

are still bright. The place fascinates me. I am going to ride in and ask to see the house. Who will come with me?"

Virginia looked at the Marchese with a half-smiling challenge; but he did not speak, and Lady Gardiner's black eyes gave out a flash. She was as poor as she was handsome and well born, and her life as the American girl's chaperon was an easy one. The thought that Virginia Beverly might make up her mind to become the Marchesa Loria was disagreeable to Kate Gardiner, and she was glad that the Italian should displease the spoilt beauty.

"I'll go with you, dear, if you are really bent on the adventure," said the elder woman.

"Forgive me, Miss Beverly. But I—once knew these people. I could not go into their house on such an errand. They would think I had come to spy on their misfortune," protested Loria miserably.

"I knew them, too," said Roger Broom, "and I'll stay down here and keep Loria company."

Lady Gardiner looked at George Trent, with whom she was having an amusing flirtation, which would certainly have been more than