

"Because we think our goose a swan, old lady, it doesn't follow that everyone else will. Perhaps Lady Iredale will think differently."

"Goose indeed!" said Mrs. Westlake with indignation. "And a widow can marry as she pleases."

It was a brilliant autumnal morning when Ronald arrived at his destination, but alas! it was only half-past eight, and it would be impossible to call on any one at such an hour.

He breakfasted at his hotel and wandered forth beside the lake, hoping against hope that he might see Enid.

But she did not appear. He did not heed the mountains with their soft purple tint; the placid beauty of the lake, for all his thoughts were full of fire and impatience. What should he say to her? He did not know, but at all events he should look again at her beautiful face, he should touch her hand.

It was now eleven o'clock, but it seemed to him as if a whole day had elapsed since he had alighted from the train.

He made his way to the picturesque cottage standing in its own grounds which overlooked the lake, for Lady Iredale and her daughter had preferred a house of their own to living in an hotel in the small town.

HE was shewn into a tastefully furnished drawing-room. He caught sight of music on the open piano. It was a good sign; surely happiness could come back to her. After what seemed to him a long wait, Lady Iredale came in.

"I was in the garden when I saw some one coming. They did not tell me at once. Indeed I am very glad to see you," she said, shaking hands.

"Have you breakfasted?"

"I breakfasted hours ago, thank you, Lady Iredale."

"We are early ourselves, now that we are in Scotland. It is so different from town life. I daresay we shall find ourselves much trammelled on our return."

"And Mrs. Cornwallis, how is she?" asked Ronald, in spite of all his self-control, feeling the colour mount to his face.

"She is very well. She will be disappointed at being out when you called."

"But," stammered Ronald blankly, "I can call again."

"Ah!" said Lady Iredale, and smiled. By this time he had again become his own master.

"Tell me," he continued earnestly, "has she recovered from that dreadful time?"

"She has," replied Lady Iredale impressively. "She has great recuperative powers, and although she has never so much as hinted it to me, neither have I asked any question, I feel sure that latterly it was more compassion that she felt for poor Horace than love. She has been through a cruel ordeal, but now her youth is beginning to triumph."

This was the best of news to Ronald. "Lady Iredale," he exclaimed suddenly, "I feel that I am not worthy of her in any way, but I love her, you know very well that I have loved her for a long time. Tell me should you object to me, supposing—which I can scarcely believe—that she should listen to me."

"I do not object to you at all," she answered kindly. "It would not be considered a good match for my daughter in a worldly point of view, but I know you to be a good man, and you have rendered her great services in the past. Nothing would induce me to oppose her wishes, supposing her wishes are to marry you. We have had enough of family differences," she added with a sigh.

"I should like to speak to her at once," said Ronald eagerly.

"I suppose you know she is now wealthy. Her father left her a very large sum of money, and she will have more at my death."

"I did not know it. At the time of our trial I was too much taken up to read the papers or to hear current gossip: But," he continued, plucking up courage, "I do not think it makes much difference. She knows I would have thought myself unspeakably honoured if she would have consented to marry me when she was working in

the mill. I may as well tell you that now that I am in the House I have made up my mind to give up the mill. My father is quite willing to sell it, and my duties call me away so much. My own fortune is ample. I hope a far wider career is open to me."

"Which you will no doubt succeed in. I think you are right to give up the mill, as your father is willing you should. Even if my daughter does not marry you, we can, I hope, be of some use to you, and shall always look on you as a very true friend."

RONALD acknowledged the speech gracefully, but he determined if Enid would not marry him, to accept no favours at Lady Iredale's hands.

Her speech had somewhat disheartened him and prepared him for failure. He enquired how he could meet her.

"She has gone up on the hills at the back. It is her favourite walk, but too steep a climb for me."

Ronald listened to the directions given him, then set out with a quick step, never pausing in his up-hill walk until the path he was following divided in two, one path going to the right, the other in a completely opposite direction.

He looked back. Beneath him lay the beautiful lake, while across it were range on range of purple hills.

The view was magnificent, every step disclosing fresh beauties of hills, lakes, and ever more distant ranges.

But his thoughts were all of Enid. Should he find her, what was he to say?

The path curved suddenly. He saw on his left hand not sharp rugged peaks as were on his right, but three lofty rounded hills with soft springy grass, on which sheep were grazing. On the summit were boulders and rocky eminences.

"Dartmoor!" he exclaimed involuntarily, and then his heart beat furiously.

A young lady was coming towards him, a tall beautiful girl in a white dress, and he knew that it was Enid.

But not Enid as he had seen her last in her sombre grief, not Enid as he had first seen her at the mill with a weight of care on her mind, but a radiant Enid with the light not only of health but of happiness in her blue eyes. He noted her grace, her distinguished air, and felt how presumptuous he had been. Would such a girl look at him? His heart died within him.

She advanced, an abstracted expression on her face until she caught sight of him. Her eyes shone, a bright colour came into her cheeks, she stretched out both hands.

"Why, Ronald!" she exclaimed in glad tones.

"My darling, my darling, my darling!" was all he said, supplementing his speech with unnumbered kisses, which were not only unresisted but occasionally returned.

And why not? No one was in sight except the handsome-faced sheep, who did not even take the trouble to turn their heads.

At last conversation was possible and he told her of all his doubts and fears of his own unworthiness.

She directed his gaze towards the hills, the solemn silent hills.

"Of what do they remind you?"

"Of Dartmoor," he replied promptly.

"Yes. Must I tell you that I come here every day because they remind me of the place where I first saw the best, and truest, and kindest, and cleverest man I ever met, the man to whom I have given my heart for a long time."

He clasped her in his arms again in a long embrace.

"Isn't it marvellous that such joy should come to us, Ronald," she said at length, "that we should be capable of feeling it after all we have gone through."

"God is good," returned Ronald reverently. "Enid, my Enid."

It was long ere they returned. Lady Iredale had been awaiting them with impatience for a considerable time. She looked her question.

"Yes," said Ronald joyously; "it's all right, Lady Iredale. She has promised to marry me."

"And," added Enid, "I am very proud to marry you."

The End.



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