

NOW FIRST PUBLISHED

A Winning Hazard,

BY MRS. ALEXANDER.

Author of "Her Dearest Foe," "The Wooing O't," "A Crooked Path," &c., &c.

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SYNOPSIS OF PREVIOUS CHAPTERS.

CHAPTER I.—Kate and Alicia Carey are daughters of a Dublin solicitor, who, through misfortune, leaves Ireland for Wales with a view to economy. While in Wales they meet Mr. Brett, a wealthy railway contractor, who fell in love with Kate. He induces her father to go to London to seek employment, saying he will introduce him to his agents, Messrs. Winks and Boucher. This she fails to do. Kate Carey writes to Mr. Winks, unknown to her father, and encloses two letters in which Mr. Brett promises assistance, asking for employment for her father. She anxiously awaits a reply, but does not receive one. She, however, receives a letter from her cousin, Dick Travers, advising that he is in London and about to call upon them.

CHAPTER II.—Mr. Carey and his daughter, returning from the hill, come across a shooting party, among whom is Dick Travers, who has had some reverses, is now secretary to Lord Balmuir. Carey at length hears from Boucher and Winks, making an appointment at their office in London. Carey, accompanied by Kate, goes to Winks, and accepts a position as clerk. Winks speaks to Kate with a view of employing her also.

CHAPTER III.—Carey, settled in his situation, procures himself use of. Kate is surprised by a visit from Dick, and an hour passes pleasantly. Dick, on leaving, promises frequent visits. Carey, returning home in the evening, is much excited over a new railway scheme of his own. Kate receives a communication from Winks, asking for her presence at her house next evening.

CHAPTER IV.—Kate keeps her appointment, and is received by Mr. and Miss Winks—by the latter rather coldly. Her free and easy manners do not meet Miss Winks' approval. She leaves with a lawd to copy out. On Sunday Dick comes to dinner, and a few family matters are explained. Kate again sees Mr. Winks, who shows himself pleased with her progress and gives her further work, which this time will be paid for. Miss Winks is more cordial than before, and promises to give Kate lessons in knitting.

CHAPTER V.—FORWARD.

Spring was again breathing fresh life into the lilacs and daffodils in the overgrown tangle of bushes and long-neglected grass on which Oakeley Villas looked, more than a year after the close of the last chapter, a year unbroken by any event, yet marked by many mute changes and developments.

The Careys had managed to meet their engagements and keep the wolf from the door. Indeed, Mr. Carey had had a promotion, and an increase of salary which made him radiant for a while. Though his daughters perceived that his position in the office of Boudhier, Winks, and Co. was very uncertain, he never doubted that he rapidly growing indispensable to that distinguished firm. Still, for the present, he had employment, and it taxed the ingenuity of both his "darling girls" to rescue the money he earned from his grasp before it was spent on unnecessary little luxuries, chiefly for them, which they would have much preferred doing without.

Alicia had continued intermittently to preside over the scales and exercises of Miss Golding, and had found two other and very juvenile pupils. Moreover, Kate calling for her sister one afternoon, made acquaintance with the heiress, who was greatly attracted by the bright youthfulness of her teacher's sister, and offered to set them down, as she was going to drive in their direction. Thus began an acquaintance not ardently desired by the sisters, for in truth, though intending to be kind, Miss Golding's friendliness was somewhat oppressive in its condescension, and the relatives with whom she lived were appallingly conscious of their superiority. Perhaps the greatest advance was made by Kate, in the particular line she had laid down for herself. She had, by infinite tact, and patient honesty, succeeded in gradually reconciling Miss Winks to her existence and her visits, for the little lord of the small establishment gave her frequent employment, and when legal writing failed found a standing source of occupation by setting her to work on an elaborate catalogue of his books.

Miss Winks had been almost converted to belief in her brother's protegee when about a fortnight before Christmas he took a severe cold, which turned to bronchitis. He was confined to his room for several weeks, and greatly reduced in strength. Then his eyes became inflamed, and his sister was at her wits' end to keep up his spirits and amuse him, as he was cut off from his beloved books by order of the doctor.

Kate, who had been constant and anxious in her inquiries, hearing of Miss Winks' difficulties on this score, offered her services to read aloud, an offer at once accepted by the invalid. Hence some trouble arose.

To Miss Winks the task of reading aloud was terrible, second only to the sufferings of her hearer; yet she resented the success of the experiment she was quite ready to adopt. Her brother would listen for hours with great content to Kate's pleasant though un-English voice, and even found interest and self-forgetfulness in explaining and discussing knotty points of the tough subjects he generally chose. The perseverance she had displayed in toiling through "Gibbon" had raised Kate intellectually in her benefactor's opinion. In truth it was "toiling" at first, but as she grew accustomed to the grand monotony of the well balanced sentences, and her mind grew to grasp the magnitude of the mighty revolution depicted in his pages, "Gibbon" began to interest her more and more, though it took her several months to wade through the ponderous tomes.

Meantime the mind of Elizabeth Winks was sore troubled, and her spirit waxed hot within her when her precious brother watched each morning eagerly for his youthful reader, and the doctor congratulated his sister on finding the "very thing" suited to help the patient to complete recovery.

Kate quickly perceived that she was out of favour, and met Miss Winks' querulous impatience with unwearied gentleness and good humour. Indeed, one day she took courage and asked if she had unconsciously offended, but this had by no means a soothing effect, so she took refuge in quiet endurance, and unvarying attention to the crotchety woman's wants and wishes.

But, if dry, Winks was also tough, and in due time he walked and went to his office one day.

First, however, he consulted his sister.

"Mr. Carey's daughter had been kind and helpful," he said. "He would like to make her a little present. Would Bess undertake to manage this, as he might bungle over it and offend her for it struck him that the young lady was slightly thin-skinned."

"You may manage it yourself, Sam," was the tart response. "I don't see any difficulty about it. Do you think she would come here day after day if she did not expect payment in the end?" Winks paused before answering, and then speaking slowly, with an air of conviction, said, "Yes, I do. She comes because she is grateful—and because she likes to talk with me—I know she does, or I could not talk so freely with her—she wants no reward."

"Well, well, Sam, there are no fools like old fools!"—but I must say it is a little hard that after all these years you'd rather talk to a bit of a girl, a mere stranger, than to your own flesh and blood."

"Ah, Hess! who is the fool now? Do you think that because I am glad to help a poor young creature I ever forget all you have been to me?" There was an unusual softness in his voice that startled her with the terrible idea that he must be going to die.

"There, don't talk like that! I'll be having you all again. You have got down again. I'll fetch you some beef-tea and port wine."

So Miss Winks was partially reconciled to her brother's favorite for the present, though a little carefully-chose flicker of jealousy in her heart always kept her from thoroughly appreciating Kate.

She so far bent herself to circumstances as to ask the objectionable "young person" what she would like, as Mr. Winks wished to give her something as a remembrance of the help and amusement she had afforded him.

Kate smiled radiantly and said she did not want anything, but as Mr. Winks was so kind as to suggest it, she would highly value a book, any book he chose, and wrote his name in it. Miss Winks was surprised—even a little vexed—she had hoped Kate would have chosen a handsome dress—or an ornament—a book was exactly the sort of gift that would please her brother—it was not a greedy choice—in short the cunningest policy could not have dictated more wisely.

When Winks was told of Kate's selection he simply remarked: "She is a sensible young woman, she shall have her books"—so in due time Kate received a plainly but well-bound copy of Lamb's Essays, with which she was greatly pleased.

The interval between the opening of this treatise and its present stage was not all dull hard work. Tickets for concerts, visits to the theatre, a rare day at the Crystal Palace—which was then considered rather an exhilarating place of amusement—were due to Travers' friendly thought, so long as Parliament was sitting. Then came a long spell of absence, after which they had occasioned peeps at him when he returned to town for short visits. True, he wrote from time to time, and never neglected his impecunious relatives. Still the time seemed very long till Lord Balmuir and his secretary were again settled in town for the session.

It had been a day of soft continuous rain—what agriculturists call "growing rain"—with a murky sky and oppressive atmosphere, a day which Alicia and Kate Carey had devoted to needlework and the renovation of last year's garments. They had retired to the large top bedroom, which was their own domain, in order to spread out their draperies, undisturbed by the necessity of "clearing away" at intervals to make place for meals.

"I am so glad Easter is over," exclaimed Kate, suddenly breaking the silence, which had lasted unusually long.

"Why?" asked Alicia, who was threading her needle.

"Oh! because Cousin Dick comes back tomorrow, and will not go away again, nor for any long time, till the end of the session. Everything seems intolerably dull when he is away! I daresay he will come out here on Saturday—he always comes as soon as he can."

"Don't be too sure!" returned Alicia, who rarely took so bright a view of things in general as her sister. She was very self-contained for an Irishwoman, and her painful experience had ranked more permanent than her nearest and dearest dreamed.

"Don't be too sure, Kate! I often wonder why Dick Travers takes the trouble to come here so often. There can be little to reward him—when you think of the brilliant society he can have when he chooses."

"Why shouldn't he like to come and see us?" asked Kate, opening her eyes.

"He enjoys talking to papa, who is always brighter when he is here, and is great friends with you and me!"

"With you—yes. He does not care a straw about me! But I am used to that!" said Alicia, resignedly. "You are always the favorite, and I don't wonder at it. But, Kate dear, don't let yourself depend on him for your happiness. It amuses him just now to talk to you and be a sort of providence to us—to you specially. All men are selfish; and some day it may suit his fancy or his interest to drop us; and how will you feel then, Kate?"

"Feel?" cried Kate; "why, it is changeable, like that. I shouldn't care a straw. Of course there is no reason why he should trouble about us. But you are not just, Alsie. Cousin Dick is as true as steel!"

"I don't care whether he is or not!" said Alicia, in a low earnest tone; "all I do care for is, that you should not build too much on his faithfulness. Just now he is taken up with you; but you must remember that he is in quite a different position from ours, and has his way to make; though he starts from a different level from what we have come down to. It is all very well for him to enjoy coming here to be received as it were the sun descending to shine upon you; but he will tire of that, and then—"

"You must be out of your mind!" interrupted Kate, with a gay laugh, though the color mounted to the roots of her hair.

"I like cousin Dick. I am fond of him; but the day he begins to consider it a mere duty to be friendly and sympathetic, I am ready to let him go free. Nor do I think we have any right to quarrel with him if he does change. Not that I believe he will."

"All I ask is that you will not set your heart on him," said the elder sister, earnestly.

"Setting my heart on him! Of course I do not. We have both to win our way. Do you mean I am not to fall in love with Dick? I know better than that. My duty, my love, my loyalty are for the dear father, and for you. Could we, any one of us, desert the others? Why, Dick is in his way poor, stricken like ourselves. Do you think so meanly of me as to suppose I would burden any man with my responsibilities and myself? You ought to know me better. We are friends, no more. Dick is like a brother, only a little nicer. Some day he will marry a great lady, and I shall rejoice. You are too ready to fancy love and matrimony to be found at every turn of the road. Because you found one dastard among the men you have known, do you think the class so numerous? You insult me, Alicia; I am not a fool; and Kate's eyes grew dark with angry fire."

"And you are speaking rather cruelly because you are cross," returned the sister, quietly. "I speak as I do, because I know you are not a fool; but you are very nearly eight years younger than I am, and I only want to spare you possible pain—forewarned is forearmed, Kate."

"Thank you; I assure you I can take very good care of myself; neither cousin Dick nor I have any absurd ideas such as suggest. It is likely a man who has seen so much of the world, of society, of delightful people, would ever take a fancy to a half formed, quarrelsome creature like me? I shall improve—I intend to improve—and I don't think Dick, nice as he is, or any other man, a bit too good for me; but I don't suppose men like him would take the same view of the subject. No, he likes me as a kinswoman, who has fallen on hard times, and he likes us all, chiefly, I daresay, because he knows he is of use to us."

Alicia, gazing at her young sister, whose speaking face was lit up and even beautiful in her excitement, said softly: "There is no accounting for a man's fancies. You may be charming to him, however unlikely it may seem to us, and—"

"You are talking absolute nonsense, Alicia," interrupted Kate. "I have no right to imagine Cousin Dick anything but a kindly, brotherly friend. I do wish but had never forced such fancies upon me, they will just make me uncomfortable when I meet him next; but, no—I will not let myself feel or show any change. I wish you had not said such disagreeable things."

She threw down her work, and hastily left the room.

Alicia dropped her sewing, her eyes following her sister with an expression of mingled pain and anxiety. "Have I made a mistake?" she asked herself.

She had made one of those desperate experiments, those leaps in the dark, into the unexplored depths of another's consciousness, which may possibly lead to unexpected discoveries or break up barriers, the debris of which may choke the passage to any further communication or outlet forever.

Kate was, in fact, an unknown quantity; not to be touched unguardedly. Alicia was always eager for her sister's confidence, though by no means dexterous in eliciting it; but while she speculated on the wisdom or folly of her present attempt, the door re-opened, and Kate entered swiftly. She suddenly knelt by Alicia's side. "I am a cross, disagreeable, cantankerous thing!" she exclaimed. "You always mean to be kind and helpful! I had no business to be angry? Forgive me, and give me a kiss. I know you are fonder of me than I deserve! I will always mind what you say—though you are all wrong this time!"—and the sisters exchanged a hearty hug and kiss. Kate instantly starting a lively discussion as to the advisability of lengthening the skirt on which she was then at work by a false hem, with a trimming of gimp to hide the junction of old and new, and the subject in dispute was dropped forever.

Nevertheless this attempt at warning had brought about a crisis in Kate's heart-history of which she was herself scarcely conscious.

She was half afraid of meeting Dick again, for she dreaded that she might betray some consciousness that he might be more than a pleasant sympathetic friend.

This fear, however, in no way diminished her impatience to see him, and her thoughts were much occupied with the effort to school herself into a proper state of composure and self-possession before the crucial test of her next meeting with her cousin.

That event, however, did not occur so soon as she expected, for a little note to Mr. Carey on the Saturday morning announced Travers' return in town but informed his friends that business would prevent him from making his way to Notting Hill till the following Tuesday.

When that afternoon arrived, Kate found it necessary to remain somewhat longer than usual at Paragon Place, as Mr. Winks had left directions for certain notes to be added to the portion of his catalogue on which she was then engaged, and she did not like to set her face homeward until she had accomplished them.

Travers was installed, and in conversation with Alicia when she entered the sitting room. As she crossed the threshold and met his expectant eyes a curious sense that he had been watching for her entrance forced itself upon her, and overpowered her for a second, with a mingled feeling of distress and delight. By a strong effort of will, however, she suppressed this disturbance greeting him with her usual frank cordiality.

"You have been away much longer than you expected, Dick?"

"No. Not much above a week. Now I suppose we shall be pretty stationary to the bitter end."

"End of what?" asked Alicia.

"Of the season. And how is the dear

Winks, Kate? and his sister? Have you subdued her yet?"

"Mr. Winks is sweeter than ever! I must show you the book he gave me! but the sister is not quite so easily won as I expected. She sometimes likes me, and sometimes she doesn't. I don't think she quite approves of her brother's regard for me."

"Is this the way you sow dissension in a peaceful family?" exclaimed Travers.

"You are a dangerous subject, Kate!" she laughed, and they continued to talk of the little occurrences of the last few months during which they had been separated.

Kate noted how well he remembered every incident which she and her sister had detailed in their occasional letters. Certainly his interest in their quite lives had not yet begun to flag, and how delightful it was to see him again, and hear his pleasant, well-bred voice. Only she wished, oh, how earnestly, that Alicia had never stirred up embarrassing and uncomfortable doubts and fears, and ridiculous fancies that made her avoid his eyes, as she never dreamed of doing before. She must conquer this absurd uneasiness. She felt ashamed of her own weakness and foolishness, and her mental effort was rewarded, for as the moments fled past, she felt more composed and at ease.

"I have had a most unexpected visitor while I was out of town," said Travers, after a short pause. "Whose card do you think I found at my rooms?"

"How can we guess? You know hundreds of whose existence we are totally ignorant."

"Well, you know this man—the card was inscribed 'Mr. James Tulloch.'"

"Indeed!" cried Alicia. "I thought he settled in India."

"So did I. I wrote to ask him to dinner, but I have received no reply. Probably he is not in town. It is nearly a fortnight since he called."

"What ages back it seems since he stayed with us in Merriem Square," said Alicia. "I wonder if he remembers us."

"Of course he must! Why, Mr. Carey, put him up for a month or six weeks, and lavished no end of courtesies upon him."

"It must be ten years ago!" exclaimed Kate. "I was quite a little thing then, but I used to be amused at his funny way of speaking! Was he not big and red?"

"He is decidedly good looking," returned Travers, "and not so very Scotch. I rather fancy he has made money!"

"Then don't bring him here," said Kate, quickly. "I hate rich people—they are all dull and disagreeable."

"I don't think you know many, Kate—not enough to form so decided an opinion respecting them."

"I know Miss Golding and her uncle and aunt, and they are equal to many," said Kate, laughing. "I am afraid I am inclined to jump at conclusions."

"Yes, you are not too logical," said Travers, looking at his watch. "I must depart or I shall be late for an appointment at six. Have you been out? No! Suppose you escort me across Kensington Garden?"

"I can only go part of the way, for I have to call on the mother of one of my pupils, who wants to make some new arrangement about the lessons," said Alicia.

"Well, Kate, are you free; you will come?"

"Yes I am at your service," said Kate, smiling brightly on him, and both girls went away to put on their hats.

When Alicia had left them Kate and Travers walked on for some little way in silence. It was a delicious evening, the fit finish for an ideal spring day, the heaves and shrubs were all covered with the first delicate flush of spring, and the sweet soft fresh air full of the indescribable youthfulness of a resuscitated world.

"What a delicious day," exclaimed Travers, as they paced along under the arching trees beside the broad walk.

"What a glorious place London is! I am always delighted to return to it!"

Kate was struck by his air of exhilaration—of contentment—he was evidently glad to come back.

"I am rather surprised that you, an old sportsman, should like to be shut up in town," returned Kate, "did you not feel the restraint of regular work horribly at first?"

"Well, yes; but the work was less regular when I began—besides—I hope I am strong enough now to endure the inevitable."

"I like London, too. At first I could have cried all day and all night; it seemed so dreary and appalling. But after you came it was better."

"We are under mutual obligations then," returned Travers with a smile, "for London has certainly been rather a different place to me since you came up."

"Flatterer!" cried Kate, turning her large soft laughing eyes on him. "Can Notting Hill count against the charms of Mayfair and Belgravia? That is too much to take in, cousin mine!"

"Yet, you do take it in, Kate, you know. I cannot say what I don't think; and at present I prefer Notting Hill to either Mayfair or Belgravia."

"Ah, well, perhaps so at present. Only when Mayfair has its turn you must not hesitate to show your preference frankly."

"What?" exclaimed Travers. "Do you think me fickle?"

"I can only guess at what you are as yet! I have only known you really for about a year."

"True, and I am only beginning to guess at the depths and complexity which lie hidden beneath the fair seeming of your pleasant exterior."

"What a long speech, Dick; and you know I am quite transparent."

"You are nothing of the kind. Seriously, you puzzle me in some directions, but I intend to find you out. Now, tell me how your father stands with the great firm?"

"And Kate readily poured out her hopes and fears. Sometimes her father was joyous and satisfied; sometimes desponding and irritated against the upsetting whisper-snappers who could not hold a candle to himself; but on the whole he had pretty constant employment, and his health was pretty good. Then Travers planned some treats, the prospect of which set Kate's eyes dancing. At last she stopped.

"I have gone far enough, Dick. I must turn back now."

"Yes, you must, and I will go back with you as far as the Bayswater-road."

"No, no; you will be late for your appointment. I will not hear of it."

"Oh, I'll manage the appointment, and

you shall put up with me. I'll find a hansom at the other side, and be in Picacadilly up to time."

"Now, Dick, we have all come down to prudence and economy; don't be guilty of such wild extravagance. Let me take care of myself."

"Not a bit of it. I will not submit to your tyranny on this occasion—for once. I'll have my own way, and a few more minutes to make it up with you; don't say me nay, Kate."

And Kate assented.

CHAPTER VI.—JAMES TULLOCH, ESQ.

Another week had gone by, when Travers found a note from Tulloch among a number of letters and invitations on his breakfast table.

As he conjectured, the successful Scot had gone North to see his people, and wrote to announce his return and intention of remaining in town. Travers replied in a note to him to dinner on his first free day—an invitation promptly accepted. They met in the reading room of Travers' club—where he awaited his guest, and each was pleased to greet the other.

"And how has the world wagged with you since we met—how long ago?" asked the host.

"About four years!" returned Tulloch. "Well, I can't explain. I've stuck pretty close to business, but I haven't worked for nothing. You see old Beecher, the head of our firm, died a year ago. He had no son, and both his daughters married swells, so his money will go out of the concern. (Gleg has done pretty well—he is the second partner), and has a son, a sharp lad, in the office, whom he wants to make a partner by and bye. Gleg is a good man, a countryman of my own, so I have just put all my savings into the concern, and I have come back to establish a branch of the business in London and work it up. I fancy I see my way to extending the business considerably."

Tulloch was considered a fine man—by himself and the majority of his friends. He was tall, and largely, not to say heavily, built. His hair and moustaches were red—rather a golden red, and his complexion a good brick dust color. His eyes were either light grey or pale hazel—it was not easy to decide which. They could look frank and laughing, but they could also gleam with fierce anger or grow cruelly cold. He was well dressed by a high-class tailor, and carried himself well; still there was a slightly provincial air about him which suggested that London had not been his abiding city. Still Travers observed a certain improvement in him. His manner showed more self-reliance, as if his position was more assured or his pockets better lined. His accent, too, had lost something of its acute Caledonianism.

Travers looked critically at him, while he replied sympathetically, and then they went to dinner.

There was no lack of talk during the repast, for Tulloch was not only communicative about his own affairs, but he inquired with friendly interest into those of Travers.

"I was sorry to hear that you lost so heavily in that smash of Oulton's," he said. "It is never wise to have all your eggs in one basket; but I am glad to see you can keep your head above water still. I heard of you when I was up in Scotland. Lord Balmuir has a fine property up there, and they tell me you are all with his Lordship. What sort of a berth have you?"

"Oh! I am quite as well off as I deserve to be. Lord Balmuir and I were chums in former days. He is a gentleman and a good fellow to boot, and makes things pleasant rather than they might be. He is a rising man, too."

"Ah! it's easy to rise when one is born so near the top of the tree."

"I don't know. A fellow may be born to wealth and all that wealth and position bring, but it entirely depends upon oneself whether one is a nobody or not."

"I'd like to get into Parliament myself one of these days," said Tulloch, thoughtfully. "Vaulting ambition doth o'er reach itself," said Travers laughing. "But it is not such a very exalted ambition nor difficult to attain."

"I know that, and I don't see why I shouldn't go in for a seat in Parliament. I'd down a few abuses I can tell you, if I succeeded."

"I am sure you are quite energetic enough to be no end of a nuisance," said Travers, laughing.

"Ay! it were not for the troublesome members the Government would just get bagged up with jobs and corruption."

"Lord Balmuir is a bit of a reformer, too," said Travers, passing the claret. "You know he is a Liberal."

"Calls himself a Liberal, you mean. None of his sort are the real thing."

"He is certainly not so eager to pull down as the men who have lately risen. He believes that there are a few things left to us from the past that are still worth preserving."

"Ah! I suspect you are a rabid Conservative," returned Tulloch, and the talk turned on politics for some minutes.

"What has become of Carey?" asked Tulloch, abruptly, after the next glass in their conversation. "I wrote to him as soon as I reached England, thinking I would run over and see them before I settled down to work regularly, but he never replied, which seemed strange—not like Carey."

"I am sorry to say he has come to grief. His wife is dead, you know."

"Yes, I heard that. It must be a eleven or twelve years since I went to stay with them in Dublin. It was a pleasant house, and an open one."

"He is in a different position now. He is living here in London, in rather reduced circumstances, with his two daughters."

"The deuce he is," said Tulloch, a look of annoyance and disapprobation contracting his brow for an instant. "Is he very hard up?"

"Not that I know of," returned Travers, cautiously. "They seem to get on comfortably, in a quiet way. I often see them."

"Is Carey doing anything? Likely to come round?"

"He works with a lawyer in the city, but he is not likely to make a fortune. He is at the wrong side of sixty for that."

"Why, I thought he was as safe as the bank. He lived in such style!—carriages, horses, servants, everything. But I suppose he has something comfortable left?"

"I hope so. You'll come and see them?"

"Eh! They are not what you call in distress; because that is painful, and doesn't answer, you know," said Tulloch, his accent growing a shade more Scotch, as it

generally did when asking a question anxiously.

"Oh, not at all. You will see nothing to hurt your feelings. But you need not come if you don't like."

"I certainly shall come. I don't forget old times, my boy! Carey was uncommonly kind to me when I was a raw youngster. You'll pilot me, won't you?"

"Of course, with pleasure. When shall we go? I think I am tolerably free on Sunday—at least till seven."

"All right, I'm your man. What are the ladies like? The youngest was quite a little girlie when I saw her last."

"They are both nice and lively, but Kate is a little more. She is as pretty—no as handsome a girl as you would see in a day's march—full of fun, and fresh as a new blown rose."

Tulloch's face brightened. He was an ardent admirer of beauty, and had seen very little freshness during the years he had been shipping, importing, bookkeeping, and otherwise scraping together the respectable amount of capital he had put into this new development of his business.

"Well, I am free, too. I don't know many yet, but that won't last long when people find out I am a solid man. I'll have lots of invitations and engagements, I'll be bound. Then I'll have lots of work, too. The first couple of years will be a bit uphill. I'm thinking I shall soon look out for a wife. It's a great help to have a comfortable, well-kept home, and a single man is woefully ill-fitted in lodgings. Hey?"

"Very likely," returned Travers. "Matrimony never had any special attractions for me. When I was well off I preferred a nomadic existence. Now my locks are growing trusted and I cannot afford such a luxury as a wife."

"Hoot too, man! All you have to do is to look out for a self-supporting one. There must be lots to be found among the set you are in."

"Of course, I might manage matrimony on those lines," said Travers, and soon after they retired to the smoking-room, where the newly returned native was much edified by the number of acquaintances his host possessed among the frequenters of the club, and their look of importance and distinction. Travers might have lost his money, and be incapable of making any, but for all that he was not without social value.

The Sunday following, though grey and dull, was dry, and Tulloch presented himself punctually at Travers' abode. He was much interested by a few hunting trophies, which adorned the sitting-room and "took stock" of the furniture, books, &c.

"You are very snug, very—and it's a good situation. You'll pay a high