

to have recognised her instantly. Charles, come here and be presented to your cousin, Mabel Earnshaw. His name is Carlo, but I couldn't possibly call him by it; it sounds so like a dog, doesn't it? At least pronounced in my English fashion. And I can't roll my r's. And here's baby. Isn't she fat? And she never cries. I consider those the two most charming qualities possible in a baby." So Polly rattled on in a blithe good humoured way, that infected one with good spirits, and looked as buxom and pleasant a young matron as you could desire to behold. Her husband was a quiet ugly bright-eyed little man, very simple and gentle in manner. An atmosphere of peace and good will pervaded the family circle.

Mr. Moffatt, the manager, wrote a very gracious letter to Mrs. Walton, consenting to give her young relative a trial, on the very handsome conditions of her performing gratis, finding her own wardrobe, and making herself generally useful in the business of the theatre.

"What sort of study are you, Mabel?" asked her aunt one morning, bringing into the room a pile of queer little books, covered with yellow, green, or brown paper.

"What sort of study, Aunt Mary?"

"I mean, do you learn by heart easily and quickly?"

"Yes; I think so."

"Because I've got a list from Mr. Moffatt of the pieces most likely to be done during the first week. And you had better begin to get some of them into your head at once."

"Oh yes, aunt," said Mabel, eagerly, seizing on the little pile of books, and turning them over one by one. Her face fell a little as her examination proceeded. "I don't know any of these," she said, looking up.

"No, of course not. How should you? That's why I was anxious that you should have time to write out a few parts. These are chiefly prompt-books, and you will not be able to keep them."

"But," said Mabel, hesitating, and slowly turning over a few leaves, "they seem to me to be— to be dreadful nonsense!"

"You'll find that they act well enough, dear."

"I thought, Aunt Mary, that I might perhaps have one or two parts in Shakespeare. I don't mean the leading parts, although I have studied Rosalind, and Cordelia, and Imogene, and nearly all Juliet. I mean little parts, like Celia or Hero, or Jessica."

Aunt Mary shook her head. "I'm afraid, Mabel, that you won't get Celia, or Hero or Jessica, for the very sufficient reason that the plays those characters are in, are not at all likely to be done. Such a thing might happen on a benefit, or a bespeak, but otherwise Moffatt sticks to tragedy and farce. But we're sure to do Hamlet, and I will stipulate for Ophelia for you. Moffatt's leading lady can't turn a tunc, and so Ophelia generally falls to the singing chambermaid. But that's very bad, of course. Meanwhile, get up in those parts that I've marked with a pencil, there's a good girl."

Aunt Mary bustled away to rehearsal, leaving Mabel seated before the play-books, uncertain upon which of them to begin. At length she took up a melodrama of the old-fashioned kind, with a band of robbers, and a forest, and a castle, and a virtuous heroine in distress, and her equally virtuous though not equally distressed confidential friend—for there is a proportion to be observed in these things, and it would never do to plunge the walking lady into an equal depth of misery with the first lady—and a great many high-flown speeches, full of the most exalted sentiments, but a little hazy as to grammar, and containing, perhaps, a somewhat undue proportion of the vocative case.

Janet was seated opposite her cousin, engaged in making a fair copy of very confused and blotted manuscript. John Earnshaw had recently dictated to her several papers on chemistry, which had been accepted and paid for, by the editor of a magazine which professed to present scientific subjects in a popular form. Small sums of money have given a deal of happiness in this large world, but perhaps no

small sum of money ever occasioned a purer joy than was felt by Mary Walton Earnshaw when the post-office order arrived in payment for her husband's first article. It was curiously pathetic to hear her expressions of proud delight, and the ingenious manner in which she endeavoured to convince John—having first most thoroughly convinced herself—that those two or three guineas were more important to the household exchequer than all the earnings of the rest of the family put together, Janet, as her father's amanuensis, was making a fair copy of a manuscript whilst Mabel was looking over her play-books.

"I am afraid," said Janet, looking attentively at her cousin, "that you don't much like your task, Mabel?"

Mabel blushed. "Oh," said she, "I am afraid you will think I'm but a poor creature to break down at the first trial. But it is not the trouble I mind a bit. I could learn every word in the play in a couple of hours. Only I don't think I shall be able to say this. I shall feel so ashamed."

"Ashamed?"

"Yes; it is such nonsense! Do listen to this, Janet. My lord, I quail not at your threats. The thunder of your frown hath for me no terrors. Beware! There may come a day when retribution, upon lurid wing, shall blight you even at the zenith of your power. Beware! beware!"

Janet smiled her rare sweet smile.

"Cousin Mabel, I think your business will be to make it seem *not* trash. Don't you remember the story of the man who made everybody cry by his pathetic way of saying Mesopotamia? I advise you to dismiss the sense of ridicule from your mind, and get the words into your head while I finish copying this page."

"Oh, thank you, Janet," said Mabel, simply.

"How sensible you are! I will try, but I fear it would be impossible for me to make anybody cry by saying Mesopotamia!"

By dint, however, of fixing her mind upon the necessity of making the best of what was entrusted to her, Mabel not only committed to memory the three or four parts that had been given her, but managed to repeat them to her aunt, when the latter came home, with some degree of earnestness: though when she came to "My lord, I quail not at your threats," &c., she was conscious of feeling tame and sheepish, and of becoming very hot and red in the face.

She was very anxious to see as much acting as possible, and accordingly she and her uncle and Janet encouced themselves, evening after evening, in a corner of the upper boxes of the Dublin theatre, and witnessed a great many performances. Mabel was always intensely interested, and was the best audience in the world, becoming quite absorbed in the fortunes of the scene. Indeed, so easily was she moved to tears by the mimic sorrows before her—even by those of the wildest and most melodramatically impossible sort—that Janet sometimes quietly whispered in her cousin's ear, "Mesopotamia, Mabel, Mesopotamia!"

So the evenings slipped away, until on a certain evening, when they were all assembled at supper, John Earnshaw, with his daughter and niece, having been in the "front" of the theatre, and Mrs. Walton having been acting, Jack said, "I'll give you all three guesses as to who came to pay me a visit in the painting-room to night."

"Stop a moment, Jack!" said his sister Janet.

"Do we all know him?"

"Yes, all of you, except Mabel; and it's well for her peace of mind that she doesn't know him, for he is about the handsomest fellow going, though I can't say I like him particularly. There's something snaky about his eyes."

"I've guessed!" cried Mabel, suddenly.

"Your visitor's christian name begins with A?"

"Yes," replied Jack, staring at his cousin.

"And his surname with T?"

"Will any lady or gentleman present," said Jack, looking round, "be so good as to repeat the most approved form of exorcism against witchcraft? Also, mother, if you happen to have such a trifle in your pocket as an old horse-shoe,

I should be obliged by your allowing me to nail it on to the threshold."

"But who was it, Jack?" cried his mother and Janet together.

"Ask Mabel. She evidently knows all about it."

"Jack, how can you be so absurd?" said Mabel laughing; "I only guessed that your visitor was Mr. Alfred Trescott."

"To be sure! That's all!" returned Jack. "A young man, whom I have not seen for more than a year, appears to me in the solitude of my painting-room one evening in the most unexpected manner. Returning to the bosom of my family, I invite its various members to hazard a guess as to who my visitor was; and the only one who instantly pitches on the truth is Mabel! Mabel, who is unacquainted with him, but who, nevertheless, has his christian name as pat on her tongue as if she had been his god-mother."

"Alfred Trescott," said Janet, putting her hand to her head; "then it was he? Of course! I thought I knew the face. My attention was attracted this evening by a young man sitting in the orchestra (though not playing any instrument), and I thought I knew him! Now I remember. Alfred Trescott, of course! He stared a good deal at us, and that first made me observe him. Mabel was so absorbed in the play, that she had no eyes for any one."

"And my part of the mystery is no mystery to anybody but Jack," said Mabel, smiling. "I have told Aunt Mary all about my acquaintance with little Corda Trescott."

"Well," returned Jack. "But how did you guess that Alfred Trescott was my visitor? Did you know he was in Ireland?"

"No; but I knew that the family had left Hammerham. And one word you said made me think of young Mr. Trescott:—'snaky.' It flashed upon me whom you must mean."

"Flattering for my friend," said Jack. "I shouldn't care, myself, to be instantly recognised by the epithet snaky. But how odd he never said anything about knowing you. To be sure, he didn't stay long, and he was talking about himself all the time. I asked him how his playing was getting on, and when he was coming out in a violin solo at the Philharmonic? To which he replied with a sneer, 'About the same time that your first picture is exhibited on the line, at the Academy.' So, as I saw he didn't like it (and perhaps as I didn't particularly like it myself), I dropped the subject."

Two days afterwards, young Trescott called at Mrs. Walton's house, and professed much surprise at finding Mabel there. "I little thought to have the pleasure of seeing Miss Earnshaw," said he. (He had her name correctly enough now.) Janet remarked afterwards that this affected surprise was a piece of gratuitous hypocrisy, inasmuch as he had evidently seen and recognised Mabel at the theatre. The young man neither said nor did anything that could positively be called objectionable, and yet the whole family appeared relieved when he went away. He avoided with considerable tact any mention of Hammerham people or incidents, unless Mabel first spoke of them. And yet he contrived, in some subtle way, to give her aunt and uncle the impression that Mabel has been on terms of greater intimacy with himself and his father and Corda, than had ever really existed between them. He let fall, with apparent carelessness, allusions to "the Charlewoods," and "that uncomfortable business of poor Walters," which it was impossible to resent, and equally impossible to explain; and Mabel found herself placed in the disagreeable position of sharing with Mr. Alfred Trescott a confidential acquaintance with the private affairs of the Charlewood family.

Young Trescott informed them that his father and sister were in Ballyhackett, a town belonging to Mr. Moffatt's "circuit" and that he (Alfred) should join the company at Kilkaro in a week or two. "Moffatt don't want me just yet," he said, tossing back his long hair with a gesture that was habitual to him, and showing the whole range of his bright teeth, "so I thought I might as well stay in Dublin for the present, and have a little fun. Paddy, with all thy faults