are some stones with Ogam inscriptions in a remote corner of the parish.

Afterwards while Tom Danton, the Colonel, the stockbroker, the barrister and the boy, were telling each other fishing stories of extraordinary imaginative power, I reflected on Miss Bently. My sister Margaret, who of course understands such matters much better than I do, has often told me that any intelligent woman can make a fool of any man.

"All she has to do," so Margaret says, "is to pretend to be interested in his particular hobby until she starts him talking about it. Then she need only smile and he will think her charming."

Margaret is very wise. I leaped to the conclusion that Miss Bently had played this trick on me. I rather resented it, but was forced to admit that she had done it uncommonly well. I should not have believed beforehand that any one could have successfully pretended to possess a knowledge of ancient Irish.

As I was saying good-night, Mrs. Danton slipped "Turquoise and Pearl" into my hand. I took the book up to bed with me, and although I had to go downstairs between one and two for a fresh candle, I finished it before I went to sleep. It was worse, considerably worse, than any novel I had ever read. I have in my time studied the classic poets. I have also read the early fathers of the Church. "Turquoise and Pearl," without being so plain spoken as either the poets or the theologians, was a great deal more disgusting.

At breakfast next morning I invited Margaret to join the expedition to the Ogam stones. I really wanted her. I felt that I required a chaperon. I was embarrassed at the prospect of a walk alone with the authoress of "Turquoise and Pearl." Margaret refused the invitation.

"I should only be in the way," she said. "If you and Miss Bently are going to talk about Sanskrit, I should be bored."

"We probably won't talk about Sanskrit to-day," I said. "She only did so last night to please me. You've often told me that that is what clever women do with men like me."

"What will you talk about then?"

"I don't know; perhaps about novels. Miss Bently, it appears, is rather a famous novelist."

"Oh, I never heard of her. What has she written?"

"She didn't tell me the names of her books," I said, "and I didn't like to ask her."

"Well, I don't know her books," said Margaret, "so there's no use my coming with you."

I took Miss Bently to see the Ogam stones. We started at eleven and did not get back till nearly two. We talked the whole time about the Gaelic language, ancient and modern. She was evidently bent on making a fool of me. She did it most successfully. I found it very difficult to believe that she was not interested in what I said. She certainly displayed extraordinary intelligence. She said—at the moment I actually believed her—that she had read my paper in "The Philologist." She said and this may have been true—that her uncle, the famous Professor Windlesch[illegible] of Heidelberg, had spoken very highly of my work. I completely forgot my embarrassment and never gave a single thought to "Turquoise and Pearl."

I was obliged to confess to Margaret at afternoon tea that the conversation during our walk had never once turned on novels or novel writing.

"She must be a really clever woman," said Margaret thoughtfully. Long intimacy with Margaret had given me the power of guessing pretty accurately at what she really means when she speaks. I knew that on this occasion she was not thinking of Miss Bently as a savante, and that the cleverness which she recognised had nothing to do with Gaelic or Sanskrit.

"I wonder," Margaret went on, "why she does it."

I was perfectly frank in my reply.

"I haven't the faintest idea," I said. "But she'll certainly not do it again. I shall talk about novels at dinner to-night, even if I have to refer to "

I paused.

"Refer to what?"

"Turquoise and Pearl" was in my mind but I said:

"The Times Book Club."

"I don't see any difficulty about that," said Margaret. "Everybody is talking about it."

They were, at that time.

I tried to keep my resolve. Miss Bently—I took her in to dinner again, of course—made resolute efforts to return to the Ogam stones. I mentioned the name of every novel I could recollect, and commented freely on several that I had not read. Miss Bently replied in monosyllables and displayed absolutely no interest in the books.

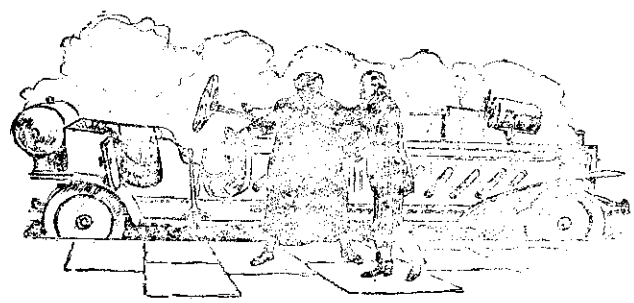
"Miss Bently," I said at last, "we talked all yesterday evening and most of this morning about my work. Don't you think it's time that we talked about yours?"

She blushed. With the recollection of "Turquoise and Pearl" fresh in my mind I didn't wonder that she blushed. Even Mrs. Danton would blush, I suppose, if suspected of having read the book. It was plainly much worse to have written it. I am bound to say she looked exceedingly charming, very innocent and shy, when I spoke directly about her work. She looked, indeed, very much as I recollect that Margaret looked once when I found a poem that she had written. She was a schoolgirl at that time. I do not think that she writes poems now.

"Oh, my work is nothing," said Miss Bently."

"On the contrary," I said, "it's fame has penetrated even to the West of Ireland. You must not think us utter barbarians."

"I'm in great hopes," she said, blushing again more charmingly than ever, "that my paper for next month's meeting of the British Association—"



THE PRAY-AS-YOU-ENTER CAR.

"Your what?" I asked.

"My paper. Didn't you know? But of course you didn't. How could you? I am reading a paper in the philological section on Gaelic and Icelandic roots. My uncle is going over it for me and correcting it. That is the reason I wanted so much to meet you."

"But how can you possibly—?"

"I'm sure it will be no good really," she said, "but if you'll allow me I should like to send you a copy of it afterwards."

"Miss Bently," I said, "did you write—? I mean to say have you ever read—? What I want to say is, are you familiar with many modern novels?"

"I read Miss Yonge's," she said, "when I was at school; but I've been so busy ever since I went up to Girton, that I really haven't had time for novels."

After dinner I got Mrs. Danton into a corner by herself.

"That book," I said, "Turquoise and Pearl,' is the most disgusting thing I ever read."

"You seem to be getting on very well with Miss Bently all the same," said Mrs. Danton.

I saw that she was laughing at me, and I very nearly hated her; although she is, in spite of everything Margaret can say, a very charming woman.

"She didn't write it," I said, "and it's an abominable insult—"

"I know she didn't," said Mrs. Danton. "Don't be angry with me. I only found out my mistake to-night. I'd have told you before dinner if I'd got a chance. I was talking to Tom about it. He knew all along that Rose Bently was an assumed name. I don't mean assumed by our Miss Bently. I mean the other woman, the real one, you know. I don't wonder she didn't use her own name. She's a married woman, and her husband is trying to get a separation from her on account of the book. Tom says he does-n't wonder."

"I don't wonder either," I said. "I shan't return the book. I shall burn it."

"You're quite right," said Mrs. Danton, "as a clergyman, I mean, of course."

Miss Bently and I went again the next day to see the Ogam stones. We talked about ancient Gaelic and some other things. We did not get back until three o'clock. Margaret was out; but I met her later on at afternoon tea.

"Margaret," I said, "I have something very serious to say to you."

"I suppose," she said, "that you're engaged to be married to Miss Bently?"

"Yes. How did you guess?"

"It's a comfort to think," she said, "that being a novelist, she'll be able to earn something. You haven't much to marry on."

"She's not a novelist," I said. "She's a remarkable Gaelic scholar."

"Does she keep that up still?" said Margaret.

"There's no keeping up about it," I said. "She's reading a paper next month before the British Association on Gaelic and Icelandic roots."

"But she is a novelist," said Margaret. "You told me so, yesterday."

"I was mistaken. She never wrote a novel in her life, and I hope she never will."

"I am sorry to hear it. There's no money to be got out of Icelandic roots."

Margaret prides herself on her strong common sense. I am inclined to regard her as occasionally sordid.

Just before I went up to dress for dinner a boy came to the door with a note. It was from Mrs. Danton.

"A congratulation, of course," said Margaret. "May I see it?"

She leaned over my shoulder while I opened and read it.

"What does she mean," said Margaret, "by that postscript about the engagement ring being turquoise and pearls? Pearls are supposed to be unlucky."

"It's some silly joke," I said. "You never can tell what Mrs. Danton means when she tries to make jokes."

The Blessings of Divorce.

Mr. Plowden, the popular, and even to us out here, celebrated president of the Marylebone police-court, gave his views on "the blessings of divorce" to the Royal Commission, just before the mail left, and showed (says the "Pall Mall Gazette") no falling-away from his usual lightness and originality in their enunciation. He will regard us as hopelessly old-fashioned when we describe them as a little too Pagan even for these comparatively emancipated days. He thinks people would realise the true meaning of marriage more clearly if the ceremony were rendered compulsorily a civil one before a registrar. He considers that when the Press is accused of reporting nauseous details it can retort very effectively by pointing to the indelicacy of the Church marriage service. And it is his view that the easier divorce is made the greater will be the weight and stability of the so-called "Holy Estate." Mr. Plowden is, of course, entitled to his opinions, and it is well that the Commission should have heard them so frankly expressed. We are, however, rather doubtful if much good would accrue to England by a legal conformation of the morals of its men and women with those of a monkey-house. The great mass of our countrymen and countrywomen attach high sanctity to the religious service, and do not regard marriage merely as a civil contract. There are health and dignity to the national life in that conception, and in its effect upon the family and the home; and to suggest its debasement to a mere contract of association is a construction that even a man of the world should not put upon it.

Woman would be more charming if one could fall into her arms without falling into her hands.—"Cynic."