



II

FROM the hall, Owen Crawford heard the gay buzz of conversation die down as Mrs. Fitzgerald's black maid, Portia, announced his name; and immediately his hostess came forward to greet him.

"So sorry I could not be at the service," she murmured feelingly, as she helped him out of his coat, "but I had to be Martha to-day, and I sent my Mary to church instead. If I had gone, I should have worried every minute about the cranberry and the stuffing. So I am afraid I could not have served God with a quiet mind—especially if I were wondering how I could serve Man with a burnt dinner. Now, *please* don't be shocked! You know how incorrigibly young I am. But I *am* truly thankful to-day, Mr. Crawford. I could name ever so many blessings, the greatest of which is Marjorie. You are one yourself. How glad I am you did not fail me! A Thanksgiving dinner without a man is, I always say, positively *ghastly*.—But you are cold! Come down to the fire at the end of the hall, and warm yourself. Yes, you had better. Miss Huntington is here. And that reminds me—excuse me a moment. Be sure to come in when you are ready."

Crawford had followed Mrs. Fitzgerald halfway down the long hall; then, as she disappeared into the library, he sought out the fireplace, according to command, and stood for a moment looking down into the cheery blaze of hickory and maple. He had forgotten that he was cold. It was very good to be here.

A light footstep on the stairs at his left; a slight figure blotting out some of the light from the windows on the landing—or was it that the light was all concentrated in that one sweet face?—and Mar-

