

the best o's, an' that ye are earnin' the respect o' a haill countryside. Eh, lassie, if your dear mother had but lived to see this peace in Haugh ! "

" Do you think papa is pleased ? " she asked, wistfully. " He does not say much, and often we have little tiffs. "

" He's mair than pleased, lassie ; he's no faur frae greetin' whiles, an' that's a lot to say for Kerr of Haugh. Gang you on, an' ye'll no miss your reward. Ye are doing a woman's noblest duty in this world. An' now, are ye for my news or no ? "

" Of course I am, " said Eleanor.

Katie brought in the tea then, and Eleanor rose to pour it out.

" Weel, Eleanor, my son's tired o' the auld mistress o' Castlebar, an' has gane to London to seek a new ane ; who think you ? "

Eleanor stood quite still, a piece of sugar balanced in the tongs, and her face white as the linen of the cloth before her eyes. Margaret Allardyce was a very shrewd woman in most things, but she had not the faintest idea that Eleanor took other than the most ordinary interest in her son. Eleanor knew that, and all her pride rushed to her aid, and she forced herself to careless speech.

" Not Frances ? "

" Yes, Frances. Maybe she has told you, dear lassie, how she has kept him hangin' on whole twelve months, havin' kent o' his auld fancy for you, an' anxious to gie him the chance to make sure o' his ain mind. But he has never swithered one way or anither, but coontit the days till the year was up ; an' awa' on Saturday night, let me say what I liked, and I've my letter this mornin' that it's a' settled ; and so there'll be bonny ongauns in Castlebar this summer, eh ? "

Mrs. Allardyce was garrulous in her supreme satisfaction, and so gave Eleanor ample time to recover herself. She was able out of pure strength of will to turn to her—handling her tea-cup with fingers which did not falter.

" You liked Frances very much, I think, and got on