

black world behind her. Still he did so burn to see her just once more with corporeal eyes—if even Harry, swaggering home from the Golden Shades music-hall, would only turn up, what a joy it would be! Nay, he once conceived a wild thought of knocking at the door, and then running to hide, in the belief that merely seeing the door open could not be without its consolations. Nobody and nothing appeared, however, until a policeman as dreamy as himself knocked up against him with the sensation of having knocked up against a lamp-post.

Luckier than most lovers in such cases, his devotions were not, as it happened, directed to the wrong address. Inside the pall-like curtains of the lighted windows, the rosy vision was in very truth glowing by Lord Drumshaughlin's side, or, to be accurate, was seated on a footstool at his knee, while Reggy Neville and the policeman were begging one another's pardon. The roses had, indeed, faded since we last saw Miss Westropp in that faint pink ball-dress which covered her like a beautiful blush. There were dark suggestions under her eyes, and white suggestions about her cheeks, of anxious unrestful nights; her hair tumbled in shining cascades around her shoulders, and her little hand was laid pleadingly upon her father's. She was justifying, as she had been justifying, oh! so many weary times during the last three days, to him and to herself, the determination which had caused Mr. Mortlake's cancerous tongue to wag. She pleaded under the disadvantage that the very looks and carresses, which, upon any other point, would have had an easy victory, did but aggravate intolerably the anguish, the incredibility of her present caprice. Briefly, she had come to the determination that, as Harry could remain no longer in London, and had lost all hope of employment through the medium of Mr. Jelliland, she would herself go back with him to Drumshaughlin, and try what she could do to save him. The monks all tell us that the postulant's first day of loneliness in his narrow cell is one of miserable doubts whether he altogether knew his own mind when he fled the gladsome world. Such had been Mabel Westropp's lonely conflict during these last bitter nights and days in the torture-chamber in which her own resolution had immured her. Did she really know what she was doing in turning her back on London? There were a dozen young girls of her season who outshone her in classic perfection of form and distinction of manner; but there was not one on whom Society was readier to lavish the adoration reserved for the chosen ones to whom, like the Mexicans of old, it offers a year or two of divine honors before immolating them. She was too young to understand that it was the faint sensuous fumes of worship which made the air of ball-rooms so subtly sweet; she enjoyed it all as naturally as a sensitive flower opens its petals to the sunshine. But she did enjoy it with the simple ardor of a girl for whom the bright paradise of youth was opening in all its freshness and springtime revelry, and who had boundless store of health and joyousness and honesty of heart to find in waltzes, operas, and pretty frocks the materials of immeasurable interest, glory, and delight. She had sipped these pleasures with a freeborn heartiness which had sometimes caused the double-harrelled eye-glasses of the Lady Dankroses to tremble with horror; in mere willfulness and caprice, it seemed; and now, to indulge what seemed no better than caprice, of a newer and more outrageous fashion, she, who had denied herself nothing, was about to deny herself everything. Was the step she was about to take likely to be of service to anybody? What real hope could there be for a young gentleman who made a confidant of Quish, the bailiff? Would he not rather drag her down with him into the abysmal meanness and stagnation of life in an Irish country town?—into the mosquito-spites of Miss Harman's archery club, or into Miss Deborah Harman's plans for arguing hungry little Papists out of their dogmatic errors with a soup-ladle? Was even her motive an unmixedly good one? Was she not—some mocking spirit kept asking her tortured soul—was she not adhering to her resolution mainly because in a Quixotic moment she had formed it, and because she found more pleasure in being wilful than in being right? Had not the very storm, which her determination brought about her, a considerable influence in making that determination unshakable?

There was ever so much truth in these self-reproaches: for, like most young ladies who had enjoyed a father's idolatry without a mother's counsel, she was not always quite sure where duty ended and caprice began. But clear amidst all these swamps and shifting mists of doubt there stood out ineffaceably that lonely figure of her neglected brother, with the vacant eyes and dishevelled hair, moping away his friendless youth in that gloomy sepulchre of a Castle;—picking up the poorest crumbs of human friendship in the stables and the public-house, while she

was basking in the glow of London drawing-rooms, sipping the honey of men's vows. Whenever his image came back upon her mind;—Harry, with whom she had first dared the ghost of mad Dick Warbro in the Castle cellars, with whom she had first climbed the breezy heights of Hungry for the white heather, and heard the waterfall dash down to its grave in the Wolves' Glen—she had no more doubt what was her duty than if she saw a child on the edge of the waterfall in Coomaguira, walking blind-folded. Mabel, though she was two years younger than Harry, and though he had borne her in his strong arms for a considerable portion of that first ascent of Hungry Mountain, regarded him irresistibly in the light of a child; and who could doubt that he stood on the brink of the terrible white abyss—if, haply, he was not already over it? But there was more than that. Plymlymmon was not wholly astray in his cynical surmise of "a bruise somewhere." Harry's appearance in London, and the awful gulf it had revealed in the household, had set Mabel's thoughts travelling in regions of vague, feverish terror, in which she cried and strained for a mother's strengthening arm with the longing of a sick child. Some gossamer, chilly shadow began to float between her and all this ball-room radiance; some impalpable, oppressive sense of discomfort which manifested itself in a certain awe of those cold, stately, perfect dames, beside whom she began to feel something of the shrinking of an overrated country coquette. Poor Reggy Neville's luckless declaration of love somehow augmented her unintelligible and unquerable self-distrust—augmented, above all, her wild lonely aching for a mother's sheltering arm and divining soul. Her feeling upon this score was not so much thought as shadowy, formless impression; but it was an impression strong enough to bring back the breath of the pure free hills of Beara, smelling sweeter than all the delicate pastilles and essences of Mayfair. Also, her want of a motherly confidante had given to her sympathies a freer range than is usual with young beauties whose first Court costume was hardly yet torn. Her highest dream of happiness was making others happy; and in the limitless sun-heat of her own bright nature she could not see why all the world might not be steeped in the same joyous, tender hopeful sun-bath, and sing from soul to soul, and from creature to Creator, like the morning stars. Perhaps, it was visiting that one lowly spot in her own heart that gave her so keen a perception of how much loveliness and how little love the great, dark, suffering, indelibly angelic human heart was composed. With a vague, girlish zeal, she stormed against the heartless, self-glorifying league of two against the world, which cheats the world of woman's unmaned treasures of human sympathy in the name of Love; she felt a certain guilty tremor run through all her ball-room joys whenever she thought "what was this among so many"—what a speck of costly, selfish brightness was this amidst the glooms and despairs of London; and I am afraid Lady Dankrose would give up all lingering hope of regeneration for a young lady who would dream now and again of some new miracle of the loaves and fishes which would make the ball-room walls expand, until all the sons and daughters of men were gathered into its golden glow, where there should be ices, and waltzes, and love-whispers, and divine music for all, and pinched cheeks and lacerated hearts no more under the sun. Such was the tangle of half-formed thoughts out of which poor Mabel's throbbing little heart had to evolve some plan for beginning her regeneration of the world by leaving father and mother to their own devices in the very crisis of a triumphant London season. The old man at first stormed and raged like a maniac when his daughter broke the news to him.

"You shan't! by God, you shan't!" he roared in his rage. "You are mad. I forbid it. Not another word." The excitement plunged him into a genuine nervous fever, which left nothing behind the next day except depression. "You want to kill me," he cried complainingly. "I'm an old man, Mabel. Don't go and take the light of my life away with you." There was a tear in his eye. The blow had actually struck water from a heart which self-indulgence had all but turned to stone.

"But, papa, why should you not come with us?"

"I!—leave London!" He started back under a new terror—his every tendril and tentacle had got gripped into the easy, lazy, luxuriant life of an elderly London club-bean, like some ancient mossy parasite clinging around a deciduous tree, and sucking its juices; and here was a hatchet lifted to strike away his tenacious hold of the associations which furnished him with the sap of life, and fling him, a hacked and withered old creeper, on the ground to go in search of something new to cling to. He could scarcely believe his ears.

"Drumshaughlin can be made a jolly place enough