

down with me, and gone to the Silver Rose to see his old sweetheart. I believe a marriage will follow in the fullness of time. And so you are governess to the twins—terrible drudgery, I should fancy—and practise drawing in the intervals. Let me have another look at my portrait—clever, perhaps, as a work of art, but, as I said before, absurdly flattered as a likeness. You do think of me then sometimes, Queenie?”

The old pet name! A faint rose-pink flush deepened all over the fair, pearly face.

“I think of all my friends—what an opinion you must have of my memory, and I have a private gallery of their portraits. Please give me my sketch back—it is easier for you to criticise than to do better.”

“A rule which applies to all criticism, I fancy. I’ll give you the sketch back on one condition—that I may give you myself with it!”

“Captain O’Donnell!”

“Lady Cecil!”

The faint carnation was vivid scarlet now. She started up, but he caught both her hands and held her. The bright blue eyes, full of piercing, laughing light, looked up into the startled brown ones. Not much fierceness—not much sternness there now.

“What do you mean, sir! Let me go. Here come the children—pray, let me go!”

“Let them come!” cries this reckless young Irishman. “Let all the world come, if it likes. I shall not let you go until you promise. You like me excessively—oh! it’s of no use denying it—you know you do, but not one thousandth part as I like you. And I want you to marry me. It will not be so *very* much more stupid than vegetating at Scarswood and teaching the nine parts of speech to Pansy and Pearl. Come, Queenie! We have been in love with each other pretty nearly seven years. They say the certain cure for love is—matrimony. Let us try it.”

“Captain O’Donnell, let me go.”

“Not until you promise. Queenie, I mean it. I have come all the way from New Orleans to say this. I love you—be my wife. Since you can bear up under the drudgery of a governess’ life, you can endure to be the wife of a poor man. The question is—will you try?”

“I would have tried it six years ago, if Redmond O’Donnell had given me the chance. I would have tried it eight months ago, if his pride had not stood between us. I am not afraid of poor