

ly, "I've been abroad to the woods to get me a colour to match my Lady Kitty's rouge, and there I saw a thing that should interest you greatly."

"Interest me?" he asked in surprise. "In the woods? My, then I must know it; for I swear that you shall not escape till I do," He seized her playfully by the wrist.

"Nay, then, Sir Charles, 'tis not seemly of you to hold the hand of a woman who is to wed thy friend; nevertheless, you shall not only know it, but see it. Will you come? But mind, not a word of this to anyone."

"You may trust me, I swear it, on the honour of my knighthood. 'Tisn't a joke, I hope, for you're prodigious fond o' that."

He laughed gaily, and, taking up a hat and cloak and lantern, followed his fair guide back again to the side of the brook.

Constance paused and lifting the bough presented to his eager and astonished gaze the intertwined hearts. He sank gracefully on one knee and looked thoughtfully at the initials.

"Now, Sir Charles, was it worth while? I came upon this quite by accident a while ago, for I dropped my amber brooch here, and while hunting for it—you see what happened." (She expressed volumes in a pretty gesture.) "She's a modest flower, this S.S., to hide her hearts away when all the others place theirs boldly forth. A secret love, methinks. Do you even guess who it is? I can't for the life of me."

"Yes, Mistress Constance, it is—but there, 'twouldn't be gallant of me to tell—what—" He bit his lip in confusion and placed the twig hastily back over the hearts.

Constance turned away to hide her smiling face, and then, facing his again, she said:

"And you don't thank me, Sir Charles, for bringing you here?"

"I do, from the bottom of my heart."

He lifted her hand to his lips.

"Shall we go, then?" she asked

simply, as she moved to return.

They walked back to the house in silence, and Constance went straight to her room. While she was arguing with her maid as to whether a patch on her charming face would look better if it were just a little farther away from the corner of her mouth, the door was flung open and Sheelah Spenser rushed breathlessly in.

"Oh, Constance! Oh, Constance!" She stopped lamely when she saw that Constance was not alone. Mistress Wynn smiled at her.

"That will do, Lila," she said to her maid. "Mistress Spenser will help me if anything is amiss." The maid left the room noiselessly. "Law, my love, what has happened?"

"Oh, Constance, he does, *he does*."

"Slowly, my dear, who is he, and what has he done?"

Sheelah sank at her feet and hurried on all in one breath.

"I was out getting lilacs with the Bennet girls, and we were reading all the names on the trees, and we came to the forked lilac-tree, and what do you think? I vow I almost fainted, for there were my initials with—his, and the girls laughed and said that they would tell everyone that he had been captured at last; and so we hurried home, and there he was in the hall, and I said, 'Good-even,' and he looked at me and he smiled and said, 'Was Sheelah out catching a cold?' and then he took my cloak and asked if he could sit by me at the late Easter Eve supper this night, and I, of course, said yes; and then he smiled again and pressed my hand. So do you think he *does* mean it?"

Constance smiled.

"If you will have the very good grace to tell me who *he* is?"

"Why, Charles — Sir Charles O'Hara."

"Well, and what do you want him to do?"

"Why, to love me—no—I mean, do you think he *does*?"

"Of course—"

"Now, you are laughing at me. Oh,