

"And he has only this one sister?"

"So he says. She must be pretty sick over this Somaliland business. It looks rotten. I hope he'll get safe through, poor chap," said Dermot. "I'm afraid it's not much of a picnic, though, by all accounts."

"Is he out there?" said the Duchess. "I'll ask her down for Easter. What did you say was her name?"

CHAPTER XVI

THE DUCHESS

THE afternoon sunshine brightened the dead moor, and the golden gorse blazed against a deep blue April sky, and scudding dazzling white clouds.

The hedge-rows were putting forth young leaves, and the baby oaks hardly yet uncrumpling faint yellow foliage, above the clumps of primroses, and the patches of blue violets which here and there lightened the dry banks.

The ducal carriage skirted the open moorland on the one side, and the tall hedge-row on the other, and Jeanne seated alone within it, drank the fresh delicious air through the open windows.

Dunham followed decorously in a fly with the luggage.

She had smiled outright, for the first time since her lady's death, when Jeanne had communicated to her the fact of the invitation. A small difficult sour smile, but still a smile of secret pleasure and triumph, though her immediate comment had sounded to Jeanne extremely irrelevant.

"I daresay William will take care of the little dog. I wouldn't trust Hewitt. His memory is that unreliable nowadays."

"Why, Mrs. Dunham, what can my invitation have to do with the little dog?"