

He told her, not without hesitation, of his castle in the air. He was afraid she might say something to damp his ardour, but she listened quietly, and he painted a glowing picture of the happiness of peace and retirement which would be hers if she would only consent to be guided by him.

"Why can't we be friends—companions—chums?" he argued. "Is the thing impossible?"

"Not impossible I suppose, but——"

"Then I won't hear of any objection," he broke out impetuously. "Let us have some lunch and talk it over."

She reluctantly consented, but on the main question he could get nothing definite from her. He was careful to avoid anything like sentiment, and while they were in a quiet corner of the grill room at the Holborn Restaurant they might have been merely acquaintances so far as any stranger could tell. But though she would give him no decided answer she made a step towards confidence by telling him where she was staying.

"Poynter's Hotel? I know it. Rather stuffy isn't it? Why don't you go for a week to the place where you *didn't* go—Brighton?"

"I'd rather stay where I am," said she lowering her voice. "Didn't I tell you that I'm being watched? If I move it will excite suspicion. You don't know the enemy you're fighting against."

So she admitted he was fighting—and on her behalf! That was something, and though she had not said a word in approval of his scheme he knew the victory was won.

During the lunch—to Graydon the most delightful he had ever sat down to—Alicia spoke of her school