

XXXIII

MY HOME-COMING

Mount Hazel.

WHAT did I say?—didn't I say that the first words of Austen would be of the weather? I guessed it. I always know in advance what he is going to say, but, alas! that's about all I know. Here I am at Mount Hazel, but, as they say in English, "the devil if I know where I am!" I am trying to joke, but there is not much jocosity left in me. And I am beginning at the wrong end. Oh, I am sorry I have the "wrong end" down—it seems like an ill omen. I'll start back from Algiers.

Médor and I discussed Austen's letter until the very commas no longer looked like commas, but like minute tears. Its very matter-of-factness seemed fantastic to me. Médor said lugubriously:

"This letter does him credit. I augur well of this. I rejoice exceedingly for your sake."

"Oh, you say that to encourage me, but if you rejoice so exceedingly, why do you look like a mute? Oh, Médor, do be funny, do make me laugh, do console me! This cold-blooded letter has depressed me so that I want to cry—and what about that horrid, 'suitable' person I'll have to put up with all the way back? I