

suit me. But, oh, I'm so happy, so happy, so happy—I never thought I could be so happy.'

'Nor I,' Arthur answered, holding her hand a moment in his tenderly.

'How strange,' Hilda said again, after a minute's delicious silence; 'it's the poor Le Bretons who have brought us two thus together. And yet, they were both once our dearest rivals. *You* were in love with Edie Le Breton: I was half in love with Ernest Le Breton: and now—why, now, Arthur, I *do* believe we're both utterly in love with one another. What a curious little comedy of errors!'

'And yet only a few months ago it came very near being a tragedy, rather,' Arthur put in softly.

'Never mind!' Hilda answered in her brightest and most joyous tone, as she wiped the joyful tears from her eyes. 'It isn't a tragedy, now, after all, Arthur, and all's well that ends well!'

When the Countess heard of Hilda's determination—Hilda didn't pretend to go through the domestic farce of asking her mother's consent to her approaching marriage—she said that so far as she was concerned a more shocking or un-Christian piece of conduct on the part of a well-brought-up girl had never yet been brought to her knowledge. To refuse Lord Connemara, and then go and marry the son of a common cobbler! But the Earl only puffed away vigorously at his cheroot, and observed philosophically that for his part he just considered himself jolly well out of it. This young fellow Berkeley mightn't be a man of the sort of family Hilda would naturally expect to marry into, but he was decently educated and in good society, and above all, a gentleman, you know, don't you know: and, hang it all, in these days that's really everything. Besides, Berkeley was making a pot of money out of these operas of his, the Earl understood, and as he had always expected that Hilda'd marry some penniless painter or somebody of that sort, and be a perpetual drag upon the family exchequer, he really didn't see why they need trouble their heads very much about it. By George, if it came to that, he rather congratulated himself that the girl hadn't taken it into her nonsensical head to run away with the groom or the stable-boy! As to Lynmouth, he merely remarked succinctly in his own dialect, 'Go it, Hilda, go it, my beauty. You always were a one-er, you know, and it's my belief you always will be.'

It was somewhere about the same time that Ronald Le Breton, coming back gladdened in soul from a cheerful talk with Ernest, called round of an evening in somewhat un-