

plain that both were masterful men, each in his own way, the elder by brute force, and the younger by sheer tenacity of purpose which would travel by many a devious path, but always keep the goal in sight. They would both have been handsome if their clean shaven faces had not been so deeply lined. To a casual observer they would have seemed types of the strenuous business man, whose fortune has been built up by sheer hard work, and has cost many an anxious day and sleepless night to prevent it from tottering to the ground. But a student of character would have seen an expression in their eyes which had nothing to do with the making and retaining of money. In one the savage nature of a tiger, in the other the keen look of a wolf that is hunting down its prey, and yet has itself to avoid the hunter.

Both men were faultlessly attired. Their coats were just the right length, their trousers just the right cut. They had not an article of jewellery between them, and even their studs were of plain white enamel. Their ties hit the happy medium between severe simplicity and artistic negligence. To all appearance they were two ordinary English gentlemen of tact and culture. Only a keen observer could have detected something out of the common behind their mark of politeness, something that spoke vaguely of another life they had lived, a life in which evening clothes and faultless white ties were unknown quantities.

The dinner was, as such things go, a success. It is true that the food was plain, and that the cook had done nothing to elaborate the scanty materials at her command. It was also true that the wine was indifferent. But both host and host-

ess proved themselves accomplished entertainers. Mavanwy's natural sweetness of character showed itself to the best advantage, though her heart was sad, and she disliked at least one of her guests. Her father, in spite of his harsh nature, was a man of no ordinary ability, and whatever he had to say about a subject was worth listening to. The two Walroyds were full of anecdote. There seemed to be few parts of the world that they had not seen, and their terse quiet method of narrating the most stirring incidents would have been a valuable object lesson to many novelists.

After dinner Mavanwy left the men to smoke their cigars, and strolled out on the terrace. It was a warm night and she longed for the fresh air. The whole atmosphere of the dining-room had been false and artificial. She knew well that at least three members of the party had been thinking of one thing and talking about another. That Cyrus Walroyd had been thinking of her, and had scarcely been able to conceal the passion in his eyes. That her father had been thinking of restored prosperity; that she herself had been thinking of Emrys Tredegar. And though she did not know it, John Walroyd's mind had been farther away than any of the other three.

The moon had risen, and the bog of Gogerddan was white with wreaths of mist. All round it the mountains towered up like a gigantic wall of ebony. In the distance the little village of Garth showed like a dim black line. The sea was marked with a broad path of silver. A single ship stood out against the glistening waves. It was motionless and apparently riding at anchor. Mavanwy could see its lights and she sighed. There was happiness in one cottage

to-night. She knew that whenever a ship anchored in the bay it meant the brief but joyful visit of some father, or brother, or husband. In the morning he would put off again, and the ship would go its way.

A faint breeze came from the sea and stirred the tops of the pines beneath her feet. Then she saw a tiny speck of black moving towards the vessel. It was a boat. She turned away and buried her face in her hands.

A few minutes afterwards she heard footsteps and saw the red tip of a cigar glowing through the darkness. Then a white shirt front glared through the shrubs, and Cyrus Walroyd came to her side.

"It is better here than indoors, Miss Morgan," he said abruptly. "My brother and your father are talking business. I looked for you in the drawing-room."

"It is a lovely night," she answered simply, "but it is getting chilly," and she half turned as though to go.

"Yes, it is a lovely night," he said, throwing his cigar to the ground, and coming a little closer to her so as to bar her path. She looked up at him and smiled a little uneasily. She knew what was coming, and thought it best to get it over. She sat down on the coping of the wall, and looked out towards the sea.

"The moonlight on the waters is beautiful," she said after a pause. "One can scarcely imagine that ship to be real. It ought to have silver masts and sails of cloth of gold, and be laden with jewels, and apes, and peacocks. Its crew should be swarthy men of the East with rings in their ears and swords and gay sashes. But I fear they are very ordinary people and that the cargo is most likely coal."

"Do you not like coal, Miss Morgan," he said, "and—ordinary people? To me they are more useful than apes and peacocks, and dark-eyed Easterus, and being more useful, are better."

"I think," she replied, "that one wants something useless and picturesque nowadays. There is too much talk of facts, and progress, and machinery. Life is not all a commercial undertaking."

"Nor is it all a dream," he answered tenderly, "though of late even I have been dreaming. Miss Morgan, I am a plain man, who has roughed it in all parts of the world. I have had to fight my way and I have got many scars in the process. I am rich, but there is something I want more than wealth. I have not the pretty language of the poets at my command, but I will tell you what I want in half a dozen words. Mavanwy, I love you, and I want you to be my wife." He came closer towards her, and tried to take her hand. She drew it gently aside and stared out at the silver pathway on the sea, as though she expected to see someone rise out of the waves and come towards her.

For a minute or two there was silence. A solitary curlew cried down in the bog of Gogerddan, and in the far distance there was the sound of a horse's hoofs clattering along the road to Trethol. The man's eyes watched her face hungrily, but the face was almost like a mask of stone.

"Mavanwy," he repeated. "I have asked you to be my wife. I am rich, and your marriage with me would meet with your father's approval. I love you passionately. This is not the love of a boy. It is something too strong and terrible to speak much about. I cannot pour words of love into your ears. If I spoke them I do not know what I might say."

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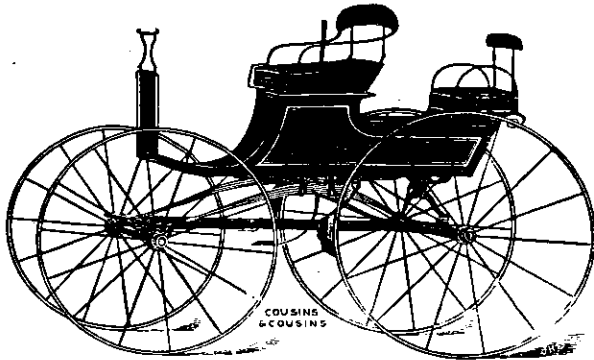
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