

"Oh, but it's not all. I'm so much ashamed of myself," broke out the lady, who seemed to enjoy the adventure with all the zest of a young girl. "You are a stranger here, I see—for I know every face in the neighbourhood. Let me offer you the hospitality of my home—The Crags—for the night. My husband, Lord Kildonan, will be delighted to welcome you: poor man, he's used to making the *amende honorable* for his wife's escapades!" she ended with another peal of the bell-toned laughter which seemed to be a more natural expression of her happy, sanguine temperament than the colder medium of words.

The doctor noticed, even as he excused himself from accepting this headstrong offer of hospitality, that the groom appeared strangely sensible of the want of dignity betrayed by his mistress's rash invitation to a stranger; for the man gathered up the reins, which the lady had let fall, as if respectfully to remind her that the time was slipping by.

"You must at least call upon us to-morrow—ah, but I insist upon that," she said, after hearing his answer. "I can't insult people and forget all about it in a moment like that; I must be allowed to make amends my own way. If you are a visitor to Conismere you have no idea how much an old resident can help you to make the very most of your stay."

The groom gave an admonitory pull to the reins, but Lady Kildonan laid an imperious hand upon them while she listened to the stranger's answer.

"You are very kind indeed, and you have nothing in the world to apologize for, madam. I am a visitor, but a visitor who has to count even the minutes of his stay; I have a business appointment of the highest importance to me to keep in Glasgow to-morrow, upon which my hopes of getting a practice rest."