

horse shied, flinging him against a granite boulder, and killing his hopes. Greville, by cautious riding and careful calculation, made a very good showing; and D'Alton, plunging as he would into a Home-Rule debate, following fast and furiously, came in at the death and gallantly won the brush.

Poor Andy Burke did not put in an appearance at dinner, but later on he honored the drawing-room with his presence. The gentlemen were deep in conversation as he limped in with a bandaged head; Blanche was seated in an arm-chair, reading.

"Don't stir, Blanche," he said, "I'm heartily sorry that fellow got the brush; if it wasn't for Firefly's balk, I'd have had it as sure as fate."

"But why did you leave your room, Andy? Dr. Moriarity—"

"I'll tell you, Blanche, and don't interrupt me till I'm done; then I'll shut up altogether. I know that these fellows are all suing for you, Blanche, and that I have no chance; and I just wanted to tell you that I care more for you than the whole of them boiled into one, and—and—there, now I'll go back to Tallyho."

"Andy, don't speak so. There's some mistake. You are feverish, excited; it's your poor head—"

"My skull is cracked, perhaps," muttered the young fellow, bitterly. "What matter were it my neck? God bless you, Blanche. You were too good for me—too good—too good." The excitement and pain were too much for him, and he fell fainting to the floor.

"What brought that scape-grace out of his room?" shrieked Dr. Moriarity, as he and the others rushed to the fallen youth's assistance. "I told him it was as much as his life was worth."

"Tell me, doctor," said Blanche, "is he so badly hurt? Is it dangerous?"

"Dangerous? A cracked skull dangerous to a Burke of Tallyho Park! There's no breaking a Burke's head," said the Doctor emphatically, and the company was re-assured.

D'Alton rather avoided Miss Blake

and she noticed and felt it. As he presented her with the brush that he had so gallantly won, there was a gleam of triumph in his eye that all his force of will could not hold back. He sat next to her at dinner, but the brilliant young debater and bold rider was strangely silent and quiet even to awkwardness. Blanche Blake could not understand him. She had risen from the table half-annoyed. For most of the company, the incidents of the hunt supplied ample topics of conversation. D'Alton, the hero of it, sat silent and abstracted. Greville tried to engage Blanche in conversation, but the attempt met with such poor success that he soon bowed himself away and joined the general throng. At this instant D'Alton raised his eyes and met the look of Blanche. There was something half of scorn, half of sadness in it. He rose and came to her side.

"I am dreadfully stupid to-night, Miss Blake, am I not?"

"Not more than usual, Mr. D'Alton," she replied. He started and reddened. She saw that he was offended. He rose and was about to leave her.

"Stay," she said. As he still hesitated, "Won't you stay a moment?"

He sat down, but his face was stern and fixed, and on his cheeks two scarlet spots burned.

"You are angry with me, Mr. D'Alton. Are you not?"

"No." There was scorn in his tone this time. "I am angry with myself."

"May a woman ask why?"

"Bah! Neither myself nor my anger is worth a thought, Miss Blake. Here, I won't be angry. Look, now. You see it is all gone."

"Mr. D'Alton, I owe you a debt which I have never paid. It was my rudeness contracted it. You have not given me a chance of paying it. I meet you again in my own home, and again, I—I—insult you. Here" and she stretched out her hand to him helplessly, "tell me how I am to pay my double debt."