

CHAPTER XLII

LOVE REMAINS

WRAYSON rode slowly up the great avenue and paused at the bend to see for the first time at close quarters the house, which from the valley below had seemed little more than a speck of white set in a deep bower of green. Seen at close quarters its size amazed him. With its cluster of outbuildings, it occupied nearly the whole of the plateau, which was like a jutting tableland cut from the side of the mountain. It was of two storeys only, and encircled with a great verandah supported by embowered pillars. Free at last from the densely growing trees, Wrayson, for the first time during his long climb, caught an uninterrupted view of the magnificent panorama below. A land of hills, of black forests and shining rivers; a land uncultivated but rich in promise, magnificent in its primeval order. It was a wonderful dwelling this, of which the owner, springing down from the verandah, was now on his way to meet his guest.

The two men shook hands with unaffected heartiness. Duncan Fitzmaurice, in his white linen riding clothes, seemed taller than ever, a little gaunt and thin, too, from a recent attack of fever. There was no doubt about the pleasure with which he received his guest.