

delight. Had he had last overcome his cold, restraining pride, and was he going to tell her he loved her, and claim her for his own?

'Do you?' she asked him quietly, but with a slow, shy glance at him from her shadowy blue eyes. That one glance into his cold, stern face, however, quickly destroyed her new-born hopes. He looked more like an angry father about to rebuke a wayward child for some act of folly, than an impassioned lover. Never before had he ventured to give her any advice with regard to Sir Aubrey; but with a woman's quick intuition, she guessed what was coming now, and as she stood in silence, waiting for him to speak, she wondered vaguely what strange whim had taken him.

'Fannie,' he said, 'I have often longed to speak to you about allowing that man to meet and talk with you, but I relied on your good sense, thinking you would at last see the folly of your conduct, and give him up. I see I have been sadly mistaken in you: I believe you are really encouraging him. Being an old friend of yours, and one whom you know wishes you well,' here his voice faltered a little, 'I hope you will not feel offended with me for giving you an advice to stop his company. No good ever came of such intercourse as he and you are carrying on.'



TREE FERNS, STEWART ISLAND.

'You mean to say,' she replied coldly, 'that I am not good enough to speak to, or associate on terms of intimacy with a personage like Sir Aubrey Travers?'

'That is not my meaning, Fannie,' he answered. 'I mean to say that you are a hundred thousand times too good for him: that you are as far above him as the stars, shining so pure and bright in the blue sky, are above this sordid, matter-of-fact old world of ours; almost as the throne of the Infinite is above the lowest pit of the Infernal.'

'And am I such a paragon of perfection in your eyes that you think me too good for a man who has a title? You know if I became his wife I would be Lady Travers? Doesn't it sound nice, "My Lady!"' She laughed softly as she spoke, and, coming a step closer to him, she laid her little white hand on his arm.

'If he had a hundred titles he would not be good enough for you, Fannie,' Frank said warmly. She laughed—a little nervous laugh.

'And why, may I ask, do you think me too good for him? Besides having a title, he is very handsome: while I am only a poor girl, and I can lay no special claim to being pretty, can I?'

'It was really an invitation for him to tell her she was handsome; she meant it for such.'

'You,' he said, a passionate tone creeping into his voice, 'are altogether beautiful. All earth's loveliness of shine and shade and tender coloring is incarnate in you.'

She raised shining eyes to his face. It was the first time he ever paid her such a high compliment. For a moment his self-control went from him. The rapture of her very nearness made him forget his pride, and all his brave resolutions; and with a sudden, uncontrollable movement, he caught her hands in his. 'Fannie!' he said, low and passionately, 'Fannie!'

Holding both her hands in his, his face transfigured with the light of love, he looked into her eyes that somehow had to meet his. There was a breathless pause, and the girl, standing so close beside him, thought that he must hear her heart beating. At last her dream was coming true, she thought: but alas! the happiness she longed for was not to be hers. All at once the eager love and transfiguring light died out of his countenance, and once more cold reason asserted its sway. Dropping her hands, he moved back a step.

'Forgive me, Fannie!' he said, abruptly. 'I forgot something that I should always remember.'

Fannie experienced an overwhelming feeling of disappointment and wounded pride. It was the very irony of fate that the only man she cared for should be strong enough to stifle his love for her. Utterly shamed in her own eyes, and angry with him that his pride had conquered his love, she decided to let him see that she, too, could be proud.

'I think you have gone a little too far,' she said, 'and taken liberties for which you owe me an apology. I don't see that you have any right to counsel me with regard to my actions, and I wish you to know that I shall do just as I please.'

The next moment she was gone, leaving him standing alone in the moonlit orchard.

For over a week they did not meet, he having no desire to speak to her after what had occurred, and she seeming studiously to avoid him.

Fannie, who possessed a more refined and a more artistic taste than any of the other girls in Mullaghmoyle, was always chosen to decorate our Lady's altar in the little chapel, and one evening towards the end of May she had a large quantity of flowers cut and arranged for taking with her. When all were collected, they made a very great armful, and Sheila, who was present also, seeing Frank pass the gate, ordered him to come and carry the flowers for Fannie. He begged to be excused, saying he had other pressing business to attend to, but Sheila was a little lady accustomed to having her own way in most things, and would not be denied.

Fannie, seeing the hesitation in Frank's eyes, declared she was quite able to carry them herself; but Sheila would not hear of her doing so.

'It would be a shame,' she said, 'to see a big fellow like him walking about at his ease, and a young girl carrying such a heavy burden.'

So there was nothing left for Frank but to go, and needless to say, he did not think it an unpleasant task carrying that fragrant armful—those great red and pink and yellow buds just bursting into bloom, and those glistening snow-white and scarlet blossoms, every one of which, he knew, Fannie's soft hands had touched. But he had refused to go with her, thinking she did not want his company.

'I am very sorry you were forced into carrying them,' Fannie said haughtily, as they stepped out on the white road, all flecked by the evening sun, and cool, green-tree shadows.

'I wanted to come!' The words escaped his lips involuntarily. One glance at Fannie, gowned in softest, filmiest white muslin, with a little handful of pink roses held against her breast, and looking, for all her girlish height and slimness, like a veritable child, with her pale blue sash, elbow sleeves, and pretty straight-brimmed hat, made him forget everything in the world save the sweet, alluring charm of her presence.

'Did you, indeed!' she asked coldly. 'Only that I understand your nature too well to doubt your