

reached him in Melbourne, and which had made him a wanderer and an exile ever after. He told her of his marriage, of its tragic ending, of his daughter, of the meeting in St. Louis between himself, Trevannance, Mignonnette, and poor, wounded Mike.

He told her all—of his love for her daughter; his strange encounter with Morgan; the death-bed confession, and that last interview in the library, so awfully closed.

She listened, deadly pale, breathlessly interested, but never interrupting until the story's end. Then she strove to rise.

'I must go to my husband,' she said. 'If he is stricken by the hand of God, my place is by his side.'

She struggled to get up, but Roderic held her gently back.

'Not yet, Inez. Evelyn is with him, and the orders of the medical man are that no one else save the nurse be admitted. You are able to do nothing. He lies insensible to everything. You must wait until the morning.'

She looked at him wistfully as he arose to go.

'Pardon me, Roderic, but how is it you could leave your daughter to struggle alone in those large, terrible cities, young and beautiful as she must be? It is not like you.'

'The fault was not mine. She had learned to hate me all her life, and was quite unmanageable in her pride and independence. I can do nothing with her; but I think I know some one who can,' with a smile.

'Ah! a lover?'

'Mr. Vivian Trevannance. He fell in love with her before I met him, and she with him, I rather fancy; but again that indomitable pride of hers held them apart. Besides, he was then engaged to Lady Evelyn. But he will go to America and he will find her, and I shall welcome my late rival as my son.'

'How very strange it all is! And this brave, faithful friend—this heroic Mike Muldoon—what of him?'

His eyes lightened at the name of that true-hearted friend.

'My brave Mike, who has loved me with a love surpassing that of a woman! He and I shall never part more. He shall reign Grand Seigneur of Clontarf—the great ambition of his life. It was agreed between us, when we parted, that he was to wait until I wrote to him, or rejoined him in St. Louis; and he will wait. I write to-night, and I mean to repair and rebuild Clontarf, and he shall be my bailiff there, and the happiest fellow in the three kingdoms. Shall I ring for your maid, Inez, before I go?'

She assented, and held out her hand.

'Good night, Lord Clontarf! Ah, thank Heaven I can call you by that name at last! Go to Evelyn. Do not let her wear herself out. Send her to me when she can leave her father.'

He lifted the wasted hands to his lips, passed from the boudoir, and was gone.

CHAPTER XV.

CONQUERING THE CONQUERORS.

'LADY CLYDESMORE TO MADAM LA COMTESSE D'AVIGNON, PARIS.

'WARBECK HALL, June 20, 18—.

'DEAREST VERONIQUE: I promised, I think, when you left London last April, to keep you posted on all that transpired here. That I have not written before is simply because I had nothing to say. It is only in books that things keep happening continually, and diaries are interesting reading in real life, the old threadmill round goes perpetually on—dressing, dining, dancing, flirting, marrying and giving in marriage—all without a particle of romance. But something has happened at last—a living, rotund event of the age! Town and country are ringing with it. It is the topic of the day, the sensation paragraph of the papers. I can scarcely realize it all yet.

Let me collect my wits and write coherently, if I can. You will have seen, my dear Veronique, in Calignani, no doubt, the marriage of Lady Evelyn Desmond to Roderic Vincent Desmond, tenth Earl of Clontarf. And in the next column you have seen among the deaths that of Gerald Desmond, at Warbeck Hall. You have seen this, and been properly astonished, I dare say, for you knew my Lady Evelyn and her late betrothed, handsome Vivian Trevannance.

'Yes, you knew Vivian Trevannance. There was a time, even, madame la comtesse, when I thought you would have written your name Mrs. Trevannance, and held it a prouder title than all earth had to bestow. Ah, well! M. le comte has five-and-fifty years, but he makes you a much better husband than our favourite Vivian would ever be, dear friend.

'It is better to be an old man's darling,' etc. You and he parted as many others parted before you, and Lady Evelyn got him and kept him, as we all thought. But nothing is certain. She is off and away on her bridal tour, and he is free and fetterless once more, and gone, no one knows whither. You recollect the sensation the news of