

# THE LOVE ADVENTURES OF PRIMROSE WARD.

BY L. T. MEADE.\*

Illustrated by J. BARNARD DAVIS.



It has all just happened, and is therefore quite fresh in my memory. It was startling enough at the time, but it has ended well. As I write these words there is not a happier girl in England. My name is Primrose Ward, and I am just of age. I have been well educated, and am now a student at Newnham. I have no mother, nor any brothers and sisters, but I have a father. This story has a good deal to say to my father. I never thought him perfect, but I have always loved him; I love him still. He is a handsome man of sixty years of age, he is considered aristocratic, and he moves in the best society. He has no settled home, and financial crises come into his life, as a rule, once or twice every year. I have grown accustomed to them, having been brought up in their midst, and it was only the last one which really staggered me.

This story begins at Christmas time. I had an invitation to join my father at Pine Woods. Pine Woods is the well-known and very beautiful seat of the Winchilseas. There was to be a large house party. I did not particularly want to go. I should have much preferred spending Christmas with a college friend in a small flat in town; but father wished it, and his word has always been law to me.

I arrived late in the afternoon two days before Christmas. I had no maid and very

little luggage, but I did not care about that. I prided myself upon being unconventional. Mrs. Winchilsea received me with her usual kindness. She is a little woman, very beautiful, and quite young, and I admire her immensely. The house was full; all kinds of nice looking and interesting people were about. We all met in the great hall. Mrs. Winchilsea stood near a roaring log fire and dispensed tea to her guests. I had just accepted a cup from her pretty dimpled

hands, when my father came up to me. He said he wanted to introduce me to his special friend, Sir Henry Joyce. Sir Henry was about father's age, or perhaps a little older. He was not nearly so handsome, but he had an interesting face — at least, I thought so then. He began to talk to me at once, and I found his conversation bright and pleasant. He knew some of the people I knew, and when he spoke sympathetically of my special friends, I retired with him into the seclusion of an oriel window. His eyes were deep-set and penetrating; they had a way of looking through you.



"He had merry blue eyes."

At one moment you liked him, the next you saw something about his face which made you shrink into yourself. I had that feeling about Sir Henry from the first. In the midst of our conversation a young man came up and asked to be introduced to me. I could not catch his name, but I heard afterwards that he was called Charlie by everyone in the place. He looked like a Charlie; he had merry blue eyes and a clean-shaven face, and an upright, bright sort of manner; his

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carriage was good and he held himself well, but he was not specially aristocratic looking, like father and Sir Henry Joyce.

At dinner that evening I sat between Sir Henry Joyce and Charlie. I discovered, just by accident, that Charlie's name was Lawford. He was a Captain Lawford, and belonged to an infantry regiment. I thought him quite the nicest and pleasantest man I had ever met. He chatted and laughed, and I chatted and laughed back with him, and we managed to get a good deal of fun out of the occasion. Once in a way, of course, I had to pay small attentions to Sir Henry, who was also extremely courteous, not to say chivalrous, and had a way of turning and looking at me out of his very short-sighted eyes which would have been disconcerting to another girl.

After dinner, Captain Lawford found me out in a recess in the drawing-room, and we continued our conversation, which was light and trifling enough, although it amused us both immensely. Once or twice, as we chatted and laughed together, I caught an expression in his bright blue eyes which set my heart beating I could not tell why. I have always vowed that I would not receive attentions from the first man who chose to pay them—that I would never be that foolish sort of girl who falls in love with the first man who looks at her. I still kept to that resolve, but, nevertheless, Charlie Lawford's eyes began, not to trouble, but to impress me. When the evening was over, and I retired to my own room, they came between me and sleep; when I dozed off into the land of dreams, they followed me there. I found myself walking with Captain Lawford, talking to him, laughing with him, and making friends with him. Then all of a sudden the scene in my dreams changed. Charlie and I were still together, but the sun had ceased to shine and gloom surrounded us.

At breakfast the next morning my place was near Captain Lawford's, and he followed up his advantages of the night before. I snubbed him a little, for that is the Newnham manner, and then he became penitent and asked what he had done that I should treat him in such a fashion. Then of course I had to be agreeable, and I believe I made myself very much so, for after breakfast we both went out into the grounds and rambled about until lunch time. At luncheon I felt that I knew Charlie Lawford better than any man in the world, better even than my father. The fact is, we had each lifted the curtain

from our lives, and shown, each to the other, a little bit of our true selves. I for one found that peep into Charlie's life very pleasant, and perhaps he felt the same about me. We were excellent friends, although our acquaintanceship was so short. Already we had our secrets, our pleasures, our confidences one with the other. It was all most remarkable; I could not account for it in the least.

After lunch the Winchileas made up a riding party, and I found myself, rather to my chagrin, by Sir Henry Joyce's side. He rode beautifully, and as we ambled along together he asked me several questions about my past life. I thought him something of an old fogey, and looked with a sigh at Charlie's bright head and gallant figure as he rode on in front with a pretty girl, a certain Miss Mitford. Perhaps Sir Henry noticed the direction in which my eyes were wandering, for he said, in that melodious and perfectly well-bred voice of his—

"Lawford is a capital fellow."

"He is," I replied; "I have not met anyone quite so nice for a long time."

"By the way," said Sir Henry, raising his brows the merest trifle, "has he told you of his engagement? I ask the question because, considering the shortness of your acquaintance, you have already seen a good deal of him."

I did not start, but all the same there came a sharp pang, sudden as the prick of a knife, through my heart. Then I pulled myself together.

"Do you mean," I asked, "that Captain Lawford is about to be married?"

"Yes. He is engaged to his cousin, a remarkably pretty girl; her name is Lady Mary Curzon. They are, I understand, to be married in the spring. Ask him about her when next you have an opportunity, Miss Ward. I am sure he will be pleased to enlighten you on the subject."

"I am sorry to hear your news," I said after a pause.

"Why so?"

"Because I do not approve of early marriages."

"Indeed!"

"It is a mistake to give up one's liberty too young," I continued.

"Ah! when your turn comes you will change your mind," said Sir Henry.

"I do not intend to marry."

"Most pretty girls say that."

I gave my horse's reins a vicious pull. I wanted to ride on faster. Sir Henry began to be distinctly disagreeable to me.

"The married woman has twice the advantages of the unmarried," he continued, speaking in that voice which seemed never to rise or fall, but kept a dead, uniform level, which soon had a most irritating effect.

"What do you mean?" I asked.

"You will find out for yourself when the time comes. The married woman takes a different place in society; she has freedoms which the unmarried girl cannot enjoy. You will understand some day; I cannot explain."

Sir Henry talked then on all sorts of matters, and I pretended to listen to him with my head in the air and my eyes gazing straight before me. Now and then my laughter rang out clear and full. Of course, it didn't matter in the least whether Captain Lawford was engaged or not; but I felt sore at his not having told me himself. Surely, when he had said so much, he might have mentioned this all-important fact.

At dinner that evening Sir Henry Joyce was my companion, and Captain Lawford sat far away at the other end of the table. That fact, however, did not prevent his eyes travelling up to mine and resting often on my face. He must have read something there which puzzled him, for he looked away as if he were hurt, and then, just as if he could not help himself, he gazed again. When I found that Captain Lawford kept looking at me I put on my most jocular manner and became my brightest self. Sir Henry I am sure was charmed, for he laughed constantly at my sallies, and I saw my father glancing at me with affectionate interest.

There was to be a ball in the house that night, and soon after ten o'clock we all found ourselves in the splendid ball-room. A great many fresh guests had arrived from the surrounding country. The moment I put in an appearance Captain Lawford came up to my side.

"I want you to engage yourself to me for several dances," he said.

"I am sorry, but I cannot," I replied. "My card is nearly full."

"Full already! You don't mean to say, Miss Ward, that you have not reserved a dance for me."

"I can give you one," I answered; "the waltz before supper."

"I will secure it. But surely you have something else?"

I gave him my card, which, with this one exception, was already full. A look of vexation came over his face; but before he could say anything more my partner came

up and claimed me, and he had to withdraw. Three of the dances which I had promised were secured by Sir Henry Joyce. Old as I considered him, he could dance beautifully; and while he danced that even, melodious voice of his kept on talking and talking. He told me a great deal about the gay world and about his own travels over the face of the globe, and then he spoke of his country seat in Warwickshire and his house in Grosvenor Square, and gave me to understand, without exactly saying it, that he was a man of immense wealth and high position. Just as we were concluding our last waltz, and were standing together for a moment to regain our breath, he said abruptly—

"When my wife comes on the scene she will have a golden time."

"What do you mean!" I asked.

For answer he looked full into my eyes—there was a meaning in his glance which I could not fail to understand. To my intense annoyance I felt the colour rushing up into my cheeks.

"My wife will have a golden time," he repeated. "I fancy I see her now, young, stately, very beautiful; she will be an old man's darling—there is no woman more to be envied."

"I cannot agree with you," I said with spirit. "Any girl who deliberately marries an old man for his wealth and position does wrong. If she is unhappy afterwards she has only herself to blame."

"You think so," he answered slowly; "are those your real sentiments?"

"Undoubtedly," I replied.

His eyes flashed with a queer light, his smooth face underwent a revolution. All in a moment it looked crooked and distorted. He said something coldly polite in a voice which I scarcely recognised as his, and then made way for Captain Lawford, who came up eagerly to claim me as his partner.

Captain Lawford danced beautifully; we seemed to float on air. Soon I had a queer sensation that he and I were floating through life together. I had but to shut my eyes to realise this strongly. His arm supported me, my feet scarcely touched the ground, his eyes were close to mine, I could feel his breath on my cheeks. My heart beat madly. Oh, if we could only go on like this for ever! Such was the thought which came to me. Then I pulled myself up. Was I taking leave of my senses? What was Captain Lawford to me? I had only known him for a few hours, and he was engaged to another woman.

This thought stung me so sharply—so desperately, that I stopped and pressed my hand to my side.

"What is the matter?" he asked anxiously.

"Let us get out of the ball-room," I said; "the air is so hot, and I am tired of dancing."

He led me into one of the corridors, and we stood by an open window. I used my fan vigorously.

"Let me fan you," said Charlie.

"No, thank you, I would rather do it myself."

"But is it safe for you to stand on such a cold night near this open window?"

"It does not matter."

"Miss Ward, what is wrong with you?"

"Nothing," I replied; "why do you ask?"

"I ask because you are changed. Before lunch to-day you were the most delightful girl in the world. We were friends, real friends, comrades, the shortness of our acquaintanceship did not matter. We had tastes in common, feelings, all the rest. By the most accursed ill-luck I was allotted to the wrong girl while out riding, and since then you have been different; I see it in your face. What is wrong?"

"Nothing is wrong," I answered; "why do you question me so closely?"

He looked at me with pleading eyes; the laughter and fun went out of them. All of a sudden I thought of my dream, in which I had been with Charlie in sunshine and then with Charlie in shadow. His eyes had the gloomy look which they wore during the latter part of my dream.

"I must go back to the ball-room now," I said nervously. "My partner who is to take me into supper will be looking for me."

"You must tell me what is wrong before you stir a step. You are changed, and I must know the reason."

"Must!" I said.

"Yes, must—cannot you understand?"

I stirred restlessly.

"You make a mountain out of a molehill," I cried. "I have moods and tenses, like anybody else; I refuse to be questioned any further. Let me go, I must."

"You shall, but not until I have said something. Do you know what has happened? I have fallen in love at first sight."

"You?" I gazed up at him, speech arrested by his words.

"Yes," he continued. "I!—I have fallen in love with the dearest, the prettiest, the best girl in the world. I want her answer, I want to know if there is a ghost of hope for me. Primrose, I thought I read some-

thing in your face to-day. I would give my life for you. Answer me, darling, answer me. Never mind the shortness of our acquaintance; we have known each other in some other state, we are not strangers. Do not our hearts each respond to the other? Primrose, say it is true."

My heart was full of anger, surprise, astonishment, and, *yes*, gladness. I forgot for the moment that Captain Lawford was engaged to another woman. People were coming into the corridor, couples were passing us; one or two looked back.

Having made his declaration, Captain Lawford stood perfectly still. His eyes danced, then gloom filled them.

"Do you hate me?" he asked. "Have I been too presumptuous? Forgive me. Do not answer me now. I will ask you again later on when you know me better; but whatever your answer, I will never marry anybody else."

"What about Lady Mary?" I cried. The words burst from me. I did not mind what I said at that moment. He was engaged to Lady Mary, and he was false to her. After an acquaintanceship of twenty-four hours he had proposed to me. What sort of man was he? Not the Charlie whom I had imagined—not the hero I was fast making him.

"What about Lady Mary?" I repeated.

His face turned white.

"My cousin, Lady Mary? How do you know about her?"

Before I could reply Sir Henry came up.

"I have been looking for you everywhere," he said. "You promised to give me the great privilege of taking you into supper."

I laid my hand mechanically on his arm; he piloted me through the thronged rooms until we reached the great hall where supper was laid. Sir Henry secured a little table and we took our seats. While we ate he talked. I answered him with my heart far away. I could think of no one but Charlie. I saw over and over Charlie's bright face; then the change in it when I mentioned Lady Mary's name.

Oh, there could be no mistake. The engagement must be true.

"You are eating nothing," said Sir Henry, bending over me in his old-fashioned, polite way.

"I am not hungry," I replied.

"Have some champagne?"

"No, thank you."

"Well, shall we return to the ball-room? I think our dance is beginning."



"I laid my hand mechanically on his arm."

I rose slowly.

"You look white," said Sir Henry. "What do you say to our sitting this dance out?"

"As you please."

He led me into the corridor. The window where I had stood with Charlie was wide open. Sir Henry paused.

"Not here," I cried. "Do you want us to catch our deaths of cold?" There were limits to my endurance. I could not stand with Sir Henry just where I had felt Charlie's strong presence close to me. We went into one of the conservatories. Sir Henry chose a secluded spot, offered me a seat, and stood looking at me.

"Now, Miss Ward, what is the matter?" he asked.

"You, too!" I cried with petulance. "I am tired of hearing people ask what is the matter."

"But won't you answer me? Something assuredly is."

"I am only sick of all this excitement; I want to go to bed. I believe these late hours are very bad for young girls."

"I am quite charmed to hear you speak in such a sensible strain. You are a very beautiful woman, and ought to take care of your health."

"I hate compliments," I replied.

"This is not a compliment; compliments are false, and this is true."

"Well, true or false, I consider it a liberty on your part to tell me I am a beautiful woman."

"What a very spirited young lady it is!" said Sir Henry, with a laugh.

I recognised a tone of delight in his laugh. I looked at him in amazement.

"I want to say something to you," he continued, dropping his voice. "I don't wish you to answer me now; you can think it over and give me your reply later on."

"If it is anything important, please reserve it for another occasion," I said. "I am too tired just now to exert my brain in the very least."

"This is not a question of exerting your brain. I rather hope that it may affect your heart."

"Then please, Sir Henry, do not put my tired heart to a strain."

"Miss Ward, you must listen. Short as our friendship is, I feel that I cannot live without you. Will you be my wife?"

I uttered an exclamation.

"Nay, hear me out," he continued. "I do not expect you to love me—not at first—although I hope and believe that will come

later on. I offer you a very ardent and true affection."

"Of twenty-four hours' date," I said.

"That expression on your face is unbecoming, but I will forgive it. The passion you have inspired will not die, believe me; I feel that it will remain with me as long as I live. I never saw a woman before who quite seemed to fit to all my requirements. You are young, strong, beautiful; you are well educated, you have got a mind. I want you to give me your youth, your intellect, your beauty. In exchange I give you unlimited wealth and a good position. As Lady Joyce you will have —"

"Now stop," I said; "do not say any more. Let me finish the category of what you can offer me. As Lady Joyce I shall be that envied thing, an old man's darling. Thank you much. The old man can give his wife diamonds and the best dresses."

"You would look lovely in diamonds."

"Please do not interrupt. The old man can put his wife in such a position that she has double the liberty of the unmarried girl."

When I said this I saw his face wince.

"The old man," I continued, "is generous; he offers the penniless girl something valuable. But now what about the freedom? Is it true that the old man's darling has more liberty than the independent unmarried girl—the girl of the present day—who is poor, doubtless, and lives in a tiny flat, and earns, perhaps, by hard work, five shillings an hour, but who has liberty unbounded, who is free as the air? Is it true, Sir Henry, that your wife will be better off as regards freedom than the unmarried girl whom I have just described?"

His brow darkened, the queer look which I have before spoken of came into his eyes.

"You would have all the freedom you could require," he said; "I should make you as happy as the day is long."

"Thank you, you have answered me. As your wife I see that I must go your way, not mine. Now I am determined to go my own way. I thank you very much. I wish you good night."

I swept a great mocking curtsey at him, raised my eyes to his, and left him.

I went up to my room, but not to sleep. Two proposals in one evening were surely enough to keep any girl awake. Early the next morning I arose. I intended to go out as soon as ever the sun made its appearance above the horizon. I went downstairs and entered the library. The moment I did so I started back—a lamp was burning on a

distant table, and a brilliant fire was lit in the grate. Someone was lying back in a deep arm-chair. I saw the top of a grey head. I was just about to fly, thinking that Sir Henry Joyce was in the room, when my father rose and confronted me.

"Now this is luck," he exclaimed. "Primrose, I must speak to you at once on a most important matter."

"What is it?" I asked.

"Sir Henry Joyce has proposed to you, he told me so himself; he proposed to you last evening."

"Yes, father. Did he tell you what my answer was?"

"The answer you gave him in your surprise was quite unimportant. I must talk the matter over with you. At present you do not understand your own good luck. As Lady Joyce you will have the world at your feet."

"I don't want it."

"My dear Primrose, that speech shows your absolute and babylike ignorance."

"I will not marry a man double my own age," I said; "and besides——"

My father came a step nearer.

"Besides?" he queried.

I could not add any more, it was impossible for me to mention Captain Lawford's name. My father took hold of my hand and drew me close to him.

"This is a very serious matter," he said; "you are a very young and inexperienced girl. I think I can read your thoughts. There is another man here who has paid you attentions. Notwithstanding the shortness of your acquaintanceship, he has marked you out in a way which, under the circumstances, is nothing short of insulting. I allude to Captain Lawford. You know, of course, that he is engaged to another woman."

"Don't say any more," I cried. "He is nothing to me, nothing at all."

"The world, as far as it is represented in this house, thinks otherwise."

"I hate the world," I cried; "I wish I were back at Newnham. I will leave here to-day."

"You will do nothing of the kind. You will give the lie to the world, which says you are all too anxious to accept the attentions of an engaged man, by promising to marry Sir Henry Joyce."

"I will not."

"Primrose, my dear child, come here. What is the matter with you? You love me, don't you?"

"Yes, father."

"Child, you would save me if you could?"

"Save you? Is anything wrong?"

"The old story, I am short of money. At the present moment I am in terrible difficulties. I have put my name to a bill, and if I cannot meet it within a week from now I shall be not only ruined, but dishonoured. If this happens I shall go under for ever. You, child, can save me."

As my father spoke his self-control gave way. I felt the arms with which he was clasping me tremble.

"If you marry Sir Henry I shall be saved," he cried. "Sir Henry has promised to set me on my feet again. He will meet the bill for me. If you refuse him, all is up. If I fall, I shall drag down others in my ruin. What is one girl's happiness where so many are concerned; and Sir Henry will make you a good husband. If you marry him all this misery will be averted."

"Is it true?" I asked at last slowly.

"It is quite true. Will you save me?"

"I cannot answer you at present; leave me to myself."

I left the library and returned to my own room. There I spent the blackest hour of my life. All in a moment, from the careless, happy life of a Newnham student, I found myself confronting one of the great problems of the world. Should I give up my own happiness for the sake of another. Should I turn my back on the man I loved? Yes, I knew it now. Whether Charlie was engaged or not, I loved him with all the strength of my youth. I thought out the problem, and in my own way I answered it. Before that evening arrived I had accepted Sir Henry's offer. As a matter of course I was congratulated and the engagement publicly announced. The only person who did not give me pleasant words and smiles was Captain Lawford, but he had left Pine Woods early in the day. I did not dare to ask about him, and no one mentioned his name in my presence.

Sir Henry was anxious that the wedding should take place as soon as possible, and in a day or two my father and I left Pine Woods for London. Time flew on apace, and it came to be within a week of our marriage. Sir Henry was a constant visitor at the luxurious lodgings which we had taken. He did not improve on acquaintance. He was exacting, narrow-minded, and had no modern ideas with regard to women. His temper was also capricious in the extreme. I hated the thought of becoming his wife, but I felt powerless in the hands of an overmastering fate.

My father was happy. His pecuniary difficulties had been completely relieved. He often whispered to me that I had saved him,

me on the brilliant alliance I was about to make.

Presents poured in from every side. I could scarcely bring myself to look at them. Night after night I dreamt of Charlie; my pillow was wet with bitter tears; I felt myself to be one of the most miserable girls in the world.

On a certain morning Sir Henry asked father and myself to meet him at Hendon. We were to join a party who meant to skate on the fine stretch of water known as the Welsh Harp. A severe frost had held the world in its grip for several days, and the ice was supposed to be in prime condition. I was fond of skating and Sir Henry was a proficient in the art.

When my father and I arrived, however, Sir Henry had not yet put in an appearance, nor had the rest of our party come. My father went off to look for some of them, and for a few moments I found myself alone.

I was just about to take a turn by myself on the ice when someone spoke my name. I started and turned quickly to meet the full gaze of Charlie Lawford's blue eyes. They were troubled and gloomy.

"Thank God for this opportunity!" he exclaimed. "I could not meet you before. When I heard the news that morning at Pine Woods there was nothing for it but to bolt. I have got more self-control now. May I offer you my congratulations?"

"Don't! don't!" I exclaimed. It was with the utmost difficulty I could keep my tears from bursting forth.

"I do believe you love me, after all, Primrose."

"You have no right to ask that question. Can't you—can't you see I—I——" I was trembling from head to foot.

"When is the wedding to be?" asked



"I started and turned quickly."

what a good daughter I was, how dearly he loved me. But never once did he ask me if I were happy in the thought of my coming marriage. On the contrary, he congratulated



Charlie. He bent forward and spoke in a quiet voice.

"In a week's time," I answered.

"You have my very best wishes."

"And when are you to be married?" I asked desperately.

"Never, you must know that."

"But surely you are engaged?"

"Who told you so?"

"To your cousin, Lady Mary Curzon."

He laughed bitterly.

"I had my suspicions," he cried. "I thought that handle was being used against me. When you spoke of her that night at Pine Woods I had not a moment to explain. She is nothing to me, Primrose; and besides, she is a married woman now. She was married a week ago to Lord Walton."

"And were you never engaged to her?"

"Yes, two years ago, for a fortnight. We both terminated the affair with mutual good wishes. They played me false at Pine Woods; they did it for a reason."

"It doesn't matter now," I cried. I felt cold and sick. Just at that moment Sir Henry came up. He bowed to Captain Lawford, scarcely concealing the annoyance which he felt at seeing him, and took me immediately under his charge.

"I hate that fellow," said Sir Henry, when we found ourselves flying over the ice.

He did not wait for me to speak.

"There is a thaw coming on," he continued. "The ice will soon be unsafe."

As he spoke he began to skate with great velocity and recklessness. I found that he was taking me away from the rest of the skaters.

"We must not go on that part of the water," I said suddenly. "Do you see the board with 'Dangerous' marked on it?"

"Yes; but what of that? You do not fear a wetting?"

"I am not exactly afraid, but I certainly do not wish to be submerged in the water," I answered. "What a wonderfully rapid thaw; the ice is so wet that it is unpleasant; I should like to land."

"And I should prefer that you did not do so, Primrose. Now that matrimony is so near this will be a lesson for you. When you are my wife your wishes and mine will naturally be one. Practice obedience this morning."

As he spoke he looked steadily into my eyes. That queer look which I have before spoken of was deepening on his face.

"I will not go on the part of the ice which is marked 'Dangerous,'" I cried.

"I think you will do so, but not quite yet. We will take a turn just round here, it is lonely; we shall have this part to ourselves. So much the better, I have something to say to you."

"What is it?"

"Now that our wedding is so near, have you any affection for me?"

"Why do you ask that question now?"

"Out of a sense of curiosity. It will be interesting to hear the words as your beautiful lips utter them, 'Henry, I love you.' By the way, Primrose, now that I come to think of it, you have never yet told your future bridegroom that your young heart is altogether his."

As Sir Henry spoke his hands clasped mine with a grip of iron. We flew over the frozen water. I gasped for breath.

"Let me go, you frighten me!" I cried.

"Frighten you? I? Impossible! You do not realise what you are saying, Primrose. In a week's time you and I will be husband and wife. In the presence of God you will have vowed to love, honour, and obey me. It will be pretty to hear the words as they drop from my darling's lips. My old ears will be attentive for them. As the elixir of youth, they will come to gladden me; the love of my angel girl will make the balance between us even. On my side the scales will be weighted with money, position, a title, and last, but not least, Primrose, with the rescuing of the author of your being from the prison-house. Think! I picked him up out of the slums of his own evil ways and base speculations; I placed him high and dry on a sound financial basis. The deed weighs heavy in the balance, very heavy. But never mind; after all, the scales are even, for the other side is weighted with Love—the innocent, pure love of a young girl. Talk to me about it, Primrose; let me hear the noble sentiments of love from those coral lips. You tremble with glad emotion when I am near, you hate all other men because of the mighty love you give to one."

"I never told you that I loved you."

"What! no more you did!—you were too modest, too sweet and virginal. But you may carry those sentiments too far, and I am anxious to hear of the mighty love which weighs the balance even. Speak! begin."

"I want to land."

"And I don't want you to. Speak!"

I was silent.

"You cannot find your voice. We will skate up this long stretch which is marked

'Dangerous.' Perhaps you can tell me there."

"No, no, no, I am terrified."

"But there is nothing to frighten you. Come, this way—you *shall*." His eyes looked full into mine. They shone with an evil, lurid light; his lips opened and he laughed. His hands held my wrists like clasps of iron; he whirled me round in the direction of the dangerous part of ice. I uttered a wild cry.

"Henry, Henry, are you mad? the ice cracks already, we shall be drowned."

"You ask me if I am mad," he answered. "I am, for you, for your love. Perhaps the cold water will loosen your tongue—the balance is uneven, Primrose, but love can put it straight. Talk to me of love. What! you fear the cold water, but my arms will be round you, our lips shall meet, even if it is in the embrace of death. Come!"

He dragged me forward. The ice cracked and shivered. I thought my last hour had arrived. Suddenly a voice shouted in our ears.

"Let go, sir! You coward, let go this minute."

A man skated rapidly up. I turned and looked in his face. His blue eyes flashed back a gleam of comfort into mine. He was

Charlie, Captain Lawford; he was in time to save me. Making one frantic effort, I managed to wrench my hands from those of Sir Henry, but the next instant, and before Captain Lawford could reach me, the ice cracked again with a report like thunder. Heaven and earth seemed immediately to recede from my vision. The next instant the cold water closed over me.

I was saved. Charlie was the one who brought me to the surface. With that salvation ends the painful part of my story, for Sir Henry, who sank almost as soon as I did, was not rescued in time from the grip of that icy embrace. When they brought him to the shore he was dead. Thus ends my tragedy. I could not pretend to mourn for the man I had never loved, and whose mind was already trembling, to a dangerous degree, in the balance. My tragedy is over, thank God! but my love story goes on. Charlie and I are engaged. We are not to be married for a year, and I am going back to Newnham after all. By the way, Charlie approves of the Modern Woman. In a sense that is not to be wondered at, for I am nothing if I do not belong to the modern side of woman's life, and my sentiments now are my lover's. A golden light surrounds us. We are very happy.



A COUNTRY RIDE.