

be made of her rheumatism to linger till the summer at Aix, where the ladies often passed a month or so. And, apart from Paul, she knew she could talk the girl out of it. As things stood, the engagement was preposterous—the young man hadn't a son!

And Gertrude did not know what to think. Marriage on nothing a year was out of the question, and she told herself, with a cynical little smile, that she was not the sort of woman to sit by and wait for her lover to build up a fortune with his own hands. "He is younger than I am—a year and a half younger," she thought, "I shall be a disagreeable old woman by the time Paul can afford to marry."

And when Paul Thurlow, with his scared white face, stood in the little dra wing-room of the villa and tried to say good-by, Gertrude for one knew that parting would in all probability be final. Miss Cronin, to be sure, knew her mother better than the young man who had come to take a temporary farewell.

"Of course I don't know how it'll all turn out, dear," he said, "but I'm willing to work. And a man ought to be able to make enough to keep—a little girl like you," he added, laughingly. Poor Paul! He had all a rich young man's vague notions as to earning money and setting up housekeeping.

At the last she cried on his shoulder, and it was Paul who, though suffering horribly, had to speak all the words of comfort. "Good-by, dear, God bless you—God bless you!"

And then he was gone. Gertrude shut herself up for the rest of the day in her room. She would not see her mother; she knew that Lady Cronin would try and console her, and the unhappy girl dreaded that more than anything.

III

It is Carnival time again on the Riviera. At Nice, there has been already a grand *confetti* day, with endless masquers and triumphal cars, clouds of chalk, and much boisterous gaiety; while at Cannes the great saturnalia of the South has been, as usual, more decorously celebrated by a couple of battles of flowers. But here, on the swept and garnished *place* of Monte Carlo, no trace of Carnival is to be seen. The principality is jealous of such extraneous amusements; they interfere with the devotion of visitors to the gambling tables.

In the restaurant of the Hotel de Paris a group of three people are at lunch. Lady Cronin has not changed, though two years have passed, but the girl opposite her has acquired a somewhat hard and reckless look. A little man with weak eyes and a pince-nez, with curious, bird-like movements, holds his fork in the air as he speaks:

"I assure you, my dear Lady Cronin, the thing is disgraceful. Statistics prove that the number of suicides—"

"Dear me," yawns Gertrude, "there has never been a suicide while we have been here—nothing so exciting. I expected, when I first came, to see people blowing out their brains at the roulette tables, or flinging themselves under the trains down there at the station. But the whole is so desperately well conducted—it might be Exeter Hall."

Lady Cronin looks shocked. The young man with the weak eyes and the pince-nez is Lord Hippisley, eldest son of the Earl of Northfleet, and he is, moreover, about to assume the relationship of son-in-law. Lord Hippisley, to be sure, is at Monte Carlo on business as well as on pleasure, for as President of a Society for the Suppression of the Gambling Tables, he has journeyed to Monaco to gather facts in support of his case.

Leaving her omelette untouched on her plate, the girl gazes drearily out through the glass windows on the public garden. She is inexpressibly bored. Is he going to talk to her like that when they are married, she wonders; to entertain her every morning at breakfast with his statistics about the number of confirmed inebriates in Whitechapel, or the chances of inducing the Central African negroes to combine and strike?

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