

THE IMPERIALIST

the local volunteers were spitting out the *feu de joie*. "I've lit the fire an' swep' out the dining-room. You tell mother. Queen's Birthday, too—I guess Lobelia's about as mean as they're made!" And the Murchisons had descended to face the situation. Lorne had by then done his part, and gone out into the chromatic possibilities of the day; but the sense of injury he had communicated to Advena in her bed remained and expanded. Lobelia, it was felt, had scurvily manipulated the situation—her situation, it might have been put, if any Murchison had been in the temper for jesting. She had taken unjustifiable means to do a more unjustifiable thing, to secure for herself an improper and unlawful share of the day's excitements, transferring her work, by the force of circumstances, to the shoulders of other people, since, as Mrs. Murchison remarked, somebody had to do it. Nor had she, her mistress testified, the excuse of fearing unreasonable confinement. "I told her she might go when she had done her dishes after dinner," said Mrs. Murchison, "and then she had only to come back at six and get tea—what's getting tea? I advised her to finish her ironing yesterday, so as to be free of it to-day; and she said she would be very glad to. Now, I wonder if she *did* finish it!" and Mrs. Murchison put down her pan of potatoes with a thump to look in the family clothes-basket. "Not she! Five shirts and