

MY HOME-COMING

as my brain begins to clear a little—"Buttons?" I say, with amazement, "but I have laced boots."

However, Médor's diplomacy had succeeded, for, as I realised, he had tricked me out of a fainting fit. The train stops and here is Austen on the platform. Médor carries me bodily out of the compartment, while I say mentally in agonised earnestness, "Holy Virgin! don't let him look at me. Will that I fall under the train and be decapitated. I promise you a *chapelet* every day if something extraordinary happens now, at once."

And nothing happens! Austen takes the tip of my glove and kisses it. I never knew him to do that—I suppose he must have planned it as compromise. He shakes hands with Médor and waves the porter in the direction of our luggage.

"It's most unfortunate you should have had such atrocious weather for coming down. Was it any better for your crossing? You must be very hungry and tired. I have ordered dinner earlier than usual."

We had arrived at the car.

"I'll sit next to Cavanagh," he says, "I want to get out at the post office, and at the tobacconist's. Are you all right?—good," and off we go.

I grip Médor's hand under the rug, he gives me an encouraging squeeze.

"So far so good," he says, "you can't expect him to relish such a joke, you know. In fact, he would be perfectly justified in spanking you."

"Oh, Médor, if he only would! You will never go away again, will you? Oh, Médor, say you will never leave me alone in that big house, with that big, still