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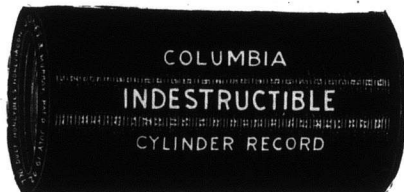
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station in the dog-cart, the lecture having been given in the afternoon. He wore the expression of a person behind a hearse.

"I say," he said, "we shall miss the lectures terribly. They have been a kind of carnival and reformation all in one. And next lecture is the last. Come up, Jane." He pulled the mare in sharply. "You're not running a Derby. We've plenty of time."

"Yes, next lecture is the last," she said. She said it thoughtfully. She stole a somewhat dejected glance over the Major's handsome, gloomy profile. "You have been so kind," she added. "It has been quite pleasant."

There was a pause. The Major flicked the berried hedge to the right of him with an absent-mindedness tempered by irritation. "You've done heaps of good to them," he said; "they open their windows now and wash. And they're trying oatmeal porridge on the youngsters instead of tea for breakfast. And the doctor says the women make very decent poultices. And I told you they saved Jenkin's life by tying his garter tight when he cut an artery with his scythe. Oh, you've taught us heaps."

"I am very glad," she said. But if you had missed her assurance and had heard only the cadence of her usually bell-like voice, you might have supposed she had said she was sorry.

"Now, look here," he broke out, as though the idea had not been one of careful maturation, "as next lecture is the last, I thought I would give the people a supper after it, you know. And—now then Jane, steady, steady—perhaps you would stay and see them, Miss Ramsay: there will be a Christmas tree for the youngsters and some games—and they are all so fond of you—I asked the vicar's wife to put you up if you would stop—"

"Why, I should like it immensely," she assented, brushing crumbs or something from her muff.

"That's awfully good of you," he cried in sudden spirits. "Now then, Jane, you seem to forget there's a train to catch. And I thought," he went on, after a minute, "perhaps you would give me the



"Quitted the Balcony"

pleasure of your company to dinner before the lecture. The Vicar is coming and the Vicar's wife and the Bashams and a few people."

"I shall be very pleased," she said, still brushing crumbs.

"And, perhaps," he continued, drawing his whip over Jane's ears with a sudden close and affectionate interest, "perhaps you might manage to come by an earlier train, if you would care to, and I could meet you and drive you round a bit. You have seen nothing of the country, and I tell you there are some magnificent views about."

He turned his head suddenly, looking earnestly down on her. She had ceased from brushing crumbs, but her hand went with a soft caressing movement round and round her somewhat shabby muff.

He saw that her face was pale. He saw a line of resolution settle on her lips.

"Thank you very much," she said in a low voice, "but I am afraid I cannot manage that."

There was a pause. Then the major said:

"You did not mind me asking you? I thought—"

She threw out her hands.

"Mind!" she cried with a sudden tension in her voice. "How should I mind? Is kindness so common?"

He flicked Jane smartly over the ears. She started forward with a head and front of the supremest indignation. Things had come to a pretty pass indeed, when a mare was to be all at once dictated to as to her pace.

"Apparently not," he said shortly. He drew a long breath. "Though why anybody should be kind to a poor devil of a one-armed fellow Heaven only knows."

She was seated in the railway carriage, with a fresh hot-water tin beneath her feet. The train was on the point of starting when she suddenly leaned her head out of the window.

"If I may change my mind, Major Roberts," she said shyly to him standing on the platform, "I think I will come by that earlier train next week."

Then she drew her head in quickly. But I do not think the Major would