

MR. PARNELL'S

Great Speech at the Convention

Which Vexed Premier Gladstone so Much.

Gentlemen, the telegrams which have just been read to you will make evident the opinions and feelings of our exiled countrymen beyond the Atlantic; and I think the magnificent gathering which I see around me is a very fair indication that the spirit animating the people of Ireland does not fall far short of the spirit which animates our countrymen in America. It is with feelings of misgiving that I look around me, and, although I miss many faces, many well remembered faces who were present with us at our last Convention, although I miss from amongst us the faces of men like Brennan, (cheers) and Kettle, (cheers)—yet we also see that for every one who has been taken from us ten, a hundred, have eagerly pressed forward to fill their place—(cheers)—and this Convention is a sign to the Government of this country and to the civilized world that when the Irish nation are branded as a nation of dissolute ruffians and of village tyrants—groans and hisses)—we are also prepared to show in the light of day, publicly, what class of men our people are composed of, and who our country chooses as her representatives here. And if we have to congratulate ourselves on the position which this movement has obtained during the few short years of its existence, we also have to thank ourselves—the determination of our people, the organization which they have practically carried out—for the results we have obtained up to the present moment; and that for the first time in our history no attempt has been made to thank any English Minister, any English statesman, for a speech in which we find ourselves to-day. Resolutions, gentlemen, will be brought before you dealing with the National question, also with the land question, and the cognate questions of the protection of labor and the development of the industrial resources of Ireland. It has been thought best, in number of resolutions, which are thirteen in number, should be moved and seconded in each county to select two or three speakers for each county in reference to these resolutions, and if they think proper, to propose any amendments or additions to them. The question of self-government stands first on the list, and it is a most important one, and one which this Convention could not for a single moment have lost sight of. I believe that we never could settle the question of Irish self-government so long as this question of how much rent the tenant should pay to the landlord remains in dispute. (Cheers, hear, hear.) So long as this land question is not finally settled, so long as it is left open, it will prove the continuous source of discontent and of strife between classes in this country; and I have not the least doubt that the Government of England is proposing a Land Act which must leave the question open, which settles nothing, which leaves it—even if we were to accept this Land Act to the very fullest extent—which leaves this land question to be periodically open and re-opened every fifteen years—I believe the Government in proposing such a measure had as their object that Ireland, that class in Ireland, should be kept divided—(hear, hear)—and that we should be thus prevented from utilizing our united strength for the purpose of obtaining our lost rights—of legislating for ourselves. (Cheers.) In my opinion, then, this national question cannot be settled so long as an Irish tenantry pay rent to Irish or English landlords. Michael Davitt truly saw that the first step to be taken towards the recovery of our legislative independence, our right, as the resolution expresses it, to national self-government, should be the abolition of landlordism, and the Irish tenant farmers invited at the very threshold of this Land Act to assist the people of Ireland in recovering these rights and not to allow themselves to be drawn aside by one single inch from the great task of regaining their right to make laws for Ireland upon Irish soil. The Land Act settles nothing—it leaves everything in an unsettled condition, to be a continual source of contention between the landlords on the one side and the tenants on the other. (Applause.) But we have certain principles—principles which we have tested and proved the value of by the experience of the last two years, which will be an invaluable guide for us in regard to our future conduct. Whatever the tenants do under this Act let them do it unaided—(cheers)—as a body and as one man. (Renewed cheers.) Avoid isolated action. (Cheers.) Let no tenant on any estate be satisfied. (Cheers.) The Land Act was undoubtedly intended to break up organization, to produce individual, even sectional contentment, while the grievances of the great mass of the tenant farmers and of the people of Ireland were still left unredressed. (Hear, hear.) It is for us to be on our guard against those hidden designs of the Government—designs which have been frequently pointed out to you, and which are patent in every line and in every section of the Land Act of 1881. One of our resolutions warns the tenant to make applications to the Court as sparingly as possible—(hear, hear)—to wait until the result of the best cases which may be taken by the executive or the League shall have been ascertained; and to make their applications only in consultation with local branches, and in consultation with those branches with the executive of the Land League. (Hear, hear.) We should insist—and I know that this Convention will, as the result of its deliberations, insist—that our union will not be broken up. (Cheers.) That, on the contrary, it shall be increased and consolidated, and that it shall grow from day to day. (Cheers.) You would be the wisest fools if you allowed yourselves to be scattered now, just as you are entering on a prospect of success. Our principles also demand that rent shall be abolished. (Cheers.) Recollect that the Act which invites you to enter into statutory engagements lasting for fifteen years may see you straggled long before those fifteen years are up, and that as far as you accept the invitation to enter into those statutory engagements to contract longer than you can possibly help, so far you violate the principles of the League, and go contrary to the principles of the executive of the League. (Renewed cheers.) Avoid, then, statutory terms or any engagements to pay rent for any period

longer than one year. (Hear, hear.) By the Act of 1870, the tenant, but by another Act, and the interpretation to which the lawyers, through the reading of that other Act, refer to the Act of 1870—place upon those clauses now known by the name of Healy's clauses—(cheers)—the improvements in reference to which the tenant is not to pay rent dates back, I think, for a period of about thirty or forty years, and consequently as regards the great majority of improvements made upon land in Ireland the clause becomes, to a certain extent, illusory. The Act of 1870, I am informed by my legal friends—I do not wish to speak with any certainty as to any legal point in reference to the complicated Act, for it appears already the lawyers differ with regard to its meaning—I am informed by my legal friends that the limitation in the clause or section takes place in this way—By the Act of 1870 the presumption that the improvements were effected by the tenant only extends for a limited period—a period, I think, of something like thirty or forty years—and if they were any further back than that period, it was necessary for the tenant to prove his improvements in order to obtain a benefit from them. Now, of course, the necessity of proving improvements which were made by the tenants' forefathers practically renders it impossible for a tenant to claim a credit from them, because from the first he has kept no account, no books, and no records of these improvements; it is impossible for him to prove that which has passed out of the memory of man, and hence it happened that the onus of proof in respect of all improvements further back than those 30 or 40 years is thrown on the tenant, and this condition follows from the Act of 1881. The tenant in order to claim exemption from rent in respect of improvements made further back than this period of years will have to prove these improvements. It is utterly impossible for him to prove these improvements, and one of the more immediate reforms we shall have to contend for, I submit, in the shape of legislative reform, will be that the presumption in respect of the peasant's improvements further back than the period of thirty or forty years, unless the landlord can prove he has made the improvements from time immemorial, shall be granted to the tenant with all which he has made. In this respect I would wish to read to you an extract from a speech delivered by Mr. Bright during the passage through Parliament of the recent Act. He says: "If all the tenants had done were swept away off the soil, and all the land were as bare as the American prairie, where the Indian now roams, and where the foot of a white man has never trod." Mr. Bright then went on to observe, "I say that I believe I am within the mark in saying that nine-tenths of all that is to be seen upon the farm land in Ireland—of the houses, gardens, fences and whatever you call cultivation—bringing the land back from the wilderness—nine-tenths of it has been put there by the labor of the tenantry of Ireland, and not at the instance of the landlords." The Land Act which Mr. Bright and his Government have just passed admits about one-tenth of the improvements to the tenants, and it leaves the remaining nine-tenths to the landlords. It will be our duty to struggle until the Legislature of Great Britain has sanctioned the restoration of those nine-tenths of valuable improvements of which Mr. John Bright spoke in this speech of his. (Cheers.) The Bill, as it was originally introduced, contained a definition of a fair rent; but that question proved such a very knotty one that the Government were obliged to drop it like a hot potato; and the Act, as it now stands, does not attempt to define what a fair rent is. Now, my definition of a fair rent would be—The original value of the land before it was improved by the tenants or their fathers before them should go to the landlords and not one penny more. (Cheers.) This definition of fair rent would enable the farmer to feed and clothe himself, to feed and clothe his children, and to educate them; would enable him to feed and pay his laborers; would enable him to feed and pay his debts; and lastly, it would enable him to pay his debts—which, I am sorry to say, in a great majority of cases he does not do now. After all this, had been done, the farmer would be enabled to give a fair rent to his landlord—while, instead of amounting, as the present rental of Ireland does, to seventeen millions of pounds sterling, would, under my definition of fair rent, amount to something like two or three millions of pounds. (Cheers.) When, then, we have secured for the Irish tenant the value of the improvements which he and his predecessors in title have made in the land of Ireland, and given to the landlord the original value of that land before it was improved, we shall not have much trouble in dealing with the landlords. (Applause.) A resolution, several resolutions, with reference to the condition of the laborers will also be brought before you. I regret exceedingly that the Act has done so very little for them; in fact, the whole laborers' question is so very much entangled that it is very difficult indeed to see what satisfactory attempt can be made under the present law to improve their condition or materially better their prospects. I may say that the attention of the Executive has been particularly directed to this question; that we have during the last few days spent many anxious hours over its consideration, and that we are very fully sensible that the result of our labor, as shown in the resolution, which will be placed before you in the resolution, is very much to be desired. The principle which I sought to have established in the Act is that the laborer should be independent, so far as house and garden plot are concerned, of either landlord or tenant. This, in my opinion, is the true principle. There is no reason why the laborer should be put under the tenant as his slave—(hear, hear)—as a sort of ad Scriptas glibe, as is proposed by the present Act. The only advantages which the present Act confers—in the shape of direct advantages—I mean—I shall refer to the indirect advantages later on, which, in my opinion, are very much more valuable to the laborer than the direct advantages—that the only direct advantages which the House of Commons has conferred on him is that a small piece of land may be given to him by the farmer, and that he is to hold this as a sort of condition of his labour, and that he is to be removable at any time at the pleasure of the farmer who employs him. This is not a satisfactory tenure. (Hear, hear.) And what I and others of the Irish members desired to carry out in the Act, and that we have failed in effecting, up to the present, was that land should be purchased in accordance with the requirements of the laboring population in different parts of Ireland—(hear, hear)—and that the laborer should be given an opportunity of settling down upon their lands, and that a comfortable house should be built for them

upon these lands, and that they should own these houses as buyers and not as tenants to anybody. This would have taken the laborers out of the towns, where they are now living, many of them in a most wretched state—it would have taken them out of the towns and placed them near their work, and in a healthier atmosphere. (Hear, hear.) And in every way it would have been a more satisfactory solution of the question than the terms that have been made in the Act, and in the way of giving the farmer the right of renting small plots of land and small houses to his laborers. But we have failed to effect that, and we must look forward to the introduction of the County Government Bill in the next session or some early session of Parliament for the purpose of enabling county boards to be established under the provisions of the Bill, with power to buy land in different parts of Ireland for the benefit of the laboring population. (Hear, hear.) The indirect benefit which may result from the Land Act to the laborer may, however, be very large. Under the Act, most important reforms have been effected. The tenant farmers are now for the first time permitted to borrow money from the Government for the purpose of improving their farms. Now, this privilege has hitherto been confined to the landlords, and it has not been used. It has been possible for the Irish landlord to borrow money for almost any purpose, and I am told that only a sum of three millions of money has been borrowed for the improvement of the land in Ireland during the last thirty years. To the tenant farmers of Ireland this privilege has been now extended, and I trust that they will show by taking advantage of it during the coming winter—by borrowing money in every direction for the purpose of improving their holdings and giving employment at remunerative wages to the laboring population—that they are worthy of holding the land of Ireland. (Cheers.) The land of this country is in the occupation of the tenant farmers. By the 31st section of the Land Act farmers can now borrow money at 3 per cent. interest. This is a very valuable privilege, and I trust that you will use it, and that we may not have during the coming winter the spectacle of starving laborers—(hear, hear)—going about the country in bands, seeking for work which they cannot get, and becoming a charge on the rates in the shape of outdoor relief. (Hear, hear.) The fault of the tenant-farmers of Ireland is any man who is willing to work is left without work during the coming winter. (Cheers.) A Voice.—Down with the poorhouses. The CHAIRMAN.—Bear in mind that if you do not assimilate the laborers' case to that of the tenant farmers there are classes in this country who will be on the watch to do so. The landlords are simulating an interest in the welfare of the laborers which they do not feel, and they have extended many temptations to them to forsake the cause of the farmers. The laborers of Ireland—to their credit be it spoken—have manfully, and in the face of cruel starvation, in the face of cruel sufferings last winter, withstood these temptations. They have stood by you, and it will be for you to return the benefit they have been to you and to stand by the Irish laborer. I deprecate all separate organization on the part of the Irish laborer. (Hear, hear.) I would ask the laborers to join the local branches of the Land League—(hear, hear)—and I pledge myself to them here to-day that of the local branches and their arrangements with respect to labor and the employment of labor throughout the country, if the farmers don't give their laborers fair play, that after we have tried joint organization between the farmers and the laborers—and we find that that joint organization is a failure—I pledge myself to take my stand at the head of a laborers' movement. (Applause, and cries of "Bravo.") Do not let us be divided. (Hear, hear.) I am convinced that no necessary exists for division on this labour question, and that the farmers will give fair play to the laborers. (Applause.) It is a matter of self-interest that the farmer should do so. No body pretends that the farmer could work well or give a fair day's work; and it will be to the advantage of the farmer to pay their laborers well and house them comfortably, and make them contented, happy and prosperous. (Applause.) Vast tracts, as regards the future of semi-waste land exist in all parts of the provinces of Leitner, Munster and Connaught. These are lands from which the tenantry were evicted after the famine of 1846-7-8. These lands stand badly in need of cultivation, and I should hope in the future that we may obtain legislation which would enable us to get our laboring population on to these lands. (Applause.) I was very much struck with the difference presented by the North of Ireland in this respect. Everywhere throughout the North of Ireland you see the country studded with small farms. There are no great grazing tracts such as you have in Leitner, Connaught and Munster. All the land of Ulster is thickly settled, and the people cultivate the land themselves. There is an enormous amount of tillage, and as a consequence a great deal of employment for the laboring population; but in all the other parts of Ireland we see vast tracts of grazing land which are gradually deteriorating, which show the need of the labor of the people; and one of the commercial reforms that is most pressing with respect to Ireland at the present moment is, that these tracts of land may be made available for the purpose of producing food for the people of Ireland. (Applause.) Let us then encourage the laborer and the farmer to stand together, and to behave fairly to each other, and I am convinced that the result will be that we shall have no attempt at sowing division or disunion in our ranks. (Hear, hear.) The laborers of Ireland, as I have already said, deserve well of the tenant-farmers, and I think the farmers ought to stretch every point to meet them that they possibly can. The industrial movement will also claim a share of your attention. Many attempts have been made in times past to establish home manufactures in Ireland. Movements have been started with a great flourish of trumpets, but they have always broken down because they have not been taken up by the democracy. I hope this movement in favour of home production will be taken up by the people of Ireland and the organization of the National Land League. (Applause.) Only such an organization can make it successful. You must not expect to be able to encourage Irish manufactures without paying a little more for them than you would pay for English manufactures. You must—if you are to make this movement a success—you must agree amongst yourselves voluntarily to protect Irish industry. If we had our own Parliament, with full powers, we should undoubtedly be invited to protect Irish manufactures by prohibitive or imposed duties, just as the United States of America and in every European country; also, where industries were confined in the land at the end of the last century and the beginning of this by English legislation and English exactions, have pro-

posed their industry, struggling and infant industries, against the settled industries of Great Britain. We should be invited, if we had the power of self-government, to do the same thing, and any movement that we set on foot to be successful must proceed on this principle. We cannot, by the law of the land, declare that Irish manufactures shall be protected, but we can protect them by our unwritten law—(loud cheers)—by the public and organized opinion of the great majority of the people of this country, in accordance with which opinions all law governing Ireland ought to be made; and if we resolve—if we bind ourselves together into an organization to protect Irish industries, depend upon it that Irish industries will flourish and thrive in Ireland—(cheers) but in no other way can you succeed. There are indirect methods of protection which may be resorted to, such as buying our goods, when we cannot obtain them at present in Ireland, in markets such as the American markets, which are protected by special legislation for the purpose. That would be a species of indirect protection, because it would encourage the formation of manufactures in Ireland for the purpose of producing similar articles. The great thing, in my opinion, is to resolve that we shall use no articles of English manufacture whatever. (Cheers) Buy in any other market that you please if you cannot get it in an Irish market; and there are undoubtedly many things which are not produced at all in Ireland. These things we ought to buy anywhere but in England—(cheers)—and such a course, if carried out in an organized and determined way, would act as a species of indirect protection, a most valuable species of indirect protection for the purpose of encouraging Irish industries. Now, gentlemen, I do not intend to detain you at any greater length. I am convinced that the deliberations of this Convention will be conducted with that dignity and that order which is characteristic of Irish assemblies when they are elected by the people. (Hear, hear.) Let us leave to other gatherings nominated by an oligarchy or self-nominated, scenes of confusion which marked such gatherings—(laughter)—and let us show by our conduct and action to-day that we understand the magnitude of the issues which are committed to us; let us cast aside all feelings of self-interest, and let us act only with the desire to benefit our country, to regain for her a place amongst the nations of the world—(loud cheers)—even at the cost of present sufferings and sacrifice for ourselves, to bequeath to those who come after us a future of prosperity, happiness and independence. (Loud applause.)

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BEAUTY'S DAUGHTERS!

By THE DUCHESS.

CHAPTER VI.—CONTINUED.

"You can tell papa," says Kitty; "and say also that Jack is coming over to-morrow morning to speak to him. Good-night mamma. I want to find Gretchen; I have not told her yet." She kisses her mother again, and, having received an injunction not to sit up too late, takes her departure.

CHAPTER VII.

"A dram of sweet is worth a pound of sorrow," says a few minutes later, standing on the threshold of the door that divides their bedrooms, and that as a rule stands open.

"Then come in," says Gretchen, quietly; "and do shut the door behind you, Kitty. You look important; and to talk comfortably with a dark gulf yawning behind one is impossible."

Kitty closes the door, and, going up to Gretchen, draws her down on the sofa beside her.

"I want to tell you something," she says, with curious diffidence, not so much taking Gretchen's hand as slipping her own into it. There is a hesitation in her manner foreign to it—a want of confidence. She had felt no nervousness when speaking to her mother, but now that it comes to making her confession to Gretchen a new and strange emotion overpowers her. A faint choking sensation in her throat compels her to pause as though for breath; and Gretchen, who is blessed with the quick sensibility that makes the joys and griefs of others as her own, tightens her fingers upon hers, and says, in her gentlest tone—

"You need tell me nothing, dearest; I know all about it. When you returned from your walk this afternoon I raised my head by chance just as he was handing you your tea, and—"

"With a little laugh—"

"I have never been engaged, I knew perfectly well all in one moment how it was with you."

"And how was it?"

"Sir John had just asked you to be his wife, and you had said yes. I knew it by the way he looked at you and you at him. There was something in both your eyes I had never seen there before."

"You are a witch," says Kitty, smiling too.

"Yes, it is all true."

"And you are happy, darling?"

"Very—very—"

Gretchen, looking at her, ponders for a little, and then says—

"Of course, you won't ask you what he said, dear; I suppose that no one would quite like to tell that. But was he nice, Kitty?"

"Yes," says Kitty; "and then there is a pang—"

"I must tell you about it, Gretchen," she says, at length, a touch of desperation in her tone. "I don't mind saying it to you, but—but I think he seemed a little too sure of my answer." The hot blush that accompanies these words betrays the assertion that she "doesn't mind," and betrays the fact that, but for the uncontrollable longing to open her heart to some one, the confession would never have been made.

"I think that is the most natural thing in the world," replies Gretchen, quietly. "Of course he knew you would accept him. He understood perfectly you were not the sort of girl to smile upon his attentions for so long without meaning to say yes. I myself despise a woman who leads a man to propose to her, merely for the gratification of her own vanity, and so, I am sure, does he. I really think," says Gretchen, warming to her work, "he paid you a very high compliment when he showed himself sure of your consent."

"Do you, Gretchen?" asks Kitty, wistfully.

"Yes I do,"—stoutly. "And I think, too, it was very honest of Sir John not to pretend to have doubts on the subject. I think even better of him in consequence." Then, impulsively, she says—

"What beautiful eyes you have, Kitty! If I were a man I should love you for them alone."

Every good woman likes a compliment. At this allusion to her eyes Kitty smiles and brightens perceptibly for a moment, after which she relaxes into her former depression.

"That is not all. There was another thing," she says doubtfully. "He had spoken to me for quite twenty minutes, and I had ac-

CHAPTER VIII.

"We know each other's faces; for our hearts—He knows no more of mine than I of yours." Nor of his, my lord, than you of mine.

Kitty's engagement makes little difference in the household. Sir John has been coming and going so incessantly for weeks that his more frequent visits cause no other than his hardy any comment. Every one treats him as though he were a second Brandy; and as though he were a second Brandy, indeed, Brandy treats him as though he were indeed a brother—a considerably younger brother—giving it as his opinion that Blunden is "jolly good fellow all round." Mr. and Mrs. Tremaine are quite satisfied on all points. Gretchen is sympathetic, and even Flora has been graciously pleased to say a few cautious words in his favor.

"But," says the youngest Miss Tremaine, quoting her nurse, "if you want to know me, come live with me; and—in a darkly mysterious tone—"I have none of us lived with Sir John yet." Whereupon Brandy says, "he hopes not," in a voice severe but significant; and Mrs. Tremaine dispatches Flora on some impossible mission.

But even Flora's awful insinuation fails to damp Kitty's spirits, who is happy and content, Sir John's behavior over since the memorable Thursday being all that the most ex-

CHAPTER VIII.

acting could require. Dogdale too has, of course, been taken into confidence, and has said all the charming things one generally does say on such occasions, whether one means them or not.

"It is now October—drear, damp, and cold. When great leaves fall, then, winter is at hand—and now in truth the leaves are falling, and flowers are dead, and the cruel striking wind speeds maddly over barren lawns and loveless woods and colorless plains, striking terror to the hearts of shivering birds."

Dogdale has made several faint efforts to leave his present kindly quarters and go home, but the attempts have been spoiled and set aside with determination by every member of the family. He has had rather a troublesome cough of late, and Mrs. Tremaine has nursed him tenderly herself, and done for him all that a mother might for a son. Indeed, so much has his helplessness—and perhaps his beauty—gained on all hearts at the Towers that his lack of departure has been sneered down by them with a will.

It may be that they have not found it a very difficult task to persuade him to remain. Long since he has discovered, and confessed to his inmost self, that to be where Gretchen is, to him is happiness. But keenest pleasure borders upon pain; and for all the hours of sweetness gained when in her presence he pays an exorbitant price when her absence makes itself felt.

"Sorrow breaks seasons and reposing hours, Makes the night morning, and the noon-tide night."

And when night falls, and silence reigns, and hope lies bleeding—when all things stand out plainly as they are, and kind deception flies, and the barrenness and loneliness of his life betrays themselves in all their hideous nakedness—then it is that he despair conquers him, and his heart cries aloud in its passionate vain regret.

As love has been forbidden him, why has he been permitted to love—to centre every thought upon one object with all the fervor and intensity of a happier man? Each hour of the day he sees, hears her voice, feels it, may be, the cool touch of her beloved hand as she arranges his pillows and marks with greedy eyes the gentle smile that always lights her face as she draws near him.

There is another—even a deeper—grief than the knowledge that he can never be more to her than he now is, that lies hidden in his breast, and that he hardly dares to drag from its hiding-place or let his secret love dwell upon. It is a belief he shrinks from, although hour by hour it grows stronger within him. Why had she blushed yesterday when he made that little foolish speech, half-faithful, half-tender? Why had that faint look of distress crossed her face last Monday when he spoke again of his return to Laxton? Can it be possible that, had late proved less unkind, she might—

It is this trouble that overpowers all others—the thought that he need not always have been indifferent to her, the intolerable fancy that he might perhaps have been allowed to win her, had he been as other men are. He has grown paler, thinner, more silent of late—more feverishly restless in Gretchen's absence, more desperately though secretly jealous of Scarlett's constant visits. Yet so strongly indeed is the claim that binds him to the Towers that he dares not break it—to fly from a passion that threatens to wreck the little peace that still remains to him.

It is the 31st of October. All hail to—and Flora's birthday. Flora (according to Brandy) has been born at least half a century behind her time, and is eminently old-fashioned—a small being devoted to by-gone ways and manners, one holding in highest reverence the games and customs of our forefathers.

Therefore she has decreed that to-night shall be kept as in ancient days, with burning of nuts and roasting of apples, and such like—all to take place in the library, for Kenneth's benefit, who is a wonderful favorite with her. There was, indeed, some talk about the dropping of lead through a wedding-ring—whereby fortunes may be told; but mamma has objected strenuously, and put her veto against the use of lead in the library.

"And you will let us have big cake, won't you, now, Cookie?" asked Miss Flora, seductively, regarding Coak with an anxious eye.

"Certainly, Miss Flora."

"And you will put a ring in it, won't you, Cookie?"—with increasing severity.

"You may bet your life on it, Miss Flora."

"And don't you hope I'll get it, Cookie?"

I ought, you know, because it is my birthday," explains Flora, with such an amount of earnestness as would lead one to suppose it is the dream of her life to be wedded before her sisters.

"I'm a most shure you'll get it," says Coak, comfortably, who is not proof against Flora's charms of manner and tender familiarity of address.

"Cookie, you're a pet," says Miss Flora, with sad lack of dignity but much bonhomie; whereupon Coak smiled benignly, and gives her a jam tart originally meant for her own special delectation.

"The sun will not be seen to-day; The sky doth frown and lour."

In very truth, the day is unpropitious. Sultry clouds chase one another across the steel-gray firmament and shed frowns instead of tears upon the patient earth; great pelted bursts of rain (that rage like angry children in their wrath) fling themselves against the window panes and make a dismal patter on the balconies outside.

But as evening falls it calms, growing less and less vehement, until at last the storm ceases; and Mrs. Boring, tired of wandering, sinks to rest within his rock-bound cave.

"Expect an avalanche presently," says Gretchen, entering the library, where Dogdale and Flora are sitting. "Dinner is over, and Flora's festivities about to begin. We are all coming to celebrate Flora's birthday; and all hallowing 'em" by burning nuts here."

She smiles at him through the semi-darkness that inclines her slight figure as though it were a veil.

"Are you the herald?"

"Yes. Presently they will follow. There was a preliminary dispute between Brandy and Flora, so I slipped away."

"It was good of you to slip in this direction."

"Shall we all be too much for you? You know now Flora laughs, and how impossible it is for Brandy to be silent for two minutes together. Do you think you will be able to bear their noise?"

"I love their noise," replies he, honestly. "And then they all come trooping in, Sir John and Kitty a little in the rear, as may be imagined—because of a tender hand-pressure, or it may be, a caress, the sweeter because stolen."

"Mamma is reading 'Ariadne,' and is so entranced she could not be induced to stir," says Kitty, generally.

"Never mind; I'll chastise Flora," declares Brandy. "It is her own night; so I shall lay myself out to take care of her and see she does not fall into the fire, or otherwise injure her little self. Children are so careless."

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