

"No Irish."

The Honorable Alicia St. Leger was scanning the advertisements in the Morning Post with close attention.

As she leaned across the bare deal table, her attitude displayed a delightful round and shapely figure in a print frock of blue, which matched the wearer's eyes, and had a suggestion of country cleanliness and of having been dried on lavender.

Miss St. Leger's hair was black as night—heavy hair with a natural ripple in it. She had a small, straight nose, red lips and a firm, white chin. When she laughed she had dimples, and the dimples sometimes came before the laughter. They were coming now—were come, indeed, although the smile had hardly dawned yet in her eyes, and her lips were still grave.

"What is it, Al?" asked the girl who was watching her with the fondest, most faithful eyes from a little couch in the corner of the big bare study, which was dining room, drawing-room and kitchen as well.

"I've found it, Honor," said the elder girl. They were easily recognizable as sisters, though the face of the younger girl had many lines of pain and had neither the firm healthiness nor the warm white color of Alicia's.

"I have found it, Honor," she went on, taking up the paper and proceeding to read from it. "A well-known and busy author requires the services of a lady as secretary. She must be thoroughly well educated, although no specialist knowledge is required. She must write a plain business hand, read clearly and have a pleasant voice. Conversation is not required, nor that she professes an interest in literature. A handsome salary will be paid to any one fulfilling the requirements of the situation. Applicants must not be Irish. Address, with a plain statement of capacity, Rex, Box 1000, office of this paper."

"What a horrid person!" said Honor, as her sister concluded, folding down the paper as though she were done with it for the day.

"Do you think so?" asked Alicia, wheeling about with a face in which smiles and dimples were come to stay. "Do you think so? Do you know, I read such weariness into the poor man's advertisement. 'She need not profess an interest in literature.' Can't you imagine what that covers! And conversation is not needed. Oh, poor man! My predecessor must have been a horrid wretch. I do pity that poor dear who had to put up with her."

"Your predecessor?"

Blank bewilderment was written on Honor St. Leger's face as she watched her sister prouetting about the room to a waltz movement.

"I'm going to have that place, Honor," said Alicia, suddenly standing still. "A handsome salary—what do you suppose that means? A hundred, eh? And I should be sure to get other people through him. Do you remember that horrid Mrs. Delaney, who offered me £20 a year as her children's governess, on condition that I played at all her parties and was introduced as the Honorable Miss St. Leger?"

"Never mind Mrs. Delaney now. What do you mean about taking this place, Al? For one thing, you are Irish."

"Why, of course I am, but he need never know it. He's not likely to ask any questions about my nationality since he expressly says Irish applicants. If he should ask me, I can say I was born in Sussex, as I was, because the Dowager would carry mamma off there so that the heir might be born under her supervision. Fortunately I've only got a brogue when I like to let it appear."

"You might let it slip one day, and then what would happen?"

"Oh, by that time I'd have made him forget my predecessor. I daresay she was never in time and mislaid all his papers. Then she probably gushed over his work; perhaps she arrested his hand when he was about to pile misfortune on the heroine. I know her sort. As an Irish woman, I conceive it my duty to remove the reproach she has cast on the national name. He will find that an Irish woman can be—"

"You are going so fast, Alicia. I don't believe you'll get the place. There will be thousands of applicants. Then how do you know he's a novelist? He may be a writer on Chaldean subjects for all you know."

"He wouldn't be busy, poor dear, if he were. Besides, there is no specialist training required. It is only the novelist's trade which requires no specialist nor any other training."

"He'll work you to death. You remember Mrs. Hammond."

"She was a woman. Women always do work women to death. Mrs. Hammond half-killed herself, and never thought her secretary could grow tired any more than the typewriting machine. Oh, no, it'll be all right; you'll see, Honor. I'll get a beautiful salary for doing very little work. And you'll be able to paint away at your angelic bits of things till recognition comes, and to rest for a day whenever you feel like it."

Honor St. Leger glanced across at her easel on which lay a delicious fresh bit of painting. The subject was a mother bird on the eggs, looking out from green branches through falling rain. To look at it was to smell the green things refreshed. How did it come to be painted here in this great loft, originally the loft of a stable, down stairs at the back of tall, dingy London houses?

"I wonder what the Dowager would think of it?" said Honor, musingly.

"She thinks still we will come back; that it was the wildest thing for girls like us to think of earning our bread. If we could both succeed!"

Again her eyes strained from her corner towards the picture on its easel. "We shall both succeed," said Alicia. "It is only a question of time with you. As for me, I shall earn money for my sister, the genius, till her genius receives its meed of praise and money."

"Alicia, it is not fair that you should drudge for me. I know how you have sat up at nights addressing those wretched circulars so that our bit of money might be saved. Dear Alicia, I was always awake when you came into the room, though you stepped so softly. If it is too much for you, pack me back to the Dowager."

"After rescuing you? Do you remember how we used to plan this out when we were children and perpetually under punishment? I deserved it, Honor, but you never did. Yet you stood in with me then, as you think that if I had not been sure you would fret yourself to death if I left you that I would have taken you into all the chances and mischances of this life, from where there was at least the certainty of food to eat and a bed to lie on?"

"I should have died if you had left me," said Honor simply. "But now, with the handsome salary—why, we will be rich. There will be no spectres of sending you back to Gran. I am going to write this minute and send off my letter."

The letter was written and despatched. On the strength of it, Honor protested, Alicia indulged in wild extravagance, procuring such a meal as she and Honor had not enjoyed since they had left old Lady Honora, dark and angry in her melancholy house amid the Irish mountains.

Despite the uncertainty of the secretaryship, Alicia jested her pale little sister into enjoyment of the meal, watching on her and watching her with such tenderness that she almost forgot her own share of the banquet.

After all, her confidence seemed justified, for the first post in the morning brought a letter from Mr. Ralph Despard. How the two girls exclaimed when they discovered what a famous person was hidden under the "Rex" of the advertisement! Mr. Despard was much obliged to Miss St. Leger for her businesslike communication, and would see her if he could make it convenient to call between eleven and twelve.

Alicia made a very careful toilette for the occasion. She dressed herself in black, as being the most professional hue. It was a soft, silken tissue, exquisitely made, the last relic of the equipment the Dowager had given her granddaughter when she desired to make her fair in the eyes of a certain cousin whom Alicia by no means favored. A slight silken swish went with it as the wearer moved, and a delicate odor of mignonette followed it, for Alicia hung orris powder among her garments.

Mr. Despard's address was in a quiet street off Piccadilly. The house was a little white stuccoed one, with green persimmons, and when Alicia had discovered the number and looked above, she saw a balcony full of flowers, sweet peas in all the colors of the rainbow making a delightful riot of clean color.

"Come," she said to herself encouragingly, "This is one bond of union between us if he loves sweet peas. It is really a happy omen that I should be met by my favorite flowers."

This little matter really exhilarated her, and though she would not own it even to herself, she stood in need of exhilaration. That terrible clause against the Irish! Was she not seeking a situation under false pretences? It had taken all her casuistry to brace her up at last, and make her believe that she was really bound to vindicate the credit of a country which had been cast in disrepute by the misbehavior of Mr. Despard's former secretary.

The door was opened by the most dapper of men servants, with a refined respectability written large on his dark, expressionless face.

"Miss St. Leger. Yes, madam, Mr. Despard is expecting you. If you will follow me, madam."

Alicia followed the black broadcloth back up a little staircase between white-paneled walls. Everything struck a note of luxury. The carpets were soft as down under the feet. Every available niche was filled with flowers and statuary.

Alicia's lips curled the least bit in the world. "H'm!" she thought. "Mr. Despard is as fond of luxury as a cat. Who would believe it, reading those robust stories of his?"

However, the servant passed the first-floor landing and went up higher. "So the sweet peas are not his," thought Alicia, with a slight sense of disappointment that her augury had come to nothing.

At a door on the second floor the servant knocked, and was bid to come in. He opened the door to its fullest extent to admit Alicia, announced her, and withdrew softly.

A screen stood by the door. Alicia advanced a step and came in view of the room and its occupant. There was no luxury here. Cool matting under the feet; books from floor to wall all around; a few serviceable chairs, wall worn; a writing table; half a dozen colored prints on the walls with the skies of Italy; a row of poplars outside the window

which shut away the neighboring houses; a sheaf of sweet peas in water on the table; for the rest, the belongings of a man—a masculine man at that—a pipe rack, a gun case, a bundle of golf sticks.

The brown head at the desk lifted itself, and Alicia saw a lean, brown, soldier-like face, with absent gray eyes, in which slowly kindled a recognition of her presence—a pleased recognition, too.

Mr. Despard leaped to his feet and looked about for a chair for the visitor. After a somewhat irritable survey he ceremoniously placed her in his own. The other chairs were occupied by three dogs, a cat and a black kitten, respectively.

"They're into my chair if I only leave it for a second," he said resentfully. The dimples came roundly in Alicia's cheeks, played there a second, and then demurely vanished.

"It's very nice of you to let them," she said. She was on the point of saying that it was just the same way at Lisnashu, but pulled up in time.

"Ah, but I don't let them," replied the man, watching her with an expression of pleasure. "It's quite against the rules, and they know it, the rascals."

"They enjoy a soft chair so very much," said Alicia, in a round, soft voice. "I never could bear to turn them out myself."

"Why, that's just like me," the coincidence seemed to please him disproportionately. "That woman, Miss Fogarty, she was always sitting down on one of them and then taking to her smelling salts."

"What an absurd person!" "Yes, wasn't she?" eagerly. "That is nothing. I could tell you lots of things about her. She put gray hairs in my head. Just look!"

He bent his handsome cranium towards Alicia. There was indeed a little white hair here and there. "But, oh, here can't be very much like her," said Alicia.

"Do you think not? I suppose not. I haven't very much experience. I kept her for years, though she nearly drove me into a lunatic asylum. I never thought I could be so angry with a woman. But, then, nobody else would employ her, and she had eleven brothers and sisters in the middle of an Irish bog. I had to pension her off in the end."

"That was very good of you." He blushed quite youthfully. "I'm afraid it wasn't. The worst of it was she didn't want to go. She said it was a privilege to work for me, and she was fond of my mother, poor thing. Every one is fond of my mother. By the way, you are Miss St. Leger, are you not? I didn't quite catch the name as Bowles said it."

He had been gradually taking in the elegance of Alicia's air. Now it came to him as a definite impression and he looked alarmed.

"I am Miss St. Leger," she said. "Ah, I am glad you are. I mean to say your voice is soft and you move softly. I'm afraid one grows wretchedly irritable at this kind of life. Miss Fogarty never moved but she knocked down something or trod on a dog. She said it was because they were all over the place. Then she was always late. But, there, I won't talk about it any more. It's a poor thing for a man to be so irritable. I'll tell you about the work, you are Miss St. Leger, are you not? I didn't quite catch the name as Bowles said it."

It seemed absurdly easy to Alicia. There was no typewriting. Mr. Despard could not endure the click of it. Nor did he dictate his work. He jotted it down himself in the most illegible and haphazard fashion. He worked whenever the fit took him, and it was a portion of the secretary's duties to rearrange these jottings for the typewriter. Miss Fogarty, said Mr. Despard, his hair literally standing on end, had never learned in all the years she had worked for him the value of waste paper in a literary man's workshop. She had been tidy in only one particular. She had always deposited stray sheets of paper in the waste paper basket. When he abolished that article the papers went into the fire.

Then Mr. Despard had an enormous correspondence, which Alicia was to answer, retiring for that purpose for a couple of hours every morning to the room within Mr. Despard's, which had been fitted up for the Secretary Alicia felt a warm glow of approval as she looked into this little room. It was finished with a cosiness and daintiness in striking contrast to the rather bare room of the distinguished author. Some one had thought with kindly consideration of the things a woman would like.

"How pretty," said Alicia, looking in from the doorway. "Ah, I am glad you like it. You see, you will have to spend a lot of time here. I wish to engage all your time. I work spasmodically, and cannot be sure of what times I may require you. So while you wait for me you must make yourself happy here. By the way, the salary. We must come to business, Miss St. Leger. The salary would be three hundred a year for all your time. Would that suit you?"

"I never expected half so much," said Alicia, her eyes dancing. "Very well, then. And when can you enter upon your duties? I am a little bit in arrears."

He looked anxiously at Alicia and then towards the piles of illegibly-scratched pages on his writing table. "Shall I stay now?" she asked. "Will you? That will be so good of you. See here, I have a whole basket of letters awaiting answers. And all these things to be reduced from chaos into something like order. Will you, really?"

Alicia was already taking off her hat, with its softly-drooping, graceful plumes. She passed her hand across the ripples of her hair to see

that they were not disarranged. Mr. Despard, from the hearth rug, watched her with the keenest approval. Three sympathetic tails wagged in the three chairs, as though the dogs knew that their master had been put out and were rejoiced at his relief.

Alicia got through the morning's work by herself. At lunch time she was introduced to Mr. Despard's mother, a delightful little Dresden china old lady, who was the occupant of the room with the balcony of sweet peas.

"They are my favorite flowers," said Alicia, sniffing towards them with delight. "They are my son's, too," said old Mrs. Despard. "I am so glad. It shows a certain sympathy between you. And his work has suffered so in careless and blundering hands. Oh, my dear, and Ralph was so patient. I often thought he must swear. But I never heard him. Not that he would do it in my presence, of course, yet I have heard that gentlemen find it a relief sometimes, although it is, of course, a very wrong thing to do. Yet she was a kind creature, a good creature, but so careless. I am rejoiced that you are not Irish. Ralph wouldn't have had another Irish person for any consideration. Now, isn't it fortunate you're English?"

"I suppose I should consider it so," said Alicia, lamely. After that things seemed to go very smoothly with Alicia's work. Mr. Despard had never hoped for any one with such cunning in deciphering his scrawl, such rare intelligence in leaping at his meaning where the manuscript had been imperfect and indecipherable. The somewhat worried look which he had worn when Alicia came passed away. The lines Miss Fogarty had written in his face grew daily fainter, as though a soft touch were smoothing them away. His work prospered. It was autumn now, and something of the gold of the September woods and air, the pale gold so full of tranquility, seemed to have entered and taken possession of the quiet house.

Alicia had grown very fond of her place. How could it be otherwise, indeed, when she was treated with such tender consideration? She had made friends of her employers. Mrs. Despard had driven many times in her neat little brougham to the stable-like studio which had served the two girls for a house, which was now so much more presentable since Alicia's salary enabled them to add the things here and there which made all the difference.

Mr. Despard also had made friends with Miss Honor St. Leger, and had bought a picture from her at a price which made the pale little artist wide-eyed with amazement. He knew how to set her at ease, for he talked as if he had bought for a very little sum what would be valuable in the course of a few years. The purchase led to other purchases. The Misses St. Leger were flourishing.

Prosperity made Alicia rash. Hitherto she had left her grandmother in ignorance of what they were doing. Now a memory of the bitter prophecies with which the old woman had received her granddaughter's intention of earning her bread returned to her. In one of those long pauses between her work Alicia wrote to the old Countess on Mr. Despard's stamped notepaper. It was a very useful, letter, and not a little arrogant.

About a week later a very shabby yet imperious-looking, old lady asked to see Mr. Despard. Alicia was gone home. It was one of Honor's bad days, and Mr. Despard, learning that fact, had kindly dismissed his secretary for the afternoon.

He was feeling that somehow his inspiration had gone out with Alicia, and was smoking a moody cigar, not quite knowing what was the matter with him, when the Countess of Dromed was announced. The old lady was in the room rapidly.

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ping her stick sharply on the floor before Bowles could announce or present her. She had insisted on following him up-stairs.

"I want my granddaughter, Alicia St. Leger," she said, with a fierce glance at him. "Miss St. Leger is not here," he answered. "She is gone home this afternoon."

"Home? Where is home?" she demanded. He looked at her and hesitated. "If you will give me your address," he said, "I will let Miss St. Leger know as soon as possible."

"Sir," said the old lady, "you are rude. Alicia is my granddaughter, and an earl's daughter, if she has loved herself to be your clerk. She has run away from me and taken with her her sister Honor, whom I could have loved if she had not always sided with Alicia. I could never love Alicia. She always fought me from the time she was a little baby. But this freak has lasted too long. She is to marry her cousin, Lord Burren. It is time that she came home."

"Madam," said Mr. Despard, from whose face the half-humorous benediction had passed. "I can only repeat that I will let Miss St. Leger know at once. Will you kindly leave an address?"

At last seeing she could not move him, the old lady left her address, the Euston Hotel.

"It is many years," she added viciously, "since I have been in the horrible old town. You see, I stay at the threshold of it, so that I may escape to Ireland again as soon as possible, taking with me these misguided girls."

Mr. Despard bowed her out without a word. He had taken in the revelation of Alicia's nationality without surprise. The little deceit of it never touched him. What would he have cared if she had been a South Sea Islander, so that she were Alicia? There was something more serious to think about—may, not to think about. He wondered stupidly how he was going to put Alicia and all that concerned her out of his life.

His first inclination was not to see her again. He would write to her, enclosing a month's salary, and telling her that her grandmother, the Countess, was at the Euston Hotel and to bear her back to Ireland and her bridegroom. The fellow that he didn't come himself? As he swooped for a sheet of notepaper Mr. Despard ground his teeth and swore softly to himself.

There was a little tap at the door. In came Alicia in a purple cloth dress. The first touch of frost was abroad, and her hands were in a muff; a collar of dark fur enhanced the fairness of her face.

"Honor was so much better," she began. "I came back because those notes were on my mind. Why, what has happened?"

Mr. Despard was looking at her with an expression so comely, strangely different from what she was used to see in his eyes. She faltered, turned red and pale, was the picture of guilt.

"Your grandmother has been here, Miss St. Leger," he began. "Ah, then you have found out my deceit and you can't forgive me. I thought you wouldn't mind. I was going to tell you myself."

"I have no desire to force your confidence," he said, taking up a book and ostentatiously cutting a page. "It isn't a crime, after all," she said, pitiously. "And, after all, I was different, wasn't I? You never asked me, you know. I think if you had I must have confessed."

"You should never have come at all," he said brusquely. "I know I shouldn't," she replied with great gentleness. "But, then, you see, it was a temptation. I had to work for Honor and myself, and I thought I would tell you some day when you had found out the difference. I have been useful, haven't I?"

"Useful?" he repeated. "I don't know how the work is going to get on without you."

She stared at him. "You are going to send me away?" she said, incredulously. "You are going to go back with your grandmother to fulfill your engagement to your cousin, Lord Burren."

"Burren!" Alicia's eyes flashed. "I wouldn't marry him for the whole world, and Gran knows it."

He turned to her with a bewildered look, hope and relief in his face. "What have you been talking about then? I thought you were talking about your engagement."

"I have none," said Alicia sweetly, with a shy glance from under her long, upward-curving lashes, "except as your secretary, if you have not indeed dismissed me. I was talking about my deceit in taking the place when you had specially stipulated for no Irish."

"Alicia!" He made a step or two towards her. Then he stood looking down at her triumphantly. Her face told him all he wanted to know. It had the color of a pink sweet pea.

"You like me better than Burren," he said. "Well enough to give me a kiss, Alicia?" She lifted her lips to his. "The worst of it will be," he said after a while, "that though I shall gain the love of my wife, I shall lose a perfect secretary."

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ST. PATRICK'S T. A. & B. SOCIETY.—Meets on the second Sunday of every month in St. Patrick's Hall, 92 Alexander street, at 3.30 p.m. Committee of Management meets in same hall on the first Tuesday of every month, at 8 p.m. Rev. Director, Rev. Jas. Kiloran; President, M. J. O'Donnell; Rec. Sec., J. J. Tynan, 222 Prince Arthur street.

C.M.B.A. OF CANADA, BRANCH 26 Organized 13th November, 1883. Meets in St. Patrick's Hall, 92 St. Alexander street, every 2nd and 4th Thursday of each month and the transaction of business at 8 o'clock. Officers: Spiritual Adviser, Rev. J. P. Killoran; Chancellor, W. A. Hodgson; President, Thos. R. Stevens; 1st Vice-President, James Cahill, 2nd Vice-President, M. J. Gahan; Recording Secretary, R. M. J. Dolan, 16 Overdale Avenue; Financial Secretary, Jas. J. Costigan, 504 St. Urban street; Treasurer, F. J. Sears; Marshal, G. I. Nichols; Guard, James Callahan. Trustees—W. F. Wall, T. R. Stevens, John Walsh, W. P. Doyle and J. T. Stevens. Medical Officers—Dr. H. J. Harrison, Dr. E. J. O'Connor, Dr. Merrills, Dr. W. A. L. Styles and Dr. John Curran.