

THE GATE OF HAZARD 15

"Yes," I said, slowly. "Yes ; but I am afraid my father is not contemplating a trip of the kind. You see, his health is not of the best, and his engagements—" I was interrupted by a peal of laughter from the widow.

"You are the drollest creature !" she cried. "Who said anything about Lord Glisfoyle ?"

"I don't fancy Cello has much notion of going out either—at least, not yet," and I pointed this with a look. "And you see, Mercy could hardly come out to me alone."

"Mercy, I do believe he'll make a diplomatist after all. He talks that nonsense with such a perfectly solemn face," exclaimed Mrs. Curwen. "I suppose, Mr. Ferdinand, you haven't the ghost of an idea what I mean, have you ? or what we've been planning."

"How could I ? But if you have any idea of Mercy coming out to Madrid with anyone but my father or Cello, I should say at once it would be quite unsafe, and quite impracticable. There are a hundred reasons ; but one's enough—the equivocal position of the whole Spanish question, owing to the unsettled relations with America."

"Nand, you're incorrigible," cried Mercy ; but Mrs. Curwen laughed and clapped her hands, for both saw the double meaning of my words.

"I think that's most lovely. Let me get that sentence—'the equivocal position of the whole Spanish question, owing to the unsettled relations with America' ! And then say he won't make a diplomatist ! Well, you must know that Mercy and I have already got our plans fixed up. She's going out with me. I suppose I can do as I like. And if I take a sudden