase," said Mademoiselle obstinately. "There need be no difficulty. He is but one hundred and fifty pounds. Possibly I get him for one hundred through a friend. But he is the only animal I feel to trust, and I must decide at once."

"I see. Well, ask Sir Patrick to advance your salary."

"That does not appeal to me. My salary I require for dress and—other matters. This purchase should be a present from Madame for all my trouble, and for all my patience in this affair, and in this so *triste* and dismal country."

Lady Lucille laughed contemptuously. "I'm not going to fork out one hundred and fifty pounds for your benefit, my good woman. Don't imagine it. I'm as hard up as the devil. I've lost pots of money over bridge these last three months."

"If that is so, there are other means. Madame could ask Sir Patrick. One knows he refuses her nothing."

"Ask Sir Patrick? Borrow from my host? Impossible! I couldn't do such a thing, Mademoiselle. How dare you suggest it?"

Mademoiselle Perigueux smiled oddly. "Is it—*impossible*? I had thought otherwise, Madame."

"I can't help what you thought," snapped Lady Lucille.

"It would not be the first time Sir Patrick had lent money to Madame."

Lady Lucille started. "How—dare you say such a thing!"

"Because I know. I could give Madame the date of one occurrence—if not more."

"Leave the room. You are insolent, and I'll not stand insolence."

"*Eh bien*. If Madame insists—I go. But perhaps if I were to tell the Lady Madison that her guest borrows money from her husband, *she* would not quite—approve."

Lady Lucille sprang to her feet; her face a flame of anger. "I don't know what you're talking about. And I warn you be careful. I could have you turned out from

here as easily as I put you in. And where would you get such a salary again?"

"Not easily. Not at once. But I have other friends of influence besides Miladi Lucille. And—after all—I risk nothing without proof. Even the anger of Madame."

"Proof? It's impossible. . . . You can't——"

"But yes, I possess it. I can give Madame the proof. A date when Monsieur Sir Patrick drew for her a first cheque of two thousand pounds. It was in London, at the Hotel Carlton. On July——"

Lady Lucille grew pale. "How—in the world——"

"That is my secret. I do not give it away at present. Will Madame, who can borrow at will from these American *canaille*, refuse me so paltry a sum as the price of this horse?"

For a moment Lady Lucille said nothing. Then she turned and threw herself back on the couch. "Go——" she muttered savagely. "I'll see about it."

"To-night? Within this hour when Madame gives the *tête-à-tête* to Monsieur Sir Patrick?"

"So you know that, too—spy!" hissed Lady Lucille furiously.

"I am here to observe. I cannot help that people are indiscreet. But let Miladi have no fear. I do not desire that anyone so beautiful and so clever as she should have to face the horrors of the Courts. Not while we are—friends."

Lady Lucille grew vaguely alarmed. That this tool of her own should turn and wound her, was a possibility she had never reckoned with. She felt humiliated, angered, furious, all in one; and yet she knew, none better, that of all undesirable things, an open scandal was the least to be desired. And the astute Frenchwoman, watching her,

thought in her heart what fools they were, these English *intrigantes*; what fools, despite their pretended prudery, and coldness, and fine airs. Then her eye travelled to the clock.

"I will leave the matter with Madame to arrange," she said softly. "But by to-morrow the dealer must know whether I am prepared to purchase the beautiful black hunter one calls Boy of Bantry."

She opened the door and went softly down the long corridor. It may, or may not, have been a coincidence that she should meet someone coming up the stairs; walking with a quick, impatient step. He took no notice of her as she passed on to the flight above. But when she reached the landing she paused and looked down.

Sir Patrick Madison was standing before the door of Lady Lucille's rooms. Mademoiselle saw it open—and close.

She smiled as she moved away to her own quarters. "I shall have that money," she said. "And I may now write with assurance to Monsieur le Captain Mallory, and say I will purchase the black hunter—Boy of Bantry."

While Lady Lucille was resting in her dressing-room, Doreen, for once unguarded and unchaperoned, was listening to the conversation of Chris Kennaway and Tommy Sallust.

Kennaway was relating adventurous episodes of the hunting field. Sallust, whose exploits were not in any way remarkable, appeared to have had bad luck with his mounts. His languid criticisms of the stables annoyed Doreen, who remembered the cost of filling those stables, and also the many lamed and damaged hunters they now contained.

"If you have such wonderful horses of your own, why didn't you bring over a couple, Lord Sallust?" she enquired.

"He was afraid they'd be sea-sick," said Kennaway. "One only takes care of what's one's own. That's why Tommy opens gates and takes gaps, and calls it self-preservation."

"It's not hunting," said Doreen, whose recklessness since freed from Barry Connell's guardianship had been proverbial. He had returned to Dublin until his services should again be in demand.

"Hunting is a much over-estimated sport," drawled Sallust, as he lounged in a beautiful specimen of Gillow's art before the blazing fire. "I don't enjoy it, though I accede to its demands. Duty is the one obligation I never shirk, when it is impossible to avoid it."

"Do you call it a duty to hunt?" asked Doreen.

"Certainly, when I am in a place where no one does anything else. Artistically considered, hunting is really absurd. That is why people take it seriously. To rush about madly after a poor little animal whose only desire is to get back as quickly as possible to his family den, has always seemed to me the acme of British idiocy. To imperil one's life by so doing is the one redeeming feature of the matter. I don't know what younger sons and ill-mated wives would do but for the hopeful chances of five-barred gates, and sunk ditches. They've saved suicide and scandal times without number. You don't hunt in America, do you, Miss Madison?"

"I—I'm afraid I don't know," said Doreen. "I was always at school. I never thought to ask."

"They hunt mechanical foxes wound up to run for a certain time," said Kennaway. "They don't need hounds

that way, and their practical minds get the excitement of sport without its risks!"

"That's not true," exclaimed Doreen indignantly. "And it's real unkind of you, Mr. Kennaway, to make fun of my country as you always do."

"I apologise," said Chris quickly. "I didn't wish to arouse your patriotic indignation. But I know it's true about the mechanical deer, so why not—foxes?"

"The difference is subtle and distinctive," observed Sallust. "Deer are not suitable for export, and might worry the Customs. Foxes could come in under the heading of 'furs.'"

Doreen laughed, and her parted lips and dancing eyes made such a charming picture, that Tommy turned the conversation to personalities. "Say, Miss Doreen, why do Americans call a girl a 'peach'?"

"Do they?" said Doreen.

"If you look at Miss Madison's complexion, you are answered," drawled Chris Kennaway.

The girl smiled. "I guess it's not better than you can run to on this side," she said. "I think Irish girls are perfectly lovely."

"It takes an American blend to touch the borders of perfection," said Kennaway.

The girl looked at him. "We concluded you were to stop paying compliments."

"I haven't begun. I merely stated the obvious. Look here," he added suddenly, "why do they shut you up every evening? I never get a chance to see you."

"Oh, that's Mademoiselle's idea. She says I'm not *out*, whatever that means. However, I've laid a plan to circumvent her. Least—mother and I between us."

"What is it? I'll promise not to betray you."

Doreen shook her head. "No, I'll not tell. Don't you know two people *may* keep a secret? Three certainly can't."

"Well, tell me anyway how long are they going to keep you in Ireland?"

"Right on to next season. June, I believe. I'm real glad of that, for I just love Ireland. And as for Dublin——"

She hesitated and coloured. Kennaway and Sallust looked at her changing face. "A clue"—murmured Tommy.

"You've given it away, Miss Doreen," said Kennaway. "Dublin means the season, and all the gaiety of the capital—including the Castle."

"Well, I trust you not to say anything; even to father," said the girl entreatingly.

"Mum's the word," said Chris Kennaway, as he drew out his cigarette-case.

"Rum thing about those Crown jewels," he said presently. "Seems as if the officials aren't *too* anxious to track the thief."

"They're not stolen. Only borrowed," said Sallust.

"How do you know?" demanded Kennaway.

"Intuition. Someone badly needed money and found an easy way of getting it. I daresay the Regalia will drift quietly back one fine morning, and nothing more be said about it."

"You do take things quietly over here," exclaimed Doreen. "I thought it perfectly disgraceful, the careless way those jewels were looked after."

"But then, Irish honesty is proverbial," laughed Chris. "Don't you know the legend of the richly gemmed and jewelled lady who walked from one end of the Island to

the other—unprotected, even by the police? Safeguarded by such antecedents, one might well regard Chubb's locks as a superfluous precaution."

"All the same, it's damned queer," observed Sallust.

"I hear there's going to be an official enquiry."

"It will be talked of for a year, and then dragged through red-taped channels, and finally shelved as an unimportant police document, awaiting information. This is the most unpractical country in the world, and the safest criminal refuge ever discovered."

Doreen rose from her chair. "I wonder what country would suit your taste, Lord Sallust? You've not a good word for England, Scotland, Ireland, or America."

He smiled languidly. "Patriotism, in its acute form, is only prejudice disguised. I should consider it very bad taste to uphold the superiority of any country, simply because I had the misfortune to be born in it."

"Misfortune," echoed the girl. "Life, youth, health, wealth, all the good things you possess—a misfortune! Lord Sallust, you deserve a judgment. You're just *the* most ungrateful person I've ever met. What would you do if you were poor, wretched, starving, as hundreds of these Irish peasants are to-day?"

He shrugged his shoulders. "My dear young lady, it is the privilege of the Irish peasant to starve. Anything else would unmake history, and prove the Government as inefficient as we all know it is."

She turned impatiently away. Kennaway looked up. "Ah, don't go, Miss Doreen. Stay with us and tell us the legend of Castle Derg. You promised you would."

"I shall not tell you anything—historical," she answered. "Only to be laughed at and disbelieved."

"I'll not laugh, I promise you," said Lord Sallust.

"I'll play you a weird accompaniment to the story. Something in harmony with banshees and haunted rooms. Do stay, Miss Doreen. 'Tis a witching hour. Firelight and stillness. You shall talk, and I will play, and Chris shall hold your hand at the creepy parts of the legend."

Doreen laughed. "It sounds fascinating. I wonder what Mademoiselle Perigueux would say if she walked in just when I was reciting the 'creepy' parts?"

Sallust lounged over to the piano. Kennaway turned his vacated chair with its back to the door. "Sit there, Miss Doreen," he said. "And if anyone comes in they can't see you. Ah, don't shake your head. I'm dying to hear that story, and I'd rather hear it from you than anyone else."

Doreen allowed herself to be persuaded. She dropped into the big chair and clasped her hands round her knees, her eyes on the dull red glow of the fire, and her breath coming and going in quick, excited rhythm as the weird harmonies wove their spell around her audience and herself.

XXIV.

"THE story goes that long ago Castle Derg belonged to an Irish chieftain. It was in times when the country was split into factions and parties. One fighting against the other, and both embittered by hatred and self-wrought wrongs."

Doreen paused and listened for a moment to chords that clashed a funeral march, through which sounded ever and anon the deep mourning note of a dirge. She resumed: "This chieftain had a beautiful wife, but he had not won her fairly, or by honourable means. She hated him, and had made up her mind to escape from the Castle and throw herself on the mercy of the other clan or faction with whom he was at war. The son of the leader, Cormac of Carra, had been a playmate of her childhood. His father and her own had been like brothers. She could never understand what had set them as antagonists, or by what cruel fate she had been forced into this hateful alliance. . . . Well, one dark stormy night her husband, the Lord of Derg, was holding high revels in the banqueting hall, and giving no thought to the poor prisoner in her bower. (For, indeed, I am told that wives in those days were no better than prisoners, and scarcely ever set foot beyond their own domains.)"

"Bower has a delightfully mediæval sound," interrupted Chris Kennaway.

"Yes, hasn't it? I put that in when I wrote the story out for Rosa Schmidt. But the beautiful lady——"

"What was her name?" asked Kennaway.

"Her name. Oh—Maeve of the Golden Locks, for her hair was so long it swept to the ground, and so heavy it required two maids to dress it and plait it round her beautiful head."

"You don't seem getting on to the tragedy," observed Sallust, letting his fingers drift through a web of chromatic fancies.

"No, I guess I'm not good at story-telling," said the girl. "But I'll try. The beautiful Maeve waited till the revels were in full swing, and then she wrapped herself in a long dark cloak belonging to her faithful maid."

"You said there were *two!*" objected Kennaway.

"So there were, but this was her favourite and the most faithful. She knew how unhappy her mistress was, and so tried to help her escape. Down the stairs and past the banqueting hall, and through a tiny little postern door in the Castle—(It's there still, and I could show it you, Mr. Kennaway——)"

"Consider that booked," he answered.

"—But she had forgotten how well guarded it was, and before she could reach the outer gates one of the soldiers saw her and captured her. She told him she was the maid Calahaena, going to the village. But he pulled back her cloak and saw her lovely hair, and swore that such hair grew only on one head, and that the head of his master's wife. She wept and implored him to let her go; even offered him her jewels as a bribe. But he refused for fear of the Chief's anger. So poor lovely Maeve was taken back, and when the husband heard the story he was mad with rage, and he drew his sword and

killed her at his feet, where she had knelt praying his pity. And the legend says that her blood poured out like a flood, and as it touched the cruel murderer's feet she cried out: 'Accursed be thy feet, and accursed thy hand, and accursed be those of thy blood. And never son of thine shall live to rule in these bloodstained halls.' . . . So she died, and they buried her on the hill-side above the Castle. But she could never rest, for her time had not come, and she was seen often and often walking to and fro between earth and purgatory, so the peasants believed, and the Castle became a place of terror and misfortune. The cruel Chief was slain in battle, and the heritage went to his younger brother, and from that time forward a curse has rested on Castle Derg, and never once has the descent been in the direct line."

"A truly wonderful legend," said Chris Kennaway, to the echo of sonorous chords from the boudoir Steinway in the corner. "But does the ghost still walk?"

"Oh, yes. On the night of her murder. She has been seen. And now no one will go near the ruins if they can help it."

"Makes one inclined to test the truth of apparitions," said Kennaway. "What do you think, Tommy? Suppose we make up a ghost party, and hunt out the spectral lady. Does her hair still sweep the ground, Miss Doreen?"

"I don't know. I didn't ask. But do you really mean you'd like to go to the haunted ruins at midnight?"

"Why not? Wouldn't you?"

The girl shivered slightly. "Not by myself. I like mysterious things, but I believe I should die with terror if I saw anything."

"Do you know the date when this 'excursionist from

the shades' takes her midnight walks?" enquired Sallust, turning from the piano.

The room had grown very dark. The firelight showed up dimly the slight figure in the deep chair. She was silent so long that Chris Kennaway leant forward and touched her clasped hands.

"Why, you are as cold as ice!" he exclaimed. "Surely you don't believe this story?"

"I do," she answered. "Every word of it. The curse and all. No one of the real direct line ever succeeds to Castle Derg, and as for the ghost of Maeve of the Golden Locks—if you want to see her——"

"I'd give a good deal," murmured Sallust, as he paused beside her chair.

"Well," said Doreen, "this is the night. The twenty-fourth of January."

"Jove! that's queer," said Kennaway.

The door opened on his words, and a stream of light from the hall showed the perturbed and shocked face of Mademoiselle Perigueux.

"*Mais*, Doreen—you here! And in the dark!"

"Oh, we're taking good care of her, Mademoiselle," said Kennaway lightly. "We have only been telling ghost-stories in the firelight."

"You have—what?" shrieked Mademoiselle, whose nerves could never stand any hint of *revenant* or spectre.

Doreen rose and pushed aside her chair. "I believe you suffer from a bad conscience, Mademoiselle," she said coolly. "The very hint of the 'other side' sets you quaking."

"I suppose Mademoiselle Perigueux would not join our ghost party?" suggested Lord Sallust.

"Party—what then have you arranged of folly? Such things are not meant for jokes, be assured."

"We are not joking. We are in deadly earnest. We are going to make up a party and visit the haunted Castle to-night at midnight. We want Miss Doreen to come also."

"That—certainly not," snapped Mademoiselle angrily. "Never did I hear of such *bêtise*. It cannot be permitted!"

"Oh! I guess it can," said Doreen, stung into contradiction by the unwisdom of coercion. "If father goes I certainly shall go also. And I should say his own family ghost would have some attraction for him."

"Attraction? Is it so you speak of what is terrifying—unspeakable? Take care that something dreadful does not befall you. Ah"—she turned quickly—"but here comes Monsieur. We shall see what he has to say on the matter."

"What matter? What are you all talking about?" demanded Madison.

He crossed the hall and came into the library. His face was flushed, and his eyes looked unusually excited. Chris Kennaway suddenly turned up the lamp he had occupied himself with lighting. Doreen seized her opportunity, and burst into explanations.

Her father listened with evident impatience. "Of course, please yourselves," he said. "But I guess you don't catch me at any such fool tricks."

"I bet Luce will come," said Tommy. "It's just the sort of thing to appeal to her and Archie. We could motor to where the road ends, and then go up to the ruins. Have you got a dark lantern in the house, Sir Patrick?"

"No doubt," he said coldly. "But I hope you ain't serious, Lord Sallust. I don't approve of the ladies going out to those crazy old ruins night-time. They're not safe, and they're not reputable, anyway."

"Ghosts never hurt anyone yet," said Chris Kennaway. "And Luce hasn't a nerve in her body. Besides, there isn't anything to be seen *really*. It's only legend and ignorant superstition. I expect we'll have our trouble for nothing. But a moonlight run in the motor isn't half bad fun. You'll allow your daughter to come, Sir Patrick? I'll promise to look after her."

"No," said Madison sternly. "Such freaks aren't for young girls. Doreen, you should be in your study, with Mademoiselle."

"So I have told her," exclaimed the governess. "I make search for her this past hour."

Madison glanced quickly at the young men. Then at Doreen's flushed cheeks. "Hour?" he repeated. "Do you mean to say——"

"Now, father, don't be English and conventional. I came here because I couldn't find Mademoiselle. She wasn't in the study at the usual time, so I and Mr. Kennaway and Lord Sallust have been telling ghost-stories. At least, Lord Sallust didn't, he played the loveliest music."

"Well, go along now," said her father, "or Mademoiselle will be tired."

"Oh, but I just can't have you turning cross, and forbidding your lonely little girl some innocent amusement," coaxed Doreen. "Say, dad, you come right along with us, and then it'll be quite proper. For I'm set on this thing—and you know me."

"Unfortunately I do," answered Madison. "Well, I'll

think about it, child. If I go I'll take you. If I don't, you stop here. That's conclusive."

"Yes. But you'll *go*, dad. There's a weight off my mind. So long!"

She kissed him lightly, and ran off, followed slowly and disapprovingly by Mademoiselle Perigueux.

At dinner the subject of the midnight visit was propounded by Chris Kennaway, and taken up eagerly by Lady Lucille. She thought it would be "screaming fun." The motor would only hold five and the chauffeur. But as Kennaway could drive it, the party of six could be accommodated. Madison and Doreen, Mrs. Archie and Lady Lucille, Sallust and Chris Kennaway. Madison was not at all eager to go, but he equally disliked staying behind. They started about eleven o'clock. The moon was nearly at the full in a steel-bright sky, and the car was left open. They were wrapped in furs and veils, and Lady Lucille was in wild spirits over the adventure.

What they expected to see, no one knew. But each held a vague hope that the expedition was to be rewarded by something unusual. Madison sat beside Chris Kennaway in order to direct him. Tommy Sallust invented witticisms to the topic of the occult, and Doreen sat quietly beside Mrs. Archie, wondering if anything would happen.

She had Nora's assurance of the hauntings on this night of the year. And behind Nora lurked village tradition, and further back still the legend was shrined in *bona fide* old Irish vernacular. The old names had died out; the heritage changed, but while one of the family was left the Curse was unfulfilled, and the ghost "walked."

The car had to be stopped where the road turned into the avenue. They all got out. Kennaway stopped the engine, but left the lamps alight. He then took out the dark lantern and offered it to Madison.

"As it's your place you had best be guide, Sir Patrick," he said. "Will you take charge of Lady Luce? We'd best walk in pairs this dark rough road. I'll see that Miss Doreen isn't frightened."

"Nonsense," said Lady Lucille sharply. "Let us walk together. The avenue is wide enough."

She had no desire for Madison's company, and she resented Chris Kennaway's choice of a companion. Tommy Sallust threw himself into the breach, and they started in threes. Lady Lucille walking between Madison and Sallust, and Mrs. Archie, who was "nervy," under the protection of Kennaway, with her arm thrust through Doreen's.

They stumbled along under the dark skeleton branches, over a pathway of interlacing shadows. When they came in sight of the ruins the moon was escaping from a dark cloud, and her clear light fell upon the old battered pile. Madison paused, and the others grouped themselves round him. There was something weird and awesome about the place, and for a moment or two no one spoke.

"Are we going in, or have we to stop here?" asked Lady Lucille.

Chris Kennaway turned to Doreen. "That's for you to say, Miss Madison. "Does the Lady of the Golden Locks show herself within or without her ancestral halls?"

"I don't know," said the girl. "But I imagine it's in the room where she was murdered."

"And that was the banqueting hall, you said?"

"Yes, but that's all fallen in now. I have a sort of plan of it. It was done——"

She stopped abruptly. Her father turned. "I guess I haven't heard of *that*," he said. "Who did it?"

"Mr. Connell," said Doreen. "He tried to make out what the Castle was like in old times, and he drew a sort of picture of it."

"You ought to have brought it, Miss Doreen, and then we'd have known our ground."

"Hush!" cried Lady Lucille sharply. "What was that?"

Mrs. Archie grasped Kennaway's arm. "I heard it too. A wail; a cry of distress."

They ceased speaking and listened. Again on the still night air came the sound. A long-drawn eerie plaint, as of some soul in grief or trouble. Mrs. Archie shuddered. "I don't like it! I wish I hadn't come," she cried.

"Nonsense!" said Lady Lucille sharply. "It was only a night bird, an owl, or——"

Doreen gave a faint cry. "Oh, look!" she cried, and pointed upwards.

Their eyes turned to the ruined tower, on which the cold moonlight poured its rays. From the broken window a face looked down. A death-white face, the head and shoulders shrouded in a hooded cloak, such as the peasant women of Ireland wear.

Madison stood still as death. Mrs. Archie gave a faint scream. Sallust and Chris Kennaway muttered the proverbial "Great Scott!" Doreen gave a little cry: "Oh! it *is* her—the ghost of Maeve. Oh, I wonder if she'd *speak*. If she could tell us——"

"Nonsense!" said her father sharply. "Here—I'm

going to see into this. Someone's playing tricks, that's my belief."

He turned the slide of the lantern and flashed the light on the tower. *No face was there.*

"It's gone!" cried Lady Lucille. "I believe you're right, Paddy. Someone *is* playing tricks."

"I'll soon teach them to stop," said Madison fiercely. "Here—any of you game to follow me?"

All except Mrs. Archie and Sallust agreed to do so. They preferred to be left below under such conditions.

Doreen, who knew the place best, took hold of her father's arm and guided him to the broken stairway and from thence to the tower. When they reached it, however, no one was there, or any sign of human visitation. Madison flashed his light on every side. Nothing but desolation and silence.

"I guess our nerves were foolin' us," he said. "That and the moonlight."

But even as he spoke, that weird cry rang out once more, turning their blood chill with its mystery of woe.

They stared at one another. The sound was close at hand. Above their heads. But only the sky roofed the tower, and its broken parapet offered neither foothold nor support.

"The Banshee!" murmured Lady Lucille. "No mistake, Paddy, you've got your properly authenticated property ghost. At least *that* proves you a rightful descendant. Here, this isn't amusing. Let's get out of the place."

She turned towards the doorway. Madison made a movement to follow. His foot caught in the uneven flooring and he stumbled. The lantern fell with a crash to the floor, and the light was extinguished. At the same

moment a passing cloud obscured the moon, and the tower was in total darkness. Lady Lucille rushed precipitately forward to the stairway, the others followed. Doreen last. And once again that cry pealed forth, louder now and seemingly nearer.

No one thought of seeking explanation. Their one idea was to be out of the uncanny place and in the free air and space below. Madison had seized Lady Lucilla's arm and helped her down the uneven steps. Chris did the same for Doreen. No one spoke till they were safely on the grass-grown terrace questioning Sallust and Mrs. Archie as to the cry. They had also heard it, but had seen nothing.

By this time the adventure had lost something of its attraction, and no one objected to the suggestion of return. They hastened back to the motor, Lady Lucille and Mrs. Archie exchanging confidences as to "creeps," and both confident that they had seen a ghost. For the description of the face and the cry lost nothing in repetition.

"I hope it's not a sign of your decease, Sir Paddy," said Lady Lucille mockingly. "They say here that the Banshee's cry means death within the year to one of the family. You see, ancestry has its disadvantages. If you had only been content to remain an obscure millionaire, you would have been spared racial obligations."

Madison made no reply. He was annoyed and disturbed, and he had an inward suspicion that he had not shown himself as courageous as the occasion warranted. In sober truth, that cry had had a most extraordinary effect upon him.

XXV.

LATER that night Lady Lucille's confidential maid was brushing her mistress's hair, and enquiring as to when Miladi intended to bring this *triste* visit to a conclusion. According to the maid, everything in Castle Madison was of the most atrocious and uncomfortable. No proper servants' quarters. No bathroom, and the food—could one figure to oneself joints of half-raw beef, of detestable pork, and the perpetual dish of potatoes?

Lady Lucille listened impatiently. She too was sick of the place. But again, she had luxurious quarters, the run of the stables, a bridge partner who had never troubled her for payment of her losses, and a certain scheme to work out that demanded time and opportunity.

"I can't help it, Jeanne," she said. "You must put up with it, at least for another week or two. I'll make it up to you—somehow."

"If Madame could oblige with my wages? Already they are overdue," suggested the girl.

Lady Lucille seized a gold-netted bag from the dressing-table and opened it. "Fortunately I can," she said, and poured out gold and silver into a little heap. The maid's eyes glittered. She was nothing if not avaricious.

"*Mais*, Madame, that is indeed welcome," she mur-

mured, as her mistress's white fingers divided the coins into two little heaps. "Also it reminds me——"

Miladi looked up sharply. "Well?"

"Of what Madame suggested when we first came to stay here."

Lady Lucille's eyes grew eager. "You have made friends with the valet, Jeanne?"

"*Mais oui*, Madame. That was not difficult. But I find him of little service. He has only been with Monsieur Sir Patrick since he stay at the Carlton, and of all he was or has done over there in America he knows not anything. Yet I have found out—something."

"Yes," said her mistress.

"I—could, of course, inform Madame. But I should require—a little more of that pretty heap of gold pieces Madame has before her."

Lady Lucille made an impatient gesture. "I might know, of course. You're all bloodsuckers. Well, if your information is of any value, you shall have these five pounds."

"Madame is not too generous," observed the maid indifferently. "But I will have trust in her further goodness if my services demand it. This—that I have learnt is from the Irish girl who attends on Mademoiselle Doreen. It seemed to me strange, but Madame will judge of herself."

"Do come to the point, and tell me what it is," was the petulant rejoinder.

"It is that Mademoiselle Doreen knew nothing of Madame *la belle mère*, until just as she left America for this country."

"How—what do you mean?"

"The young lady never saw Madame Madison, never

had knowledge that her father had made *la seconde noce* until he was leaving the country."

"Well, there's nothing strange in that."

"Nora appears to think it very strange, Madame. Why did Monsieur never tell his daughter that he had made the second marriage? Why did he not ever have her to live with them, even *en vacances*? Does it not seem as if there were a reason—a mystery?"

"Nonsense!" snapped Miladi pettishly. "I suppose he was afraid they mightn't get on together. That girl is absolutely spoilt. She does just what she likes with her father."

"Still," persisted the maid, "Madame must allow that it is a little singular to keep a daughter in ignorance of her *belle mère*, for sixteen—seventeen years."

Lady Lucille was silent. In her heart she acknowledged it was a little strange. The more so in that Octavia was no gruesome type of stepmother, but far too simple and kind-hearted to have made the girl unhappy.

She dismissed the maid abruptly, giving her only two sovereigns out of the pile for her information, as it was valueless; but long after she had gone she sat there by the fire turning over in her mind these facts. Who and what sort of woman had been Doreen's mother, and how long or short a time had elapsed between her death and Madison's second marriage? He was still a man in the prime of life. If he had married eighteen years ago he could scarcely have been thirty. If he had been a widower for the conventional year, that would mean twenty-nine. Then suddenly there flashed across her mind a chance word of Octavia's. It had been to the effect that she had passed her silver wedding-day. That

would mean she had been Madison's wife for twenty-five years! But that was impossible. Why——

She lifted her head and felt her cheeks grow suddenly warm. Could it be there was some mystery? Something wrong about these people? She threw her memory back to that acquaintance on the steamer. To the stories of the Louisville millionaire and his Irish heritage. If there was anything shady in his past, anything he wished to conceal, why, what a power it would mean!

"I must find out," she thought. "That simple fool of a woman couldn't hold a secret to save her life. I'll set to work on her. The girl is too sharp. Besides, she hates me."

She rose and stood for a moment leaning against the mantelshef. "Oh! to be even with him!" she muttered. "He is getting on my nerves. I hate his cool masterfulness; his American accent; and I've had such heaps of his money. Oh! for some clue, some knowledge, to hold over him and cancel debts and obligations once and for ever."

The idea of discovering any secret of "Paddy's" appealed to her the more she thought of it. Every *nouveau riche* had something shady in the background. With an American it was even more possible, when one considered the large percentage of blackmailers who made an honest livelihood in the States. Madison did not give one the idea of shadiness, or dishonesty. But if it were a question of morals——

"Perhaps he has no right to his property?" she reflected. "Is that what he is trying to hush up? I suppose he *is* legally married, or he wouldn't put up with that transatlantic cow. No—I must go further afield. If only she and Doreen were unfriendly, I could get at one

or the other, but they're such pals. Oh, I give it up for to-night. I shall have a headache if I go on worrying over mysteries."

All the same, it was the mystery, or the chance of discovering a mystery, that formed her first waking thought next morning. There was no hunting, so she lay in bed and read her letters and swore pettish oaths at her bills, and then went over again what Jeanne had communicated to her the previous night.

"I ought to go to-morrow," she reflected, with a sudden memory of other engagements. "But if there's a chance of getting even with Yankee Doodle, I'm on, to quote his own expressive phraseology!"

She grew so restless that at last she rang for her maid and went through her toilet, and finally descended to the library in hopes of coming across Octavia. Nor was she disappointed. The lady of the house sat rocking herself in her favourite imported seat before a huge fire, and with apparently no more pressing duty to fulfil. Lady Lucille greeted her with unwonted amiability, and drew up another chair beside the rocker.

"I'm glad to find you alone," she said, and plunged into details regarding the forthcoming season. "I've found the very house for you," she added. "In Curzon Street. A friend of mine would sub-let it, furnished, for the season and save you all trouble. You and Doreen ought to come to London in May, or sooner. There'll be her Court dress to see to, and——"

"Thank you, Lady Lucille," drawled Octavia. "But Doreen and I have concluded to do without the English presentation. We are going to Dublin for the season, and I find I can present her at the Viceregal Court with less difficulty and ceremony than at the English one."

"You—present her!" gasped Lady Lucille. "My dear woman, what on earth has put *that* into your head?"

"Heaps of people here go to Dublin for the season," said Octavia. "I guess there won't be any difficulty about introductions. There's one good thing about this country. Money don't count beside birth; the old families just get around all the time. Why, those two Miss M'Cartneys, who haven't two red cents to give away, they date right back to over three hundred years ago, and for all they dress so queer and seem so mean, they can walk straight into Dublin Castle without so much as by your leave, and welcome too."

Lady Lucille laughed contemptuously. "Oh! if you are going to model yourself on the Miss M'Cartneys, I wash my hands of you," she said. "But I fancy your husband has other views on the subject of his daughter and her future position. You will have to await his decision, I take it."

"Patrick is very set on you and your opinions, I know," said Octavia calmly. "But that don't prevent me from expressing mine. And Doreen—she agrees with them."

"If she were your own daughter," said Lady Lucille, "I fancy you would be more ambitious for her. As it is, you must excuse my reminding you that her father is the person to decide things. And he has left the matter in my hands."

"So he told me," said Octavia quietly. "But I guess it doesn't need discussing just yet. Your ladyship seems to take amazing interest in our family concerns."

Lady Lucille glanced covertly at the composed face, then she smiled. "I never can make out whether you

'boss' your husband, or he you," she said. "Or Doreen the both of you. You are a very singular family."

"Perhaps that's so," answered Octavia. "But as long as Doreen and I hang together, I guess things are all right."

"You are very much attached to her. I suppose you brought her up from childhood, and that makes her seem like your own."

"I wish I had," said Octavia sadly. "The miss of a little child of our own made all the difference between Patrick and me. Of course, that don't seem of importance to you, Lady Lucille. You great ladies over this side seem to think children are a nuisance, or a shame, 'stead of a blessing. But no true woman was ever happy without one of her own. It don't seem right she should be."

"How old-fashioned you are, my dear woman!" exclaimed Lady Lucille. "But since you were so fond of children, why didn't you have your stepdaughter to live with you after you married her father?"

"Because——" began Octavia. Then she paused. Why were these questions being put to her? She looked up at her guest, and met the eager search-glance of those hard green eyes. Again she smiled. "You are in a mighty curious mood this morning, Lady Lucille," she said. "But I reckon you've got enough trouble on your hands if you concern yourself with our future, and just let our past slide."

"You *are* such a quaint person," purred Lady Lucille. "I assure you my questions are only those of interest—not idle curiosity."

"Seems to amount to the same thing," drawled Octavia. "I guess you wouldn't care to have me buzzin' around your conjugal life, and askin' how you and the

Honourable Altamont get along when you're livin' together—which ain't often, so I'm told."

Lady Lucille flushed angrily. "There's a proverb which says you can't make a silk purse out of a sow's ear," she said rudely. "Your good manners don't match your good fortune, Lady Madison."

"Well, they're older friends, and I'm more used to them. I never pretend to be aristocratic, Lady Lucille. It would be too much trouble, and, judging from what I've seen and heard, the show ain't worth it."

"No wonder your husband regrets his first wife," said Lady Lucille calmly. "She, at least, would have upheld his position—not lowered it."

Octavia started. "His—first wife? Patrick's? Why, never tell he's been lettin' out fairy tales o' *that* sort." She laughed softly. "His *first* wife!" she repeated. "Didn't happen to say what she was like, your ladyship?"

"Something very different from you," said Lady Lucille rudely, as she rose from her chair.

"I guess so," observed Octavia reflectively. "She must ha' been, or he wouldn't have told you anything about her!"

"He didn't. I only said that. But his pride in Doreen justifies me in imagining she resembles her mother."

Octavia's impassive face changed at last, and her tormentor saw it.

"That's so," she faltered. "And now, if you please, Lady Lucille, we won't talk any more about either o' them. Guess I was pretty sick over the whole business. But I forgave him, and——"

She crimsoned suddenly to the roots of her soft, dark hair. What had she said? Of what imprudence had she been guilty? Could this scornful aristocrat read between

the lines of an inadvertent admission, and suspect that jealously guarded secret which fenced Doreen?

Lady Lucille noted the flush and the sudden embarrassment. What had the woman meant by saying she had been "pretty sick over the whole business"? There *was* something in the background. Something concerned with Doreen and her father. Would she ever be able to get at it?

She left the room as abruptly as she had entered it.

How worrying these people were! She almost wished she had never troubled her head about them. The man was hard as nails, and the girl unmanageable, and the woman a fool of that bovine, placid type, than which there is none more trying. Perigueux was useless here, and simply another paid tool like Jeanne Baudouin. Altogether, the whole affair was an annoyance and threatened to be a failure.

Octavia sat on before the fire, rocking herself in a slow, mechanical manner. She had plenty to think about, and the thoughts represented a disturbing element in the next half-hour. They were interrupted by the entrance of Doreen.

She was smiling and flushed and excited. "Oh, mother!" she cried. "I am glad to find you alone. Something has happened. Guess—Oh! no, you never would, so I'll tell you. I've had a proposal!"

"Mr. Kennaway?" said Octavia.

"Gracious! How did you guess?"

"Never mind. Ain't I right?"

"Yes—you are. He asked me to marry him just ten minutes ago when I met him in the conservatory. I thought it was just the queerest idea. And so I told him.

But he said it was all nonsense about Lady Lucille. He only loved me. Mother, it seemed so awfully queer to have a man say that. One—who's half a stranger, and quite out of one's life."

"What did *you* say?" asked Octavia.

"Why, of course, I told him I'd never thought of him in—well, in *that* sort of way. But that I took it as a great compliment. He talked a lot of nonsense then about my being young, and learning to *care*, and my cruelty in breaking his heart; then Lady Lucille came in, and I went away."

The girl drew near to the figure in the rocking-chair and knelt down beside her.

"Say, dearie, it *is* queer, isn't it? A man caring for one like that. His face was quite white, and his eyes looked strange. I got frightened."

"Ah—I know," murmured Octavia. "When you first meet love it frightens as well as allures you. I'm glad, Doreen, that you don't care for this young man. He's not the sort as makes a good husband, and you're so young, child. . . . So young. God keep your heart free for many a long day yet!"

Doreen was silent. Her eyes were on the fire, and its warmth added colour to her soft cheek. An uneasy, disturbed feeling set her heart to a quicker beat. She wanted to question her stepmother, and yet the words were hard to frame in speech.

"Were you ever in love, mother, when you were a girl?" she whispered at last.

"Why, yes," answered Octavia. "But I lived in Southern States, and had the warm Southern blood in my veins, and your father was just the most splendid lover."

"Father!" exclaimed Doreen. "But you didn't know father when you were a girl?"

Octavia flushed with sudden embarrassment. Accident seemed for ever digging pitfalls for her unwary feet. "I guess he made me feel like a girl does," she said hesitatingly.

"And how does she feel when—well, when it's the right person?" asked Doreen, accepting the explanation of that slip in all innocence.

Octavia laid her large, soft hand on the girl's bent head. "Ah, dearie," she said, "that's just what no girl can answer until she don't need to ask. But don't you go lettin' your thoughts dwell on love, or lovers. Keep yourself free o' men, and you're free of sorrow."

Doreen said no more. Even the frankest and purest girlhood is reticent of a hope that breathes uncertainty.

Meanwhile, a fierce battle was raging between Lady Lucille and Chris Kennaway. She had come upon him holding Doreen's hand, and pleading earnestly, and, for once, sincerely. The amazed and outraged eyes of his unlawful possessor could scarcely credit such defalcation. But there was no mistaking it.

Her tongue lashed him with bitter sarcasm. His own long-held anger leaped to meet it. There was little left unsaid of reproach and recrimination when the luncheon bell recalled them to a sense of worldly propriety. By that time Lady Lucille was half hysterical with rage and indignation, and a general feeling of failure in all her carefully laid schemes. Everything had gone awry; everything was hateful and horrid. She only longed to get away and out of the place which had grown so distasteful.

She announced at luncheon that she was leaving on

the morrow, and felt some satisfaction at the annoyance and surprise in her host's face.

Octavia said nothing. The men of the party were too diplomatic for any outward expression of astonishment at so sudden a decision. The two Gorings were not sorry to leave Ireland, Sallust was indifferent, and Chris Kennaway too sore and hurt by Doreen's refusal and Lady Lucille's discovery to raise any objection. Madison alone felt savagely hurt at so unceremonious a termination to this visit. She had given no hint of it yesterday, and now took the opportunity of a public announcement which only left him capable of conventional regrets. In vain he tried to secure a moment's private conversation. She retired to her own room on the plea of superintending packing and letter-writing, and only appeared at tea-time. It had been a gloomy, wet afternoon, and everyone had assembled in the warm, comfortable library with a sense of relief. As Lady Lucille entered she found the house-party supplemented by several visitors. Captain Mallory was there, and Gerald Roche, and the two pretty McGuire girls. Last, and not least, and seated close to the tea-table and Octavia, appeared the Miss M'Cartneys.

Lady Lucille's eyes took in the various groups with one rapid glance. Then she walked across the room and seated herself near Miss Judy.

"Well, how are you both?" she said coolly. "I've not seen you at any of the meets. Thought you'd gone away."

"We are not so fond of leaving our own roof-tree, Lady Lucille," said Miss Judy stiffly. "And it's not meets and hunting that attract us. No—nor the company that one finds there."

"I forgot you were exclusive," said Lady Lucille. "Sorry I haven't had time to call."

"We accept your apology, but we haven't really much to regret," interposed Miss Jane.

Octavia handed some tea, and Madison crossed over to offer cakes and sandwiches.

The oddity of Miss Jane M'Cartney's speech struck Lady Lucille with a sudden sense of affront. These hateful, meddling old maids had always disliked her, but as yet they had not been openly rude. She drank her tea, and wondered if she could carry the battle into the enemy's camp.

"I suppose you still take paying guests, Miss M'Cartney?" she said. "A friend of mine was asking if there was anywhere he could put up in this neighbourhood. He wants a little hunting, and I thought of you."

Miss Jane's eyes flashed wrathfully under her brown "front." "A friend of Lady Lucille Altamont's needs different accommodation from what our poor house could afford," she said ironically. "Why wouldn't Lady Lucille offer him the convenience of Shiel Lodge? I've heard it is mighty accommodating in the matter of adjacent rooms, and communicating doors!"

Lady Lucille's face grew scarlet. No one knew better than herself what scandals had surrounded Shiel Lodge. But she was as yet ignorant that such scandals had become county gossip.

"The architect was old-fashioned," she said sharply. "He remembered that Ireland possesses all the virtues. Apparently he had not reckoned with the crooked stick of the bundle—an old maid's tongue."

She put down her cup, and walked across the room to where the group of men around Gerald Roche were

discussing the last hunting exploit. Octavia smiled. Miss Jane turned her nodding and indignant head to her hostess.

"There's insolence for you!" she said breathlessly. "Old maid, indeed! Well, better for them that's unmarried spinsters, than unfaithful wives. It's not Lady Lucille Altamont's husband that's any cause to be proud of *his* bargain. And well she knows it. Now, listen to me, Lady Madison. When I heard *that* woman was living under your roof, I said to Judy—my sister there, 'Judy,' I said, 'I'm sorry for Lady Madison. That Altamont woman is a stormy petrel. She brings trouble and scandal wherever she goes.' It's true, Lady Madison, and I'm not ashamed to say it, even though she's your guest."

"I guess I'd best not listen to you as long as she *is* my guest," observed Octavia; "you needn't say more about Lady Lucille, Miss M'Cartney. I'm not blind, and I'm not quite a fool, though there's heaps of things in this country that puzzles an American woman. We're cleaner-minded anyway—leastways those where I come from."

"But pray, don't be thinking *that* woman a representative of English society—or Irish, either!" exclaimed Miss Jane. "Don't you know she daren't stay at Shiel Lodge any longer? Not a soul in the place will call on her. But you're new, so perhaps you were taken in. Anyway, you've let her bring her own party here, and so she was independent of other folk. Still, if you'd been at the big meets you'd have noticed every decent woman avoided her. The men, of course, were at her heels. That's her way. A dangerous woman, my dear Lady Madison—and a bad one too."

Her voice had sunk to a confidential tone, and Oc-

tavia's heart grew heavy within her as she heard. Dangerous?—but what was there to fear? She had suffered all that a wife and a woman could suffer. Was there a place in her heart where the hand of an enemy could plant another dagger?

XXVI.

PEACE descended upon Castle Madison with the departure of the house-party.

Octavia breathed relief, and settled down to her previous enjoyment of home and its duties. Doreen ran light-footed from room to room and place to place undeterred by fear of rebuke. Mademoiselle Perigueux had purchased her horse and was being duly tutored by Captain Mallory, as befitted the principal gainer in the transaction. She made a fairly presentable figure on horseback, and despite the many years that had elapsed since she had first learnt to ride, she speedily gained confidence. True, Doreen laughed at her steed, which was so mild and good-natured that an infant would have been safe on its back. But Mademoiselle cared nothing for her pupil's ridicule. She had gained her point; the horse had cost her nothing; and Captain Mallory was the most gallant of cavaliers. She was perfectly happy, and almost forgot that she was only in Ireland for a special purpose, and that a very insignificant trifle might end her engagement.

The hunting season was nearly at an end, but that did not trouble her. She had her daily ride, and insisted on accompanying Doreen when her father was unable to do so. It seemed to the girl that this happened very

often. Madison seemed to have lost all interest in hunting, or his stables. He used the motor a great deal, caring little for hills, or bad roads, or the fact that he deprived his wife of one of her greatest pleasures. He had grown irritable and impatient. He was dissatisfied with the house and telegraphed for Mr. Raeburn, and gave him so many contradictory instructions that that gentleman suggested his building an entirely new mansion.

Then quite suddenly he went off to London, merely giving business as excuse. Octavia entreated him not to take a house there, but he would make no promise to that effect.

Thus matters stood when Doreen announced that the McGuire girls were off to Dublin, and had suggested that Octavia and Doreen should accompany them.

"It depends on your father," said Octavia. "I kind of fancy he don't like us to go there. I'm sure I don't know why."

"Sir John Creagh's sister, Lady La Touche, would introduce us," said Doreen. "We'd have a perfectly splendid time, mother. All sorts of fun. Balls, concerts, the theatre, and all the best people there for the season, and the Castle open up to the middle of March. Don't you think you could act on your own responsibility—for once?"

"There's the expense to think of," said Octavia. "We'd have to rent a house and take the servants. I'm afraid to do all that without your father's consent. Suppose you write, child? He'd likely take it better coming from you. Say you want to get a bit used to social functions afore you face the London season."

Doreen agreed to try her persuasions, and penned a long and diplomatic letter to Madison stating her request

and her ambitions. It occurred to her to say that as workmen were once again in possession of the house, things were none too comfortable for her stepmother and herself. Having written her letter she sauntered down to the village to post it, by way of something to do.

Half-way to the lodge she caught sight of a familiar figure approaching. The sudden gladness of recognition surprised herself. She had forgotten that a visit from the junior architect lay within the realms of possibility.

"Why, Mr. Connell! Is it really you? What a surprise!"

She held out her hand, and he took and held it quite a long moment. He looked down at the blushing girlish face, and read the welcome in her eyes.

"Mr. Raeburn thought I'd best come and look to things again," he said. "I'm sorry Sir Patrick is so dissatisfied."

"He was pleased enough at first," said Doreen. "I can't think what took him afterwards. I fancy some of those people made fun of the alterations, and he didn't like it."

"It was his own idea—his own wish to have the towers."

"I know. And I can't see what's wrong with them. Were you going to the house?" she asked.

"I was. But——"

He glanced at the letter in her hand. "You are taking a stroll, perhaps?"

"I was just going to walk to the village. I've been in the house all day."

"Might I——" He half turned.

"Why, certainly," she answered frankly. "I'll be very glad to have someone for company. Mademoiselle is out riding. Did you know she'd bought a horse for herself?"

"No. Is that so? I'm surprised. She didn't give me the idea of——"

Doreen laughed. "Oh! she's not so bad. She can't hunt, but she just loves trotting around the lanes and by-roads. Usually she has Captain Mallory with her. That makes her downright radiant. You'd never think she owned a temper, or could look thunder-clouds when things didn't go just as she wanted them."

"And how did the house-party go off?" he asked.

"Very badly as far as I'm concerned; and father's been as cross as a bear ever since."

"Is he at home?"

"No. He's in London. I've just been writing to him. I want——" she stopped abruptly. Did she really want so much to go to Dublin? Was it of such vital import that that letter should catch the post—now? The fact that the question suddenly suggested itself, sent the blood to her temples. How stupid she was, and why on earth should she blush and falter over such a simple matter?

"You want——" he repeated. "What is it you want, Miss Doreen?"

"Oh, it's no matter. I should have said you want to see father, I suppose?"

"I can afford to wait for his return," he said. "I've a fairly accurate knowledge of what has to be done next."

"Then won't you come up to the house? I thought perhaps you might stay on to dinner as—you used to do?"

"I'd love it," he said quietly. "Even if I have to face the critical eyes of Mademoiselle Perigueux. I fancy she doesn't like me, Miss Doreen."

"She doesn't seem to like anyone that I do," said the girl frankly.

He looked at her quickly. "That was a nice-sound-

ing speech," he said. "Because it's as good as saying you don't share her prejudice."

"I've never forgotten how you helped me that time on Coney Island. I should be very ungrateful if I did."

"You will soon be living in a society that doesn't lay much hold on gratitude," he said. "You've sampled some, I daresay, since I last saw you. I was wondering if you'd be changed—in any way."

"Well, I'm not. Am I?"

"Not so far as I can see. Just as frank and sweet as the little girl who clung to me so desperately in that crowd, and wasn't a bit ashamed to know me again on the steamer."

"Do you reckon sincerity such a wonder?" she asked, smiling.

"I do. Because I know the world, and its values and valuations. Ah, Miss Doreen, if only you could just remain as you are!"

"Why shouldn't I?"

"I hardly know. But it's not possible. Change is part of life and part of ourselves. Nothing remains the same—for always."

She was silent for a moment. They had reached the lodge gates, and were now on the road. As if unconsciously, the girl turned to the left instead of the right, and apparently her companion forgot that the village post-office had been her destination.

"I'd like to tell you something," she said suddenly. "Only you must promise not to laugh."

"It's done," he answered.

"Well, I think I must be grown up really, for I've had a—proposal!"

He was quiet so long that she looked at his face, half

fearful of the smile of incredulity such an announcement warranted. But his lips were quite grave, and the eyes she met looked—was it troubled?

"I'm not surprised," he said at last.

"Well, I was. I thought it the most ridiculous thing for any man to want to—to—marry *me*."

"That," he said, "is one of the opinions you'll have to change."

"I guess not. I don't seem able to place myself as a suitable person for marriage. It's serious, and I'm—not. That's one thing. Another is——" she hesitated.

"Don't stop. I'd like to know."

"Well, I don't seem to care for men."

"You haven't had much opportunity of judging their merits, or their characters."

"No. That's so. All the same, I've met a few. And it seems to me they're either selfish, or foolish, and—oh! I just can't express it—but not *good*. Not what one has pictured and dreamt of and read about. Do you understand?"

"Yes," he said gently. "But a girl's dreams are more or less of the ideal. The common everyday, working, struggling, disillusioned man isn't a hero. Only he'd *like* to be one, perhaps; just once in his life."

"I don't mean a story-book man," said the girl earnestly. "I think the worker and the doer are just as fine as ever they can be. But they don't seem to come my way. Oh—but I forgot——" And she laughed and coloured more adorably than ever.

"You forgot your father," he said, anxious to spare her embarrassment.

"Yes. I used to think him just splendid. Only now that he's so rich, and so set on knowing titled society

folk, he's changed. Sometimes I hardly feel he's the dear kind old dad I knew in America. Often I wish we hadn't come over this side at all. Nothing's turning out the least bit like what I thought it would."

Again he was silent; conscious of comprehension and of sympathy, yet afraid to tell her so. Afraid to hint that the rumours of Madison's infatuation had reached even his ears. They strolled on for some moments, both occupied with their own thoughts. When Doreen spoke again it was to tell of that midnight expedition, and the weird apparition in the ruined tower.

He listened gravely. "But surely," he said, "you didn't think it was a *ghost*?"

"I didn't know what to think," said Doreen. "It was awfully weird and uncanny, and the country people all believe that the tower is haunted. My little maid, Nora, declares it is. No one will go near the place after dark."

"It is, perhaps, just as well your father did not restore it—under the circumstances."

"It seems so now. How one changes, Mr. Connell! I look back on all I had pictured of Castle Derg, and can hardly believe it. Nothing's the same. We've sort of drifted into a new life, and I can hardly believe there was ever another."

"Is it so very different?"

"Why, yes; Ireland, and people, and home; and even father." Then she added wistfully, "Sometimes I think he doesn't love me as much as he used to do. It's not my happiness, but his ambitions that come first."

Connell looked at the young face shadowed now by a new gravity. The soft content of mere happy girlhood had gone, but there seemed a deeper charm in this wistful tenderness.

"Don't his ambitions concern you too?" he asked. "He is proud of you, and he naturally wants to get the best things of life for your future."

"Ah—but *his* ideas of the best things aren't mine," said the girl eagerly. "Money, and rank, and this sort of giddy, ceaseless whirl of amusement. I like simple, homely things much better, Mr. Connell, and so does mother. That's why we get on so well together. I often think if we'd a quiet, pretty home—(nothing big or grand)—and our horses, and a few nice *real* friends we'd be ever so much happier. But if I say anything like that to father, he gets quite mad with me. It's not only that he's set on money, but set on making more than he's got already. I can't think why."

Connell thought he could give a pretty good guess at reasons, but he did not say so.

"Would you really be content with a simple home, and a moderate income, and love as your house-guest, Miss Doreen?" he asked. "It is a wise choice—but—I doubt if it will always be yours. You say you've changed in this short time. Possibly another year, or two, will change you more."

"I hope not," she said anxiously. "I don't think they will. The *me* I know, the real me, isn't a bit fickle; of that I'm sure. I shall never love another friend as much as Rosa Schmidt. I shall never care for another horse as much as Rosemary. I shall never think another man——"

She hesitated. It was a little difficult to frame her appreciation of Barry Connell in suitable words.

"I mean, no other man will ever mean to me quite the same as you," she went on bravely. "You did me a great service once, but it isn't *that*. I think it's because

you mean to do something with your life, and have put that before you, and will just work on till you get it."

"Why, Miss Doreen," he said. "That's just me, and you've gone straight for it. I never thought I'd interest you enough to make you think of what I was, or am, or have done, or mean to do. It's just the sweetest and most encouraging thing in the world to hear such words from your lips, and to believe you mean them."

"Of course I mean them."

"Well, that just makes me long to do something really good and great, so as to justify your belief."

They had reached the old churchyard where Doreen had first seen him since their parting on shipboard. Involuntarily they paused. Their eyes met.

"Do you remember?" he asked.

"Yes—of course. You had come to look at your ancestors' graves, and I was riding Rosemary, and saw you."

"And ever since," he added, "I've lived on the thought of you, the memory of you, the lovely grace and sweetness that stand just for yourself. You're not offended with me for telling you so?"

"Offended? Certainly not. It sounds just perfectly splendid to hear such things. I'm sick of silly compliments. You—you don't mean compliments, Mr. Connell. Only that we're friends, and aren't ashamed to say so?"

"Friends!" he echoed. "That makes me very proud, Miss Doreen. I only wish—But there, I mustn't take advantage of your kindness. It's the more surprising because I had feared that those grand folks who have been staying with you would have shunted my insignificant memory altogether. You see, by your own confession one of them did fall in love with you,"

Doreen crimsoned suddenly. "Oh, no. I'm sure it wasn't *that*. He asked me to marry him, but it wasn't because he cared for me, personally. Mademoiselle says I shall be a great 'catch'. I know that means rich. I'm sure Chris Kennaway only thought of that. It sounds horrid, and it—oh! it made me feel so ashamed."

She pushed open the half-broken gate by which they stood. "Let us go in," she said. "I want you to show me where your people lie. Perhaps somewhere here, in far back times, some of our folk are buried. The churchyard is near enough to the Castle to allow of it."

He followed her in, and over the grass-grown paths, and moss-covered stones. The afternoon was growing late, and the sky darkening with heavy rain-clouds. But Doreen seemed to have lost count of time, and Barry Connell saw no reason for reminding her. From grave to grave they wandered, but saw nowhere the name they sought.

"It seems as if our joint ancestors had sought oblivion, doesn't it?" said Connell at last. "But——why, what's this——? Look, Miss Doreen."

The girl came up to his side. He had been pushing away a mass of weeds and creepers that had covered a flat tombstone. The lettering showed faint and dim, but one name was familiar enough to catch his eye.

"DOREEN MADISON,
The beloved wife of John Barry O'Connell.
Aged Twenty-four."

Doreen read it. "My name. How strange!"
"And mine," he said softly.

XXVII.

THEY talked of it as they turned homewards. The coincidence was strange enough to engross both minds.

Once, far and away in buried and forgotten years, a Madison had married an O'Connell.

"And how young to die," said Doreen. "Only twenty-four! I wonder if father knows? He must, of course. That's why he gave me the same name."

Conjecture ran rife. Dates had been obliterated. The lettering was barely decipherable. Yet the fact remained. It awakened intense curiosity in Connell's mind. Interests about which he had been careless, names and associations about which he had not troubled hitherto, these hurried back to memory as possessing enormous importance. He resolved to write home at the earliest opportunity, and secure as much family history as was possible.

Meanwhile, Doreen had brought him back to the house; she left him in the library while she ran off to inform her stepmother of a guest for dinner. Octavia received the news placidly. She also informed Doreen that Mademoiselle Perigueux had excused herself from appearing on account of great fatigue after a longer ride than usual. "So it's as well we have company," she added, as Doreen went off to dress for dinner.

"Sure, you're gettin' rarely beautiful, Miss Doreen!" exclaimed Nora as her young lady hurried into the simple white silk which composed her dinner-gown. "'Tis yourself will be turnin' the heads av all the Dublin gentry, once they sees ye."

"Dublin?" The girl hesitated a moment. Somehow it did not seem so important that they should hurry off to Dublin. Also, she remembered that a certain letter still awaited postal attention. "Perhaps we sha'n't go to Dublin for weeks yet," she said. "Nora, do you think my hair looks all right?"

"It looks lovely, miss. As bright and soft as sunshine. It's a pity there's no one to see ye, barrin' jist the ould Frenchwoman, and your mother herself."

"Oh! but there is," smiled Doreen. "Mr. Connell is here to dinner. He's come down about the house again, and I met him, and asked him to dine with us."

"Sure, that's good," said Nora; and she smiled also. Was there, after all, a reason for that anxiety as to appearance and *coiffure*? Mr. Connell was a favourite with the household generally, and pronounced by all "a rare gentleman," despite the facts of American birthright. For to the Irish mind America embraces Canada as well as California. Still, when Doreen had hurried off and her little maid was tidying up the room, she asked herself if, after all, an architect was quite the sort of match one would expect for Miss Doreen? Certainly the servants' hall had looked for an alliance with "the quality," and a title was spoken of as probable.

But Doreen, gay and radiant, and conscious of no disapproving eyes, gave herself up to the interests of the evening, and the unexpected guest.

They told Octavia of the discovery in the churchyard,

but she only expressed vague surprise at the coincidence. Then Connell tried to draw her out on Madison's family history. She professed to know nothing of it. She really did know very little. He had never been communicative, and when he had startled her by the information respecting his inheritance, she had been far too bewildered to follow up any imbroglío of ancestry. She looked at Connell as he sat opposite Doreen, and remarked that possibly they were "kind o' cousins." She wondered Patrick hadn't found it out before. Then she took the fact of cousinship for granted, and suggested the young man should make his home at the Castle while he was engaged on the work. There were plenty of rooms to spare, and he wouldn't have to waste time running to and fro from the Miss M'Cartneys'. Connell at first demurred, but afterwards allowed himself to be persuaded. The temptation of being under the same roof as Doreen, had an unforeseen strength.

The evening passed with lightning-like rapidity, and he found himself going down the avenue with winged feet and glad heart. The night was misty and the wind chill, but nothing could damp his spirits. That discovery in the churchyard nestled like a warm hope in his heart, and set fancy free to dream as it pleased. The fancy of youth, and a clear conscience, and expectation of glad days to come.

How kind Fate had been to him! How wonderful the chance that had led to a second meeting—to the charming intimacies of that summer-time, and now placed him on the equality of relationship. One that could not be affected even by a millionaire's dollars. As he hurried along towards the M'Cartney mansion, he was busy composing a letter to his people. One that demanded authentic

information as to the first emigrating Connells, and so onto the family who had grafted themselves on to the strong green branch of a new colony and its enterprises; adopting it so closely that home ties were cut adrift along with that distinguishing "O" of the ancient name.

It might be a matter of some difficulty. But the importance of asserting himself to Madison, dwarfed all other considerations. The pride of wealth was as nothing to the pride of birth in the American mind, and to prove himself Sir Patrick's equal by ownership of a common ancestry would be infinitely more satisfactory than to claim the equality of dollars.

It occurred to him that some of the necessary "tracing" might be done on this side. Ireland was a country of genealogical traditions and long-cherished memories. Some of the village folk, or the peasants, might remember the O'Connells when they were impoverished farmers, and be able to tell of that branch of the family which had sought fortune and found it in a new and kinder land. He must set about the matter at once. Meanwhile, he would be under the roof of this new-found, lovely cousin (as she called herself), the girl who already stood out in his mind from a background at once romantic and personal. He was young enough to reckon with the chances of things as more important than mere happenings. Years were but the measure of events, and the future now assumed an importance dwarfing all immediate transactions.

In a very hopeful and eager frame of mind he walked into the drawing-room of the Miss M'Cartneys, and found them just concluding a last game of double dummy at a halfpenny the "rub." Miss Judy and her sister would have sat up all night playing cards, and then refused to open the shutters in an endeavour to cheat the daylight.

They demanded reasons for Connell's desertion. Hints of dinner specially prepared and spoilt by the keeping fell on inattentive ears. He knew those dinners too well to regret one.

With a sudden memory of Miss M'Cartney's accurate memory of families and fortunes as connected with her own county, he put a few tentative enquiries as regarded those Connells who had not discarded the "O."

Miss Jane had heard her grandfather talk of them. John O'Connell had been a well-to-do farmer, as Irish farmers went. He was the son of an O'Connell who had made a runaway match with a young daughter of the Madisons. They had never forgiven the affront, and misfortunes had followed the rash couple from the day of their marriage. The young wife had died after the birth of her second child. The broken-hearted husband had gone away, taking the children with him. To America—it was supposed. But no one had heard of him from that day onwards. The remaining O'Connells sank into yet deeper depths of poverty and trouble, ending in political crime and disgrace. They were all dead and gone now. The farm had been cut up into small holdings, and parcelled out among various tenants. The story of the Madison persecution was almost a legend now, only to be unlocked from such a muniment room of archæology as Miss Jane's mind represented.

Barry Connell listened with eager interest. He fancied the tracing of that emigrating O'Connell would not be so difficult, now he had reliable information on the point. But as he parted from his hostesses on the stroke of midnight, Miss M'Cartney added a further detail.

"If it's your folk you're seeking," she said, "there's one can tell you more than I—or indeed anyone else in

the place. But she's hard to find. Old Kate Kearney, her name is, but she's mostly known as Crazy Kate. Her folk and the O'Connells were neighbours and fast friends in old times. You might learn something from her."

Barry Connell shook hands warmly, and thanked her for all her information. He resolved to find Crazy Kate at the earliest opportunity.

Doreen's letter to her father remained unposted until time enough had elapsed for a reply. Then—Octavia began to wonder at the delay. She expressed herself to Doreen with the result of blushes, confusion, and explanations. They were placidly accepted. Life was too smooth and tranquil for Octavia to raise any objection to its continuance.

It was Mademoiselle Perigueux who threatened disturbance. Captain Mallory was in Dublin, and horse exercise had lost its charm. She urged Octavia to proceed to the gay capital, and leave the house to its army of workmen and the strenuous supervision of its architectural superintendent. Lady Madison therefore wrote to her husband, acquainting him with her wish to spend some time in Dublin. She told Doreen. That young lady received the information with less interest than it warranted.

"Seems I don't care about being presented," she said. "I like this sort of life ever so much better."

"A fortnight ago you were all for going to Dublin," observed her stepmother.

Doreen said nothing. Was it only a fortnight since life had changed so utterly? Since morning had become a thing to greet with joy, and every night breathed but a soft regret?

Octavia looked at the young face, the dreaming eyes, and a sudden fear sprang to life. Something had chanced to the girl. Life and its dawning possibilities had faced her in those dreams. Careless chaperonage rebuked her, and yet she asked herself why should she have interfered. Madison's hopes and ambitions were all very well, but she was a woman with a woman's heart, and a woman's intuition. She knew Doreen as her father could never know her. All the same, she shrank from the anger and the scenes that might be their joint portion if——

Yet perhaps she was alarming herself unnecessarily. Barry Connell was too much a gentleman and man of honour to take advantage of the friendliness extended towards him. He had never presumed on it. He had performed every duty required of him, using a small dingy room at the back of the hall for his plans and business affairs. Never coming into the library except at her invitation, and taking the trouble to put on evening-dress every night for dinner, despite the fact that as often as not his hostess appeared in a high-necked velvet tea-gown, and that Mademoiselle Perigueux considered a white blouse and black silk skirt a sufficient *toilette* for the home-party.

Pleasant informal evenings had followed. They would play cards, or go to the billiard-room for "pool," or sometimes there would be music. O'Connell possessed a fine baritone, and Doreen played his accompaniments very charmingly.

Occasionally the Miss M'Cartneys would drop in uninvited and stay to dinner, and have to be sent home in the motor. They always had some fresh information for the non-paying guest who had deserted them, and Doreen's

interest grew apace as their stories of gossip opened out fresh details of that ancient O'Connell-Madison feud.

Now—she was conscious that to go to Dublin meant an end of all this. An end to calm, pleasant family life, and a resumption of that exciting, extravagant, restless dressing-up, and wasteful existence falsely proclaimed as "social gaiety." Its appeal to her was no longer insistent. She found herself hoping her father would not consent, and as day followed day and no reply came to her step-mother's letter, the girl told herself that he evidently did not care whether they remained or not.

She questioned Octavia with apparent carelessness. "I suppose you mentioned that Mr. Connell was staying here?"

"Now I come to think of it, I don't b'lieve I did. I suppose I ought to have told him?"

Doreen looked charmingly unconscious. "We seem to have taken him on as a matter of course," she said.

"There's no harm in that. I guess your father will be considerably surprised when he finds he's a family connection."

And meanwhile the "family connection" was being caught up into the meshes of a tragedy at once mystifying and horrible, that threatened to destroy his peace of mind, and rend asunder the cobweb fabrications of the Madison inheritance.

One evening he was coming back from the village when he was arrested by a strange figure. It stepped out from the dark shadow of the hedge, and croaked an arresting order to "stand still wid himself."

Connell stood still, and demanded a reason. The figure was a piece of antique Irish womanhood, weird of aspect, and mysterious of tongue. Depleted of foreign phrases and apostrophes, Connell gathered that his enquiries respecting the self-banished O'Connell had reached her ears. That she was in a position to tell him more authentic family history than anyone in the place. That craziness and the reputed "evil eye" in no way affected a memory concerned with her neighbours' affairs, and traditions of a past generation. In short, that to his order and command and generosity the aged crone was prepared to confide histories and tragedies that had once enmeshed the fortunes of two families with both of which the young man was concerned.

Connell listened in growing amazement. As the narrative progressed it betrayed a virulent animosity to one particular person, alluded to as "Himself," at one moment, and an "interloping desayer" at another. The said gentleman had offended her dignity. He had been guilty of "the bad wurrd" to an old poverty-stricken woman with hardly the breath of life in her. He had committed that unforgivable offence—in Ireland—misnaming an appeal to generosity as begging and vagrancy, coupled with threats of the police. For this and other unmentionable reasons the old crone had called down the "curse of Heaven" on his head. Had prophesied evil and misfortune, and was now prepared to assist in bringing about one or other with all possible goodwill.

Barry Connell listened and pondered. Vengeance was no part of his programme. He had no desire for a downfall that should celebrate his own rise to good fortune. The subject was far too weighty to be either credited or

dismissed without due consideration. He temporised. He poured a handful of silver into a wrinkled palm, bade the old woman come up to the house a week hence, and then went thoughtfully up the avenue pondering on the extraordinary statements he had heard.

That evening he asked Doreen the address of the Dublin lawyers who had been in communication with her father. Hearing of Standish M'Caughen as "just the dearest old thing ever," he made a note of the fact, and in the privacy of his own room that night he indited a letter to that gentleman asking a few pertinent questions respecting the twisted and entangled branches of the Madison family.

The enquiries so surprised and perturbed M'Caughen that he showed the letter to his partner. The result was a cautiously worded communication to Barry Connell—asking if it would be convenient for him to give a personal interview to the firm, and bring with him such documents, etc., as were in his possession. Connell considered this letter for a whole day, and his gravity and silence were noticeable. The same post had brought a letter from Madison saying the family were to go to Dublin by the end of the week, and he would meet them at the Shelbourne.

Doreen was not as pleased as she should have been. But a mutual discussion of plans restored her cheerfulness. Connell's business could wait on their movements, and he would escort them on their journey. Thenceforward all was bustle and confusion. Marie and Nora packed for their respective mistresses. Mrs. Donnelly received instructions. The house was put into winding-sheets and wrappers, the servants on board wages, and in

due time Octavia and Doreen found themselves luxuriously accommodated with the best suite at the Shelbourne, and were received by Madison as arranged.

Barry Connell retired to humbler quarters, and Doreen found herself wondering why it was that her father seemed no longer the one engrossing object of her life. Wondering also why he was so cold, so strange, so altered.

XXVIII.

"My dear sir, I quite see your point—but——" It seemed to Barry Connell that M'Caughen never got further than that "but." It opened at least four cross-roads of arguments and disputes. Also a handy side-lane of evasions. Standish M'Caughen did not like trouble, neither would he confess to carelessness, or a too ready acceptance of claims that were not founded on a sure rock of evidence.

"Loopholes there may be—and as to the marriage—well, we've no proofs. These side issues are mighty troublesome things to follow out. Even take it for granted——"

Connell interrupted. He wished nothing taken for granted. There had already been too much of that.

"Well, well, say there's been a flaw in the matter, are you prepared to go to the trouble and expense of a lawsuit? Mind you, it will be a terrible matter. Think of the searches, both in this country and in Canada; and the lapse of time too!"

"That is quite true. But it does not do away with the facts. Also it does not answer my question. Were you perfectly satisfied with Patrick John Madison's claim?"

M'Caughen hesitated. He ought to have gone out to America himself, but a horror of the sea, and a natural

habit of laziness had prevented this. Besides, there was no other claimant—then.

"Were you?" reiterated Connell.

"Of course. It was as clear as daylight."

"What about my discovery? Surely I have a right to ask for investigation?"

"Any man can stir up a hornets' nest," answered M'Caughen gloomily. "The thing is to get away from the stings. If you go against Sir Patrick, you'll do more harm than good. He's a hard man—and a 'cute one. He didn't enter into this business without seeing into all possibilities. Besides, his daughter——"

Connell recognised the little thrill that the mention of one name always brought to his heart. How could he make Doreen suffer, as she would suffer, did he prove her father a cheat? A man who had taken advantage of another person's ignorance and poverty to assert a wrongful claim?

"I wish you would understand, Mr. M'Caughen, that I only move in this matter for my own satisfaction. I wish to make certain investigations, and I have applied to you to assist me. I don't desire to turn out Sir Patrick Madison, or even to commence a legal battle, but I *do* desire to be able to say to him—'I am your equal in every sense of the word, and I refuse to be treated as an inferior.'"

M'Caughen looked at the frank face, the clear, steadfast eyes, and muttered—"Inferior? Surely you mistake——"

"He would not allow his daughter to speak to me on the liner, because I was a second-class passenger. He has treated me all this time as a mere workman. Some-

one to whom he pays wages. I have never been invited to sit at his table, to meet his guests, and——"

"And Miss Doreen is a very lovely and charming girl," observed M'Caughen.

The blood rushed to the young man's brow. "You don't suppose——"

"My dear Connell, you're young and hot-headed and ambitious, and Fortune hasn't treated you as well as some other folks. You're eager for a tussle with the fickle dame, and no doubt you picture yourself as victorious. It's a pretty enough story as it stands, but it's the sequel I'm thinking of. There's high hopes and ambitions set on that pretty russet head of Doreen Madison's, and perhaps plain Mr. Barry Connell wouldn't be welcomed by those who own the ambitions?"

"I—I haven't said, done—anything to make you——"

"Divil a word, but all the same I've been young myself, and I can see as far as most folk where a pretty girl and a gallant youth are concerned. Your case is open to suspicion—to say the least of it. And that brings the whole affair into a nutshell. I can't act for you, and act for Sir Patrick. If you're going to assert a claim, you'll have to find another lawyer, and he and I'll be for thrashing out the matter to our joint interests respectively. On the other hand, if you wish to make friends at Court, you'd be wiser to have a personal interview with Sir Patrick, and tell him what you've discovered. Shall we leave it at that?"

Connell was silent for a moment. Then he rose and pushed back his chair.

"Yes," he said. "Leave it at that."

Standish M'Caughen breathed relief. He, too, rose. There were two entrances to his private office.

"Go out this way," he said, and threw open the door. The handle moved so easily that it gave the impression of the door not being properly closed.

A figure standing by the window turned quickly at the sound. "Ah, Monsieur M'Caughen! At last. It is long I have waited. *Bon jour*, Mr. Connell. It seems we meet again."

Connell bowed stiffly. He had no great liking for the Frenchwoman, but a good deal of mistrust. He walked out of the private room wondering what on earth had brought her there.

Standish M'Caughen wondered also.

He had an uncomfortable impression of a door ajar, and remembered that neither Connell nor himself had been speaking to the chance of eavesdroppers.

He enquired Mademoiselle's business, and was informed that she had brought a letter from Sir Patrick requiring immediate attention. He took the letter, and read it quickly. Then he sat down and wrote a few lines in answer. He handed this to the Frenchwoman, and enquired who had shown her into that room. She explained that she had come to the wrong entrance, and that a servant had told her to wait in there until her master was disengaged. The servant had been cleaning the doorstep, and said there were two entrances. Mademoiselle had come up the stairs, and waited.

The explanation was simple enough, yet all the time M'Caughen had an uneasy sensation about the speaker. He longed to ask if she had overheard anything in the other room, but felt that to do so would lend importance to the recent interview.

In truth, Mademoiselle Perigueux had heard a great deal. Enough to arouse her curiosity; enough to set her

busy brain scheming and plotting once more. So there *was* something wrong about the Madison inheritance, and Mr. Connell was concerned with it! How could she find out the secret? And to what market should she carry her knowledge? Lady Lucille was, by rights, the proper person to acquaint with the discovery. But what of Sir Patrick himself? Surely he would give anything to keep such an affair secret? An American—however rich—would not be tolerated as possessor of a false title; in Ireland, at all events. All his plans would fall to the ground, and he would have to return to his own country shamed and humiliated. Yes—surely Madison would pay anything to keep such a thing dark and out of common knowledge. But she was a little in awe of him. He was not an easy opponent to tackle. On the whole Lady Lucille was safer.

She returned to the Shelbourne flushed and excited, gave Madison his letter, and then retired to her own room to think out a plan of action. It had occurred to her that it only needed the hint of a "dot" to bring Captain Mallory to her feet. If she could acquaint him casually with news of a legacy—a sudden piece of good fortune—why, then his conquest might be counted on as sure. And what a triumph for herself! A county lady, with a home and place of her own. No more drudgery; no more teaching; no more playing the subordinate to *nouveaux riches*, or insolent, indifferent aristocrats. She laid out an elaborate scheme. She saw Madison confronted with the supreme assurance of the owner of trump cards, and a knowledge when to play them.

She lunched with Octavia and Doreen. Madison was absent. Octavia mentioned casually that Lady Lucille had run over to Dublin, and was to dine with them that

evening. The announcement seemed a fit coping-stone to Mademoiselle's schemes. But it set Doreen fuming. "She'll interfere with everything. She'll want to present us, and Lady La Touche will be offended. Why on earth couldn't she stop in London!"

It appeared that the offender had taken a furnished house for a couple of months, and was going to give some entertainments. Octavia retailed all this in her usual languid manner. If she was annoyed or surprised, she did not allow it to appear. Then the motor came round. She took Doreen out shopping, and left cards on various houses as directed by her husband, and enjoyed the new experience to all appearance. But Doreen's face grew graver and crosser, and her disgust at interference with preconceived plans was openly expressed.

In the Park and in the streets the girl's eyes had searched restlessly for one face. Two days had passed, and they had seen nothing of Barry Connell. He might have called, she told herself, but he had not done so.

As it drew near five o'clock she persuaded Octavia to return to the hotel. Perhaps——

She was right in her conjecture. He was in the lounge when they passed through.

In response to Doreen's eager greeting, he announced that he was waiting to see her father. Octavia asked him to come up to their room for tea, but he excused himself in a somewhat nervous and constrained fashion. The girl wondered at the change in his manner. What had happened in forty-eight hours to alter him? The chill of restraint touched her also. She neither jested nor questioned, but, accepting the excuse as coldly as it was made, she walked away up the stairs, telling herself

that the episode wasn't worth troubling about, and yet strangely troubled about it.

Meanwhile, Barry Connell was conducted to Madison's private room, a place of telephones and type-writers and secretaries—all the necessary apparatus of financial importance. He was walking up and down the room dictating letters, and for a moment Connell was struck with a sense of his own daring in thus bearding a great financial magnate, with such unexpected information as lay typed and proved and docketed in his coat pocket.

Madison pointed to a chair, and went on dictating. A brief interval was filled up with the telephone. Then he turned to Connell. "The Castle, I suppose?" he said.

"No," answered the young man, with a sudden access of colour. "It's a private matter. *Very* private," he added.

Madison stared. "That so? Well, you've hit on an awkward time. I'm busy with the mail. I reckon you'll have to wait."

"How long?" enquired Connell.

Madison glanced at the clock. "Fifteen minutes. Sure you can't say it out here?"

"I could, but you wouldn't like it."

Madison gave him a quick, surprised glance. "Why, what the——" he began. Then he laughed and turned to the stenographer. "Just clear out for ten minutes," he said. "Stop in the next room. I'll ring. Now——" and he turned to the young architect. "Say what it is. You look mighty mysterious. Something wrong with the works, I guess."

"No," said Connell. "This is a personal affair between ourselves."

He took out his pocket-book and papers, and in a few brief sentences narrated his recent discovery. Madi-

son listened in absolute silence. His face was as impassive, his eyes as calm as if the recital were of no importance.

When Connell ceased speaking he said coolly—"You don't suppose I didn't go into *that* before I sent in my claim? You won't get a look in if you mean a fight, and that's what it would have to be. D'you suppose I'm the sort that knuckles down to sentimental conditions? Not likely. I never overlap business with anything *but* business. You've got a pretty enough story together, but it wouldn't hold in a court of law against mine—and against *me*. Of course, if it's a deal you're after——"

Connell started to his feet. His eyes blazed. "Don't judge everyone by yourself, Mr. Madison," he said. "I appealed to your honour and your sense of justice. Of course, I'm not in a position to fight you in the Law Courts. I know that. Still, there *are* authorities to whom I could appeal. I might even do more. I might acquaint your wife and daughter with these particulars."

"You dare!" shouted Madison, with sudden fury. "You dare breathe a word of this outside these four walls, and you'll regret—once. But that'll mean all your life!"

"I have already informed your lawyers of my discovery," said Connell coolly. "One of them acknowledged carelessness in adjudging your claims. He thought I had a good case if I wished to press it—but I don't."

"Oh—you don't? That's magnanimous. What is it then you *do* want?"

"I want your acknowledgment of our relationship. I choose to be on a footing of equality—not of tolerance. It is my right, and the mere question of your wealth doesn't touch it. I choose to meet your daughter as an

equal—as she meets other men, and to have as fair a chance of winning her heart as—other men. If I tell her of this discovery, you best know what she would think of you. No man likes to fall off a pedestal, especially the pedestal of a child's ideals. The worshipping love of your child is no secret to you. I fancy it's the best thing in your life, and you'd be sorry to lose it."

"I am to conclude from all this that you're in love with my daughter? That you've taken advantage of my absence, and her ignorance, and youth to—to——"

His voice broke harshly. Anger, and pride, and overthrown ambition were wrestling within his heart. That it should be Doreen who must arbitrate between them—that Doreen should ever know how base and ignoble her idol had proved! That those eyes which had never held anything but love and tenderness should shun his own in bitterness of shame——

Connell's voice broke over that storm of passion. "I have done nothing of the sort. Your wife invited me to the house, and I went—because I knew I had a right to go. But I have never by word or hint betrayed my feelings to your daughter. I respected her youth and purity more than your titled guests respected them."

Madison made an impatient gesture. "Doreen represents everything to me. It is for her I value this heritage. I have planned her future on great lines. I'm not going to cave in and allow you to win her. It's not good enough. Not by half, Barry Connell, and it's not going to happen."

"You cannot dispose of your child as if she were a mere chattel. She has enough of your own independence to insist on free disposal of herself. And whatever course of action you take, I shall not waive my chance of win-

ning her love. It's the dearest and most precious hope I've ever held. I don't give it up at any bidding save her own."

Madison's rage swelled like a rising torrent. The cool peremptory tones of this despised and hated interloper maddened him with a sense of inferiority and helplessness. He looked from that calm young face to the papers on which his hand rested. There had been a time when a hot oath, a revolver shot would have been answer to such insolence, but now in the trammels of civilisation he could not resort to such methods.

He paced the room in silence. Then turned abruptly. "Will you leave those papers with me? I'll go through them."

"Certainly. They're only copies."

Madison's eyes flashed. "D—n your insolence! Did you suppose——"

"One reckons with chances—sometimes."

"You're going the right way to make a friend of me, aren't you?" sneered Madison. "Seems you forget I could smash up you and your pretensions easy as——" He snapped the ivory paper-cutter he had been holding, and threw the pieces on the floor.

"Money's a big power, I grant," said his opponent. "But money sometimes melts and escapes the most careful hands. I happen to know that Oregon Pref. aren't the safest things in the world. Even when locked up and self-controlled."

Madison stood suddenly still. "You know a great deal, it seems, besides your trade——"

"Profession—if you don't mind," corrected Connell. "Sounds better, whatever it may mean. I do know a great deal. I've been a student of human nature, which

—translated—stands for realism in literature. Human character and human weakness have always possessed a strong interest for me. I get curiosity from one side of our race, and grit from the other; same as yourself, Mr. Madison."

"I notice you drop my title," said the millionaire grimly.

"Wouldn't hold water if I had your dollars to back *my* claims."

"I guess you're a cool hand, Mr. Barry Connell. Ever tried this sort of thing over our side?"

"It mightn't have been safe!"

"It wouldn't—with me—ten years ago. I've shot better men than you for opposing schemes and inciting mutiny!"

"If you shot me there'd be a big scandal, and I doubt if you'd come out of it as well as you might come out of the chance I'm giving you."

"Chance? You're a cool hand, upon my word!"

Connell smiled. "Irish blood tells—on occasion," he said. "Perhaps you'll find that out also. Need I detain you from your mail? Guess your stenographer's a bit tired of waiting."

"You can 'git,'" said Madison fiercely. "I'm not going to give you an answer straight away."

"Take your time," said Connell. "I'm to be found here when you want to see me." He laid a card on the table. "I know you feel like swearing," he added. "But it won't do any good. The cleverest folk in the world find themselves in a tight corner sometimes. Good-bye."

Madison said nothing.

XXIX.

"YOU'RE in the dumps, Paddy," said Lady Lucille, leaning across the table to light a cigarette. "Anything wrong with the pile?"

He roused himself with an effort. "I'm a bit tired. I had a heavy mail to work off."

"Have a sherry-cobbler, or something. Water don't agree with work."

"I'm not used to liquor," he said. "Specially when I've business on hand. A cool brain's worth more than all the Pommery and Heidsieck in the world."

"Wish you wouldn't say 'liquor.' It sounds disgusting. Oh—do you want to leave the table, Lady Madison? Don't let me detain you. I rather want ten minutes with your good man."

Octavia rose. Doreen had not waited for permission. All dinner-time she had alternately raged and fumed at the cool insolence of their guest. She was in even worse form than at the house-party. How could her father stand it?

But, indeed, Madison had hardly noticed the fact. He had been absorbed by the question he had to answer sooner or later. And on the top of this annoyance had fallen a cable from New York. Those securities in which he was locked up and entangled were not looking so safe as was desirable. It would be better to get out. And

yet the getting out promised difficulties. Money had gone out this last year quicker than it had come in. His bank-book showed alarming expenditure. His cheque counterfoils displayed one name with the word "loan" underneath often enough to excite suspicion. Added to this had come Barry Connell's discovery. It was inopportune and unwelcome. He had bluffed, because bluff was second nature when opposition faced him. He knew he was safe as far as actual proof went, but also he had no desire for a lawsuit, or the scandal that would arise from it. The weak point in his armour had always faced him. It could never be quite soldered up until Doreen was safely married, and dowered, and placed in a position that offered security.

Now he confronted the one obstacle to parental plans, that has again and again thwarted parental ambition. A girl's love-affair—a sentimental fancy—of all things the most undesirable. It was no wonder he had been distrait and "glum," as Lady Lucille expressed it.

That lovely person was in radiant spirits; hence the insolence and assurance of her manner. Chance had played into her hands in a sudden amazing fashion that was reminiscent of proverbs respecting luck and its divinity. She was going to have a real good sporting time with Sir Paddy, as she called him; going to turn the tables, so to say, on their relative position. Henceforth she would dictate, and he would obey. She had ruled him hitherto by sheer feminine allurements. Now—it should be by the iron hand of a ruler, not a slave. As she looked at his dark stern face, her heart gave a sudden throb of triumph.

"What fools they are!" she thought. "What fools—and always—always it is one of *us* who makes them so."

She thought of Abraham, and of Samson, and of David, the king and adulterer; of Herod enslaved by a dancer; of all the follies of which great rulers, great statesmen, great monarchs, great men in all ranks and conditions of life had been guilty. And always the same cause. A woman.

"Yet they're calling out for more power," she reflected scoffingly. "Idiots! They've got the only one that counts. Sex. Why can't they be content?"

As there was no indignant Mrs. Pankhurst to answer that question it was shelved for the moment, and she set to work on personal affairs.

With a truly feminine idea that to "spring a mine" was a sure way of accomplishing disaster, she leant across the table, propped her lovely insolent face on her two hands, and said softly: "Paddy, how long since you dropped Virginie Lamonte?"

Whatever she had anticipated in the way of surprise, or even of fear, was more than answered by the appalling change in the face of the man she had questioned. It grew grey and ghastly and dreadful. Nothing had in any way prepared him for such a question; for the sudden flash-light of revelation that might at any moment reveal his most cherished secret. And now, without hint or warning, this woman threw it at his feet.

"You don't answer," she went on. "Evidently it's a tender subject still. She said it was."

"She——?" he whispered hoarsely. His voice was out of control for once.

Lady Lucille nodded. "Yes. I—happen to know her. Queer, isn't it? But life's full of queer things. She's over in London just now. Came with that American 'Star Company' at present lighting up Shaftesbury Avenue

by their own unaided brilliance. I went to see them with Tommy. He had an introduction to the leading lady. Asked her to supper with the leading gentleman, who happened to have caught my erratic fancy. The Savoy on a Sunday night, lots of champagne, mutual discovery of American acquaintances, a few leading questions—and there you are. Of course, the likeness to Doreen helped me some—to quote your expressive vernacular. Also it helped to solve the problem why Octavia Madison and her stepdaughter had never met until just before you sailed from New York."

Still he said nothing. The colour came slowly back to his face. His eyes stared at her with a fixed dull glare. The knuckles of his strong workman's hand showed white as his fist clenched. Words were beyond him in that moment. All the scandal so carefully buried, all the wrong his wife had so nobly pardoned, all the shame and sorrow kept from sight of that young beloved life—all these of no account—now! All these at the mercy of a woman as heartless as an iceberg, and as unscrupulous as a paid courtesan.

His breath came in a sudden, quick gasp. Then he laughed. "Seems to me, my lady, you've been mighty busy over my affairs. May I ask just *how* much you know—and how much is surmise?"

"I know all about that affair with Virginie Lamonte. I know that Doreen is her daughter, and therefore——"

"Stop!" he cried sharply. "There's no call for you to say more. You've shown yourself pretty 'cute. You've not learnt all this quite so accidentally as you pretend. Don't think to cheat me, Lady Lucille. I haven't lived fifty years in the American States for nothing."

"I know that," she retorted. "You've lived to the

tune of a good many sharp 'deals,' vulgar scandals, and shady transactions. That's how most millionaires acquire palaces in Fifth Avenue, and purchase titles for their daughters. You didn't trouble about Fifth Avenue, but you had other ambitions. You wanted to found a family, and you wanted a title for your daughter."

"And you," he said, "offered your services at a figure that cancels obligation."

The green eyes flashed angrily. "Was it likely I was going to lower myself to your standard for nothing?"

"Your own standard was a pretty low-down one for a British aristocrat," he said brutally. "Fine tricks you've been up to, Lady Lucille Altamont. It's not half bad fun to rook an American millionaire, is it? Not a bit contemptible to use his house, his servants, his stables, himself, as a safe hiding-place for your intrigues; a passport into Society that was only keen on turning its back on you! Talk of *my* money coming from dirty hands; look at yours, fine lady as you call yourself! Look at your lap-dog friends whining and begging and borrowing all the time! Look at the money you've had of me, the insults you've put on me, and then say which of us stands the whitest in this 'show up.' Guess it ain't your ladyship!"

Lady Lucille sprang to her feet in a blind fury that recked nothing of what she said, or did. Her hatred of this man, her joy in having unearthed his secret, her momentary triumph, were trampled into the dust of humiliation by his words. No tradition of race or breeding could check the anger that rushed like a boiling flood through her veins. She looked at the sullen face, the sneering lips of the man she had deemed only a slave to

her own decrees. That he—of all men—should say such things to her face!

"How dare you speak to me like that!"

"I guess I'll speak as I choose—now. You've thrown down your cards. Well, I'll play mine. What you've found out about me is just an episode in most men's lives. D'you suppose your Kennaways and Sallusts, even your own husband, Altamont, is one whit better than I—stripped to moral nakedness? Not they. But I've done an unforgivable thing. I've tried to set the innocent straight and fair before the world——"

"Wouldn't it be just as well to say that you tried to palm off your illegitimate daughter on Society; to fool me into helping your schemes for a titled husband? Would have let me insult my Sovereign by presenting——"

His loud laugh cut across her words. "Insult! If your Sovereign wasn't insulted by the acquaintance of a—— like yourself, I don't see that my innocent daughter is goin' to set his back up."

The brutal words, the deliberate insolence of his manner were like fuel to her already ignited fury. In all her career of successful infamy no one—even her husband—had dared arraign her with the truth. And now this tool, this low-born American trader, this despised minister to her extravagance and her needs, he to—dare! A veritable lightning of rage flashed from those dangerous green eyes. She could have killed him in that moment, had a weapon been to hand. As it was——

Her glance suddenly caught the sparkle of a cut-glass decanter on the white cloth. With an impulse of unreasoning hate, she seized it and flung it at that

mocking face. Then she turned, and rushed to the doorway.

An impassive figure barred the way.

"Let me pass!" cried Lady Lucille furiously. "He—he insulted me. I'll never enter your doors again!"

Octavia's soft amazed eyes fell on the figure of her husband. Patrick Madison had fallen across the table, bleeding and unconscious. She rushed to his side, all else forgotten in the horror of that moment. She lifted the heavy head; cried out in horror at sight of streaming blood, and blue distorted lips. Someone came into the room. She never knew who it was, nor cared in that awful moment.

Her arms went round the senseless form, the heavy head lay against her faithful breast. She wiped away the blood, and knew in that moment of weakness and helplessness that a long-forgotten and half-ignored right had once again asserted itself. It was her place to protect, shield, command. To cloak scandal, and shut out the world's inquisitiveness.

The polite manager gave due assistance. An unfortunate accident—of course.

The American magnate was taken to his room. A doctor came almost on the heels of the telephone's summons. The cuts were attended to; the fragments of glass extracted. A sedative administered. Then came the suggestion of a trained nurse for the night. Lady Madison wouldn't hear of it. She would take charge, she would sit up. No hired person was needed. There was his man if necessary. But she would have no "lady nurses fussing around."

The medical man smiled at American prejudices, but as it was his good fortune to be attending the wealthy

husband of this quaint, outspoken person, he did not feel called upon to oppose her wishes. Octavia exchanged her evening gown for a comfortable wadded Japanese wrapper, her tight satin shoes for fur-bordered velvet, her lazy indifference for alert, steady command of an intricate situation.

"'Tis an ill wind blows no one some good," she reflected. "And if this storm only sweeps out of our way that red-haired hussy, I'll not complain."

Calm of face and of voice she moved to and fro, making arrangements for that night vigil, seeing that everything was to hand in case of a recurrence of that heart attack which had further complicated the "accident." She told Doreen as little as possible, but refused to let her see her father, on the plea of disturbing him. The girl was sadly distressed, and mystery added to her trouble. That it was all concerned in some way with that detestable woman she felt sure. Lady Lucille and her father had been left alone in the dining-room, and the next thing she heard was that he had met with an accident, and a doctor had been sent for.

Mademoiselle came to her, eager and curious. Rumour had penetrated even to her quarters. But Doreen would say nothing. She felt she loathed the fussy, inquisitive Frenchwoman almost as much as she loathed Lady Lucille. They had been concerned in all that had happened ever since her father had come to this country. In the alteration in his character, the estrangement between himself and herself. In all that woven mesh of extravagance and inutility in which his credit had been entangled. He had been unhappy, constantly worried, constantly besieged. At the mercy of claimants whose one aim and object was to secure some portion of his

wealth for themselves. They had lived an unnatural life, bereft of all anticipated family intimacies. They seemed to have no *real* friends, no real human interests. Social success had meant only a vast bribe paid to greedy sycophants, who held the payers in secret contempt while piling up their own commissions on everything.

How or why this revelation rushed upon her she could not explain; but it did. She felt herself disillusioned, lonely, and bitterly unhappy as she surveyed these brief months of experience. How hateful wealth could be! How much sweeter and more wholesome a life of work and usefulness! A life full of interests shared with some congenial companions. A life where the word "home" spelt a truer meaning than luxury, and wastefulness, and lip-service.

Then she went to bed, and cried a few tears. Tears of youth and disappointment, and a sudden hurt consciousness that forty-eight hours could hold so many long moments, and so little enjoyment of them.

Early next morning Doreen sought Octavia. She found her fresh from a warm bath, and a cup of hot tea. But her eyes looked tired and anxious.

"I'm afraid he's not going to get well right away," she said. "He is very feverish, and his mind wanders. I'm not surprised he's sick. I haven't liked his looks this many a long day. I've just telephoned to the doctor to come round soon as he can. No, dearie, you mustn't see him until after. He's got to be kept just as quiet as we can. I do wish Mr. Connell would think to call here. I'd be real glad of some sensible understanding man to speak to."

"Couldn't we telephone?" asked Doreen.

"Don't know his number. He's in an apartment, don't you know? He never said if they had a service there. But I reckon not from what I've seen of private houses over here. Why, child, how mis'erable you do look!"

"I *am* miserable," said Doreen, great tears welling up into her eyes. "I feel real bad, mother. As if I had lead *here*——" (She touched her young breast pathetically.) "And as if nothing was going to come up bright and cheerful ever again."

"Why—what nonsense, dearie! You mustn't go on like that. Tell you what. Suppose you telephone to Mr. M'Caughen. Maybe he'll come round and cheer us up?"

Doreen wiped away the tears, and looked up eagerly. "Why, that's perfectly splendid," she said. "I'll go down to the office—oh! but it's too early, I'm afraid. Mother dear, I know what I'll do. I'll go round to his private house. It's only two blocks off from here. It'll be something to do, and then he'll very likely come back with me."

"I've no objection. You won't lose your way?"

Doreen scoffed at the idea, and carried out her plan with such expedition that she was sitting at Standish M'Caughen's breakfast-table before half an hour had passed.

His amazement at so early a visitor was changed to uneasiness at Doreen's confidences. Octavia had not said what was to be told, or withheld, so the girl told all she knew. M'Caughen detected mystery, and marvelled whether the astute American had been entrapped in unlawful coils. Certainly it was a strange story. He had seen him the previous day, and he had been perfectly well.

"Do you know if your father had any other visitor? I mean, did anyone special call yesterday—any time?"

Doreen coloured in an unreasonable and altogether uncalled-for fashion. "I think Mr. Connell came to see him—about five o'clock that was."

Standish M'Caughen noted the flush and the hesitance. Heavens alive! were there to be complications?

"Oh, Mr. Connell? The young architect, isn't it? Do you see much of him at the Castle, Miss Doreen?"

"Not very much. He's always busy. Mother invites him to dinner sometimes."

"I see."

He offered her some more coffee, but she refused. He was wondering what she would say if she knew of Barry Connell's claims, and their queer side issues.

"Perhaps I'd better come back with you, before I go to the office," he said at last. "I'd like to have the doctor's opinion, and I'm sure, my dear, you ought to have a nurse in. Your mother isn't fit for the long strain and tedium of an illness."

"Illness!" The girl looked at him with startled eyes. "Oh, but father only had an attack of faintness, or something. It's not serious."

"I hope you're right. I'll just get my hat and coat, and come back with you."

But after an interview with the doctor, and ten minutes' talk with Octavia, the lawyer began to think something very strange must have happened. The doctor referred to an accident, followed by a slight heart attack. When M'Caughen questioned the nature of the accident, there were veiled hints that his patient had indulged somewhat freely in wine after dinner, had slipped and fallen and cut his face.

M'Caughen had always found Madison abstemious almost to a fault. He could not understand such an accu-

sation, nor did he credit it. There was some mystery. Something was being concealed. He insinuated that the family lawyer was never to be shut out from confidence, but Octavia only smiled faintly, and answered she knew nothing more than she had told. Even in her own mind she scarcely credited Lady Lucille with an action worthy of a drunken virago. She imagined there had been a scene, possibly Madison had lost his temper. The broken glass had meant an accident of his fall across the table. That was as far as conjecture carried her.

The day wore on. A trained nurse came in; handed a list of regulations to Lady Madison respecting her diet, hours of exercise, and sleeping arrangements, and requested a second to help her in her arduous duties. Octavia calmly announced herself as second-in-command, and in her imperturbable fashion refused to be interfered with. She rested during the afternoon, while her husband was asleep; dined quietly with Doreen, and then returned to the sick-room.

Mademoiselle Perigueux was distracted with curiosity. What had happened—what did it all mean? No one would tell her anything. She suddenly left the room, dressed, and started off for Lady Lucille's house in Merriion Square.

Doreen wandered about disconsolate and lonely. It seemed the irony of fate that that evening should be chosen by Madame X— of Dublin fame to send home her presentation gown. Nora opened the box. She laid the lovely, gleaming, cobwebby affair on the bed, and demanded Doreen's admiration of the wonder. But the girl was too sad and disturbed in mind to manifest more than a passing interest in the toilet. Everything had come to a standstill, it seemed to her. That closed door, that

stricken figure at whose bandaged head she had only been allowed to glance, these stood between her and all other less important concerns. To forty-eight long hours twelve more had now been added. And still——

The thought brought sudden ready tears to her eyes again. Nora broke into distressed comments, and begged her young mistress to take heart. There was no use in fretting, and possibly no need. A fine strong gentleman like "the Masther" would soon be up and on his legs again. She enumerated worse cases; running the cheerful gamut of fevers and lung troubles and various sorts of "fits," in order to convince her young mistress that the present case was really a light one, demanding only a little patience and submission to the "will o' God," and the help of a good constitution.

Doreen felt cheered by the girl's sympathy, and shed no more tears. Still, she bade her put the dress away in its wrappings of tissue paper, and then seated herself by the fire, and endeavoured to read "Jane Eyre."

As she turned the pages with listless interest, a waiter came to the door with the information that a gentleman was below, and desired to see her. He handed a card. Doreen read the name, and flushed rosily.

"Oh—yes. Show him up," she said, and let her book fall to the ground as she jumped up, and took a hasty glance into the mirror over the mantelshelf.

Forty-eight and twelve made up a formidable number of hours and moments, but the addition had come to an end—at last.

XXX.

"I AM so distressed, so surprised! I only heard of it this afternoon from Mr. M'Caughen."

Barry Connell was holding her hand, and looking down with grave, sympathetic eyes at the young face that flushed and paled and seemed to have lost so much of its bright, buoyant youth in these long hours of suffering. For suffering was new to Doreen, and there had been no one to speak to for such a long time. Her lips quivered. It cost an effort to steady her voice, and keep back those too-ready tears.

"Oh—I'm so glad you've come," she said.

He released her hand. She sank back into the chair, and he brought another close to it and seated himself. There was an atmosphere of emotion in the room, and about themselves. Neither of them met on the usual ground of friendly camaraderie. The touch of sorrow that had shadowed the girl's young beauty also illumined her consciousness. Life was sad, sweet, hopeful, mysterious; a thing of joy and pain. Something that withheld cruelly, and gave bounteously. She looked up to the grave eyes watching her, and felt that in some strange way all the trouble of these past hours had faded into peace.

"If you could tell me?" he said gently. "At present all is conjecture. You know I had an interview with him yesterday evening?"

"Yes," she answered.

"Did he say anything about it?"

She shook her head. "I only saw him at dinner. I thought he looked worried—not quite himself. Lady Lucille Altamont was dining with us. Mother and I had left the table, but she remained. I came up to my room. I don't know what happened. Mother said he had a sort of fit, and cut his face. I wasn't allowed to see him. There's a trained nurse here to-night, and mother hardly leaves him. The doctor said something about his heart, but they don't let me go into the room."

The tears were there again. How piteous and childish she looked! His eyes took in the pathos of the quivering lips, the droop of the down-bent head. He was acutely conscious of sorrow, and what that sorrow meant to him. A whirl and tumult of emotion were surging in his heart. He rose and bent over her.

"You poor little lonely girl!" he said, and then—neither of them quite knew how, or why it was—but the loneliness was over, and the sadness forgotten, and her head was resting against his heart, and his hand was stroking the bright hair that flooded his breast in sudden abandonment to tears. Something within their hearts woke to life and spoken sense of importance, and all the world was changed.

"I've waited long enough," he told himself. "If I can help her, and make her happy, that's enough. Another man might ask questions. I never shall. She's all I want—and she loves me."

He put her gently back into the big deep chair, and knelt beside her, and poured out the story of that cherished romance springing into life at Coney Island, weaving itself around and about every change and chance that had

thrown them together; ready now to do battle with all the world so only she might be won for his own. Of any barrier of wealth, or parental consent, he did not choose to speak. He felt strong enough to combat even her father's will, and iron mastery of circumstance. Madison knew who he was, and knew also that to acquaint Doreen with the facts of his forfeited inheritance would be to enlist all her sympathy, and arouse her indignation. Whether he asserted his claim, or forbore it, she was entitled to know that it existed. Entitled to judge as to who had best right of inheritance. But as yet—he kept silence. It was not the time to speak. Enough that he could play the part of comforter and protector. Enough that his was the power to chase shadows and reclaim joy, and bring back the light and brilliance of happy youth to the face he loved so dearly.

"Ah, Doreen," he said, "are you sure you really love me? I—who made such a poor show beside all those gay and brilliant folk you had about you. I—who am only carving out a slow way to fortune with my own brains and hands, and have so little that's worthy of you to offer."

"I think you have all I need," she answered. "And much more than I deserve."

Then "Love took up the harp of Life," and the commonplace hotel sitting-room became an enchanted garden, where all the wonders of all the ages were sphered and veiled, and where the smitten chords of magic strings poured out a magic melody.

Nothing spoilt the lovely moments. No smirch of past sins, or hint of future insecurity. Their hands clasped. Their eyes met. Their voices faltered.

Ah, Life! how sweet you are when hearts are young
and Hope knows no boundary save its own!

It was close on midnight.

In the sick-room the man turned restlessly on his pillows, and muttered a name.

Soft as a whisper it was answered.

"Yes, dearie—I'm here beside you."

A hand went up to the bandages. Another soft and strong and yet very gentle touched it; drew it down; held it captive.

"Don't do that, Patrick. The doctor says they must remain. You're feeling better, ain't you?"

"I'm feeling mighty bad. What's happened?"

"We don't quite know. But don't worry about it. Just rest and try to get to sleep again. I'm here all the time to see to you."

"It's good of you, Octavy. I don't know that I deserve it."

"That makes no difference, Patrick. I'm your wife, and my place is here."

He said no more. He lay back; pain throbbing in his wounds, dull resentment smouldering in his heart. A tangle of baffled schemes and futile ambitions mocked his vanquished will. His body lay here—benumbed and helpless. His brain refused assistance to his tangled thoughts. Like jangling wires, tuneless and hideous, they played their irritating tune; a mocking voice for ever set to their fantastic echoes; a mocking face for ever glowing with mad rage and defiance through the mists of half-remembered things.

Then once again delirium set his brain wandering

through channels of disjointed visions, broken speech, mad endeavour to capture a memory that always and ever escaped.

Days lapsed into nights, and nights into days. The faces around him grew graver and more anxious. Fresh advice was called in. Important bald-headed Knight-hood, honoured by royalty, and not indifferent to fees whose magnitude set small practitioners palpitating, came and went, and consulted and advised, and murmured of "nervous breakdown," "long strain," "severe shock," and other safe and suitable diagnoses. And still patient and unwavering to the duties she had vowed, Octavia watched and waited. The strain began to tell upon her, but her loyalty distrusted alien ears. And sometimes Madison talked of things and subjects that were not good hearing.

It was during one of her night vigils that he suddenly called out a name that set every nerve in her body quivering, and brought her to his side by a spontaneous impulse.

"*Virginie!*"—he cried, and then the soft muttering began again.

Octavia stood there, her heart beating with heavy, dull throbs. *Virginie?* What did it mean? Why was she taking part in the fantastic pageant of that wandering brain? How of all names should that one have escaped, to terrify her with a long-past yet never-forgotten fear?

She listened to the breathless sentences, but their tangled sense guarded the secret jealously. She could make nothing of them. She laid her cool hand on his brow, touched the clenched and burning hand, whispered that name, and waited results.

Her voice was like enough to another voice to cheat his ear. Southern, too; soft and sweet as its own clime. His hands grew still. He seemed to listen. The fog that enveloped the wandering mind drifted, parted, seemed to lift itself to a clearer atmosphere. He spoke. "Virginie—why did you give me away—after all?"

Octavia's heart stood still. Her every sense seemed freezing into horror. Virginie—the dearly loved, the petted, cherished sister who had recklessly set forth to make her own fortune in her own fashion. Virginie mourned as dead, and now——

"Didn't our love count? Didn't I swear the child should be as sacred as if you were my wife? And you fooled me all the time! You've cheated me now! Virginie—curse you—curse you!"

With a harsh sob his wife laid her hand on the quivering lips. "No—no," she whispered. "Don't curse her. I loved her so!"

Silence in the room. A silence tense as pain and strained to terror. Then a deep sigh quivered. A restless hand went up to the bandaged face. With a sudden effort the sick man sat up; looked at her with conscious eyes. "Why?"—he whispered hoarsely. "What's happened? Why are *you* here?"

She forced him gently back on the pillows. "You know me, Patrick?"

"Of course. Why not?"

His hands fumbled with the bandages. She arrested them. "You mustn't do that."

"Tell me, then——"

"You fell and cut your face all to pieces. You've

been feverish and delirious, but it's all over now. You're going to get well just as quick as ever you can."

"Am I?" he said feebly. "Somehow I can't quite get hold of things. I don't recollect ever bein' ill before. Was I, Octavy?"

"I believe not," she said. "But now your mind's clear you'd best just lay still, and get to sleep. I've been terrible anxious about you, Patrick."

He lay still, but he kept his eyes on her face. It had grown pale and thin and anxious. There was something unfamiliar about it.

"Seems a hundred years," he muttered. "A hundred years."

She thought he was wandering again. "No, dearie. Only a week."

"What day is it? What time?"

She told him. He closed his eyes and seemed to reflect. At last he spoke. "I reckon Oregons have gone to smash by now. I was to have cabled. I didn't reckon with this. And young Fitzgerald's a fool. He'd never have thought——"

"Don't worry about money, Patrick," she entreated. "Seems to me we haven't been so happy since we had it, that you need mind the loss of some of your dollars."

"You're right. I haven't had a day's happiness over here, Octavy. Where is it I am—Dublin?"

"Yes," she said.

"And where's he to? That young architect chap—Connell?"

"He's here also. He's been around every day enquiring about you."

"I expect he wouldn't be sorry if I was to cut my stick. Make room for him. Save a lot of trouble."

"Patrick!" she murmured wonderingly.

"You don't know? He hasn't told you?"

"Mr. Connell? He hasn't told me anything."

"Not that I cheated him out of his rights? Not that I took the place that should be his?"

"My stars, Patrick! Your brain isn't clear yet. Don't talk any more. Just try to sleep."

"I don't want to sleep. I've got something on my mind. I'll tell you, Octavy, and then—maybe I'll make my peace with God and man, and that'll be the end of me."

She softly stroked his hand. "Not the end, Patrick. By God's help only the beginning. Life's just an experimental journey till one hits on the right track; and then one must just go straight on."

"Ah, Octavy," he said. "That's what I didn't do. There's a lot that you don't know—a lot——"

"I don't want to know," she interrupted. "What's the use, Patrick? Not all the tears nor all the regrets will undo one wrong we've done; heal one heart we've broken."

The silence was a clear note in that hushed pause of emotion. It lasted so long that she thought he had fallen asleep. Very gently she tried to withdraw her hand, but the weak fingers closed over it. "No—don't leave me," he entreated. "I can't part with you, Octavy."

"You'll never need to," she said. "Seems I'm good at forgiving, Patrick."

"But did you know who—who——"

"I know *now*," she said. "I guess you didn't. That's how I trust you."

"You're right. I never did. I never guessed. She changed her name when she went on the stage. It was

just an—accident—that revealed it. I parted from her there and then. I swore I'd never see her again——"

"You came back to me."

"Yes; and you showed yourself an angel of forgiveness. Since—since then I haven't much to reproach myself with——"

"What about Lady Lucille?"

"Don't speak her name! It ain't fit for your lips. Octavia, I've been the biggest fool ever! But not such a fool as she thought me."

He paused; then repeated: "No, not such a fool as *that*."

"I reckon we don't get on so well this side as we did in Louisville," said Octavia presently. "We haven't made a real friend. We've only been used as conveniences, and money-loaners. Society folk despise us and laugh at us behind our backs. I haven't had one happy hour, Patrick. I don't know about Doreen."

"Ah—Doreen," he said, and then lapsed into silence for a moment. "I'd like a word with her. No—don't be skeered; it won't hurt me. Just give me some doctor's pick-me-up, or something, till I've had my talk out. Then I'll promise to go to sleep, and when I'm well again, I guess, Octavy, we'll just make tracks for the old country, and fix up a home for ourselves over there. I'd like to forget we came over to this blamed——"

"Ah, hush! Don't swear at it, Patrick. If it's done nothing else, it's given you back to me."

"A worthless brute enough! No need to be grateful for *that*, Octavia. But there it is! For softness and foolishness, and the sweetness of angels above, there ain't nothing to touch a good woman!"

Irish society was too occupied with its own affairs, and ostensibly with the Castle scandal, to trouble overmuch about a cancelled presentation, or the sudden departure of the American millionaire and his family in the next outgoing American liner.

That Lady Lucille had rushed back to London a week previously, was only to say that she was—erratic; not to be judged by other standards than her own caprice. The caprice that had allied green ear-rings to green eyes, and had thrown a halo of allurements round the cat-like cruelty and heartless rapacity of her real nature.

She read in the papers that the Madisons had sailed for New York, and her heart grew light. With marvellous self-command she treated that episode as an episode. She silenced even Mademoiselle Perigueux's hints by acrimonious injunctions to hold her tongue, and accept—the last bribe she'd ever get for doing it.

Mademoiselle was angry; almost *féroce*. But she knew she had played her cards badly. It was no use trying to replay them.

A year after the Madisons' departure there was a sudden stir of excitement in the household of the M'Cartneys, and the county generally.

The house was again being put in order, not for Sir Patrick, or his wife, but for a younger mistress—and a new owner. Sir Barry and Lady Connell-Madison were coming to Mount Madison, and restoring the house to something of its original appearance, along with the restoration of the original name.

The county wondered, and gossiped, and talked for

more than the proverbial nine days. But then, it was an Irish county, and it certainly had something to talk about in the queer twists and turns of the Madison inheritance.



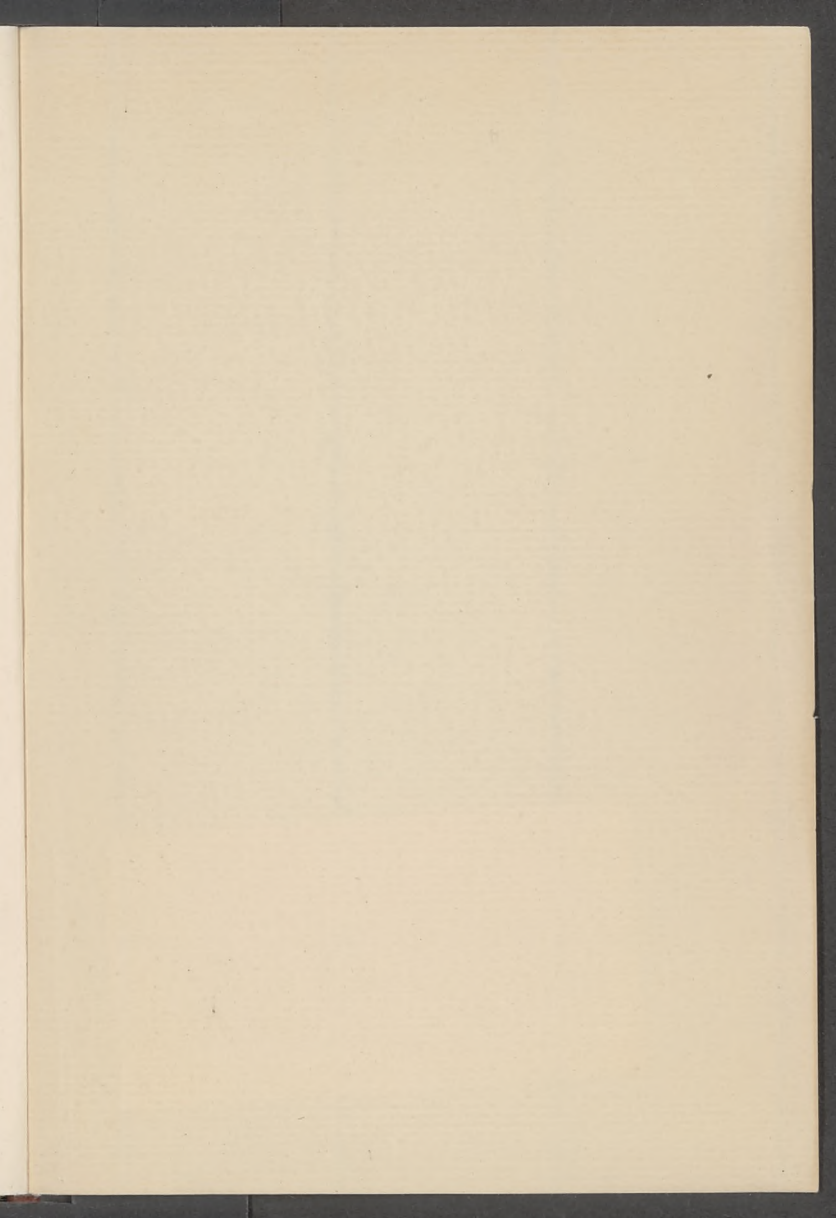
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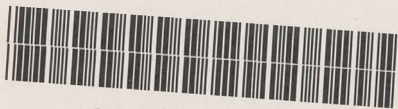
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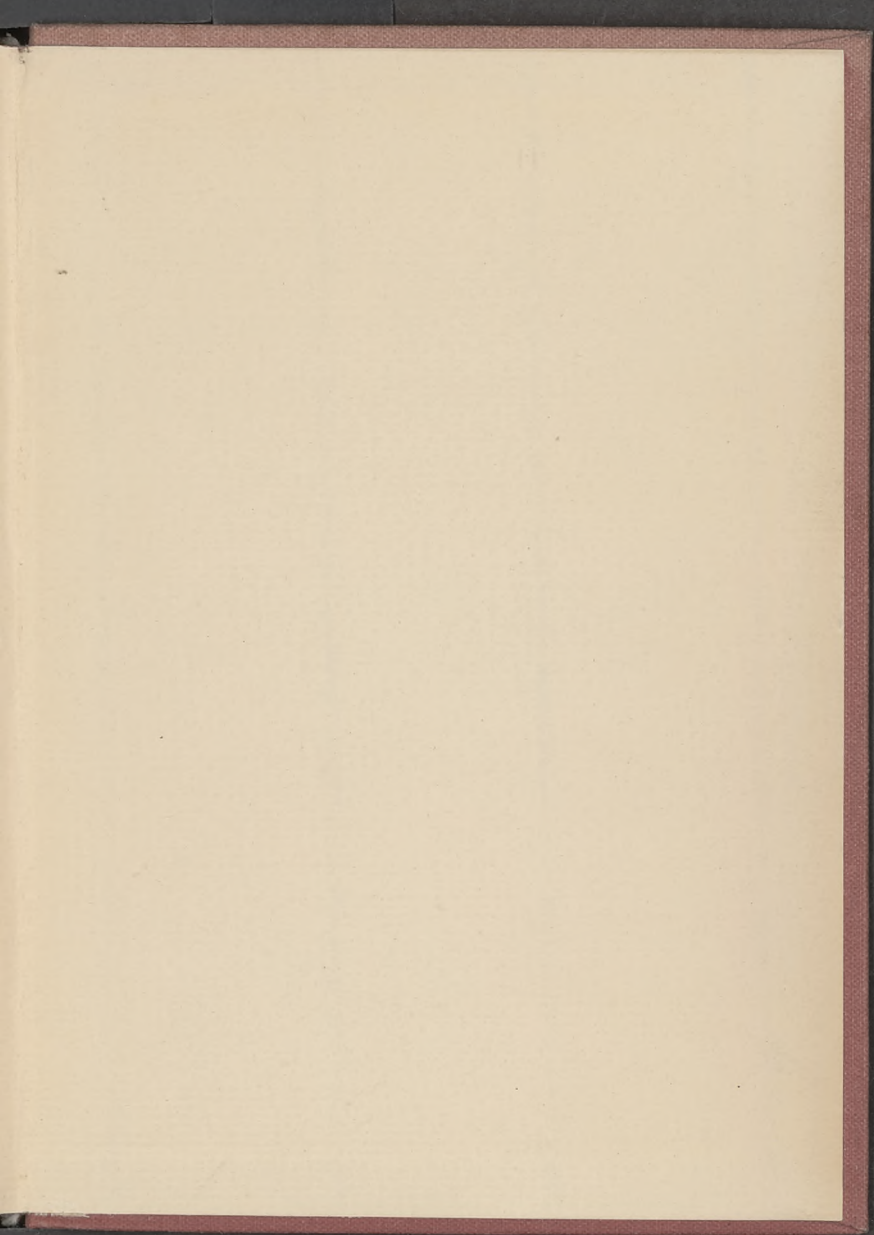
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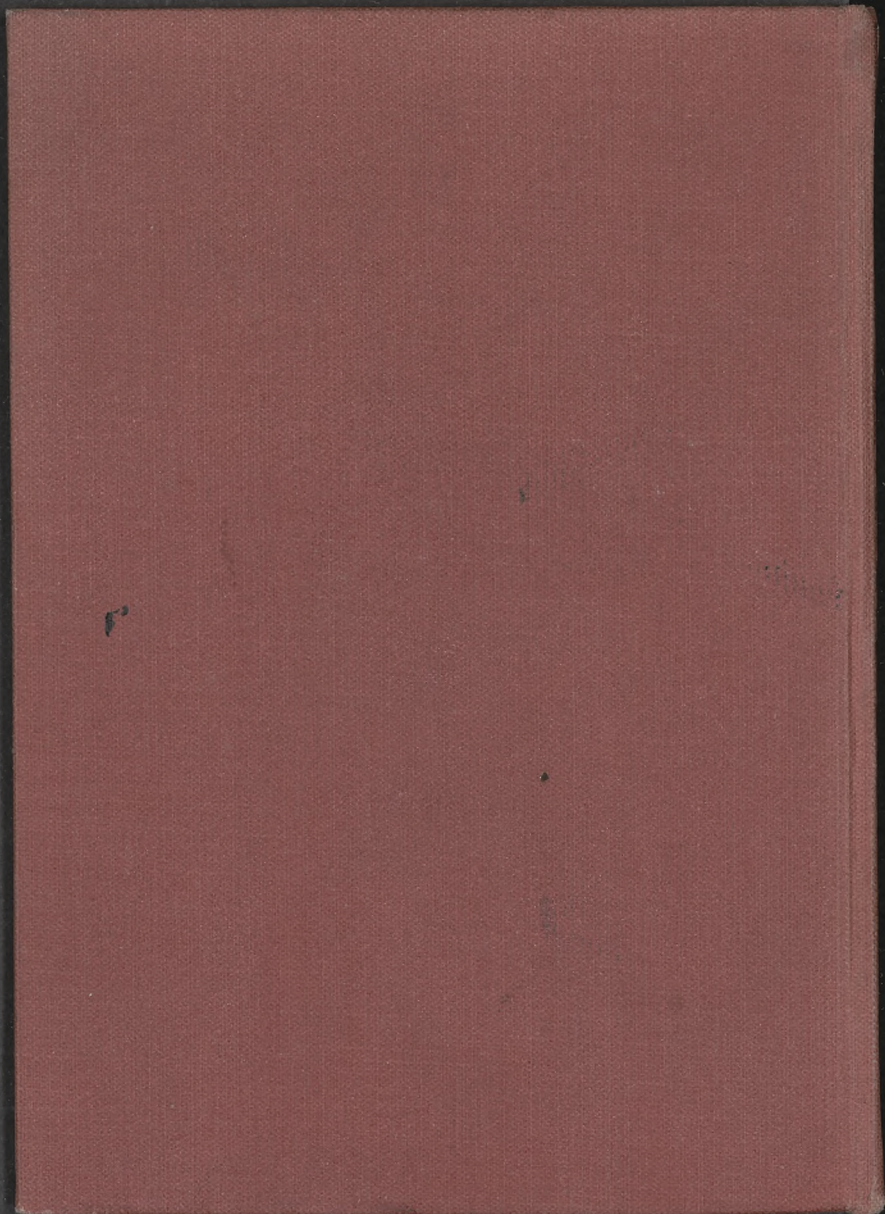


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