

she has both color and form, and some excitement has made her beautiful wild eyes as bright as in the old days when conquest was new to them, and victory did not make her feel forlorn.

Garde Ruthven remembers the last time he had been in his cousin's company; it was at a dance at this very Glen Farm, before he went to New Zealand. It was also before Ada had 'come out.' How she had scorned him then—the bright, ethereal creature whom everybody had petted and admired! She never vouchsafed him so much as a look, much less a dance, though he had asked her for one. She had more applications for dances than could be danced in five harvest-home balls. It had not broken Garde's heart to be refused—perhaps he did not care. If his own pet little cousin Maud had only been there, she would not have refused him even then.

Garde Ruthven remembers all this. He also remembers another thing which Ada has been wont to make men forget sometimes—she is engaged. He wonders vaguely what kind of man Blair is, and pities him a little. Nobody knows better than Garde Ruthven what a coquette "the beautiful Miss Hemsworth" is. But she shall not coquet with him. He is too keen not to have seen that she would willingly break his heart for pastime; but she shall not have that little amusement.

"Take care of the stones here," he calls out presently. Ada is in advance, climbing among the rocks and peat. "Go easily, or you will come to grief."

But she does not heed the warning; she only gives him a flash of her proud eyes, and Black Bess goes on rapidly, the rocks and stones falling at every step as the horses mount the steep defile. Garde can only follow as best he may. They reach the top of the ridge at last. The moonlight is strong and bright now, and gives a weird appearance to the whole wild landscape. Behind them, far down below, lies their own valley, and before them is a rocky glen, with the old farmhouse they are in search of, its many windows all alight. Beyond the glen is another rise, and then a long slope—invisible from the ridge—clothed with corn-fields and meadows belonging to the Pattersons. Ada and Garde stop to breathe their horses for a few moments. Ada is a little in advance, and Garde watches her dim outline against the moonlit sky. Perhaps he thinks how Captain Blair could improve this romantic situation.

'Let us get on,' Ada says at last; and they begin to descend.

At the door of the Glen Farm they are met by a merry crowd. Dancing is going on already in the big barn, which has been decorated for the occasion. Millie Patterson seizes Ada and carries her up-stairs. She is a pretty girl, in a ruby silk with short sleeves.

'Make haste, or you'll lose the best of the fun. We won't have room to dance when all the common people drop in. They're at supper now in the great kitchen; it is our only chance of a clear floor while they're busy. Have you a dress? Oh, yes! Here it is. Maud left it ready for you. How pretty she is—your sister! She's quite the belle to-night. And so you're going to be married, Ada? How nice. What is he like? Oh, an officer! That's grand. Do you want any pins, or hairpins, or anything? No? Then I'll run down, for Charlie Simcox is waiting for me at the foot of the stairs, and it is a shame to lose this waltz. I'll meet you in the hall as you come down, or I'll send Maud to you. Mrs. Ruthven is helping mother to pour out tea for the people; and, oh, Ada,—putting her head in at the door again—"I'm so glad you've brought your handsome cousin! How he's improved. But you must not monopolise him this evening—give us a chance.'

So Milly Patterson rattles on, and then she vanishes. Ada is not long at her toilet, though she has a ball-dress. Happily, or unhappily, Herrold has packed up one among her young ladies' dresses; she was so accustomed to do so for Miss Hemsworth that in this instance she had done it without thought. It is a pale-green silk, edged with lace. The long white gloves, the fan, the wreath of ivy-leaves, all are there. Ada is soon ready; and as she takes her long train over her arm and the candle in her hand, with the light falling full upon her beautiful neck and the fringes of her golden hair, she looks too fair.

Garde Ruthven, coming out of his room meets her in the long, quaint passage. He takes the candle from her hand. Dazed by the light, for a moment she does not see who has taken it; but, when he lays it down on a table and gravely offers her his arm, then she sees, and with a strange feeling which she cannot explain to herself she puts her gloved hand on his arm; it is born of the look in his dark eyes as they met just now in the dusky passage; yet what those dark eyes said she cannot quite interpret. Of course he admires her—she knows he cannot help himself so far as that; but that there is some antipathy or occult influence at work between them, she feels equally certain—or perhaps it is only that he is preoccupied.

They are dancing in the great illuminated barn, a merry crowd of them, girls and young men. By means of wreaths of corn, and poppies and evergreens, and flags and curtains, the barn is transformed to a very picturesque ball-room. The band—or rather the fiddlers—are placed in a kind of gallery—formed by some of the farm machinery, draped with red balze. The lights are fastened all round the walls and to the great wooden pillars that support the roof.

Garde does not ask her to dance, though the waltz is still going on. Maud is dancing with a strange youth, who appears very devoted. They stand together till the waltz is over. Ada removes her hand from his arm, but he stands still at her side, watching the dancers. As soon as the music ceases he makes his way across the room to Maud, Ada being at once surrounded.

'When is our dance, Maud?' he asked gaily, holding out his arm. Maud's late partner hands her over rather unwillingly.

(To be Continued.)



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