

**PRETTY MISS NEVILLE**

BY B. M. CROKER

CHAPTER XXVI

I MAKE A PUBLIC CONFESSION  
"I will enchant thee"—Shakespeare.

Most of the people of Mulkapore were invited to a grand entertainment, given by a native nobleman at his palace in the city. It was my first experience of anything of the kind, and I was considerably impressed as we drove under an archway into a large inclosed square, lined with mounted troops, in wildly picturesque uniform, and lit up by huge flaming torches. We were greeted at the entrance by our host and his friends, and conducted upstairs to an open courtyard, carpeted with white cloth, and in the midst of which a fountain of Italian marble cooled the air with its lightly-falling spray. Here we found many of our acquaintances promiscuously sitting on the surrounding sofas, awaiting the arrival of the Resident, and the signal for dinner. After a short delay we were all filing off to dinner, two and two. I think, including the native princes and gentlemen, we must have numbered at least a hundred and fifty; and we formed a most imposing procession, as we passed through the various anterooms and took our places at table. As I looked up and down, the scene reminded me of some superb banquet in the "Arabian Nights."

Three sides of the room were literally lined with large mirrors in colored and cut-glass panels. The ceiling was the same, and hanging from it were numbers of glittering chandeliers multiplying themselves in a thousand reflections. The fourth side of the apartment was open to a large courtyard (similar to the one in which we had been received): the high surrounding walls were illuminated by three rows of colored lamps, whose brilliant light quite extinguished the stars that looked down, pale and twinkling, from the dark blue vault above. The table, narrow but immensely long, was loaded with exquisite flowers and a profusion of superb plate. Looking down the long vista at either side of me, brilliant uniforms and gay evening tolets met my eyes in dazzling numbers. The brave and the fair were well represented. Here and there a native nobleman varied the monotony of European dress, and gave a *raison d'être* to this magnificent entertainment. During the whole length of the repast a first-class string band delighted our ears, and bright crimson lights were burned at intervals in the courtyard, making everything completely *couleur de rose*; and throwing a glamour over the whole scene that made one think oneself in fairy-land, and almost expect that at the striking of an hour, or crowing of a cock, crash would go the palace, out would go the lights, and the whole edifice, guests and all, would disappear like the "garden of the world" in Hans Anderson's fairy tale.

Right opposite to me sat Mrs. Gower and Maurice, an ill assorted couple. A little lower down, through the screen of floral arrangements, I caught a glimpse of Mrs. Vane's cream damask dress and pretty animated face. I had for this evening, she continued, eyeing Mephistopheles, and then first half-dozen "rankest" ladies had been coupled off, the remainder of their own choice; each gentleman, in the sudden tumult excited by the announcement of dinner, generally blindly seizing on the lady nearest to him. No greater stickler for precedence existed than for Mrs. Gower. To be sent in to dinner after a lady she considered beneath her, and the social scale envenomed her remarks and destroyed the meal. At the present moment she was happy. A very stupid, very greedy old colonel had led her to the festive board, and thus completely vindicated her right to a high situation on the ladder of rank. Her escort was a noted bon-vivant, and was certain to devote his mouth to but one object—viz., discussing the succulent morsels and dainty dishes soon to be set before his critical eye. He deliberately unfolded his napkin, carefully arranged his various glasses and knives and forks, and set himself solemnly to study the menu.

Not a word, not a remark, would he vouchsafe beyond "champagne," "more ice," "bring back the pate," etc., until dinner was concluded. As far as Mrs. Gower was concerned, his silence was a complete matter of indifference to her; for had she not, on her left hand, that very good-looking young gunner, Captain Beresford?—a *tel-a-tel* with whom would be a rich compensation for the taciturnity of her other neighbor.

As dinner progressed, and the unimpeachable champagne began to circulate, conversation became more general and more brilliant. Mephistopheles and I were the one exception to the surrounding sociability. We had neither tastes nor topics in common, and our talk was visibly flagged. He was an utterly bored and *blase*-looking dandy, to whom even the toil and trouble of his eye-glass was a torment. He held that "there was nothing new, and nothing true, and that it did not signify;" and the only person he thoroughly and implicitly believed in was himself. His favorite expression was "Just so;" and he generally extinguished all my feeble remarks and observations with this dampening rejoinder. It

was a conversational *cul-de-sac*, and excluded further incursions into any subject; and as I was not prepared to administer piquant, risky little stories to his jaded palate, like his *vis-a-vis*, Mrs. Gower, I was not worth the trouble of entertaining.

He looked across at her repeatedly, with all the eloquence of which his cynical face was master, in order to convey to her how much he wished he were in Maurice's countenance; as any index to his feelings, I think he would have changed places with the greatest alacrity. Uncle Jim was wholly absorbed in exchanging and comparing shikar experiences with his neighbor (a stranger from Bengal), and had no leisure, even to attend to his dinner—which was all that the human palate could desire. Seeing how dull we were at our side of the table, Mrs. Gower occasionally vouchsafed to include us in the conversation, and to direct some remarks to Mephistopheles and me. As the board was narrow, we chimed in with the greatest ease.

"Have you seen the new spin, Mrs. Gower?" inquired my partner, languidly.

"Oh, yes! a dark, sallow little thing, come out to keep house for her brother until she can contrive to get one for herself. For my part, I hate these shikarry young women."

"Oh, come, Mrs. Gower!" expostulated Maurice, good-naturedly: "surely a girl may come out to live with her brother without any ulterior designs, especially as you are descended from a race of apes on the borders of the Mediterranean, who learned accidentally how to use the muscles of the thumb."

"Quite disposed to be her champion," interrupted Mrs. Gower, smartly. "Well, I cannot say that I admire your taste. She reminds me forcibly of a black monkey."

"According to Mr. Darwin, we were all monkeys," returned Maurice with imperturbable gravity. "I was reading somewhere lately that we were descended from a race of apes on the borders of the Mediterranean, who learned accidentally how to use the muscles of the thumb."

"How interesting!" sneered Mrs. Gower, drawing down the corners of her mouth. "If you like to consider yourself a direct descendant of these unusually intelligent monkeys, you have my full permission to do so, Captain Beresford," she observed, with a significant glance across at Mephistopheles, as much as to say, "you see how I snub him."

Mrs. Gower's permission is a command," replied Maurice, with a profound bow. "In future, I shall consider myself an orang-outang; my only regret being that Mrs. Gower and I no longer belong to the same species. Allow me to give you some of this very excellent aspic," he added, politely.

Mrs. Gower, a well known epicure, was evidently much softened by this little attention.

"How is it, Captain Beresford?" she asked, between two dainty morsels, "that you have never called on me?"

This was indeed a home question. "Really," stammered Maurice—"I really have had a lot of work to do of late, and no time for visiting"—I believe this to have been an unmitigated fib—but I hope to retrieve my character very shortly."

"I know you thought it an awful infliction having to sit next to me this evening," she continued, eyeing him smilingly over her champagne glass.

"Pardon me," returned Maurice, "I was only too glad of the opportunity it afforded me of making your acquaintance, and paying the homage I have hitherto been unable to offer."

"Oh, come, come! you must not say such fine things to an old woman like me," rejoined Mrs. Gower—who *au fond* was the vainest woman in the presidency—greatly delighted, she rapped him playfully on the knuckles with her fan.

"Old!" echoed Maurice, eyeing her with unreserved astonishment, "your ideas of old age and mine don't tally; and age would be robbed of all its terrors if old women looked like you!"

"Well—how old do you really think I am?" asked Mrs. Gower, with a sweet, insinuating smile.

"I never presumed to think of ladies' ages. All ladies are necessarily young and charming."

"Well, you may think of mine, at any rate. Come, how old am I?" inquired Mrs. Gower, with her most sprightly glance.

"If I were to say what I think, perhaps, I may err on the wrong side, and you will never forgive me. The risk is too great for me to run," observed Maurice, with a deprecating air.

"Humbly, thy name is Irishman!" "Never mind, go on," she cried impatiently.

"Well"—bending closer, and speaking in a low confidential tone—"you must pardon me if I am wrong. India ages people. You are eight-and-twenty."

"Oh, Maurice! Maurice! and she must have been upward of forty."

"Not at all a bad shot," returned Mrs. Gower, in great delight; "I shall be twenty-nine next month."

"I looked at my cousin in blank amazement. Could this be the Maurice of Gallow?—a match for the renowned Mrs. Gower, and perfectly equal to the task of feeding even her enormous appetite for admiration; for, now that she had an inward conviction (ably seconded by her looking-glass) that her charms were slipping from her, she was more than ever tedious; and, although that still remained; and, although, as I have said before, she no

longer publicly posed for a beauty, she was more rapacious of compliments—the echo of what had once been perhaps her lawful due—than any one within the wide precincts of the contentments of Mulkapore.

I heard Maurice compare her powers of conversation to Madame de Staël; the shape of her head and classic, and he swore she was absolutely classic, and I distinctly heard him state that her presence alone was sufficient to add a luster to any entertainment. After a while conversation took another turn. Ireland and the Irish were the new topic; and in this discussion Mephistopheles and I listlessly joined, contributing a few desultory remarks, till Mrs. Gower roused herself and politely informed us that she "hated the Irish." She would have endeavored herself to Dr. Johnson, for she was an admirable hater.

"I hate the Irish!" she reiterated, "detest them! Their appearance, manners, accent, country, and everything about them. There are none of the nation in the neighborhood?" she asked, glancing round with affected caution.

"Then in your case I presume 'No Irish need apply'?" said Maurice, ignoring her question.

"Most certainly not," she answered promptly.

"I am truly concerned to hear you say so, for I belong to that most distasteful country."

"Nonsense!" she exclaimed, with indignant incredulity.

"It is a solemn fact? I wish my rents were as sure. My father and grandfather were Irish; and I am only a 'Sassenach' by the mere accident of having been born in England. I actually own a bog of very considerable dimensions. Now do you believe me?"

"I suppose I have no choice. However, you know I have the sense to discern between people individually and people *en masse*. There are Irish and Irish," with an air of benign toleration. "By the way, Miss Neville, addressing me, 'you are Irish, too are you not?'"

"Yes," I made answer in my meekest manner.

"Colonel Neville," she continued, raising her voice and leaning toward me, "I heard such an odd discussion the other day, as to whether Miss Neville was your niece or Mrs. Neville's."

"I said that of course she was yours."

"My wife's niece," returned stupid old Uncle Jim, merely glancing up for one second, vexed at being interrupted in an animated argument relative to the length of tiger's tails.

"Oh, really," cried Mrs. Gower, with raised brows, "how immensely funny; then your name is not Neville, of course!" she paused, addressing me pointedly.

Now, it is coming," I thought, tightly clasping my hands in my lap, and feeling the very blood freeze in my veins. "No, it is not," I answered courageously, and looking Mrs. Gower steadily in the face.

"May we make bold to ask your real name?" as they say in your country, or is it a family secret?" she asked with a malicious smile. She saw that there was some mystery, and was determined to probe it to its source. I glanced helplessly at Uncle Jim. He was still carrying on the argument with a sportsman's ardor, and was entirely lost to my sense of his immediate surroundings. Seeing him help himself to sugar and cream along with his asparagus, I gave up all hopes of succor from that quarter, and felt that I had better depend on myself alone, and tell the plain, unvarnished truth. It must be known some time, why not now? I glanced across the table; Maurice's eyes were fastened on my face, and Mrs. Gower was leaning back in her chair, regarding me with an air of spiteful amusement.

"Well?" she drawled, superciliously.

"You wish to know my original name, and you are quite welcome to hear it. You will not be much wiser, Mrs. Gower. My name is really O'Neill—Nora O'Neill, I answered, now driven to bay.

"Oh, really: quite an Irish name. But not nearly as pretty as Neville's, is it, Captain Beresford?" turning to her neighbor.

"Thank you to Captain Beresford, his composure was marvelous. He gave no outward sign of having made an important discovery. He did not rise, and rush madly round the table, and seize me, and say, 'At last, my long lost cousin!' No; he merely gave me a glance of extreme significance, and calmly went on with his dinner, still keeping up the ball of conversation with undragging energy. As for me, I dropped my share for the remainder of the meal, shifting myself as much as possible behind a large maiden-hair fern. Still I could not conceal myself altogether, and I felt that Maurice's eyes were on me more than once, as I sat, silent, pale, and nervous, behind my leafy screen. How glad was I when the signal to move was given, and, with a general pushing back of chairs, we rose and left the table! Mephistopheles and I parted with mutual alacrity, once he had left me in auntie's keeping. How I longed to unburden my mind to her! but she had been seized upon by a lady friend, and I saw no chance of getting in even one word edgewise. Her companion was mounted on her favorite hobby, "the servants," and was riding it with great zeal and spirit. Her cook milked the kitchen cat, and her system made away with the gram. When she entered upon the sins of a previous generation, I lost all patience, and gladly responded to Mrs.

Vane's invitation to come upstairs and see the pictures.

We toiled up a broad, steep flight of stairs, and found ourselves in a long gallery overlooking the courtyard. We paused, leaned over the balustrade, and looked down at the gay scene beneath us, where long-trained dresses and gorgeous uniforms were promenaing up and down together, and displaying the bravery of their toilettes to the utmost advantage. Scattered among them were numbers of native nobles, clad in long velvet coats fastened with magnificent gold and diamond belts, and wearing small, elaborately folded white or pink turbans.

I had not long been a beholder of this brilliant spectacle when I felt some one come and stand beside me. It did not need a glance at the dark blue and gold sleeve that rested on the balcony to tell me who it was.

"So, Nora," said Maurice, gravely, "I have found you at last! I had a presentiment that we should meet."

"Found what?" inquired Mrs. Vane, raising herself from a leaning posture, and looking curiously round.

"Found my runaway, long-lost cousin, Nora O'Neill," returned Maurice, laying his hand on mine.

"What!" she exclaimed, "What do you tell me—the cousin you told George about?" opening her eyes very wide, and staring incredulously, first at one, and then at the other of us.

"Yes, the very same," he replied in a tone that must have carried conviction to her ears.

"You don't mean to ask me to believe that you and Miss Neville are one and the same?" she said, suddenly sitting down with an air of complete mental and physical prostration.

"Nora O'Neill has just confessed to her identity with Miss Neville before a dozen reliable witnesses."

"So you are Nora O'Neill," said Mrs. Vane, looking at me steadily, and grasping the situation with her usual alertness of mind. "Why, this is absolutely delicious food for a three-volume novel. I declare I'll write one, and call it 'The Mystery of Mulkapore; or, Miss Neville's Secret.' What a small place the world is after all!" she continued, with a comprehensive wave of her fan. "Fancy losing a young lady among the bogs of Ireland, and finding her at our Indian banquet!"

"Ireland is not all bog," expostulated Maurice seriously.

"What a deep, artful girl!" resumed Mrs. Vane, addressing me. "How you have taken me in! I really don't know what I am to say to you."

"What am I to say to her? I think that is more to the purpose," interrupted Maurice, with a smile.

"Do you know that I told her her own story?" continued Mrs. Vane, with increased animation, "as a romantic tale, as a great secret. Oh, you sly girl!" addressing me. "How demure you looked! Now I know why you laughed so immoderately; now I understand why you abominated my red nose. Go away, you abominable little deceiver," giving me a playful push. "I am quite ashamed to have been taken in by such a mere child, such a little Paritvan puss! Take her away, and give her a good scolding, Captain Beresford. She ought to be kept on bread and water for six months, and solitary confinement into the bargain."

Mrs. Vane's flow of language had given me ample time to compose myself, and had quite taken the awful rush out of my meeting with Maurice.

"Come away," he said. "Come along and look at the pictures. I shall certainly take your advice into consideration," he remarked to Mrs. Vane, as we moved on together.

"You see," he observed, "I was not so very far wrong when I traced a strong family likeness in you to Molly Beresford."

"I wonder you never suspected me, I wonder you never discovered me before," I answered, now quite at my ease.

"I sincerely echo both remarks. Now that I really know the truth, I marvel at my own obtuseness. But I never imagined that my cousin Nora had any relatives out here, much less that she was niece to Mrs. Neville. Now I understand why you avoided me. It was not alto-gether because you disliked me?" he asked, earnestly.

"Oh, no!" I replied with much frankness.

"Tell me, Nora," motioning me into a chair in a large, empty drawing-room, "tell me honestly, why did you run away?"

"No answer."

"It has turned out very well, as it happened; but it was one chance in a thousand. You don't know what madness it was, for a young girl like you to set off, in such a manner, to seek your fortune. You cannot imagine all the trouble and anxiety you caused!"

"To whom?" I asked sharply.

"Well, to me, for one, to your governess, and to Mr. French."

"Look here, Maurice," I said, standing up to give additional force to my words, "I did run away; I am not denying the fact, nor am I one bit ashamed of it. I have gained a very happy home, where no one lectures me." "I am glad," Mr. French and Miss Flanker showed me kindness, and she was only too glad to be rid of me, if the truth were known. I was miserable at Gallow," I concluded, emphatically.

"Yes, I know," he interrupted hastily; "but, why did you not let me know? I would have done anything to make you happy and comfortable."

"Do you think that I would have stayed at Gallow, knowing what I knew?" I cried, crimson to the roots of my hair and the tips of my ears. It was one thing to repudiate Maurice by means of a sheet of paper and pen and ink, and quite another to do so to his face, as he stood before me, regarding me with a look of grave, earnest interest. "Listen to me, Cousin Maurice, I went on, with trembling voice, and almost breathless with excitement and nervousness. "As cousins, let us always be friends," said I, holding out my hand. "As cousin, I am only too glad to claim you; but we will bury grand-father's bargain in the deepest oblivion, and never refer to it as long as we live. Promise me," I faltered, almost in tears.

"I'll see about it," replied Maurice evasively, but pressing my fingers most reassuringly, as an influx of sightseers put an end to our *tele-a-tel*.

"I wonder what the first arrivals thought, when they saw Maurice and me standing in the center of the apartment, hand locked in hand! We went down stairs together and visited the library, the armory, and china-room, and rejoined auntie and Mrs. Vane, on the best of easy, cousinly terms. The latter had diplomatically announced to our most intimate friends "that Captain Beresford and Miss Neville had discovered that they were cousins!"

So everything went on velvet, and as Maurice carefully wrapped me up in my Ramapo cloak, and handed me to the carriage, I felt by no means sorry that I had been found out.

TO BE CONTINUED

ANSWERED

This is a serious story. People who do not like serious stories need not read it. It is a true story, and yet it is fiction—which is a paradox. It is true in the sense that it contains a great truth, one of the most consolatory of all truths, namely, that our prayers are always answered; not always in the way we look for when we pray, for in our ignorance we often ask for a stone and God in His mercy sends us bread. But no prayer to God or His saints, offered in faith, is ever rejected. It may be refused—refused at the time, but granted afterwards; refused in the way it was intended to be answered, but granted in a far better way. In this sense, then, this story is true, and yet, as we said before, it is fiction.

In the month of May, at a certain church in London, a certain man and a certain girl heard a sermon at High Mass, preached by a certain priest. The name of the man was John Murray, the name of the girl Mary Luttrell; the names of the preacher and the church are immaterial. The sermon was one on prayer, and the gist of it contained in the above remarks, but the theme was elaborated and the truth it contained brought out in the most convincing manner with great oratorical skill.

The preacher was an elderly man, now I understand why you abominated my red nose. Go away, you abominable little deceiver," giving me a playful push. "I am quite ashamed to have been taken in by such a mere child, such a little Paritvan puss! Take her away, and give her a good scolding, Captain Beresford. She ought to be kept on bread and water for six months, and solitary confinement into the bargain."

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loving, but all these gifts she would have exchanged willingly for the fatal gift of beauty. Yet there was one thing that not in her worst and most foolish moments would she have bartered for beauty, and that was her faith. She was silly, no doubt, to desire so passionately to be beautiful, but she was not so mad as to be willing if it were possible to risk her salvation for it.

As she listened to the sermon she made up her mind that she would try if it was really true that no prayer made in faith was ever left unanswered, but sooner or later granted in some way. Only by a miracle could the prayer she meant to pray be granted, as she thought, for only by a miracle could her plain face be changed to a beautiful one.

When Mass was finished Mary went to the altar of the Sacred Heart to pray for beauty. To no one else, not even to our Blessed Lady, could she tell this secret desire of her heart, at any rate at this early stage of her conversion. She was ashamed to write her request and put it into the box that stood by the altar for petitions, but she knelt there for a quarter of an hour, praying with all her soul that He who was the most beautiful of the sons of men, and who was also Almighty God, would make her fair and comely.

John Murray was also deeply impressed by the sermon. He had come to Mass that morning a prey to distracting thoughts. He had recently embarked upon a financial scheme which, if successful, would make his fortune, but which, if he failed, would probably cripple him from a monetary point of view for some time, for he had invested all his available capital in it. It was a great risk that he was running, but the prize, if he were successful, was so large that he had determined to make the venture. It was undoubtedly a great speculation, but he was an unmarried man, with no one dependent upon him, and he had persuaded himself that he was justified in his action. If he succeeded he would rest content with his gains, he thought, but for this once he would let himself go. So he now stood to win a large fortune or to lose all his savings, and meanwhile he was in a fever of excitement.

As he listened to the sermon something in him was kindled by the preacher's words. Perhaps it was faith, perhaps it was a fixed determination to leave no possible stone unturned to gain this prize, and after Mass he went to Our Lady's altar and prayed as he had never prayed before in his life for the success of his scheme.

The anxiety he was enduring, the vacillation between hope and fear which every rise and fall in the stock in which he was so deeply interested caused him to feel as telling on his physical strength and reacting on his spiritual nature, as our bodies are wont to act and react on our souls, and weigh them down or raise them up without our suspecting their influence.

John Murray, though usually a calm, collected and not particularly fervent worshipper, was to day in a high emotional frame of mind as he knelt before Our Lady's statue and repeated the Memorare with passionate fervor, almost commanding her to grant his request: "You can, you will you must grant my prayer, I believe that never was it known. Hear my prayer, O gracious Virgin, and grant me the success I covet."

John's prayer was not so long as Mary Luttrell's, but after he had finished he strolled slowly round the church and presently recognized her graceful figure bent in deep and humble supplication at the feet of the Sacred Heart. His prayer had been like the storming of a citadel, tumultuous, vehement, violent; she was absorbed in devotion.

John stood a little way off watching her, and when at last she rose from her knees and came towards him her usually pale cheeks were flushed, her eyes shone with a new light, and John, as he looked at her, experienced a new feeling overwhelming his troubled spirit, a feeling that was at once pain and pleasure, joy and sorrow, hope and fear, blended inextricably together.

He knew intuitively that the sermon had moved her as it had moved him to ask some great favor. He wondered what her request had been, but he longed to know not only what it was, but if it would be granted. He longed greatly to find this out, for he argued if Mary's prayer was granted his, too, might be, and as he walked home with her, as he frequently did, he summoned up courage after they had discussed the sermon to say:

"Will you tell me if your prayer is granted?"

Mary Luttrell, remembering what her prayer had been, flushed crimson and womanlike, answered with another question.

"What prayer?" she said, almost guiltily.

"The prayer you were making at the Sacred Heart altar this morning."

"It was a foolish prayer, because only by a miracle could it be granted, and we ought not to expect miracles."

"Perhaps not, but I am quite sure it was a better prayer than mine. But anyhow, will you tell me when it is granted, if it ever is?"

"Yes, I promise I will," said Mary, smiling, and her smile was so very sweet, in John's opinion, that he began to think there were other things in the world better worth desiring than financial success.

"Well, I prayed for something, too, this morning, something I want desperately. I will tell you what it was," said John. And he told her just as they reached the home of her employer.

Some days later John Murray heard that his speculation had failed and he had lost every penny he had invested. He raged and stormed, blamed himself for his folly in risking so much on an uncertainty, made things decidedly hot for his unfortunate clerks and then remembered that he would probably see Mary Luttrell next day, which was Sunday; at Mass. He would certainly tell her his prayer had been refused, and somehow he derived great consolation in his loss in anticipating her sympathy.

The next morning he saw Mary in her usual place when he entered the church, and after Mass was over he hovered near her when she went to the altar of the Sacred Heart, for perseverance in prayer was part of Mary's scheme of life.

Her attitude, at any rate outwardly, was less humble than on the previous Sunday. She knelt upright, with her little hands—such pretty hands John thought them—clasped and held out towards the statue; her eyes were raised, and once or twice that smile of hers played round her moving lips. John waited till she rose, and then went up to her, saying impulsively:

"Your prayer has been granted?"

Mary blushed deeply as she answered this random shot.

"No, indeed, it has not."

"I am sure it has. Tell me what it was."

"I can't possibly. But how about your scheme? Has it turned out well? Have you heard yet?"

"Yes, I have heard, worse luck! I have lost every penny I invested, but somehow I don't seem to care so very much about it, after all. I did just at first, but I have found something else worth more than a fortune even so large a one as I stood to win," said John as they passed into the street.

"Have you? Tell me if you are more successful this time," said Mary as she joined her pupils, who had accompanied her this morning and were waiting outside the church for her.

Again John raged and stormed, but this time inwardly, at the inconvenience of Mary's pupils electing to come to church with her, instead of going, as usual, with their parents, as in John's opinion, they ought always to do. The only opportunity he had of seeing Mary alone was on her way home from church. If he went to luncheon or dinner at the house where she was living, the family was of course, always present, and he had no opportunity of any private conversation. He was beginning to feel more and more every day that Mary Luttrell was the supreme need of his life.

The next Sunday after Mass John went again to Our Lady's altar and knelt there for some time. As he knelt a light broke over him, and he began to understand what had puzzled him at first when he heard that he had lost his money, and remembered the prayer he had offered about it a few weeks ago at Mary's shrine.

"Holy Mother," he said, "I asked you for gold which perished, like the sordid wretch I am, and you refused to give it to me, but instead you opened my blind eyes and showed me there was a treasure that all the gold in the world could never purchase close to my elbow, a treasure that but for you I might never have found. O Mother of Mercy dispense not my petition, but in your mercy give me that treasure."

A moment after, when he rose from his knees, he was startled to see Mary Luttrell standing before him, coming to kneel at Our Lady's altar.

She started as she recognized John for she had not expected to see him, thinking he had left the church. During the week she had pondered over their last meeting, and wondered what he could have meant. What was this thing worth more than a fortune that he had recently found? Very often she asked herself this question, and snubbed it and herself by sadly thinking once or twice her vanity had suggested a possible answer, but she had promptly dismissed that as an impossible solution. How could John Murray or any one else care for a plain girl like her? The impossible solution, however, re-occurred more than once to her, and she felt that it was one that would change this workaday world for her into a Garden of Eden.

And so she came to Mary's shrine, and John, seeing her, went forward and took hold of her hand, and there was a look in his eyes that told Mary her prayer was granted, for she knew as every woman knows when she sees that look, that to him at least she was beautiful.

"Mary," said John, "My prayer is granted. I asked Our Lady for you, and she has sent you to me." And Mary understood that she had guessed the right solution to the problem John had propounded to her.

"John," she said, "my prayer, too, is granted, but I will never, never tell you what it was."

And thus these two young people found that prayer is answered in more ways than one; that He who is Infinite Wisdom takes our poor, paltry, foolish wishes as we lay them at His feet, and burns them in the crucible of His love and gives them back to us so changed that we hardly recognize them, but increased in value a thousandfold.

And perhaps this is not such a very serious story, after all.—Daley Dale in the English Messenger.