

THE FIGHTING CHANCE

He laughed.

"You mean that you really would stay and play double dummy when every other living man will be off to the coverts? Double dummy—to improve my game?"

"Certainly! I need improvement."

"Then there is something wrong with you, too, Mr. Siward."

She laughed and started to flick her whip, but at her first motion the horse gave trouble.

"The bit doesn't fit," observed Siward.

"You are perfectly right," she returned, surprised.

"I ought to have remembered; it is shameful to drive a horse improperly bitted." And, after a moment:

"You are considerate toward animals; it is good in a man."

"Oh, it's no merit. When animals are uncomfortable it worries me. It's one sort of selfishness, you see."

"What nonsense," she said; and her smile was very friendly. "Why doesn't a nice man ever admit he's nice when told so?"

It seems they had advanced that far. For she was beginning to find this young man not only safe but promising; she had met nobody recently half as amusing, and the outlook at Shotover House had been unpromising with only the overgrateful Page twins to practise on—the other men collectively and individually boring her. And suddenly, welcome as manna from the sky, behold this highly agreeable boy to play with—until Quarrier arrived. Her telegram had been addressed to Mr. Quarrier.

"What was it you were saying about selfishness?" she asked. "Oh, I remember. It was nonsense."

"Certainly."