

own card on no better title? and was not her vogue in Rivieran society entirely due to her personal assertion of her relationship to the Ceriolo of Castel Ceriolo, in the Austrian Tyrol?

'Well, he's a nice-looking young fellow enough,' Nea added, pleading his cause with warmth, for she had committed herself to Mr. Gascoyne's case now, and she was quite determined he should have an invitation.

'Besides, we're awfully short of gentlemen,' Isabel Boyton put in sharply. 'I haven't seen him, but a man's a man. I don't care whether he is a scallywag or not, I mean to go for him.' And she jotted down the name on her list at once, without waiting to hear Madame Ceriolo for the prosecution.

It was seasonable weather at Mentone, for the 20th of December. The sky was as cloudlessly blue as July, and from the southern side of the date-palms on the Jardin Public, where they all sat basking in the warm rays of the sun, the great jagged peaks of the bare mountains in the rear showed distinct and hard against a deep sapphire background. A few hundred feet below the summit of one of the tallest and most rugged, the ruined walls of the Saracen fortress of Sant' Agnese just caught the light; and it was to that airy platform that Nea and Isabel proposed their joint picnic for the twenty-fourth—the day before Christmas. And the question under debate at that particular moment was simply this—who should be invited by the two founders of the feast? each alternately adding a name to her own list, according to fancy.

'Well, if *you* take Mr. Gascoyne,' Nea said, with a faint air of disappointment at losing her guest, 'I shall take Mr. Thistleton.'

And she proceeded to inscribe him.

'But, Nea, my dear,' Madame Ceriolo broke in with an admirable show of maternal solicitude, 'who *is* Mr. Gascoyne. and who *is* Mr. Thistleton? I think we ought to make sure of that. I haven't even heard their names before. Are they in society?'

'Oh, they're all right, I guess,' Isabel Boyton answered briskly, looking up much amused. 'Mamma was talking to them on the promenade yesterday, and she says she apprehends Mr. Thistleton's got money, and Mr. Gascoyne's