



Bodleian Libraries

UNIVERSITY OF OXFORD

This book is part of the collection held by the Bodleian Libraries and scanned by Google, Inc. for the Google Books Library Project.

For more information see:

<http://www.bodleian.ox.ac.uk/dbooks>



This work is licensed under a Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial-ShareAlike 2.0 UK: England & Wales (CC BY-NC-SA 2.0) licence.

ORDERS
TO MARRY
RICHARD MARSH

**ORD
T
MA**

**Rich
Ma**

Clever,
fresh and
ing — su
be the ver
here Mr.
Marsh gi
rein to hi
tility and is
the top of

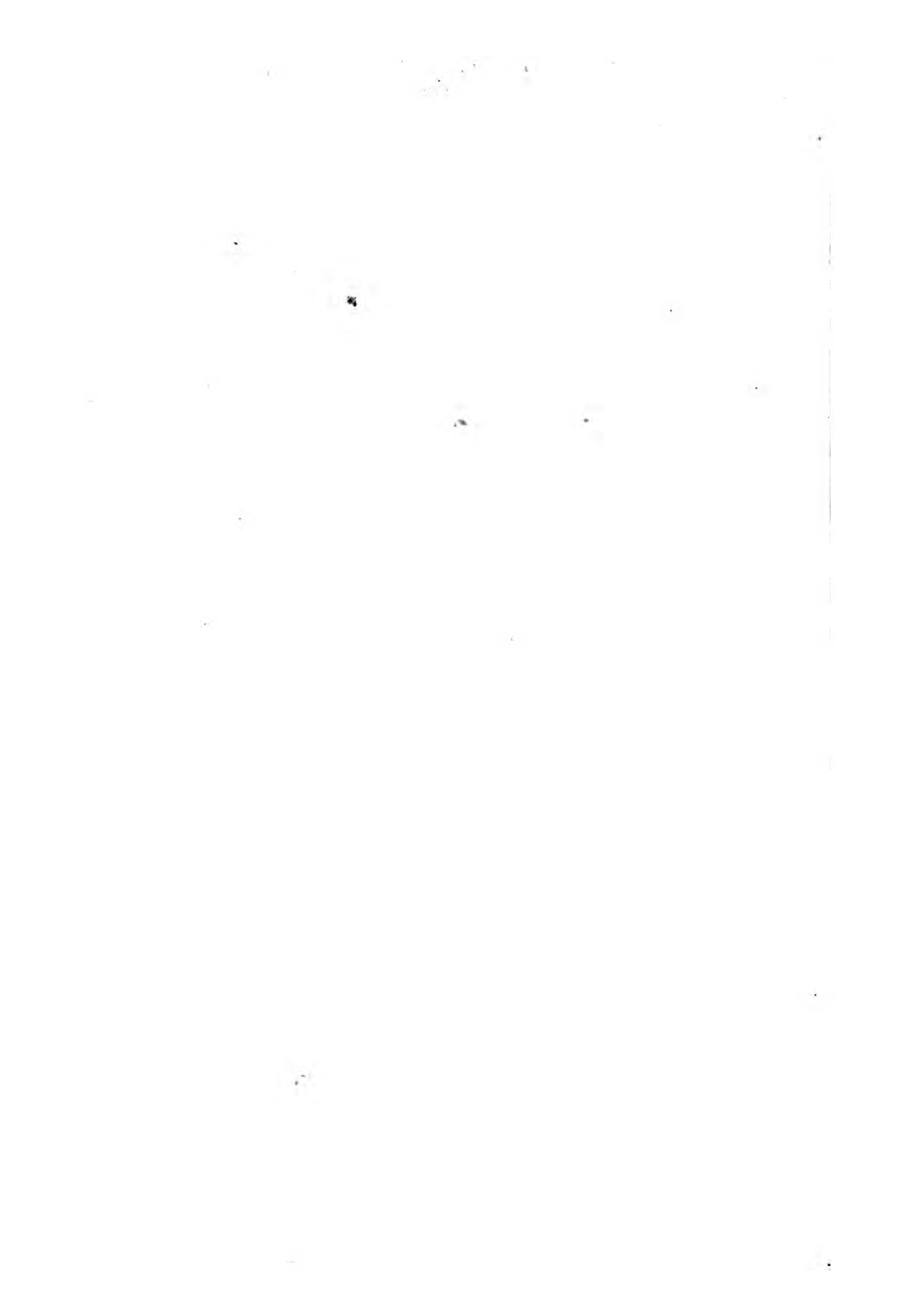
JOHN I

**ERS
O
RY**

**ard
sh**

**genial,
entranc-
ch will
dict, for
Richard
ves full
s versa-
seen at
is form.**

LONG



THE WORLD'S FAVOURITE AUTHOR

The Times says: "Of Mr. Nat Gould's novels more than Ten Million copies have been sold; and when this can be said of an author there must be qualities in his work which appeal to human nature—qualities, therefore, which even the most superior person would do well to recognise. 'A Northern Crack' is one of those tales which set you down in an arm-chair and keep you there till it is pleased to stop."

Athenæum says: "All living writers are headed by Mr. Nat Gould and, of the great past, Dumas only surpasses his popularity."

Truth says: "Who is the most popular of living novelists? Mr. Nat Gould easily and indisputably takes the first place."

THE NOVELS OF NAT GOULD



Sales now exceed **ELEVEN MILLION** Copies!



6s., Crown 8vo., cloth, wrapper in 3 colours. Also in John Long's Colonial Library, cloth, wrapper in 3 colours; stiff paper cover in 3 colours.

A FORTUNE AT STAKE
A GAMBLE FOR LOVE (*on the Film*)
THE WIZARD OF THE TURF
BREAKING THE RECORD
NEVER IN DOUBT
LOST AND WON
A TURF CONSPIRACY
A NORTHERN CRACK

THE SMASHER
NEW VOLUMES
THE RIDER IN KHAKI
WON ON THE POST
FAST AS THE WIND
THE STEEPLECHASER
A RACE FOR A WIFE

1s. 3d., Net, Crown 8vo., thread sewn. Paper cover in 3 colours.

LEFT IN THE LURCH (also **9d.** net, cloth)
THE TRAINER'S TREASURE
THE HEAD LAD
A FORTUNE AT STAKE
THE WIZARD OF THE TURF

NEW VOLUMES
NEVER IN DOUBT
LOST AND WON
A TURF CONSPIRACY
BREAKING THE RECORD

7d Net, Large demy 8vo., thread sewn. Paper cover in 3 colours.

1 ONE OF A MOB
2 THE SELLING PLATER
3 A BIT OF A ROGUE
4 THE LADY TRAINER
5 A STRAIGHT GOER
6 A HUNDRED TO ONE CHANCE
7 A SPORTING SQUATTER
8 THE PET OF THE PUBLIC
9 CHARGER AND CHASER
10 THE LOTTERY COLT
11 A STROKE OF LUCK
12 THE TOP WEIGHT
13 THE DAPPLE GREY
14 WHIRLWIND'S YEAR
15 THE LITTLE WONDER
16 A BIRD IN HAND
17 THE BUCK JUMPER
18 THE JOCKEY'S REVENGE
19 THE PICK OF THE STABLE
20 THE STOLEN RACER
21 A RECKLESS OWNER

22 THE ROARER
23 THE LUCKY SHOE
24 QUEEN OF THE TURF
25 A GREAT COUP
26 THE KING'S FAVOURITE
27 A CAST OFF
28 GOOD AT THE GAME
29 THE CHANCE OF A LIFETIME
(*on the Film*)
30 A MEMBER OF TATT'S
31 THE TRAINER'S TREASURE
32 THE PHANTOM HORSE
33 THE HEAD LAD
34 THE BEST OF THE SEASON
35 THE FLYER

NEW VOLUMES
36 THE WHITE ARAB
37 A FORTUNE AT STAKE
38 A GAMBLE FOR LOVE (*on Film*)
39 THE WIZARD OF THE TURF

JOHN LONG, LTD., 12, 13, 14, NORRIS ST., HAYMARKET, LONDON

THE LATEST 6s. NOVELS

Colonial Editions are also Published

"E." By JULIAN HINCKLEY. "One of the most refreshing goddesses in fiction. The author is a real find."—*Sunday Times*.

THE TOLL OF THE ROAD. By MARION HILL, author of "The Lure of Crooning Water," "Sunrise Valley," "A Slack Wire," "McAllister's Grove," etc.

DEAR YESTERDAY. By AMY J. BAKER (Mrs. Maynard Crawford), author of "I Too Have Known," "The Impenitent Prayer," "The Snake Garden," "Moonflower."

THE GARMENT OF IMMORTALITY. By ALICE and CLAUDE ASKEW, authors of "The Shulamite," "The Tocsin," "The Inscrutable Miss Stone," etc.

A DANGEROUS THING. By JAMES BLYTH, author of "Rubina," "Amazement," "Ursula's Marriage," "Vain Flirtation," "A Modern Sacrifice," etc.

THE WONDER MIST. By HENRY BRUCE, author of "The Native Wife," "The Eurasian," "The Residency," "The Song of Surrender."

ALL THE JONESES. By BEATRICE KELSTON, author of "A Three-Cornered Duel," "The Blows of Circumstance," "Seekers Every One."

THE RIDER IN KHAKI. By NAT GOULD. *The Times*, 12th July, 1917, in a long and appreciative review, said:—"Of Mr. Nat Gould's Novels more than Ten Million Copies have been sold; and when this can be said of an author there must be qualities in his work which even the most superior person would do well to recognize."

BLUE FLAME. By HUBERT WALES, author of "Cynthia in the Wilderness," "Mr. and Mrs. Villiers," "The Wife of Colonel Hughes," "The Rationalist," etc.

ORDERS TO MARRY. By RICHARD MARSH, author of "The Garden of Mystery," "The Magnetic Girl," "Coming of Age," "The Deacon's Daughter," etc.

THE TIDEWAY. By JOHN AVSCOUGH, author of "French Windows," "Marotz," "San Celestino," etc.

THE ADMIRALTY'S SECRET. By CARLTON DAWE, author of "The Confessions of Cleodora," "The Woman with the Yellow Eyes," etc.

A DAUGHTER OF THE HEATHER. By MARIE HARVEY, author of "Satan, K.C."

JESS OF THE RIVER. By THEODORE GOODRIDGE ROBERTS, author of "Love on Smoky River," "In the High Woods," "Forest Fugitives," etc.

THISTLEDOWN. By EILEEN FITZGERALD, author of "The Heart of a Butterfly," "A Fetish of Truth," "A Wayfaring Woman."

INSPIRATION. By FARREN LE BRETON, author of "The Courts of Love."

THE UNHALLOWED VOW. By HYLDA RMODES, author of "The Secret Bond," etc.

THE SWIRL. By MONTIE McGRIGOR, author of "Cross-Tides."

THE GLEAM. By ALFRED E. CAREY, author of "Sealed Orders," etc.

JOHN LONG, LTD., PUBLISHERS, LONDON

And at all Libraries and Booksellers

Orders to Marry

The Novels of Richard Marsh

CURIOS

COMING OF AGE

UNDER ONE FLAG

ORDERS TO MARRY

THE MAGNETIC GIRL

A WOMAN PERFECTED

ADA VERNHAM, ACTRESS

THE DEACON'S DAUGHTER

MISS ARNOTT'S MARRIAGE

THE GARDEN OF MYSTERY

CONFESSIONS OF A YOUNG LADY

MRS. MUSGRAVE AND HER HUSBAND

THE ROMANCE OF A MAID OF HONOUR

London: John Long, Ltd., Publishers

Orders to Marry

By
Richard Marsh



London
John Long, Limited
Norris Street, Haymarket
[All Rights Reserved]

The Novels of MARION HILL

THE TOLL OF THE ROAD

Library Edition, 6s. Recently published.

THE LURE OF CROONING WATER

Popular Edition, 1s. 3d. net, cloth. Library Edition 6s.

MR. CLEMENT K. SHORTER in *The Sphere*: "The best new novel I have read in the present year. It is a pretty and indeed brilliant story, has infinite charm, and is a distinct addition to good fiction. I can very heartily commend it."

Daily Chronicle: "We fully expect that the name of this novel will be often in the mouths of the multitude."

SUNRISE VALLEY

Popular Edition, 1s. 3d. net, cloth. Library Edition, 6s.

Evening Standard: "'Sunrise Valley' is by the author of that 'best seller,' 'The Lure of Crooning Water.' It will probably sell as well. There is no reason why it should not."

The Times: "Marion Hill endowed her first novel, 'The Lure of Crooning Water,' with liveliness and charm, and her new story, 'Sunrise Valley,' contains many of the qualities which made the earlier book so readable."

A SLACK WIRE

Popular Edition, 1s. 3d. net, cloth. Library Edition, 6s.

The Bookman: "Mrs Marion Hill's 'A Slack Wire' is nothing less than a finished and delectable work of art. Its human interest is so possessing, so intense and progressive, that no lover of good fiction will lay it down, until finished, without a pang—or thereafter without a sigh of admiration."

McALLISTER'S GROVE

Popular Edition, 1s. 3d. net, cloth. Library Edition, 6s.

Country Life: "The most enjoyable American book we have read for a long time is 'McAllister's Grove.'"

Westminster Gazette: "In the famous authoress's best-selling manner. Marion Hill's many readers may be assured that yet once again their novelist has provided them with the kind of thing they simply adore."

Aberdeen Journal: "A novel of indubitable grace and charm. Exquisite as were 'The Lure of Crooning Water' and 'Sunrise Valley' in their wit and originality, 'McAllister's Grove' surpasses them in its infinite variety, its humour, its virility and power, its pathos and exquisite tenderness."

HARMONY HALL

Library Edition, 2s. 6d. net, Illustrated

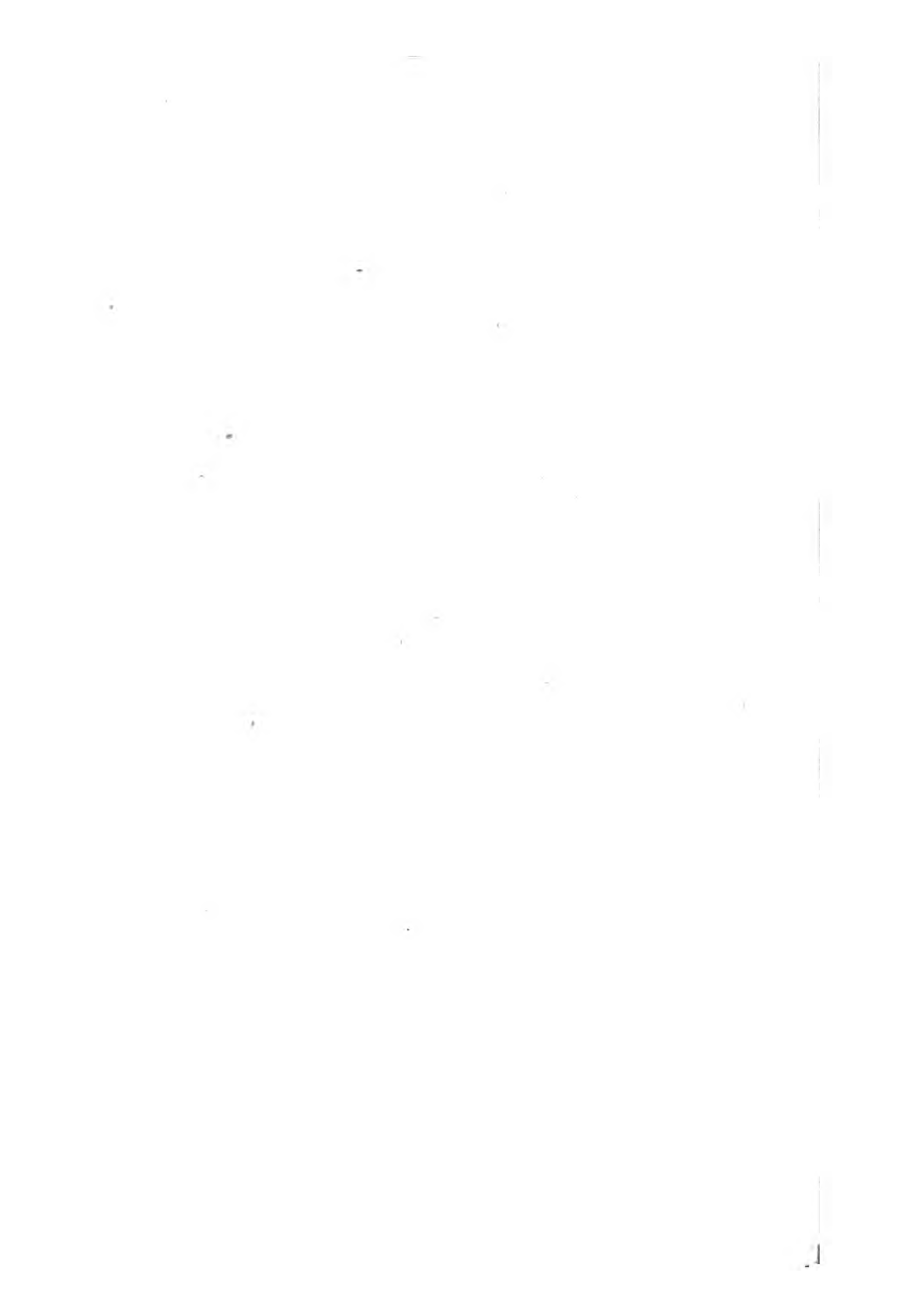
Outlook: "Merry, bright and wholesome, it would be impossible to find a more delightful story than this for Christmas. Touched here and there with pathos, it yet bubbles over with artless fun."

London: JOHN LONG, Ltd., 12, 13, 14 Norris St., Haymarket

And at all the Libraries and Booksellers

Contents

	PAGE
SEVENPENCE	9
THE PRINCESS FREDEGONDA	28
A LUCKY DAY	65
MR. McCULLOCH	88
SCANDALOUS!	126
THE END OF HER HOLIDAY	154
THE HUNTER'S MOON	207
THE PRINCESS HELIOTROPE	238
THE AMAZING VISITOR	268



Sevenpence

IT was the most extraordinary thing that I have ever heard of; if anything more extraordinary has ever happened to any girl I should like to know her name and what it was. When I paid my rent and settled up for everything I had exactly three and sixpence left. Where the next money would come from I had no idea. I started on the old dreary round to learn, what I knew already, that such work as I could do no one wanted. I went into a tea shop to get something to eat. I was literally nearly starving. I felt that if I did not have something to eat soon I should drop, or faint, or do something equally silly. I had a steak pudding, a cup of cocoa and a roll. I knew it was extravagance, but I had to have something substantial: I had a sort of feeling that I had got to a stage physically, mentally and morally, when I had to have something which would serve me as a stand-by. The meal came to sevenpence. I felt for my purse which I had slipped inside my blouse, and found it had gone.

I have endured some shocks, but that was the greatest of all. Whether the purse had fallen out

or been stolen, or what had become of it I could not say : it certainly had gone. Not only had I lost my entire fortune of three and sixpence, but I had not even the money with which to pay for my meal. I suppose my concern was written on my countenance. While I was wondering what I should do a man who had been sitting at the next table stood up and crossed to mine, with his hat in his hand and said :

“Is there anything I can do for you? I am afraid you are in trouble.”

“I have lost my purse.”

The words came out before I knew it ; though as, in any case, I should have had presently to tell the waitres and the manager, and possibly the whole staff, I did not see that it mattered. He did not seem to be in the least surprised.

“The wonder is that you ladies do not lose your purses oftener than you do. I hope there was not much in it.”

“There was three and sixpence, all the money I have in the world.”

I was conscious that this did take him a little aback, and I could have bitten my tongue off for saying it. The fact is, I was in such a state of mind that I hardly knew what I was saying. He asked :

“Have you paid your bill?”

“That’s just it—I haven’t the money. I haven’t a farthing left, not a single farthing.”

I daresay that my manner was a little excited, it would have been strange if it had not been. I was conscious that his had all at once become graver.

“May I see what the amount is?” He took up

Sevenpence

11

the bill. "Sevenpence?" Although I wasn't looking up at him I knew he smiled. "I daresay we shall be able to settle this between us."

He sat down at the other side of the table and he looked at me, without saying a word, for, I suppose, quite a minute. It might as well have been an hour—I could not have felt more awkward. I did not dare to look at him; I felt as if I were tongue-tied; I had to sit there like a dummy. When he did speak it was very quietly, very gravely, and, if I may say so, very courteously; yet the effect could scarcely have been greater had he aimed a thunderbolt.

"Please do not be alarmed, or annoyed or, if you can help it, even surprised at what I am about to say; nor must you think me a lunatic, or a fool, or—something worse; I am simply a plain, level-headed, and I believe reasonably honest man." The preamble was sufficiently startling. I could not imagine what he was going to say, but the reality was beyond my widest imaginings. "I want to ask you to be my wife."

"Your—wife!"

I gasped. Was ever such a question asked of a woman by an utter stranger before—in such a note, in such a manner? Anyone seeing him leaning towards me across the table would have supposed that he was asking if I would like a cup of tea.

"I asked you not to be—alarmed."

"I'm not in the least alarmed but—I suppose you're mad."

"Nor am I in the least mad."

"Then—you are worse. Do you think you can insult me because I—I've lost my purse?"

“Nothing was further from my intention than to offer you the slightest impertinence. If you will suffer me for a few minutes, I will make that quite clear. At least I want you to think that I am not—something worse.”

I had to do what he called “suffer” him. Under the circumstances I do not see what else I could have done.

“My name is Ernest Norton—let me begin by introducing myself. I have a farm in the province of Ontario, Canada, over three thousand acres. Although I say it, it is, in all respects, one of the finest farms in Ontario, and that means Canada. I am not a rich man, but I am not poor. So far as I know, the only relative I have is an old bachelor uncle who resides at Swaffham, in Lincolnshire. I have been in England, this time, six months. I came, I owe it frankly, to find a wife. I thought I had found one. A month ago I was to have been married. Two days before the date fixed for the wedding, my bride that was to be, married another man, an old flame of hers, of whose existence until that moment I had known nothing. I learnt the fact from a telegram she sent me. Of her I have seen and heard nothing since. I was told the whole story by her mother. Beyond a doubt I had a lucky escape. I should have taken a wife with me who hated the idea of leaving England and—who cared for someone else. I can conceive of no greater tragedy. Still, though I can see quite clearly that it is better as it is, it was hard on me.”

“It must have been dreadful. Did you—love her.”

“ I thought I did ; I certainly don't any longer. The day after to-morrow I have to return to Canada ; and that is the hardest part of it all. I may not be able to return to England for years. There are no women out there ; at least none I would care to marry. I saw you when you came into the shop, and I said to myself : ‘ If only that girl were going with me as my wife to Canada, what a lucky beggar I should be ; instead of being, I do believe, the loneliest wretch on earth. When I saw that you seemed to be in trouble, I took it as almost a sign from Heaven : when you told me that you had lost your purse, containing three and sixpence, all the money you had in the world, my heart seemed to bound within me. I took my courage in both my hands.—Please—won't you be my wife ? ’ ”

“ But you don't even know my name.”

“ That can easily be remedied. I have told you my name is Ernest Norton ; what is yours ? ”

“ Mine is Mary Sinclair.”

“ My mother's name was Mary.”

“ I don't see what that has to do with it. You know nothing about me : I may be a thoroughly bad character, the child of dreadful parents, and—I don't know what else besides.”

“ I am sure you are a good woman.”

“ I'm not—I can't earn my own living. My mother died six months ago—”

“ Just as I was coming to England.”

“ Her income died with her : I had, when all was done, rather more than fifty pounds. I thought I should be earning my living before this, but I'm not ; now every farthing of my money is gone, and

14 Orders to Marry

I can't even pay for what I've been eating. No one seems to want me."

"What an odd world this is. You say that no one seems to want you. Why, if you were in parts of Canada which I know, you'd be wanted on every side, by men who are seeking wives."

"I'm not at all sure that that kind of wanting appeals to me at all, thank you very much indeed. If you don't mind I think I'll say good day."

I was getting up as if to go : he stopped me.

"How about your bill?"

"I'd forgotten all about my bill."

"And the money which was in your purse?"

"I had forgotten about that also. Oh, dear, what am I to do?"

"Your bill is nothing ; your purse is very little more. Let me come with you for a stroll in Hyde Park ; there I shall be able to place my proposition before you in all its bearings."

Considering that I had to let him pay my bill, I did not see how I could object to his going for what he called a "stroll" with me in Hyde Park,—which took the form of driving in a taxi-cab to Hyde Park Gate, and then crossing to a seat by the band stand. I admit at once that I was quite favourably impressed. He told me in the cab that he was thirty-five, though, to my thinking, he did not look more than thirty. He was obviously an out of doors man, brown as a berry, lean, active, and I should say untiring ; just the kind of man to be a prosperous settler on the other side of the world. He gave me the names of his solicitor, of his London banker, of two people who knew him, and he asked me to go with him that very evening to call on the only family

with whom he said he was on terms of friendship ;—all this he did with the desire to prove that he was really the sort of person he represented himself to be.

All that was very well. I told him frankly that I was prepared to believe every word he said. It was his proposition which stuck in my throat. He proposed to go and get a special licence there and then ; to marry me in the morning ; and to sail with me to Canada the day after. He had a cabin booked on the *Virginia* which he said would serve excellently for two. Talk about being wooed by flashes of lightning and married by telegram,—that sort of thing would be nothing compared with what he wanted to do. I never saw a man so positive. He declared that he had not the slightest doubt about me, that I was just the sort of woman he had been looking for, and that if I would marry him I should make him the happiest of men. His confidence might be flattering, his courage was amazing. I explained that I was not by any means so sure of him. I did not pretend, I told him, to be a judge of character, and I should not dare, even supposing other things were equal, which they were not, to marry a person of whose tastes and disposition I knew absolutely nothing ; it would be sheer madness for me to dream of doing such a thing, even if I were not such a coward. The mere idea of doing it made me shiver in my shoes.

The way that man talked me round ! I said to myself that if the man who was sitting beside me on the seat was always going to be the same as he was then—why, after all, I might not be running such a risk. I felt he was doing his best to charm

me, and to a certain extent he succeeded. I did not exactly say Yes, but on the other hand I did not definitely say No. When we parted it was on the understanding that he was going to get a special licence, and that then he was going to call on me and—we might carry the conversation a stage further.

The whirl in which my mind was as I walked home! Although it was broad daylight, I could scarcely realise that the whole thing had not been a dream. Yet it was—well, curious how odd I felt now that he had gone. Suppose I should never see him again? The shiver which seemed to go all over me at the thought was quite startling. I had heard of men taking advantage of girls in all sorts of ways; suppose it had all been a little joke of his and this was the end. What an idiot he must have decided I was to have taken it all in. If I were to cover pages and pages I could not set down all the thoughts which went tearing through my brain, or wherever it is thoughts do go tearing through. I reached my rooms in the street off the Brompton Road; something had happened to them since I saw them last. I was aware that the sitting-room was but an enlarged cupboard, but when I got back to it then it seemed poor, and mean and shabby. Of course you cannot expect to get much in the way of furnished rooms for nine shillings a week; but if only the paper had not been peeling off the walls and the ceiling had been cleaner!

A letter was lying on the table. I stared at it with amazement; I had not had such a thing for I do not know how long. My surprise grew greater when I saw the writing on the envelope. I used to

know it so well ; to see it so often, and to long for its coming. What could he be writing to me about then, after the way in which he had behaved ? This was the note the envelope contained :

“Dear Mary,—I propose to call on you to-morrow Tuesday, between half-past five and six. I want to say, something which I hope will please you.

Yours,
TOM TYRREL.”

That was all ; short and to the point enough ; but, somehow, so like Tom. His letters always used to make me smile ; he always seemed to find it so difficult to say a word more than was necessary. I always used to tell him that I believed that the end and aim of his existence, when writing, was to use as few words as he possibly could.

He was coming to call on me between half-past five and six ;—whatever for ? After all that had happened. Mr. Norton was coming about that time,—if he did come. Suppose they should meet,—how should I explain each to the other ? I had no means of telling the time : I went down-stairs to find out,—that was when I had been in perhaps three-quarters of an hour. Mrs. Holden, the landlady, told me that, according to her clock, it was a quarter past five, but that her clock never could be relied on, and that, for all she knew, it might be a few minutes wrong either way. She asked me if I had had any luck. I shook my head,—I knew what she meant.

“I am sorry to hear that, miss,” she said. “I’m sure you’ll understand that I’ve got to look after

myself. I don't see how you can go on paying my rent, if you can't find nothing to do ; so when a friend of mine came in this afternoon, as wants a couple of rooms, I told her she could have yours next Tuesday, and sooner if it was agreeable to you."

I said nothing ;—what could I say ? I had not a penny left in the world ; no notion of where one was to come from ; under such circumstances how could I expect to be allowed to continue in the occupation of her rooms ? And yet, if she turned me out, penniless, where should I find shelter ? How tired my legs seemed all at once to have grown as I dragged them back up the stairs ; when I got back into that horrid, dirty, poky little room, how my heart seemed to have died within me. By that time next week I should not have a room at all to shelter in,—it was a comforting reflection !

I won't say what I was doing when I heard footsteps ascending towards me, but I jumped up and wiped my eyes and brushed back my hair with my hands, and made myself as presentable as I could ; so why, when he opened the door, Tom Tyrrel should have stared at me as he did was beyond my comprehension. It was the funniest meeting. There was he, broad and burly, a little stiff ; and there was I, looking, I could not but suspect, a miserable little rag. Neither of us seemed to know what to say. His opening remark ; when it did come, was not at all likely to make things smoother.

"I am sorry to find you in such a place as this."

As he spoke he was glancing about him as at something incredible.

"You would have found me in something much worse if you had waited for a day or two."

He regarded me with that look which I knew so well, as if I had said something which was very nearly shocking.

"Then it is just as well that I've come in the nick of time."

His tone was dry and cold. I flew into a positive rage; there was something in his manner I resented; things had come to such a pass that I was in a mood to resent anything. In the old days I had found Tom Tyrrel sometimes trying. I daresay it was generally my fault; but there were moments in which he seemed to have the gift of rubbing me the wrong way beyond anything I had ever heard of; he had not been inside that doorway ten minutes before I began to feel that he had that gift strong upon him then.

"I don't know, Mr. Tyrrel, what you call the nick of time, or indeed, why you came at all;—I am quite aware that such a place as this is totally unsuited to a gentleman of your high qualities. Please don't trouble to come any farther into the room."

"You'll be sorry you've spoken like that presently." Although he paused I said nothing; I found his smile too irritating.

"May I sit down?"

I did not see how I could stop him, so he sat down,—on a chair which creaked beneath him.

"Your furniture does not seem to be very—solid."

"It will be less solid still next week; because then I shall have none at all,—I shall be camping out in the streets."

“Mary!—please don’t talk like that, even in jest!”

“Jest!” I laughed. “It’s pretty nearly as certain that I shall be camping out in the streets next week as that you are sitting there;—if you call that a jest, you’ve your own ideas of humour.”

“I’m sorry to hear that, Mary; if that is really the case you’ll understand what I meant when I said that I had come in the nick of time.—Mary I want you to be my wife.”

I believe I started,—I have no doubt I did something to show my surprise; because I was surprised. That was the second time that remark had been made to me to-day; was that sort of thing in the air? The idea of his saying such a thing after all that had gone before,—it was almost an insult.

“Tom Tyrell!—you dare to say that to me.”

“Dare? Mary, why do you say that? Have you forgotten?”

“That’s just it; I haven’t. I thought you had.”

“I have not been able to forget so easily. I have not been able to get you out of my thoughts—”

“That’s unfortunate.” He winced, but was not a bit sorry for him.

“I have been re-considering things. I cannot admit that in the attitude I took up I was wrong; but since then my position has changed. I should not then have been justified in marrying a girl who was without a penny:—you must excuse my speaking plainly, but you know your mother always gave me to understand that you had a small fortune of your own.”

"So I had until she lost it."

"Exactly." I could have killed him for the tone in which he said "exactly."

"Your mother had no right to lose it, since it was not hers to lose."

"I think we've discussed all that before."

"We have; I do not propose to discuss it again."

"That is as well."

"Circumstances with me have altered for the better; my practice, even in this short space of time, has increased beyond my expectations. I feel that not only should I like to have a wife, but that I ought to have a wife. An unmarried doctor is a mistake."

"I thought you had decided to ask Miss Taverner; she has heaps of money."

He winced again; it was a moment or two before he spoke.

"Miss Taverner certainly has the latter recommendation; but, in my eyes, it is the only one she has. I may say that I have decided, in any case, to ask you first. You once said you loved me."

"Once is such a very long time ago; so much water has passed under the bridge since then—so much muddy water."

"Mary, please don't speak so flippantly; I am afraid that you always were a little frivolous. I should have thought that all you have gone through would have made a difference."

"I am sorry it hasn't, at least, as much as you think it ought to have done."

"I am at least entitled to ask that you should treat what I have to say with becoming gravity."

"You think so?"

"I do. I am not a rich man, but I have every prospect of gaining a good position. I offer you a home, the home you once promised to share, and everything your heart could desire."

"Indeed!"

"I ask nothing in return."

"What do you mean by that?"

"I mean that I am willing to take you exactly as you are, without a farthing, or the prospect of ever having one. I could not give you a more tangible proof of what my feelings are; because, as you are aware, there is more than one comparatively rich woman who, we have both of us reasons to suspect, would gladly accept what I have to offer."

"Tom Tyrrel, I wonder I ever put up with you at all—by that I mean that I wonder I ever said Yes when you would persist in worrying me. I'm beginning to believe that when my mother speculated with my money and lost it, she did me the best turn she could possibly have done."

"Mary!—you must not talk so foolishly—even of your mother! How can you say such a thing?"

"Because it is true. If she hadn't lost it, probably by now I should have been your wife."

"Think what we might both of us have been spared if that had been the case."

"Think what I should have suffered when I found you out; as I did six months ago, and, again, to-day."

"What do you mean by 'again to-day'?"

"That's the pity of it, that I believe you yourself are in honest ignorance of what kind of man you really are."

"You say that after I've come here, at great trouble and inconvenience, to make you the offer which I have done, when you yourself admit that you are practically in a state of destitution."

"Not practically, but absolutely. Tom, I haven't a penny in the world. I haven't even the proverbial crust of bread. All I have in the world worth anything I am standing up in, and you guess how much that's worth ; so you can see that I have nothing even left to pawn—there's a pile of tickets in that drawer. Now my landlady wants the rooms, —those grimy rooms which, you could not help confessing, so offended your sense of what is right and proper. I have nothing but the bare pavement as an immediate prospect, yet—I must give myself the pleasure of declining your offer."

"Mary!—you can't mean it!—You—can't be so mad."

"Can't I? Alas, I can—and I am. I would sooner camp out in the streets than be your wife."

"But why, what have I said, what have I done? Surely I was entitled to show some natural resentment, for your sake if not for mine, when I learned how your mother had squandered your small fortune."

"You were entitled to do nothing of the kind ; however, I will not be induced to discuss that with you again. On the whole, I am not sorry to have seen you, Tom, but beyond that I am afraid I really cannot go. How are all the people in Torchester?"

"Thank you, they are in varying states of health." The frigidity with which he said it! He did so want to snub me, and I kept laughing at

him all the time. "I am afraid," he admitted, "that I don't quite understand you, Mary. If it really is true that you really are in the terrible state of destitution of which you speak—"

He stopped because just then someone else came into the room and, so to speak, interrupted him. It was Mr. Norton. It was ridiculous what a glow went all over me at the sight of him;—never, in the whole course of my experience, had such a glow gone over me at the sight of Tom. I am convinced that these things are beyond one's understanding.

"You will realise how destitute I am, Tom, when I tell you that this morning I incurred a debt of sevenpence for my dinner, and if this gentleman hadn't paid it for me, I should probably have been locked up for obtaining food under false pretences, since I hadn't a farthing of my own in the world."

Tom stared at the newcomer as if he were some strange creature.

"I have not the pleasure of knowing this gentleman's name."

That was just the sort of thing one might have been sure he would say; if he is not punctilious he is nothing. I introduced them, in my own way.

"Mr. Norton, this is Mr. Tyrrel, an old friend to whom I was once engaged to be married. When my mother died, the discovery that what money I had, had died with her, caused him to change his mind, and to cry off. He has called to-day to inform me that he has changed his mind again, and wished to cry on. He has just done me the honour to ask me once more to be his wife."

"Mary!—how can you say such things of me—"

such thoughtless things, in the presence of a perfect stranger?"

"You can hardly regard me, Mr. Tyrrel, as a perfect stranger."

"You are an utter stranger, sir, to me, however you may stand with Miss Sinclair."

"I stand towards Miss Sinclair in a very delicate relation, since I have in my pocket a licence to marry her."

"Sir!—Mary!—is this true?"

"You must ask Mr. Norton."

I spoke a little faintly, I was so taken aback. Mr. Norton had taken advantage of an opening in a way which was most disconcerting. What could I say? The way he went on was more amazing still; I had to sit down and—gasp.

"Since Miss Sinclair has referred you to me, Mr. Tyrrel, I have pleasure in giving you all the information you may require. Miss Sinclair is to be married to me to-morrow morning in the church of St. Martin's-in-the-Fields; we shall be happy to see you there; and afterwards at the—banquet which is to follow. We journey to-morrow afternoon to Liverpool; and the day after, Thursday, we sail on the *Virginia* for Canada."

"If that really is the case, Miss Sinclair, I can only crave forgiveness for my intrusion and wish you all good fortune."

When he said that Tom was as stiff as if someone had slipped a ramrod down his back. But though he turned towards the door, I was not going to let him leave me in that frame of mind; after all, he was the only link with the past that I had.

"You are not to go, Tom,—at least, if you do go, you must come to the wedding to-morrow—promise."

I really and truly scarcely knew what I was saying. The word "wedding" dropped out before I knew that it was coming. To all intents and purposes I was nearly off my head. But he promised, not with the very best grace; Tom Tyrrel never could undertake to do what he did not want to do quite gracefully, but he did promise; and I knew that when he did that he kept his word. If I had wanted to keep him to his promise he would have married me, although my mother did put my money into a gold mine and left it there. It was most awkward for me when Tom had gone; though certainly—well, I hardly know what to call him—he could not have been nicer.

"So there is to be a wedding?"

When he said that I was all over tremors. He has told me often since that I spoke so faintly that he had to stoop down to catch a word.

"Well you see, I owe you sevenpence."

"That's true."

"And—I don't know how ever else I'm to pay it."

* * * * *

That is six years ago, and I doubt if there is a woman in the world who is happier than Mrs. Ernest Norton is to-day. I am Mrs. Ernest Norton. You should see our homestead! We are coming home next year for a visit; we should have come before, only we both of us felt that young children, quite young children, are in the way when travelling. But my eldest boy is now turned five, of

Sevenpence

27

course that does make a difference ; even baby is nearly three. When we do come we have made up our minds to call on Dr. and Mrs. Thomas Tyrrel, she was Miss Taverner.

I have a wrist watch ; it is set in a gold bracelet ; in the bracelet are inserted seven English pennies. He—there's only one he in the world to me—says that is the price for which he bought me.

The Princess Fredegonda

I WAS absolutely penniless—that is my excuse. When I got out of the train on to the platform at Waterloo Station I had not so much as a copper coin in my pocket and my pocket was my bank. So when I saw what looked to me like a suitcase, an excellent example of its kind, on the platform at my feet—unattended—I do not know what induced me to do it, but I picked it up and walked off with it carelessly toward the barrier at the end.

I walked right through the barrier to the cab rank, hailed a taxi, put the suitcase inside—that suitcase would have to produce somehow the wherewithal with which to pay my fare—got in after it, and was about to tell the driver, who was standing at the door, where to take me, when some one touched him on the sleeve. He moved away, and a lady got into my cab. She placed herself on the seat next to me and said to the driver, who was again at the door :

“ Babbidge’s Hotel ! ”

The driver closed the door, got on his seat, and off we went. The lady sat in one corner, I in another ; we both looked at the suitcase I had found

The Princess Fredegonda 29

on the platform. She pointed at it with a gloved hand and said :

“ Mine ! ”

Of course the situation was awkward for me. I have reason to know she was twenty-three years of age ; but had she been a centenarian she could not have made me feel younger—and I am more than twenty-three. I did try to explain. It was absurd to suppose that I would sit still in my own cab—because it was my cab, even though I had not the money to pay for it—and allow a strange woman to instruct the driver, my driver, to take me to an address that was not mine ; so I opened my mouth to start an explanation. And the moment I got it open she said :

“ Do not speak to me ! ”

I did not speak to her ; I just closed my mouth and suffered that cab to take me to Babbidge's Hotel. Babbidge's Hotel, as every one knows, is the place where royal princes and people of that kind are quartered when it is inconvenient, for one reason or another, to put them in our own royal palaces—at least so I have been given to understand.

As the taxi stopped and the porter was about to open the door a personage, who might have been a dignitary of the Church or of goodness knows what, came out of the hotel, motioned the porter aside and opened the door of our—that is, my—cab. The lady descended and I descended. I had had a hazy idea of putting her down and going on to where I wanted to go, but there was something in her manner which suggested that that would not have suited her ; so, as I have already remarked, I also descended.

She said to me: "Come!" And she said to the personage: "See that he comes!" And somehow that personage saw that I came. There was something about him that made it difficult to explain. He was well over six feet high and he glanced in my direction in a manner that I was confident brooked no contradiction. So we all three went into the hotel—the lady first, I second, the personage third. I felt that his glance was penetrating my spinal cord as with a gimlet; and, anyhow, why I was entering a hotel in which I had never been before, and did not want to go then, beat me altogether. A porter was bearing the suitcase, which I wished I had left unnoticed on the platform.

We entered a lift, the three of us and the hotel porters. We were raised to the first floor; then we got out, the personage opened a door, the lady passed through, I followed—though I had not the faintest desire to do anything of the kind. And presently I found myself following the lady into a fair-sized room, which apparently formed one of a considerable suite of apartments—even in that moment of agitation I caught myself wondering how much they charged for a suite like that at Babbidge's Hotel. The door of the room was closed by the personage and I found myself alone with the lady.

I am a man who has always been content to be alone with a lady—I think I may say that without fear of contradiction—but I was not content to be alone with that lady. The position was peculiar. She said to me directly we were alone together :-

The Princess Fredegonda 31

“Stand up straight! Do not slouch. What you want is a drill sergeant.”

Now I am not accustomed to be addressed like that by a lady. I believe my family is as good as any family in England, and—well, she practically admitted as much.

“Your clothes are all right; your boots are good; your face is not bad. You appear to be a gentleman.” She saw that in a glance. Then she added: “Yet you are a thief!”

“Pardon me!” I began.

It seemed to me that the moment for explanation had arrived; but she would not have it. She repeated what seemed to me to be her previous offensive observation.

“Do not speak to me; I will do all the speaking. Do not open your mouth unless I tell you.” She placed herself in an armchair, crossing her legs so that I could not help seeing how excellently she was shod; but when I turned to a chair with the object of sitting down also she stopped me.

“Do not dare to sit down uninvited.”

Had an ordinary young woman of twenty-three spoken to me like that I should have been ready with an answer; but in this case I was not. I simply continued to stand.

“You stole my bag!” she observed. I tried to assure her I had done nothing of the kind, but she would not let me. “I do not wish to know that you are a liar as well as a thief!” That was how she put it; she had a disagreeable way of speaking. “Continue to stand where you are and say nothing!”

She spoke to me as though I were a sort of—I

do not know what sort of thing she thought I was. She let me stand there, mumchance, in the centre of the room, with my hat in one hand and my stick in the other while she got up, went to a writing-table, sat down, turned her back to me, started writing, and continued writing while she flung a remark at me over her shoulder.

“Do you think I am writing to a policeman?” I admit that some such idea had occurred to me. Still the remark was tactless; as also, I may observe, was the one that followed. “Perhaps I am; we shall learn. In any case I have but to touch a button and there is the policeman.”

Quite what she meant I did not understand, but then I did not know what the whole thing meant. She scribbled two notes; then she did touch a button—the ivory push-piece of what I presume was an electric bell, because no sooner had she touched it than the door opened and the personage came in. Without a word she gave him the two notes she had written; without a word he took them, and also without a word he bowed himself out. Then she asked:

“What is your name?”

Being allowed for the first time to speak, I told her that my name was Savile, Jack Savile; and I was going on to give her a few particulars about my family and the distressing circumstances that had placed me in such a momentarily unfortunate position but she would not have it. She stopped me.

“When I ask you a question, answer it—no more! I am not interested in your affairs; I do not like the sound of your voice. It is enough for

The Princess Fredegonda 33

me that you are a thief; if I touch a button a policeman will come and lock you up. How old are you?"

I told her I was twenty-five. It was no use going on to explain that I sometimes felt like fifty, because she looked at me and I stopped. It was perhaps as well that I did stop—at least I saved my breath, and I wanted all the breath I had, because the next remark she made took it all away.

"Mr. Jack Savile, you are to understand that I am going to marry you!"

She said she was going to marry me, not that I was going to marry her. It was perhaps not a material matter, but her way of putting it was suggestive. Of course I thought she was joking, though where the humour of the joke came in was a little difficult to see. I continued to think that she was joking when she went on:

"I am going to be Mrs. Jack Savile."

It may seem absurd, but she said it in a way that sent a cold shiver down my back, even though I still thought she was joking. It was not only the thing she said, or her way of saying it, it was the smile that accompanied her words. I could fancy a cannibal smiling like that when remarking he was going to have you roasted for dinner—with cranberry sauce. She had an extraordinary keen perception; I do not know what in my appearance gave me away—her next words showed that she saw through me.

"You suppose that I jest. You are a fool! You will presently see. Are you married already?" I stammered out that I was not. Her comment amazed me: "Not that it would make any

34 Orders to Marry

difference if you were, I should still marry you. It is either that or a policeman ; either you will marry me, say, in an hour, perhaps a little more or a little less—that we will leave for the moment—or I will have you punished as a thief deserves to be punished.”

I managed to explain, she suffered me so far, that I did not see how she or any one else could marry me, even in two hours ; in England we do not move quite so rapidly as that. I had seen from the very first moment, when she got into the cab, that she was a foreigner ; but she had a considerable acquaintance with our manners and customs and our laws. She was not civil, though she was frank.

“You are again a fool, and you know nothing about your own country. I have sent to Doctors’ Commons for a license. In ten minutes it will be here. In less than an hour a priest—what you call a clergyman—will be in attendance at the church round the corner. He will marry me to you.”

It was news to me to learn that a marriage license could be procured at Doctors’ Commons, except by one of the principals in person ; but before I could say so the personage returned. He handed her a blue paper. She opened it, glanced at it, then glanced at me ; and again she smiled—the smile that I disliked. She spoke to him in a language with which I was unacquainted ; he replied, I presume, in the same tongue ; it sounded like jargon to me. Then he withdrew. She held out the blue paper.

“This,” she observed, “is the license of which I

The Princess Fredegonda 35

told you—to permit the marriage of Jack Savile, bachelor, to Letitia Robinson, spinster; I am Letitia Robinson. Do I not look—do I not sound as though I were Letitia Robinson? What a name! Nikol has gone to arrange about the priest; in an hour I shall be married to you, unless——” Some one tapped at the door. She had absolutely the loveliest eyes I have ever seen. The way she used them to look at me when there came that tapping at the door! The tone in which she spoke! “Perhaps this is the ‘unless.’ Come in!”

The personage opened the door. There entered a shortish, stoutish individual, red-faced, grey-haired, with great bushy eyebrows that stuck straight out. I could see at a glance that he was some one. He came into the room with an air which, in a man of his build, I thought comical—his agitation was as obvious as his desire to conceal it. He made a sort of salaam to the lady, bending himself double. Then he glanced at me; he had seen me the instant he came into the room, and for some reason I felt sure that he did not like the looks of me. He did not grow fonder as he subjected me to a most impertinent scrutiny. The lady motioned toward me with the blue paper.

“This,” she remarked, “is Mr. Jack Savile, whom I am about to marry.”

I thought he would have exploded! Her words caused him to distend like an airball. When he could speak he said something in a harsh voice in the same dissonant jargon. She interrupted, addressing him in the same unceremonious fashion in which she addressed me:

“Speak English, if you please. I wish the man I am going to marry to understand all that is said.”

Her remark seemed to generate in him some noxious kind of gas, by the fumes of which he was so overcome as to be rendered incapable of speech. He could only splutter :

“Madame—madame—madame jests!”

When she talked to him as she had done to me I began to understand it was owing to no special disqualifications of my own that she had treated me as though I had been the dirt under her feet.

“My poor Dolgouruki, you’re a fool!” She had called me a fool; it was some satisfaction to know that in her judgment I was not the only creature of the kind. He did not like it. “I will try to drive into your thick head the situation.” That is how she continued. “You have had the presumption to stop my supplies, idiot that you are! You have done something or said something to the bank; they will give me no money. I must have money.”

“I have explained to madame——”

“Imbecile! Will you be still! Who asked you to explain. I will explain. I am the only one to explain. I tell you I must have money; to get it I am going to marry—this individual here, Mr. Jack Savile.”

The idea of any one getting money by marrying me! My sensations were surprising as I listened to that remarkable conversation. Dolgouruki spoke next.

“Is this person a millionaire?”

“He is a thief! It is only that I may not hand him over to a policeman that he marries me.”

The Princess Fredegonda 37

I should like to have had the assistance of a camera to give something like a faint idea of the expression on Dolgouruki's face as the lady made this remarkable statement.

"You propose, then, to marry a thief?" he contrived to gasp that out.

"It is not a question of proposing. I am going to marry a thief—Mr. Jack Savile. Perhaps already a priest is waiting for us at the church. This is the marriage license. In England these things are easily procured."

Dolgouruki broke into what sounded to me like a torrent of bad language in his native tongue. She just smiled. Perhaps she liked to listen to that kind of language—she struck me as being the sort of woman who would. When she had perhaps had enough of it she said:

"Did I not ask you to speak in English? I tell you I am going to become Mrs. Jack Savile in a very few minutes, unless——"

"Unless what?" he thundered.

"Unless you bring here to me in this room, before I start for the church, ten thousand pounds in English gold."

"So that is the idea?"

"That is precisely the idea! You stop my supplies! I have no money. I want money. Unless you let me have money I will marry a thief!—very quickly."

"Your imperial father sends this morning a message——"

"Tell my imperial father to stand on his head!"

I protest and declare that those are the very words she used; possibly because she was a

foreigner she did not realise their enormity. Yet I doubt it, because when Dolgouruki continued, "Your imperial father sends this morning a message that his heart is beginning to break——" she interrupted him without showing the least sign of filial emotion—or indeed any emotion.

"Let it continue to break!" she callously said. It was dreadful that so pretty a young woman could be so callous! "His heart will go crack when he hears that I have married a thief! It will teach my imperial father a lesson—and also others."

He replied to her in his own language—I fancy he was more fluent in that. Also, I have no doubt he realised that it was difficult to deliver himself of what he wished to say with me standing there with my ears wide open. This time she answered in the same tongue. For some minutes they were at it hammer and tongs. When you hear a man talking in a strange tongue it sounds so awful that you are apt to think he is using language he ought not to use.

I dare say they were not swearing at each other all the time; but if they were not, then I wonder what it would have sounded like if they had been. After a while the discussion seemed to wax less warm. Apparently she had never once asked that elderly man—he was old enough to be her grandfather—to take a seat. She kept him standing as she had done me. Presently Dolgouruki moved himself backward toward the door and got himself somehow out of the room.

She touched the ivory button—in came the personage; she gave him what I judged to be an

The Princess Fredegonda 39

order ; he withdrew and almost instantly reappeared with a decanter and a glass on a tray. He placed the tray on a table by her side, filled the glass and went out. Then she had a drink.

I think that was the most trying moment I ever had. My longing for liquid refreshment had reached a point at which it became intolerable ; and to see her sip at that glass and then swallow the lot, refill it and place it again at her side, without even suggesting so much as a moistener to me, was almost more than I could bear ! I told myself : This is what the modern woman is coming to—women must drink and men must die of thirst ! Then she took a cigarette out of a great gold box, lit it—again without so much as a suggestion to me ; and while she enjoyed it she asked :

“ Would you not like to marry me ? ”

I do not wish to be vulgar, but coming at that moment the question was a crowner. I was dead tired of standing, but I not only did not dare to sit down, I scarcely dared to move.

My tongue was dry, my throat was parched, my whole system was weak for want of some stimulant ; and there was a decanter full of a comfortable-looking fluid, and all I was suffered to do was to watch her drink.

The only possible alternative, which might have served to soothe my very real sufferings, was a cigarette ; and clearly the only person who was going to be allowed to enjoy a cigarette was that young woman ; and, mind you, I never have been quite clear in my mind that I approve of women smoking. And while she was inflicting on me all

these tortures—that is what they amounted to—she chose that moment to inquire whether I thought I should like to marry her! I was not so plain as I should have liked to be. I had to be diplomatic.

“I sometimes do not think that I’m a marrying kind of man.”

“You are a fool!” She used the epithet of which she seemed to be fond. “I am a woman worth having; do you not think it?”

I did not know what to answer. If I said “Yes” I did not know what suggestion might follow; I dared not say “No,” so I was more diplomatic still. I do not see, even now, what else I could have been.

“I am not a man who is in a position to think at all of a woman who is so lovely as you.”

She might have suspected me of sarcasm; she might have thrown something at my head. I am sure she would not have hesitated had the idea occurred to her; but so mysterious is woman that she actually swallowed what I said as if it were meant.

“Sometimes a woman does not ask who a man is—if he is a man.” It might have been true enough, but the sentiment was an odd one coming from her. She went on: “I am of a most romantic nature. This is the kind of situation that appeals to every fibre of my being.”

Then we differed, that was all I could say; if it did appeal to me it was certainly not in the sense she meant. She tucked her cigarette in the corner of her mouth, looked at me in a way that set me tingling, and asked, all mischief:

“Do you not know me?” I did not know her,

The Princess Fredegonda 41

I could not honestly say that I wanted to know her ; but all the same she told me all about herself. She began with an untruth : " I am Miss Letitia Robinson—here is my photograph ; it may interest you." She took a sheet of paper out of a drawer in the table at which she was sitting. " Come and fetch it ! " she said.

I went and fetched it. It was a page torn out of an illustrated paper. On it was the portrait of a young woman. Though she was attired in some strange and, as it seemed to me, barbaric fashion, I recognised the likeness on the instant. Underneath were some lines of type in which the portrait was described : " The Princess Fredegonda. The only child of the Emperor of all the"—well, we will say " all the Balkans." I do not wish to get myself into trouble. Then the letterpress went on to say : " The princess, who, when her turn comes, will be ruler of the greatest empire in the world, is a young and very beautiful woman of twenty-three. She is to marry her cousin, The Grand Duke Michaelovitch, whose protrait is also given on this page."

As I glanced from the paper to the lady on the chair I knew I was in the presence of the Princess Fredegonda—possibly the most famous and, in a sense, the greatest woman in the world—who called herself Miss Letitia Robinson and who apparently was presently about to marry me. Small wonder I was inclined to doubt whether I was standing on my head or my heels. Picking up that suitcase off the platform had served as a sort of magic carpet to transport me to the land of marvels and mysteries.

"You think it is like me?" she asked.

"It does not do you justice," I told her. I managed to retain some of my wits. She did not take my remark in quite the spirit in which it was meant.

"I know that I am better looking, of course. To a woman of my rank no portrait can do justice." What she meant she knew better than I did. "My father wished the world to become familiar with my face; so my portrait was sent to all the papers in all the countries—and, of course, they were all of them only too glad to put it in."

She lighted another cigarette with the tip of the first one.

"It was insolence on the part of my father to send my cousin's portrait with mine. It was to that I objected. On the subject of marriage I have my own ideas. My cousin is a presumptuous fool. He thinks he is the only man I can possibly marry; so he takes liberties. He spoke to me as though he were already my husband; as though in my case anyhow, a husband was anything at all! It is I who will be the empress; he will merely be my husband. So I had him arrested—and then I ran away."

She took another sip at her glass. I had to moisten my lips with my tongue as I watched her.

"My father is a man of violent temper; in my family we all have violent tempers. I know that when he learned I had had my cousin arrested he would probably have me arrested; so I escaped to the coast and went by a little steamboat to Constantinople, where I found a steamer intended for tourists. There happened to be a vacant cabin; I took it and came to London. Had I travelled by

The Princess Fredegonda 43

one of the usual routes I should have been traced and taken back as though I were a criminal. Travelling in that hole-and-corner way, calling myself Miss Robinson, no one suspected who I was until I came to London. The morning after my arrival at this hotel Dolgouruki came to call. He told me he would have called the night before if I had not arrived so late. Dolgouruki is our ambassador."

I recognised the name when she mentioned it in that connection.

"Dolgouruki was a fool ; I had to tell him so. He talked as though we were in my father's palace and I was at my father's mercy. I explained to him that I was in London. Then there was a scene. Dolgouruki was doubly a fool ! Nikol had to put him by force out of my apartments. He has behaved like a fool ever since. He has stopped my supplies of money ; he would not let the bank give me a five pound note. I have been here now five days. I find that to be without money is inconvenient.

"Seeing you steal my bag gave me an inspiration—perhaps it was because you were like one of my father's servants whom I liked. I said to myself, I will use him to put the screws on Dolgouruki. Oh, I know all about your English slang ! I had a maid who was the sister of an English jockey—she taught me everything. She was a hot lot. I married her to one of my household, who cut his throat six months after he had married. I was not surprised ; that way he was better off."

After this slight divergence she returned to her former theme.

“I knew that Dolgouruki would not dare to have my name associated with a man's. My father would talk to him. You will find he will give me ten thousand pounds—though, also, my father will talk to him for that.”

For the first time she got up from her chair and crossed to the fireplace. I thought to myself: What a dainty figure she has! It was even better than her face. I think it was the fashion she had of bearing herself that made it so impossible to contradict her. As the American phrase has it, What she said went!

“It is good to have a place in the world like London. My father gnashes his teeth, but here he cannot touch me. He does not wish to have it known that I am here. He realizes that he will be in a difficult position if it does become known. To say no more, it will amuse the European chancelleries to learn that I have run away; their amusement will not amuse my father. He has ordered me to return; but here in London I snap my fingers at his orders. He has begged me to return; I let him beg. I believe he has told my cousin that I am confined to my apartments by a slight cold. My cousin has to pretend to believe it, even if he does not; the whole court has to pretend. I am sick of courts and of my cousin—also of my father.

“Now that I am here I should like to have a real high time, to paint the town red, as my maid used to say; but I do not know how to begin. I am all alone—expect for Nikol; I cannot paint the town red all by myself. One thing I do know—that I cannot begin without money. In my own

The Princess Fredegonda 45

country I never have money ; I have but to ask for a thing and I get it. I suppose some one pays ; but I don't. Here when I go into a shop to buy something that is in the window they ask for cash or a reference. So far, I have had neither. I will certainly marry you, thief though you are, if Dourgouruki does not bring my ten thousand pounds."

"If your royal highness will permit me to explain I do assure your royal highness that I am not a thief." I managed to get that out before she could stop me.

"No? To me it does not matter ; I care nothing what you are. You are but a piece with which I can play against my father."

There was a cold-blooded immorality about this that affected me, as so much about her did, quite unpleasantly. I did not relish the fashion in which she persisted in treating me—as though I were either a counter or a worm!

"The chief thing I fear is that I shall be kidnapped ; they will put something into my food, make me unconscious, and in that way take me back to my father. The thing has often been done. I have done it myself. There was some one who came to London threatening to tell tales about me.

"At a theatre he went into the refreshment room to get something to drink ; a person standing by him, pretending to reach forward for a match, dropped something into his glass.

"That night, knowing nothing of what was happening, he was put on one of my father's ships that was in the Thames ; and he fell into the sea on the way home. They will not let me fall into the sea—they dare not! As for you"—she

glanced in my direction—"if they get a chance they will send you to the mines; there you will stop until you're dead—that also often happens. No one will make inquiries about you. It will be quite simple; you are only a thief; what does it matter?"

I am no more of a coward than the next man, but when she talked like that I felt as though I was going at the knees. I happened to know something about her father's country and was conscious that that was the sort of thing which might quite easily occur. One of her father's subjects had been an acquaintance of mine. He had left his native land in rather a hurry; they wanted him back rather urgently—he told me so himself. I knew it without his telling me.

So conscious was he of his peril—his offence was not extraditable—that he went to the authorities, told his story, and threw himself on the protection of the English police. They promised him their protection; they told him that in London he was perfectly safe, that any attempt to take him out of it against his will would be a breach of international law.

A breach was made in international law. I missed him. I learned in a roundabout way that he was one of a gang, in a particularly chill part of the world, who worked in what was supposed to be a mine, and never saw daylight. For all I knew he was there still.

I wished most heartily, when Princess Fredegonda made that remark and glanced at me out of her beautiful eyes, that I had never noticed that lonely suitcase.

The Princess Fredegonda 47

"In England you know nothing of lese majesty; in my country it is an offence that is punished with death. To be associated with a princess of the blood royal in an affair of this kind"—she waved the blue paper she had said was a marriage license—"is lese majesty in the highest degree. That the suggestion was mine is of no consequence. They will not punish me—I am above punishment; they will punish you for both of us. You are a marked man; that is perhaps the more to be regretted since you are young and—not ill-looking."

She lit another cigarette—like most women she smoked too quickly—and again she smiled. Some one tapped at the door; not at the one by which we had entered, but at another, which was in the corner by the writing table.

"It is Stephanie," observed the princess when the tapping had been thrice repeated. "I like to keep her waiting; it enrages her. Situated as I am, it is necessary that people should be kept in their places. Enter!"

There entered the most absolutely ravishing specimen of the feminine sex I ever beheld. I do not wish to exaggerate—to say that is to speak with moderation. And when she saw me, and our eyes met, something passed from her to me and from me to her—well, her cheeks flushed and I was tingling.

"A message, madame, for Miss Robinson from a milliner." She spoke with that slight foreign accent which is so becoming to a pretty woman.

"From a milliner? So! For Miss Letitia Robinson? Good! I do not want her message. Tell the milliner to hang herself. Go! Stop!"

The girl started to go with precipitance that was eloquent; then just as suddenly she stopped.

"This is Mr. Jack Savile. Look at him!"

The princess motioned toward me with her cigarette as she might have done towards a tailor's dummy outside a shop door. The girl looked at me—making me burn.

"Are you married, Stephanie?"

"No, madame; not yet."

"How would you like to marry Mr. Jack Savile?"

"I do not know."

Of course she did not know; how could she know? She spoke in a whisper, which was so low that it was scarcely audible. The wonder was that she could speak at all, having such a question hurled at her without a moment's notice. The princess seemed to be reflecting as she smiled. How I did dislike that smile of hers—it was so cattish!

"There is something in that. It is necessary, perhaps, that you should know him five or six minutes before you can make up your mind on such a subject as marriage." She looked at me. "Perhaps your brain moves quicker; I imagine that a thief has to be quick witted. Would you like to marry Stephanie?"

"There is nothing I would like better."

I was looking at Stephanie as I said that. I just let myself go; when I looked at her I had to let myself go. I spoke hastily, without thought, but also out of the fulness of my heart—or, at least, what seemed to me to be that just then. Stephanie went pink and red. I was ashamed of myself. She was visibly trembling. I could have banged

The Princess Fredegonda 49

my head against the wall. The princess said, this time without a smile :

“You are too rapid in making up your mind Mr. Jack Savile. Stephanie, go!”

She added something in her own tongue, I could not even guess what ; but it brought to the girl's face the sort of look which comes to a dog who knows that he is about to receive a whipping, and Stephanie slunk from the room. When she had gone the princess eyed me in a fashion I never dreamed a woman could have used. She moved toward me ; I moved back.

“Stand still !” she said.

So I stood still. She came close up to me ; she took her cigarette from between her lips and pressed its red-hot tip against my cheek. Before I could get out of reach, with her other hand she struck me a violent blow on the ear.

“Thief !” she said. “So there is nothing you would desire better than to marry Stephanie ? Idiot !”

I was at a loss what to do. She looked at me as though she were on the verge of attacking me tooth and nail, like some East End virago. The cigarette had burnt me ; my ear smarted ; I felt half stunned. Luckily, before she bestowed any more of her attentions on me there came a tapping at the other door. The personage opened it, Dolgouruki came in, salaaming as before. The personage, placing a square metal box on the table withdrew. Dolgouruki looked at the lady and at me ; whether he guessed he had come at a delicate moment I cannot say—he said nothing. Perhaps it was etiquette not to speak before the lady.

Presently she observed: "So you have come?" with an addition in her own tongue that I was convinced did not convey a compliment. Clearly she could say unpleasant things in more languages than one. I was beginning to feel that her father was well rid of her.

Obviously Dolgouruki did not like the remark she had made to him in a sort of postscript, which he understood better than I did. He replied in the same language; she returned to English.

"If you had been another minute I should have been married to him." She turned to me. "I am not sure that I will not marry you even now. Why should I not marry you?"

She hurled the question at me as she had hurled the other, an equally delicate one, at Stephanie. I could have given her a hundred and fifty reasons, but I gave her none.

"Speak!" she cried. I still said nothing. "If you do not speak——"

She stopped short. I do not know whether she was reluctant to assault me again in the presence of her ambassador: there was certainly assault and battery in the way she looked at me. Dolgouruki observed in a paternal tone:

"Be easy, madame. I will have him punished."

She emitted a sound that I can only describe as a snort.

"Do not put yourself to so much trouble! I will attend to him. Where, then, is this money?"

Dolgouruki handed her a flat leather case, which he took from his pocket.

"These are banknotes." The fact that the case seemed stuffed with them did not seem to afford

The Princess Fredegonda 51

her the slightest pleasure. "Did I not tell you to bring gold?"

"If madame will permit, ten thousand pounds in gold would not only weigh a great deal, it would occupy much space. Banknotes are as good, especially as those that madame has are mostly for small sums. Besides, here is English gold."

He unlocked the metal case the personage had placed on the table. It seemed full of sovereigns. I had never before seen so many of them together: even at that moment the sight made my mouth water.

"Here, madame, are a thousand sovereigns."

She took out a handful and held them up in front of her.

"After all, they are pretty coins. I have never seen so much money in my life. One perceives that it must be fun to pay for things with what they call here ready money. With these I will paint the town red."

"Madame!" Dolgouruki's voice suggested that he was startled.

"Well?" Her tone could scarcely have been softer; she did not look at him, yet he took the hint. She went on: "Have you ever painted a town red?"

That respectable, elderly gentleman was smitten unawares. He endeavoured to cover himself under a show of dignity.

"What is it that madame is pleased to mean?"

"Dolgouruki, you are a fool! You are an old fool—once you were a young fool. In those days did you not love to be a fool, to be a greater fool even than Nature had made you? Do you suppose

I do not know I am a fool? that I do not know that to love things I cannot have is folly? Yet I love them all the same." She gave a little sigh. "You see, there are so few things for which I ought to care."

"There is the whole world at madame's command."

"No, Dolgouruki, no; else you would not have about you somewhere my father's command to take me back, with or without my will—if necessary, gagged and drugged and pinioned—to where I do not wish to go."

"Madame knows that I have no such instructions."

"I do not believe you, Dolgouruki. I know you are a liar! One day, perhaps soon, you will catch me when I am not on my guard: and all will be over. I shall not have a chance of running away a second time. I know! So in all probability I shall not have much time in which to paint the town red, and I would so love to!"

"How would you begin?" There was that in the old man's deferential tone which stung her. She pressed the tip of her finger against his chest.

"Take care, Dolgouruki, that you do not go too far!"

"I but ventured, madame, to ask a question."

"Then do not ask a question. I will begin to paint the town red in my own way. For instance, by marrying you." This was addressed to me. With her beautiful eyes she subjected me to a sort of valuation. The way in which she did it made me shiver. It was a positive relief to learn that, for some reason, I fell short of the standard she had

The Princess Fredegonda 53

set up for herself. "No—again, why should I? There are plenty of men like you to be got for two a penny."

"For less than that," said Dolgouruki. "You find them in the dirt-carts. His presence is a contamination. Prmit that I send him away."

The lady hesitated. Her pink palm was full of sovereigns; she held it out.

"Would you like a handfull?"

I said nothing. Remember, I was penniless; I had not even anything worth pawning. I dare say she saw it written on my face. She laughed right out. Her laugh was very musical; it lingered pleasantly in the ear even when it had ceased.

"No!" she cried. "I will not give it to you. They are so pretty! My sovereigns—my golden sovereigns!"

She took handfuls up out of the box, letting them fall back in yellow cascades. Then she saw the fat leather case. Picking up some of the notes she threw them toward me.

"Take those," she said; "they are good enough for you." They came unexpectedly. I failed to catch them; they fell to the floor.

"Clumsy!" she exclaimed. "Are you not used to catching alms? Dive for them! Go down on your knees and pick them up."

I did as she told me; to this moment I do not know why. It was not because my need was so urgent. I would have left the room if I could and left them there; but I could not. From the instant I had come into the room it had been the same—the slightest expression of her wish had been my law. I knelt and picked up the notes. There were

54 Orders to Marry

quite a number. As she watched she laughed. She tossed another.

"One more" she said. Pick that up also. Stay as you are!" She came so close that her skirt brushed against my face. As I wondered what was the next fantastic trick she was about to play she said: "Shall I kick him, Dolgouruki? He is a thief!"

"Permit that I have him thrown down the stairs."

Crossing the room she touched the ivory button. The personage came in.

"Show this gentleman out into the street." To me she said: "Go!" I was only too glad to get the chance. At the door she stopped me. "One moment, Mr. Savile. The next time do not let your mind move too rapidly. One day we may meet again."

"Madame!" exclaimed Dolgouruki. She paid no heed to him.

"I say that perhaps one day we may meet again. Dolgouruki, you are a fool! Shake hands with me, Mr. Savile, in the English way." To my surprise as well as confusion she advanced her right hand. I touched it with the tips of my fingers. She smiled, this time bewitchingly. "Do not be afraid, Mr. Savile. Take my hand in yours and press it." I did as I was told, but she pressed longest. She held me. "For a thief you are not ill-looking. Good day, Mr. Savile!"

I bowed and went out. When I was outside, the door of the room adjoining was opened and Stephanie looked out—only for a second, for just one peep; but she caught my eye—there was that

The Princess Fredegonda 55

in her glance which turned my head. I stood still until the personage touched me.

"Come this way!" His English was nearly perfect. I went that way. At the end of the corridor he again put his hand on my shoulder and remarked very softly—for so big a man it was strange how softly he spoke, but he was quite audible—to me:

"If you breathe a word of this morning I shall hear of it and you will pay for it with your life. Make no mistake! Miss Letitia Robinson is a lady who does not like to have her affairs talked about, or her name mentioned, or her existence known. Wherever you go there will be some one watching you and listening. You understand?"

I did. I did not tell him so, because it was unnecessary. He knew I understood. He took me down what I presume were the service stairs, through a part of the building I do not think was known to visitors, to a small door that opened into a side street. We exchanged no parting greetings; I just went out by that small door and along the narrow pavement of the mean street to the corner, where I found myself in a great square.

It was only when I was seated in the taxi I hailed that I gave a sigh of relief. I took off my hat and wiped my brow. After all, I was not so sure the time had come for me to congratulate myself on having escaped from between the upper and the nether millstones. I took out the slips of crinkly paper that, at her bidding, I had picked up from the floor—took them out furtively as though ashamed. I was ashamed. However, they were genuine banknotes. The numbers were consecutive, which

I did not fancy. They were all fives—twenty-two of them—a hundred and ten pounds.

I had told the driver to take me to Piccadilly Circus. I descended at the Criterion, giving the porter a five-pound note and telling him to pay the taxi and bring me the change. I went into the room on the right of the great entrance hall and ordered the waiter to bring me a bottle of champagne. He asked what kind. I named a brand, haphazard. I was indifferent as to the brand; at that moment all I wanted was champagne—enough of it to taste.

The porter brought my change—the waiter my wine. As the fellow drew the cork a man came in from the hall. It seemed to me he had a horrible resemblance to the personage who had shown me into the street and whom I had heard addressed as Nikol. He caught my eye as I was raising the glass to my lips—and took the taste off the wine. He came in and sat at a table opposite mine. I heard him order a small bottle of sparkling water. When the liquid came he did not touch it. He stared at the table and smiled; and I knew that Nikol had been as good as his word—that I was being watched.

When I left the Criterion I went to my rooms, driving part of the way, walking part. I could have sworn that I was not being followed. Before entering the house, standing outside the street door, I took a good look up and down the street. There was not a creature in sight. My landlady was glad to see me, especially when, inviting her into my sitting room, I took out a handful of money and paid her what I owed. When she had gone, as I

The Princess Fredegonda 57

examined her receipt I chanced to glance through the window. There was the man who had ordered the sparkling water strolling along the pavement, his eyes on the ground.

I asked my landlady's niece to go out with me that night—to dine and to a music hall afterward. Kathleen O'Connor is a pretty girl, full of life, vitality, fun—if her hands are a trifle large and red. She and her aunt do all the work of the house between them. She had a splendid time, better than I did. We dined in Rupert Street. When they brought the fish, that man, coming into the restaurant, placed himself at the table next to ours, the man who so unpleasantly recalled Nikol. What little appetite I had vanished with his appearance. I did not know what to do. The man was dogging me clearly. Should I pick a quarrel with him? I should probably not get the best of it if I did.

Kathleen praised all the dishes and thought the band was lovely; she sent up one of my half-crowns—which had come by a sort of side track, *via* the Princess Fredegonda, from the Emperor of all the Balkans—with a request to the conductor to play some fatuous waltz. When they began to play she told me how lovely it would be to clear away the tables and start waltzing there and then.

And that dark-eyed man at the next table, seeming to eat nothing, kept his eyes fixed on the cloth. He was at the music hall—I do not doubt it.

“Whom are you looking for?” asked Kathleen, apparently struck at last by the fact that I kept screwing myself round in my seat.

“No one,” I told her; “at least no one in particular.”

“Then I wish you would keep still. You do seem fidgety. And isn't she pretty?”

She alluded to the lady who had been responsible for the item of the programme that had just been finished. I did not think it was splendid or that the lady was pretty. I had but to close my eyes to see a face that indeed was ravishing, which was hard on Kathleen.

As we were going with the crowd through the great doors into the street some one slipped a scrap of paper into my hand, some one behind me. I felt as though the palm of my hand was being tickled and closed it quickly—there was a scrap of paper. I looked quickly round. We were hemmed in on all sides; I could see no one I knew, or who looked as if he or she had done that thing.

“Now what's the matter?” inquired my landlady's niece.

I suppose in turning I had given her arm a wrench. I told her that some one had trodden on my foot, and I slipped the scrap of paper into my waistcoat pocket. Kathleen would have supper—she said it would be so lovely to have supper; so she had it, while I pretended. In the entrance hall of the restaurant as we came out was Nikol's friend, looking down on the floor. The sight of him inflamed me; if I had not been eating I had been drinking. I went up to him:

“This is the fourth time I have seen you to-day, or is it the fifth? I must ask you, sir, for an explanation.”

He took off his hat with a most courteous gesture, met my eyes with his great black ones, and said with an almost incomprehensible foreign accent:

The Princess Fredegonda 59

“Pardon! No understand; no speak English.”

What could I say to a man who declared that he did not speak English, who looked and sounded as though he did not? I could only glare, while he stood in front of me with bowed head and a smile that was charmingly apologetic.

“Aren't you coming?” asked Kathleen, touching me on the arm; so I went. “Do you know that gentleman?” she asked.

“No, I don't.” My manner was brusque. I was fingering the scrap of paper, wondering whether he knew I had it.

“I thought you spoke to him.”

“We'll take a taxi home,” I said. As soon as we were in the cab I began to talk about the evening's performance. She forgot all about her question.

It was only when I was in my bedroom that I felt at liberty to satisfy my curiosity as to what was on that scrap of paper. It was just half a sheet of notepaper—small note size—parchment I believe they call it in the shops. I fancy my fingers trembled as I opened it, then I found it was blank. There was nothing on it. I turned it over and over; no, there was nothing on it; it was blank. I thought a trick had been played on me. Why did any one wish to amuse himself, or herself, by giving me a blank half sheet of common notepaper? I struck a match and touched the flame to the corner. It began to burn. I watched it. When the flame had a good hold something began to happen to the paper—writing became visible—words—one word—a name—Stephanie!

I tried to extinguish the flame. It was too late;

the paper blazed, curled into ash. I let the ash fall. Where the paper had been, where I held it in front of my eyes, though there was no longer anything there, I saw the name staring at me—Stephanie!

I do not know how it happened—but it did. I offer no explanation; I do not understand; I set it down for truth, as I saw it. I do not believe my imagination played me a trick—no, I do not believe it even now.

In the morning there was the dark-eyed man in the street—Nikol's shadow. The sight of him inflamed me. I assured myself that I would not have him there. I rushed out the front door to tell him so. When I reached the pavement he was vanishing round the corner. When I gained the corner he had quickened his pace and was already at some distance. I could not chase him—I had no hat; the idea was absurd. I returned and had breakfast. I have never seen him since.

The five-pound notes that had been flung at me were hateful in my sight. Yet they were all I had to live on—it seemed to me I had to live. While I still had twenty of them Carruthers died—Gaye Carruthers. On my breakfast table one morning, less than a fortnight after my visit to Babbidge's Hotel, I found a letter to tell me so. He had forbidden me ever to speak to him again—yet he left me practically all he had. Life's little ironies! I could not believe it—even after I had dashed round to the lawyers' and they told me it was true.

"The thing is impossible!" I said to the senior partner, who sat on the other side of the table and grinned. "Carruthers swore I should never touch a cent of his."

The Princess Fredegonda 61

“Possibly. None the less, four days before he died he made a new will in which he left you most of what he had.”

“Then, in that case,” I shouted—my brain was in such a whirl that I had to shout—“if that is true perhaps you’ll advance me five hundred pounds?”

There was nothing in his manner to show that he thought my suggestion monstrous.

“Certainly! You inherit at least eight thousand pounds a year; here’s a cheque for five hundred.”

He handed it across the table then and there, an open check. I took it to a bank as fast as ever I could. I added two fives to the twenty I had in my pocket, slipped them into an envelope, inclosed my card—With Mr. Jack Savile’s Compliments—addressed it to Miss Letitia Robinson, tore round with it to Babbidge’s Hotel, and handed it across the counter to a clerk.

“Be so good as to send that up to Miss Robinson at once.”

That clerk—he was a dapper little man with a waxed moustache—eyed me, then the envelope.

“No Miss Letitia Robinson is staying here.”

“She was here ten days ago.”

He referred to a great ledger and then smiled.

“No Miss Letitia Robinson has stayed here—at least, during the last month. This contains the names of all our visitors—you can look for yourself if you like.”

I did not want to look. I was ready to believe that that name was not inscribed in his great volume. A man came through a side doorway. He took my envelope from the clerk’s hand. His manner was precise, even curt. He said:

"You have made some mistake, sir. No person of that name was ever among our visitors."

He passed me my envelope with a look that made me slip it into my pocket almost as though I had been proposing to do something of which I had cause to be ashamed.

Three weeks later it was in all the papers, columns and columns. For days the topic in the journals was The Balkan Marriage. The Princess Fredogonda, the world was informed, had recovered from her severe influenza.

And her marriage to her august cousin, the Grand Duke Michaelovitch, was to take place at the earliest possible moment. All the great folks were hurrying to the wedding. So they were married!

How had it been done? Did Dolgouruki do it? Had Nikol lent a hand, or the dark-eyed man—and Stephanie? Had they put something into the Princess' coffee, slipped her into a bag, borne her away on one of her father's ships, and so home? If that was the way it was done—that it was done in some such way I have no doubt—what did she say when she found herself back again in her imperial father's palace? There were some stirring times! Somebody suffered. Did she dare to beat Stephanie? I should have liked to beat her if she had! She probably said some plain words to her imperial father—not the fear of instant execution could have kept her from doing that.

Yet persuasion was brought to bear; she did marry her august cousin. The world is informed that they are a happy pair. I wonder!

In the fall of the same year—that was my

The Princess Fredegonda 63

wonderful year!—I met Miss Isa Franklin. I had heard a deal about American girls—I had met a few; but so soon as I set my eyes on her I knew she was the one girl in America or out, the first and the last, the beginning, the middle and the end! Pretty soon, one morning in an avenue in the Bois—we were in Paris—I told her so. I just quick-stepped up to Heaven when she said what she did say to me. We were married at the American Embassy.

The day before I saw Stephanie in the Avenue du Bois. She was in an open motor car—and she saw me! She had passed before I had time to get my hat off; but she nodded and put her head over the side and looked back as the great car sped on.

“Why,” said Isa, with whom I happened to be strolling, “what a beauty! I believe she knew you.”

Then I told her this story. When we had been married and had lived in America two golden years we came back to Europe for a trip. I met Prince Dolgouruki at a reception in the Avenue Kléber. He looked at me hard. I looked at him and said clumsily—the meeting was unexpected and took me aback: “Unless my memory plays me false I have met you before.”

He continued to look at me as though I were not there. He replied:

“Memory sometimes does play one false; it is safer to have no memory, as is the case with me.”

He passed on into the crowd. At the moment Isa was at the other end of the room. I said nothing to her—at least not then; but the next morning I saw in the papers that the Emperor of

all the Balkans was dead, and that within two hours of his death the Grand Duchess Michaelovitch had borne an heir to the Balkan throne. The Princess Fredegonda was a mother and an orphan, and Empress of all the Balkans. Did her august cousin and well-loved consort make any remark on the situation that would have been of interest to the world at large? I wonder!



A Lucky Day

THE way I started business, straight, steady business, was what I should call queer. It was in Coventry Street. A bloke was coming from Leicester Square, put his hand in his trousers pocket and dropped some change, right close by me. I stooped down to help him pick it up, half a thick'un went under my foot ; I fastened on to it ; he caught me by the neck, twisted the thin'un out of my fist.

"Thank you, my young nobleman," he said. "By your leave ! You come along with me."

He slipped the shiner into his pocket and took me along with him, to the coffee shop which was close by.

"What's yours?" he said. "Give it a name." He pushed the bill of fare over to my side of the table.

"The best they've got," I said, "is good enough for me."

He looked at me and he sort of laughed, and he ordered a large plate of roast beef for both the two of us, though he didn't look as if he was the sort of chap who grubbed in a place like that along with a kid like me. He was glancing round, and looking me up and down, as you might call it, me saying nothing. Then they brought the food and when I

saw my plate I showed I didn't want any waiting.

"Hungry?" he asked, with both his eyes on the way I was going it.

"So would you be if your meal times were as uncertain as mine are."

"It's a pity you're on the cross."

"I'm not! If anyone says I'm on the cross I'll dot him one."

"You were going to pouch my shiner."

"Finding's keeping, that's what that was."

"Stow that!—don't tell that yarn to me! I've done a bit of it myself. How do you make your living? Got a father?"

"Ain't got nothing. I did have a mother, but she died. We used to live in the country till father got into trouble; he and the keeper had an argument about some pheasants. Then mother would come to town. When father came out, first thing he did was to get himself run over by a motor 'bus. Mother never knowed what motor 'bus done it, so she got nothing. I was only a kid—"

"Only a kid, were you? How old are you now?"

"Just striking twelve, as we used to say when I was in the country. That was two years ago, when father died, so I'm not so young as you might think. It's being from the country makes me look it. Mother had bad luck right from the very first. She started with a pain in her side, which turned out to be cancer, so they said afterwards; she slipped down the stairs, and there she was, hurt herself something cruel. I don't know how long afterwards it was that they buried her. They wouldn't let me stop in the place, there was a month's rent owing as it was, so they told me.

It's not so easy to earn yourself a living when you're eleven and have got no one to help you. I got along somehow, I ain't complaining, but I never have been on the cross, and I ain't going to have you say so!"

"All right, all right! Keep your hair on! Who's saying so? What's your name?"

"Frank Jarvis, that's my real name and no lies. What's yours?"

"Lawrence is my name, Charlie Lawrence; and there isn't a bloke in London or anywhere else who can say a word against it. Well, Frank; glad to have met you. I've tasted worse beef than that was, hope you felt the same." I grinned, but said nothing, he had a funny sort of way, had Mr. Lawrence. "I agree with you that it's not always easy to earn your own living when you're twelve, or even a little more; I've found that out myself. I ain't singing no song, but if I could keep straight I should. Chuck all that rot about finding's keeping, it must be nice to be able to look a copper in the face. What's your game? Honest?"

"Ain't got no game; I pick up what I can."

"Would you like to have a game? Would you like to be a paper boy?"

"What do you take me for? O' course I would! That's a game that costs money; they don't give you your stock for nothing."

"How much? What's the least you can start on?"

"I have known them do it on a bob. Cinders—that's a chap what lived in the same house I did—he started with a bob. Now, when times are good, he's got a hatful; does a little betting and I don't

know what. But it ain't easy to do it on a bob, one bad day and you're done."

"Could you do it on half-a-crown?"

"Where am I going to get the money from? You don't pick up half-crowns in the street."

"There's half a dollar, with my blessing. Good-day, Mr. Jarvis; glad to have made your acquaintance. Next time I meet you I hope to find you've got papers of your own. I'm told that Mr. Lord Northcliff has found it rather a paying game."

I don't quite know what he meant, but he put down half-a-crown on the table and off he went.

"Don't you try and follow me," he said, just as he was going; "you walk the other way."

"He needn't have worried about my following him—other fish to fry I had—especially with that half-crown. Nipped off Upper Street way I did, caught Lizzie with the jackets under her arm, glad I was to see her.

"Sorry I can't do much for you, Frank, this is one of our bad days."

"Don't you trouble yourself about me," I told her, "this is one of my good 'uns." Then I told her.

"You don't mean to say he stood your dinner, and then gave you half-a-crown!" I held out the half-a-crown.

"Sorry I can't show you the dinner, but here's the coin."

"Frank, whatever are you going to do with it?"

"Set myself up in business, that's my game; turn that half-crown into five shillings, like Cinders done. Papers! you watch out! Keep your eye on me."

"I never seen nothing like it in all my borndays. What a stroke of luck, you must be born to it."

"Ain't so sure of that! I've had my bits of trouble, I have. Ain't had nothing to speak of inside o' me this week. How's things with yourself?"

"Don't talk of it! They were talking last night, they was. Why she takes it from him beats me! Half a push would send him downstairs. Fact is she's so weak that she can hardly stand on her legs; oh, he's a crummy piece of goods! She's late with these coats because of him; they ought to have been in the day before yesterday, but he wouldn't let her alone. And it's no good expecting me to do it all on my own; they won't take 'em from me. I may be a tailor in time, but as things are I ain't a patch on her. They know my work directly I get in the shop. 'At it again!' says Mr. Josephs. 'Tell your mother it won't wash.' And he cuts the work all out. 'If you try it on again it's the last time you will try it. When we pay for first class tailoring we don't want it done by kids as would be in the nursery if everybody had their rights. Then he chucks the stuff in my face, back I have to go with it, and the work has to be done all over again. Fine old flare up there is when Mr. Walters hears of it."

"I'd Mr. Walters him!—skulking brute! That all right?"

"Most of it, it'll be hard luck if it ain't; don't know what we shall do if Mr. Josephs don't pass it, there's not a mag in the house. As it is I shall have to walk every inch of the way."

"Not much, you won't; we're going to have a 'bus, we are, both the two of us!"

"That we ain't. And you'll pay for it out of

your half-crown, what you're going to set up business with. I don't think! Off you start a-setting up. The three o'clocks'll be out if you ain't moving, then where'll you be? You step it. See you to-night."

Mrs. Walters works for some blokes near Fleet Street, a bit of a step it is from Upper Street. Nothing to eat Lizzie had had, and nothing to drink, except what she called tea, and I know what tea is in their house, dirty water what they've used for washing up. Three coats she'd got to carry, great big coats, and Lizzie's not so big, nor yet so strong neither. It would be as much as I could do to carry them coats. She may be as old as I am—born the same day she was, ain't it odd?—let alone that she's a girl and I'm a boy, she ain't near so strong as me. I wouldn't let her walk all that way, not with money in my pocket. I put an end to talking by stepping on a 'bus what stopped close by us.

"You do as you're told," that's what I told her, and get outside. I'm going your way—Tudor Street, that's my mark. So just you come along o' me."

If I'd known how things was I'd have put a bit of something in my pocket, but like a silly headed chump I never stopped to think though I might have guessed. Though she was obliged to own herself that she was glad for the ride, when I got down with her at the bottom of Chancery Lane, not only couldn't she carry those jackets down the stairs, she couldn't hardly stand. I slipped in to a baker's shop and bought a penn'orth of bread, though she didn't want it because she was afraid of

making her hands sticky; very particular they are where Mrs. Walters works. Before I left her I saw her putting herself outside the bread, and wasn't she enjoying of it, new bread it was! When I got to Tudor Street the three o'clock was beginning to come out; there was a crowd over at Carmelite House. By rights I was among the last of my lot, only there happened to be a chap there who I'd seen a good deal of; been of service to him two or three times I had.

"Hullo, Curls," he said, "what do you want?"

"Want a bob's worth, that's what I want."

"What!" He gave a kind of whistle. "For yourself—all at one time? Are you going into business? Come into a fortune?"

"I am going into business," I said, "though I don't know about no fortune."

Then I did have a stroke of luck, he gave me the bob's worth, straight he did!—bought an extra bob's worth and made me have 'em,—gave me a kick and shoved me out into the streets, because I was so took aback. Like a gentleman he behaved that afternoon, I will say that for him;—gave me my first stock. If ever I become a millionaire I'll have it marked up against him. I don't know what his name is—Bones is what they call him—but I'll know him when I see him again. I'm not one of those who can't remember the face of a chap who's done me a good turn. It was all luck with me that day. Just as I was getting into Fleet Street some chaps came out of one of the offices and I was sold out almost before you could say knife. That was the first deal I ever did on my own. It seemed as if Mr. Charlie Lawrence had

put me in the way of making a fortune the very first try, it was luck all the time, seeing that there was racing over at Kempton, and everyone had got his bet on something—even some of the young ladies. I heard one saying to another, dark hair she'd got and no hat.

“Gladys, I've won ten shillings!” She gave a kind of a gasp, she was so excited. “Artichoke's won!”

Her friend took hold of half her paper; she was a little slip of a thing, half the size of the other. Her front hair was up in curlers.

“No! you don't say! Where's Frying Pan?”

I didn't wait to hear where Frying Pan was. They couldn't hardly have both of them won, but I did hope he'd got a place, and that young lady had been on the race one two three. Couldn't get my papers fast enough, it was like as though everyone was buying them off me. I was getting rid of a fresh lot when someone clapped me on the back.

“Hullo, my hearty!” he sang out, “who are you working for now?”

It was Cinders; George Mitchell is his real name, but they call him Cinders like they call me Curls. I don't know why. Up by Charing Cross station he was. A lot of papers he always has, enough to stock a shop; lets others sell them for him and go shares in the profits. I've done it for him many and many a time. He thought that was what I wanted then. I explained.

“No, Cinders, I am not having any, thank you very much. I'm a merchant on my own, opened my shop only this afternoon. Paper, sir?—five o'clock edition!”

"Now I tell you what I'll do," he said. "I'll have a hand in starting the business. Could you do with half a quire from me, for the sake of auld lang syne?"

I could, and I did, and I thanked him very much. He's been a good friend to me, has Cinders. I've felt sometimes as if I'd known him all my life. Of course our ages is different, he's seventeen, and an old seventeen, he's been about a bit, has Cinders; what he don't know ain't worth knowing; he's a marvel, that's what I call him!—and of course I'm only twelve, what might be not a day more than eleven and a half, so they've told me.

"Curls, old cock," said Cinders, "I've got an idea in my head, I have. Where'll you be to-night?"

"Over at Lizzie's, about nine. This being the first day on which I'm starting off to make a fortune I want to let her know how things goes; always got to keep Lizzie posted if anything special happens to me."

"Good it is!" Cinders laughed, "he's always laughing at Lizzie and me; not really, it's only his fun. He knows what Lizzie is to me, how nothing would be nothing without her, he understands. I'll be over there between nine and eleven; I've got to pay a call near the Angel, I may have a word to say to you on your own."

A chap spoke to him as wanted a quire and I went on. There wasn't much 'going on' about it; I sold out pretty near where we stood. Then I got two quires from a cart that came round. That lot didn't go so well. Of course everybody knew

about the three o'clock, and there wasn't, so to speak, nothing much to take its place. Of course everyone knows that to sell a paper there's nothing like a good three o'clock race. There'd been some fighting, and that sells, but not so much in my trade, not out in the streets; it's the book-stalls who get that. Then I heard two gentlemen talking about a case what had been in the police court, so I made that my call. "Police court sensation! Extraordinary evidence by a lady!" That sold a few. I didn't know nothing at all about it, I chanced it; lot of people is always interested when they think a lady has been giving herself away in a court of law.

I knocked off at half-past eight, sold out. I hadn't had a long day but I'd had enough, the strain on my mind was what did it. When you're starting business you're bound to have a strain on your mind, especially with the luck I had. I'd been having so much of it from the very first that I couldn't make out how much I had had. Me being fresh at the game, it wasn't to be expected that I'd be much of a hand at large figures. Couldn't make out how much I had made, not quite I couldn't. There was half-a-crown which Mr. Charlie Lawrence had given me in the corner of my waistcoat pocket just as it was, I was a bit anxious about the stitches; I knew three or four of them was lose; especially when I took it out and found it only a florin. Quite a start I had till I remembered the 'bus I'd paid for and Lizzie's chunk of bread. Then there was the bob's worth I'd got from the chap whoes name I didn't know, —when you come to look right at it as a fact he

was the chap that actually started me, and there was Cinders' half quire. So far as I could make out there was the florin in my waistcoat pocket, which was what was left of Mr. Charlie Laurence's half-crown, and then--leaving that all on one side--there was eight and a penny. How I got it I don't know; came out of nothing you might say that did. With the florin I'd made half a quid! I tell you I felt queer when I found that I'd got that money actually on me, because, mind you, there's lots of gentlemen--if it comes to that, ladies too--who've got a fortune on 'em in the way of clothes, who haven't got so much as a bob to take them home. It don't follow because you've robbed a tailor that you've robbed a bank, I know a bit better than that!

The trouble was that I couldn't make out where my reckoning was right and where it was wrong. A two shilling piece there was what was Charlie Lawrence's; the rest was coppers--a lot of them ha'pence. They was in my trousers pocket, I've only got one pocket in my trousers which you could call a trousers pocket; it's only by luck that I had that. That morning I had found a bit of string and I'd tied the pocket up at the bottom, because I'd said to myself I might have money--not that it looked much like it just then! and then where should I put it? because after all, my waistcoat pocket was only kept together by a few last stitches--all the while I had to keep feeling if Mr. Charlie Lawrence's florin was there. All the same, when you've got eight shillings' worth of ha'pennies and pennies in a pocket which is only kept a pocket by a bit of string, you can't be sure if it's seven, eight

or nine shillings' worth you've got, especially when you feel all the while that the piece of string is coming undone.

When I got out to Islington there was Lizzie waiting for me outside their house. Directly I see her I knew there was something up. She's always indoors at that time, often she's working with Mrs. Walters, half through the night they work, those two, if, that's to say, her husband will let her.

"What's up?" I asked. Lizzie lifted her hand and emptied a glass what she hadn't got down her throat. "No!" I said, "like that? Where did she get the money? I suppose they paid you for the coats?"

"I wish they hadn't. When I brought it back she went out with it and drank the lot."

"Didn't she give you any?"

"Not so much as a crust! Mrs. Anderson was here: a daughter of hers has been having a baby or something: she brought something round in a bottle to drink its health. Mrs. Walters hasn't had nothing to eat since goodness knows when; by the time she came home she'd had too much to drink. She and Mrs. Anderson went out together—you know what she is when she's like that, there's no stopping her. I got her on the bed when she came home, there wasn't so much as a brown on her. Let's hope he'll be as happy when he comes home, or there'll be something doing."

"Then you ain't had nothing to eat since I left you this afternoon?"

I took her to Gardiner's, that is a very nice coffee shop close to the Angel, and I gave her a feed, what was a feed.

“Now look here, Frank,” she said before we had passed the doorway, “if you think I’m going to eat a Lord Mayor’s banquet out of your stock money—I’m not; that’s where you’re wrong. I’ll have a couple of doorsteps—”

“Doorsteps!” I stopped her talking. “You ain’t going to have no doorsteps along o’ me, not to-night you ain’t. I want something to eat what’s worth eating, and so do you, and we’re going to have it together. I’m a millionaire, that’s what I am, and that’s no kidding. You listen to what I’ve got to say. In you go! I don’t want to be kept waiting here all night till they close.”

I gave her a shove and in she went. I ordered two steak puddings, sixpennies mind, none of your fourpennies—with baked potatoes; nothing I like more than a baked potato with a beef steak pudding and coffee. You should have seen the look of them puddings when they came, it would have done you good!

“You’ve had some luck, I see,” said Lizzie, while they were bringing them. I don’t know if it was the thought of what was coming that made her smile. “Have you sold all your papers?”

“Some luck! my papers! I should think I sold half the papers that have been sold—all profit. You wait and I’ll tell you.” They brought the puddings. “Now just you attend to business, we’ll do the talking afterwards, and don’t you eat too fast. We’ve got plenty of time; let’s eat these puddings as if we was enjoying them. I think I’ll have another potato with mine—so will you; it helps to spread out the gravy. Have you got a handkerchief?”

"Whatever for?" she asked.

"Well, I'll tell you. I'm in a delicate position. I've got a pocketfull of money, and I'm afraid every moment it'll bust out. I want something that I can put it in."

She looked at me as if she was puzzled.

"Ain't you got more than one pocket? I thought you chaps always had lots."

"I bought these trousers one Sunday morning from a chap on the pavement who was selling them by hundreds for a sixpenny bit I'd happened to find the night before. Not bad trousers they wasn't then; but they'd only got one pocket, and of course he's been on the go ever since. Presently I'll show you what I mean. I hope you're enjoying yourself."

She gave a kind of a sound which I can't describe.

"Oh, Frank, if you only knew how hungry I was!"

"I was a bit that way myself. I've been looking forward all the afternoon to having a bit of something along o' you. Liz, if I could only get some pieces you and me would always eat together. I'd sooner go shares with you in what was going than blow myself out when I was alone. Talking about pockets"—I had a squint round—"think it's safe?"

"What d'you mean? Who's a-going to hurt you? Why shouldn't it be safe?"

"I've got a pocketful of money, and I don't quite know how much I have got, that's why. I don't want some bloke to borrow it directly I get outside. What's more, I want it changed into silver."

A Lucky Day 79

Lizzie stopped eating to stare.

“Why, Frank, however much have you got?”

I looked round again to make sure who was listening, then I whispered.

“I believe I’ve got ten and a penny, but most of it is coppers so I ain’t quite sure. I want to count ’em to make sure. You know what it is when there are eyes about. What I want is something in the nature of a pocket handkerchief I can wrap up the coppers in.”

“I can tear a bit off the lining of my skirt, that might do.”

It had to do; her skirt wasn’t much, nor yet the lining neither. We spread it out on the table, then I turned the coppers out on to it, and we both of us counted them. Made it come to the same, we did, eight and ninepence;—so when I said eight and a penny I was doing myself out of eightpence. A young lady what was serving came and had a look at what we was doing.

“Come into a fortune, ain’t you?” she asked.

“Had a good day, miss, that’s how it is.” I liked the looks of her. “Do you happen to have eight and sixpence in silver?”

“Shouldn’t wonder if we managed to find it somewhere in the house.” Lizzie and me had arranged the coppers in piles of a shilling. The young lady saw as they were right, then she handed over the silver. “Eight shillings and sixpence. How old might you be?” she asked, “and how old’s your sister?”

“She’s twelve same as me, but she’s not my sister. Brought up in the same village in the country we was, but I hardly knew her till I met

80 Orders to Marry

her again in town. She ain't got no one living what belongs to her, it's the same with me."

"Do you live in the same house?"

"That we don't; I wish we did. I can't be said to live anywhere. Lizzie lives with a woman what was a cousin of her aunt's. Sometimes she gives me what she calls a shake down in a cupboard on their back landing; sometimes I get a doss on the stairs. But in a general way I may go where I can."

"You don't have a good day seven times a week."

"Not in a general way I don't, but I've only just started business, and I'm expecting it to do pretty well."

"Where are you going to sleep to-night?"

Which reminded me; I looked at Lizzie and Lizzie looked at me, then I said a few last words to the young lady, and I paid the bill—my crumbs, they had done us good, them puddings!—and not very many minutes afterwards I was saying good night to Lizzie outside her house. I had arranged, because of the little trouble there might be with Mrs. Walters, that I wouldn't come inside, but for once in a way stand myself a doss. I wanted Lizzie to keep the fortune which we had got tied up in a brown paper bag what had been given us by the young lady in the coffee shop, but Lizzie would have it that because of the trouble there might be indoors it might be safer with me, even in a doss house.

"I wouldn't," she said, "keep the money in the place not for anything this night; if Mr. Walters was to come across it goodness only knows what mightn't happen."

She was holding the bag out towards me, trying to make me take it back, when it was snatched from her fingers, and Mr. Walters himself was there.

“Oh, don’t you know what would happen? Then you’ll soon find out! you squint-eyed little thief! You steal the money, do you, what my wife earns with the sweat of her brow, and when she’s had a little drop to drink, you leave me to starve! You take yourself away, you mean snivelling little cat! —to rob the hand that feeds you! You take yourself away, or I’ll take the skin right off you!”

It was a bit of a facer, that was. I’ve never known anyone move more quietly than Mr. Walters does; I’ve said times without number that I believe he’s a thief by profession. If he hadn’t come upon us from behind and snatched the money from Lizzie’s hand what was the beginning of my fortune! That was a little more than I could stand.

“Excuse me, Mr. Walters,” I said, “but that happens to be my money what you’ve got.”

“Your money? you tallow-faced little moucher! I catch myself believing it! You never had no money. So you’ve been putting yourself to teach her to rob the only creature who’s ever been good to her. I’ve been warned against you before. Now off you go while you’ve got the chance.”

Lizzie put in her oar; I could see as how she was all trembling.

“But, Mr. Walters, it is his money. He made it to-day out of his papers.”

“Made it out of his papers, you dirty little liar! You take yourself indoors before I very nearly kill you.”

He raised his arm and he caught her a swipe

which did very nearly knock her down. Before he guessed what I was after I snatched the bag from the hand which happened to be next to me. He gave a yell.

"Here! you young hound! what are you doing?"

"Taking back the money what's my own. Here, you keep your hands off. It don't happen to be yours, and it don't happen to be Lizzie's."

"Who thought it was Lizzie's? It's my wife's, that's whose it is!"

"Oh no, it isn't! It never has been hers and it never will be; she never heard of it. Here, you stop it."

I dodged him once or twice, then he made a sudden dash and he got me by the throat. He ain't much of a man, ain't Mr. Walters; a man what was wouldn't make nothing of him at all; but after all I ain't so old and I ain't so very strong, not even for my age—he ain't so easy for me to tackle. He got me up against the wall, stuck his knuckles right into my throat—it's a trick he has—and while I was a-choking he twisted the money away from me with his other hand. In an other half minute I daresay he would have got away with it—Lizzie, she couldn't do nothing!—I wouldn't have liked her to try. There were some blokes coming along who I daresay were pals of his, they'd have made nothing of outing me; but just as I was expecting something quite different, there was a voice what it did me good to hear, and there was Cinders speaking to Mr. Walters quite different to what I'd done.

"Here stow this! What are you doing to my friend?"

Mr. Walters, to whom I daresay the voice was strange, looked round to see who the speaker was, which gave me a chance to keep myself from being choked.

"Cinders, he wants to sneak my money." I knew he would believe me, which there ain't many would have done, especially when there was a chance of sneaking it themselves.

"Oh, that's his little game, is it?"

Cinders is as big as Mr. Walters, and perhaps a trifle over. If they was up against each other I'd put my money on Cinders every time, at any game you liked. He got the money in his turn, it was passing round. Mr. Walters started to squeal.

"Here, who are you? interfering with what's no affair of yours! That's my wife's money you've got. You give it me back, robbing of a sick woman!"

He moved towards Cinders as if he'd out him in one; but Cinders never moved. He saw in half a twinkling what sort of man he was up against. He's very useful with his hands, is Cinders.

"Your wife's ill, is she; you'd better look out where you're coming or you'll be more ill than she is."

Three or four other men had come up. One of them said:

"Here, what's this shocking behaviour. We can't have no robbery with violence out in the open street. Walters, you ought to know better."

"You make him give me back that money what's in the brown paper bag," snivelled Mr. Walters, who always liked other people to do little jobs of that kind for him, "and I'll stand you Sunday drinks, Sam Edwards."

Cinders, looking at Edwards saw that he was quite another pair of shoes. It wasn't no use our stopping to get ourselves broken to pieces.

"Move," he said. "I'll take the girl."

He caught hold of Lizzie's hand and we moved, all the three of us—got away just in time to get a good start. Not that they were very keen to catch us. We hadn't gone scarcely any distance when we had the place to ourselves. When we got into the main street Cinders was for stopping a 'bus. Lizzie didn't like the idea at all.

"I can't go with you on no 'bus, at this time of night—you know I can't, Frank Jarvis. I've got to get back home."

"Oh, no, you haven't," I told her. "If Mr. Walters catches you he'll pretty nearly kill you."

"Not him! I know him better than that, and so do you. There won't be no killing of me, not where he's concerned. He may land me a swipe or two, but that's all. Besides, where do you suppose I'm going to if I don't go home?" Cinders answered.

"I'll tell you that in half a brace of shakes—your going home with me, that's where your going."

"With you? What next? Are you mad? Didn't know you'd got a home."

"That's where you're wrong—I have—a slap-up home. Had it two days, took it for my sister. You don't know my sister, do you, Curls?" I didn't; didn't know he'd got one till his speaking like that reminded me of his having spoken of her once or twice before. She's fourteen about the same age as Lizzie is, only she's not so big, and won't never be neither."

"Won't never be as big as I am?" Lizzie pulled up to see if he was making a guy of her. "Why ever not? They say I'm small for my age."

"It's her back." Cinders winked. "Getting worse instead of better, can't hardly do more than sit up now. So I took her home, over Wandsworth way. It's a flat. We'd got some furniture, and before long I'm going to have more. But it ain't that what troubles me, its having someone to look after Tab."

"Tab? is that your sister?"

"Tab is short for Tabitha, that's her name; her mother was a God-fearing woman, so she called her it." I didn't know what he meant so I said nothing. "I've been wondering who I could have to stop with her since I got her the home. Then this afternoon, Curls said something about you, so I thought I'd ask you. Will you?"

"D'you mean it?"

"What do you think I'd come all this way for if I didn't?"

I didn't know what you'd come for. How should I know what you'd come for, if it wasn't to see Frank?"

"So it was. I came to ask him to ask you. I didn't know how you'd take it from me; but I know Frank and he knows you, and that's all I ask. The idea is that you should stop a night or two, then we can see how it works, then we can talk. Tab's all alone, she's got the flat all to herself, I don't like it, and that's where the trouble is. It ain't good for her to be left in the flat all alone all day."

"I won't leave her alone, I can promise you that. Coming? You give me a chance."

“Then let’s hop on to this ’bus ; takes us close to where my home is ; we might have been very nearly there if you’d done as I wanted you to at first.”

She still hung fire.

“What about Frank ? What’s to become of him.”

“Frank’s all right, don’t you trouble yourself about him. Up you get !” He explained when we were on top. “I can give him a corner for to-night, then you and me might patch something up. I’ve got room for a lodger.”

The idea of me being a lodger tickled me almost till I thought I would bust. Lizzie had to dig me in the side with her elbow and ask me to behave. Cinders handed me over my brown paper parcel when we got to his home—a tidy long way it was from Islington.

“Looks as if you could pay me a few weeks in advance,” he said. That started me off again. The idea of me paying for lodgings a few weeks in advance ! That tore it ! Cinders opened his front door with a latch key—heard afterwards that was what he called it ; never seen one in my life before.

“That’s where it is,” he explained. “Either you’ve got to open the door yourself or leave it open, and it don’t always do to leave the door open, as you know ; though it’s not so bad here as it is in some parts. Here we are—Now, Lizzie, if you find Tab’s a bit off colour you cheer her up—Will her grace admit her servant ?”

A voice came back. “Who’ve you got with you,” it said.

He led us into a room—there were more rooms than one—a regular house ! I took my cap off. There was somebody in bed.

A Lucky Day 87

“This is Lizzie, what’s an old friend of a friend of mine—Lizzie, this is the Duchess of Bunk. A week or two ago she was the Queen of Blazes ; just at present queens is off and duchesses is on—Look here, your grace, the lady’s in want of some temporary accommodation ; could you make room for her on the floor, or something like that where she’d be comfortable ? You might talk things over with her—This here is Curls, otherwise Frank Jarvis. I’ll take him in the next room, there’s something I’ve got to say to him while you’re talking to Lizzie.”

It didn’t take long, the talking didn’t ; I don’t suppose it was more than half an hour before the front door was locked—you should have heard Cinders shoving the bolts. Everything was settled. They made Lizzie a very nice bed upon the floor. I was going to lie on a couch—a couch, mind you !—real ! That was in the sitting-room, with a bit of carpet in the middle of the floor. Cinders was in another bedroom what was on the other side, next to the kitchen. A regular palace the flat was. Cinders had to be up early ; he said he’d leave all the talking till the morning. Of course I was a bit excited, but wasn’t I tired ! The last thing I remembered was getting a tight hold of that brown paper bag, feeling that it really was going to be the beginning of my fortune. I had a sort of idea that I heard those two girls talking in the next room for hours and hours ; but it seems to me that girls always do talk more than fellows.

Mr. McCulloch.

I COULD not make it out at all. Twice in one week had I heard the noise without hitting on anything which, to my mind, in the least degree explained it. I had arrived at the cottage on the Tuesday. Harold had received orders the week before, and had left for France on the Friday afternoon. When he heard what I proposed to do he declared that I was mad ; that the idea of my going all alone to such a place as Kilgarnie at that season of the year was unthinkable.

“Then don't think,” I told him. “I'm sorry if you don't approve, but all the same I'm going. I'm simply longing for the solitude of the hills and the smell of the heather.”

“Smell of the heather be bothered ! Don't talk such nonsense !”

“I won't ; I'll only go—that's all ! Now, Harold, be good ; don't let us part with a difference of opinion. You're going to enjoy your aeroplanes, and dodging the shot and shell, and the excitement of it all, and I am going to enjoy my own society in the solitary fastnesses of Kilgarnie. Each to his or her own taste—that's mine.”

Of course he had to give way, because he couldn't help it—but he stuck to his opinion. Even as the train steamed out of Charing Cross station he put his head out of the carriage window, and said, in a tone of voice which was too audible to be nice :

“Mind you, I say you're mad—and don't you forget it!”

And when I arrived at my journey's end, and got out at the roadside station which serves Kilgarnie, I wasn't so sure that he mightn't be right. The train was late, as usual ; instead of arriving at three, it was past four ; there was a horrid mist and a chilsome breeze. The staff of the station stared when they saw me alight—they certainly thought I was mad. The only grain of comfort was the presence of Tammás Macfarlane with his cart—which was probably built of timber which came from the ark. He was not disposed to comfort me.

“You'd better let Janet give you the best bedroom for to-night, Mrs. Parry. There's no going to Kilgarnie to-night ; I'll take you over with the groceries in the morning—if the weather mends.”

“Tammás,” I told him sternly, “you will, I trust, bring over what you call the groceries in the morning—though I'm hoping that there's more than groceries—but I am going to Kilgarnie to-night. I told you to have a parcel ready packed which I could take on my carrier. I hope you have it with you.”

He had. It was a fair-sized package, and with my hold-all was about as much as the carrier of my motor-bike could manage. The remainder of my posses-

sions he was to bring in the morning. I started from the station amid what almost amounted to a chorus of entreaty to spend at least that night in Mrs. Macfarlane's best bedroom. I certainly felt that I was a trifle mad in persisting in my refusal—but I did. Eighteen miles it is from the station to the cottage. By the time I got there the rain was coming down in bucketsful. But when I once got indoors I didn't mind. I left the bike, which had come over the bad roads like a bird, in the passage, to be attended to next day—and I laughed. The place was empty, so that there was no one within miles to wonder if I was mad. I perhaps was mad—stark, staring!—but so long as I was the only person who knew it it didn't matter. Macfarlane had followed instructions; there was a fire laid in every room. There were eight rooms in the house; including the kitchen, four below, and including the bathroom, four above. With a view to getting as much dryness in the place as I could I put a match to each of the grates, and having changed my damp garments for some easy, go-as-you-please substitutes, I thought about food. There was some bacon and some eggs in Macfarlane's package; the kitchen fire having burned up—it was a good one to burn—I cooked myself a dish of them; induced the water to boil, prepared a proper meal, with which I did myself well. I don't mind owning that while I washed up I smoked a cigarette or two; after which I had a hot bath, went to bed and slept the sleep of the just.

The next day the bad weather had gone. Macfarlane appeared with my belongings, which filled his cart, and "groceries"—which included

meat and vegetables—to last a week ; it was only once a week that he favoured me with fresh supplies—and then orders had to reach him well in advance. I quite expected that occasions would come on which I should have to be my own carrier on the bike.

Kilgarnie isn't even a village, it's just a hole in the hills—the name of our postal district. I don't know how it came to have a name of its own, but it so happens that it has—" Kilgarnie, R.S.O. Ballalaig." Ballalaig is the name of the station and a village which has some three hundred inhabitants, spread over miles and miles, who think it a place of importance. There are two houses who share the honour of being next to mine. They are two farm-houses, one occupied by an old man and his wife and the farm-hands, the other by a younger couple, together with a generous array of sons and daughters, ranging from ten years upwards. As one of these is south of me, and the other nearly due north, there are practically twenty miles between them—so you can't call the district overcrowded.

That is part of its attraction for me—its solitude. I suppose I am an unsociable wretch, but the feeling that I have all that glorious country practically all to myself delights the very cockles of my heart. It may sound absurd—and perhaps something worse—but the country is not the country to me if I'm not the only person in it.

I own that I should have liked someone in the shape of a handmaid ; I am not keen on doing what the Americans call my own "chores" ; but there are difficulties in the way of getting one. The

Frasers—the family to the south—were pious folk, in the Scotch sense; they disapproved of both Harold and me, no matter why. They had what they supposed to be sufficient reason of their own. My own opinion is that they disapproved of every family but their own. Anyhow, they wouldn't let any of their offspring remain under the roof of such an ungodly house as ours. I had hopes of obtaining a handmaid from a distance, by paying perhaps twice the wage she would have had in England. But that was a question of time—and of trust in Macfarlane. He had, it seemed, some female member of his own family in his eye, who was by way of being a paragon, even for a Macfarlane.

But for her I should have to wait at any rate a week. As it is written, I got there on the Tuesday, and on the Thursday I first heard that mysterious noise. I had been sketching all day long—having come to Kilgarnie to get the material I needed to enable me to paint a picture which would make me famous. I had tramped miles across the hills to reach the actual point where I knew I should get what I wanted; by the time I got to bed I was tired, had scarcely laid my head upon the pillows before I was asleep. It is my habit, when I am tired, to remain asleep until the time for getting up—and sometimes after. In a general way it takes something to wake me, so knowing my own peculiarities, when I found myself lying wide awake I wondered what had happened. It was pitch dark; there was a breeze outside, probably from the north-east, because the window rattled. Presently I became aware that there was an unusual sound. I lay and listened. As a rule the only sounds to

be heard at Kilgarnie, day or night, were those caused by wind and rain. The noise to which I was listening had nothing to do with either. Had I not felt it to be impossible, I should have said that I was listening to the curious sound which an aeroplane makes when it passes through the air; I did feel that it was impossible that it could be anything of that sort.

What could an aeroplane be doing in the neighbourhood of Kilgarnie, in the pitch blackness of a winter's night? We were within six miles of the sea. Where could it be coming from?—where going to? The nearest land across the sea, as the crow flies, was the Norwegian coast. It was ridiculous to suppose that any airman in his senses would attempt to fly from that—especially at that season of the year. There was a great deal of talk about fears of a German invasion. I had no doubt that Germany would be only too glad to gain a footing on British soil, and would take advantage of any means which would enable her to do so; but it seemed scarcely credible that the most daring and desperate Germans would venture to try to gain an entrance in aeroplanes by way of the north of Scotland. We had heard a great deal about the wonderful Zeppelins; personally, I was a little sceptical about their boasted prowess. Harold was an enthusiastic aviator. He talked about air-ships all day and every day. I had been up with him over and over again, and acted as an impromptu pilot more than once—Harold himself says that with a little experience I could fly with anyone. So I spoke with some practical knowledge when I said that I didn't believe that the much

94 Orders to Marry

advertised Zeppelin was all that the Germans boasted it was.

The noise I was listening to was not caused by a Zeppelin, that was sure. A Zeppelin has a musical note which is all its own. A trained ear can tell one aeroplane from another by the sound alone. There was something about the noise to which I was listening which I did not recognise as proceeding from any type of flying machine I was acquainted with, but I had to admit that it might have been made by some aeroplane which was strange to me.

When I first heard it it might have been at a distance of possibly a couple of miles. There was a strongish wind; that noise seemed to be coming with it; which meant that it was coming from the direction of the sea. Whatever caused it was moving quickly, on a line which would take it past the house without bringing it near. I had a wild notion that it might be caused by Harold, who was trying some mad experiment on the new monoplane of which I had heard so much. Something which immediately happened filled me with a startled suspicion, mad though the notion was, that it might after all be he.

The noise ceased!

It came appreciably nearer; just as I was expecting it to turn towards the house and introduce to me a visitor, it stopped. It was followed by a silence which, as someone has said, might have been cut with a knife. One moment the world seemed full of that curious sound, the next it had entirely vanished. The contrast was almost disconcerting. What had occurred? What had become of the cause of it?

If it had been an aeroplane, then one of two or three things had certainly happened; either, having reached its journey's end it had voluntarily stopped—almost within hailing distance of the house; or something had happened which spelt tragedy; or the sound had not been made by an aeroplane, but by something the music of whose flight had an astonishing family resemblance to that produced by a flying machine as it sped through the air.

The three alternatives suggested to me a state of things which I found it pretty difficult to swallow. Probably the nocturnal airman—if it was an airman—was Harold. He had talked about my being mad, but I knew he was much worse than I; compared to him I was sane. He was absolutely a lunatic—there was nothing he wouldn't try to do if the mood seized him. He had been called to France—so far as I knew, to make experiments with an aeroplane in which certain alterations had been made of his suggesting. It was a long way from where I believed he was to Kilgarnie, and nothing was to be gained by his trying to fly from one point to the other. All the same, it was just the mad sort of thing he would try to do. If he had tried, and succeeded, and that was his aeroplane I had heard, then I might expect a personal visit from him shortly. He must have come down close to where I was. That fact suggested that it was Harold. Knowing the country as he did, he ought to be with me in comparatively no time. So I lay quiet and waited; it wasn't any good doing anything else. What was the use, for instance, of my sallying forth to meet

him in that light, in that country? One might as well start looking for a needle in a hay stack.

But as time passed and there was no Harold—no anyone—I began to wonder. The intense silence began to get upon my nerves. Was Harold playing a trick on me? I was sorry to be compelled to admit that that was a thing he was quite capable of doing, only he might not have called it a trick. He would be quite entitled to tell me that he did not wish to create a disturbance in the middle of the night. I discovered that it was rather more than two hours after midnight, and knowing my capacity therefore for sleep, he had no notion that I had been woke, or wished to be; that he proposed to wait until the clock had reached some Christian hour to make his presence known; which mode of reasoning on his part would actually involve my waiting, in horrid uncertainty, until goodness alone knew when.

The next thing I knew was that it was broad day-light, and the sun was shining into my room. I must have fallen fast asleep when I had supposed myself to be wide awake and listening with might and main. I sat up with a start. It was nearly nine; there were no signs of anyone having paid me a call. The incidents of the night came back with a rush. If the disturber of nocturnal peace had been Harold, surely he would have been with me before, unless something was wrong. I made my breakfast off a cup of coffee, a boiled egg, and a round of toast half expecting each second to receive some intimation that Harold, or someone else, was in the immediate neighbourhood.

When I had finished breakfast and there was

still no sign of anyone's propinquity, I began to be conscious of a curious sense of uneasiness. If Harold was not responsible for the noise I had heard, who was? The more I reflected the more convinced I was that it had been caused by an aeroplane. Coming down in the train the other day I had read a paragraph in a Scotch paper about some mysterious sounds which had been heard lately in the northern Highlands. Various people—no name was given—had spoken lately of having heard sounds of which no reasonable explanation seemed forthcoming. Had I heard one of them? I did not like that idea at all. The air was full, just then, of stories about German spies, their underhand methods, the continual menace they were. Had the conditions been normal I should have said that the idea that the noise I had heard was caused by a German airman was too absurd for serious contemplation. But, really, so many strange things had happened recently, and the Germans had shown themselves so alert in taking full advantage of what seemed to us impossible positions, that I heartily wished that I could prove that the noise which broke the stillness had been caused by Harold.

The problem requiring solution seemed to be so unpleasantly persistent. If Harold had not been the disturber of the peace, who had? If things were as they quite possibly might be, I was not sure that I appreciated the idea—after all! of being so remote from human assistance.

The weather was only too seasonable. In spite of wind and mist I went out for a tramp over the hills. I wanted to learn if there were any traces of

the nocturnal visitant. My notion was that he had been within a mile of the cottage, somewhere to the south, when the sound of his presence ceased. I tramped and tramped, but not a trace of anything unusual could I find. If the aeroplane had been there, it was quite possible that it had returned whence it came, or gone somewhere else, while I was asleep when I thought I wasn't.

So far as I knew, nothing happened that night. I had a hazy intention of keeping awake, and it was past one when I turned into bed; but as unfortunately, I fell asleep on the chair, and was only roused by nearly slipping off, there was not much gained by doing that. Sleep overtook me again when I was between the sheets; it was close on seven when I came back to a consciousness of life. Obviously nothing had disturbed me in the night, possibly merely because I had slept too soundly.

That was Saturday. The weather was so unpropitious that it kept even me indoors. I spent a delicious day pottering with some of my sketches; turned in early; fell asleep, to find myself later wide awake and listening with all my ears. That sound had come again. That time I had no doubt as to what might be causing it. If that was not an aeroplane, comparatively speaking quite close to the house, then I had never heard one before. As a matter of fact I had heard flying machines of all sorts and kinds, hundreds and hundreds of times.

I got out of bed and put my head out of the window. There was a fairish easterly breeze, the air was tolerably clear, there seemed to be no mist; from an airman's point of view the conditions were not so bad. What struck me at once was that, as

on Thursday, what wind there was came from the sea; did that mean that that aeronaut only mounted in the air when it did? If that were the case, it suggested that he had come over the sea. As I recalled how far it was to the other side, and what traversing the North Sea in winter meant, it pointed to his being an adventurous soul indeed if, in his frail machine, he had ventured over that long, dreary, dreadful waste of tempestuous waters.

And twice in one week! because the presumption was that he had come by the same route on Thursday.

The programme—so far as I knew—was Thursday's over again. The sound suddenly ceased; presumably the flying man came down, relatively close to my cottage. This time two things seemed obvious. The aviator knew the country, or he would not have come twice to the same spot; but if he knew—which he very likely did—of the existence of my house, he was probably not aware that it had an occupant. The visitor was in all probability not Harold. I could conceive of no reason why he should come again after behaving in such a mysterious manner when he came before. If the visitor was a stranger, knowing the country, though he might be aware of the existence of my cottage, he could hardly know that it had lately got a tenant. If he did, odd though his methods were, there could be nothing wrong, or he would scarcely risk himself, and his aeroplane, in what had all at once become such a dangerous neighbourhood.

The position puzzled me. Reference to a watch showed that, as on Thursday, it was after two.

100 Orders to Marry

Was that his regular hour for paying a call in the neighbourhood? On whom was he calling? Since, so far as I was aware—and I thought I knew—I was the only person within miles. I listened with all my might for something to determine the whereabouts of his descent; without result. He had certainly come down somewhere to the south; the window of my room had a southern aspect. I was pretty nearly sure that the sound, just before it ceased, had come from the direction in which I was looking. In broad daylight I might have seen the actual descent. All the same I knew how misleading sound may be; you cannot always judge of its direction by hearing alone. Although I was almost sure that I could have marched straight to the spot where the visitor was at that moment, so conscious was I that my sense of hearing might have led me astray that I refrained from acting on a wild impulse to don my 'rags' and sally forth on a voyage of investigation.

That night I did not go to sleep again. Not another sound broke the stillness. Somehow there seemed to be something—under the circumstances—so ominous in the profound silence that by the time daylight came I had worked myself into a state of jumps. The morning broke well, promising a fine day. I had finished breakfast and washed up by half-past eight. I had been brought into a condition of unusual tension by the momentary expectation of a caller. I kept listening all the while, for someone who did not come. Who would come—if anyone—was a problem which kept me on tenterhooks of doubt. Before half-past eight I went out to learn if I could find an answer.

But I could not. Before I started I assured myself that I knew just where to look, that I could locate the whereabouts of that aeroplane within a little ; at any rate find traces of its descent. I was wrong ; nothing turned out as I had anticipated. Not a trace could I light on which pointed to the recent presence of anything unusual, certainly nothing in the shape of an aeroplane.

You cannot bring down a flying machine on soft ground without its making some kind of a mark. In my own mind I had settled matters before I set off to look for one. I said to myself, ' My flying friend came down between this point and that.' When I reached the first I stopped and looked about me ; there was nothing to be seen. The ground rose a little from where I stood ; I walked to the top. The ground fell ; from where I was I could see for a mile down the slope ; there was nothing to impede the vision, not a tree, scarcely a bush. In that direction, so far as the eye could travel, there was practically nothing but coarse tussocky grass. My sight is excellent ; the day was clear, by then the sun was shining brightly. Had any sort of aeroplane alighted recently on the open ground ahead, my trained eyes could scarcely have failed to detect the mark it must have made.

Anyhow, where was the thing itself ? I was prepared to swear that it had come down and not gone up again, unless it belonged to a type of machine of which the world had hitherto known nothing. It was not likely that it did that since it had made such an old-fashioned kind of noise when aloft. If it could rise and start in silence, then it could have flown in silence, which it had emphatically not done.

The explanation, I told myself, clearly was that I had allowed my ears to be deceived. The machine had not come down where I supposed. It was quite easy for one's judgment on such a subject to go astray. It was for me to learn exactly where the machine had gone to.

It took some learning. I walked for miles. knowing the country as I did, I visited every point of vantage, and sought in vain for something which would suggest the recent visit of an aeroplane. I tramped the hills for nearly five hours before I was forced to the conclusion that there was nothing to be found of what I sought: then I returned, disgusted, to a cold meal.

I was not only disgusted, I was worried; I was puzzled, and I hate to be that. There was a mystery somewhere which I couldn't fathom. I might have been the victim of a delusion; have heard that aeroplane in imagination only. In that event the time had come to lock me up in an asylum, because I was prepared solemnly to swear that I hadn't. I had heard that flying machine because there had been one close at hand for me to hear. In spite of appearances—and my futile search—I believed it to be close at hand still. It was always possible that it had gone back whence it came without my knowledge; but I was prepared to bet a trifle it hadn't. I had not closed my eyes since two o'clock that morning. The flying machine I had heard stop, and, I had no doubt, descend, could not have been re-started and flown back without publishing the fact to the world, especially to ears which were so keenly on the alert as mine had been.

I felt sure that the fault was mine; in my morning's wanderings I had done some stupid thing, overlooked some possible hiding place, omitted to do something that I ought to have done. I racked my brains to think where the mistake was; passed a mental map of the country in review, in my efforts to think what the position was, without avail. After my unappetising meal I went out of doors to have a look round, starting at the back of the house. Since I had decided that the noise had come from the front, to start at the back was futile; yet scarcely had I put my nose outside than I lighted on something which changed the whole aspect of affairs. The cottage stands on the side of a hill, the ground rises behind, we had to have some cover in the winter or we should be blown away. At the top of this rising ground was something which caught my eye, something which seemed to have come over the brow of the hill, come quite recently. If it had been there when I was out before I must have noticed it. I hurried up to see what it was. To my surprise it proved to be a sheet of typewriting paper, on which was what looked like a plan. I regarded it in amazement. How had it got there? It was soaking wet. The only explanation of which I could think was that it had been caught by a vagrant breeze and borne to where it was; but how, in the first place, it ever came to be in the neighbourhood of my house I was unable even to guess.

I looked more closely at what was on it. It was a plan, a rough plan of the surrounding country, sketched by a German; such words and abbreviations as had been used were all in German.

104 Orders to Marry

The discovery seemed to sharpen all my faculties, bringing to the front all the doubts which had been lurking in the back of my head. There had been something in the paragraph which I saw in the paper about the mysterious noises which had been heard by various people in lonely districts of the northern Highlands.

On the sheet of paper I held was drawn a sort of map of the immediate district which, when I came to study it I began to understand fairly well, though there were points about it which were entirely beyond my comprehension. Apparently the district dealt with began at the sea. I recognised the rough road, scarcely more than a cart track, which went from the coast to Ballalaig. Since it was never used nowadays, tradition had it that it was originally meant for smugglers. What I did not understand was what the cartographer meant by decorating his plan with a supposititious road which passed from the old one to a point among the hills. I had known the district well for more than five years; had been there so recently as the preceding spring, for three months, April, May and June; nothing even in the shape of a cart track had existed then. Why had his imagination induced him to invent one to place it on his plan?

The more I looked the more I wondered until all at once I was nearly startled into jumping. That imaginary road recalled something to my mind, what Harold and I called "The Gap." At some period so remote that, so far as we were able to ascertain, no aboriginal knew anything about it, some person or persons had dug a hole in the ground. At its widest part it was perhaps twenty

feet across ; at its deepest it was perhaps a hundred feet. Curiosity moved us on one occasion to scramble down and see. It was not easy scrambling, or very pleasant. Here and there it was so precipitous, that had it not been for thistles, bracken and brambles, it would have been almost impossible to get down at all. There was nothing to reward us when we were down, at least I didn't think so, because I tore my skirt almost from its gathers, and was in a dreadful state generally, when I reached the top again.

Harold, however, seemed content. At the bottom the ground seemed to have fallen away, or been dug away, all round. The result was that there was a sort of cavern which went for a dozen feet under the ground. He was of opinion that investigation might show that it went farther ; that a passage of some sort might be found which led to something curious in the way of caves, which had once been used, but whose very existence, owing to disuse, had been forgotten. Had he had any sympathy from me I believe he would have spent money on what he called 'excavation.' But he had not ; we had no money to spend ; what were we to gain, even if the excavation were successful ? What good could a cavern at the bottom of a horrid pit be to us.

It was nearly five years since I had descended, for the first time and the last. Harold, I fancy had gone down several times. But once he slipped and did himself and his clothes no end of damage, and that forced him to the conclusion that, for him, nothing worth getting was to be got out of "The Gap."

It was no end of time since I had been even near it; I had even forgotten its existence. The top was in a sort of little hollow amid a wilderness of gorse. You would not notice it unless you were on a special quest. Among other surprising things I think what surprised me most was to find that it made such a special feature on that plan. Close study gave one the impression that it was the whole cause of the thing being drawn; the intention being to show the stranger the way to get to it. What he was to gain by going there there was nothing to show. Personally I should have said nothing, but the more one considered the more one wondered. "The Gap" was within half a mile of the house; I started then and there to have a look at it, threading my way in the gathering dusk through the thickly growing gorse. Remembering what the place had been like when I saw it last, taking it for granted that no marked alteration had changed it since, I moved so carelessly that presently I found myself on the edge of what seemed to be a yawning precipice, had it not been for the mercy of Providence I should have gone over it into the depths below.

I could scarcely have had a narrower shave; one foot was already over the edge when I woke to my peril and dragged it back. Instead of "The Gap" being as it used to be, thirty feet across, it had become more like three hundred. Workmen had been there, directed by whom I had no notion, and had changed its appearance entirely. In stepping back I caught hold of what proved to be the top of a hand-rail. Since it was associated with no steps, its purpose there seemed to be to denote the best means of descent. Clinging to it as best I could,

down I began to go, to find, when I got down half-way, that the rail, as if suddenly grown rickety, began to shake and tremble, and presently fell away. Fortunately I did not actually fall, I slithered, which was about as undignified a means of descent as I could have chosen. I picked myself up when I reached the bottom, and found myself still sound in wind and limb.

Could I be in some sort of trap? I asked myself as I looked around. I shouldn't wonder if, when the innocent stranger had got to a certain point, that the rail was not meant to give way, and that whoever had trusted to it was bound to come to grief, perhaps bringing half a dozen people on the top of each other. Had I paused to reflect I might have postponed further investigation until the morning; but, in the first place, although things looked queer, I did not guess that they were so bad as they proved to be; and in the second, I could not have rested easy if I had waited till the morning, preferring to take instant advantage of the little light that remained.

The bottom of "The Gap" was altered beyond all recognition. It used to consist of a few feet of uneven ground, covered with a thick growth about which it was difficult to pick one's way. Now there was a wide expanse of perfectly level ground, the top of which seemed to consist of thick, solid cement, covered with carefully laid, hardened gravel. The broken sides which suggested caverns in embryo had vanished; the ground below had been cut away for a distance of many feet, so that the top of the gap served as a roof to what seemed some of the largest hangars I had ever seen. They

108 Orders to Marry

were only closed at the top ;—there was nothing to prevent my staring at four enormous Zeppelins to which they gave shelter. Further inspection showed that three of these seemed quite ready for business, and the fourth nearly so.

I was so dumbfounded by the discovery that it was only after a good deal of staring that it occurred to me to wonder how they could ever have got there. Even in Kilgarnie someone must have seen them passing through the air. Where could they have come from ? Zeppelins were not made in the neighbourhood. If by some marvellous chance they had remained unseen, the noise they made must have attracted sufficient attention to set inquiries afoot.

If a base for a fleet of Zeppelins could be established in the north of Scotland without anyone being one penny the wiser, then the idea that it was possible to safeguard the country against German invasion might be dismissed for ever.

The thing suggested not only lavish expenditure—I had only to glance around and realise, even superficially, the transformation which had taken place to know that money must have been spent like water—but an army of workmen must have been employed. I could not believe that the transformation had taken place when we had been there in the spring. Harold, at least, who had been fond of hunting in the neighbourhood of "The Gap" must have some inkling of what was taking place. We had left in June ; probably at that time the authorities in Berlin were already aware of what might be coming. There had been time, if they had started at once, to work those wonders,—if they had put

themselves into the job with that thoroughness which seems to mark all their proceedings. It was possible that that part of the work might have been done without anyone having the faintest notion that something unusual was taking place. Remember that no one had ever come that way, and the nearest house was ten miles off. How those Zeppelins had been smuggled there was another matter altogether,—and one altogether beyond my comprehension.

“Good evening, madam—this is an unexpected pleasure.”

I ought, under the circumstances, to have been prepared for the possibility of someone speaking; yet, so far was that from being the case, that the sound of a voice gave me such a shock that it almost knocked me over. It came from behind. I twirled myself round to find myself confronted by a man who was regarding me with what seemed to be a smile of amusement. He was a tall, well set up, soldierly looking person, of about thirty years of age. For some moments we eyed each other. Then, as he removed both his cap and cigarette, his smile grew more pronounced.

“Mrs. Parry, this is an unexpected pleasure. I did not anticipate that our next meeting would be in this remote corner of the world.”

It was with a curious sense of shock that I recognised who he was.

“Herr von Toll,” I cried, “what are you doing here?”

“Is that not rather a question which I should put to you? Here I am on my native heath.”

“Your native heath? How do you make that

110 Orders to Marry

out? I have yet to learn that you are a Scotchman."

"The Lord forbid that I should be anything so stupid! Here I am on German ground."

"German ground? Again I should like to know how you make that out?"

"On my part—again—quite easily. This is German by right of purchase. It is you who are the trespasser. I suppose even you will admit that the ground one has bought and paid for is one's own. Do not imagine, however, though you are an uninvited guest, that you are unwelcome. Permit me to offer you German hospitality in Scotland—I think I can even give you an excellent cup of tea."

The man's presence and manner—the whole thing—filled me with a sense of marked discomfort. Herr Walther von Toll was an individual whom I had first met some two years before at Aldershot, at the flying school. He was there, as far as one could learn, to pick up wrinkles which he seemed very quick at doing. He made the acquaintance of lots of Englishmen, who all of them seemed to think that in the art of finding out all that there was to find out they had never met anyone quicker. I had seen a good deal of him during the period which had intervened, and while I had grown to like the man, I had an uneasy feeling that he was in a constant state of being amused at something I could never understand.

As he stood at the foot of the transformed "Gap" with a smile on his lips and in his eyes I knew so well, I knew what that something was. He had taken advantage of British hospitality to suck British brains,—a state of affairs which struck him as being extremely comical. That it was comical in

a sense of which he had no reason to be proud did not seem to strike him at all.

Some insight into the meaning of the situation began to come to me with uncomfortable clearness ; —“The Gap” had been transmogrified into a German base ; as a harbour for her Zeppelins ; as a vantage point from which she could set forth at any hour of the day or night to carry havoc and destruction through the land ;—and not a soul had the dimmest notion of the awful danger which was lurking in their very midst. The great Scottish towns,—Aberdeen, Dundee,—even Glasgow and Edinburgh—from the Zeppelin point of view—were within easy distance. There was nothing to prevent those four monsters starting after nightfall, and returning in the morning, having spent the hours of darkness in working destruction in all parts of unsuspecting and defenceless Scotland.

And this von Toll, this man before me, was to be the amused prime mover in the sanguinary game.

I saw so much clearly,—that that was what the situation meant ; with equal clearness I also saw something else. So far as I could judge, the whole wicked scheme was ready for action. In a manner of speaking the mine was ready, the train was laid, this smiling gentleman had only to touch a button to spread death and destruction among countless unsuspecting helpless people. The entire responsibility of preventing his touching the button rested on my shoulders. It looked as if, humanly speaking, I was the only person living who could balk this gentleman of his prey and prevent his inflicting on my native land a wound from whose memory, at any rate, it never would recover.

And the well-meaning, kind-hearted, hospitable gentleman was offering me a cup of tea, which he assured me I should find an excellent cup of tea.

No doubt—I did not question its excellence—how should I feel afterwards when those Zeppelins had done their work?

I accepted his offer: I drank his cup of tea; while I drank I chatted, I could think of no other way of gaining time. I was in a position in which time was the first importance. I was conscious that it might also be of value to him—to me it was all in all. I had to hit upon some means of circumventing him;—try my best I could hit on none.

I learned that the ground was cut away to serve other purposes besides being a shelter for Zeppelins. There was abundant room to garage a fleet of motor cars, besides leaving abundant space for the construction of quarters for human occupation. Herr von Toll took me to a room than which a man of simple tastes could have desired none more comfortable.

“You are all right in here,” I remarked as von Toll closed the door behind us. “You Germans are both practical and thorough.”

“It is very good of you to say so, madam, we have to be; since we aim at achieving a sort of success which would be impossible otherwise.” He called my attention to a point which I fancy he would not have done had he not perceived that I had already discovered it for myself. “Out of the world as we are, you will notice that we are not beyond the resources of modern science; a Morse sounder; a wireless transmitter, of a type with which you will not be

familiar; a telephone—I observe that neither has escaped your notice.”

“You like your tea strong?” He was filling a teapot with water from a small kettle which was already boiling. “Try how that is.” He held out a cup full of tea. “You understand telegraphy?”

As I held the cup up to my lips he moved towards the sounder. I interposed.

“Would you mind, Mr. von Toll, leaving this instrument alone?”

“Mrs. Parry!—What do you mean? What do you think is going to happen? I was merely going to show you how easy it is to send or receive a telegraphic message.”

“Thank you; I have already some idea of that. I would rather you postponed your practical demonstration.”

He laughed, as if he found my attitude amusing.

“As you please—tea all right?—To what do I owe the pleasure of your presence here?”

“Where is the aeroplane which brought you here last night?”

“Aeroplane?—Oh; so you heard? I did not know that I had a listener.”

“I did not know that the old hole in the ground, with which I had been acquainted for years, had been turned into such a place as this. We have heard a good deal lately of a German invasion; it seems that one has taken place without our even guessing it.”

He observed me steadily, as if he were drawing his own conclusions from something which he saw on my face. Then he glanced at his watch.

“Mrs. Parry, I am sorry to seem discourteous to a lady—especially to one whom I esteem as highly as I do you. By the way, in that book at your back there are some excellent photographs of the neighbourhood. Would you like to look at them? I have a clear recollection that you are yourself an expert photographer.”

At any rate a camera was a sort of passion. I turned to glance at what he referred to; the moment I did so he was playing tricks with the sounder. I knew that he was sending someone a message which I would have given my life to prevent him sending. Without a second's hesitation I threw the contents of the cup which I was still holding straight in his face. He started back from that sounder with a cry of rage and pain; followed by exclamations in German which were certainly not becoming a gentleman. His hand went to the hip pocket in his trousers;—a revolver was pointed at my head.

“You would play tricks with me like that!” he exclaimed. “You English cat! Come away from there! Go down on your knees, or I will shoot you like a cat! Her sex cannot excuse a woman's bad behaviour. Down on your knees, I say!—You would!”

I did! The idea of my going down on my knees to him! With that revolver still at an unfriendly angle, I had ducked and started forward. Crack! Crack! Twice the trigger was pulled. I heard the shots whizz through the air. Before it could be fired a third time I had caught him by the wrist; we fought for the weapon. The language he used was still unbecoming a

gentleman; he did not find it so easy to shake me off as he possibly expected, though I willingly admit that as regards strength and adroitness I found myself nothing like his match. The strain upon my wrist was becoming more than I could bear; my grip on the weapon was loosening. Each moment I was expecting to be again at his mercy when the door at my back was opened and someone came in. The sound of a well-known voice told me who that someone was.

"Meg! What on earth!" The new-comer left his sentence unfinished, seeming to find an answer to his own question. "Von Toll—you! How did you get here, and what does all this mean?"

"Look out!" I gasped. "Harold, he'll shoot! I can't keep hold any longer!"

Indeed, at that very moment, not only was the weapon torn from my yielding fingers, but Herr von Toll struck me full in the face with his clenched fist and sent me staggering backwards. Apparently the sight of the treatment to which I was subjected did not please Harold.

"You cowardly hound!" Then instantly adding, "Would you!" sprang at the weapon which, in his turn, was aimed at him.

There was no doubt about the intentions which actuated Herr von Toll, but this was a case in which he had met his match. Not only was he taken by surprise, but possibly the struggle he had had with me had weakened his capacity for resistance. In a very few seconds the revolver was transferred to Harold. Herr van Toll made a dash to regain its possession; in the consequent struggle the weapon exploded; the German fell to the ground;

116 Orders to Marry

and lay where he had fallen. Harold gazed at the recumbent figure as at some awful spectre.

"I believe I have shot him!"

"It looks as if someone had." My tone was drier than Harold's. "I believe it would be more correct to say that he has shot himself. I don't think, anyhow, that's a point of much consequence, since he did his very best to shoot me."

Harold looked as if he were shocked almost to speechlessness; then his voice came with a rush.

"Meg!—what do you mean? What does it all mean? What was von Toll doing here? What is this place? Isn't it what we used to call 'The Gap'?" Harold was interrupted by the curious tinkling noise which one Morse operator makes when he asks another if he is prepared to receive his message. Harold, who among his other acquirements is both practically and theoretically a skilled telegraphist, recognised the sound in an instant. "Hullo! what's that? Someone calling?"

He strode to the sounder and made an answering call. A message began to come over the wire which he made no attempt to set down in writing, but took by ear as it came, sending answers as the occasion required; at least so I presumed, because I understood nothing at all. The message ceased. There was a look on Harold's face which suggested that the world had suddenly been shaken to its foundations.

"Meg," he dropped his voice as if he were afraid of being overheard—"there's some devilry afoot. That message was in German, God knows from whom, as the sender evidently supposed himself

to be communicating with von Toll in person I thought it better not to ask. But apparently, whoever it came from, was not very far away."

"What makes you think that?"

"How long ago is it since you came? Did von Toll telegraph?"

"He started sending a message, but my throwing my cup of tea in his face induced him to stop."

"You threw a cup of tea in his face? Meg! He seems to have sent some code signal, but only in part. The person to whom he was telegraphing appears to be waiting for the continuation of his message, and to be worried by its non-arrival. He wires that the contingent as arranged started precisely at the time agreed, and should be here by now. Is anything wrong? whoever was telegraphing asked. I immediately answered, nothing. If that were so, the message continued, would I immediately advise Die Gnadige Frau by wireless. Die Gnadige Frau is, I presume, some sort of craft. I promised it should be done, though I had not the vaguest notion what it was he intended I should do. As everything there was ready, the message went on, and the weather conditions were excellent, it was of the first importance that everything should be done as arranged. So far as I knew, was there likely to be any sort of hitch? I simply wired back there would be no hitch. In that case, the message continued, I was to keep the person telegraphing posted in the progress of events, and advise him instantly the start was made. At this point the person handling the wire switched on to something I did not understand. How long, he

118 Orders to Marry

asked, did I think it would take to get the Prince Eitel ready? What do you think he meant by the Prince Eitel?"

A brilliant idea occurred to me.

"Harold, there are four Zeppelins outside; three of them look to me as if they were in perfect flying order; about the fourth there seems to be something which is not quite as it should be, perhaps that's the Prince Eitel! Do these gentlemen who are coming propose to do the little which is still required to make it ready for immediate flight?"

"For immediate flight? There can't be much which needs to be done; the person wiring talked about the Prince Eitel being got ready in half-an-hour; but four Zeppelins! Where are the things?"

"Come and I'll show you; that is if we can get light enough; as it is too dark to see anything. What's that by the door? Is it an electric switch?"

"It is a neat German invention; these fellows are thorough going, they take advantage of all the latest modern improvements; fancy finding that here. Let me try my hand, it wants understanding. You see, you set this pointer thus; if the thing is in order, with a single switch you can control fifty—or five hundred—different lights. The thing is in order, you see! we have a regular illumination. Where do they get the electricity from? Where are the Zeppelins? If only I get the chance I'll put them all four among the killed and injured; or at any rate in such a condition that they will not be able to get going until official attention has been called to their presence here?" Harold had opened the door; we both of us stepped out into the hitherto darkened "Gap"

which now was a blaze of light. As he did so his manner changed; he held up his hand as if to request silence. "Listen! Meg! what's that? It sounds like motor cars coming along at top speed."

"It is a motor car, now I understand the road on the plan."

"What road? what plan?"

"I'll tell you later. Harold, those motor cars are bringing the 'contingent' of which the person who was telegraphing to you wired. If you're not quick they'll catch you here. Where's the aeroplane on which you came? I suppose you did come on an aeroplane?"

"I did; the new model, I've been giving it a trial flight; I've come right across from Europe without one single descent, established a record; proved it to be the finest thing of its kind which was ever made."

"Then where is it? Those motor cars are coming closer and closer. If you're not off before they come, the next trial flight will be made by someone who won't be you. Harold! tell me! where is your aeroplane?"

"Just outside, at the entrance to this. I saw this place ever so far off, couldn't make out what it was, so came down to see."

"Hurry, Harold, hurry! My dear boy, don't talk, do! Tell them at the nearest police station—barracks—anything! of what's happening here. Warn them to be on the look out, to send help, to be prepared. If those Zeppelins have a clear field, and get a good start, before anyone is even aware of their existence, goodness only knows what

120 Orders to Marry

mischief they may do. Come, Harold, I'll lend you a hand."

"No hand needed, mine's a self starter; what's more, I'll give you a lift; I can easily carry two." Side by side we ran down the broad passage which ran out of the gap into the open; a passage broad enough to permit of the unimpeded manipulation of even such a monster as a Zeppelin. Suddenly Harold broke into exclamation. "Hullo Meg! there is another aeroplane. See! in that hangar."

"I take it that that's the one which brought von Toll. I tell you what, I'll borrow her, and try a flight on my own. You go to the east, I'll go west, we'll carry warning broadcast."

"Can you start her single handed? Are you enough of an aeronaut?"

"I'll be off as soon as you are, so look out for yourself! I don't propose to allow myself to be caught if you do. I'll show you if I can start her single handed!"

I did. The machine was a monoplane, fitted with what I presume were German notions and a German engine. Although I do not pretend to be such an expert as Harold, I have taken every certificate which denotes proficiency in aviation which I believe a lady can take. I never found a flying machine easier to handle than that was. The hangar—if it could be called a hangar—was so spacious that it offered no obstacle to an ascent. I was aloft in so short a space of time that I surprised even myself. Quick as I was, Harold was even quicker; there was his machine in front of me as I left terra firma behind. He waved his

hand to me as he saw me mounting upwards ; quick as he had been he was only just in time.

There was the road which had been portrayed on the plan, stretching as far as one could see. Not a bad road either. There, immediately beneath us, in the gathering dusk, were four huge motor cars, of the char-a-banc type, carrying I daresay between twenty and thirty passengers each. At the sight of Harold—and perhaps of me—they stopped. Each car seemed to be full of passengers ; as they turned out at apparently someone's word of command they presented the appearance of a little army. Not only did each passenger carry a gun of his own, but there was a gun of some special design on board each car ; some sort of machine gun I took it to be. Deeming us, I suppose, sufficiently low to be still within range, they took shots at both Harold and me. Something struck my propeller which I took to be a bullet ; otherwise nothing happened. When, however, two of the guns fitted on the cars themselves were fired at me, it was only by what seemed to be a fortunate fluke that I escaped annihilation. My impression is that I owed my salvation to the increasing darkness ; I was out of sight before those gentlemen could get my range. In comparatively no time I descended at, I wish to give no names, so I will merely say a little Highland town, which was within easy distance of Kilgarnie. It is not a very important town, but it has a post office, a police station, and at that period there were recruits there in training. News of the danger which threatened at "The Gap" were flashed to the authorities at all points of the compass. With really surprising

122 Orders to Marry

rapidity official persons of all sorts and kinds put in an appearance at that secret centre of mischief among the Scottish hills.

None the less, rapid in their movements though the authorities undoubtedly were, there was ample time for those Zeppelins to sally forth and carry death and destruction through the land. Indeed, I had been momentarily expecting to hear of their misdoings. It was the small hours of the morning when, with the aid of Mr. von Toll's aeroplane, I was back again at "The Gap." It was glorious moonlight. I found motor cars, more or less official, soldiers, territorial and otherwise; even police; but the German motor cars had vanished, and in "The Gap" itself the electric light had vanished, and all was silent as the grave. A young officer greeted me as I hurriedly alighted from von Toll's machine which had brought me as swiftly as an eagle through the air, and to earth with the lightness of any bird.

"What has happened?" I inquired. Though vague he was sufficiently clear.

"That's more than I can tell you, but something queer seems to have taken place in there." He nodded towards "The Gap." There seems to have been a fire or something. The place reeks."

There had been a fire, of a kind. Harold, in demonstrating his mastery of that German novelty in electrical switches, had, it seemed, made rather a hash of things. In switching on that illumination, the presumption was that he had done something he ought not to have done. There had been a short circuit, something had fused, exactly what had occurred was never clearly shown. The

Germans, with the thoroughness which is their characteristic, had kept large stores of petrol in "The Gap." The petrol had become ignited and set fire to the Zeppelins, which had exploded in their turn, so that nothing but their charred skeletons remained. Unwittingly, inadvertently, almost as it seemed by sheer bungling clumsiness, Harold had saved the land from a peril of which most of those in direst danger know nothing until this day.

The whole story became known to the authorities only by degrees ; with certain reservations, to avoid dotting the i's with unnecessary candour, it is for the first time set forth here. At some time or other, Herr Walther von Toll had probably gone on a motor tour round Scotland with a view to finding the sort of place which he might one day require. He had found "The Gap." A long lease of the land on which it was situated was in the market. It was bought by an individual who bore the enigmatically Scotch name McCulloch. It was stated to the agents at the time that Mr McCulloch was a successful Scotchman who had made his pile abroad, and wished to build for himself a residence in his native land. Nothing could be more natural, nothing could be less likely to arouse suspicion. It is the sort of thing successful Scotchmen are always doing.

"The Gap" is not very far from the coast ; there is a break in the land which might be made to serve as a natural harbour, ending in a sort of estuary which brings the sea within six miles of "The Gap." The land—for that part of the world well wooded—rises on either side ; craft of quite considerable size

might ride at anchor without attracting attention from those who did not know that they were there. Some little distance out are a number of spits of ground, some of them sufficiently large to attain to the dignity of islands. The most important is some four or five miles out, of quite considerable dimensions. There was nothing at all remarkable in its being bought by the same Mr. McCulloch who had acquired "The Gap." It was the haunt of numberless wild birds, quite an ideal hunting ground for a sportsman who has a taste for wild fowl.

On this island a number of buildings had been erected which had never been examined except by Mr. McCulloch and his friends. So far as could be ascertained he had brought the workmen with him from no one knew where. It was the same workmen, no doubt, who had transformed "The Gap." A ship of some kind, suited to the prevailing conditions, must have paid periodical visits to the island. Its cargoes had probably consisted of materials required for the work which was taking place on Mr. McCulloch's property ashore;—also of complete Zeppelins, in parts of convenient size to be carried in small, flat bottomed boats to the head of the creek which afforded such satisfactory and confidential natural harbourage. Large suitable motor cars had been bought in England and taken to Scotland. These served to transport the materials and Zeppelins, and the workmen, to and from the place of landing to "The Gap." A rough road was constructed, which figured on the plan, on which the motor cars could run, nothing was omitted. All this was done without attracting

attention from prying eyes. It turned out later that certain people had noticed some things which struck them as funny, but not a word was breathed about them at the time.

Then war was declared, the transformation of "The Gap" was complete, the four Zeppelins were installed, needing only finishing touches which it was wiser, if possible, to postpone to the last moment, and there, in that remote district in Britain, his neighbourhood suspected by no one, was the enemy in our midst!

It was true that he did nothing, that he was beaten before he ever got to work; that the best he could do was to beat a precipitous retreat in the very nick of time. When the crew of a British gunboat landed, that island was deserted; there were traces enough and to spare of recent occupation, unmistakable signs of what had been intended; but all papers, everything which would have gone to establish the identity of the persons, concerned, not a line in writing, or in print, was found which pointed to the identity of Mr. McCulloch.

The only thing human which was discovered were the charred remains of Herr Walther von Toll among the burned ruins of the apartment in which he pressed on me his hospitable offer of that excellent cup of tea.

Scandalous

Hôtel de l'Océan,
Dunkerque.

"DEAR MISS HUBERT,—I have stolen an overcoat." Having read as far as this Miss Hubert lowered the sheet of paper she was holding to examine the letter again. It was written with a pencil of some kind, on greyish white paper, which was so common that she did not remember to have ever seen anything quite so common before. As the pencil which had been used was a coloured one—apparently a sort of flesh colour—and the handwriting so bad that it could be correctly described as a 'scrawl,' the result was that the whole thing was almost undecipherable.

"Who is this writing to me?—It is to me."

She once more referred to the envelope—for about the dozenth time—to make sure. The address on the envelope which had contained the letter she was reading was as illegible as the epistle it contained. So far as she could make out, it was "Miss Ethel Hubert, Pleasant Prospect, Eastbourne." Pleasant Prospect was the name of the boarding house at which she had stopped when on

a visit to Eastbourne last July. It seemed that the letter had been delivered at Pleasant Prospect only a few days ago, months after she had left, and had been obligingly enclosed by the proprietor in one of his own envelopes and sent on to her at once. It seemed, therefore, clear that the epistle which began so oddly was intended for her.

She set herself to recommence its perusal.

“Dear Miss Hubert, I have stolen an overcoat. I am wearing it now——”

“I cannot conceive,” she paused to tell herself, “how anyone who had such a confession to make should have written to me.”

Yet the explanation was simple enough, as she presently found.

“I found it in the trenches,” the writer continued, “so stole it at sight. If you had been as wet as I was, and as cold, you would have done the same; to say nothing of my own overcoat being nothing but a wretched wreck and ruin. I passed it on to Private Griffin, who, I understand, cut down what was left of it to wear inside his tunic, making about the tenth garment he had on. I am a junior captain in the 22nd Surrey Rifles. We were ordered to occupy the trench just vacated by the 14th Sussex, and as I have said, almost directly we got in my eyes fell on an overcoat which I annexed, we will say *pro tem*. I had not the slightest idea who it belonged to, and I didn't care. Then a splinter from a “Jack Johnson” cut my cheek, rather a nasty gash it was; then I got sick listed, and here I am, going back to the same game to-morrow. For the first time this afternoon as ever was, I explored the inside pocket of someone else's overcoat, and found the envelope which

you will get with this. You will see it seems to have been sleeping in the mud, and to have been written by someone who can't write, and to have been addressed to you, so I am sending it on. One day, perhaps, you will tell me if it reached you.—Yours truly, J. C. Bellchamber: (Home address, Captain J. C. Bellchamber, Naval and Military Club.)”

Having read the letter to a close, Ethel Hubert placed it on the table by which she was seated and gave a sort of gasp.

“That is the most extraordinary document,” she told herself, “I ever came across. Captain Bellchamber seems to be a curious sort of person. So this is a letter which he found—as he puts it—in the pocket of someone else's overcoat. It does seem as if it had been ‘sleeping in the mud.’ What a state it's in! Whoever can it be from? Another stranger? I hardly dare to open it. What a curious looking envelope.”

It was unusually long and narrow. Its original colour was uncertain. It might have been laid in a pool of oozy mud and left there to soak. The result on its complexion was indescribable, almost as if it had been dipped in dyes of various hues.

“What's that written in the top left hand corner?” She called in the aid of a reading-glass. “It looks like ‘Please post if found,’—that suggests an Irishman. I don't see how it could have been posted if it hadn't been found. Same address.—‘Miss Ethel Hubert, Pleasant Prospect, Eastbourne.’ That seems to suggest that it is from someone I met at Eastbourne. Now, who was there that I met at Eastbourne on whom I made such an impression that he felt drawn to write to me, even in the trenches?”

I can think of nothing male. The only person in whom I took the slightest interest were the Borrowdale girls, and I've seen and heard plenty of them since. This person seems to have supposed that my only address was at Pleasant Prospect : anyhow he doesn't seem to have been acquainted with any other, so he couldn't have known much about me. Perhaps if I look inside—”

She looked inside. There were three sheets of thin foreign note-paper, which had suffered with the envelope. They were closely covered with thick sprawling handwriting, which probably owed its being to a broad-nibbed pen. The mud in which it had been steeped had not only caused the ink to run, but had turned it different colours—the result being that she found herself confronted by a page of blurred rainbow tints.

With difficulty she made out what the writer said, pausing now and then to call in the aid of the reading glass. She must have had a knack of making out illegible writing, but even so it is not unlikely that the fact that the contents to her were of such engrossing interest armed her with a sort of special intuition. The very first words caused her to prick up her ears ; by the way, pretty little pink ones, set close to her head, they were.

“ Dear Miss Hubert,” the letter began. “ Do you remember that day on Beachy Head ? ”

“ Beachy Head ? ” She stopped for a moment to think. “ Can it be ? ” She slightly changed colour ; she was one of those young women to whom a flush gives an air of charm. “ I do believe— ” She did not say what she believed, but, flushing a little more, went on.

“I wonder! How long ago was it? This is winter, ‘the stormy winds do blow,’ and ‘the rain it raineth every day.’ That was when July was at its loveliest and best. What weather! Don’t you remember?—You must! Not a cloud in the sky, a breeze whispering secrets, the air so clear! Do you remember how we discussed the question of how far we could really see across the briny. I know we differed, was it five miles you said, or was it fifty? Do you remember? I do, I remember everything, every moment, every word. I am prepared to enter for an examination on the subject of what we talked about, and to back myself to pass with honours. What is more, I could describe—to the examiner’s satisfaction—how you said each blessed thing. Do you remember anything I said? I wonder. I like, as I sit here, in this cheery trench, with the rain coming down in bucketfuls, and the guns boom-boom-booming, they boom in all sorts of different keys like a blaring lunatic orchestra, out of time and out of tune; I’ll begin that sentence again. I like, I say, to think that you do remember something—O lady, with the big child’s eyes.

“I remember—I am going to tell you some of the things which I remember; perhaps, if I were nearer I shouldn’t dare. But since this concoction may never reach you, and anyhow we shall probably never meet again, I take my courage in both hands and write boldly, like a man. I remember how sweet I thought you looked the first time you swam into my ken, ‘swam into my ken’ is a good phrase, isn’t it? I hope it’s right. I lay on the tussocky grass within a hundred feet of the signalling station; you paused at the edge of the cliff, looking down at the

new lighthouse far below. The sight of you set me quivering. I am one of those persons who cannot look down from a height ; the thought of what might happen if you went a step too far, or the edge of the cliff gave way (the cliff is always falling away at Beachy Head) rendered it difficult even for me to breathe. What a relief it was when you moved farther from the edge.

“ I did not behave well ; I behaved badly. You moved along the cliff towards Birling Gap ; I rose from the grass and followed you ;—yes, I intentionally followed you. I meant to speak to you if I got a chance, and to make a chance if one didn't come my way.

“ There, I have confessed. I am a bounder, you can say it if you please. I have been taught that only a bounder takes advantage of a lady being alone to force on her his conversation. I forced my conversation upon you, and you were very much alone. I don't care. I ask your pardon on my bended knees, but if the occasion recurred I'd do it again. That's frank, so now you know.

“ I can't exactly say that a chance did come my way, but I made one. Do you remember how I did it?—Call me brazen faced ! I took my hat off, when you were at your loneliest, there wasn't another soul in sight, marched straight up to you, and said, “ I wish you wouldn't walk so close to the cliff.”

“ I doubt if, till that moment, you had been conscious, shall I say of my propinquity ? It's a horrid word. You stopped, flushed, I had startled you. I knew I ought to be kicked. ‘ I beg your pardon, what did you say ? ’ you asked. I stuck to my guns, though all the time I knew what I deserved. ‘ I

132 Orders to Marry

said,' I repeated, 'that I should be glad if you would not go so close to the edge of the cliff.' You seemed amazed. 'I don't in the least understand what you mean.' You had just the right kind of voice, I noticed that; everything about you was just right. I have such a hoarse, husky voice myself that you can't think what a relief it is to hear real music proceeding from the lips of a woman. I tried to explain, haltingly. With what a perfect air you listened, you put me in my place. All at once there came into your eyes, round your lips, all over you, the dawn of a smile. You became amused: you even laughed—just a tiny little ripple of mirth. You told me you did not suffer from dizziness yourself; that height, the edge of a cliff, of a precipice, made no difference. Presently, before I knew it, as in a dream, we were walking side by side, and we were talking. You told me that you had done some serious climbing—the different parts of the world in which it had been done: and I told you—what did I tell you? Do you remember? I wonder."

She put the letter down: perhaps that was because her hands were just a little tremulous, even her lips seemed to quiver. There was something odd about her eyes, as if something sparkled in the corners. Her cheeks were flushed. She who prided herself on her unsusceptibility to the feelings which are apt to play havoc with others, all at once found herself a prey to emotions which she did not even dare to try to understand.

Did she remember? the writer asked. Could she ever forget? How it all came back to her, never having gone far away. The air from the sea which

came up to the cliff, seeming to put new life into her veins. The masculine figure which she had been vaguely conscious kept her company, sometimes in front and sometimes behind. It might sound silly, but that was one of her dreaming days; she did not realise the neighbourhood of a stranger until the sound of a masculine voice brought her back to a consciousness of her surroundings. 'Hoarse and husky' did he call his voice? How absurd! It was certainly neither its hoarseness nor its huskiness which had had such a magnetic effect upon her, filling her with such a sense of comfortable ease, causing her—far from snubbing him—to fall in at his side.

What did that ridiculous yet amazing letter say next?

"We walked two miles without a break either in the conversation or the pace."

She considered for a moment, her cheeks seeming momentarily to grow more flushed, the map of the district held up before her mind's eye. It must have been all of two miles; think of it!

"I asked when we reached the Gap if you wouldn't like to go down and look at the sea. You did not say we had been doing that all the while, you just went with me down the broken path on to the sand."

It was perfectly true. The recollection astounded her still. However could she have done a thing like that, with a perfect stranger?

"We found a place on the beach—after all there was not much sand—fairly comfortable—at least we didn't notice it wasn't—and there we stayed—I'll dare you to say how long we stayed."

134 Orders to Marry

The challenge frightened her, even staring up in those parti-coloured, sprawling characters from that mud-stained paper. How long had they stayed?

With an odd mixture of shame and something else she realised that it was a question which she had left unanswered again and again, declining to admit, even to herself, that it was one which, for any reason, required a reply.

“Do you remember what time it was when it occurred to us that we had had no tea? My word, weren't we startled!”

Why would the man, writing in those water-logged trenches, harp upon a subject, the mere thought of which made her feel so odd?

“You did not want to have any tea, at least you said so: you said it was absurd to talk of having tea at such an hour; that you had miles and miles to walk, and it was near the dinner hour. You would be frightfully late. ‘Very well,’ I said, ‘that's obvious. We'll have no tea, dinner instead.’ You were amazed, shocked,—I believe you were even horrified, to say nothing of being frightened. But we had dinner all the same, under the porch of the hotel which stands close to the top of the broken path, you and I together. I don't know what we had for dinner, whether the meal was good or bad; you were on one side of the table, and I on the other, that's all I know. And we talked and laughed, and somewhere, I believe, in the back of your mind, you were wondering all the while how on earth you would get home.

“You walked home, five miles over the cliffs!

“There are some things which seem too sacred

to speak about, that walk is one of them. The stars were shining by the time we got to Beachy Head, the moon was up by the time we had dropped down to the town. You remember our last resting place upon the grass; the sort of constraint which came down upon us and tied our tongues? In some strange subtle way something happened, and we both were changed. We might have been guilty of some crime, and to have suddenly awoke to a consciousness of what we had done. The rest of the way we were under a cloud of silence: the capacity for speech seemed to have left us. I said goodbye to you at the Wish Tower, and the day was done.

“It was only when I turned on to the bricks when you had gone, and strolled back towards Beachy Head beside the sea, that it occurred to me that I had never asked your name, and that you did not know mine. For all I could tell you had vanished into the unknown out of which you had come. For two days I never saw you. On the morning of the third I was standing with the crowd listening to the band. You came along the Promenade with a strange young woman one either side. You never glanced my way; I suppose no inward monitor told you I was there; you could hardly have forgotten me already. I shadowed you again; I followed till all three of you turned into a house on the Grand Parade. There were large gilt letters on the front—a name—Pleasant Prospect. A porter was standing at the door. I presented him with half-a-crown, and asked what were the names of the young ladies who had just gone in. Only one sticks in my mind, yours. You were the one in the

centre, with a Miss Somebody on either side. You, he said, were Miss Ethel Hubert.

"I have no means of knowing if he lied. I hope he didn't, because Ethel Hubert is a name which has been enshrined with a sort of halo of sanctity, as my patron saint, the being to whom I have turned when my thoughts were holy.

"That afternoon I left Eastbourne. I was a soldier, recently retired; a little sick, to speak the truth, with the slowness of promotion. Then came the war; in a trice I was a soldier again. I was in Belgium with the first lot of troops sent out from England. I have been here ever since, fighting all the while, ages it seems. On the whole I like the life as well as any I have ever known; I am fighting for what England has always fought for—freedom—the right to live, to call one's soul one's own; and I have won promotion.

"I think every day, since that day I have thought of you. You will take this to be exaggeration; I assure you it is not. You will suppose me to be a curiosity; I don't know that I am; so far as I am aware no one has hinted that I am. In all my days I have had no truck with women. I have never had a female friend, or wanted one. I am not saying this for the sake of producing an effect. I fancy there is nothing unusual in my case; I believe that in that respect there are heaps of men who are just like me. Men can do without feminine society much more easily than many of your sex imagine. I can honestly declare that, to the best of my knowledge and belief, I never gave a woman a second thought, seriously, until that afternoon, to repeat my own phrase, 'you swam into my ken.' And you have

never swum out of it again, and you never will. They talk about thought transference, telepathy, soul communication with soul, mind with mind. If there had been anything in the thing but talk you would have had a curious time. I have tried, over and over again, day and night, to get into communication with you, and I know I have failed. Now here I am, in the trenches, in the wet and cold and general discomfort, to which I have become case hardened, writing to you, or rather, trying to write, because my ink is half water, for the first time and the last, asking myself if it is possible to recall to your memory that day. I have had a bit of a wound. An ugly splinter from a "Black Maria," that's a piece of ordnance which vomits forth strange missiles, has played such mischief with my thigh that I can hardly walk. When the men with the stretcher come they'll hale me off to hospital. Nothing has been seen or heard of them for the last couple of days, so perhaps they will never come. What does it matter? I am probably quite as comfortable here. I don't want to be out of the fun.

"You did not tell me in so many words, but you gave me to understand that day that you had no entanglements with anything male. It is possible that since then you have become engaged; if so, tear this up; or show it to the man, and smile; and he will smile with you. Lucky dog!

"But if you are still unattached, know, as the man said in the play—falsely—I say—truly—that you, the acquaintance of a day, the dream which I have never ceased to dream, are the first woman I have ever loved; the only woman; the first and the last.

"Do you think that is a silly confession for a

138 Orders to Marry

man to make, a man situated as I am? Shall I tell you why I made it? One reason—because I am tired of keeping the secret to myself, so I whisper it to you.

Your very faithful, obedient, devoted lover,
David Carpenter."

That was the end of the letter.

It was a fact which she seemed to find it difficult to realise; sitting with it held in both her hands, staring at it, as if in search of something which she thought she might have missed. Then, suddenly, something came rushing to her eyes. She let the sheet of paper slip from her fingers; her head dropped forward; with her face pillowed on her arms she was the victim of emotions at whose very existence she had scoffed. The most un-sentimental person in the world, she had never behaved like that before.

Hers was the oddest situation. She told herself a dozen times a day that one could hardly conceive of one more curious. During the days which followed she moved as one in a dream; borne this way and that by sensations which she would have found it hard to explain. She had never had a secret in her life. That letter from the trenches represented to her a secret of the most amazing and portentous kind. She was the sole occupant of her small cottage. Friends, including her relations, regarded what they called her fondness for solitude as eccentric; some even seemed to hint that it was improper. Her married sisters, when they came to stop with her, always said that they could not understand how she possibly could live

alone. They were apt to be quite frank upon the subject, as sisters are. Ada, the eldest, on more than one occasion put the family point of view :

“It isn't as though you really were an old maid,” she would explain; “after all, you are still only thirty-two; nowadays lots of women marry after they are thirty-two, and think themselves young, and really you know, Ethel, there are times when you look young. Mrs. Norris only the other day, when I told her how old you were, assured me that she would never have taken you for a day more than twenty-seven. Look how you're flushing now; it's absurd.”

Ada—who was Mrs. Paget—came to stop with Ethel a few days after she had received the letter. Ethel, if the thing had been possible, would have put her off; but she did not see how it could be done. She was so conscious of her extraordinary mental, moral and physical condition that she would have given a trifle to have been able to avoid her sister's eyes. Mrs. Paget had a knack of scenting anything unusual. Not for a good deal would Ethel have breathed a word about the letter, or the adventure on the cliff. Let the elder sister but get wind of the wonders which the younger could reveal, she would never give her a moment's peace till she had wrung the whole story from her, somehow, with the i's all dotted, and the whole thing vulgarised. Once in possession of the details, the elder would pass them on; the younger would never hear the last of them to her dying day, and her romance would be gone.

Mrs. Paget was to be her visitor for at least a week. She had not been in the house a couple

140 Orders to Marry

of hours when she commented on one strange fact.

"I can't think what's happened to you, Ethel; you look as if you had grown at least half-a-dozen years younger. I said as much to Jane."

So already her sister was talking her over with her elderly maid; a deeper flush probably made her look younger still.

"I am very sorry, Ada," she explained, "but the weather has been so fine lately, and I've been taking so much exercise, that I expect that's it."

Two days later came a fresh attack.

"Something has happened, Ethel, something which you are concealing from me."

Ethel, taken unawares, was weak.

"Surely I'm old enough to be allowed to keep my own counsel, even if something had happened; but nothing has."

"My good woman, it's no good your talking like that to me; I've a pair of eyes in my head! I really must ask you to remember that I'm your elder sister, and the head of the family, and entitled to have your confidence."

"I don't see it a bit. I can't help your being the eldest; anyhow, I don't mean to be rude or unkind, but I really must ask you to concern yourself with your own affairs."

"Is it Mr. Rossiter?" Ethel stared; she really did not understand.

"Is what Mr. Rossiter?"

"Have you at last made up your mind to marry the man? If so, I can't understand why you didn't do it years ago, instead of wasting all this time. I know he's been asking you again."

"I don't know how you do know it. Ada, are you aware that you really are a sort of female Paul Pry?"

"I notice that, although you have been both unkind and rude, you have not denied it."

"Denied what?"

"That you are going to marry Mr. Rossiter, or at any rate you're thinking about something of the kind. I know."

Ethel shrugged her shoulders; she even smiled.

"I don't know what you know; but if you do know I suppose that's all you want."

It was not by any means all the lady wanted. During the remainder of her visit, as it were, she kept her sister continually on the rack. Nothing she resented, as she frankly said, so much as the idea that something was being kept from her. Her hostess had a most uncomfortable time in holding her own against the Grand Inquisitor. None the less, when the time for her departure came the visitor's curiosity was still unsatisfied. As she boarded the train she fired a parting shot.

"I shall tell Fanny, and Lucy, and Florence," they were the other sisters, "that they may expect at any moment to hear, I don't know what, but something which I can only trust may not unsettle the family confidence—in spite of your eccentricities—in you. I have asked the Vicar's wife to keep me posted in whatever goes on"

Quite what the lady meant was not clear, even to the victim. Only a few days afterwards something did happen of which the Vicar's wife—for obvious reasons—probably said nothing to Mrs.

Paget. A letter lay on the table when Ethel came down to breakfast, which had again been re-addressed from Pleasant Prospect. Jane, the handmaiden, who had passed a large part of her life in Mrs. Hubert's service, and who, at that lady's decease, had been transferred to her youngest daughter, commented on the presence of the letter with the freedom of an old domestic.

"It seems strange, Miss Ethel, that they should still be sending letters on to you from Eastbourne, considering what a long time it is since you were there."

"Yes, Jane, it does seem rather strange. I—I haven't the least idea who its from."

She had not. The communication was in a blue envelope, whose very tint suggested to Miss Hubert the unusual—it was so unlike the envelopes she generally received. Eager though she was to learn what it contained, she studiously refrained from opening it while Jane's keen eyes were on her, lest its contents should be of a kind which would cause her demeanour to convey information to the maid which she would rather keep to herself. In her own way Jane was as sharp-eyed as Mrs. Paget.

"That's a lawyer's letter, that's what that is, Miss Ethel," she observed, lingering to perform various unnecessary offices. "I've seen them before. I suppose you're not owing anyone a bill?"

"Jane! what do you mean? What a thing for you to say!"

"Well, Miss Ethel, I was only thinking that you might have over-looked something, and one of

those lawyers was sending it on. I can see that the sight of the envelope upsets you."

The statement was so true that Miss Hubert was rendered almost incapable of putting the speaker in her place. She only did it with an effort, and then not effectively.

"Really, Jane, you go too far. I can't allow you to talk to me like that. Can I not have a letter without its being remarked on by you? Please go now, I have everything I want."

Miss Hubert did not feel much more comfortable even when Jane had gone. The idea that all the eyes of the world were on her was growing of late into a sort of monomania; as though the presence of that 'secret' in the secret drawer of the bureau upstairs was suspected by all and sundry, who, in consequence, were on tip-toe to discover what it meant. The notion that the re-addressed blue envelope might have some further connection with the 'secret' was almost an awful one to her. Suppose Jane were to tell Ada what she had noticed, and Ada were to rain at her four pages full of questions, what could she answer? So resolved was she that nothing should be learnt from her demeanour that she actually finished her breakfast, glanced at the newspaper in the ordinary course, and carried that blue envelope—unopened—to her little sitting-room upstairs.

It was an act of self-restraint which was almost heroic.

Even when assured of privacy, a perceptible period of time elapsed before she opened the envelope. Although no longer afraid of unwelcome eyes, she seemed to be in a nervous derad of

something ; so that when, with tremulous fingers, she had opened the envelope and withdrawn the sheet of blue commercial paper it contained, she had to lay the letter down upon the table until she felt sufficiently mistress of herself to read it.

When she did read it her worst forebodings were more than fulfilled ;—compared to it the ‘secret’ in the bureau—in a sense—was as nothing. According to the heading on the letter paper, it came from a firm of lawyers in Lincoln’s Inn Fields.

“Dear Madam,” it ran. “We have to advise you that our late client, David Carpenter, of 65 Arlington Street, London, Major in the 43rd British Rifles, has left you his sole residuary legatee. His testamentary dispositions, owing to circumstances over which he seems to have had no control, were of an informal and unusual kind, but are perfectly sound and valid. Our Mr. Pettigrew will have pleasure in waiting on you at any time you may appoint to explain to you what they are ; or we shall be very happy to see you here.

“We may mention that, so far as at present can be ascertained, the property to which you have become entitled may be valued roughly at some £30,000 ; probably rather over than under.

“Awaiting your instructions, and holding ourselves always at your services. We are, Madam, your obedient servants.

Pettigrew, Harding and Baines.”

That Miss Hubert did not master the meaning of this epistle on the first perusal was perhaps not strange ; to be candid, the already sufficiently

unstrung lady was so startled that it took her breath away. A second reading was not much better, or a third ;—they left her gasping.

What did the communication signify? What it said? The presumption was not unreasonable. Then, in that case, she was an heiress ; possessor of something in the neighbourhood of £30,000.

The first feeling it conveyed to her mind was characteristic ;—in that event she certainly would not be able to conceal the fact from Ada, or from anyone. The whole truth would be out. She would have to admit that she had allowed an entire stranger to scrape an acquaintance with her ; that she had suffered him to continue in her society on the footing, not only of an acquaintance, but of a familiar friend, sharing with him an expensive meal—she happened to have noticed the bill—for which he had paid ; walking with him afterwards, in the darkness, over miles of lonely country ; there had been passages in that walk of which she scarcely dared to think even in the silent watches of the night. What would people think—especially the family—when the truth was told, particularly in the light of this astounding communication from Messrs. Pettigrew, Harding and Baines?

Would they not draw the worst conclusion, make matters out worse than they really were? Might they not take it for granted—such is the corruptness of human nature—that a perfect stranger would not leave her £30,000 for nothing. In some shape it must represent value received. At the thought of it Miss Hubert hid her face for shame.

Was she to go through life branded as a woman who had wheedled a fortune, by means known only

146 Orders to Marry

to herself, out of a chance acquaintance, the companion of only a few hours?

It was only after she had contemplated the uncomfortable possibilities which the situation entailed on her that she became alive to another point of view. Obviously, if she had inherited a fortune, the testator could be no longer with the living ;—Major David Carpenter must be dead. It was not expressly stated in the letter, but the inference was—clearly—that he had been killed in fighting for his country. She recalled, how vividly! the passage in the letter which Captain Bellchamber found in the pocket of the overcoat which he had stolen, where Major Carpenter referred to the ‘splinter’ from a ‘Black Maria’ which had played such havoc with his thigh. He was then waiting for the men with the stretcher to carry him to hospital, the men who were overdue. Had they never come? or arrived too late? or had he died in hospital. Contemplation of this point of view affected Miss Hubert much more than the other. What did a fortune matter after all compared to the fact that he was dead? It was ridiculous; she was sure that Ada would say so; beyond the bounds of reason, that was a matter on which the family would be agreed. But the thought that the man who had come into her life like a flash-light and out again, was among the great army of those who had died for King and Country, shook her to the foundations of her being. Nor was the position improved by the reflection that in her selfish dread for what she deemed her reputation it had not occurred to her to think of him at all. What did the £30,000 matter? What did it matter what

they thought of her? What did anything matter, if he was dead?

His letter had been her greatest treasure. That was the real reason why she had locked it in her secret hiding place; why she had kept its very existence secret. She knew it now. She had been a dreamer of dreams, although she had been so unwilling to admit it even to herself;—and now all the glory, the radiance, the happiness, for which the dreams had stood was dead.

Because Ethel Hubert was crying, as she had never cried in all her life, she did not hear that someone was tapping at the door, someone who presently came in—Jane.

“Why, Miss Ethel,” exclaimed the maid, astonished at the spectacle which her mistress presented, “whatever is there wrong?”

Miss Hubert, caught unawares, looked round with an attempt at anger which was possibly designed to conceal the fact that her features were discoloured by her flooding tears.

“Jane!” she gasped, it was not easy for her just then to speak, “how dare you come into my room without knocking?”

Jane, legitimately aggrieved, was not slow in saying so.

“Without knocking?” she replied. “Miss Ethel, however can you say so? I am sure I knocked quite loud.”

“I didn’t hear you,” sobbed the lady. “I didn’t tell you might come in. I never said a word.”

“No, miss, you didn’t; but it’s the first time I’ve learned that I am to wait to be told to come in after knocking. There’s a telegram, miss. I thought

148 Orders to Marry

you might like to see it. I do hope there's no more bad news."

The maid held out the familiar yellow envelope ; the mistress drew back, as from something dangerous.

"Oh, Jane," she cried, "what can it be?"

"I'm sure, Miss, I don't know. Can it have been sent on, Miss, from Eastbourne, like the letter you had this morning?"

Had it not been that, in that moment of tragedy, her sense of dignity was too strong, she might almost have been disposed to ask Jane to open the envelope herself and acquaint her with its contents, breaking them gently. Her reluctance was so obvious that Jane had to use pressure.

"Hadn't you better see what it's about, Miss? The boy's waiting to see if there's an answer."

The troubled lady, taking the buff coloured envelope in her unwilling fingers, stared at the pink slip of paper it had contained as if unable to decipher the words which were on it. They conveyed no meaning to her confused intelligence when she did.

"Letter posted to you yesterday written under extraordinary misunderstanding. Please consider it cancelled. Full explanation follows.

Pettigrew, Harding and Bains."

That was the telegram. It was no wonder if Miss Hubert, in her then condition, regarded it as if it were so much double Dutch. In her calmest, clearest moments she might have been excused for finding its meaning a little hard to follow. She confessed her lack of comprehension.

"I'm afraid," she stammered, the sobs which would not be restrained rendering her almost inarticulate, "that I don't quite understand what it means."

"Don't understand what it means, Miss! What does it say? Perhaps there's been a mistake;—those telegraph people do make mistakes. That Miss Harris, who does the telegrams at the Post Office, I wouldn't trust her as far as I can see her. Let me see." Somehow—she did not quite understand how—Miss Hubert relinquished her hold on the telegram. Jane's comments were outspoken. "But this is plain enough! These people from whom it comes say that the letter which they posted yesterday was written under a misunderstanding;—was that the lawyer's letter which you had this morning? They want you to consider it cancelled;—that is, behave as if you'd never had it. That mayn't be easy, but it seems to me that the meaning's plain. They say that a full explanation follows. I think, probably, that one's wanted. Shall I look at the letter, Miss? Perhaps I should be able to tell you what they mean."

When Jane stretched out her hand, Miss Hubert snatched up the document in question and held it tight. She awoke to a consciousness of the latitude she was allowing Jane.

"No, Jane," she exclaimed, "I can't allow you to read my letter."

The maid was pleased to take on an air of what might have been offence.

"Very well, Miss Ethel, as you wish. I'm sure I don't want to pry into what is no concern of mine; but as you said that you didn't understand the tele-

gram, which seems plain enough to me, though I don't know what's in the letter, I thought I'd see if I could help you;—that's all, just as you wish. Shall I tell the telegraph boy—who is still waiting at the back door—that there's no answer?"

"Yes, Jane, I suppose you'd better. I'm sure I shouldn't know what to say, even if I sent one."

Left alone with the sheet of pink tissue, Jane having gone to take her message, Miss Hubert still could not make head or tail of it. Her life had hitherto been so uneventful, each day being so like another, nothing happening to ruffle her tranquil existence, this sudden rush of the unusual had a more confusing effect upon her faculties that she would have thought was possible. That amazing afternoon upon the downs had always been somewhere at the back of her mind; she had always been conscious that it was there. It was the great landmark from which she dated all sorts of events. To use another metaphor, it was the magic philtre which leavened and changed the whole of her existence. And then, just as she was trying to tell herself that the memory of it was growing less, there had come those two letters, the one introducing the other. Since their appearance the world for her had been re-created. Earth, sea and sky had assumed different hues. Familiar scenes had changed; even the people she knew best had been transformed; or perhaps she saw them through different eyes. Certainly something very strange had happened. So far as she remembered, and her memory was a good one, nothing exciting had happened in the whole of her life until—first, that adventure on the

cliff; and then, when the excitement of that was passing away, came the letters.

They it was which had really done it; especially the one from Major David Carpenter. She had never been the same woman since his letter came, the full, frank, strange confession of what some mysterious influence had caused him to feel for her. It was true what Ada had accused her of, she not only looked younger, she felt it. Rejuvenation, indeed, had played such pranks with her that it had even turned her head; destroyed that perfect mental balance on which she prided herself; caused her, indeed, to lose her sense of proper feminine dignity and well-bred self-possession. Just as she was making a sincere attempt to regain what she regarded as her proper mental equilibrium, had come the terse communication from Messrs. Pettigrew, Harding and Bains, and right on the top of that the bewildering telegram. Under such a stress of agitating events what was a forlorn, helpless woman to do? That was not an inquiry which she put to herself in so many words, but she was only too conscious that it was one which imperatively called for a reply. And Jane had gone down to tell the boy who had brought the message that there was no answer. Had she not better run after him and tell him that there was? Had she not better telegraph to Ada and ask for her assistance? That might necessitate her humbling herself, but after all, her eldest sister was hard-headed, and at bottom not so hard-hearted as she chose to pretend; she might suggest something. Or should she wire to those lawyer men to say that she was coming up by the very next train for the promised ex-

152 Orders to Marry

planation, for which she found it impossible to wait.

She had almost made up her mind that the latter course was the one she would pursue, when there came a knocking at the front door which so startled her that as she stood with her hands pressed to her side she was almost convinced that it shook the house. She was not accustomed to have people knock like that at her front door. The very violence of the onslaught suggested a further incursion into the realms of the unusual. What fresh shock was threatening?

Jane was answering the summons; she could hear her opening the front door. A voice addressed her;—one which, though it was not unduly raised, had such an odd penetrating power that what was said was distinctly audible upstairs; but then only one flight of stairs led up to the sitting-room, and the front door was just at the foot.

“Does Miss Ethel Hubert live here?”

Somehow—there must be—it certainly was—what was it which set the listening woman in such a state of trembling? She heard Jane’s reply.

“Yes, sir, she does. What name shall I say?”

There was a momentary silence, as if the caller were hesitating what to say. Then the same masculine voice was heard even more distinctly than at first:

“Major David Carpenter.”

The door of Miss Hubert’s sitting-room was opened more rapidly probably than it had ever been before; a feminine figure went fluttering out, rushed down the stairs, and before the astounded Jane had the faintest notion of what was about to

happen, her mistress, whom she had always regarded as the pink of ladylike propriety was in the caller's arms. She was crying in his arms, and he—tell it not in Gath!—was using a method of his own to wipe away her tears.

Possibly if Jane had been aware that this was only the second occasion on which these two persons had met, and that they had never been introduced to each other at all, she might have regarded the whole episode as inconceivably scandalous. At any rate, Miss Hubert did not have to wait for an explanation of Major David Carpenter's letter; of how the lawyers had been rather in advance of facts in taking his decease for granted; of the rather vaguely worded telegram;—she did not, we say, have to wait for an explanation of these things till the arrival of Messrs. Pettigrew, Harding and Baines's promised further communication, which reached her in due course of post. The gentleman went with the lady to her sitting-room and furnished her with all the necessary explanations there and then.

Major David Carpenter was married to Miss Ethel Hubert only the other day. So far neither bride nor bridegroom has allowed a hint to escape which might suggest what a romantic love story theirs has really been. Possibly they are a trifle afraid that what they regard as romance, other people might view from a standpoint of their own. Some folks have their own notions of what is scandalous.

The End of her Holiday

MISS CONSTANTIA AREDALE writes to her mother, of the town of Tankerton, in the State of Maine.

My dear mother,—my word, doesn't it seem funny to be writing to you again, as if a letter was such an extraordinary thing! and this is the twentieth century! We're in the age of blood and slaughter here, I tell you that! If your daughter's hair hasn't gone grey it just shows that the stories about hair going grey in a single night are just tarradiddles, that's all! I've bathed in carnage—you may take it from me. One afternoon within three miles of Liège, one of the greatest manufacturing cities of the world, I was nearly up to my shoulders amid bodies of the killed and wounded. It was awful! I shan't dare to think of it in the future. I shall suffer for it if I do: I shall develop nerves, and be haunted by nightmare horrors. I don't want to exaggerate, but that's just a fact.

When I came to Europe this time I had Luxembourg in my mind. You remember Minna Brown, how she began talking Luxembourg at me? and she has only been in Europe once! I said to myself that when I got home I would know as

The End of her Holiday 155

much about Luxembourg in my little finger as she knew in her whole body. I would write a hand-book about the place and give six copies to the town library. But when I thought of writing a series of lectures on the Grand Duchy of Luxembourg, and instructing the town of Tankerton about things they had never known before, I never dreamed that I should be in the position to give the minister, and Mr. Dixon, and Uncle Alfred, and all the rest of them, to say nothing of Minna Brown! the sort of instruction I am able to give them now.

When I wrote to you last I was at Diekirch; look in the map and you'll see where Diekirch is. It flatters itself it is quite a place, and, of course, to anyone who has never known anything larger, it is. It happens to be a village; the guide-book says there are 3,327 inhabitants, but if that is true I don't know where they are. You would have to walk a good long way to see a quarter of them. It is true that Diekirch straggles, and so has acquired a habit of running into places which you would have thought were somewhere else; but allowing for its keeping on straggling for miles and miles, you still keep on wondering where the people are.

When I left Diekirch I went to Bourschied. My dear mother, that is a place! Although Diekirch may be twice the size, and I daresay is, in my judgment, as regards real importance, it doesn't begin to count in comparison with Bourschied. Bourschied is one of those places for which you have to quit America if you want to see them. I will bet that there is a good substitute for Diekirch, and most of the other places in Europe, in our great country, if you know where to look for it.

But you won't find another Bourschied, not if you pick out the latest thing in autos and run it for five years.

It's a dream, that's what Bourschied is—as a whole—and a phantom; and if you sit on the slope in the moonlight, it's a thousand years ago come to life again. You expect it to vanish if you breathe a word, but it doesn't; it continues—until you begin to feel that you are a phantom yourself.

There are lots of places that have that effect on you in Luxembourg; Minna Brown talked better than she knew when she sent me here. There are heaps of places where you have a sort of feeling that you're living among people who died goodness knows how many centuries ago, who for your special benefit have suddenly come to life again. You know, mother, you don't find places of that sort in America; you have to go away for them; places where, by night as well as sometimes by day—I have felt it in the blazing sunshine—you have to resort to pinching to make sure that you yourself are not one of the ghosts.

I didn't stop at an hotel at Bourschied—I stayed in the oldest house in the place; but, as I learned afterwards that there were at least a dozen oldest houses in the place, so long as I was in one of them it doesn't matter which. I couldn't be expected to sleep in all the dozen, just in order to make sure. But what I am trying to do is to point out that it was because I resided in that not too comfortable relic of the middle ages that—to some extent—it happened.

I do not pretend to have fluent French at my finger tips; I may have allowed it to be supposed

The End of her Holiday 157

in Tankerton that my knowledge of French is more profound than it really is,—but lots of travellers do that. I do not believe that Minna Brown knows as much French as she pretends she does ; if I had not been afraid of giving myself away I should have made a point of finding out,—between ourselves, dear mother. Yes, it is all very well for you to talk about the money which was spent on my classes, but my opinion is that they would have been productive of very little result if I had gone in for them as hard as ever I could,—which I didn't. It's wonderful how obliging people are in Europe ; you need scarcely ever talk to them in their language ; they are nearly always willing to talk to you in yours. It's so convenient.

I trust you, mother, to tell nobody, but I don't believe I have ever spoken to French people in their own tongue. I don't know why, but I haven't. There was a good deal of ignorance at Bourschied. I have no doubt they talked English at the hotel, and perhaps in other places, but they certainly didn't in that one of the dozen oldest houses in which I was. To be frank, I don't know what they did talk. An old Englishman—he was the only Englishman I saw while I was at Bourschied, so you can imagine what sort of a place it was—told me that he thought it was a sort of low German. He might have been right, or he might have been wrong ; it made no difference to me. I can only say that I didn't understand a word they said to me, and they did not understand what I said to them,—which was perhaps another reason why it happened.

There wasn't a newspaper in the place. It is true that there was nothing at all in the place,—but

you would have thought there would be a newspaper. I don't only mean that there wasn't one printed and published there, but I never saw so much as a single copy of any kind of newspaper during the whole of my stay. Just think what that means! It means that New York might have been swallowed up by an earthquake, and I should have known nothing about it.

I had been there ten days. You will wonder what I found to do for ten whole days in a place like Bourschied. I can't tell you, but I know I found it,—and enjoyed doing it every moment of the time. It was a Tuesday; hot sun, no breeze; everyone seemed inclined to do less than usual by way of a change. As the day went on I began to have a feeling that something was happening in spite of appearances. I can't explain how I came to have that feeling,—but I had. It began after *petit déjeuner*. I never could master the name of the people I was staying with. He wrote it down, and she wrote it down, but as, so far as I could make out, the spelling didn't agree, I left it alone. As neither of them pretended to take the slightest interest in what my name was we were even.

I was going to say that after *petit déjeuner* I went into the kitchen, and there was Madame seated at a little wooden table—crying. What she was crying at puzzled me,—but it was no use asking; and although I did so—in English—she just went on crying, without paying the slightest attention to what I said. Of course if she had given me the fullest possible explanation, in whatever tongue it was she spoke, I should not have been any the wiser.

The End of her Holiday 159

The odd part was that she was not the only woman I saw that day who was crying; and those who weren't looked odd, as if they would have liked to cry but couldn't. And the men,—I can't describe the look which was on their faces.

I did wish that I could find someone who could understand at least a part of what I might say,—or at least make himself partially clear to me. I went to the station to see if I could find someone there,—and what do you think I did find? Just think of it, mother,—soldiers! Of course, generally speaking, in Europe soldiers are common sights of the countryside; you see them everywhere. But at Bourschied, until that moment, I did not know that there was one within miles. And about those soldiers there was—I won't just say that there was something ominous—but there certainly was something strange.

The *depôt-gare*—railway station at Bourschied is a small tin building placed by the side of the line. When there is a train people come to see the sight. It consists as a rule of about three cars, of a type which you never see anywhere but here;—you could put the whole thing into one of our cars and there would be room for more.

That morning there was a string of cars which seemed to be miles long; each packed as full as it could hold,—with grim, khaki coloured men, whose appearance did not accord well with the glorious sunny morning. Some of them had turned out on to the line, and stood with guns over their shoulders looking grave and serious, as if they were ready for the fray, and only needed the word of command to set to.

I couldn't make out the look of things at all,—

160 Orders to Marry

and the strange part of it was that none of the inhabitants were in sight. These strange, stern-looking soldiers seemed to have dropped from the skies and to have frightened everyone away. One huge man—well over six feet high—was standing at the open gate as if he were on guard.

“Whatever has happened?” I said. “Where have all these soldiers come from?”

In my surprise I spoke plain English, forgetting that there was probably no one around who would understand a word I said; but there was one who understood,—the big man at the gate. He looked me up and down, as if I were some sort of strange microbe, and he said, in English—an English which was guttural.

“Who are you?” Without giving me a chance to reply he absolutely roared at me. “What the devil are you doing here?” While I was wondering what on earth he meant by shouting at me like that, he added something which made me feel as if my flesh would drop off my bones. “You are English! Take yourself away!—Go!—quick!”

I stood and stared. I had never been addressed in such a tone of voice before. The idea of his accusing me of being English—as if to be English were a crime—and ordering me to take myself away, as if I were some unpleasant kind of reptile, did take me aback.

“You are a German?” I murmured,—I protest that I said it quietly. Until that moment it had not occurred to me to wonder what he was. For some cause which I was unable to fathom, my meek surmise seemed to inflame him to madness. He went purple in the face;—if I may say so, his voice

The End of her Holiday 161

seemed to go purple too ; he bellowed rather than shouted.

“ You insult me ! you Englishwoman !—So ! You shall be taught ! ” He bellowed, in German, to someone on the train. Two big men bounded out of the car immediately in front of us ; they came striding through the gate without uttering so much as a syllable. Each took me by a shoulder with his huge paw, swung me round, and marched me off.

Conceive it, my dear mother ! Picture your Constantia, hauled off between two huge men, armed to the teeth, as if she were something much worse than a mere bad character, dragged at a pace which it was impossible for me to imitate—I suppose their strides were as long again as mine,—on and on, I began to fear, for ever !

Seriously I began to wonder if they would ever stop. Half the time my feet weren't on the ground at all ; they jolted me, held in their dreadful paws, from point to point,—and still they haled me on ! No doubt the proceedings were watched by eyes from behind windows, but we did not pass a single soul in the street,—and I began to understand why.

I couldn't speak ; I couldn't properly breathe. I was just concluding that I should have to faint, when they gave me a sort of swirl up against a bank, dumped me down into a patch of weeds and nettles, turned boorishly upon their heels, and, still speechless, returned whence they came.

That was my first introduction to the German soldier. Yes, mother dear, I have endeavoured to avoid any sort of exaggeration, and to give you the plain story of my first encounter with what I have since heard described as the army of civilisation.

162 Orders to Marry

Mind this—then I didn't know it was the army of civilisation ; I might have been more impressed if I had. I could not think what the creatures were, or what I had done to cause them to treat me like that. I have heard strange stories about American policemen—about the unceremonious fashion in which they have been known to handle criminals, but I have never heard it even hinted that they handle a "tough" of the deepest dye more unceremoniously than those two German soldiers handled me. You can imagine the sort of sight I looked ! My hat was hanging by one pin ; my hair was anyhow ; my skirt was tumbled and dusty, my shirt waist was torn ; I was so hot and uncomfortable that I could scarcely see out of my eyes for perspiration.

And this had happened to a free-born American woman for no reason at all ! A few moments before I was as happy as I could be, congratulating myself on the perfect enjoyment I was deriving from my holiday ; and now here I was, discarded, thrown by the way-side, treated as no American woman had ever been treated before. Was it strange that it took me some considerable time to appreciate the situation, and that then I should have understood no more at the end than I had done at the beginning ? After I don't know how long I had to go. I know that ominous train was still in the station, with its horrible passengers. I had a dreadful notion that another train was about to join the first. But I could not stay on that little patch for ever. Luckily those cowardly bullies had dumped me at the end of Bourschied, at which was my oldest house. I reached it. The door was

The End of her Holiday 163

fastened. Never in my whole experience of European country life had such a thing happened to me before—to find, on my return to my quarters, wherever they might be, that the door was fastened. I made sure that it was fastened, the thing was so startling. It was ; apparently it was bolted, locked, and barred as well—in the middle of the day ! I rapped with my knuckles, three separate times, and still no one answered. It was only when I picked up a stone and banged with that that signs of life came from within. It was Monsieur's voice which spoke. I took it that he was enquiring who was without—as if he did not know ! I answered him as best I could, but I knew that he did not understand a word I said, and I don't suppose he was any the wiser. The door was opened by Madame. There was no time wasted in talking. She just pointed to what they were doing and left me to draw my own conclusions.

The were putting things together, which I fancy they judged to be their most cherished possessions, and were making ready for a hasty departure. There could be no mistake, as I have hinted, about what they were doing ; why they were doing it was another matter altogether.

My dear mother, my landlord and landlady left the house within half-an-hour of my return, taking away with them on a hand-cart all they had which was dearest to them in the world—and I myself was out in the street with the door barred and locked against me. I also had my dearest belongings with me in the small grip which small though it was, I knew I should not be able to carry more than a quarter of a mile ; but as, ap-

parently, there was no one on whom I could count to give me the slightest assistance, I had to do the best I could. I had my money and a note of credit and other valuables in my satchel—that was all I had got. You remember that up to that moment I had not the slightest notion of what had happened or what I was to guard against, or in what direction I was to turn; and had it not been for a nondescript individual who came shuffling out of a blind alley, I think it possible that worse may have happened to me than actually did. I had a notion that the man was something of the waiter kind—and I proved to be right.

“You speak some English?” I inquired. The man was voluble.

“Yes, yes, yes, yes; I speak English very well, but I can't stop to speak now. I am in a hurry, it is impossible!”

He was such a find in my then desperate fix that I was not disposed to let him go—especially as he looked as if he were the kind of person it would be possible to hold. I caught at a sleeve of his coat.

“I will not keep you a moment longer than I can help. In the first place, why are you going? Why are they all going?”

“They fly for their lives!”

The reply was eloquent enough. I stared at the man. There was no doubt that he was in earnest.

“Fly for their lives—why?—from whom?”

“You do not know the Germans have come?”

“I saw some Germans at the station—but why have they come? What have the people

The End of her Holiday 165

done to them that they should be afraid of their lives?"

"I cannot stay here to talk nonsense!" Breaking away from my grasp he began to mount the winding road which led away from the village. I took care, before he had got half a dozen paces, to be again at his side. As he walked he talked. "You ask what the people have done that they should be afraid? What they have done! They have done nothing—nothing! It is what the Germans will do—that is the question! They come with ten million soldiers——"

"Ten million soldiers!"

"What does it matter if there are eight or nine or ten million?"

"But what have they come for?"

"Do you not know there is going to be war?"

"War!" Mother, I was surprised when he said that. "With whom is there going to be war? What about? I thought all the world was at peace. Has Luxembourg quarrelled with Germany?"

"Luxemburg has quarrelled with no one—not such a fool—no! It has got a soul which it can call its own. It is Germany which has quarrelled with all the world. To quarrel is their business."

"But why should Germany quarrel with all the world?"

"What does it matter why they quarrel? If they have no excuse, then they imagine one. Do I not tell you that to quarrel is their business? To them nothing is sacred. Not their own promises, not the property of others, not the lives of other men! I do not understand, although I tell you myself. But

I know that presently they will begin to fight with France. To get at France quickly they bring their soldiers through Luxembourg and Belgium. They have no right to do it—they have promised they would not—but what does that matter? If it were not for our soldiers they would do as they like, go where they like; they would not leave a wall standing in one of our houses, or a man or a woman alive. They kill children, these Germans, if there is no one else they can kill.”

I know that the man spoke wildly, without pausing to weigh his words; but I am bound to say that he impressed me as if he meant what he said. Germany has always appeared to me to be the centre of culture up-to-date. You know, mother, what we think about Germany at home, how we have been told that if we want real education, mental, moral, physical, we must go for it to Germany. That has been America’s point of view, and mine. It seemed ridiculous that we should be rushing from the most civilized nation in the world like panic-stricken cattle.

“I don’t believe a word you say!” I told him frankly what I felt. “Am I running away from Bourschied because of the stuff you are talking?”

He paused to gape. I thought for a moment that he was actually going to take his hat off, but he couldn’t do it because his hands were so full. he did manage to treat me to a sort of bow.

“I do not know why you run away from Bourschied! You came with me! Go back, do not run away.”

“I asked you where you were going.”

The End of her Holiday 167

"I? I fly for my life! You—you stay? You will find out by this time to-morrow what value German soldiers set upon a woman's life, to speak of nothing else."

He quickened his pace, as if he wished to leave me behind. There were stragglers all along the road; not one among them could understand English except himself. Whatever ridiculous, ignorant libels he might utter against the most cultured nation in the world, I was not going to let him leave me behind. I struggled to keep pace with him.

"Will you not tell me where you are going? I know you said you are going to save your life, but how are you going to do it?"

"I am going to catch a train."

"But we are not going to the station, we are going from it."

The station! Those animals—they are at the station! Do you think I want to go to the station? I am a Belgian—a soldier—I go to join my regiment. What do you think they'll do to me if they catch me? I hear already they have shot my cousin at Ettelbruck. If they are going to shoot me I prefer that they shall do it when I have a gun in my hand after having had a shot or two at them."

"You say that they have shot your cousin—why?"

"Why? you ask why? The German army has shot a waiter at the village café, there is no why! They shot him, that's all! Perhaps it was because he did not bring them their drinks fast enough—who can tell? What does it matter? I tell you

168 Orders to Marry

they shall not shoot me like that if I can help it. I will fire my one shot first for my country, if the good God pleases."

The man suggested such astounding ideas to my mind that I hardly knew what to make of them. He did not intend to frighten me; I am convinced that he meant to do nothing of the kind; but all the same he did. I had a dreadful feeling that those two German soldiers would have thought no more of killing me than their colleagues had apparently thought of shooting my companion's cousin. I glanced over my shoulder, half without intention, to make sure who there was behind. A sound as of men's rough voices came from where I knew the railway was on my left. The sound worried me. The fact of being tired made me nervy. Besides, I had had no dinner, in Bourschied they dined at noon; the supper hour was drawing near. There seemed to be no prospect of anything to eat.

"Where are you going to catch your train?" I asked.

"Along the line—further up—where there is a siding. Later, when it is dark, they are going to get some trucks together—anything; those brutes have stolen all the trains. It is not their intention to leave any for us. We will get what we can, and be thankful. You are lucky if you find a place in a horse-box."

"A place in a horse-box?" I gasped. "Won't there be any cars at all?"

"Don't I tell you that there will be what we can get. You will find there will be no cars."

"Where is this—odd train going?"

The End of her Holiday 169

“Where the train is going I cannot tell you, no one knows. I go to Brussels to join my regiment. Whether I shall get there—who can tell? or how? It depends upon the Germans. Their soldiers are everywhere. They have taken all the railways, without asking permission; it needs some rolling stock even to take a million soldiers by train. They are trying to get for us what the Germans have overlooked. We shall not have a new engine—do not count on it! we shall have any old thing they have left. We shall creep along from point to point. Every few hundred yards we shall be drawn aside—in our trucks—to let the German soldiers pass until there comes a place where the Germans will discover that there is a train on the line without authority from them. They may discover this on a bridge, or an embankment, or something of the kind; in which case they may decide that it may amuse them to pitch the whole thing on to whatever is below; they are very quick at work of that kind. Anyhow they will turn us out of the train if they do not lock us up, or shoot us, or punish us somehow—we shall have been guilty of a grave crime in traveling on a railway which has nothing to do with them! They will give us a few kicks perhaps, and send us away. You can get on afterwards as best you can. I know only that I go to Brussels, to join my regiment. The mobilisation order was only issued yesterday.”

What he had said filled me with the gloomiest forbodings. Fancy coming all the way to Europe for a holiday, and suddenly finding, without the least warning, such a prospect in front of you! I

170 Orders to Marry

attacked him on the food question; which had become a pressing one.

"Do you think we might be able to find something to eat? I have scarcely had anything all day, nothing since breakfast."

He stopped in the middle of the road and, turning, eyed me keenly.

"Food? You are English? You English are going to fight for us—it is almost sure, the good God be thanked! An Englishwoman is my friend, I will divide with her what I have—you shall have half my sausage."

It was kind of him to mistake my nationality, but I couldn't accept the compliment uncontradicted. I confessed that I was American. He eyed me as if the news surprised him. He was a thin, hungry-looking man, with high cheekbones and lean jaws. I felt as if my prospective share of that sausage was hanging in the balance.

"If," I hinted, I was so hungry, "you will allow me to pay for what you consider to be my proper share."

He cut me short, waving his hand as if with the desire to brush away an unfortunate interruption.

"I will share with you my sausage. I have a brother in America, he earns sometimes thirty dollars a week. He writes to my mother that in America all men are equal, and that there there is no army." I was not sure that I ought to allow this statement to go unchallenged. But that was not the moment to enter into a discussion about things which did not count. "One day I also will go to America." Then he added—what was of the first

The End of her Holiday 171

importance to me just then—"I will share with you my sausage."

He shared it, walking first perhaps another mile. Oh, how tired I was!—but I could hardly suggest to my host that he should alter his meal time to suit me. We supped amid quite a numerous company, scattered about, not gathered in one spot. There was the railway, then the high road, then a field opposite. In this field we made two of a varied assemblage—men, women and children, from babes in arms to veterans of seventy. Eeveryone had brought something to eat;—I don't know what I should have done without that divided sausage. It was not a very large one; I am bound to confess that that was the point which struck me most;—I am bound, also, to add that I was uncomfortably conscious that it would not have been a very large sausage even for one, and that, because of me, his meal was being considerably shortened.

I went to sleep before that train came; not because I had over-eaten myself, but because I was so tired. My waiter friend perceived that I was having some trouble with my eyelids.

"If mademoiselle would like to sleep"—he was quick in grasping the requirements of the position—"I should advise her to do so while she can. It may not be possible later. I will see that the train does not start without her."

He was as good as his word. I don't know how long it was before he roused me, but I shall always feel that that was one of the sweetest snatches of slumber I have ever had. It was quite dark, and when I awoke and found him bending over me. I should not imagine where I was or what had

happened. You remember it was August ; there was a delicious breeze.

“ The train,” he told me, “ is ready to start.”

‘ The train,’ he said ; you never saw such a train as the one to which he presently introduced me!— and ‘ ready to start!’ It might have been ready, but it made no attempt at starting for quite an hour. There was one horse-box ; in this my benefactor had reserved me a niche in a corner. I don’t know how many there were in that horse-box besides myself, a woman with two children was next to me. I think she got a little mixed in her mind as the night wore on ; first one child, and then the other, passed into my possession.

What a journey that was ! You will perceive, dear mother, that I understood nothing at all, where, or why, I was going. Looking back now it seems ridiculous, but really I was running away from those two great German soldiers. My waiter friend, possibly from motives of delicacy, had vanished. Two or three persons in that horse-car had a smattering of English, just enough to make it difficult to grasp their meaning. It was the funniest thing ! So far as I could make out the fear of those German soldiers filled all hearts. The whole country-side was flying because of them ; they had not that waiter’s excuse, a desire to join the army ; they were just flying for flight’s sake. It seemed dreadful that people should have such a feeling toward their next door neighbours that at the mere prospect of their coming they should become possessed by one thought only, to fly for their lives. At home we have always been taught that the Germans are the apostles of the newest culture !

The End of her Holiday 173

In that little backwater, where a stranger seldom penetrates, they were known only as the exponents of the Kaiser's policy of the "Mailed Fist," as living practitioners of his horrible gospel Blood and Fire! The idea that the world is to be ruled by blood and fire only has always been a more or less humorous one to us; it was serious and real enough to those villagers in Luxembourg!

All through the night we jerked, bumped and jolted along, never, I suppose, at more than twelve miles an hour. The engine, I presume, was not strong enough for its work. The vehicle in which we travelled would have been impossible had the driver attempted to take us faster. Once we made a sort of little flurry, culminating in a series of jumps which almost took us off the line, and then stood still. A voice came along the road, saying in a mysterious tone something to us from without which I did not understand. Replying to my request for information one of the women, who thought she could speak English, whispered:

"They come!—the Germans!"

I suppose that for the better part of an hour we stayed still, listening, with beating hearts, to—as far as I was concerned—we knew not what. At last there was a low rumbling. A train was approaching. It lumbered past. I should not have been surprised to learn that some of our passengers did not venture to breathe as it jolted past us. "The soldiers," murmured the woman; word of fearful import to her!

Apparently a train laden with troops had gone past us. We, making the best of our way to a siding, let it pass. What would have happened to

174 Orders to Marry

us if we had been noticed everyone was too terrified to think.

Light came through the openings in the horse-box, day had come. People began to grow restless. The coming of the day was to them a thing of evil omen; I fancy they were discussing whereabouts we might be. At last we stopped with a jerk. There were voices without—rough, harsh voices; cries in the horse-box; doors were thrown open, soldiers without, in that uniform which everyone seemed to hate and dread. Unceremoniously we were bundled out on to the line. I tried to tell myself that not only was I a woman, but I was an American citizen, and to comfort myself with the knowledge that those two facts should be more than sufficient to keep me free from even the shadow of inconvenience in every quarter of the world; but somehow, as I scrambled with the others out on the line, I had a feeling that I should like something material on which I could lean as well as mere abstract knowledge.

This feeling was stronger when, on reaching solid ground, I found that no one would pay the slightest attention to a word I had to say; indeed, I found it positively dangerous to speak at all. The only tongue I could speak was English. It was taken for granted by that extraordinary collection of human creatures among whom I found myself that anyone who spoke English must of necessity be English. I dare say there were two or three thousand men in that little wayside station, I don't know to this hour what the name of it was; a large number of them spoke and understood English almost as well as I did; but for some reason the

The End of her Holiday 175

idea that I could be American was one which they treated with contemptuous scorn;—I can conceive of no other reason for the extraordinary way in which they treated me. My fellow passengers, male and female, were passed from hand to hand as if they were the pickings of some rubbish-heap. They hustled me with them. When I tried to remonstrate they announced that I was a “damned English-woman.” A good many used much stronger language. It seemed to be the general opinion that because of my nationality I deserved to be hung and drawn and quartered at sight. I do not doubt that, really, there were many who were of quite a different opinion; but just then they were certainly not in the ascendant. I understand that at that moment there was a feeling among the Germans against the English which made them treat even solitary women in a manner which certainly did not redound to their credit. That was the morning of the 5th of August; the day before the British government had informed the Kaiser that if he persisted in his nefarious project of treating Belgium as if it were his own country and possessed of no rights of its own, it would fight to protect the weakling from the bully. To listen to those Germans you would have thought that in doing so England had been guilty of a heinous crime. Opinions differ. As I began to understand the position, for the first time in my life I felt that I should not be ashamed of being mistaken for English! There, mother, what do you think of that?

I let one of those German gentleman have it, just a little bit of my tongue. He was a tall,

176 Orders to Marry

handsome good-looking, young German officer, in the uniform of what I dare say was some fashionable cavalry regiment. What he was doing there I have no notion. At sight of me he twisted his moustache and nodded, with an air of familiarity which I resented. He spoke in perfect English.

“How goes it with the pretty little Miss Simpson? Ought she not to be with her papa and mamma at Putney?”

What he meant I had not a notion; I was merely aware that his intention was to be impertinent. He touched a trigger which fired something inside me.

“My name does not happen to be Simpson, and I am not, as you appear to suppose, English. I happen to be American. But let me tell you that I would rather be English a thousand times than German! I am sure you must be German. You appear to have all the charming characteristics of your countrymen. In my country they would use you for cleaning out the streets?”

Mother, it was not a well-bred thing to say; but really the atmosphere was beginning to be polluted by “Vaterland” and “Vaterlanders.” Think what I had suffered already! If you had only seen and heard that nice young man! I am bound to say that he was not easy to crush. He gave me as good as I sent, that flower of German chivalry!

“If you are American you are an ignorant little fool! If your father is here, or your brother, I will give myself the trouble to pull his nose.”

He paused, as if to await the arrival of either of the persons he named. Oh, how my fingers tingled to pull his nose! He called some one.

“Wilhelm! have this young woman put into a

The End of her Holiday 177

railway carriage, no matter where it goes. Have her taken away, that's all, and mind you do not let me see her again."

I was treated in very much the same way as on the preceding morning, this time by one huge soldier. He took the collar of my coat in both hands, ran me across the permanent way, exclaiming something as we went, to where a collection of cars was standing on the other side of the depot, lifted me off my feet and literally threw me into a compartment which was already over full.

I have been told that German officers are the most charming men in the world. I am willing to believe it—only they were not the kind which came my way. Those I met were evidently doing their best to do their master's bidding; they were carrying blood and fire with them wherever they went. I can fancy they were leaving a dreadful trail of "blood" and "fire" behind them wherever they went.

If they could have heard the fashion in which they were spoken of by the occupants of that compartment into which I had been thrown possibly they would have had the speakers dragged on to the line and shot there and then—on the grounds that they had all been guilty of what I am told the Kaiser calls lese-majeste.

They all had some English, though I was the only "foreigner" among them. The British and Americans the moment the ominous rumours began, had made what haste they could to quit the country. I, alone in Bourschied, had heard nothing. I really am inclined to think that I was the only representative of my nation left in

178 Orders to Marry

Luxembourg. It seemed that we were practically at the Belgian frontier. Fighting had already taken place. The Belgians had, it seemed, done something to prevent the desecration and invasion of their native land. Even as we sat there talking—in whispers; none of us dared to speak in our natural voices—a sound seemed to shake the earth; whenever I shut my eyes I can hear it still! It was the sound of guns or rifles which men were firing at each other. The idea that the intention on either side was to kill so affected me that I have no doubt I behaved like a perfect idiot. Had not a big, strapping Belgian woman put her arm round my waist and held me close to her, and kept on holding, as if I were some frightened child, I believe I should have fainted, or behaved in some way which would have brought shame upon my country. I could picture what was taking place; each time I could hear the sound of firing I could see men falling—dead! And this was happening quite close to where I was.

All through the night my suffering continued. Thank goodness I cannot bring home to you what I suffered—or you would suffer as I did. What happened to us in that train I cannot tell you—it was all a blur. Ultimately we must have left that station—because we did; but how long it was before we went I do not know. I have a misty notion that the night before came all over again. Sometime that sound ceased. It must have done, because I slept; but with the daylight it came again, louder, more insistent, more continuous than before. I have a recollection of waking up and looking through the car window, to find a glorious

The End of her Holiday 179

sun shining in my face—and the guns and rifles broke with greater violence as the sunlight came streaming from the heavens.

It was the dawn of another day—one of God's most beautiful days. It was like the dawn of the end of the world—of pandemonium—to me.

Some one exclaimed in English, as if taken by surprise:

"The battle must be just ahead of us—quite close; we must be going right into the fighting line."

People were standing up—the speaker among the rest. He seemed merely to voice the confusion, doubt, alarm, of the others. Those who knew the country peered through the windows on either side of the train to learn whereabouts we were. The horror of the preceding day came back to me. The Belgian woman drew me to her ample bosom again, or I don't know what I should have done. Of course I was hungry tired, worn, worried; strength seemed to have gone out of me. Each gunshot seemed to cut through my bosom. I have no excuse to offer, no real excuse; I behaved like a blithering idiot.

But all at once I did have an excuse. The noise of the firing was all at once right in our ears. The train had actually brought us to where they were fighting. I have heard since that the engine driver had orders to push along at all costs—to take us as near to Brussels as he could. He must have been a bold and a desperate man; for he obeyed his instructions as best he could. It was obvious, for some time, that fighting was taking place not far from the line. Suddenly the combatants had

180 Orders to Marry

spread out wider, broadened the attack and the defence. The battle had not actually reached the railway; our driver made a desperate effort to push on before it did. What he tried to do proved to be impossible. Troops appeared on all sides. The driver had perforce to stop—we were in the centre of the battle.

It would be impossible to attempt to describe to you the position. I myself have never been able to realise what it was. I never shall. I have a vague notion that the train was passing along perfectly level ground, that houses—mean houses—were about us on all sides, sixty or seventy yards from where we were; and that actually where we were were no dwellings, no trees,—nothing, except wide spreading banks of slag which must have been brought there from the neighbouring furnaces.

Our progress had been stopped by what seemed to me to be thousands of men, who, I was afterwards told, were Germans. They used our train as cover, shielding themselves behind it until hoarse words of command rang out, and somehow they came streaming past into the open ground on the other side. As they came they raised their guns and fired.

I presume I lost my head, that in that train we all did. Don't you think it would have been strange if we had behaved like normal men and women? Ours was one of those little boxes which they call compartments in Europe, with narrow seats on either side intended to hold, at most, eight or ten people, with a door at either end. Someone opened the door near me. People

The End of her Holiday 181

began to scramble out as if bereft of their senses, blind to the fact that, obviously, they were safer in the train than out of it. And I may have been, perhaps, the maddest of them all; like some frightened wild thing which it is impossible to keep within bounds. I have a dreadful recollection that when the big Belgian woman who had held me in her arms all through the night did her best to persuade me to listen to reason, I dragged myself away from her sheltering hands and practically threw myself out of the train.

To pass from our compartment to the ground without involved a descent of between three and four feet. The footboards are so placed that if you are agile you can use them as aids to descent. Just then, so far as I was concerned, they might have been non-existent. I sprang from the compartment straight to the ground. I believe I was not alone in doing this. Driven out of their wits by the horror of the position many of them behaved like panic-stricken fools. There was a motly mob of men, women and children, striving to keep their footing amid a host of soldiers filled with the lust of battle and incapable of thinking of anything else. Looking back I do not see how they can be blamed if they treated us as if we were foolish, frenzied cattle who insisted on getting in their way. Arms were stretched out to thrust us this way and that; one man struck me with the butt of his gun; unflattering words were growled in German; too late I was conscious of what a fool I had been. Pushed this way and that, I was a solitary woman in an angry sea of wild men. When, at a word of command, they stood shoulder

182 Orders to Marry

to shoulder, I found myself between two of them as if I were a third. The whole crowd of them fired, close to my ears.

And then the component parts of the world seemed rent asunder. I gathered afterwards that someone had fired back, with huge guns which were in a fortress less than half a mile from where we were. The great host of Germans, of whom I was one, were essaying what they called a "frontal attack," trying, reckless of life, limb, everything! to take that armed place by the mere force of their desperate attack.

For the first time, I believe, they had come out into the open, enabling the defenders to get a sight of them. Taking instant advantage of their opportunity, they poured on them a hail of steel.

Oh God! that such things should be!

One moment there was that great concourse of ravening men, filled with the lust of battle, in their eagerness to play a soldier's part indifferent to life or death; the next not one of them was left, or so in that first blind, awful agony, it seemed to me. The guns of that fortress mowed them down like ears of corn before the reaper's scythe.

The strangest part of it was that I was left untouched. The man on my right went toppling to the ground, snatching at me as he went; the man behind almost pitched me forward on to my face; I remained standing among the wounded and the dead.

Of course it was a lucky chance, that was all; the thing might not happen again in a hundred years. The next time I alone should fall; they would be left upon their feet. It was just the

The End of her Holiday 183

fortune of war. A good phrase—the fortune of war—in a case like that. Had I been asked to write a paper describing what my feelings would probably be in the practically incredible event of such an occurrence happening to me, I probably should have written something which would have been entirely wide of the mark. The truth is that at the actual moment I had no feelings. I shudder now as I try to write, haltingly enough; I scream when the memory comes back to me in bed. When the pictures comes back to me of myself standing up alone in that army of the dead, I pray God to have mercy and blot it out. But then I felt nothing. I have a notion that I looked about and wondered.

Two things brought me back to consciousness of earth. I was looking down at the man whose body lay across my feet, wondering, in a neutral sort of way, what he was doing there. He moved; turned right over on his back! stretched out his arms; muttered something in German which I should not have understood if I had caught what he said. Others did the same. Men prone on their faces, on their backs, their sides, seeming to break the spell which bound them, began to move. It all happened as in a dream; in an instant; and while I watched and wondered there came the sound of further firing from the Belgian fort whose death dealing munitions of war had placed those German soldiers where they were.

As I look back I am struck by what I have a misty notion moved me then. As those weapons of war belched forth their threats of death, a great many of the dead began to come to life. It was

as though they had carried a message which was understood even by men beyond the grave. Bodies which I had supposed were dead assumed positions which proved that they were not. I was told afterwards that only occasionally modern gun-fire kills outright. A man struck goes down like a ninepin. Modern artillery, especially fired at comparatively short range, has a trick, given certain conditions, of so displacing a current of air that bodies of men can be swept off their feet and yet remain comparatively uninjured. That was a case in point. Men had gone down as if stricken by death who were to live for many a long year to come. There was no question of being "comparatively uninjured;" I imagine that they represented in their persons every variety of gunshot wound; but at least many of them were yet alive. And as that fort began to do its best to complete the work which it had begun, as I have said, those who had seemed dead began to show that they were still alive by struggling to regain an upright posture.

The big man who was lying across my feet was one of those whom the cannon called back. He clung to my skirt with both hands, trying to take advantage of its assistance to help him stand. But the task was beyond his powers. One side of him had been nearly shot away. The mere thought of such a horror would, in the ordinary course, have been enough to deprive me of my senses; but in what I cannot but regard as a real moment of trial, the actual effect was to bring my senses back. You know, mother, I have always been mad on nursing; I have always wanted to

The End of her Holiday 185

be a nurse ; how, short of enrolling myself as a professional, I have taken every course which has been accessible to the mere outside amateur. I remember you have told me that if I were ever called upon, in real life, to do what it has pleased me to do in what you called "play," it would be bad for the patient, because of my constitutional incapacity to look at, far less touch with the requisite firmness, bad cases of physical trouble.

But, mother, if you have said so, you have been wrong, at least so far as that one instance went to show. So soon as I saw that poor man's plight, and realised how dreadful it really was, I was as cool and steady as ever I was in my life. I had not the least desire to shriek, or to be guilty of any nonsense of that kind. My one longing was to get hold of something which would enable me to stay the blood which was coming from his side before my eyes. I was on the point of removing the over-coat which was strapped to the back of a man who lay in a crumpled up posture, which showed, to even my inexperienced eyes, that he must be quite dead, in the hope that I might find part of it which would serve as a bandage.

Just as I was leaning forward to reach the coat something like a miracle happened. I was addressed in perfect English by a man whom I recognised as one of the passengers in my compartment who had hitherto spoken scarcely a word.

"Mademoiselle is a nurse?" He was holding a valise wide open, which I recognised was full of surgical instruments and medical bandages. "I am a surgeon. Realising that something of this

186 Orders to Marry

sort might happen, I have brought what I fancied might be wanted. If you wish to give some assistance to that poor fellow you will find this strapping useful. As you'll have to cut away his tunic you will need these."

Somehow he gave me the very thing I needed. If I had not lost the power of speech I might perhaps have found eloquent words with which to thank him. As it was, I confined my attention strictly to business. My friend in need moved a step or two farther away. Fifty doctors and nurses would not have been too many. The consciousness of how much depended upon my poor efforts caused me, I do believe, to work with more skilful fingers than I had ever done in all my life before.

But my work was interrupted before I had done anything really worth doing. Guns in the fort were still using that particular piece of ground as a target. More than once I had been spattered with earth cut up by bullets. Such men as could rise to their feet had done so. Officers were issuing orders; they issued orders to me. One laid his hand on my shoulder and addressed me—for a second time—with words I did not understand.

"Can you not," I asked him, "have this poor fellow moved to where he can be properly treated?"

"You are English!" he exclaimed. I informed him of his mistake. "It is the same thing," he declared, with preposterous lack of logic. "Whether you are English, American, or what you are, makes no difference; you must be mad to suppose it does. You must get back to your train; it is starting."

The End of her Holiday 187

He called to someone, who took the form of the usual huge soldier, who handled me in the usual unceremonious way ; that is, he just lifted me off my feet, carried me like a babe in arms, deposited me in the compartment, and shut the door. In his grip I struggled with all my force, but against his gigantic strength I was useless. I never saw anything like those specimens of German soldiers which came my way. They were not men, they were giants, quite exceptional examples of their kind. Before I could scramble off the floor on to my feet to enable me to proffer some effectual remonstrance, the train was off, and the first might-have-been patient with whom I had ever come into actual contact was left behind. When I could get to the window, near enough to look out, he was nowhere to be seen, at least so far as I was able to judge. They would not let me stop there long enough to make sure. Quite a fusillade was taking place without ; the train was being continually struck by shot. Someone gripped my skirt and dragged me back.

I was not in the same compartment as that which I had quitted. My fellow passengers were all strange to me. They were beside themselves with terror, as I had been myself only a few moments before. They seemed uncertain whether it would not be safest to crouch upon the floor. They kept up a continual lamentation, women cried ; so for the matter of that, did men. Some of the mothers were so alarmed themselves that they were unable to comfort their own children. One exception there was to the general fear, a child, a boy of about three or four years old, a

188 Orders to Marry

bonny youngster, with naturally curly hair and and big, dark eyes. Whose child he was I was never certain. He seemed quite at his ease with anyone ; for instance, with me, though we neither of us understood a syllable of what the other said. So far as he was concerned the whole proceedings might have been a joke. We were continually being struck by missiles from the fort ; I do not say that they aimed at us ; they must have known we were non-combatants ; we were right in the line of fire ; they hit us by chance. Once a shot came right through a pane of glass, sending the fragments flying all over the compartment ; more than one brushed against me in its flight. The boy clapped his hands and laughed ; he thought it was a jest. Only by the mercy of God did it avoid being to him a messenger of death or disfigurement for life. A woman started up from the floor, her face was bleeding, torn by a splinter of glass. In the midst of her concern for herself her glance fell on the boy I was holding. Leaning forward she snatched him from me with a cry. Startled, I wondered what was wrong ; apparently she could not speak English ! she pointed to my costume, and I understood. I perceived that it was soaked with blood, the blood of the wounded soldier I had sought to bandage. I had been unconscious of my own state ; the boy, brought into contact with my person, was smeared all over. I was shocked. Taking refuge in a corner seat I tried to think what I could do to cleanse him of the stain. It was then, I think, that I became conscious that my grip and satchel were both gone ; I might have left them in yesterday's train. I was unable to

The End of her Holiday 189

feel any interest in their adventures; I was content at being conscious that they were gone. That their absence meant that I was left without a scrap of personal property in the world did not seem to trouble me in the least. Nothing mattered to me then. I would like to have been able to change my gown for the mother's sake, and the boy's; that was all.

After re-starting I do not think we can have continued in that train many minutes. We seemed to be passing through a fighting zone, endeavouring to get away from it. I wonder if a train laden with passengers ever had such a journey before. Evidently orders had been given to take us out of the danger zone, if the thing was possible. It was not. Suddenly the train was absolutely swept by a hail of bullets. Plainly our progress had been interrupted; something had happened; we gave a little series of jolts and jerks; stopped short; made no apparent attempt to move again. They said that the driver had been killed. The former scene was re-enacted. People descended on to the line, amid a babel of various exclamations. An old gentleman spoke to me in excellent English as he climbed on to the line.

"Mademoiselle had better get out with the rest of the women. It is plainly no use to continue in the train. We are getting into the centre of the fighting. She had better seek safety for herself. We may have a better chance if each of us goes alone; like that we shall not offer so big a target for bullets."

He courteously removed his hat as he climbed down the footboards, and, gaining the ground,

190 Orders to Marry

vanished. I do not know what became of him ; I never saw him again.

I was the last to leave the compartment ; not for any particular reason, but simply because it did not occur to me that it might be as well to go. I doubt if I should have troubled to move even then if someone, coming along the line, seeing me the only occupant, had not shouted to me something in French. I guess he was just telling me to pull myself together and get out.

I got out. A few steps brought me to some open country beside the line. I was dimly impressed by the nature of the country. It seemed that we were in a flourishing suburb of some big town. There was an open space by the side of the line, which might have been intended to be used as a pleasure ground. Seats, with and without backs, were scattered here and there. A copse of straggling young trees were in front of me and on the left. Some day they might have become a credit to other trees ; just then they were still struggling for existence. Beyond these trees there seemed to be a broad, well-kept road ; more seats on either side.

The only thing in sight which suggested life was a motor car. Apparently something had gone wrong with it. A man and a woman were endeavouring to put it right. It was in a position of some danger ; the quicker they were in getting their auto as far as possible from that place the better it would be, but the crackling, yapping, snarling sound made by guns, with whose performances I already was familiar, was unpleasantly close at hand.

The End of her Holiday 191

I myself had scrambled through a broken fence. I had gone through so much emotion during the last four-and-twenty hours that I had no more left. I expect, although I did not know it, that I was hungry, tired, dazed. I cared just enough for the things of this world to stagger to a bench with some sort of a back, and there was content to let things rip and take my ease; and there I should probably have been content to remain had it not been for something which occurred.

A small girl had been watching that man and woman in their struggles with the auto. A number of men came running across the open ground, taking advantage of the cover afforded by the straggling group of weedy trees. The moment they got among the trees they threw themselves down flat; an instant later each man was lying on his stomach, a rifle at his shoulder, pointing at someone whom he could see but I could not. Directly they had thrown themselves down flat other men came scurrying forward, to sink down at their sides; and others, and others, until right across that stretch of open public pleasure ground soldiers were lying, ready to fire, without a second's warning, at I know not what.

The man and woman tinkering with the auto were so much engrossed with their task that apparently they did not notice the advent of the soldiers; but the little girl who was with them did. Not only did she observe their coming, but, childlike, seemed to take it for granted that their proceedings suggested that it was a game which they were playing, a game in which she was quite at liberty to take a hand. With a shrill little laugh and cry she

192 Orders to Marry

darted out into the open and, clapping her hands, started to run right across the hidden line of death. No sooner had she started than I realised what was the nature of the peril into which she was unwittingly thrusting herself farther and farther with every little step she took. Someone at the other end of the public pleasure ground was waiting to get a good aim at those soldiers lying down. At any moment rifles might flame on either side of that small girl, while she ran laughing on. I did not stop to think ; I got on to my feet and I shouted to the child. I do not know if she heard, but I did not wait to see. I just ran towards her faster than ever I ran in my life. It was only a distance of perhaps sixty or seventy yards. I reached her and I snatched her up. I fancy that, suddenly realising my presence, and that I was a stranger, she screamed with terror as I caught her in my arms. I did not know what to do, whether to go backwards or forwards. I plunged on, and had covered half the distance when the rifles sang.

Those soldiers were not likely to notice a young woman, more than half beside herself, rushing across a double line of fire, a little child clasped tightly to her breast.

They obeyed orders.

What else is a soldier to do? Obedience is the law of his life. This, as I hold, patent truism, was well drilled into me, not directly I came back to life, but later on.

It was one of the most delicious sensations when consciousness first returned. And also the strangest feeling. I could not think what had happened, or where I was, or anything definite at all, except that

The End of her Holiday 193

I was floating in languid ecstasy on the soothing surface of a sea of bliss, which was not very definite. For quite a considerable period that was enough to feel ; I should like to have the chance of feeling it all over again. I seemed to be in the glow and glory of that light which never was on sea or land.

By long and lovely degrees it dawned upon me that that oft quoted mystic light was in a room. I did not attempt to take in any vulgar details ; I only knew it was a lovely room. That knowledge was enough. I lay quite still and drank it in ; and after a while I fell asleep again.

That is the clear picture which was presented to my mind of my first return to life. I fancy that when I went back to sleep I stayed there, possibly for a day or two. When consciousness came back a second time the world was somehow different, not less pleasant, but more material. I knew that room was not of the fabric of which dreams are made. It was real, and the things in it were real, especially to my joy, the sunshine which streamed across my bed and showed me a wilderness of green in the garden without. And the sound I heard was real. I was still in such a state of haze that it took me several seconds to know what it was ; then, actually !—I smiled as the knowledge came to me—it was the sound of someone whistling, softly, so softly that you had to listen to make sure you heard it. It was a born whistler, whoever it was, or so it seemed to me, though the subject on which the gift was displayed was not precisely classical. Presently the whistler departed from whistling and took to words. He sang as sweetly as he whistled, in the ghost of a tenor which will, I think, come back to

194 Orders to Marry

me by night or by day as often as I choose to summon it. The words with which I have since grown familiar, coming I daresay from a million mouths, sounded as if they were nearly poetry the first time I heard them sweetly hummed :

It's a long way to Tipperary,
It's a long way to go !
It's a long way to Tipperary,
To the sweetest girl I know !
Good-bye Piccadilly,
Farewell to Leicester Square.
It's a long way to Tipperary,
But my heart's right there !

When I heard those tender lines repeated by the same voice perhaps a dozen times, I was not so sure about the poetry, but I knew I liked them. I'm afraid I did an improper thing. There were various articles on a little table just within reach of my bed. Among them was a phial which I presumed contained medicine. I managed so that this fell to the floor, better than I meant ; coming into contact with something as it fell so that it shattered into I don't know how many pieces, which startled even me.

Evidently it also startled someone who was just outside the window, who was attired in what the English call "flannels." It seemed to me that he was more surprised than the occasion required. Springing through the open French window, dashing up to my bed, he stood and stared as if I were a thing of awe and mystery ; but there was nothing in the least mysterious about what he said, or the way in which he said it.

"So you are you ? Good egg !"

The End of her Holiday 195

I said, "I presume that you are you, and I hope that you are a good egg also!"

He smiled. I soon learned that he was great at smiling; that his mouth turned up at the corners, in a whimsical way, as if in eternal enjoyment of some particularly private joke.

"I always said it would be just like this."

"That was very clever of you. Nature has not been so generous to all of us; it hasn't told us what would be just like what."

Something caught his eye, or his ears, or something; the look on his face changed, until it became just a note of surprise.

He made one remark, and one only; it struck me as being an odd one.

"This beats the band!"

It puzzled me to know what it was he wished me to understand.

"I am afraid I am dull, but, might you be meaning anything particular, or was that more cleverness?"

His surprise seemed to continue. "You are an American! I'm not sure that doesn't make it better. I ought to have guessed it from the first. Helen always did say that there was something queer about the cut of your skirt."

I knitted my brows and I sort of read into his soul. Was the man always saying odd things. We were sure to get on very well together if he was. It was rather a strain not to as nearly as good as tell him so.

"I have not the pleasure of knowing your sister, but I have been told that Englishwomen can be rude. I'm sure there's nothing wrong about the cut of my skirt."

196 Orders to Marry

“No? Perhaps not. Perhaps I misunderstood. Those sort of things don't interest me ; to me it's a matter of complete difference whether you cut them straight or the cross.”

I wondered if he was trying to be clever again ; to me he sounded merely silly. But I forgave him, because practically all men, when they come to talk on questions of importance, show how they are hampered by limitations of sex. Something in his manner rather nettled me—so many Englishmen have a knack of doing that. I don't believe they mean to, but they do. But, after all, awkwardness is a sort of crime.

“It is sufficiently trying to have to admit my nationality, without going on to the question of skirts.

His evident uneasiness seemed to hint that I had been harder on him than I intended.

“Quite so, quite so. But, mind you, I am not prepared to admit that your nationality is a drawback. That's not the point ;—the point is that I've always said it would be just like this. You look puzzled ; permit me to explain. For instance, only three days ago I said to my sister Helen—after she had said to me, ‘I don't believe in Tapson——’”

“Who is Tapson?”

“Tapson?—he's the doctor. He's a real good sort! Of course he's a bit of an ass, but doctors nearly always are! ‘In spite of Tapson,’ Helen went on, ‘this may be a case of aphasia.’—‘I don't believe you know what aphasia is,—that was me. ‘In which event,’ Helen persisted—she is persistent, even for a woman!—‘it may last twenty years.’—‘Twenty years!’—I laughed. ‘Don't be absurd!

The End of her Holiday 197

It's just like this,'—here's my point!—'she will just wake up all in a moment.'—So you did! When I first sat down outside that window you were as good as dead; when I came into the room you were as much alive as I am. You didn't seem to think yourself that you ever had been dead."

"Has it really been like that with me? How odd! And yet I have a notion that it may have been;—the life—coming from ever so far."

He looked as if he were uncertain whether to go away.

"I hope I'm not disturbing you. The nurse is out, or lying down, or something—I don't know what;—and Helen's out——"

"Is Helen your sister?—Who are you?"

"I'm Helen's brother. I beg your pardon—of course you take that for granted—the fact is I'm Bob."

"Bob?"

"Just plain Bob. This house is Helen's; it was her husband's—Harold Fullerton. He was shot practically as soon as he got there."

"Shot?—as soon as he got there?—where?"

"That's the trouble. We've not been able to get any definite information—probably shan't till after it's all over. He went out with the first lot. There was a lot of loose scrapping directly he got there. The War Office people never have made it clear where 'there' was; it is the sort of thing which isn't mentioned in despaches. We have never heard a word from that day to this—that is, since the day he left England. In reply to our inquiries he was reported missing. Then his dead body was picked up in the field near Dinant; how it got there no one knows. The idea is that he was taken by

198 Orders to Marry

the Germans, and—something happened. There have been thousands of such cases. Poor old Harold! he had his ways, but he was one of the best. Helen has borne up like a brick. The fact is”—he glanced round the room, as I thought a little guiltily—“What does it matter? After all things sometimes do turn out for the best, in this best of all-possible worlds. Then there’s Jones—of course Jones is Joan; she’s all that makes life worth living to Helen. You’re responsible for her.”

“I’m responsible?” He had a way of talking which made it a little difficult for a stranger to follow.

“Of course you’re responsible—that’s why you’re here.”

“I’m afraid that your meaning is quite beyond me.”

I was beginning to feel—already!—in a delightful, inconsequent sort of way, that he was rather an exasperating man.

“I haven’t the least notion why it should be. Aren’t you a heroine?—One moment—who am I?”

“You’re Bob,—I beg your pardon, I should have said you’re—well someone else, but I don’t know who.”

“I’m not anyone else!—I’m Bob, plain Bob! I’m Helen’s brother. That’s where you have me at a disadvantage—I don’t know who you are.”

“I’m——” I hesitated, then I said—“I’m Miss Aredale.”

“Oh, are you? Then you can keep it? Haven’t you got a name of your own? I don’t want your mother’s name,—I want yours.”

The End of her Holiday 199

“ My christian name is Constantia.”

“ Constantia? That’s rather a mouthful—I shall call you Con, to begin with ; and probably a hundred other things before long,—but I’ll begin with Con.—I presume you’re aware that if ever a woman did earn the Victoria Cross—I take it that you’ve heard of the Victoria Cross—it’s a twopenny half-penny thing they give you for valour—she’s you.”

“ I am afraid Mr. Bob——”

“ I’m not Mr. Bob!—Bob,—plain Bob.”

“ That you take a good deal for granted. You do presume when you presume that I’m a heroine.”

“ All right, I do presume! But I presume you are aware that you saved Jones’s life?”

“ I’m aware of nothing of the sort,—and I don’t know who Jones is.”

I all at once had a ridiculous feeling that I wanted to cry.

“ Jones,—otherwise Joan Fullerton—is Helen’s only child ;—I call her Jones because, although she’s a darling love, she’s a limb,—which of course is the finest compliment you can possibly pay to a female child of six years old,—and don’t forget it!—Don’t you remember her doing a straight-as-an-arrow sort of flight across the public garden? and ten thousand soldier boys volleying and thundering at her from back and front—and you springing with a single bound into the centre of the fiery circle, and hooking her up by the hair of her head just in time to do her out of three quarters of a ton of lead, which was intended for her, but which you got instead. It was one of the finest things of the kind I ever saw, and I’ll take jolly good care that it’s mentioned in despatches.”

"I don't know why you're laughing at me like this."

"Am I laughing at you? Am I laughing at you?" The second time he repeated his inquiry he positively shouted, as if I were not a nerve-racked invalid still lying on a bed of sickness. She came in, then a voice said, with a sort of little drawl at the end,

"Bob! what are you doing?"

He put his finger up to his lips. I could see nothing and no one; but I gathered from his gesture that he was endeavouring to impose silence on some person unknown, he of all people! and he whispered, "Back again, back again," in his little ghost of a tenor.

"She's just woke up;—as I said she would do."

Someone came fluttering across the room, noiselessly, to the other side of my bed. A quaint dainty little person, a child in mourning. When she saw what kind of creature I was she just said nothing. She just knelt down, touched her cheek against mine, put her arms about my neck;—that was all. The consciousness of her nearness filled me with a strange sweet sense of comfort: and presently she whispered:

"You have been sent to me from God."

"I trust I may be." I also whispered.

"You saved my child, nothing is more sure. But for you I should have lost all that I had in the world. You will always be my patron saint, and Joan's. I shall always see you with the eye of my heart when I pray. Nothing will ever make you anything but the most beautiful woman in the world to me."

The End of her Holiday 201

Other things she murmured ; I could not set them down in a correct list, but they were pleasant to hear ; they seemed to come from her heart to mine. For myself, I could say nothing. Presently her brother went through a sort of form of introduction—as if it were needed !

“ Miss Aredale, this is Helen—she is my sister. She is perhaps a little given to sentiment ; but in a woman that may sometimes be excused—if it is not overdone. I’ve always told you, H., that you have a trick of overdoing it—so don’t.”

“ Stuff and nonsense !” came from the head whose cheek was touching mine. Then I knew that there was small risk of the sentimental tap being turned on too freely by her. I had to smile, Bob looked so taken aback. I started to make inquiries on my own account.”

“ Please may I ask you people where I am ?”

“ You’re at Quarr Abbey. You’ve been here for nearly eight weeks.”

“ What !” I drew myself away from that soothing cheek and half sat up in bed. “ I beg your pardon—I hope I haven’t hurt you.” This was to Mrs. Fullerton, whose head had nearly been jerked against the sheets. “ How long did you say I had been here ?”

“ Eight weeks the day after to-morrow. You did nearly give me a bump. What is wrong ?”

“ Wrong ? What is wrong ? How long did you say I had been here ?”

“ It took nine days to bring you here——”

“ Nine days to bring me here ? Where did you bring me from ?—and where am I now ?”

"You ought not to get excited. Doctor Tapson said it might be bad for you."

"I'm very much obliged to Doctor Tapson, but—who may Doctor Tapson be?"

"He's your medical attendant—a charming man. He takes a very great interest in your case. When you first came he paid you two or three visits a day."

"I told you who Doctor Tapson was!" This was Bob, who spoke with an air of grievance. "He's the doctor johnnie, a bit of an ass, but a real good sort."

"But, I don't understand. Eight weeks here, and nine days bringing me?"

"You see, it's like this. You had a bit of a squeak. When they first began to put you together again—" this was Bob. At this point I interrupted him. It was enough to make anybody interrupt.

"When they began to put me together again!" His sister interposed, seating herself on the coverlet, putting her arm round my waist, drawing herself close to me.

"S-sh!—Bob, don't be silly! My dear, it's only by a miracle that you're here at all. You were right in the line of fire, you and Joan. Directly they had fired—which I don't think they ever would have done if they realised what you were doing—Bob dashed forward and waved his handkerchief. They treated it as a flag of truce, and let us carry you away. And two German soldiers came and helped us to do it. Whatever they may have against the German soldiers I shall always say that for them, that they stopped firing to help

The End of her Holiday 203

us carry you away. You know that must have been by consent on either side. Then we took—you really must excuse my saying what was left of you to an hotel at Liege. The doctor said that though there might be breath left in your body, it could not possibly be for long; that you must be dead in a few hours. But he was wrong; God worked a miracle of healing for both of you. After a day or two the doctor admitted that, since you were still alive, you might continue living. Liege was besieged, it was awful! Again and again the street in front of our hotel was covered with dead bodies. We simply had to go to England, both Bob and I; we could not help it. The doctor said we might take you with us, so we did. Oh, my dear, it was a business bringing you here! But we got you here, God be thanked! You and Joan have been winning your way back for just on eight weeks. Joan began to chatter more than a week ago. This is the first time we've known you had a tongue, and a pretty tongue it is! Thank God for the knowledge, dear. Now you must lie down and go to sleep again, and then, when nurse returns, if Doctor Tapson says Bob has not allowed you to get over-excited and fatigued—he's a most thoughtless person, Bob is! think of some of the things we've got to say to each other, and, my dear, won't we just say some of them? Now, you must be good, and let me make you comfy on your pillow."

She began to place me back upon the pillow—so gently!—but I had to remonstrate,—I simply didn't know what the position might be.

"But, mother!" I cried. She stopped and stared.

204 Orders to Marry

"Mother? My dear, what do you mean?"

"Does she know? Have you told her?"

I eyed the sister and brother. They seemed puzzled.

"My dear, I don't understand. Have I told who?—what?"

That put me all of a twitter, it was her air that did it. I began to try to get out of bed. I don't know if the idea was to rush straight off to Tankerton, Maine. The desperate nature of the situation nearly turned my brain, what little I had left to turn. She was calm and sweet; she had tight hold of my waist.

"Please try and tell us what is troubling you. You seem to forget that we English are proverbially dull. Tell us, please."

She spoke as if I were a child of two.

"Don't you know I've got a mother?"

"A mother?" The idea of my having such a belonging seemed to be a novel one to her. "Living?"

"Please don't suggest that she's dead!" I believe my voice was foolishly broken. "Though I shouldn't wonder, considering that she seems to have been left for more than two months under the impression that I am killed, or a prisoner, or wounded, or something awful. I must go to her at once."

She continued to treat me as if I were a child.

"Do please try to be reasonable." She turned to Bob. "Bob, you do seem to have made a frightful mess of things! You might have thought of Mrs. Aredale's terrible anxiety!"

Mr. Bob seemed disposed to tear his hair.

The End of her Holiday 205

“But how was I to know there was a Mrs. Aredale, when I didn't even know Miss Aredale's name was Aredale? You yourself have told me that there was no mark on any of her clothes to show what her name was—if you can give me your mother's address, Miss Aredale, I'll cable to her at once. If she is anywhere within reach of the telegraph she will know all about you in less than an hour.”

And that, mother dear, was how you first came to learn that I was still alive, after nearly three months' silence. Mr. Bob telephoned you a cablegram, or rather we did it between us,—he, and Mrs. Fullerton, and I. We all sent bits. You remember what a tremendously long cablegram it was, and how we sent it in instalments? The telephone was in the room almost at the end of my bed. First he sent his own message. “Your daughter Constantia is perfectly all right. R. Macfine, Quarr Abbey, Quarr, Sussex, England.” Then I sent a message. “Dear mother, Mr. Macfine has cabled you that my health is nearly quite restored. Will wire later to tell you just what has happened. Constantia.” Then a more detailed message from Helen. “Your daughter, Constantia, has saved my little girl's life, and nearly lost her own in doing so. She has quite recovered now, and in two or three days will be able to write to you with her own hand. I would have communicated before, but did not even know her name or your address. Everything is going on all right now. Helen Fullerton.”

I suppose you had those three messages within a few minutes of each other, after that long interval

206 Orders to Marry

of silence. How they must have made my darling mother stare! And before you had begun to digest them, the real long cablegram began to come over the wire. It was again a joint composition. What it cost I tremble to think. And then your cable back again! That cable company must have made a fortune out of us. And you have had at least one message daily since. That was more than a fortnight ago, but though everything is, and has been, perfectly all right this is the first time I have really been able to hold a pen; and now you see how badly I use it! Helen has written Bob has sent you some rubbish in which there has been a great deal too much about me, and now I wind up the story.

I am so glad to hear that you are coming to Europe—to England—to Quarr. Bob says that this is the End of my Holiday, but I am not so sure.

Mother, darling, I am almost afraid that you will have to get used to calling him Bob. Uncle Alfred, and the minister, and Dr. Dixon, they all of them will when I bring him over to Tankerton. Constantia.



The Hunter's Moon.

MISS CONSTANTIA AREDALE, an American girl engaged to an Englishman, desirous of expressing certain of her views on the subject of International Courtship, writes from Quarr Abbey, Quarr, Sussex, to her mother, of the town of Tankerton, in the State of Maine :

My Dear Mother,—I want to write to you about something very important,—so important indeed, that I don't know how to put it. I certainly don't know how to begin. If I could only get properly started I believe I might get on,—but I simply can't! I have sat with this stupid fountain pen between my fingers for the last twenty minutes ; I have dropped two blots : and still it won't come !

It is not exactly that I wish to ask your advice ; quite frankly, mother dear, I probably shouldn't follow it if it were given. Indeed more, the mere fact of your advising me to do one thing would quite possibly cause me to do another. Human nature is so full of inconsistencies,—at least mine is. And as to being dictated to by anyone on the subject of my marriage—well, there!—I simply couldn't stand it! I have the American girl's pro-

found conviction that the only person who is entitled to say a word on the private, intimate, sacred subject of what she is to do with herself is—herself. The idea that anyone—except herself—should have anything to do with the disposal of her own person is, to me—mother—I can only say that to me—it is a dreadful one.

I remember Mrs. Stanley Cohen—you cannot have forgotten Mrs. Stanley Cohen,—the woman we met that year we spent in the Adirondacks, who nearly always wore blues and yellows, and who never sat, but flopped. I remember her saying to me that her daughter Millicent was always asking her advice about the man she was going to marry. I should have thought that it would have been rather difficult for Millicent to marry anyone, but according to her mother, it was just the other way. Nearly every other man she met ‘popped’—that was her mother’s word—in the shortest time on record. Then Millicent would go to her parent and say, ‘Shall I marry Mr. Johnson Brady, mother?’—and then her mother would instantly reply, without even stopping to consider who Mr. Johnson Brady was, ‘No!’—and, so far as she was concerned, the subject was closed. Mrs. Cohen was of opinion that when Millicent did meet the man she wanted to marry the dear girl wouldn’t say a word about it ;—she would just marry him.

That’s the way we have in America ; when we are in doubt we talk. You mustn’t jump to the conclusion that I don’t want to marry Bob because I’m going to talk about him ; my case is an exception—I am apt to find that the cases in which I am concerned are. But that’s by the way. You

The Hunter's Moon 209

will perhaps understand better what I mean when I've got a little further on. I really am trying to move, mother dear.

In England they are so different. It seems to me that here a girl very often takes orders as to whom she is going to marry. That is what it amounts to,—which, of course, is monstrous! Theoretically I say it's monstrous, but practically sometimes it is not so bad. There is no one in the world I like—I love—better than Bob! There, mother, is a confession to make! But, sometimes, let me explain.

They have rectors here,—as we have: but somehow their rectors are not at all like ours. When two persons are supposed to be exactly the same thing in America and in this silly little island, you will generally find that they are nothing of the kind. You know what our rector is; here he is a parson who has a rectory,—mostly, it seems, a lovely old house, judging from Quarr, two or three hundred years old; he has a glebe, which apparently means the best land in the parish; he has a tithe, and—what is right and proper—he is one of the most important people in the place. We in Tankerton have no notion what a Personage—with a capital P.—the rector of an English country parish can be.

The Reverend Carwardine Douglas is the Rector of Quarr; a tall, thin man who, I understand, is a great authority on the later Latin poets. He may be an authority on Latin poets, but he certainly isn't on life as it exists to-day. I put one or two questions to him the other evening;—his answers were quite enough to tell me that.

“What Mr. Douglas,” I asked, “in your opinion,

210 Orders to Marry

is the extent to which a man is entitled to lay down the law to the woman who is about to become his wife?"

He took his spectacles between a finger and a thumb of either hand, lifted them gently, placed them right in the middle of his nose, then looked at me as if surprised.

"Do you mean in fact or in theory?" he asked. "Are you suggesting a polemical discussion, Miss Aredale?"

There was twinkle in Mr. Douglas's eyes which I distinctly resented. At the moment I had reasons of my own for being annoyed.

"No, Mr Douglas, I decidedly am not. Some Englishmen have such opinions on the subject of women that I sometimes wonder if they wish themselves to be taken seriously or not. For instance, I have been just now told that no woman ought to wear her hat on the side of her head. I should like to hear an American man say a thing in the least like that to an American woman. He would be instantly taught his position!"

"You mean that she should wear her hat on the side of her head?"

"I mean nothing of the sort. I mean that it has nothing to do with any man living how or where a woman wears her hat, or any other article of her apparel."

"I am so fortunate as to be—" He stumbled a little before he went on; I fancy he had got hold of the wrong word—"as—er—as—to be still free to marry. I am not in a position, therefore, to pronounce an opinion on so delicate a subject."

The Hunter's Moon 211

I as good as told him that I perceived the subterfuge which lay behind his words.

"The English attitude towards women is in entire contrast to the American. In my own country we are used to being taken seriously."

"Oh, are you? The trouble is, Miss Aredale, that we often have to take you much more seriously than we want to."

"Have you ever been in America, Mr. Douglas?"

"The opportunity to do so has never crossed my path, but I have been told by Americans who know this country well that the difference which, as the French put it, 'jumps to the eye,' is more superficial than real."

"That is not the case as regards your attitude towards women, especially as regards young women."

"Dear me! How's that? Have we English ceased to regard young women as if they were young women? Surely, Miss Aredale, that is not your own experience."

"You are in error, Mr. Douglas. I regret to be forced to say that that is my experience. Never since I awoke to consciousness in England has any man taken me seriously."

"My dear young lady, surely you cannot mean it!"

"There! you're a case in point. Are you taking me seriously?"

Again he started to stutter and stammer.

"I—I—can only say that I—I—I am trying my best to do so."

"You must excuse my seeming rudeness, Mr. Douglas, if I say you're doing nothing of the kind. I had not been in your company two minutes with-

out the feeling being forced upon me that you regarded me as a joke."

"I can only humbly apologise, Miss Aredale, if my conduct has been so bad as you suggest."

"I'm not saying that your conduct has been bad; it is merely the English attitude towards a woman. When a man hints that it is his ambition to leave the world a little better than he found it you wish him God speed; when a woman hints as much, you smile."

"It depends, I imagine, to some extent upon the woman."

"Why should it depend to some extent upon the woman?"

"Miss Aredale, have you ever seen a looking-glass?"

Dear mother, that did it! As vulgar persons say in this country, that took the bun! It expressed in one sentence, concisely, what I am driving at. Englishmen do not argue with a woman up to eight or nine and twenty, they say, have you seen a looking-glass? After eight and twenty they do not, unless in exceptional cases, make any remark at all; they just pass on to something feminine, to whom they intend to pay compliments by asking if she has seen a looking-glass!

Let me illustrate what I mean in a little different way. In America we women live our own lives, even that I should use the word 'even' in such a connection!—our young girls. We spend a good deal of our time together, we seek each other's society, we have interests of our own, which have nothing in common with those of men. There are luucheons, teas, dinners, functions, parties of all kinds, at which

The Hunter's Moon 213

women only are present, at which men would not dream of intruding. There would seem to be nothing of that sort in England. Women do not dream of doing anything without men ; to that state have men brought them. With us it would not occur to a man to express an opinion on subjects which are of interest to women only,—they realise that there are such subjects. Certainly, if it should happen to come out that a woman has an opinion on a subject which she regards as being of vital importance to herself, I cannot imagine what kind of American man it would be who would ask her : Have you seen a looking-glass? and having shown her in that way the superiority of the masculine intellect, consider the subject finally closed.

There is an atmosphere in an English country house, at least there is in this one, which is, I should think, the most delightful in the world. To begin with, the house itself, the furnishing, the grounds, everything about it is just lovely. Of course we have lovely houses. I don't pretend to know them all—good gracious, mother, think of it ! but I have an innate conviction that we have not one quite like Quarr. These people have brought the science of life to perfection, in their way. You have just got to wake up in the morning and drift ; that's all ; you are nearly sure to find the most charming people to drift with you. Some of the men one sees about the place do things ; I don't quite know what, but I am told they do. They play cricket, and tennis, and polo ; they ride ; they ' motor,' as they call it ; they are natural proficients in all sorts of ways of doing nothing at all. They have bridge parties three or four times a week ; people play lily bridge at a

shilling a hundred from three to seven on a glorious sunny afternoon! If they make or lose half a sovereign they feel their time has not been wasted. This will show you, mother, that here I am not in smart society, I am merely among charming people. Scarcely anyone is very rich; certainly no one is very poor. There probably are those who can afford to play lily bridge for high stakes, but I don't think they do. Perhaps some of them go to half-a-crown a hundred—or even five shillings. There seems to be a sort of unspoken consensus of opinion that to play for more than that, among friends, would not be nice.

It is a lovely place in which to live, but I am beginning to doubt if what it stands for is good for me. Bob said to me, after what, from my point of view, was a frightfully strenuous game of tennis.

“ You are getting on to your game ; persevere and you'll find it yet! Have a lemon squash ? ”

I did not require a lemon squash, and I didn't particularly want to find my game. Although it is October it is quite too hot to do anything.

“ Do you play tennis all the year round—lawn tennis, I mean ? ”

“ My dear child, no. The season is dead over. We have only had the nets put up again because the weather is so top-hole. Really tennis is dead as a door nail, till next spring. Unless you are going in for it seriously—propose to play on the Riviera and that kind of thing. Myself, I call it feeding—the idea of spending my life in playing such a game as tennis never has appealed to me, especially as I know perfectly well that if I practised fourteen hours a day for fourteen years I should never get beyond a

The Hunter's Moon 215

certain point. If I had to choose a game to which to devote my life it would certainly not be tennis."

"What game would it be?"

"You're pulling my leg. It wouldn't be a game at all. I wish you would marry me next week. I can't see what's the point of hanging about. What's the notion, skipper?"

That is a trick he has. He calls me a dozen different things in a dozen sentences, quite regardless of sex, from 'cook' to 'field-marshal.'

"Bobbie, can you mention any real reason why we should be married next week?"

"Well, I'm blessed! Why shouldn't we. You tell me that. Don't you think it would be awfully jolly to be married?"

"Do you think marriage is a vocation like real first-class tennis, to occupy fourteen hours a day for fourteen years."

"Well, I'm dashed! Talk of capers! What bee has her ladyship got in her bonnet now? You have got a way of putting things."

"So have you. I believe your way is queerer than mine."

I leaned back in my hammock chair and nursed my racket, and I thought how delicious it was to be there in the sun. Bob isn't often in a sentimental mood, but he seemed to be then.

"Don't you sometimes feel that you'd like to spoon?"

I was a little startled; it was not quite the sort of thing I expected him to say.

"I am not sure that there isn't a little too much—what you call 'spoon' about Quarr Abbey."

He twisted his face round towards me,

216 Orders to Marry

“ My dearest queen of my heart ! As if there could ever be ! ”

“ Do you think life should be all spoon—under any conditions ? ”

He was lying on the grass. Rising to his feet, his hands in his pockets—what would an Englishman do without pockets to put his hands into !—he began to stroll a little to and fro, pausing now and then to deliver himself of the fruits of thought—or what he supposed to be thought. When he is, as he supposes, wrapt in thought, Bob is one of the most delightful creatures in the world.

“ I always thought that a girl was told that for her the beginning and the end of life was centred round the idea of marriage. ”

“ Not in America—certainly not ! With us divorce is much easier than with you, or at least I am told so. Some women are divorced three or four times, which involves three or four marriages. Round which of those marriages would the idea to which you just now referred be centred ? ”

“ You’re pulling my leg again, you’re always at it. Tootsicums, why do you do it ? Don’t you try and stuff me that in America everyone is divorced, because I simply can’t believe you. ”

“ Of course in America everyone isn’t divorced ! Don’t be silly ! But I don’t believe in America marriage is regarded so seriously as it is here. By women generally it is regarded as not more than an incident. ”

“ I don’t believe it. ”

“ Bob ? ”

“ Well, I don’t ! That’s flat ! I don’t believe that any decent woman anywhere regards marriage-

The Hunter's Moon 217

as merely an incident, or ever has done, or ever will. It stands to reason. Do you?"

"That's not a fair question; or, at least, it's not a fair way of putting it. I don't mind telling you this, I certainly don't regard marriage as you do."

"Constantia!" He stood and stared at me, apparently as surprised and shocked as if I had told him that the heavens were about to fall.

"How long have we been engaged?"

"Do you mean to tell me you don't know how long we've been engaged. I've written it down in my diary with the hour to a fraction of a second attached. I'm not sure that the fraction is correct, but I got it as near as I could. The idea of your asking how long we've been engaged!"

"I can tell you this, that the very moment we were engaged I started to tell you that your way of looking at marriage wasn't mine."

"In what respect does it differ? Can it differ?"

"In a hundred and fifty ways at least. To touch on one, it is obvious that in England the married woman is bound, not free."

"Of course she is bound! What the dickens else could she be?"

"Don't use strong language, Bobbie! I fancy we're using the word 'bound' in different senses. Yesterday I asked Mrs. Pontifex—Mrs. Jack Pontifex—to come out with me to lunch. She said she would ask her husband and let me know. I inquired what it was she was to ask. She said—and seemed surprised that I wasn't quicker at understanding—that she would have to ask him if she might come. Did you ever hear anything so ridiculous? Don't you call that bound, not free?"

"You're too clever for me. What was there wrong in what Mrs. Pontifex said? Why shouldn't she ask?"

"Why should she?"

"Common courtesy should suggest a reason. There's stewed neck of mutton for lunch—a dish which I abominate—wouldn't it be courteous of her to suggest that her share might be given to someone else, because she has a chance of getting something better?"

"That isn't what she meant, as you very well know. What she wanted to know was, would her husband permit her to lunch with me at all. Do you think any woman would allow herself to be so treated in America by a man? Permit her, indeed! As if she needed anyone's permission except her own!"

"I don't know much about America, but I do know something. I know that there circumstances are different. You're not playing fair. With you a man seems to go out in the morning, and stop out till night. There are heaps of men who do the same here, men in the City, for instance. I imagine those men don't bother their heads about their wives' luncheons; they don't care if they lunch or not. Their permission is neither asked, given, nor required. But take our case, you and me. I suppose we're going to spend a good part of the day together; isn't that the idea? As a general rule we shall lunch together, shan't we?"

"My dear Bob, you can take it from me that I shall lunch exactly where I please."

"That's fair; if only we can understand each other at the start we shall know where we are.

The Hunter's Moon 219

Then we shall both of us know that we need neither of us care a hang about the other's feelings."

I looked at Bob, in order to make quite sure, if I could, how much in earnest he was; because, quite seriously, mother dear, his way of putting things did not altogether appeal to me.

"It isn't absolutely necessary, is it, Bob, that we should inaugurate matrimony by deciding to be rude in the domestic circle?"

"My dearest shrimp! Angels and ministers of grace forefend—Rude? Rather than be rude to you I'd—well, I don't know what I wouldn't do. Let me put it in this way—you shall be as rude as you like to me, and I'll keep a special eye on myself in order to make as sure as is humanly possible that I am the very soul and spirit of courtesy to you."

"Bob, I don't like the way you have of putting it at all. Are you hinting that an American woman is ever intentionally rude to her husband?"

He shook his head in a light-hearted, genial, easy way, which made me mad.

"Dearest-est-est!"—I don't know where he gets his words from, continually fresh coinage from the mint. "Dear-est-est-est, my experience of that great entity, the American woman, is confined to one member of her sex. I am sure you never could be rude, either by accident or design."

I got up from my hammock chair. There was something about Bob that afternoon which grated a little on my nerves. Somehow he has a knack of putting me in the wrong when I know I'm in the right; and a much worse gift, making me feel that somewhere, deep down inside him, he is laughing at me all the while.

"Perhaps it is the heat which has given me a headache. It might do me good to take it easy for a quarter of an hour."

I took it easy. The more I see of Bob, the better I know him, the greater grows my sense of wonder. A horrid suspicion is growing upon me that his dexterity in handling a woman is born of experience ; it cannot have come to him by nature, it must be the fruit of practice. Practice on whom ; some other woman—quite possibly, some other women. I do not at all fancy the notion that he has had practice of that sort with anyone. I remember Ruth Cartwright, who was in my class at Vassar, telling me that no man knew how to kiss a girl until he had kissed twenty. I recall how shocked and hurt I was ; it was not only the vulgarity of the notion, it was the suggestion it conveyed that Ruth herself must have had some curious adventures before she was in a position to promulgate such a theory. I have never had the same feeling towards Ruth since. I do not wonder she has never married, but I have heard that during last year she was engaged five times.

Such uncomfortable thoughts filled my mind that, that very evening, after dinner, I unbosomed myself to Helen. She and I were seated on some chairs outside the drawing-room window ; what they call in England 'the hunters' moon' was sailing proudly across a sea of glory. It was as warm as June ; perhaps that was what made me feel that I might at times have been more tender to Bobbie ; especially as there was something in his attitude towards me—and towards women generally—which made me wonder. He was somewhere in the house. As

The Hunter's Moon 221

usual he was whistling an extraordinarily senseless comic song which, it was said, the British soldiers taught to the other fighting men of Europe. He is a born whistler, Bobbie is ; if he chooses, whatever rubbish he pipes goes to your heart ; you have to love it whether you like it or not.

When we had listened to about the dozenth repetition of that silly air, I said to Helen :

“ Do you think that women are better at managing men, or men better at managing women ? ”

She turned towards me with a start. I woke her from a dream—a dream in which she had been kneeling in a field near to Dinant, by the body of a man who lay stiff, stark, cold, in the sunshine. He was alone in the field ; there was nothing to show how he had got there ; no signs of fighting having taken place in the immediate neighbourhood. He just lay there dead, with a bullet through his heart. She gave no sign of what she had been dreaming ; she just considered my question for a moment, then she smiled.

“ Is it a riddle you were asking me ? ”

“ No, it's just a plain question. I simply wish to know which you think is better at managing the other, a woman or a man ? ”

“ Some men never could manage anything,—a woman least of all. I know one ; my husband. He would probably have been alive to-day if he could.”

The answer was not in the least what I had expected. It was not at all like Helen, who, I always felt, was so reticent, especially about matters in which she herself was personally concerned. I stared.

222 Orders to Marry

"But how could your husband's inability to manage women have prevented his being killed on the battlefield?"

"He wasn't killed on the battlefield, he was shot in a duel."

"Helen! how do you know? Are you absolutely sure?"

"The man who shot him was himself killed in battle the day after. He went to his own death." She had a small gold bag in her hand. From a compartment inside it she took a scrap of folded paper. "I am going to destroy it presently. You might look at it before I do. It might give you an idea of how strange men are. Bob is as strange as the rest."

I unfolded her scrap of paper; it was less than three inches square. I knew that it spelt romance; it was the first piece of romance I had ever come across in my life. Somehow the feel of that scrap of paper chastened me. I peered at it in the moonlight.

"Am I to read it?" She nodded. I read it aloud; there were half a dozen lines or so, in a foreign writing. "It is no use for me to beg your pardon. I know that I have done what you did not wish me to do. You will be able to forgive me better when I am gone."

That was all: neither beginning nor end. She held out her hand.

"Please let me have it." I gave it to her. She read it through to herself; then she tore it into scraps, actually smiling as she did so. "A three volume novel on a scrap of paper; I daresay there have been many." She held up the scraps of paper.

The Hunter's Moon 223

"This was meant to be tragic, so it was. It cost two men their lives. But it was funny all the same."

She gave the scraps of paper another tear, then dropped them into her empty coffee cup.

"Would you like to hear a love story? I have never told it to anyone before, and I don't suppose I ever shall again; but you're going to be my sister, and I feel I should like to tell it to you."

"Helen, don't tell me anything because I'm going to be your sister. I should feel that I had wormed myself into your confidence under false pretences. I may never be your sister after all."

"That's perfectly correct. You may go to the North Pole, or become a Militant Suffragette instead. I'll run the risk of your never becoming my sister; I'm going to tell you the story anyhow."

She seemed to be considering how to tell the story. When it did come, as had been the case with her answer to my original question, it was not at all the sort of story I had expected.

"My husband's name was Harold. He was a big man, with red hair, and one of the most sensitive dispositions I ever met. He never could endure the slightest reference to his red hair. It may sound funny, and it was, but all the same it was a tragedy to me, to himself, and to others. He was thirty-five when he died. We had been married six years. I knew him for nearly eleven years before we were married; so since I had known him altogether nearly seventeen years, you will see that I was quite a child when I first made his acquaintance. My dear Constantia, in those days how I did laugh at him! I suppose that he threatened to break my neck for me dozens of

times, and he would have been quite right if he had done what he threatened. Let me see, I am twenty-seven now, so I must have been ten when first I knew him. You know what a bundle of mischief a girl of ten can be. He was, roughly, nineteen. I remember that at our first meeting he actually told me that he was in love with me, with me, a child of ten! What a time I gave him. He got so mad with me that for days and days he daren't trust himself in my neighbourhood, lest he should put his own threat into execution, and at least nearly break my neck. The truth is I behaved like a perfect little cat."

"I can't fancy your behaving like a cat to anyone."

"Oh, can't you? That's all you know about it! There never was a woman yet who couldn't behave like a cat to someone. I admit that he acted with what, looking back, seems almost incredible stupidity; but, well, I might have spared him something."

She laughed, her happy little laugh; which suggested that the reflection did not exactly overwhelm her with remorse.

"He wouldn't go to an English university because of his red hair, he went to Heidelberg. And there, I believe, he fought, on an average, a duel a day, to mark his attitude towards certain impertinences. When I saw him again I was, I take it, eighteen years old. He was an exceedingly handsome man, that was the extraordinary part of it. He seemed to have an idea that because a man has red hair, and has been laughed at on that account all his life, he must be repulsive. Of

The Hunter's Moon 225

course that's all nonsense. Harold was a magnificent man, a born athlete. And the funniest part of it is that soon after I had met him for the second time it was I who fell in love with him."

She put her hands up to her face and laughed again; very softly, so that you had to listen attentively to make sure what she was doing.

"His attitude towards me was really too ridiculous. Of course I knew within twenty-four hours of our re-meeting what his feelings were. The sentiment he had felt towards me as a hobbledehoy had become the great passion of a strong man's life. But, he was so shy! I wonder what it is in some men which makes them incapable of understanding a woman; not one particular woman, but any woman. In the ordinary things of life he was wide awake enough, but, whenever he came, even remotely, into contact with a woman it was amazing how stupid he could be—not afraid, no, no, he was not afraid of anyone, he was just simply stupid; there was some curious formation inside him which made him incapable of comprehension."

She took her spoon from her saucer, and began to draw patterns with it in the air.

"It was practically eight years since we had seen each other. My eight years had been spent at school; and when they weren't I was generally in a tiny Wiltshire village, where men, particularly young men, were perfectly unknown. He all the time was in the middle of affairs. When he left Heidelberg, where he was famous for his duels, he joined the army. I have always understood that soldiers do see women; if he had chosen he might have known hundreds, anyhow dozens. But it

226 Orders to Marry

seems that he had never known one, actually."

She stopped, apparently to enjoy the memory of a little joke. As far as I could make out she was trying to see her own face reflected by the moonlight at the bottom of her coffee spoon.

"I think I will tell you about a funny little talk we had together soon after our acquaintance began again. It was in a field at the back of my mother's house, father died when I was a kidlet, in Wiltshire. He had met Bob, and Bob had asked him to come and stay, and there he was. I was sitting on a low branch; he was sitting, stiff and straight on the bank beneath me; you see, I remember all the details. There never was such a man for sitting stiff and straight; that was his attitude towards life. 'I suppose,' I said to him, 'you have met heaps of girls since I saw you last, first at the university and then in the army. Bob says officers in the army always do.' 'Bob has no right to say anything of the kind. Frankly, Miss Macfine, you are the only woman I ever have met.' I stared, of course I had been only joking; he was pretty hard to talk to; I had been merely trying to make conversation. To my astonishment he seemed to have taken me seriously; and what he said about my being the only girl he had ever met was so funny—think of it, my dear—I had to smile! Red haired people have sometimes beautiful complexions. He had; creamy white, without freckles. Where another person would have flushed he turned creamier. He spoke with an odd calmness which, like the rest of him, was unexpected. 'You always used to laugh at me! I see that in that direction at least you are unchanged.' 'But I wasn't laugh-

The Hunter's Moon 227

ing, at least not exactly laughing. I was only thinking of what you said about having only known one woman. It seemed so funny! 'All the same it was true. I'll tell you something else, which you will perhaps think funnier still. I only shall know one woman in my life, and you are she.' He got up and walked away before I could do or say anything to stop him. Did you ever hear anything so ridiculous?"

"The man was a lunatic!" Helen looked at me as if I had said something which suggested that there was something wrong with my brain.

"Constantia! whatever made you say a thing like that? Why was he a lunatic?"

"How old do you say he was?"

"Twenty-six."

"And yet he talked, and behaved, like that? He must have been a lunatic."

"But why? why? I ask you why?"

"Did he expect you to take him seriously? or to believe him? What did he expect you to do? I know what I should think of a man, an officer in the British army, who talked to me like that."

"What would you think? Stop a minute, suppose you started with the knowledge that he worshipped the ground you stood on."

"I shouldn't want him to worship the ground I stood on. I don't see what satisfaction that could give me. The mere fact that he thought he had done me any good by starting off to do a thing like that would prejudice me against him directly."

"It is you who are dull. Can't you conceive of

228 Orders to Marry

a great passion? Isn't there such a thing in America?"

"I certainly shouldn't like to feel that, even in a poetic sense, I was the only woman my husband had ever known. Your Harold Fullerton was just a freak; freaks are the only thing I want to be saved from."

"He was a little eccentric, I must grant."

"To talk about a man like that being a little eccentric is really too ridiculous—I say he was insane."

"After all I'm not so sure he wasn't. But if he was, so was I."

"Two lunatics don't make one William Shakespeare." She looked at me and laughed.

"No, I suppose not. Constantia, you're as hard as nails; I don't believe you could be anything else but practical. The light that never was on land or sea will never be yours. Of course I was a fool; so was he—we were silly fools for eight years, and I wouldn't mind being a fool all over again. I have known what it is to be loved by a man. He started by quarrelling in the sweet old way. When he left me sitting on that branch he marched off to the station and bade his servant pack his bag and bring it after him."

"He was an idiot—beyond excuse."

"I never saw nor heard of him for another six months."

"I should have taken care never to see or hear of him again: call him a man! I don't mind telling you that, deep down within me somewhere, is an uncomfortable suspicion that woman is the inferior beast, but I never have got down to quite so low a plane as yours."

The Hunter's Moon 229

"Then we met at Trouville—a queer place for him to be at. I went with Bob. He had been there four days when I saw him one morning on the plage; then, when I was beginning to wonder if he was going to cut me dead, he took his hat off."

"How very nice of him! You must have felt favoured by his condescension! Your Englishmen!"

"What's the matter with our Englishmen?"

"Judging from your example of his class, I should say there was a good deal. Pray what had you done to cause this British officer—and gentleman—to behave to you as if he were several degrees worse than a Bowery tough?"

"You don't understand; you should have seen the towering rage he was in."

"I should have let him tower. I wonder he condescended to fall into a rage with a person who was the only woman in the world to him."

"You see, I wasn't alone on the plage; four or five other persons were with me, and they were all of them men; I fancy not very desirable sort of men, because Harold told Bob afterwards that he wondered that he let them thrust themselves upon me. You know, society at Trouville is, well, you know what it's like."

"I am afraid that pleasure has still to come. Helen, I am being introduced to an entirely new side of you. At that period of your life weren't you able to take care of yourself, and wasn't there Bob to lend you a hand if you weren't. How many persons does it require to take care of a young Englishwoman even in a haunt of impropriety like Trouville? I have known American girls who

230 Orders to Marry

have been there, plenty, and they haven't been a penny the worse ; but I have not known one who wouldn't have marked her sense of Mr. Fullerton's peculiar behaviour. Didn't Bob say anything about knocking his head off his shoulders ? ”

“ I fancy Bob's position was one of some difficulty.”

“ So I should imagine. I should fancy that no one ever came in contact with Mr. Fullerton without finding himself in a difficult position. My opinion of Bob is not growing higher.”

“ My dear, my poor brother Bob ! You must not talk to him like that. If he hears of it, he will break his heart.”

I considered the matter for some time before I asked,

“ And do you really mean to tell me that you married this Mr. Fullerton—in cold blood ? ”

“ We quarrelled, and quarrelled, and quarrelled ; and then, on my twenty-first birthday, I took him to be my wedded husband. Constantia, we women certainly are queer creatures.”

“ So far as you're concerned that certainly is granted ; and before you began to tell me this ' tale ' of yours I had the highest opinion of your intellectual eminence.”

“ Did you ? how nice ! We were married in the village church at home, a funny, squat old building, with an uneven floor and what we called a Saxon tower, though I don't believe there was anything Saxon about it. I got as many people there as I could lay hands on. Harold wanted an empty church, with just our two selves and the verger. I wouldn't agree.”

The Hunter's Moon 231

"I should think not! I should think that even in England a woman has something to say about her own wedding."

"Yes, she has, my dear, a lot. Harold thought that on an occasion like that publicity was scarcely proper."

"Harold thought! How dared he think! At such times as that the groom is a lay figure."

"They gave us a lovely send-off. All the villagers were there, some of them threw things. An old shoe hit Harold on the nose. Oh, my dear, he was annoyed! That was just the silly sort of thing which would annoy him. We had a lovely honeymoon, though he would scarcely speak to me while we were motoring up to town. Between ourselves, our life was all honeymoon. You have no idea how well we hit it off together, when we had to hit it off. If Harold had been a little more reasonable, well, he would still have been the happiest man alive. His ideas of marriage, I'm not betraying a secret, came out of the ark."

"I should say that Mr. Noah was glad enough to get rid of them."

"It was no use his saying that he was the only man I was ever to know, because it simply wouldn't answer."

"Helen! you don't mean to say you flirted! I regret to say that you're a constant revelation. Not that you were not entitled to do exactly as you pleased; still——"

"But there was no 'still' about it, so there! By degrees I came to have an idea that guns were all about me, and that if I looked at a man one would pop up and look me in the face. He told

me himself that he wasn't jealous. It was merely that his idea of what the kind of man was who it was good for me to look at was so elevated; there was not room for him on the terrestrial sphere; he wasn't of a brand they were making on earth; a fact which was brought clearer home to me each time one of those guns stared me in the face."

"My dear, that husband of yours must have been a positive brute—he and his guns!"

"I presume you do not understand that the guns were metaphorical?"

"All the worse on that account. I say he was a positive brute!"

"And I say he wasn't. I myself was a bit of a trial. Then I met Konrad von Rothenheim."

"Oh! now we are coming to something! Who was Konrad von Rothenheim?"

"He was—well, if you like, my dear—he was a freak of nature."

"What?—another freak? Really, Helen, you seem to have had more than your share."

She put her hands up to her face, and again she laughed behind them.

"I am aware it sounds ridiculous; I haven't told the whole story even to Bob; you are the first person I ever have told it to." Leaning towards me she spoke in what I should describe as an attenuated whisper. "Constantia, the absolute truth is that he was so like my husband that it would have been quite easy if you were a little short-sighted, and the light was not very good, to have mistaken the one man for the other. I shall never forget the first time I saw him."

The Hunter's Moon 233

"I should think it was very probable you wouldn't."

"It was at Wiesbaden—in the Kurhaus gardens, one afternoon. We were staying at the Quisisana. A Countess Eckhardstein, whose son Harold had known at Heidelberg, was staying there also. That afternoon, just as I was feeding the stupid gold-fish with buns the Countess came sailing up with someone at her side, whom I stared at with amazement.

"'Madame Fullerton! Madame Fullerton!' she exclaimed. 'Allow me to introduce to you your husband's twin brother.' It was a silly thing for her to say, but then she was a silly woman. The stranger at her side took off his hat. I was astounded! I had a sort of foolish feeling that someone was playing a trick; the man with his hat off was so like Harold that it seemed incredible. He was a little shorter than Harold, and a little narrower, and when I looked closely I saw that there were freckles on his face, while there were none on Harold's; but in all essentials the one was the replica of the other. 'Is it true, madam,' he asked, 'that between Mr. Fullerton and me there is some resemblance?' Some resemblance! I was about to try to explain to what extent the resemblance really went, when I stopped in time. I realised on the instant—it did not want much cleverness to do it, that, unless I was very careful, there was trouble ahead. I really think that if it had been possible I should have taken Harold away from Wiesbaden then and there, before he met the stranger. I did not know the stranger, but I did know Harold, and I was perfectly aware that this

234 Orders to Marry

was just one of those positions in which he would be at his very worst.

“Did you like the look of your Konrad von Rothenheim?”

“I liked the look of him very much, that was just the trouble. He was a softer, gentler edition of Harold; Harold without that look on his face, that glint in his eyes, with which I was so familiar, daring all and sundry to tread upon the tail of his coat. Most persons, meeting Harold for the first time, would be quick to realize that he might be the easiest person in the world to pick a quarrel with, while Herr von Rothenheim would be the hardest. I got away from the Countess, and I went off in search of Harold. I caught sight of him on the other side of the fish-pond, but when I reached him it was already too late. The very attitude in which he was standing suggested that; the words with which he greeted me made sure. ‘Do you think that fellow is trying to copy me?’ He spoke very quietly, as he always did when he was going to be most unmanageable, pointing his words by looking at the stranger, who was walking by himself on the other side of the pond. The idea had not occurred to me; and of course I knew it was ridiculous; but as I followed the direction of Harold’s glances I had to admit that even the style of Herr von Rothenheim’s costume was not unlike Harold’s. It is true that all the men at Wiesbaden were wearing green felt hats just then, but it really did seem as if he and Harold might have bought theirs at the same shop, and each wore his at the same angle. My dear, under ordinary circumstances I should have thought it was the greatest

The Hunter's Moon 235

joke in the world, and would have looked forward to results with lively expectations. But where Harold was concerned, my dear, in such matters Harold never joked.' ”

“What an awful, awful man that husband of yours must have been. How you can have kept so young, in spite of him, I can't think!”

“My dear, I caught myself breathing an unspoken prayer that Herr von Rothenheim might start moving a little faster before Harold took it into his head to throw him in the fish-pond.”

“But tell me, Helen, did he try?”

“I laid my hand on his arm, and I said, ‘Harold, do let us get back to the hotel for tea; I'm not feeling very well.’ And I wasn't! Any hint that there was anything the matter with my health was enough to induce Harold to lay himself at my feet. He put his arm through mine, and he marched me back to the hotel. Constantia, there are some very foolish women in this world.”

“No one doubts it. What is the case you have in point?”

“The case of the Countess Eckhardstein. She actually had that man von Rothenheim to dine with her that very evening.”

“What a joke! Your story is getting positively amusing.”

“A joke! You would not have called it a joke if you'd felt as I felt like when I got into the dining-room and saw the man sitting at the woman's little table in the corner. I only glanced in her direction for an instant, but she managed to catch my eye, and started to grin and simper, and even to beckon with her fan. The mischief was

236 Orders to Marry

that she not only caught my eye; she caught Harold's, and she beckoned to him. 'Come,' he said to me; 'we'll see what she wants.' 'Won't after dinner do? I don't suppose she wants to say anything particular.' 'At least we'll see what that man's presence at her table means.' Well Harold was introduced. 'Captain Fullerton, I think I must have stumbled upon a relation of yours. Herr von Rothenheim, cannot you not give Captain Fullerton a place in your family tree? Wasn't that an absurd thing for her to say; especially as she might have been aware that to Harold his family tree was the only one in the world. For, you know, the Fullertons have lived at Quarr for three hundred years, and before that—"

"Yes, I know; before that they were at the Flood! You think more of that sort of thing than we do."

"That was the beginning of some very curious days and nights. Luckily Harold did not start off by pulling von Rothenheim's nose. The fact is that von Rothenheim was a most delightful man. Now, of course, they are fighting each other. If you read the newspaper you will think that, by nature, German and English hate each other like poison. But they don't. Some of my dearest friends are Germans, of all ages and both sexes. And when you are told in the columns of the 'Daily Squasher' that German men, and especially German officers, are creatures beneath contempt, don't you believe it, because they're not. Von Rothenheim certainly wasn't. He was, well, he was a little in the clouds."

"What do you mean by 'he was a little in the clouds'?"

The Hunter's Moon 237

"My experience is that, in their own way, the German men are the most sentimental in the world." Having delivered herself of this rather sweeping judgment, Helen startled me by asking a question: "Do you think that a woman is of course to blame when a man falls in love with her: a man who isn't her husband?"

You know what our opinions in Tankerton are upon such subjects, mother dear. I was uncompromising.

"Ordinarily speaking, I should say certainly, yes."

"Then you don't know the Germans. They fall in love with every pretty woman—platonically. You certainly didn't know von Rothenheim."

"I am glad I didn't. You appear to have known some curious men."

"Oh, you little hard and fast precisian! There certainly was nothing discreditable in his sort of love."

"Did he ever hint that he was in love with you outright?"

"Well, not exactly; I should not have allowed it. Don't think the worst of me, my dear; but—of course—I understood."

"Then you ought not to have understood!—You don't mean to say you continued to meet him after he had made you understand that much?"

"Decidedly not—especially after Harold's behaviour."

"Pray what was there about Harold's behaviour which made it impossible?"

"He challenged von Rothenheim to a duel."

238 Orders to Marry

"Helen! You don't say! What had you been doing?"

"Absolutely nothing. You may not believe it, but it's true. He was always challenging men to duels, it had become a regular habit of his. Where another man would say, 'Come and have a round on the links,' he would say, 'Come and have a fight.' I happen to be aware that he was known everywhere as 'The Duelist.'"

"I thought that in Europe they no longer fought duels.—And he was an officer in the British Army?"

Helen shrugged her shoulders. She made a gesture with her pretty little hand.

"I don't know anything certain against Harold; I really only suspect that he challenged von Rothenheim. However, I won't enter into details, because I feel that you're not so sympathetic as I had hoped you would be. What would you have had me do, circumstanced as I was? You young girls are the cruellest creatures in the world!"

"Oh! Helen! how can you say I'm cruel?"

"You're taking it for granted that, through it all, I was in the wrong, as if my standard of conduct, morals, everything!—was lower than yours! As if the special circumstances which apply to your case must necessarily apply to mine. Men aren't always hard to each other; why should women be?"

"They aren't. I have never been hard to a woman yet, or to anyone else. My dear Helen, don't you see that you are telling me something which is new to me; introducing me to a side of life with which I am entirely unfamiliar?"

The Hunter's Moon 239

“Introducing you to a side of life with which you are entirely unfamiliar! Now, there’s a phrase! Was I to blame because I was married to a man who was insanely jealous, who was always quarrelling with other men?—Now, Constantia, you tell me something—truthfully, frankly. Have you never flirted? You will laugh, but I never have. Yes, I thought so! Open your eyes wide; look as if you wondered that I should have the audacity to say such a thing. I have the audacity—because it is true.” Then she did one of those things which I think are peculiarly English; she rounded up her sentence with a little vulgar idiom. “You can put that in your pipe and smoke it, so there! I have never flirted in my life.” She struck her hand against the table on which her coffee cup was still standing. “In the first place, I have never felt any inclination to flirt; in the second, I have never dared. If Harold was standing there at this moment he would tell you himself that he never had the slightest fault to find with me.”

Dear mother, you are aware what a poor opinion I have of those writers who play tricks on their readers. I have not the slightest desire or intention to what they call here ‘spring a surprise’ upon you, but when a ‘surprise is sprung’ upon me—what can I do?

It was nearly ten o’clock, late hours for me: because, mother dear, you must not suppose that I am even yet restored to perfect health, whatever may have been said—I am not—I am going to tell you all about it presently:—it might have been still August, instead of nearly the beginning of November. Helen and I were just a little heated; in her

240 Orders to Marry

anxiety that I should accept her point of view, I could not help feeling what a pretty picture she looked, with the lovely white moon bathing her eager and dainty face with an almost supernatural glamour.

"You exquisite American icicle," she was beginning to say—as if the word 'icicle' could ever be applied to me! but it showed that the moon was playing tricks with both of us. She had got as far as that when she stopped; sat very still, listening; and then looked round with a start. Of course I heard what she did, the sound of footsteps moving across the grass. They weren't Bob's footsteps, and they weren't the butler's, I think I could tell Carpenter's footsteps anywhere, they are so noiseless; he gets so much dignity into such a little sound; and they weren't the rector's, who has been known to put in a first appearance as late as eleven. They were strange to me, but somehow I had a kind of a notion that they were not strange to Helen. It was most curious;—when I saw the expression which was on her face, turned sideways and a little upwards, I felt it was more curious than it seemed. The conviction was borne in on me that, in an instant, without warning, we were plunged into a atmosphere—I won't say of the supernatural—but distinctly of the abnormal. Fancy a member of the committee of the Tankerton Society for Casting Light in Dark Places making such a confession as that! Whenever there is a suggestion of even the unusual, that is the moment for us to make an appearance on the scene to dissipate the shadows. But I have ever had a weakness for the truth; and when I saw the look which was on Helen's face I

The Hunter's Moon 241

am bound to say that I realized what the Head of the House's feelings must be whenever the icy fingers of the Family Spectre are brought into contact with his own warm proportions.

The steps came on, this is not fiction, it is a fact. They were approaching from behind my chair; I wished that they had come the other way, because in England one is not supposed to take too active an interest in the movements of either comers or goers; and presently, watching Helen's face, I had positively to jump and glance right round.

A man was moving toward me; indeed, there were two; I had a notion that there was a third person in the shadows at the back. The two men came forward, keeping step in a fashion which made their calling clear. Then they both stopped dead, as at a word of command, and there was silence.

I have seen that phrase, 'and there was silence,' in print over and over again—without realising what a depth of meaning the simplest words can be made to convey; there was something about that stillness which was almost awful, so that Helen—somehow when I looked at Helen I wished that I had followed what is really my usual custom, and gone to bed at half-past nine.

She sat on the edge of her chair, her hands held out, her eyes staring, her whole dainty person a shrinking note of exclamation, obviously yearning to break into speech, yet unable to utter a sound.

They say that a woman's brain moves quickest; that when it becomes a question of loosing wits, it is she who finds hers first. That was hardly the case in this point: he was certainly the first to

242 Orders to Marry

speaking, breaking that mysterious silence with what was certainly one of the most banal remarks I have had the pleasure of hearing.

"I'm sorry if I interrupt."

That was all he said; stopping dead as if he were under the impression that that was all the occasion demanded. You know how easy it is to use words figuratively to express our feelings; directly I heard his voice I did feel how I should like to have shaken him. Of course, dear mother, you do appreciate the presence of the figurative there. But somehow, in some horrid fashion, I felt how characteristic of the man the remark was, how completely it gave him away, and it hurt. It hurt Helen too. She got off her chair, trembling—I could see her trembling in the moonlight. She looked at the speaker; made a sort of fluttering movement forward; stopped: sort of whispered, "Harold!" stopped again, shivering and shaking, so that I wondered if I had not better help her to stand; which I would have done only I was conscious that it would be well to keep from intervention as long as I could. It was clear to me, as she stood there white faced, with the tips of her fingers up to her throat, that she expected him to make a sudden dash at her, snatch her in his arms, and, careless of the surroundings, treat her generally as a man would treat the woman he loves when meeting her for the first time after a long separation.

But this man did nothing of the kind, not he! He seemed unable to forget that it is a soldier's first duty to stand stiff as a ramrod; then he remarked, causally, as if the consciousness was forced

The Hunter's Moon 243

upon him that, under the circumstances, he was compelled to say something :

“ I am afraid I have taken you by surprise.”

His cold woodenness! She continued to stare at him, a look coming on her face which hinted that the position was getting beyond her. She broke into speech, which was punctuated by a sort of hysterical titter.

“ By surprise? Yes; I am afraid you did rather take me by surprise. I suppose, Harold, it really is you.” The titter became more pronounced. “ It's not a ghost.”

I thought every moment that she would break into helpless hysterics and we should have a scene. But no anxiety about anything of that kind seemed to trouble him. He was calmness personified; if his was British calmness I felt that I should like to bang British heads together.

“ To the best of my knowledge and belief I certainly am no ghost; but the fact of the matter is that I've been in rather an awkward situation, as also has von Rothenheim. I don't know if the bad light prevents you from noticing that he is here. Von Rothenheim, I believe you remember my wife.”

The second man came in front of the first, hat in both hand—a shy, ingratiating something in his whole bearing for which I could have hugged him right away, he was such a contrast to the other man.

“ Mrs. Fullerton does me the honour to remember that such a person existed once, that is to pay me a great compliment.”

She eyed him silently; then a change came into her face which it did me good to see.

"I am not likely, Herr von Rothenheim, ever to forget you, you may be sure of that, especially since you have brought my husband back to me."

Of course the first man intervened, you might be sure of that, at the wrong moment, in the wrong way. Though I tried to guard against being taken in by first impressions, I was absolutely convinced that he always did that sort of thing. The glib yet stolid fashion in which he spoke—correcting her: as if he were entitled to.

"It is hardly the right sort of way to put it, to say that von Rothenheim has brought me back; because it so happens that we have done it between us; we have been waiting for each other. He and I have had a little misunderstanding."

Von Rothenheim, seemed to take his cue from a glance that he gave him.

"Yes, Mrs. Fullerton, we have had a little misunderstanding."

"Yes, Herr von Rothenhiem, you needn't explain; I think I understand."

It amazed me how she managed to convey the impression of careless light-hearted indifference. It annoyed her husband; his tone said so.

"I don't know how you can say that, Helen; as a point of fact the matter is extremely complicated."

The way she smiled! Looking at him with her great wide-open eyes, as if she were amazed at the serious way in which he took the thing. I could have kissed her for it!

"What is there complicated about it, Harold? It seems quite simple, especially to one who knows you as well as I do. Constantia, this is my husband, Harold Fullerton, whom you might have

The Hunter's Moon 245

heard me mention." The irony of that! You might have thought it would have cut him to the bone, but it plainly never even slightly abraded the surface of his epidermis, indeed, he seemed unconscious that anything had been said in irony. "Harold, this is Miss Aredale, of America." Fancy his describing me like that! I knew she was laughing again. "She saved our little daughter's life, risking more her own life to do it. I suppose you have not forgotten that you have a little daughter?"

"Forgotten? Joan? My dear Helen, what a thing to say! As if a father could forget his child!"

"Some fathers might, unless they made a special call upon their memory."

"I am not one of them. How is Joan, by the way? I'll make all inquiries later. In the meanwhile I thank you, Miss—er—I thank this young lady for what she has done for Joan."

"You hear? Isn't that nice of Harold? Really Harold, I am surprised that you should think there is anything requiring explanation about the whole affair; if you do. I suppose you've been fighting one of your usual duels."

"Helen! really! I would rather you did not talk like that. One doesn't blurt such things out aloud."

"No? you don't say? How odd! Does it matter? This time, I suppose, by the way of a little variety, you have been fighting Herr von Rothenheim. Not so, mein herr?" Again the shy little bow from the man she addressed. "This time it is plain you did not kill each other."

There came a series of bobs from Herr von

246 Orders to Marry

Rothenheim, suggesting that there was something which he very much wished to say; so badly that he had to say it.

"The drollness is, Mrs Fullerton, that we thought we had killed each other, that is the drollness."

"I see nothing droll about what you suggest, von Rothenheim." This was the husband, on a sudden almost hard and venomous. His wife broke in,

"Actually don't you see anything funny in the idea of your having killed each other, when you hadn't? I do. I could laugh to split my sides! Perhaps the next time you start killing someone, please God you'll do it, when the funniness won't be so plain. Is it a good story, Herr von Rothenheim? May I hear it, or is it to be kept a secret between yourselves?"

Von Rothenheim's glance towards the other man was eloquent; Mr. Fullerton was eloquent without the glance.

"It's no good making a mountain out of a molehill. It's nothing the least bit serious. If it weren't that you have been taking me for dead—I suppose you have been taking me for dead?"

"Oh, yes, we've been taking you for dead; such a pleasant relief to find that you're not."

"It is hardly a thing for an Englishman to make a fuss about."

"You see, Constantia, an Englishman never makes a fuss about a trifle."

Mr. Fullerton seemed to be conscious that there was something odd about the position seen through the woman's eyes.

"I don't see what is the use, Helen, of making a

The Hunter's Moon 247

remark of that kind—a fuss is just what I don't want. The whole thing has been an accident, rather a silly one. I don't want to call more attention to it than can possibly be helped, with your kind permission."

"Quite so, you have it."

"There was a slight difference of opinion between von Rothenheim and me, as I am telling you. The understanding was that there should be a meeting, under the circumstances, in private. Well, there was a meeting; before any definite result could come of it we were interrupted."

"What a pity! wasn't it? after all the trouble you had taken. We were both attached to our regiments. Some of our fellows turning up when they weren't expected—half a dozen or so, I take it, on either side—began, I suppose, to take pot-shots at each other."

"You say you suppose? Didn't you see them?"

"Never saw a single thing. I know no more what happened than you do." Mr. Fullerton spoke as if he were annoyed. "The German Tommies can't shoot for nuts! Without, I take it meaning to do anything of the kind—I doubt if they ever saw me! Some of them got home at me, and some of ours winged von Rothenheim."

"Winged? Is that the proper word? When you think, it is not such a bad word, is it?"

Von Rothenheim seemed to be enjoying the joke much more than the other did. A more serious look on a man's face I never saw.

"Of course it's a proper word—what does it matter? I've been lying in a peasant's cottage, I don't know how long, supposed to be dying. It

was only the other day that I learned that von Rothenheim was in the same house."

Herr von Rothenheim exploded. It was only by degrees that the joke was getting plain.

"Conceive the situation, madame! It was only the other day that I heard speaking in the next room to mine a voice which I felt sure that I knew. 'In the name of all that is holiest,' I exclaimed, 'Whose voice is that?' I was told that it was the voice of an Englishman who was supposed to be dying, but who had now decided to live. In a flash of lightning I was out of the sheets, and through the next door. There was my good friend Fullerton sitting up in bed. You never heard such a shout as he gave at the sight of me!"

"You never saw such a sight as he looked!"

Von Rothenheim bent himself double; I thought he never would have stopped laughing.

"It was the most extraordinary, the most ridiculous, the most absurd, the most incredible thing! He wished to fight me, because he thinks that I insult him, that I wish to imitate his appearance. Until the other morning he did not say a word about it to me. I had no idea what was the cause of the quarrel which he wished to pick with me, or I would have explained! Englishmen are sometimes curious. How was I to guess that he wished to shoot me about nothing at all? Behold me! Observe! You look at me carefully? The other morning, when I went into his room, I was like this."

Something happened to the man's head; for some moments I could not understand what. You know, dear mother, I told you that he was holding

The Hunter's Moon 249

his hat in both hands, so that it was quite easy to see that his head was thickly covered with hair.

Laughing, as if he found it difficult to stop, staggering from foot to foot, he raised his right hand—and behold! there was no hair there. It was a most astonishing metamorphosis, and so unexpected. Instead of a well-covered head there was a hairless pate, shining as if it had been polished. The thing was so startling and grotesque that it was not strange that Mr. Fullerton showed signs of being disconcerted; unmistakable signs, indeed, of being the more disconcerted of the two. He shouted:

“Didn't I ask you not to do it, von Rothenheim? Confound it!—didn't I? Do you imagine that other people have not got more sensitive feelings than you? It's a national German failing! I'll be hanged if I don't believe that the lot of you don't know what it means to be sensitive.”

As I watched Herr von Rothenheim then I really was inclined towards Mr. Fullerton's opinion,—at least as far as he was concerned. He snatched up a little bag which, without my noticing him, he had apparently laid upon the ground. From this he produced various articles,—as callously as if they were not of the least importance;—to say nothing of associating them with such a word as ‘delicacy.’ Out they came,—flashed in Helen's face with a rapidity which she must have found astonishing.

“Understand, if you please, madame, on my head I have always had very little hair; lately what little I had went; I don't know why,—I had none. I was very young, it was not easy to go through the world bald-headed. People would laugh,—so I tried wigs. Credit me, I have tried

wigs of every shape, size, colour. You perceive them,—here is a brown wig, here is a black; here is one with short hair, here is one with long; here is one parted on the side, here is one with no parting at all. You may easily believe that I have been to more wig-makers than one. On the day on which I had the honour to make madame's acquaintance—”

“We don't want to know what you had on; and don't I tell you it was just a misunderstanding!”

This remark was made by Mr. Fullerton, whose obvious annoyance seemed to leave the other untouched.

“Mr. Fullerton, it is necessary that I should explain in order that Madame may understand?”

“What do you think Madame wants to understand?”

Helen spoke for herself.

“I can assure you, Harold, that I want to understand a good deal—I am very much interested. Herr von Rothenheim: please go on.”

“The wig, madame, which I wore when I met you I had on for the first time. I flattered myself it suited me. I thought that Mr. Fullerton had a red wig also. That is my explanation. I had got into the way of thinking everyone wore wigs. I noticed certain details in Mr. Fullerton's costume which went with his coloured hair—with his general appearance. That was the first time he tried to quarrel with me.”

“You knew very well why. You bought yourself a waistcoat of an unusual type which was an exact copy of the one I was wearing.”

“I have already endeavoured to explain that

The Hunter's Moon 251

you are mistaken. Madame, I entreat you to believe that it was not my intention to insult Mr. Fullerton, but his taste in dress is so exquisite; he knows so exactly what accords best with the hair he is wearing——”

“With the hair I am wearing! What the deuce does the fellow mean?”

“Madame will understand.”

“Quite, Herr von Rothenheim.”

“I venture—I trust at a respectful distance—to pay him the highest compliment—I take him as a model. Every time he tries to quarrel I apologise; I beg to explain; but no, he declines to explain—he only quarrels more! I come to madame—who is always so gracious—to ask her to explain how I offend her husband, for whom I have such a profound admiration. He gets more angry, until he forces me to wonder if he supposes that I am in love with his wife. I try to explain that nothing is further from my mind.”

I fancy that this frankness on the part of Herr von Rothenheim took Helen by surprise. She addressed herself to me.

“You see, Constantia, how correct I was; how entitled I was to say I was in no way to blame; in whatever happened I was merely an innocent spectator from first to last.”

“Who has suggested a word to the contrary? On what grounds can anyone have ventured to imagine that I ever regarded madame as anything but a gracious stranger?”

There was something about Herr von Rothenheim's eagerness to make it appear that he had never thought about Helen at all which was, I

fancy, not altogether to her taste. Helen made the best of it very well.

“My husband could never credit that any man would regard me as he ought not to.”

Herr von Rothenheim was, I was concluding, quite a charming fellow and quite a good one—but a little blundering. It seemed to me that he blundered then.

“Madame does me but justice; under no circumstances could I ever regard her as anything more than a stranger.”

“So that the plain fact is that my husband quarrelled with you about a wig.”

“About a wig, Mrs. Fullerton; he did not know it was a wig; I did not know why he quarrelled. It was what you call ‘a chapter of accidents.’”

Mr. Fullerton interposed. “Yes, thank you, on Rothenheim. And now you have told her all about it; at least as much as she wants to know. I have no doubt my wife is very much obliged, and edified. Helen, Herr von Rothenheim insisted on coming with me here, feeling that matters might not be perfectly plain to you unless he explained in person. Since he has incurred all sorts of pains and penalties, I trust that you will be duly grateful.”

Helen, crossing to Herr von Rothenheim, held out both her hands.

“Duly grateful I cannot be. You have placed me under too serious an obligation; but I shall be grateful to you—as long as I live—for more than you suppose. I shall never cease to be grateful.”

I don't quite know what was at the back of her mind myself; and I am sure he didn't. Dropping wigs and various belongings, he favoured her with

The Hunter's Moon 253

the most doubled-up bow I ever saw ; his words owing more to sentiment than sense.

“ For madame to address me in such language is to make me the happiest—and the proudest—of men.”

“ Herr von Rothenheim has dined ? ”

“ We dined on the train. I tear myself back to London as fast as I can. I understand that Mr. Fullerton is going to lend me an automobile.”

“ I am going to drive von Rothenheim to town myself—in the Mercedes—to some friends who are awaiting him. I presume you gather, Helen, that Herr von Rothenheim is a German officer, and for him to be found careering about all on his own might have awkward consequences for him, not only here, but in his own country.”

So I should imagine ; how awkward I did not care to think. I felt that these two men were a couple of curiosities ; possibly the most curious thing was yet to come.

“ Perhaps,” exclaimed von Rothenheim, “ before I bid Madame farewell she will permit me to introduce to her—my wife. It is a pleasure which she impatiently awaits—Bertha ! ”

He said it in a voice which was half caress, half entreaty—and something in skirts came fluttering out of the rhododendrons which were on my right. She was a tall, imposing lady who, one felt, hardly ought to flutter—but she did.

“ Oh, Konrad, I have become so anxious because of the passage of time. It is of very great importance that you do not leave your departure till too late. Perhaps if you will allow me I can make matters shorter than you.” She proceeded to take

254 Orders to Marry

the conduct of matters into her own hands ; I felt sure that she was more like her usual self ; there were now no traces of fluttering. " Mrs. Fullerton, permit me, on my husband's behalf, to have the pleasure to present myself, Bertha von Rothenheim, his wife. There have been passages between your husband and mine of a very curious kind. I do not attempt to apportion the blame ; in such matters men have sometimes their own ideas. It is not for a wife to criticise her husband."

Fancy a woman nowadays talking like that ! Conceive, if you can, an American woman—especially a woman with such a husband as she had.

" It is not, strictly speaking, necessary that I should be introduced on the scene at all ; but since it seems that ideas are going about that it is because my husband has—as you English say—'fallen in love' with you that the trouble comes, it was felt by him that I should be his companion on this visit, and so make it clear that there is no truth in the report at all. Permit me, madame, to assure you that there is no truth in the report at all—or I should not be here. The trouble between these two gentlemen is a personal one, into which neither of us enters. I authorise—and entreat—you, madame, to refer to us—to my husband and to me—should anyone suggest the contrary."

They went ; I cannot tell you exactly how—but they did—amid a flood of words both from the husband and the wife. It was the oddest scene. The von Rothenheims went arm in arm, neither silent for a second ; the Fullertons were on their right and left. He was stiff and speechless, she was in rather a whirl of emotion. To be frank, I

The Hunter's Moon 255

am not sure whether she was the more disposed towards tears or laughter.

Presently she came back to me alone, and I was still less sure. She plumped down on to a chair and laughed; put her hands up to her face and shuddered; removed them and gazed like a ghost in the moonlight. She broke the silence in a voice which was preternaturally serious.

"Constantia, if you laugh I shall never speak to you again."

I did not laugh, but she did, as if she never could stop.

"They are both of them very good fellows; it is not their fault if each of them is a little mad. As for Harold." Picking at her dress with her finger nail, she asked what, under the circumstances, was a surprising question: "Do you not think that Harold is very good-looking?"

"I do; he is one of the best looking men I ever saw."

It was perfectly correct, he was. No one could look at Harold Fullerton and fail to be impressed by some strange compelling quality in his physical charm. But I do not agree that my words were intended to convey the meaning she placed on them; she did not explain what it was, but I knew. She continued; gave one laugh, which was almost hysterical; rising slowly, she stood and looked at me.

"Constantia," she said, very gently, clearly, finally, "you are perfect. I did not think it was possible to say so much in so little." She began to move slowly across the lawn; to see her moving slowly in itself was odd; hers was so often the flash

256 Orders to Marry

of a bird's flight from point to point. She spoke as she went: "If you do not sleep well because you have talked too much it will not be fair to lay all the blame on me."

Nor, as I heard the slight swish of her departing skirts, did it seem to be quite fair for her to leave me all alone. But the moment she had gone I understood. Bob stepped out into the moonlight. As he appeared I admitted to myself that I had known that he was there.

"You have been playing eavesdropper," I cried at him before he had a chance to speak. The accusation did not seem to hurt him.

"I have," he owned it hardily, "some time. You have all of you been so funny. I have had a few minutes' perfect enjoyment."

I was in one of the great big lounge chairs, delicious; there are lots of them at Quarr; they are my worst temptation. He came and perched himself on the arm, as if he had a right to be there. Bob has such a way of taking things for granted; as he does it nicely it makes him such a difficult man to deal with.

"Do you think it becomes a man to eavesdrop?"

He twisted his head round, and he looked at me, and he smiled; there was something about his smile for which I could have kissed him. There is such wisdom sometimes in Bob's smile; I believe it to be quite unconscious. "You are mistaken." He startled me. He has the intuition almost of a woman.

"Bob! What do you mean, how am I mistaken?"

"He loves her. Love comes to different men in

The Hunter's Moon 257

different ways—like that to him, like this to me.”

“Bob, what on earth are you talking about? Is there ever any meaning in what you say?”

“It’s hard on him; but it’s not his fault. If you remember the first time we spoke of him I told you he was a good sort, but queer. I tell you now that he’s one of the very best fellows the world has ever seen; but, O Lord; if you only had the least idea how queer! The joke is that it’s quite impossible to get it into his head that there’s anything about him which even begins to be queer.”

“If it’s true, I am a creature of infinite courtesy, I should say that that was hard on her. To commence, it must be so trying to have much to do with a man who has no sense of humour.”

“Helen has enough. She knows and she understands. A woman always knows when a man is in love with her.”

“Under certain circumstances the knowledge is no use to her even if she has it.”

The glance with which he favoured me! I liked him because he made no attempt to take advantage of what he read between the lines. He continued to stick up for Harold; it was so unexpected. I went on.

“To think that all these weeks she thought he was lying dead.”

“And her disappointment to find that after all he isn’t. I fancy we have both of us been too afraid to make too close an inquiry. Some of the tricks he gets up to are so very mad. There will be trouble if someone finds out what happened at Dinant. He has never been among the officially dead. You will find that inquiries won’t be too searching; he will

be spared to put up another good fight for his country."

"Do you mean that he will go back to what you call 'the front'?"

"Sure; he'll report himself right away and be back with his regiment to-morrow. Next time he'll have the Victoria Cross."

"Nice for Helen. I don't understand you Englishmen."

I suppose that for nearly a minute he was still; then he held out his hand.

"Put it there," he said. I don't think I quite meant to put it there, but I did; my right hand. He swallowed it in his, and then kept still again; we both did. It seemed queer that the mere contact of one hand with another should have so comfortable an effect; so unscientific. They don't give you an explanation of that kind of thing in any work on eugenics I've ever come across. I believe that occasional remarks were made, but I have no clear recollection of what they were. We continued to sit like that until, long after my usual time, I went to bed; the hunters' moon was still in the sky.

I started, dear mother, by saying that I wished to write to you about something very important. By this time you will probably have understood what it is. If you don't I will take care that the next time there is no hunters' moon in the sky. In its absence I'll take the most careful and precise pains to make my meaning perfectly clear. Thoroughly trained as I trust I am on the various philosophical aspects of marriage, points occasionally crop up which do not seem to be even mentioned in my text-book with which I am personally acquainted. Nothing ap-

The Hunter's Moon 259

pears to be more obvious than the superlative value of which, in such a situation, a mother's knowledge ought to be. CONSTANTIA.

P.S.—Tell them in Tankerton that the date is not yet quite finally fixed.

The Princess Heliotrope

HE fell in love with her at first sight. The moment she came into the dining-room and moved across the floor towards the table at which the waiter stood expecting her, he was conscious of a curious sensation. He did not know at the instant what it was, but he knew later—before he reached the dessert at the end of the dinner.

It was awful! He, the man who only a few days before had told his mother that he did not think he would ever marry, that he did not want to have anything to do with women—to find himself feeling like that. Eric Dane was twenty-three, nearly twenty-four, had just taken his degree, had 'come down,' was in unrestricted possession of his quite nice property; in short, he was a man of the world. His mother was his only trouble, that is, though of course he loved her dearly, she was likely to be to him the cause of trouble. That was Nellie Prentice, she was really at the back of it. Not that Eric blamed her; she was really not a bad sort of girl. But his mother had got this ridiculous notion that he ought to marry Nellie—the idea was really too absurd for words. In fact he had come away from

The Princess Heliotrope 261

Teighdale to escape from that preposterous nonsense; practically for that reason only. That had been more than a fortnight ago. He came to Monte Carlo on the Wednesday, and on the Friday evening—only two days after—there walked into the hotel dining-room that dream of feminine beauty.

There could be no doubt that the lady was exquisite. It was not merely a matter of his own private judgment, the thing was patent. He heard a woman at the table next to his say to her husband, "Did you ever see such a lovely frock? I wonder however much it cost; a fortune!"

The man said,

"The lady inside the frock, my dear, is worth a little attention. Don't you think she's almost as well—as lovely as the frock?"

"She's not bad," admitted the lady. She was observing the 'dream' through a pair of glasses. "Indeed, she is distinctly good—good appearance, good style, good figure, and an aristocratic face."

"I should call it rather more than aristocratic," declared the husband. The lady looked at him, which was perhaps why his remark came to what seemed an inopportune conclusion. When the waiter came round she asked him a question.

"Can you tell me who the young lady is, sitting with the elderly lady at that table near the corner?"

Mr. Eric Dane distinctly heard the waiter's reply, perhaps, because he was listening with all his ears.

"She travels incognito. The elderly lady is her *gouvernante*; she also has a lady-in-waiting in her apartments upstairs."

Exactly what the man meant was not quite clear. Mr. Eric Dane—that man of the world—drew his own conclusions.

The dream of beauty was a princess, before the night was over there was not a doubt of it. One or two remarks caught his ear which made that perfectly plain. It was her first appearance on the scene. Mr. Dane learnt that she had only arrived that morning. Already she had created a sensation. In the hotel she was the observed of all observers. Men and women stared at her, and they all admired. The women spoke with hushed breath of her wonderful gown; they conceded that she was not ill-looking. The men, they spoke with hushed breath of the wonderful woman; allowing that the gown was not so bad; it certainly became her.

She appeared in the room. Mr. Dane, in the roulette room, was contemplating risking another louis when she first came in. Without lifting his eyes from the green cloth he might have known that something unusual had happened. He heard people's comments. Even the croupiers looked round. An elderly man beside him said to his companion:

“*Mon Dieu!* there is the.”—the person spoke in French, of which Mr. Dane's knowledge was not so great as might have been becoming in a student who had just taken his degree, but he thought the person said—“the Princess Heliotrope.”

Whether he had caught the name quite correctly Mr. Dane did not care. The Princess Heliotrope, it was a delightful name, a charming name. He was not intimately acquainted with the names and titles of royal personages; he was not even

The Princess Heliotrope 263

acquainted with the Reigning Family with which the Princess Heliotrope might be connected; though he gathered, from what he heard later, that she was one of the Hohenzollerns, and he had the English university man's vague notion that they were Austrian. All that interested him was the girl's beauty.

That really was amazing. Some one said that she was *epatante*, and he knew what that meant. Each time he looked at her his blood seemed to quicken. Her air, her conduct, her beauty, were irreproachable. The manner in which she seemed to be unconscious that anyone was in the room save herself and her companion was what he understood as 'royal.' Apparently she was utterly unconscious that everyone in those crowded rooms was admiring herself and her clothes. Her air of childlike innocence was sublime.

He followed her into the *trente et quarante* room, though it cost him two louis to enter. There she played a little. Her *gouvernante* handed her a gold purse encrusted with gems. She took from it some gold coins which, with white gloved fingers, she placed upon the table, smiling slightly, glancing sideways at her *gouvernante*, as if she dared her to say a word. And she won. Mr. Dane would have liked to throw something at someone if she had lost. But she did not lose, she won. Not only once, or twice, or even thrice, four times she won. Mr. Dane saw it with his own eyes. She did not lose once. It was Mr. Dane who lost.

He would have liked to follow her lead, to stake as she staked. The fear that she might think it a liberty restrained him. The result was that as when

she played he practically played against her, her gain meant his loss. An extraordinary thing happened in connection with this as he was leaving the room:

The lady had such a singular effect upon his nervous system that he felt he could stay no longer and behave as a reasonable man. The fact was that she brushed against him, ever so lightly, as she stooped to lay her stake upon the board. The slight contact with her person, it was so slight that a sane creature would have held it imperceptible, made his head all at once start whirling round. He moved towards the door, he dare not trust himself to stay. As he neared the door he lingered. His feet seemed weighted with lead, they did not seem to wish to bear him from the room. When, having passed through the doorway, he hesitated, inclined, even at the eleventh hour, to return whence he had come, the great doors swung open and the lady appeared, the elder woman at her heels.

Taken by surprise, forgetful of his manners, he stared at her as if moonstruck. Perhaps it was because he was little more than a boy, and his admiration was so obvious, simple and sincere, that, so far from showing any sign of being offended, the lady smiled. As she neared him something fell from her hand to the floor. It was her gold purse. He still had wit enough to stoop and pick it up. As she took it from him she said:

“Monsieur, I thank you.” The sound of her voice, the glance of her eyes, were thanks enough, even had she not added, showing an interest in him of which he had not dreamed, “Monsieur has had bad fortune;—I am sorry,”

The Princess Heliotrope 265

That was all ; not another syllable. She made towards him a little inclination of her dainty head and then moved on. It was enough. He scarcely slept that night, good sleeper though as a rule he was, because of her. Her voice kept sounding in his ears. She had spoken in English, her tone a little high-pitched, with the quaintest accent. And she had been sorry. She had observed him enough to notice his ill-luck—that she should have noticed him at all seemed incredible.

He found on his return to the hotel two letters ; one from his mother, full of local gossip, enclosing a snap-shot of Nellie Prentice. The other was from Nellie herself, informing him that some amateur theatricals were to take place, asking him if he would take part in a little piece with her. The idea seemed so droll, it made him smile. Passing from the fragrant presence of the Princess Heliotrope to a part in a little piece with Nellie Prentice, the idea seemed so droll ! Nellie was quite a dear, but—well, that snap-shot was very like her. It represented her in her golfing dress, club up-lifted, in the act of striking a ball off the tee ;—just a modern country girl.

Even as he looked at her photograph the memory of the princess blotted it from his eyes. He slipped it back into the envelope, and the second after had forgotten all about it, and his mother's letter, and Nellie's invitation to act with her in the 'little piece.'

The next day was one of marvels. He was standing in the hall of the hotel when the princess came towards him in a costume which suggested that she might be going motoring. She was

266 Orders to Marry

attended by a shorter, darker girl, and the everlasting *gouvernante*. Although Mr. Eric Dane had only seen the beautiful lady for two or three hours over-night, he had already begun to regard her chaperon as very much in the way. As the princess was still at a distance she saw him standing there. When she came closer she bowed;—she even stopped and spoke to him.

“I trust, monsieur, that your ill-fortune did not keep you awake?”

“No, madame, it was not my ill-fortune at the table which kept me awake.”

“Was monsieur then kept awake?”

“I—I did not sleep very well.”

“Why?” The look with which she favoured him! The something in her eyes which came right through her veil and seemed to cause a sort of delightful electric shock to steal from the soles of his feet to the crown of his head! When he stayed silent, she added, “Does not monsieur as a rule sleep well?”

“Yes, madame; as a rule I sleep very well, but last—last night I couldn’t.” His voice faltered and almost broke. He himself did not know why. There was a gleam in her smiling glance which conveyed a kind of occult hint that she knew more than he did.

“But why,” she persisted, “should you have slept badly last night in particular?” Though she asked the question she did not wait for the answer; perhaps because she was a person of unusual perception and could supply the answer for herself.

She went out of the hall, and the dark girl—who also smiled at him—followed, and the *gouvernante*, who looked a trifle grim. There was a magnificent

The Princess Heliotrope 267

motor car without, an open car. A man in gorgeous livery held the door open ; another gorgeous man was on the driver's seat ; the three ladies entered, the car drove off.

When the car had gone Mr. Dane said to the porter, who stood bare-headed on the steps,

“What is the—the elder lady's name?”

The porter looked at him a little oddly, as if, noticing the break in his voice, he suspecting that the question had not taken the shape originally intended.

“The elder lady, that is Madame Daubray ; she always travels with the princess.”

“What—what is the princess's name?” Mr. Dane put that very simple inquiry to the porter almost as if his heart was in his mouth.

“The princess?” Again the porter looked at him as Mr. Dane thought a little oddly. “That is the Princess Heliotrope. There are few persons better known on the Riviera.”

Mr. Dane was convinced of the truth of the porter's last statement when, later, at the hour for dejeuner, he saw the Dream in the restaurant of the Café de Paris. Every creature in the crowded room looked at her as, with her little retinue, she entered. There were men who rose from their tables as she passed, and bowed. She walked on unheeding, save for the faintest little nod, until she came near the table at which, all alone, Mr. Dane was seated. She smiled at him, she even spoke :

“I trust that monsieur will not eat a bad lunch because of his bad night.”

That was all, just that one sentence with very little in it. But Eric Dane felt as if he had been

honoured before all men. He went out after lunch to a certain florist and there he bought flowers, for which he paid a monstrous—his mother would have said a wicked—price. Considering that it is supposed to be the land of flowers it is strange how dear they can be at Monte Carlo. Mr. Dane waited while the flowers were being made up into a bouquet, with a lovely broad ribbon round the stems, and he bore that bouquet off with him in a taxi-cab, though he was not a quarter of a mile from his hotel. And on the way he stopped at a candy store ; hesitated ; got out of the cab ; returned to it ; got out of it again ; then, as if he feared that he might change his mind again, made a little dart into the shop ; where he purchased a large, resplendent and expensive ornamental box filled with the finest chocolates. He took that box with him also. Clearly, since he proposed to play the part of common porter, it was just as well that he had a taxi-cab.

He was making up his mind, and unmaking it, during the short distance that lay between him and the hotel. The problem which presented itself for solution was a complex one, or so it seemed to him. That box, those flowers, were intended for the Princess Heliotrope. The question was, should he send them with or without a card attached ? He did not know, had not the faintest notion, what etiquette prescribed when it came to sending presents to princesses. She might resent his sending presents at all, even flowers and a box of chocolates. If they were accompanied by a card, or by anything which pointed to the donor, he might be informed, more or less indirectly, that he had offended by treating royalty as if it were common

The Princess Heliotrope 269

clay. She might never smile, still less speak to him again. That was a thought too dreadful for contemplation! If she ceased to be conscious of his existence, at Monte Carlo there would be nothing left for him. On the other hand, if nothing went with that box and that bouquet to hint from whence they came, she might never guess.

Then all at once he smiled. She might never guess? He knew better than that. Something within told him that on the instant she would not only guess, she would be certain. All he had to do was to send his offerings; she would know from whence they came.

So he handed them to the porter at the hotel, and bade him send them up at once to the apartments of the lady. And at dinner she appeared with a rose at the neck of her dress, and more roses at her waist. And he knew that they were his. And she knew also, because, as she took her seat at the table which was almost in a line with his, she looked at him and nodded—it was not formal enough to be called a bow—and smiled. And he was the happiest young man in Monte Carlo.

While he was engaged with the roast, a waiter placed on the table at his side a folded menu card without a word, and then he went. Mr. Dane glanced at it, wondering whence it came and what it meant. Then he picked it up. On the back, the card being folded so that they could not be seen, written with a pencil in a small, clear hand, were the words, "Thank you. So good and kind of you. You who are so fortunate—I who am so unhappy."

What the words meant he was not quite sure;

he had no doubt from whom they came. He glanced at the table near the corner. All three women were engaged in the business of their meal. The princess did not look his way. What did she mean by saying that he was so fortunate and she was so unhappy? Was she unhappy? Was it possible that anything so monstrous could be true? She unhappy! That entrancing vision of a woman perfected! His blood burned at the thought of it.

He remained seated at his table until the three women went. He rose as they passed. The princess inclined her head most graciously, the forefinger of her right hand touching the rose at her neck. Madame Daubray looked straight in front of her, seemingly unconscious of his presence. The dark girl sent a mischievous glance his way; her smile was an enigma.

Apparently the princess ascended to her apartments and stayed there. He did not see her again that evening. That night, for some reason, he seemed tired out; he went to bed quite early, sleeping till the waiter brought his coffee in the morning. Even then it was all he could do to open his eyes. So soon as he had gone they re-closed. He awoke again with a start to find his coffee waiting for him. As he rose to pour himself out a cup he saw that on the little tray was an envelope; a small, oblong, silver-grey envelope, with a mysterious something on the flap which might have been a monogram, or a crest or almost anything. The envelope was perfumed. As a rule, Eric Dane did not care for perfume; for some cause the perfume of that envelope appealed to him as none had ever done before. It was inscribed, 'A Monsieur

The Princess Heliotrope 271

l'Inconnu.' He knew enough of French to be able to translate that 'To Monsieur the Unknown.' He recognised the small, delicate handwriting of the menu card—it was from Her. It had been lying there unnoticed while he slept! Why had that oaf of a waiter not called his attention to its presence? Could he have slept if he had known it was there? With fingers which actually trembled he opened the flap. Taking out the sheet of paper which the envelope contained as if it were something sacred. It was really in a spirit of reverential awe that he unfolded it. On that sheet of paper were some half a dozen words in English.

"The Casino Garden at half-past ten."

No end, no beginning, nothing to show from whom it came; just that. But no eloquent letter, dealing with matters of world-wide importance, could have moved him as did that little note. He glanced at the watch suspended above his head—it was nearly half-past ten; the coffee had been brought to him at nine; no wonder it was cold.

What an idiot that waiter was not to have called his attention to the envelope! It was no use staying in bed to swear at him, he could do that just as well when he was on his feet, scrambling into his clothes, using all possible speed to get to the Casino Garden. For the first time in his life he cut his bath; he actually went unbathed. Anything rather than that she should be kept waiting for him a moment longer than could possibly be helped. The Casino was within a stone's throw, so was the garden. In the shortest possible time on record he washed and dressed—before a quarter to eleven he was rushing towards the Casino Garden. He had not

272 Orders to Marry

even stopped to shave. As a matter of fact if he had only shaved himself once a week it would have made no difference. But it was a rule with him, as with some young men, to shave each morning and again at night. When they reach a period in their lives when shaving is absolutely necessary they are not so eager.

Nor need he after all have been in quite so much haste. When he gained the garden it was empty. A dreadful doubt assailed him--could she have come and gone? Had she felt it impossible for a person in her position to wait ten minutes. He traversed every foot of ground. He found a fat elderly woman with a fat pug dog, and, at some distance from her, a scraggy elderly man who looked at Mr. Dane with bilious eyes. Possibly he envied him the appearance which his anxiety lent him of being shod in seven-league boots. The way in which that young man tore over every inch of ground would have furnished a fine example for the dyspeptic. Mr. Eric Dane moved as he had never moved before; but she was not there.

She was not there either till after the passage of a good three-quarters of an hour. How those five and forty minutes hung on that young man's hands! He did not know what course to pursue. Ought he to go back to the hotel to learn if she had been to the garden and returned, or dare he hope that she was later than he himself had been? In an indeterminate frame of mind he traversed the garden over and over again as if he hoped. At about half-past eleven she came.

As always, a dream of beauty. Matutinal though the hour was she already wore a ravishing toilette.

The Princess Heliotrope 273

And she became it so, holding herself so well, moving with a grace which would have become any Hohenzollern of them all, her lovely face framed under a lovely hat. Her greeting was hardly what he expected, considering that he had waited so long; her manner was, indeed, a little brusque.

“Ah! it is you? Why do you stand here, where the eyes of all the world are upon you? So far as he knew there were still only three or four simple souls about—their eyes were certainly not on him. “Go to the seat which is on the bottom terrace in the corner on the right. Go by yourself, not with me;—presently I will come.”

He did as she bade him. In spite of her odd accent she spoke English wonderfully well for one who was not to the manner born. He was at the seat which he supposed to be the one she had named ten minutes before she was;—when she appeared it was from an unexpected direction. He rose as she sat down.

“Do not do that,” she told him; “you sit down also, and put on your hat. This morning I am not in a very good temper.” Her first greetings had suggested that she might be a trifle ruffled; her frank admissions of the fact took him aback. That was only a beginning, he was taken a good deal more aback before the interview closed. From her end of the seat she was looking at him, up and down, as if he were some object which was there for exhibition. Her beautiful eyes affected him even more than the surprising candour which presently marked her speech.

“You are a good-looking boy;—yes, indeed, you are a handsome boy. You are an English

gentleman?" He admitted a little lamely that he hoped he was. "That is good, I like an English gentleman. You are rich?"

"No, I am not what you would probably call rich; on the other hand, I am not exactly poor."

"No? Not rich? nor poor? That is a fortunate position. For my part, in me you see the most unhappy creature in the world."

She did not look it, he did not like to say so, yet he could not help but feel it. To his mind she not only presented a perfect picture of all that in a woman was desirable, but also of all that a woman could desire to be. He felt sure that there must be unhappier women in the world than she. Yet before he could tell her so she went on in a strain which, man of the world though he was, brought the blood into his cheeks. She began by asking him a question which took his breath away.

"You love me?" He had never had such an inquiry addressed to him before. Anyhow, it seemed hardly the place or the hour for questions of that sort. When, nonplussed, he remained still, she pressed him for an answer. "Say that you love me—say it!"

So he said it, she was so insistent.

"I hardly dare to—to love you—but I do."

"You pay me a compliment," she said "which I appreciate. It is because in my heart I felt you loved me that I am here. Because of your love for me I may, before long, ask you to render me a service. Until then—good-bye."

Without any sort of warning, in an instant she was on her feet and walking off. He remained seated in a condition which it would not have been

The Princess Heliotrope 275

easy to diagnose. He had heard of royal vagaries, but she certainly seemed to have her share of them. The more he thought things over the more he wondered what possible reason she could have had for making that appointment in the Casino Garden, for which she had been an hour late. Had it merely been her intention to wring from him a confession of his love? It seemed hardly the sort of thing one supposed that a princess would do. Yet what other reason could she have had for meeting him there? She had said nothing about her feeling for him; she had simply been curious to learn what was his for her. Their interview had scarcely lasted a minute, what idea could she have had at the back of her shapely head?

He tried to draw conclusions from certain deductions, and failed. His conclusions and deductions were both of them absurd. The only thing of which he was sure was that this delightful example of her irresponsible sex seemed within four and twenty hours of their first meeting to be turning his brain. She had spoken of a service which she might require of him. At that moment there was nothing which he would not have done for her: he was so nearly mad as that.

And he continued so until the afternoon. That was the last glimpse he had of the princess till it was time for lunch. And all the while he was thinking of feats of derring do from which, for her sake, he would not shrink. She did not lunch at the hotel, which was a disappointment, so that it resolved itself into a hurried and a scanty meal for him. Afterwards, quitting the hotel, disposed to ransack Monte Carlo for a glimpse of her, passing

a famous restaurant, he saw, seated at a table in the open air—the day was gloriously fine—the object of his quest. She was not alone; she was with her chaperon and the dark young woman, and she was in still another toilette. A woman who was standing by him noticed her in the same instant that he did.

“I never,” she said to a feminine companion, “saw anything like that woman’s frocks. She seems to change them a dozen times a day. However many must she have?—and they are all of them just dreams!”

The princess not only saw him, she made a little beckoning gesture with the teaspoon of her coffee cup. He acted on it there and then, though he had a feeling that Madame Daubray was saying something to her which was almost in the nature of reprimand, and although he knew that the dark-eyed girl was regarding him with eyes which were not eyes of invitation.

When he reached the table, still trifling with her coffee spoon, she looked at him and laughed.

“So it is you again! Well?—What do you find at Monte Carlo to amuse yourself? Always it seems to me so dull, and it smells of money; at least they tell me that that is the cause of the soul-deadening something which is in the air. Is he not a good-looking boy?”

Turning to her companions she asked the question as frankly as if she were praising the points of the latest triumph in toy dogs. Madame Daubray’s answer was serious enough; there was no suggestion of anything in the nature of a toy dog in what she said.

The Princess Heliotrope 277

"If you take my advice you'll tell him to go away. You are very foolish."

"Can one always be wise?—Can one?" The first question was addressed to the lady; the second to Mr. Eric Dane. "Come!—what does it matter if, for once in one's life, one is wise or foolish? Sit down. Join us with our coffee. Waiter, a chair. You speak French?"

"Very little, and that little very badly." He placed himself on the chair which the waiter brought. "You know they do not teach us to speak French in England. But you—you speak English beautifully."

"I!" She made a little movement with her shoulders. "I do not speak it so badly, why should I? My friend, Madame Daubray, also speaks English very well."

"I have been in England once for seven years," explained the lady referred to. "One learns to speak a language in seven years. He is certainly good-looking. There you have reason."

If the allusion was to Mr. Eric Dane, the lady spoke as calmly as if it were usual to say such things about young gentlemen in public to their faces. Not the least strange part was that the Princess treated the remark as if it were the merest commonplace.

"Did I not tell you that I had reason?—You perceive. My other friend, Hortense, also speaks a little English, but like you not very well."

The dark girl, who was thus referred to as Mademoiselle Hortense proved that she had at least some English by an astonishing question which she immediately asked; although she spoke

with a strong French accent, it was perfectly easy to understand what she said.

"Where did you get your eyes from?" That was the inquiry which by way, possibly, of an introduction to a general conversation, she addressed to that diffident young man. "They are fine eyes. Do not all the women tell you so?—You are a good boy!"

Laughter came from the Princess, just a tiny ripple; Madame Daubray allowed herself to relax into something like a grin; Mr. Eric Dane had seldom felt less at his ease. He blushed, turning, he was convinced, all the colours of the rainbow. He tried to treat the lady's reference to his personal attractions as if it were a merry jest; but he was conscious that he felt—and probably looked—like an awkward clown.

And the way in which Mademoiselle Hortense, with her own fine eyes, which were big and bold, surveyed him as if he were some queer specimen! She said something in French which he did not understand, though the others smiled. Then, on a sudden, she broke into exclamations, which were still beyond him, but clearly plain enough to her companions. Her face, voice, manner, suggested that she was startled; so complete was the alternation in her bearing, such was the precipitance of her movements, that one might almost have said that she was frightened. She rose from her chair with surprising quickness, and moved off so rapidly among the seats and tables, that one might have been forgiven for thinking that she was running away. Madame Daubray was almost as quick as she was; though she was so much older

The Princess Heliotrope 279

and heavier, and the other had the start, in half a dozen seconds she was at her heels, and stuck there. Nor, amazing though it seemed, did the Princess stand upon the order of her going. The singular conduct of her chaperon and of her lady-in-waiting in practically running away and leaving her alone seemed to fill her with the desire to keep them company. She glanced round, just once; what she saw the young gentleman did not know; whatever it might be it was evidently enough for her. She did not stop to glance a second time, but without a word of explanation or farewell followed those who were supposed to be responsible for her well-being, as if at least she was resolved that they should not gain much advantage by being the first to take themselves away. Mr. Dane, making no attempt to rise from his chair, sat staring after them, wondering what could have happened to cause them to desert him in such precipitate fashion. He was vaguely conscious that about him people were smiling, even tittering. The three ladies had certainly not been very ceremonious in the fashion in which they had chosen to take their departure; could the men and women who crowded the other tables see something in his suddenly solitary position which amused them? Someone laughed behind him; he twisted himself round to see who it was. As he did so he found himself confronted by a waiter who bore a paper on a plate.

“L’addition, monsieur. The bill, sir.”

Scarcely knowing how it came about Mr. Dane found himself holding between his finger and thumb a document of portentous length, which was apparently an account for what seemed to have

280 Orders to Marry

been an excellent repast. He was not very quick at deciphering French figures, but the total appeared to be surprisingly large.

While he was endeavouring to collect himself sufficiently to understand the situation, and especially what that waiter fellow meant by handing him that prodigious bill, he became conscious that an individual was standing by his side, who had come he knew not whence. Mr. Dane looked up; the individual looked down. The confusion of the young gentleman's mind was increased by the discovery that the stranger—who was neither young, nor tall, nor thin—was regarding him with a glance which could hardly have been described as friendly. Indeed, so much was it the other way, that before Mr. Dane had time to realise that the fellow was glaring as if he would like to strike him, the stranger snatched from his fingers the document which the waiter had brought him on a plate. The man said something in French. When he perceived that it was beyond the young gentleman's comprehension he repeated what was probably its equivalent in English, with a strong French accent.

“So! You pay their luncheon bill! Why the devil?”

He said this in a tone of voice which was so distinctly audible to the surrounding lunchers that it was followed by sounds which uncomfortably suggested amusement. The stranger, ceasing to glare at Mr. Dane, glared at the laughing crowd instead. Apparently realising that he was making a fool of himself he said something to the waiter which caused the man to bow and smirk. Another and more important individual coming up greeted

The Princess Heliotrope 281

the stranger with a profound inclination of his head. The stranger said something to him; then he waved the bill in the young gentleman's face, and he observed, with sufficient curtness.

"We shall see!"

What he meant the young gentleman had not the faintest notion; but it was all he said—having said it he marched away. Although he had not the slightest real comprehension of what had occurred, Mr. Eric Dane, as he watched the excited stranger marching off, puffing as if he were a little short of breath, was conscious that, whatever the significance of the happenings of the last few seconds might be, he himself was not exactly in a dignified position. Everyone seemed eyeing him. The people at the outside tables stood up to get a better view; he might have been a performing donkey which people had paid for the right to look at. He had an uncomfortable suspicion that they did think he was some kind of donkey. It was almost with the air of a dog carrying its tail between its legs, that presently, so soon as he could gather himself together, he took himself off.

He saw nothing more of the Princess Heliotrope that day, but at night he found a note awaiting him in his room—on the same perfumed grey paper, in the small delicate handwriting, without beginning or end.

"I return to Paris to-morrow. Come and see me at my palace, 11^{bis} Rue Pigalle, on Tuesday, at three o'clock in the afternoon.

"Please!"

He read the note over and over with feelings which were a good deal mixed. She asked him to

visit her in Paris—at her palace. His knowledge of Paris was to seek ; he had no notion where about in it the Rue Pigalle was. He pictured it as a street of splendid houses, inhabited by the luminaries of rank and fashion who, he had always understood, made Paris the gayest city in the world. He himself had intended to stay in Monte Carlo quite a while, but somehow when he read that note he concluded that he had had about enough of it—he had come to something like the same conclusion that morning, when he had been left sitting alone at the table outside the Cafe de Paris. After all, he had practically exhausted all there was to do ; he cared little for the tables ; he had lost money—he might continue to lose. There seemed to be little to do in Monte Carlo except lose money—until the Princess appeared upon the scene. If she were going—why should he stay ?

On the Tuesday morning he put up at the Hotel Meurice in Paris. In the afternoon he chartered a private motor car ; a gorgeous Delaunay-Belleville drew up at the hotel entrance. In it he started off for the palace in the Rue Pigalle, wearing his most important air, arrayed like Solomon in all his glory in what he believed to be his most becoming clothes.

He had a vague feeling that there was an odd glint in the chasseur's eye as, with a little flourish, he bade him tell the driver to take him to 11^{bis} Rue Pigalle. But he only paid scant attention to the man, and it was with a consciousness that he was about to be introduced to the gay city's gilded splendours that he settled himself in a corner as the car rolled off. He was indeed a little curious to

The Princess Heliotrope 283

learn in what abode of luxury that dream of beauty dwelt.

It was, therefore, as by degrees he roused himself sufficiently to look about him, with a little feeling of wonderment that he observed what kind of neighbourhood it was which the car was entering. On neither side did there seem to be anything like palaces or dwellings of splendour. He wondered if the driver, misunderstanding his instructions, had lost his way ; they positively seemed to be entering a district which was all slums.

And when at last the car drew up as if it had reached its journey's end, it seemed to him that they were in the worst slum of all.

The driver opened the door. Mr. Dane, feeling sure that he had made a mistake, put to him a question which suggested as much.

"Why are you stopping here?" he asked.

The driver touched his cap, he was apparently an Englishman.

"You said *II^{bis}*, sir. This is *II^{bis}*; there it is over the door."

The man pointed to a number which was plain for all to see.

"But," murmured Mr. Dane, "I said the Rue Pigalle."

"Yes, sir, the Rue Pigalle. I know, sir. This is the Rue Pigalle.

Mr. Dane, arrayed in all his splendour, alighting on the dirty pavement, stared about him in amazement. He was in a grimy, shabby street, doubtful little shops on either side of the road, above them dirty houses. There was an error somewhere. The Princess Heliotrope could not possibly live in

such a place as this, it was absurd! He had brought that last note of hers with him in his pocket. He took it out. Her words were plain enough, "Come and see me at my palace, 11^{bis} Rue Pigalle." And the day and hour, "On Tuesday at three o'clock in the afternoon," he was there punctually to the tick; even as he studied the note somewhere a clock struck three.

If there was an error, a misapprehension, as obviously there must be, he had yet to find out where it was. He entered the doorway of 11^{bis}. The door stood wide open. A woman was coming out. An elderly female, probably, the wife of some workman, who after the manner of her class was about to sally forth into the street with her head uncovered. He called to the driver of the car.

"Do you speak French?"

"Yes, sir, I do, sir."

"Ask this woman if she can tell me where the Princess Heliotrope lives."

The driver said something to the woman in French at which she laughed, to which, also she replied with what seemed amazing volubility. The driver seemed half puzzled, half amused.

"What did she say?" demanded Mr. Dane.

"She says, sir, that the lady, the—the Princess Heliotrope, has a room on the third floor back."

"Third floor back! Good heavens! What does the woman mean?"

"I don't know what she means, sir, that's what she says."

Mr. Dane reflected. Clearly it was no use to carry on a discussion in the open street. He entered the house and mounted the stairs. Such

The Princess Heliotrope 285

stairs, old, uncared for, unclean. He gained the first floor, the second, the third, it seemed to be an immense distance from the bottom. There were two doors on the landing, one on the right, which was obviously the back. With hesitating knuckles he rapped at the door on the left. A voice within exclaimed, a voice he knew :

“Entrez !” Then in English, “Come in !”

He went in. There was the Princess Heliotrope, but how changed ! All her splendours gone, clad in a plain black frock. And the room was so small, so odd, he did not know what to make of it. He was astonished, bewildered. Not so the lady. She was seated on a wooden chair at an uncovered wooden table, engaged on some piece of needlework. When he entered, rising, she favoured him with a sweeping curtsey.

“Welcome, sire, to my palace. Will your highness please deign to take a chair.”

She smiled, and spoke so gaily, and bore herself with such self-possession that he was more at a loss than ever. She went on when she saw that he was tongue-tied.

“I wondered if you'd come. I was betting myself a packet of needles against two reels of silk twist that you would and then that you wouldn't. I don't know how the bet went after all, but I know I won. Aren't you glad you've come ? Isn't this just the kind of palace you expected to see ?”

“I certainly am glad I've come, very glad indeed, but—I'm afraid I don't quite understand.”

“No ; you wouldn't.” She stood in an attitude of listening. “But here is someone who understands quite well. I told that someone to be here

at five minutes past three, five minutes after your arrival and this someone is always punctual."

While he stared, wondering what her words might mean, there came a tapping at the door.

"Entrez!" she cried. And there entered that person who had come to him when he had been left alone at the table, and who had snatched from him the bill. Which of the two men was the more surprised to see the other was not clear. The lady went through a ceremony of introduction, as if their meeting was the most natural thing in the world.

"Monsieur Bernard, this is Mr. Eric Dane, a noble English gentleman. Mr. Dane, this is Monsieur Jean Bernard, the proprietor of the famous millinery establishment which is known to all the world as "Heliotrope." I am Mary Ellen Jenkins, until lately American, mannequin extraordinary at "Heliotrope's." Indeed, so closely am I associated with the Maison Heliotrope that in more parts of the world than one I am known as the Princess Heliotrope. Monsieur Bernard, who is Heliotrope, has supplied me in luxurious abundance with all the most sublime confections which his house produces. I have worn them everywhere, at his expense. I have been attended by an inferior mannequin, Mademoiselle Hortense, and by the lady who acts as saleswoman, and who is responsible for the safe custody of all those illustrious examples of Heliotrope art, Madame Daubray. I have acted to the Maison Heliotrope as a walking advertisement. You perceive that I am designed by nature to display a costume to perfection. I have displayed a great many costumes for the

The Princess Heliotrope 287

Maison Heliotrope. I have made the Maison Heliotrope famous—I, I who speak! You cannot deny it.”

The lady wagged her finger at Monsieur Bernard.

“Have I denied it? Have I ever attempted to deny it?” he exclaimed.

“You have done worse; you have treated me, an American woman, born in the town of Batterton in the state of Illinois, as if I were a worm.—Very well, the worm has turned. You underpay me—”

“I say you underpay me, though you do pay me what I ask. What I want you will not give me.”

“What in the name of fortune do you mean? I do not understand! You have saved money, you are rich—you live in a place like this when you might live in the Avenue Klaber—”

“What do I want with the Avenue Klaber! I want a partnership.”

“On what terms? In the name of all that is reasonable, on what terms?”

“On the terms that I become your wife. Those are the only terms; that is the only kind of partnership I want; then I will make the Maison Heliotrope hum. But you have not asked me to be your wife, you do not ask me to be your wife, you will not ask me to be your wife. Therefore I say to Mr. Eric Dane, whose acquaintance I have only made two days, yet who has already told me that he loves me. Have you not told me that you love me?”

The youth, evidently taken aback, attempted a stammering reply.

“I—I believe—I—I—did—mention—something of the kind.”

“Certainly you mentioned something of the kind.

You told me that you loved me. Therefore I say that I will become your wife. And you Monsieur Bernard, can find another Princess Heliotrope."

"But of all the unreasonable women in the world—"

"Why am I unreasonable? How many confect-ions have I sold for you? How many orders have I taken? Have I not done my share in making the Maison Heliotrope famous?"

"But do I deny it? Do I deny it?" Monsieur Bernard shook his clenched fists as if half beside himself with agitation. "Nom d'une pipe, when have I denied it?"

"Yet you do not ask me to be your wife."

"How was I to know that you wished to be my wife? This is the first time I ever heard of it."

"It is also the last. I shall presently become Mrs. Eric Dane. I have asked Mr. Eric Dane to come here in order to tell him, in your presence, what I propose to do. The Maison Heliotrope can go hang!"

"But why—but why! My father, my mother, my uncles and my aunts, why? why? I am ready to marry you whenever you please, unreasonable woman! How can I tell what is in your mind when you treat me as if I were dirt."

"It was your business to see what was in my mind."

"But—but—but—" Monsieur Bernard seemed almost inarticulate with emotion. "My heavens, what is it you are speaking, when you say such things! Now that I know you wish to be my wife you shall be my wife."

"When?—supposing I consent."

The Princess Heliotrope 289

"If I could go out into the street and marry you at once I would do it. I have letters from Nice, from Cannes, from Menton, from everywhere! People want to see my latest confections. You have made appointments with all sorts of people, you have not kept them! My business suffers."

"No doubt it does, and it can continue to suffer, so far as I am concerned, until I am your wife."

"If I give you an undertaking to marry you as soon as it can possibly be done, will that please your ladyship? Will you go back to Monte Carlo—with the dresses. You would be selling every day if you were there. Will you go back to-day?"

"Maybe. Where is the undertaking?"

"Come, come, come!" Monsieur Bernard waved his hands at the lady in a sort of frenzy. "Will you come round with me to Monsieur Feval my notary? I will have a deed drawn up in which I will undertake to make you Madame Bernard, my wife, the moment the necessary formalities are concluded. It will not take an hour. Then will you go back to Monte Carlo with the frocks? There are two new models come this morning, they are ravishing! You have only to be seen in them to sell a dozen copies."

"What colour are they?"

"One is emerald blue."

"Emerald blue? what the goodness is that?"

"Never mind! It is what I call it, it will become the rage. The other is Chinese pink. Never mind what that is either! Come to Monsieur Feval!"

The lady looked very steadily at Monsieur Bernard; then she turned to Mr. Eric Dane. She smiled with an exquisite grace; there was pathos in her voice.

“ Mr. Dane, I am very grateful to you for coming to see me in my palace. Next time you are in Paris I trust you will come and see me in another palace. Should you marry, as I hope you will—you will see that I am engaged. I regret that I am not available. I shall hope that you will bring Madame your wife to the Maison Heliotrope, where every effort will be made, and no pains spared, to meet her requirements. I can promise, indeed, that she shall be waited on by Madame Bernard herself, the Princess Heliotrope.”

* * * * *

Mr. Eric Dane played in that little piece with Miss Nellie Prentice, it was just a little love scene, and they played it very well.

It is whispered that she may procure part of her trousseau from the great Parisian house which was the first to introduce the now famous colour shade, emerald blue.

The Amazing Visitor

I WAS never more startled in my life. Before I write another word I pause to consider if that statement is exaggerated. It is not. It expresses the exact fact. So I repeat it, I never was more startled in my life, and I never was! Perhaps that was because my life has been so commonplace, so like everyone else's, that I had never had an adventure in all my days, till then! That was an adventure with a vengeance!

I came up from Cambridge on the 6.30,—dressed for dinner. I hate travelling in evening dress, but there was no alternative. I had been playing in a hockey match against Somerville and there was no other train. I was to dine with the Priors at 8.30; the train was not due in London until after eight, it was sure to take half an hour to get there from Liverpool Street, even in a taxi; unless I wished to be unpardonably late I had to be ready to sit down to table when I got to town. So I dressed before I started, and went up to town in a sky blue ninon, mixed with goodness alone knows what—I am no better than a man at describing a frock!—which I hoped wasn't cut too low. They do put so little on

292 Orders to Marry

you if you only give them a chance. We had had a ripping game, the Somerville crowd can play hockey!—and I had had to rush to change my clothes and get to the station in time to catch my train;—so my impulse was—the compartment being empty—to put my feet up on the opposite seat and think of what a good time I was having at Girton.

I was thinking hard when something happened which woke me up. What it had been I could not imagine. There was I, with my feet stretched out in front of me,—I had kicked off my shoes because they were a weeny bit tight; there was the lamp overheard; and there was the empty compartment. Nothing in the least degree uncommon seemed to have occurred. Still I felt a most curious conviction that something had. I sat still, facing the horses, wondering and listening, when something caused me to look round at the door on my right,—and as I have written, I never was more startled in my life!

It was, of course, pitch dark,—like Erebus without; you could see absolutely nothing outside,—but I saw something through the window on my right. I was not quite certain what it was, but it gave me the impression of being a face outside the window. Yet, since we were travelling at, I suppose, more than forty miles an hour, and there was nothing outside for anyone to stand on, how could it have been? I must have been mistaken,—the victim of a momentary hallucination. And yet—I kept on looking—and it came again,—the face outside the window.

It continued there,—as plain as plain could be,—obvious to the dullest pair of eyes. The train was going goodness knows how fast, but as fast as it

The Amazing Visitor 293

could go, and someone was standing on nothing outside the window of my compartment.

I had been thinking so hard and woke so suddenly, and the thing was so surprising, that I was a little moithered. I couldn't think what I ought to do. Ought I to pull the alarm and stop the train, or—what ought I to do?

I was still indeterminate when I saw a movement of the opposite door; it opened,—and before I could say Jack Robinson someone got into my compartment. That was, I believe, the mathematical moment when,—as I have stated twice—I never was more startled in my life.

I sat up with a jerk, got my feet—still shoeless—off the seat with another jerk,—and was about to scream when—well, I decided not to. It was borne in on me with the swiftness of lightning that not much good would be gained by screaming; and anyhow I was so much occupied with staring at the person who had made such an extraordinary entry that I had no inclination to do anything else,—at least not for the moment.

The amazing visitor—that was what I called him to myself then and there—was a young man, little more than a child—he could not have been older than two and twenty—with quite the nicest face I have ever seen in the world. He wore no hat; his overcoat seemed to have been nearly torn off his back; how he had managed to keep himself from an awful death I could not conceive;—yet when he came into the carriage he laughed as if in light-hearted enjoyment of an excellent joke. And he looked at me,—how that boy did look at me!—his impertinence! At last I suppose it dawned on him

that I was there. He put his hand up to his head,—to find apparently to his surprise that nothing was there.

“Hullo!” he exclaimed, “where’s my hat?—Anthony and Cleopatra, I must have lost it on the way! Now that hat—pardon me, you’re not interested in my hat—that hat was something quite unusual in hats! It had only had the crown bashed in once, and then it was by a friend,—what I’m going to do without it I can’t think!”

He spoke as if he still thought the thing was an excellent joke; but I was not going to encourage any nonsense of that kind.

“How dare you,” I inquired, “come into my carriage like that? And who are you anyhow? I insist on a satisfactory explanation.”

“Naturally,—so you would; but what would you call a satisfactory explanation? Can any explanation be satisfactory in a case like this? It was like this;—there was the footboard outside, there was the door, and there was the handle,—so I came in. I apologise for my intrusion, but I give you my word of honour that anything was better than remaining on that footboard. Hullo! what’s that?”

Something had happened to the train,—we were stopping. Again he laughed,—what at I could not understand.

“That girl’s done it! She stopped the train. Now we’re in for it! What do you suppose I’d better do?”

“If that question is addressed to me—”

“You can take it from me it is, though I might be addressing myself! You see, it’s like this. There were two female blokes in the carriage. I beg

The Amazing Visitor 295

your pardon,—there were two ladies in the carriage ; I took them to be mother and daughter, though which was the elder of the two I couldn't help wondering. The mother was made up and looked ten years older than the daughter, who I bet you half-a-crown was thirty. It was the old girl who sounded the alarm,—which, for the first time on record, seemed to alarm someone. They're stopping the train,—there, it has stopped! How many seconds did they do it in? In a brace of shakes they'll be intruding on your privacy, looking for me. Shall you advise them,—just think it over,—shall you advise them to drag me to my doom, or will you allow me to linger on? I tell you what,—I'll come to the other end of the carriage by you, farthest from the door by which I entered ; I'll place myself on the seat and I'll go fast asleep. You've no idea how fast I can sleep! If they do succeed in waking me they'll see at a glance that I must have been asleep for hours ;—I don't know where the beastly train comes from, but that's where slumber must have overtaken me. Forgive me, but may I repose ?”

That boy—he was nothing but a boy!—came down the centre of the carriage, until he was right in front of me,—and then he saw my blue satin shoes on the seat opposite.

“Goodness sakes alive!” he exclaimed, “what have we here from fairyland? They can't be shoes! Can the human foot be small enough? Here, I say, they're coming! Don't you think you'd better try if you can get into them,—or shall I?”

That extraordinary boy actually had my slippers in his impudent hand and was apparently about to

see if he could put them on my feet. I snatched them from him,—I had to snatch them.

“How dare you touch my shoes?” I demanded.

“I daren't,—that's the point; the supernatural always fills me with terror.” What he meant I could not think, but I have no doubt it was something preposterous. He watched me put them on,—it was rather a difficult thing to do with him within an inch of me. Presently he began again: “There, what did I say? No human foot was ever small enough for them! They are a bit of a squeeze.”

“They're nothing of the kind! They fit me perfectly, only your in the way. I haven't room to move.”

“You have room and to spare! I'll place myself full length on the seat and repose like that. Look out! they're coming. It will take you an hour to get into those things. If they come in and find you with no shoes on they'll take us for husband and wife, and I shall be safe.”

The impudence of the creature was so great that I had more than half a mind, but there really wasn't time for only half a mind. He had placed himself on the seat with his back propped up against the window; the train had stopped; there were voices without; people were evidently moving on the permanent way. Someone was mounting the step of my compartment and opening the door through which he had come. Before I could get myself into a whole minded state the door was opened and the guard of the train appeared. The moment he did so that young rascal gave a sort of gasp, as if he had been startled out of heavy sleep, sat up, and exclaimed,

The Amazing Visitor 297

"Good heavens! what has happened?" He turned towards me. "I beg your pardon, my dear, but I'm afraid I've been to sleep." He glanced at his watch. "Why, I must have been asleep for hours. Before we started I told you I was dog-tired." He looked at the guard, with an air of sublime surprise. "Hullo! who's this? Has anything happened? Where are we? Who are you, sir?"

The guard touched his cap.

"Sorry to disturb you, sir, but a lady has stopped the train—"

"Stopped the train?—What on earth do you mean? How can a lady stop the train? Is she on the engine?"

The guard grinned. "No, sir. She's in the next carriage but one. She says that there's a gentleman missing from her compartment."

"Missing from her compartment, what on earth does the woman mean? Or is it you, guard, who are playing a joke on us? You knew I was asleep."

"Yes, sir, I saw that. The lady says she went to sleep she and the young lady; when they woke up the gentleman wasn't there. They couldn't make out what had become of him, they knew the train hadn't pulled up, so they stopped it to find out if he had thrown himself on the line."

"That's it, is it? All this fuss about nothing! Can't a chap throw himself out on the line without this bother?" The amazing visitor turned to me. "My dear, if you haven't got your shoes off! you'll get cold feet if you don't take care. Good night, guard; be careful to shut that door. Let me get some sleep! I've been suffering from insomnia for the last nine days. It would serve you right if I

complained to the company." The guard went, the door shut, and the amazing visitor turned again to me. "If you'll forgive my saying so, I'm beginning to regard you as a trump. I said to myself, when first I came into this carriage, 'Hang it! there's another of those confounded women!' But I saw in an instant that the word 'confounded' was out of place. I don't know what your sweet name is, but consider me henceforth at your dear unslipped feet for you to keep them warm on." The language he used was, like himself, astonishing. "What would have become of me if you had given the show away?"

That gave me a sort of clue, my manner became as severe as I could make it; it wasn't easy to be severe with him laughing all the while.

"What's on your conscience?" I demanded; he didn't look as if anything were on his conscience, but that was by the way. "What does your behaviour mean? Of what have you been guilty?"

"Guilty!" he threw out his hands in front of him and laughed again. "Of what have I not been guilty? My dear lady, when a fellow reaches my years—"

"Your years! Why, you're only a boy!"

"That make it worse! It's the boys who commit the crimes. Of what offence was I guilty last? That makes me have to rack my brain and think."

"I don't want you to talk nonsense, please. There must be some explanation of the extraordinary way in which you came into this carriage. Obviously there must be something wrong, or the train would not have been stopped. Don't you think you owe me some sort of explanation?"

The Amazing Visitor 299

"I do, and—strictly between ourselves—if we were not alone I'd give it you."

"Some people might say that you might explain because we are alone."

"Then if that is so it only shows how fond people are of talking of what they know nothing about. I'm a he and you're a she, we're strangers. If we had known each other from childhood's happy hours it might be different. But I have a strong sense of propriety and there are some things of which I cannot speak to a lovely stranger when I am alone with her. Hadn't I better help you on with your slippers? You're almost sure to get cold feet."

"I do not want to wear my slippers, thank you; and I do not suffer from cold feet. When I want to wear my slippers I can put them on without your help."

"You're sure of that, perfectly, absolutely sure? Strictly between ourselves, it looks to me as if it might be a frightful struggle."

I wished that I had never taken off my slippers; but when he began to be rude I felt that all relations must cease between us.

"I do not wish," I told him, "to inquire into matters of which you evidently are ashamed, probably for sufficient reasons; I must ask you not to speak to me again until we reach London, or I will ring the bell."

"She will ring the bell! Ye whales and little fishes, if that doesn't cop the biscuit! Then, beautiful though adamantine maiden, since I cannot keep awake without speaking, I will resume my slumbers."

If he actually went to sleep I am not sure ; but he seemed to ; though I confess that I was in doubt as to whether anyone could go to sleep quite so easily as he did. He crossed his arms and closed his eyes, and remained so motionless that it was not easy to be sure that he even breathed. He really did behave rather well about my shoes. I got up and moved to the other end of the compartment and took my shoes with me, and there I put them on. It really was a bit of a tussle. I glanced at him to see if he was looking, but as far as I could judge he never did. When, to my comfort, I got them on at last he still seemed to be sleeping like a child. I will make a confession, I doubt if any sleeping child ever looked handsomer than he did. He really was a perfect picture !

I am a bit of an artist. I took a pad out of my dressing-case—I always carry one, and I sketched him. I felt myself that it was quite well done and an excellent likeness.

I doubt if his sleep was all pretence, because it was only when the train was slowing up at the platform in Liverpool Street that he showed signs of returning to life. If it was acting it was wonderfully done. He rubbed his eyes, and he yawned and looked hazily about him, and when he saw me he gave himself a little shake.

“I say !” he said, “have I slept all the way to London ? I must have been suffering from insomnia !”

I did not speak a word. A porter opened the carriage door and I got out,—and that was the last I saw of him. I felt a little guilty as I walked along the platform, because, after all, he could

The Amazing Visitor 301

scarcely be said to have done anything to annoy me,—and I had been hard on him. I might at least have said good-night ; it would only have been civil ; and as I got into the cab I wished I had.

All the way to Hyde Park Gate I was conscious of two things. In the first place I was conscious of a sort of feeling of having behaved badly,—which was unreasonable ; in the second I was obsessed by a sort of delicious sense of adventure,—which was absurd. Another taxi drew up at the Priors just in front of mine. Directly after I arrived dinner was served. They placed me next to Oswald Prior.

“ I’m afraid I’m a bit late,” I told him. “ I hope I haven’t kept anybody waiting.”

Oswald, unfolding his napkin, leaned towards me and dropped his voice.

“ Strictly between ourselves, you are a little late, and if you hadn’t come when you did dinner would have been served without you. You know the governor hates waiting.”

“ I really am frightfully sorry ; and to show my penitence presently I’ll tell you something thrilling. I’ve had a little adventure. By the way, how is Adelaide ? She looks topping ! ”

The dinner was in honour of his sister’s engagement. She had been at school with me, and I was to be one of her bridesmaids. She sat in front of me, all wreathed in smiles. Perhaps that was because she was sitting next to her young man,—Harold Baxter. He is a good sort, but no one can call him handsome. Oswald looked at me as though he were interested,—possibly because I had

302 Orders to Marry

spoken with a sort of thrill in my voice. The fact is I had the 'thrilling' feeling on me still.

"You've had an adventure?—Honest?—Good egg!—Tell me all about it when we've settled down to the soup."

Just as I was going to start to tell him someone began to talk on the other side of the table, a woman. She spoke a little loudly, as if she wished to be heard all over the room. If she did, her wish was certainly gratified. There were flowers in front of me; I had to peep round them to see who the speaker was. She was a big woman, gorgeously dressed, whose ambition it evidently was to look about half her age.

"Such an extraordinary thing happened in the train,—to Ethel and me. I shouldn't have believed it if it hadn't happened to us,—it was such an extraordinary thing."

"What was the extraordinary thing, Mrs. Philpotts?" asked Mr. Prior from the end of the table.

"I feel so flustered that I hardly know how to tell you."

"It seemed so incredible!" struck in another voice, also a woman's.

"Yes," chimed in the first; "as Ethel says, it does seem to be so absolutely incredible,—almost supernatural."

The speaker's voice was so shivery-shakery, and her manner so pronounced, that it was small wonder that the whole table was roused.

"Come, Mrs. Philpotts," repeated Mr. Prior, "tell us all about it. You're putting a strain on our curiosity."

The Amazing Visitor 303

Whereupon two voices—I learned that one belonged to the mother and the other to the daughter—began in a sort of chorus;—and both the voices were so alike that it was not easy to tell one from the other.

“The mystery started at Cambridge,—at least it wasn’t a mystery then—but it started at Cambridge.”

This very luminous observation came from the mother. Then the daughter had her turn.

“No one got into the carriage when the train stopped at Cambridge, and we thought we were going to have it to ourselves. But just as we were starting someone got in.”

“We had actually started, and I believe that a porter tried to prevent his getting in; it was positively dangerous—but it was no good!”

“He got in—with a suit-case in his hand. The moment he was in he dropped the suit-case on to the floor and he actually said Damn!”

“He said it quite loudly, without our having given him the slightest cause to use such language. The extraordinary part of it was that he was so good-looking.”

“He was the most beautiful boy I ever saw!” The mother said this as if she defied contradiction. The daughter followed suit.

“He positively was. There’s a picture in one of the Italian galleries which is exactly like him; I can’t think what the picture is, but I know the face is beautiful.”

“And yet with a face like that, never apologising for having used that dreadful word, what do you think he did say?”

Someone—I think it was old Prior—said he had

not the least idea. None of us did have. The daughter went on.

"You would never guess if you had five thousand tries—it was so incredible. He took his hat off, and with bare head he looked more like that Italian angel than ever—I believe the person in the picture was an angel—and he said;—do you remember what he said, mother?"

"Shall I ever forget? He spoke with such a heavenly smile, in such a gentle, sweet voice, 'Would you two ladies mind getting under the carriage seats for half an hour?'"

People laughed—which was not surprising. Someone asked,

"Whatever did he mean by saying that? Was he mad?"

"You might think so, but he didn't seem to be; at least there was nothing in his manner to show it. He spoke as quietly as I'm speaking now."

"A great deal more quietly, mother. I particularly noticed how softly he did speak. I thought that he was joking, but he didn't appear to be that either. I looked at mother and mother looked at me; but we didn't know what to say or think. He said, as the train started, and he sat down—another extraordinary remark!—as if addressing no one in particular, 'It's surprising what a number of women there do seem to be in the world. You keep meeting them everywhere—even in trains.' Of course it's a frightfully rude thing to say, but it didn't seem to be rude coming from him. We didn't know what to do. We sat there looking at each other—I had to smile—and not another word was spoken—and the odd part of it was that we

The Amazing Visitor 305

went to sleep. I know I went to sleep, and mother says she did."

"You see," said the other voice, speaking when the other apparently paused for breath, "we had been at Lady Piltdown's ball nearly all night, and we had been packing and travelling all day, and we simply couldn't keep our eyes open. We had been asleep when that young man got in at Cambridge, and, though he certainly was enough to wake anyone up, we were so ridiculously tired that in spite of him we were fast asleep again before we had gone very far."

"The next thing I remember," went on the daughter, "is that all of a sudden I was wide awake, conscious that something very strange had happened. And there had with a vengeance! That young man had gone, the carriage was empty, the cushions were piled up anyhow, the door at the other end was open and kept banging. I screamed."

"And I screamed." This was the mother. "Was it strange? after what had happened? Where had that young man gone, with the train travelling at sixty miles an hour?"

The lady was perhaps slightly overrating the speed of the train, but that did not matter.

"Shall I ever forget my horror when I realised that everything pointed to his having thrown himself out on the line."

"Oh, mother!" I cried, "can he have committed suicide—while we were asleep? Then he must have been a lunatic!" This was the daughter.

"I felt that it did not necessary follow that he

was a lunatic ; quite sane people do commit suicide. But I rang the alarm bell and stopped the train. The guard came to our compartment and wanted to know why the door was open, and if it was I who had sounded the alarm. I tried to explain to him, but it was not easy—I myself was in a state of fluster and the guard was a stupid man.”

“ Mother said to the guard,” added the daughter, “ ‘ A young gentleman has committed suicide. You will probably find his body on the line. I insist upon your finding it at once ! ’—as if it had anything to do with the guard ! ”

“ Did they find the body ? ” This inquiry came from some person unknown.

“ They did not, not a trace of it, at least not then. But when we got to Liverpool Street station the guard came up with a telegram. It said that just about where the train had been stopped they had found a felt hat and a gentleman’s suit-case. The guard said—he really, mother, was rather an intelligent man—that that suggested that they would find his body also before very long. I expect you’ll read about it in all the morning papers. I never had such a shock in my life. I haven’t got over it now.”

“ My dear Ethel,” continued her mother, “ I probably shall not get over it for weeks to come. It was all so—so—so—I don’t know how to describe it—but it was ! That beautiful boy, bursting in on us like that—”

“ Was he so very good-looking ? ” The inquiry came from Adelaide Prior.

“ My dear Adelaide, I assure you I couldn’t exaggerate that boy’s good looks. I never, never shall

The Amazing Visitor 307

forget his face. And then, while we sought from nature some much needed rest, he threw himself out on the line! What an awful fate for one so young! What can have driven him to do it? Can he have been guilty of a crime and goaded by despair?"

"I feel," said the daughter, "that if we had only kept awake it would never have happened. I certainly should never have allowed him to throw himself through the carriage door if I had been looking on. The whole thing has unnerved me. If it hadn't been that I was afraid of upsetting the table, I should have begged you, Mrs. Prior to let me off."

They went on talking, and the other people kept chiming in, until a general conversation ensued and all sorts of suggestions were made and guesses hazarded, while I sat and wondered.

For some time I sat perfectly silent. Somehow I did not care to hint that I had had a finger in the mystery just where the mother and daughter had left it. It was their beautiful boy who had been my amazing visitor, that was entirely obvious. But what did his behaviour mean? The conclusion was forced upon me that he must have been insane. Surely no sane creature—however beautiful he was—would have behaved so madly. Why had he burst in upon that mother and daughter as he did? Why startle them with his insane suggestion that they—two ladies, complete strangers to him—should get under the seats? And why should they get under the seats anyhow? Would a rational person have even remotely hinted at such a thing?

And then his conduct when he had been alone with me! Why had he risked his life to get from

one compartment to the other? Had there been any purpose in his action, or was it the mere freakish frolic of a disordered mind? I listened, as I said, to the babel of talk ;—everyone seemed to have some more or less ridiculous explanation to offer, and I wondered. What a hullabaloo would have arisen if I had added my quota to the mysterious story! More than once I was on the point of doing so, if only for the sake of enjoying the sensation which would inevitably follow, but—I refrained. What did it matter, after all, to anybody there? Suppose my amazing visitor had been guilty of some crime! I kept asking myself if he might not have been drinking ;—what useful purpose would be served by proclaiming the fact abroad?

“What’s the matter with your tongue?” asked Oswald Prior, commenting with the freedom of a life-long friend on my continued silence. “Aren’t you interested in this wonderful mystery?”

I looked at Oswald ;—he was laughing. Apparently he had not taken the matter seriously. I had a notion that he regarded the whole story as an invention of the mother and daughter. I had an inclination to say a word or two which would at least show him that he was mistaken in doing that. Oswald Prior is quite a nice person to talk to, and I was beginning to feel that I should burst if I did not soon say something to somebody. But again the feeling came over me that I did not wish to give my amazing visitor away—even to Oswald. Once more I refrained.

Presently something happened which made me feel glad that I had.

The chatter about the ‘beautiful boy’ was still in

The Amazing Visitor 309

full swing. Some of the guests had had one or two glasses of wine; possibly that had caused their tongues to wag more freely. There really was a din in that dining-room, and the wonder was that they heard each other speak. Everybody seemed to be raining questions at the mother and daughter at once, and expecting answers before they had heard the questions. The hubbub was at its height when a servant slipped something into my neighbour's hand. Oswald, glancing at it, exclaimed:

"Hullo! what's this? An express message?—Who has sent me an express message?"

He tore open the envelope then and there. I don't know how many words one is entitled to send in an express message; personally I never sent one in my life; that message seemed to me to contain the makings of a long novel;—and it really did. Many a novel has been founded on the basis of a slenderer plot.

And the variety of emotions with which he seemed to read it! He started directly he had assimilated the first few words.

"What on earth!—who the deuce!——"—he glanced at the signature at the end—"Why, it's from old C.V." He paused to explain under his breath to me. "This is from a chap who was to have dined here to-night; but he was later than you, because he never came at all. Cyril Vaughan is the bounder's name, everybody always calls him C.V. He is a card if ever there was one! He's going to be Harold Baxter's best man, that's why such a special point was made of his coming." I had not been aware until that moment that a special point had been made of his coming, or that there

was such a person as Cyril Vaughan in existence, but that is by the way. "He was to have been introduced to Adelaide. She and Harold will be pretty wild at his not turning up. This seems to be a sort of explanation of why he didn't, though I may tell you, my dear Christabel," I'm Christabel Christabel Wilson—"entirely between ourselves that I sometimes take C. V.'s explanation with a grain of salt. He appears to be in a hurry to make it, seeing he's sent it by express messenger. It seems to be a regular yarn. This is how he starts:"

Oswald read the opening words of the message.

"'Dear old Tiddle-de-hi-ti-hi!' That's what the ass calls me, and thinks it's funny. 'Top bricks aren't in it, or biscuits either; you can cop the lot but you won't touch me!'" C. V. wrote in the vernacular? it is not my business to say what he meant. "'Honourable sir, it was it, just it! It will never be more It, if I live to be ninety. A joy ride can't compare! Played a rotten game of footer. Started late and left off late. Found I'd got someone else's dress clothes in my suit-case. Started to hunt for mine. Found them in Peter Piper's rooms. The Lord knows how they got there! If ever I find myself alone with that man on the top of the Himalayas the world will be the richer by the loss of one. Hadn't time to change. Taxied down to the station—on one wheel!—one or two coppers seemed to think we were going fast. Got to station just in time to see the train starting. It wasn't going to start without me, I'll give you my word! although a porter got himself almost thrown on the

The Amazing Visitor 311

line. But of course, in the economy of the universe, porters don't count, *vide Schlegel*. Conceive my agony when I found myself in a compartment with two horrible women! My idea was to change on the road to town, the train is a non-stopper. How dare they permit women to get into a first-class carriage!

“Talk about the improvement in the standard of manners! I could not—no, I could not!—change from one suit of clothes into another in the presence of two objectionable females—I know they were objectionable, because I believe they were mother and daughter—and the obvious intention of them both was to conceal from the public eye which was the younger of the two. Miss was somewhere in the thirties and Madam somewhere in the teens. If she had gone back much farther she would have been an infant in arms.”

I glanced across the table—as well as I could because of the flowers—at the mother and daughter who had been telling the tale. The elder lady was admittedly a masterpiece of make-up—what she was like when it all came off she alone knew; but I think C. V. exaggerated when he wrote of her ever becoming an infant in arms. Oswald, looking up from the message, which he had been whispering aloud, caught the direction of my eyes. His remark was a little cryptic.

“You don't think—not really? My word! do you know it might be?—If it were! Christabel, my dear, I believe we're on the brink!”

He continued to read that message.

“Let's see what C. V. says next.—Yes, here it is! You're not bored, are you?”

"Bored! The idea! I'm palpitating with excitement. Get on!"

"Dear P., emotion overwhelmed me! I believe I suggested that those two wretched women should get under the seats. But what was the use of a suggestion to them? They sat and stared; oh, the stare of British females! If the old girl made up to look about fourteen had opened her mouth much wider I am morally certain that a brand new set of teeth would have dropped out. Oh, how I wish it had! I sat down, and I sat, and I sat. I was bound to make an illusion to the monstrous regiment of women which holds the world in thralldom. It was no use—they sat and sat!—and do you know, before we had sat and sat much longer, all at once I became aware that they were asleep.

"Think of that!—they had actually fallen asleep under my very nose! Two mere women.

"Wild notions came to me. If I could get hold of their coats I could rig up a sort of screen, divide the compartment into two, and change in my half. But first of all I had to get hold of the coats. They seemed to fit them like wax, so I did not see how it was going to be done. Then I thought of piling up the cushions into the semblance of a barricade, and changing behind them. But there were no cushions, and anyhow they wouldn't pile.

"I became desperate, time was flying. If I reached town without changing I should have to chuck dinner. I had promised darling Harold only yesterday that if the heavens fell I wouldn't do that. I had been given to understand that the beauteous Adelaide expected me."

"That's true," observed Oswald, "she did. But

The Amazing Visitor 313

when she reads the explanation—I wonder how much of it is fiction?”

“Never mind about that now, finish the message. They’ll be stopping you if you don’t.—Hurry!”

He hurried. “‘In my desperation I was calmness itself. I crammed on my hat, reached down my suit-case, opened the carriage door, and stepped out into the night.’”

Oswald paused to comment. “Oh, I say, what a whopper!”

I knew better, but I held my peace. “We can talk about that sort of thing after you’ve finished; do get on!”

“What does the purveyor of ripe fiction say?—Oh, yes, here it is. ‘I opened the carriage door, and stepped out into the night.’ He must have been dead if he did, yet he keeps on writing. I’ll swear this is his fist. What next? ‘I found myself on the footboard of the carriage. Did you ever find yourself on the footboard of a carriage when the train of which it forms part was tearing through the darkness? It was only when I found myself in that position that I realised that wisdom is not my strongest point. The confounded door wouldn’t shut. In trying to shut it I almost tumbled off on to the line. The suit-case slipped from my hand, it was a marvel I didn’t slip too. Off went my hat; but, my beloved, I held on. How I did it I shall never know, but I did. I am alive to prove it. Somehow I got along the footboard, I was moving backwards so that the wind was behind me, or I should never have done it, till I reached the next compartment. It was a menagerie, sir, a menagerie! It seemed to me to contain fourteen or fifteen kids!

314 Orders to Marry

I would never have got into that even if I had died, so I actually reached the next compartment but one, and I got into that. I had shut the door and was about to thank Providence when—!

“My well-beloved, there was another woman in that! It seem past credence, but there was. The train seemed to be made up of women.

“Of course it didn't make any real difference because, having lost my suit-case with my rags in it, I could not have put myself into my war-paint anyhow. But the shock of it, the shock! What had I done that I should be haunted by women? Is my life to be blasted by the female microbe?”

“Your friend,” I managed to slip in, “seems to think that men ought to have the world all to themselves. Have women ever done him any harm?”

Oswald's reply was horrid. “Of course, in a way, they do everybody harm. And, you see, he's rather a decent looking chap.”

Fancy speaking of my ‘amazing visitor’—the mother and daughter's ‘beautiful boy’—as decent looking! Oswald went on.

“I made some piffling remark, I don't know what about, I was in such a state of mental collapse that I had to piffle. And would you believe it, that woman fired and took a shot at me. She actually wanted to know what I meant by getting into her carriage like that, and asked me for a satisfactory explanation. As if any explanation could have been satisfactory! Such is the unreasonableness of the inferior mind! I have an idea that I was struggling to explain—a man dies only at the last stitch!—when the beastly train stopped dead. Of course I knew what had happened—down I

The Amazing Visitor 315

plumped on the seat in front of her. A few absolutely unnecessary words were exchanged, and the guard came in. Of course I got rid of the guard—trust me to do a little thing like that off my bat! The train re-started, and I was alone with the girl. I may mention that the woman was a girl.

“Oswald Prior, I have never hidden from anyone what my attitude is towards women; therefore do not let your silly noddle jump to the conclusion that I am raving when I state, with entire calmness and nice appreciation of the meaning of words, that I'm not at all sure that the woman, instead of being a girl, wasn't an angel.”

At this point something happened to me—it was so sudden. I knew I had turned a dreadful red, and when I do flush I flush all over. And remember I was in evening dress. My impulse was to snatch the message from Oswald, stop his reading it, and finish it when I was all by myself. But Oswald would not let me; I thought his conduct most disagreeable. He stuck to the message like glue.

“The dear old boy's gone off his chump,” was the remark he made. “Fancy C. V. talking about anyone in petticoats being an angel. Hopping about from one carriage to another must have turned his brain. Just listen to this!”

I had to listen whether I liked it or not.

“‘She was one of those rare beings who are too good for human nature's daily food.’” Oswald interjected a remark of his own. “He's got some quotation in his mind, hasn't he; he seems to me to have got it all wrong.” Then he read on: “‘Picture a being with red-gold hair—you know how I adore gold hair of just the right shade; hers was divine!

316 Orders to Marry

And eyes!—shall I ever describe to you the effect that Being's eyes had on me?—eyes of blue with lambent fires gleaming through the starry iridescence of pupils framed in glory.” Oswald interposed with a very ribald observation. “Good Lord, did you ever hear such toshery? What's the matter with the man?” Then he glanced at me, and made a discovery. “I say, Chris, do you know you've got blue eyes? I never noticed it before.” That man had been acquainted with me all his life, and yet had not known what another had seen in less than half a second. “Do you think, if put to it, C. V. could be brought to write toshery of that sort about your eyes—they aren't bad ones! And, when I come to look at you, yours is a sort of a kind of a brick coloured wig; now what would you call red-gold?” Oswald returned to the message. “Let's see if the rotter has got any more of that sort of stuff to say—if so, I'll cut it.”

Luckily Mrs. Prior got up from her chair at that moment, so I was able to rise with the others. My tone was a little frosty:

“I won't trouble you to finish that special message now, Oswald; but if you'll let me have it I'll see what I can do when we get into the drawing-room; one is generally glad of something to read there. I think it's rather interesting.”

But Oswald would not let me have the message; he said he would bring it with him when he came along. He favoured me with another sentence just as the women were about to go.

“Just listen to this; this is what the lad says next. ‘Whether in this world we shall meet again I don't know; but in a sense we can never part—

The Amazing Visitor 317

my Angel of the Slipperless Feet will be with me all the while.' ”

Fancy calling me his 'Angel of the Slipperless Feet!' Oswald might jeer—I own the thing was funny—but I never guessed that my amazing visitor had thought of me like that. What had he written about my eyes? Absurd, preposterous, nonsensical stuff—but fancy his having written it about me.

It was not very exciting in the drawing-room. It seldom is when the women are alone after dinner. Still, personally, I had so much to think of that that did not matter. To say nothing of Adelaide's regaling me with a long catalogue of Harold Baxter's perfections. To listen to her he might have been something more than a man. I managed to ask if she had not been disappointed by one of her guests.

“You mean Cyril Vaughan, who was to have been Harold's best man?”

“Was to have been? Isn't he going to be?”

“Well, my dear, Harold's so annoyed with him. Fancy his never turning up after he had promised he would, and not sending a word to excuse himself! Harold says that's him all over. Nowadays young men are simply unbearable! Harold says that he wouldn't wonder if, after all, Mr. Vaughan hadn't forgotten all about his promise. If he has Harold declares that he will never speak to him again.”

Even as she spoke I heard a servant's voice announce a visitor's name—more audibly than those things are sometimes done.

“Mr. Cyril Vaughan!”

I heard the announcement quite clearly; it so

318 Orders to Marry

startled me that I nearly jumped up from my chair.

“Who is that come?” inquired Adelaide. She had clearly not heard so plainly as I did. “What did Parkins say?”

“It sounded like Mr. Cyril Vaughan.”

I was in such a stupid fluster that if Adelaide had been thinking of anything but herself she must have noticed it.

“Mr. Cyril Vaughan!” Something shocking might have occurred to judge by Adelaide’s manner. “You don’t mean to say he has arrived! Fancy his arriving at this hour, for dinner! Under the circumstances he must have courage to come at all. He’ll have to have a very good explanation to offer or I’m sure Harold won’t like it. I suppose I’d better go and speak to him. Is that the man?”

The individual to whom Adelaide was referring emphatically was the man. I must admit to a very curious state of mind, because the mere sight of him seemed to send the blood to my head. I knew I was flushed all over—it was so extremely ridiculous, especially as I pride myself on keeping cool. As he stood in the centre of the room talking to Mrs. Prior all the women stared. In his dress clothes he was more the ‘beautiful boy’ than ever. Suddenly there was a little scene. Mrs. Philpotts, rising from her chair, delivered herself of a statement which surprised the company.

“Why,” she exclaimed, “it’s the young gentleman who committed suicide!”

Her daughter said, “It’s the face of the picture!”

Although they spoke loudly enough they seemed to be unheeded by Mr. Vaughan. Something caused him to glance past his hostess towards me—

The Amazing Visitor 319

perhaps it was the fact that Adelaide was moving towards him in order to associate herself with her mother's greeting. Although Adelaide was within three or four feet of him she also went unheeded; seeming to be entirely oblivious of her presence, striding straight past her, he advanced towards me.

"To think," he cried, "of meeting you again so soon. I see you managed to get your slippers on."

The young man certainly spoke with unnecessary loudness. The others might not know what he meant, but I did. I was told afterwards that I turned absolutely pink. Then the men came in from the dining-room; Oswald Prior, entering by a different door, passed straight to me. He was apparently as oblivious of Mr. Vaughan's presence as Mr. Vaughan had been of that of others. Oswald held out to me the 'message.'

"I say, what do you think? Old man Vaughan says—in a postscript—that he may come on later; we'll roast him if he does. You read his precious message to its drivelling end; anything like the farago of rot he writes of that girl he met in the train——"

I could not let him continue to the bitter end. Something seemed to have obscured his sight—I had to pull him up. Goodness knows what might have been trembling on the tip of his tongue!

"Oswald," I said, "don't you see Mr. Vaughan?"

Oswald turned with surprising suddenness, as if he were an automaton worked by a spring.

"Cyril!" he exclaimed. "Good Lord Almighty! Where on earth have you dropped from? Why, I thought you were the other side of nowhere."

320 Orders to Marry

"So I was—I've come from nowhere into paradise."

It was rather a crude thing to say—to say nothing of exaggeration, but Cyril Vaughan has a crude way of saying exaggerated things whenever the spirit moves him. Oswald stared at us as if he could not make the position out.

"You know each other?" he asked.

"I do know this lady very well," declared that shameless youth, "though I have not the honour of knowing her name."

"Don't know her name?" cried Oswald. "Why, this is Miss Christabel Wilson."

My amazing visitor looked me in the eyes, and he laughed.

"Allow me, Miss Christabel Wilson, to express the pleasure in meeting you again. May I be permitted to take you by the hand?"

I let him take my hand—before the crowded room—although he was so silly.

Presently—for the public satisfaction—I had to explain. The second version of the story, when my amazing visitor and I told it between us, created a greater sensation than the first had done. The mother and daughter were eclipsed.



THE END

Telegrams and Cables—Longing, London
Code A B C, 5th Edition
Telephone No. 6313 Regent

1918

JOHN LONG'S NEW BOOKS

All JOHN LONG'S Books are published in their Colonial Library
as nearly as possible simultaneously with the English Editions.

The Nation: "Mr. John Long is the most enterprising of all the publishers who strive to supply the English public with those well-known brands of Fiction which best satisfy their cravings. The novels published by him are always distinguished by the bold appeal they make to the great majority of our countrymen."

SIX SHILLING NET NOVELS

Crown 8vo., Cloth, with Dust Wrappers in three Colours

TYRIAN PURPLE

By AMY J. BAKER (Mrs. Maynard Crawford), Author of "I Too Have Known," "The Impenitent Prayer," "The Snake Garden," "Moonflower."

In this, her new novel, Miss Baker has written of a period of history never before treated in fiction. Events of two thousand six hundred odd years ago stand out with cameo-like clearness. We see the Scilly Islands and the main land of Cornwall in the time of the Phœnician traders, the city of Tyre fifty years after the death of Solomon, Samaria in the reign of Ahab, the snow peaks of Lebanon and the Syrian desert. As with places, so with people. We go with Ethbaal, King of Tyre, into his temple of ivory; we witness Elijah striving in prayer upon the mountains; we have a vision of Jehu the avenger driving furiously in his chariot of bronze; and through the pageant of kings and warriors, the orgies of Baal worship, the intrigues of priests and the zeal of the prophet, we follow Jezebel the Queen, at first a girl headstrong and splendid, afterwards a woman, magnificent, passionate and brilliant. Never perhaps since Flaubert's "Salambo" has a more vivid picture been drawn of the ancient world. The tale will come as a revelation to novel readers and to the very big public which Miss Amy J. Baker's South African novels have already made for her in all parts of the world.

JOHN LONG, Ltd., 12, 13, 14, Norris St., Haymarket, London

John Long's New and Forthcoming Books

SIX SHILLING NET NOVELS—*continued*

THE TIDEWAY

By JOHN AYS COUGH, Author of "French Windows," "Marotz," "San Celestino," etc.

John Ayscough is one of the few story-tellers who charm the literary critic and rejoice the popular audience alike. A master of style, he possesses the secret of how to embody in a brilliant literary setting the sympathy, humanity, and tenderness of a love story which go straight to the heart of the greater public. Countless thousands have been captivated by his novels in the past, and in this new book we have in abundant measure the characteristics and stimulating pictures of life which give to this author his special niche in the temple of present-day fiction.

BLUE FLAME

By HUBERT WALES, Author of "Mr. and Mrs. Villiers," "Cynthia in the Wilderness," "The Spinster," "The Rationalist," "The Wife of Colonel Hughes," "Hilary Thornton."

Mr. Hubert Wales has written some of the most significant and virile fiction of our day, and his mastership of the literary craft was never more surely exemplified than in this typical successor of a series of wonderful stories. He is very fond of a love-duel and in the clash between the duty which a clergyman, who has been smitten with spiritualism, thinks he owes to his Church and to his Wife, we have the *motif*, and we see that a disregard of obligations, even on high moral grounds, does not bring happiness. Again we have the full-bodied and realistic treatment of bold and original ideas whose human import and fidelity to life are not less positive than are the enchanting descriptions and sparkling dialogue which lend to Mr. Hubert Wales's work its universal appeal and its artistic value. The new story will be read with unspeakable satisfaction and will romp through large editions.

THE TEMPLE GIRL

By HENRY BRUCE, Author of "The Eurasian," "The Residency," "The Song of Surrender," "The Wonder Mist."

The words "temple girl" have a special meaning for all acquainted with India. In this novel from the author of "The Eurasian," Betty Stuart shows how entirely charming an Eurasian may be. She scatters the prejudices of the young missionary Dr. Fulton, who finds the adventure of his life in rescuing her from the terrible temple to which she is destined, and his vocation in loving her.

JOHN LONG, Ltd., 12, 13, 14, Norris St., Haymarket, London

John Long's New and Forthcoming Books

SIX SHILLING NET NOVELS—*continued*

THE TOLL OF THE ROAD

By MARION HILL, Author of "The Lure of Crooning Water," "Sunrise Valley," "A Slack Wire," "McAllister's Grove," "Harmony Hall."

Marion Hill is an American novelist who has succeeded in winning, hands down, the suffrage of English readers; in itself no small victory. The determining factors in her undoubted ascendancy are brilliance and sincerity—two dominant qualities in first-rate work. The story unfolds the life of a young country girl whose wonderful hair has attracted the fancy of an actor-playwright of great personal magnetism and unconventionality of life. Partly against her will he takes her with him "on the road," and trains her to become an actress. It is the conflict between her early mental outlook and the vivid and moving spectacle of theatrical life that forms the crux of the romance. Reality, sympathy and insight are blended with wisdom and laughter in a triumphant drama in this fascinating and indeed remarkable story.

ORDERS TO MARRY

By RICHARD MARSH, Author of "The Garden of Mystery," "The Magnetic Girl," "Coming of Age," "The Deacon's Daughter," etc.

Fantastic, sensational, sentimental and humorous in turn, but, in whatever mood, never commonplace or dull—these are the chief causes of Mr. Richard Marsh's abounding popularity. His new book is a shining example of the varied accomplishments which, in their totality, connote the art of captivating the gentle reader. Clever, genial, fresh and entrancing—such will be the verdict of even the most captious critic on it, for here Mr. Richard Marsh gives full rein to his versatility and is seen at the top of his form.

THE RIDER IN KHAKI

By NAT GOULD, the Author whose sales now exceed ELEVEN MILLION copies.

There is no doubt about "The Rider in Khaki" being one of the most stirring novels of this popular author. It is bright, the action swift and dramatic, there is a strong love interest, and the wonderful escapes of the hero on the battlefield, and on a special mission to Brussels, are graphically described. The closing scenes are clever, and the race in the motor car, in order to reach the course in time, is as whirling as anything Nat Gould has written. It is a tale of action from start to finish.

For full List of Nat Gould's Novels see pages 10 and 11

JOHN LONG, Ltd., 12, 13, 14, Norris St., Haymarket, London

John Long's New and Forthcoming Books

SIX SHILLING NET NOVELS—*continued*

WINE, THE MOCKER

By GUY THORNE, Author of "When it was Dark," "A Lost Cause," "Rescuing Rupert," etc.

The literature of Temperance is enormous, but it is remarkable how very few novels have been published on the subject. Until this book by Mr. Guy Thorne, no leading novelist of our day has endeavoured to tackle the subject. Doctors say that inebriety is a Disease. The Churches say that it is a Sin. The Law says it is a Misdemeanour. How far these three theories act and react upon one another is shown in this intensely human and yet scientific story of an Alcoholic Subject who descends to the depths and is raised again by the influences of Religion and of Love. The novel is frankly a drama touching many aspects of modern existence, and it will go straight home to the hearts of those whose lives have been influenced in greater or lesser degree by the shadow of the Fiend Alcohol. And, directly or indirectly, what English family has not at one time or another heard the beating of that sinister wing?

THE UNHALLOWED VOW

By HYLDA RHODES, Author of "The Secret Bond," etc.

Foiled in her ambitions, Rachel Relf becomes the ready tool to a Brotherhood of Black Magicians. She aids in abducting Esmé Lancaster, the daughter of her former lover, in order that the girl, in her capacity of a Psychic, may assist her in her evil designs. Esmé is discovered and released from her terrible ordeal by a young American, the agent of Professor Lyndhurst, an Occultist who works to benefit Humanity and to frustrate the aims of the conspirators. In interest and intensity, this—Hylda Rhodes's new novel—may fairly claim to excel her previous success, "The Secret Bond."

THE FAMILY TRADITION.

By JULIAN HINCKLEY, Author of "E."

The author's first novel, entitled "E," was an outstanding success last season, and Four Impressions were demanded within a month of publication. The *Bookman*, in eulogizing "E," said: "We await with pleasant anticipation Mr. Hinckley's future work," and great things are expected of his New Novel. In brief, here are some of the reviews of "E": Mr. Clement K. Shorter, in the *Sphere*: "A very clever story—quite a remarkable novel." *Daily Telegraph*: "The writing is strong and picturesque, the delineation of character sure." *Sunday Times*: "The author is a real find." *Bookman*: "A brilliant and most fascinating study of human nature."

JOHN LONG, Ltd., 12, 13, 14, Norris St., Haymarket, London

John Long's New and Forthcoming Books

SIX SHILLING NET NOVELS—*continued*

FAST AS THE WIND

By NAT GOULD, the Author whose sales now exceed ELEVEN MILLION copies.

Athenæum says: "All living writers are headed by Mr. Nat Gould, and of the great of the past, Dumas only surpasses his popularity."

Truth says: "Who is the most popular of living novelists? Mr. Nat Gould easily and indisputably takes the first place."

For full List of Nat Gould's Novels see pages 10 and 11

THE EDGE OF TO-DAY

By BEATRICE KELSTON, Author of "A Three-Cornered Duel," "The Blows of Circumstance," "Seekers Every One," "All the Joneses."

The interplay of interesting characters makes this an absorbing tale. A young girl, brought up in the traditions of Yesterday, after a terrified glimpse into the potentialities of her own nature, makes a bid for safety in a hasty marriage. Her husband is of Yesterday; she is upon the Edge of To-day. A boy-lover reappears, like herself uncongenially wed; and a reckless passion betrays them. Out of the shipwreck that follows, Isabel builds up her life anew, and emerges the finer for the ordeal.

THE ADMIRALTY'S SECRET

By CARLTON DAWE, Author of "The Confessions of Cleodora," "The Woman with the Yellow Eyes," etc.

Most readers have a warm affection for the spy in fiction, for plot, mystery and passion are its inevitable accompaniments, and these, after all, are the most essential elements of a good story. "The Admiralty's Secret," moreover, presents a picture of the activities of some of the splendid men of that silent invincible force, the Royal Navy. Mr. Carlton Dawe is a master of his *métier*, and he reaches highwater mark in this full-blooded and engrossing romance.

WON ON THE POST

By NAT GOULD, the Author whose sales now exceed ELEVEN MILLION copies.

The opening scenes in this powerful novel are laid in wild and picturesque country in the heart of beautiful Midland England. Interest is at once riveted, and increases as the story moves on. There are great racing scenes described in this famous author's best style. Some of the London incidents are thrilling. The hero, the scamp and the lady have some strange experiences. The love element is intense.

For full List of Nat Gould's Novels see pages 10 and 11

JOHN LONG, Ltd., 12, 13, 14, Norris St., Haymarket, London

John Long's New and Forthcoming Books

SIX SHILLING NET NOVELS—*continued*

A DAUGHTER OF THE HEATHER

By MARIE HARVEY, Author of "Satan, K.C."

In Maggie Buchan, the heroine of this story, the influence of native wilds is at war with that of an Edinburgh education. As Maggie of Glen, she loves and wins Alan, the young Laird of Glen, but as Maggie of Edinburgh she succumbs to the passionate element in her nature, and, in horror at herself, hides from the man she loves, leaving him to seek her, unconscious of her guilt. The revenge, with which Maggie's defection ultimately inspires Alan, thwarted by Fate, is the cause of their ultimate reunion, and the wild, vital girl finds happiness again amid the mountains of her beloved country.

THISTLEDOWN

By EILEEN FITZGERALD, Author of "The Heart of a Butterfly," "A Fetish of Truth," "A Wayfaring Woman."

This is the story of a girl from the West Country, Gerry Godolphin, who becomes engaged to a very charming man whose chief and ineradicable fault is the elasticity of his affections. She is gradually disillusioned, and eventually loses all faith in her lover. Gerry is trying to make up her mind to break off her engagement, when a desperate trouble overwhelms him, and out of her pity and generosity she determines to stick to him, cost what it may. However, he, with his keen intuition, recognizes that her feelings have changed, and releases her from her promise; but only his own marriage later on makes her feel free to espouse the man for whom she has grown to care.

JESS OF THE RIVER

By THEODORE GOODRIDGE ROBERTS, Author of "Love on Smoky River," "Blessington's Folly," "In the High Woods," "Forest Fugitives," etc.

In this adventurous romance the author deals with his native country—A Province of Eastern Canada—and with numerous picturesque characters peculiar to that locality. As in "Love on Smoky River" and "Forest Fugitives," activities of the timber industry pervade the story, and the whole scheme of things has for background the high forests of spruce and fir, the shouting rivers, the stumpy clearings and swampy coverts which are so dear to Captain Roberts's heart.

JOHN LONG, Ltd., 12, 13, 14, Norris St., Haymarket, London

John Long's New and Forthcoming Books

SIX SHILLING NET NOVELS—*continued*

INSPIRATION

By FARREN LE BRETON, Author of "The Courts of Love," "Fruits of Pleasure," etc.

What is genius? No satisfactory answer has ever been found to this question; but in this absorbing novel the author implies that it is indeed a divine gift, and one that can be withdrawn as a direct punishment for sin. How a brief passion cost Stefan Leonoff, the brilliant young Russian violinist, his wonderful power; and how he worked out his salvation, and won it back, forms the principal theme of the book. Incidentally, an interesting and unusual aspect of Russian peasant life is described, also a little-known but fascinating trade, that of fiddle-making and repairing.

"E"

By JULIAN HINCKLEY, a new Author.

The best American fiction runs the best English fiction very close. In "E," by Julian Hinckley, the English publishers are ushering to English notice a novel with more than a touch of genius in it. The rise and fall of the amazing house of Vincent is the fulcrum by which the story moves upon the stage. It is a stage crowded with players, whose individual parts in the drama of American society are sustained with marvellous dexterity. The love interest, which is always prominent, alternates with scenes of deep feeling and delightful comedy expressed in epigrammatic and glowing language. It may be flatly stated that "E" introduces an author destined for the front rank in popular estimation.

A DANGEROUS THING

By JAMES BLYTH, Author of "Rubina," "Amazement," "A Modern Sacrifice," "A Marriage for Two," etc.

The early days of the war supply the setting of Mr. James Blyth's new novel, but, as is his wont, the frame is never allowed to overshadow the picture, which portrays for us more than one full-length portrait of a daughter of Eve. In the delineation of certain phases of the feminine temperament, indeed, Mr. Blyth is unapproachable, and "A DANGEROUS THING" is as powerful a story, and as vibrant with the human element, as anything that has yet emanated from his facile and fascinating pen.

JOHN LONG, Ltd., 12, 13, 14, Norris St., Haymarket, London

John Long's New and Forthcoming Books

RECENT POPULAR NOVELS

SIX SHILLINGS NET

With Dust Wrappers in three Colours

McALLISTER'S GROVE	- . . .	- MARION HILL
THE RATIONALIST	- . . .	- HUBERT WALES
THE SMASHER	- . . .	- NAT GOULD
IN THE YEAR OF WAITING	- . . .	- BY A PEER
THE BREATH OF SUSPICION	- . . .	- WILLIAM LE QUEUX
THE SWIRL	- . . .	- MONTIE McGRIGOR
THE DEACON'S DAUGHTER	- . . .	- RICHARD MARSH
FOREST FUGITIVES	- . . .	- THEODORE G. ROBERTS
DEAR YESTERDAY	- . . .	- AMY J. BAKER
ALL THE JONESES	- . . .	- BEATRICE KELSTON
THE WONDER MIST	- . . .	- HENRY BRUCE
A MARRIAGE FOR TWO	- . . .	- JAMES BLYTH
ANOTHER WOMAN'S SHOES	- . . .	- H. MAXWELL
THE SHAME OF SILENCE	- . . .	- MARIE CONNOR LEIGHTON
THE GARMENT OF IMMORTALITY	- . . .	- ALICE & CLAUDE ASKEW
A WAYFARING WOMAN	- . . .	- EILEEN FITZGERALD
THE WOMAN WITH THE YELLOW EYES	- . . .	- CARLTON DAWE
THE SECRET BOND	- . . .	- HYLDA RHODES
A NORTHERN CRACK	- . . .	- NAT GOULD
THE GLEAM	- . . .	- ALFRED E. CAREY
A SLACK WIRE	- . . .	- MARION HILL
MOONFLOWER	- . . .	- AMY J. BAKER
THE MAN ABOUT TOWN	- . . .	- WILLIAM LE QUEUX
WINGATE'S WIFE	- . . .	- VIOLET TWEEDALE
THREE PERSONS	- . . .	- BY A PEER
COMING OF AGE	- . . .	- RICHARD MARSH
THE CREGGAN PEERAGE (<i>Filmed</i>)	- . . .	- C. RANGER-GULL
A MODERN SACRIFICE	- . . .	- JAMES BLYTH
A TURF CONSPIRACY	- . . .	- NAT GOULD
URSULA'S MARRIAGE	- . . .	- JAMES BLYTH
IN THE HIGH WOODS	- . . .	- THEODORE G. ROBERTS
BREAKING THE RECORD	- . . .	- NAT GOULD
THE SNAKE GARDEN	- . . .	- AMY J. BAKER
THE BLOWS OF CIRCUMSTANCE	- . . .	- BEATRICE KELSTON

TWO SHILLINGS NET EACH

THE INSCRUTABLE MISS STONE	- . . .	- ALICE & CLAUDE ASKEW
RESCUING RUPERT	- . . .	- GUY THORNE

JOHN LONG, Ltd., 12, 13, 14, Norris St., Haymarket, London

John Long's New and Forthcoming Books

JOHN LONG'S 1/6 NET (CLOTH) NOVELS

The Authors in this Series have been specially selected. The volumes are bound in Cloth, with artistic Dust Wrappers in three Colours.

New Volumes for 1918

25	Moonflower	AMY J. BAKER
26	The Key of the World	DORIN CRAIG
27	A Slack Wire	MARION HILL
28	The Woman Ruth	CURTIS YORKE
29	Allison's Adventure	HAROLD BINDLOSS
30	Queer Little Jane	CURTIS YORKE
31	Coming of Age	RICHARD MARSH
32	Wingate's Wife	VIOLET TWEEDALE
33	In the High Woods	THEODORE G. ROBERTS
34	Itinerant Daughters	DOROTHEA GERALD
35	The Great Refusal	MAXWELL GREY
36	Alton of Somascoo	HAROLD BINDLOSS
37	Miss Daffodil	CURTIS YORKE
38	Perpetua	DION CLAYTON CALTHROP
39	Thrice Armed	HAROLD BINDLOSS
40	Their Marriage	CURTIS YORKE
41	McAllister's Grove	MARION HILL
42	Dellilah of the Snows	HAROLD BINDLOSS
43	Dangerous Dorothy	CURTIS YORKE
44	The Viper of Milan	MARJORIE BOWEN
45	By Right of Purchase	HAROLD BINDLOSS
46	The World and Della	CURTIS YORKE

Volumes Already Published

1	The Great Gay Road (<i>Dramatized</i>)	TOM GALLON
2	His Master Purpose	HAROLD BINDLOSS
3	The Mask	WILLIAM LE QUEUX
8	Sweet "Doll" of Haddon Hall	J. E. MUDDOCK
9	The Old Allegiance	HUBERT WALES
10	The Lure of Crooning Water	MARION HILL
11	The Realist	E. TEMPLE THURSTON
13	The Tocsin	ALICE AND CLAUDE ASKEW
15	Love on Smoky River	THEODORE G. ROBERTS
16	Rancher Cartaret	HAROLD BINDLOSS
17	Olive Kinsella	CURTIS YORKE
18	A Legacy of the Granite Hills	BERTRAM MITFORD
19	Sunrise Valley	MARION HILL
20	The Cattle Baron's Daughter	HAROLD BINDLOSS
21	Sylvia	UPTON SINCLAIR
22	Blessington's Folly	THEODORE G. ROBERTS
23	Levity Hicks	TOM GALLON
24	Left in Charge	VICTOR L. WHITECHURCH

JOHN LONG, Ltd., 12, 13, 14, Norris St., Haymarket, London

John Long's New and Forthcoming Books

The World's Favourite Author

ATHENÆUM says:—
"All living writers
are headed by Mr.
Nat Gould, and of
the great of the past,
Dumas only surpasses
his popularity."



TRUTH says:—"Who
is the most popular of
living novelists? Mr.
Nat Gould easily and
indisputably takes the
first place."

THE TIMES, July 12, 1917, in a long and appreciative review, says:—"Of Mr. Nat Gould's novels *more than Ten Million copies have been sold*; and when this can be said of an author there must be qualities in his work which appeal to human nature—qualities, therefore, which even the most superior person would do well to recognise. 'A Northern Crack' is one of those tales which set you down in an armchair and keep you there till it is pleased to stop."

The Novels of Nat Gould

Sales now exceed ELEVEN MILLION Copies!

NAT GOULD'S NOVELS AT 6s. Net

Crown 8vo., Cloth, over 300 pages, Dust Wrapper in Three Colours. Also in John Long's Colonial Library, Cloth, Dust Wrapper in Three Colours; Stiff Paper Cover in Three Colours.

WON ON THE POST. *March, 1918*

FAST AS THE WIND. *May, 1918*

THE STEEPLECHASER. *July, 1918*

A RACE FOR A WIFE. *September, 1918*

LOST AND WON
A TURF CONSPIRACY
BREAKING THE RECORD
NEVER IN DOUBT
A NORTHERN CRACK
A GAMBLE FOR LOVE

THE WIZARD OF THE
TURF *[Filming]*

A FORTUNE AT STAKE

THE SMASHER

THE RIDER IN KHAKI

Recently published

FOR THE CHEAPER EDITIONS OF THE NOVELS OF NAT GOULD
SEE PAGE FACING

JOHN LONG, Ltd., 12, 13, 14, Norris St., Haymarket, London

John Long's New and Forthcoming Books

THE NOVELS OF NAT GOULD—*continued*

NAT GOULD'S NOVELS at 1s. 3d. Net

Crown 8vo., thread sewn. Paper Cover in Three Colours

- 50 **Left in the Lurch** (Also 1s. net, Cloth)
- 51 **The Trainer's Treasure**
- 54 **The Wizard of the Turf**
- 55 **Never in Doubt**
- 56 **Lost and Won**
- 61 **A Turf Conspiracy**
- 62 **Breaking the Record**

NEW VOLUMES, 1918

- 64 **A Northern Crack**
- 68 **The Smasher**
- 72 **The Rider in Khaki**
- 76 **Won on the Post**

NAT GOULD'S NOVELS at 9d. Net

In large demy 8vo., thread sewn. Paper Cover in Three Colours

- 1 **One of a Mob**
- 2 **The Selling Plater**
- 3 **A Bit of a Rogue**
- 4 **The Lady Trainer**
- 5 **A Straight Geer**
- 6 **A Hundred to One Chance**
- 7 **A Sporting Squatter**
- 8 **The Pet of the Public**
- 9 **Charger and Chaser**
- 10 **The Lottery Colt**
- 11 **A Stroke of Luck**
- 12 **The Top Weight**
- 13 **The Dapple Grey**
- 14 **Whirlwind's Year**
- 15 **The Little Wonder**
- 16 **A Bird in Hand**
- 17 **The Buckjumper**
- 18 **The Jockey's Revenge**
- 19 **The Pick of the Stable**
- 20 **The Stolen Racer**
- 21 **A Reckless Owner**
- 22 **The Roarer**
- 23 **The Lucky Shoe**

- 24 **Queen of the Turf**
- 25 **A Great Coup**
- 26 **The King's Favourite**
- 27 **A Cast Off**
- 28 **Good at the Game** [*Film*]
- 29 **The Chance of a Lifetime** (*On the*
- 30 **A Member of Tatt's**
- 31 **The Trainer's Treasure**
- 32 **The Phantom Horse**
- 33 **The Head Lad**
- 34 **The Best of the Season**
- 35 **The Flyer**
- 36 **The White Arab**
- 37 **A Fortune at Stake** (*Filming*)
- 38 **A Gamble for Love** (*On the Film*)
- 39 **The Wizard of the Turf**

NEW VOLUMES, 1918

- 40 **Never in Doubt**
- 41 **Left in the Lurch**
- 42 **Lost and Won**
- 43 **A Turf Conspiracy**
- 44 **Breaking the Record**

IMPORTANT NOTICE.—The Trade and Public are earnestly requested to see that they get the Novels of Nat Gould bearing the Imprint of **JOHN LONG**, otherwise they are buying only the very early productions of this author.

JOHN LONG, Ltd., 12, 13, 14, Norris St., Haymarket, London

John Long's New and Forthcoming Books

JOHN LONG'S FAMOUS 1s. 3d. NET SERIES

All most attractively bound in Three-Colour Covers, art paper, thread sewn.

New Volumes for 1918

63	The Decoy Duck	- - - -	BY A PEER
64	A Northern Crack	- - - -	NAT GOULD
65	Vain Flirtation	- - - -	JAMES BLYTH
66	The Inscrutable Miss Stone	- - - -	ALICE AND CLAUDE ASKEW
67	Rescuing Rupert	- - - -	GUY THORNE
68	The Smasher	- - - -	NAT GOULD
69	In the Year of Waiting	- - - -	BY A PEER
70	A Modern Sacrifice	- - - -	JAMES BLYTH
71	The Rationalist	- - - -	HUBERT WALES
72	The Rider in Khaki	- - - -	NAT GOULD
73	The Secret Bond	- - - -	HYLDA RHODES
74	A Wayfaring Woman	- - - -	EILEEN FITZGERALD
75	The Woman with the Yellow Eyes	- - - -	CARLTON DAWE
76	Won on the Post	- - - -	NAT GOULD

Volumes already Published

4	A Wife Imperative*	- - - -	BY A PEER
6	To Justify the Means*	- - - -	BY A PEER
8	The Oyster	- - - -	BY A PEER
9	Folly's Gate*	- - - -	JAMES BLYTH
10	A Complex Love Affair	- - - -	JAMES BLYTH
16	The Barbarians	- - - -	JAMES BLYTH
17	Secret History of the Court of Berlin	- - - -	HENRY W. FISHER
18	Sonnica	- - - -	VICENTE BLASCO IBANEZ
19	A Society Mother	- - - -	EDMUND BOSANQUET
22	Mighty Mayfair*	- - - -	BY CORONET
28	Hilary Thornton	- - - -	HUBERT WALES
31	A Perfect Passion	- - - -	MRS. STANLEY WRENCH
33	Chicane	- - - -	OLIVER SANDYS
35	Decree Nisi	- - - -	LADY X
36	The Diary of my Honeymoon	- - - -	LADY X
37	The Enemy in Our Midst	- - - -	WALTER WOOD
38	Sport and the Woman	- - - -	CAMPBELL RAE-BROWN
40	I Too Have Known	- - - -	AMY J. BAKER
41	The Impenitent Prayer	- - - -	AMY J. BAKER
42	A Household Saint	- - - -	JERRARD SYRETT
46	The Devil's Profession	- - - -	G. DE S. WENTWORTH-JAMES
47	The Girl Who Wouldn't Work	- - - -	G. DE S. WENTWORTH-JAMES
48	Strings	- - - -	G. DE S. WENTWORTH-JAMES
49	The Courts of Love	- - - -	FARREN LE BRETON
51	The Trainer's Treasure	- - - -	NAT GOULD
54	The Wizard of the Turf	- - - -	NAT GOULD
55	Never in Doubt	- - - -	NAT GOULD
56	Lost and Won	- - - -	NAT GOULD
57	The Greggan Peerage	- - - -	C. RANGER-GULL
58	The Curtain	- - - -	G. DE S. WENTWORTH-JAMES
59	Young Eve and Old Adam	- - - -	TOM GALLON
60	Ursula's Marriage	- - - -	JAMES BLYTH
61	A Turf Conspiracy	- - - -	NAT GOULD
62	Breaking the Record	- - - -	NAT GOULD

* Signifies temporarily Out of Print. Numbers omitted are Out of Print.

JOHN LONG, Ltd., 12, 13, 14, Norris St., Haymarket, London

John Long's New and Forthcoming Books

JOHN LONG'S 1s. NET (CLOTH) NOVELS

Printed in clear type, newly set, on good paper, tastefully bound in Red Cloth, with attractive Pictorial Wrapper in Three Colours. Each volume has a Decorative Title-page with Frontispiece, both on Art Paper.

Volumes now Ready

1	FATHER ANTHONY	ROBERT BUCHANAN
2	DELILAH OF THE SNOWS	HAROLD BINDLOSS
3	ONLY BETTY	CURTIS YORKE
4	THE GARDEN OF MYSTERY	RICHARD MARSH
5	IN SPITE OF THE CZAR	GUY BOOTHBY
6	THE VEILED MAN	WILLIAM LE QUEUX
7	THE SIN OF JASPER STANDISH	RITA
8	A BORDER SCOURGE	BERTRAM MITFORD
9	WAYWARD ANNE	CURTIS YORKE
10	THE GREATER POWER	HAROLD BINDLOSS
11	A CABINET SECRET	GUY BOOTHBY
12	THE EYE OF ISTAR	WILLIAM LE QUEUX
13	A WOMAN PERFECTED	RICHARD MARSH
14	HYPOCRITES AND SINNERS	VIOLET TWEEDALE
15	THE SILENT HOUSE	FERGUS HUME
16	BY RIGHT OF PURCHASE	HAROLD BINDLOSS
17	THE OTHER SARA	CURTIS YORKE
18	LITTLE JOSEPHINE	L. T. MEADE
19	A BRIDE FROM THE SEA	GUY BOOTHBY
20	THE MAGNETIC GIRL	RICHARD MARSH
21	THE MATHESON MONEY	FLORENCE WARDEN
22	CRIMSON LILIES	MAY CROMMELIN
23	THE GRASS WIDOW	DOROTHEA GERARD
24	THRICE ARMED	HAROLD BINDLOSS
25	THE GIRL IN GREY	CURTIS YORKE
26	THE LADY OF THE ISLAND	GUY BOOTHBY
27	THE WHITE HAND AND THE BLACK	BERTRAM MITFORD
28	THE STOLEN EMPEROR	Mrs. HUGH FRASER
29	A MAN OF TO-DAY	HELEN MATHERS
30	THE PENNILESS MILLIONAIRE	DAVID C. MURRAY
31	LINKS IN THE CHAIN	HEADON HILL
32	AN INNOCENT IMPOSTOR	MAXWELL GRAY
33	THE GOLD TRAIL	HAROLD BINDLOSS
34	MOLLIE DEVERILL	CURTIS YORKE
35	A GLORIOUS LIE	DOROTHEA GERARD
36	ALTON OF SOMASCO	HAROLD BINDLOSS
37	IRRESPONSIBLE KITTY	CURTIS YORKE
38	OUR ALTY	M. E. FRANCIS
39	MEMORY CORNER	TOM GALLON
40	THE BARTENSTEIN CASE	J. S. FLETCHER
41	THE ROMANCE OF A MAID OF HONOUR	RICHARD MARSH
42	THE INEVITABLE MARRIAGE	DOROTHEA GERARD
43	NURSE CHARLOTTE	L. T. MEADE
44	LEFT IN THE LURCH	NAT GOULD
45	THE RANSOM FOR LONDON	J. S. FLETCHER
46	A SEALED VERDICT	LAWRENCE L. LYNCH
47	IN HIS GRIP	DAVID C. MURRAY
48	TINSEL AND GOLD	DION CLAYTON CALTHROP
49	THE GIRL AND THE MAN	CURTIS YORKE
50	THE VIPER OF MILAN	MARJORIE BOWEN
51	HIS MASTER PURPOSE	HAROLD BINDLOSS
52	PATRICIA OF PALL MALL	CURTIS YORKE
53	THE GLEN O' WEEPING	MARJORIE BOWEN

JOHN LONG, Ltd., 12, 13, 14, Norris St., Haymarket, London

John Long's New and Forthcoming Books

JOHN LONG'S 9d. NET (PAPER) NOVELS

Good paper, clear type. Thread sewn. Striking Covers in Three Colours.
Size 9 by 5½ inches.

New Volumes for 1918

49	THE MASK	WILLIAM LE QUEUX
50	SWEET "DOLL" OF HADDON HALL	J. E. MUDDOCK
51	THE SECRET PASSAGE	FERGUS HUME
55	A WOMAN OF BUSINESS	Maj. ARTHUR GRIFFITHS
57	OUR WIDOW	FLORENCE WARDEN
58	THE GIRL IN GREY	CURTIS YORKE
59	THE VEILED MAN	WILLIAM LE QUEUX
60	IN SPITE OF THE CZAR	GUY BOOTHBY
61	FATHER ANTHONY	ROBERT BUCHANAN
62	A CABINET SECRET	GUY BOOTHBY
63	THE EYE OF ISTAR	WILLIAM LE QUEUX

Volumes already Published

By FLORENCE WARDEN		By JOHN STRANGE WINTER	
1	Something in the City	9	The Countess of Mountenoy
13	No. 3, The Square	By L. T. MEADE	
27	The Bohemian Girls	10	The Wooing of Monica
31	The Lovely Mrs. Pemberton	29	The Burden of her Youth
37	The Mystery of Dudley Herne	40	Little Wife Hester
46	Kitty's Engagement	By GEORGE GRIFFITH	
53	An Outsider's Year	11	The World Masters
By FERGUS HUME		By LUCAS CLEEVE	
2	The Turnpike House	12	His Italian Wife
26	The Crimson Cryptogram	By J. S. FLETCHER	
30	Woman the Sphinx	15	The Three Days' Terror
38	The Jade Eye	By G. RANGER-GULL	
47	The Golden Wang-Ho	17	The Harvest of Love
54	The Bishop's Secret	By ADELINE SERGEANT	
By MRS. LOVETT CAMERON		19	Beneath the Yell
3	Midsummer Madness	18	Bitter Fruit
28	An Ill Wind	34	A Passing Fancy
39	A Woman's No	48	A Difficult Matter
56	The Graze of Christina	By DAVID CHRISTIE MURRAY	
By RICHARD MARSH		20	The Brangwyn Mystery
4	Mrs. Musgrave and her Husband	By MARY E. MANN	
14	Miss Arnott's Marriage	22	In Summer Shade
32	Curios	By RITA	
44	Confessions of a Young Lady	23	A Jilt's Journal
52	Ada Vernham—Actress	By DICK DONOVAN	
By HELEN MATHERS		24	The Scarlet Seal
5	The Sin of Hagar	By J. E. MUDDOCK	
16	The Juggler and the Soul	33	Fair Rosalind
By CURTIS YORKE		By ERNEST GLANVILLE	
6	Delphine	35	A Beautiful Rebel
25	Alix of the Glen	By EDWARD H. COOPER	
By JOHN BLOUNDELLE-BURTON		41	George and Son
7	Traitor and True	By FRANK BARRETT	
By MRS. CAMPBELL PRAED		42	The Night of Reckoning
8	The Other Mrs. Jacobs	By WALTER WOOD	
21	Fugitive Anne	43	The Enemy in Our Midst
		By GUY THORNE	
		45	A Lost Cause

JOHN LONG, Ltd., 12, 13, 14, Norris St., Haymarket, London

John Long's New and Forthcoming Books

GENERAL LITERATURE

LOVE INTRIGUES OF THE KAISER'S SONS.

Chronicles by WILLIAM LE QUEUX. With numerous Illustrations.
Crown 8vo. Cloth. 7s. 6d. net. Dust Wrapper in colours.

In this book the author lifts the veil from the private lives of the Kaiser's sons, showing how, despite the iron hand of Prussian discipline, they were frequently involved in affairs of the heart with girls in all classes of society. Mr. William Le Queux's unrivalled knowledge of the Court of Berlin and his many sources of information have enabled him to present, in this enthralling volume, secrets in the lives of the German Princes which have long been zealously guarded, and which on more than one occasion have meant life or death to those concerned.

THOSE—DASH—AMATEURS. By Mrs. JOHN SWIFT

JOLY. Crown 8vo. Cloth. 2s. 6d. net. Dust Wrapper in three colours.

This book, written round though not about the War, will appeal especially to all connected either directly or indirectly with nursing. What the authoress does not know about hospitals and their environment is a negligible quantity, and the reader is afforded a little "peep behind the scenes." The book abounds in topical incidents which are related with cynical humour. Every capable nurse will recognize herself in Sister Janet who coaches, coerces, and, when occasion calls for it, drastically "sorts" her "Dash—Amateurs" till they surprise their Mentor, their M.O., and incidentally themselves, by becoming useful as well as ornamental in Boulogne. How the little God Cupid steals into "The Haven" is daintily and sympathetically told, and Sister Janet learns that "a good man's love" is Heaven's big best blessing.

LIFE'S EDIFICE. With 6 Diagrams. Crown 8vo. Cloth.

5s. net.

In the opening sector of this book Life in its relation to the Universe is treated scientifically and philosophically. Thence we pass to a consideration of existing conditions as they affect life around us. No department of human activity is left untouched, and the theoretical and practical aspects are both investigated. Natural selection, heredity, eugenics, hygiene, education, government, parties, religions, are only a few of the actual questions which find comprehensive and admirably lucid treatment in this able work which contains a mass of specialized information, and makes a direct call upon readers of cultured and thoughtful tastes.

FOR ENGLAND—MOTHER! By E. H. TAYLOR, Author

of "The Khaki Men." Foolscap 8vo. Paper. 1s. net.

JOHN LONG, Ltd., 12, 13, 14, Norris St., Haymarket, London

John Long's New and Forthcoming Books

WOMAN: HER HEALTH AND BEAUTY. By MAX PARNET (Lauréat de l'Académie des Sports). With 54 Photographs from Life printed on Art Paper; Diagrams; and large folding Chart of the Exercises. Crown 8vo. Pictorial Boards, Cloth Back. 3s. 6d. net.



The principal aim of physical culture for women is health and, by way of it, beauty. A famous lady doctor has written of this system: "By adopting it, women will acquire a figure which will enhance their beauty, and that suppleness which gives charm and elegance to their every movement." The exquisite full-page photographs which illustrate the exercises, and which have been taken from life by the Mansat Studios, Paris, show how effectively this system allies health to beauty; and as artistic and faithful reproductions they will be greatly admired by all lovers of the female form.

SONGS FROM THE FAR AWAY. By R. STEWART PATTERSON, Author of "Romanian Songs and Ballads." Crown 8vo. Cloth. 4s. 6d. net.

The author's previous work, "Romanian Songs and Ballads," met with a very favourable reception from the reviewers and the public alike. It was written from intimate knowledge, Mr. Patterson (late of the British Legation in Romania) having lived in Romania for seven years. The author's travels have been almost world-wide, inspiring the poetry in the present volume, which is of a very comprehensive nature, being of many countries, embracing Canada, Japan, New Zealand, Palestine, Morocco, Greece, etc.

SONGS FROM THE SOMME. By Captain H. RIPPON-SEYMOUR. Crown 8vo. Cloth. 2s. 6d. net.

In "Songs from the Somme" the spirit of the soldier is mirrored rather in the moods of the moment than in the glories of battles and battlefields. There is patriotic verse and regimental pride, but in the main the songs strike an entirely personal note. The author enables us to understand what the soldier's thoughts are at unexpected and inopportune moments within sound of the guns. We have in this volume a refreshing youth and optimism.

A SUBALTERN'S MUSINGS. By HAMISH MANN (2nd Lieut. A. J. MANN, 8th Black Watch). With Portrait. Crown 8vo. Cloth. 3s. 6d. net.

A volume of verse of singular charm and originality by a young Officer who has fallen in the Great War. He joined up immediately on the outbreak of hostilities, and took part in the battles of the Somme and Arras. In the latter he was seriously wounded whilst leading his Platoon to the attack, and died the following day, five days after his twenty-first birthday.

MYCHURACHAN. By MONA DOUGLAS. Crown 8vo. Art paper. 2s. 6d. net. A volume of verse.

JOHN LONG, Ltd., 12, 13, 14, Norris St., Haymarket, London



