

D'Alton had been "badly hit." Blanche Blake was just the one woman worth playing a life against, worth every thought, every hope, every aspiration. Her adoration for that country in whose future he was so wrapped up was a golden link that bound him to her even before the white radiance of love-light had penetrated his heart.

"Can a woman apologize to a man, Mr. D'Alton?" she asked earnestly enough. She felt bitterly sorry that she had wronged him.

"Never!" he laughed.

"Well," she said with a half-sigh, "I feel that I am in your debt."

"My dear Miss Blake, you make altogether too much of a mere nothing."

"But it was not a mere nothing. It was wrong—it was an insult—even to think such a thing of you. I am very sorry." And she laid her hand on his a moment. At her touch he grew deadly white. She saw his pallor and added: "You are hurt?"

"Very, very, sorely."

"I knew it, and yet you smiled. Can you forgive a silly girl a silly remark?"

He had recovered himself and the old smile came back as he said:

"I can forgive Miss Blake nothing."

"Oh! why?"

"For the very reason that I have nothing to forgive," said the good-natured fellow.

"You are generous, Mr. D'Alton; but I feel that I am still your debtor, and— and—I pay my debts."

He looked at her a moment earnestly, and a deep flush swept over his face. He bent towards her, all his soul in his eyes, and again recovered.

"I had better go back to Thermopylae," he said huskily. "Good night, Miss Blake."

"There's papa. Make him go back with you."

"I wish I were the Usher of the Black Rod for about twenty-five minutes," laughed D'Alton, as he

plunged after the mis-representative of Connemara.

Later on as Greville was about to surrender Miss Blake to her *chaperone*, he earnestly exclaimed:

"I mean to go to Dublin."

"That's right. When?"

"Next week. Yes," he added, "I'll run over and see you presented at court."

In pursuance of his "drift," Charlie Greville, one fine February morning, deserting the village by the Thames, in less than eleven hours found himself at the Shelburne Hotel, enjoying all the luxury of a "big wash" in the softest of all soft waters, brought from the sweet little river Liffey; fully prepared to sneer at the idea of a "Dublin season", but keenly alive to the fascination of Blanche Blake and her thirty thousand pounds.

After a poor dinner Greville sent his card to Mr. Blake's room, whither he was ushered by the returning waiter.

"Ah! how de-do Greville? What on earth could have induced you to venture among us?" exclaimed the M. P. "Business of course; I cawn't understand any body coming here for pleseaw. Only fancy, they want the royal family to come and live here—in *such* a country! I voted against the Royal Residence Bill as both impudent and preposterous."

"I cannot see it in that light," said the barrister; "I can see why the Queen snubs Ireland whenever she gets a chance of doing so. I don't see what benefit a royal residence would be to the country, but if the Irish wish to have her it is a very short-sighted policy not—"

"They *don't* want to have her," said a low soft voice at his elbow; "it's the mere outcry of tuft-hunters, and Castle-hacks."

It was Blanche Blake.

"Yes," she continued, "we can get on very well without England; all we want is our own parliament and a tax on absentees."

"What absurd nonsense you do talk!" observed Mrs. Blake languidly.