

"The Count du Potiron!" repeated Mrs. Lovell. "How perfectly preposterous!"

"Perfectly," echoed Maud. "Why," really I had scarcely ever spoken to him, you know. I noticed, of course, that there was a great tendency on his part to those *galantries* which every Frenchman considers himself bound to offer; but I really never suspected that he meant anything by them. Even when I received his proposal, it only amused me, and I scarcely gave it a thought until to-day."

"To-day?" said Mrs. Lovell; "well, what happened to-day?"

"Why," said Maud, "to-day I find that some dreadful mistake has been made; but how, or why, or by whom I cannot quite make out."

"Tell me all about it, dear," said Mrs. Lovell, earnestly; "perhaps I can help you to find out."

"Well, Georgie, you know, of course, I like Mr. Carrol, and so, — why, when he asked me, — I — I wrote him that — well, I accepted him, you know, and at the same time I wrote that absurd Frenchman a civil note, declining his proposal, of course. Well, Georgie dear, I waited, and waited, and for two or three days I expected to see Mr. Carrol. You know how often he used to come. Well, he did n't come at all, but yesterday that odious Frenchman called."

"I remember," said Mrs. Lovell.

"Well, I would n't see him."

"Yes."

Maud was silent for a time, and at length continued: "This morning I received a most singular note from him. He addressed me by my Christian name, and told me that my acceptance of his proposal had overwhelmed him with the profoundest joy. My acceptance of his proposal! Think of that, Georgie! And I had rejected him positively, and almost contemptuously."

"Good heavens! Maudie, dearest, what is the meaning of it all?"

"Wait a moment," said Maud, drawing a long breath, and speaking in an excited manner. "Wait till you hear

all. Such a letter, of course, surprised me, and at the same time excited all sorts of fears. I could n't understand it at all. I suspected that I must have made some horrible mistake of the most stupid kind. My anxiety was increased by the silence of Mr. Carrol. I had accepted him, but he had neither called on me nor written. I was bitterly mortified, and afterwards dreadfully anxious; and though I began to fear that some mistake had been made, I really did not believe it till I got that dreadful letter from the Frenchman."

"Maudie darling, you really terrify me," said Mrs. Lovell. "I have a suspicion that is positively quite shocking."

"This afternoon, said Maud, in a tremulous voice, — "this afternoon, just after lunch, I got this letter. It's from Mr. Carrol. Read it, and tell me what you think about it."

With these words she handed to Mrs. Lovell the letter which all this time she had been holding in her hand. Mrs. Lovell took it in silence, and, opening it, she read the following: —

"DEAR MISS HEATHCOTE: If you wished to crush me, your wish is gratified. I am crushed utterly, and am now in the lowest state of prostration in which even *you* would wish to see me.

"I received your reply to my letter two days ago, and would have acknowledged it before, but I did not do so, partly because I supposed that any further remarks from me would be unwelcome, but more particularly because I did not feel altogether able to write.

"I expect to leave this place to-day, and forever. All my arrangements are made, and you and I will never meet again. Under the circumstances, therefore, I hope you will forgive me for saying that your rejection of my offer might have been made in terms a little less cruel and cutting. *After all that has passed between us*, I think I deserved something more than a note such as the one you thought fit to send me. It seems to me that any one with ordinary