

I hate that sort of thing as much as anybody. No, she's beautiful enough, but she's coloured. There's the strain in her. Three generations back there was a black in the family. In most of them it's worn itself all out completely, but she's a set back. You can see it. Her hair's as black as pitch. Not a mat, thank God; it's fine enough. Her skin's quite olive, too. The whites of her eyes are that blue-white of old china. She's got the taste, too, for gaudy coloured things. Wanted to dress herself in canary-coloured satin when she first came to Ballysheen. My aunts soon put a stop to that. Oh, I've no doubt they'll teach her in time."

I think just that touch made me see it most of all. The little creature putting on her bright plumage, the very colours which Nature gives to those whose home is in the sun, and then to have them stripped from her, and in their place the dull religious black of these grey countries given her to wear. Oh, no doubt, they would teach her quickly enough, those two old maiden aunts of his. Her school-room roof would be the lightless skies of grey—one quickly learns a lesson of obedience, the obedience of despair, in such a room as that. Ready to their hands would be all the forms of chastisement that can so soon break down a spirit from the sun. Just that canary-coloured satin made me see it most of all.

And what did his aunts think of it all, I wondered. It was as if I had wondered aloud, for his companion echoed the question to my thought.