

NOW FIRST PUBLISHED.

## A Winning Hazard,

BY MRS. ALEXANDER.

Author of "Her Dearest Foe," "The Wooing O'it," "A Crooked Path," &amp;c., &amp;c.

COPYRIGHTED, 1895, BY MRS. ALEXANDER.

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 tells 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 he fails to do. Kate Carey writes to Mr. Winks, asking him 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, received 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, rambling over the hills, come across a shooting party, among whom is Dick Travers, Dick who had some reverses, is now ready to go to London. Carey at length hears from Boucher and Winks, making an appointment at their office in London. Carey, accompanied by Mr. Winks, who shows himself a competent position as clerk. Winks speaks to Kate with a view of employing her also.

CHAPTER III.—Kate, settled in her situation, proves herself useful. 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 excited over the 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. The evening is a long one 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.—Mr. Carey gets promotion and an increase of salary. Mr. Winks becomes ill and Kate offers her services to read to him, which are accepted. Miss Winks consents, but with bad grace. Winks receives and his sister becomes more jealous. Winks offers Kate a present, and she selects a book. Dick Travers arrives and calls on the Careys. He speaks of James Tulloch, a rich friend of his, living in London. Kate and Travers take a walk.

CHAPTER VI.—Travers gets a note from James Tulloch, who has been in Scotland, announcing his return to London. They meet, for the first time in four years. Tulloch inquires about the Careys and learns of their return to Ireland. He promises to call on them and do so on the following Sunday in company with Travers. They are made welcome. Tulloch, who has been in Scotland, since he was a little girl, conceives a great admiration for her, and tells Travers of it. Mr. Carey was not at home when they called, but a note inviting them to dine at his house on the following Wednesday.

CHAPTER VII.—Travers and Tulloch go to dinner at Carey's. Mr. Carey tells of his good luck in being about to go to Ireland on a special mission for Mr. Winks. Mr. Carey has a scheme for establishing an Irish branch for Boucher and Winks, and Tulloch hints that he would advance some capital to enable him to enter the firm. Tulloch becomes more in love with Kate and Travers seems annoyed. On the way home Tulloch and Travers are talking, and Travers is not seeking a penniless bride. Mr. Carey departs on his mission to Ireland.

CHAPTER VIII.—Travers invites Alicia and Kate to the theatre. Alicia being away for the evening Kate goes alone. On the way home a shaft of the carriage breaks, and Travers betrays his affection for his cousin. Kate goes to see Winks and has a confidential chat with him. He tells her of his relationship to him. He is very much chagrined to find Alicia in Miss Golding's assistant music teacher. He is evidently divided in his admiration of Kate Carey and Miss Golding.

CHAPTER IX.—Kate offers to teach Tulloch the art of imagination. Travers and Tulloch talk on the way home in which Tulloch makes a confidant of Travers. Mr. Carey returns in high spirits from his trip to Ireland. He gets his salary doubled by Winks. James Tulloch meets Miss Golding in the Carey's drawing room and tells her of his relationship to him. He is very much chagrined to find Alicia in Miss Golding's assistant music teacher. He is evidently divided in his admiration of Kate Carey and Miss Golding.

CHAPTER X.—Kate looks and was fascinated. Winks felt she was; she made no effort to express the pleasure his discourse gave her; but it was clearly perceptible to the speaker, so he talked on till the catalogue of Romish errors and misdoings began to pall upon the mental palate of Miss Winks, and she rose to take her leave.

"I am much flattered by your kindness in calling on my girls, my dear madam; and to you, Mr. Winks, for this mark of friendship," said Carey, escorting his guests to the door. "I only hope, once you have found your way to our rooms, you will come again."

"Thank you, I shall be very happy," said Miss Winks, graciously. "If you think that new work on crosses would interest you, we are welcome to take it next week. I don't say take care of it, for I see you value them; was Mr. Winks' valediction."

"I don't think those people live as economically as they might," said Miss Winks reflectively, as the brother and sister paced steadily homewards.

"How do you make that out?" asked Winks.

"Do you mean to say you did not observe the antimacassars over the back of those old lodging-house chairs? They must have cost eighteenpence to two shillings, and can't be washed, for they are worked with gold and silver. Then that water jug and goblets! They never were bought by a lady. Nor is it very prudent to keep whisky at hand; it is a common law."

"Mr. Carey's youngest daughter is an unusually intelligent young woman," broke in Mr. Winks, as if he had not heard her speak. "She is interested in topics that I—never thought I should broach to a young person; and thought Carey is a curious mixture of shrewdness and folly, he has managed to attract a wonderful degree of devotion from his daughters, and the little man sighed unconsciously. "Yes, he is a strange sort of man; more likely to serve another wisely and faithfully than himself."

"He is very nice and polite," returned Miss Winks, who was always pleased when her brother thought aloud to her, his nearest approach to confidence—and his religious principles seemed sound—still I would not trust an agreeable Irish man too much." But Winks did not seem to hear her. On his side Carey was much gratified. He came back from opening the garden-gate for his guests rubbing his hands. "I never thought my worthy principal would pay me a visit. I dare say he thought it a condescension. Faith, his sister is a sensible, agreeable woman. She wouldn't have a bad figure if she hadn't swallowed a couple of pokers in her early youth and never digested them!"

"Well, papa, I don't know how Miss Winks made herself agreeable, except by listening."

"And a very good way, too, my jewel."

"I'd a good deal rather be listened to than strive to listen." It's easier for both parties too, by Jove."

"I don't care for Miss Winks," said Alicia, lighting her bedroom candle, "and I don't think she likes us."

"Perhaps not, but she tries to like us, and should be encouraged," said Kate.

"I wonder how it would do to ask Winks to a bit of dinner? by all accounts he lives chiefly on chops. I'd like to give him a treat for once," observed her father, not hearing her last observation.

"Oh, no," exclaimed Alicia. "It would be too tiresome."

"I don't think it would do," said Kate, thoughtfully. "Probably Mr. Winks never dined out in his life!"

"God help him," ejaculated Carey, compassionately.

Tulloch's project of dining on the previous day with Travers was nipped in the bud. A telegram awaited his return to his room, informing him that Travers had been called away on important business, and would not return to town till the following Wednesday. Tulloch used some bad language, and departed to seek his repast at a restaurant, not having joined any club as yet.

A week elapsed before they met, during which interval Tulloch went a good deal into society, and found his days well filled by increasing business. In short his natural tendency to consider himself a man of importance was developing largely. It was a pleasant sensation, yet the cause of some mental conflict also.

He was torn between a very strong fancy for Kate Carey and an equally strong desire to improve his position by a wealthy marriage, which he began to think he might have for the asking. Still Tulloch was an ardent admirer of beauty and responsive to the charm of manner. His satisfaction was therefore not without alloy.

Early in the ensuing week he had a line from Travers—

"Just come back. Are you free tomorrow? And shall we have our deferred dinner? right sharp, wire 'yes' or 'no.'"

It was with mixed feelings that Tulloch accepted the invitation. He had an odd kind of growing repentance and dislike towards Travers. When they had met in India—Tulloch then this hard-working junior in a respectable, but by no means a great commercial firm—thought it lent dignity to his social position to be on friendly terms with so well-known a sportsman and member of the "upper ten" as Travers. Since his reverse of fortune, and Tulloch's rapid advance, the latter's soul burned within him with pride at the contrast between the present and past.

In a way he felt kindly and compassionate towards Travers, for Tulloch was not without feeling, and could be generous in the sense of giving money on occasions; but it riled him not to be able to look down from the height of his advancing prosperity on his friend as an unfortunate fellow. Somehow there was an undefinable superiority about Travers, which Tulloch instinctively felt he could never touch—a certain high-bred quiet tone of absolute self-reliance that would be the same to king or cobbler, and perfectly polite to both—a sense of being behind the scenes, in circles which as yet were unexplored by him; as yet only—for in this "fin de siècle" all things are possible to success; nor is there a social holy of holies impenetrable to an accumulator of the dross that makes the world go round. Still, though Travers had "come down" considerably, and was but "more than an upper servant" to Lord Balmuir, by Jove, Jamie Tulloch was pleased to say he had been dining with him—a sort of connection of mine, and he was saying, etc.—there would follow some bit of political gossip or forecast. Their mutual friendship with Carey and his daughters was another source of irritation, though the rivalry was not prompted by any special regard for Kate; as far as he was concerned Jamie thought Travers was nowhere. But there was a general sympathy between him and the trio—a confidence and similarity that Tulloch perceived though he could hardly define, notwithstanding the very kind welcome always bestowed upon himself.

Travers saw that there was something on Tulloch's mind as dinner proceeded. He was rather cynical in his remarks, and laughing louder and oftener than was necessary. When they reached their dessert and needed no more waiting, conversation naturally became more confidential.

"Another glass of claret, Tulloch," said Travers, pushing the bottle towards him. It's not bad; were you mature enough, when you used to visit Carey in the old days, to appreciate his claret? I always liked good things, and I don't think I have ever tasted any wine that surpassed it. Poor old boy!—and how liberal he was with it."

"If he had been less liberal with it and many other things it would have been better, and he'd have given his friends as trouble," growled Tulloch.

"Come! He has not given much except his daughters, and they are unconscious victims."

"Why you know they are always consulting you and sending for you."

"If I don't mind why need any one else? And if it bores you to go out to Notting-hill, Tulloch, why don't go; I dare say they'll forgive you."

"Oh! you think so," with a self-sufficient grin.

"Have you seen Carey since he returned? I hear that he has won golden opinions from Winks & Co."

"No, I haven't," said Tulloch, "but I called on Saturday—the Saturday after he came home—and I was a good deal annoyed and put out."

"Indeed! Was Kate captious? she is sometimes."

"There was no one in the room but a lady I was very much surprised to see there—a deuced pretty girl I can tell you, who has more as well as looks: Miss Golding."

"Ah! I know," ejaculated Travers.

"Well, I said I didn't expect to see her there, and she said she was amazed to meet me. We had gone down to dinner together at Sir Peter Ingou's, and talked half the evening at Mr. Tremlet's reception, and I fancy she rather took to me; and never thinking how they came to know each other, I said, 'Oh! I'm a cousin, a sort of cousin of the Miss Careys.' 'No! are you?' said she, with a little scream. 'Why, Miss Carey is my assistant music mistress.' 'Not very nice for me. I can tell you I was taken aback.'"

"Why?" asked Travers, quietly.

"Why, man! you don't mean to say that you can not see the disadvantage of having poor relations in the eyes of a girl who has been brought up in the lap of luxury, and surrounded by such wealthy people all her days? Of course, she will think less of me."

"Very likely. Has she struck you off her visiting list yet?"

"I never knew whether you are in earnest or not, Travers, but I can tell you I am just at a turning point in my career, and it's a very serious matter the choice of a wife: the sooner I make it the better, hey?"

"No doubt, and where are you disposed to throw the handkerchief?"

"Well, Travers, I have been going out a good bit to dinners, and dances, and receptions, and in a very good, solid set, though I say it. It's wonderful what a lot of nice-looking young women I have met, all well off, able to bring a fair amount of capital into the partnership. Now, that's a great help, and I don't think a man is justified in throwing away his chances, however elegant he may be about a pretty face and an elegant figure."

"That depends on the man, and what he considers most essential."

"Now," resumed Tulloch. "I confess I was awfully annoyed about those girls—the Careys, I mean—for keeping me in the dark about what they were doing, and letting me in for that disagreeable encounter with Miss Golding."

"Keeping you in the dark?" repeated Travers, with a touch of scorn in his tone.

"What do you mean? Where you not perfectly aware that Alicia gives music lessons, and that Kate wears out her pretty fingers writing for old Winks? that was nothing new to you. You have no right to complain because they did not submit a list of their employers' names to you."

"No, no, of course not, still it was awkward. They're good girls, very good. I'm sure I admire and commend them, but still one can't expect a girl like Miss Golding to take that view exactly, and it was unpleasant. Decidedly unpleasant. Yes, thank you, I'll take another glass."

"No doubt you found the encounter trying," put in Travers.

Tulloch, however, required no incentive to talk. He had taken a good deal of wine, and was full of his subject.

"I see, I am a good bit troubled and perplexed. I am greatly struck with Kate Carey."

Travers had looked round, and observed that the dining-room was rather empty, while the table was in a corner, remote from the other diners. He, therefore, encouraged his guest by observing, in a sympathetic key.

"Yes, I have noticed it."

"Eh, man," continued, Jamie, warming to his subject, "there aren't many like her. What eyes she has! How they melt and sparkle, and her golden-red brown hair, and her bonnie sweet mouth! Eh, I'm like to make a fool of myself about her, and then she is a bit of a me!" Ah, lad! I don't think I'm wrong, and she's good right through, but Travers, though I would love her well, it wouldn't only be marrying her, but the father and the sister, and I'm not sure I've a right to take such a burden on my shoulder. After, you see, man? After, when the fire was quenched a bit, I might be sorry—that would be unjust to her."

"I'm immensely enjoying wringing his neck," thought Travers, looking steadily at him. "He's a big fellow, but I think I could do it."

"You are right—that you are—but it's a deuced hard. Now look here, there's that infernal Crystal Palace business?"

"I shouldn't trouble about that if I were you. You can get out of it easily enough. I'll take the trip."

"No, no, no," energetically. "I'll not go back of my word. Let us settle all about it, and after I'll be more prudent."

The details of this long promised excursion were soon arranged, the following Saturday being fixed as most convenient for everyone. The general half-holiday, though less general than now, making that day the usual teatime with all classes.

They were rising from table when a man who had been dining by himself came across the room, and saying, "Mr. Travers, I think," offered his hand. He was a broad thick-set man, dark and rugged-looking, with a pair of stern, resolute eyes. Travers shook hands with him cordially.

"Very sorry to have missed you when you called. I have been out of town for nearly a week," he said.

"If you'll fix any time when you can see me I'll call again. We all want you to consider your refusal to join us. Believe me, you are throwing away a good thing—a thing that would suit you exactly. You're just the lieutenant I want, and there's money in the concern."

"I have no doubt of it, but—"

"Let me have a talk with you. Dinner with me tomorrow."

"To-morrow I am engaged."

"The next day, then, eight o'clock, Morley's Hotel."

"Thank you, I shall be very happy," returned Travers.

"Who is that?" asked Tulloch, as they went out into the Hall, and took their hats and coats from the attendant.

"Captain Garston. He is the leader of an exploring party that the African Mining Company, a concern started by Finlay, the brewer, is sending out to the wilds behind the Portuguese settlements on the East Coast. They want me to join them. No doubt it may turn out a very good thing for these who venture first, or it may not. It is a sort of thing I should like well enough and I am sick of town life."

"Why don't you go?" cried Tulloch, with some eagerness. "You might make a lump of money, instead of plodding on at a beggarly salary. Why don't you go?"

"Oh, I hardly know. In some ways it would not answer."

"Well, you know your own affairs best. We'll be sure to meet between this and Saturday. So, good night."

CHAPTER XII.—A GHOST FROM THE PAST.

At the period of this story, the Crystal Palace was considered rather an appropriate scene for elegant festivities, and distinguished members of the "upper ten" gave luxurious dinner parties there, and strolled about the grounds or gazed at the widespread landscape, or the gorgeous fire works from the broad balconies. Its

glories are gone, but they were quite satisfactory while they lasted, and not only Kate, but even Alicia, who took things much more coldly, was elated at the prospect of a day among the beauties and curiosities of the gardens and wonders of Sydenham Hill.

"Shall you want me especially tomorrow, Mr. Winks?" asked Kate, who was busy pasting a collection of newspaper cuttings, accumulated during a long period by her employer, in a book.

Mr. Winks had been obliged to keep away from business on account of a slight indisposition, an attack of faintness, at which the doctor looked grave, and counselled complete repose. Winks sat very quietly in his easiest chair, and directed her operations languidly.

"I expect a gentleman on business tomorrow morning," he returned, but I should be glad to see you in the afternoon. I don't feel equal to much."

"At the same time," said Kate, as he paused, "you are going to disobey orders, and see a gentleman on business. Now, if Miss Winks did such a thing you would scold her."

Winks smiled rather a feeble smile.

"The business will be short and simple," he said, "and I shall know no rest until it is accomplished. But do you want a holiday tomorrow? Why?"

"Yes, I do for a cousin of ours is going to take us all to the Crystal Palace, and I should like to go very much."

"I hope you are not growing fond of pleasure?"

"No, Mr. Winks, I am not growing fond of pleasure. I never could be fonder of it than I have always been."

"Still you have been diligent, and never asked me for a holiday before."

"My work has been intermittent, you know, and if I could not work diligently for you, for whom could I?"

Winks did not reply, but a softer look stole over his wrinkled face.

"Very well," he said, after a pause. "There is no necessity for your coming here to-morrow and on Monday I hope to be at the office."

"Thank you. I hope you will be able to go out, but Mr. Winks, I like coming to work here very much. Could you not have your letters sent up and dictate your replies to me? I can write quite a good business hand now, and—b-but I fear I take a liberty by speaking so fully." A sweet blush stole over her cheek and she looked deprecatingly at him, and a soothing warmth stole into the little man's half-starved heart as he felt, with a conviction he could never reason about nor resist, that this bright, fair young creature heartily liked him, and, if necessary, would nurse him as tenderly, as carefully as if he were her father. Winks was very weak today, and could not resist these foolish sort of feelings, though he was properly ashamed of them.

"No, you mean no freedom," he returned, drily. "You might be more careful of your speech, not with me but with other strangers."

"And do you think I speak to every one as I speak to you?" she said, indignantly.

"That I cannot tell. However, you can go to the Crystal Palace if you like, only do not spend much of your own money."

"O, dear me, no. We would never dream of going had we not been invited, even though we are much better off now, since you were so very good as to help us help ourselves. Thank you so much. I will come round on Sunday to see how you are, and if you want me on Monday. Do you like the Crystal Palace, Mr. Winks?"

"I have never seen it."

"Never?" echoed Kate, much astonished.

"Nor Miss Winks? O, you really ought to go! The gardens, the fountains, the view—all are lovely."

"It is too late to learn such joys," said Winks, somewhat grudgingly but with a slight smile.

"Oh, no, I hope not. I do hope not," cried Kate. "Perhaps Miss Winks will come again some evening, and you too, to see us. It will be a fortnight on Sunday since you came."

"It is rather late for me to begin paying calls. Now please write the heading of the next page. These cuttings all relate to the working of an orphanage I am interested in, though I am sorry to see it has been a good deal mismanaged lately. Here the conversation ended."

The long anticipated Saturday was soft and balmy, but somewhat uncertain in its aspect, with many scattered clouds veiling the heavens.

Mr. Carey, moreover, prophesied that it would clear up and turn out a "hissing hot" afternoon.

They found their escort waiting for them at Victoria, and Travers observed there was very little increase of prudence or diminution of ardour in Tulloch's attention to his attractive kinswoman—notwithstanding the prudent view entertained by him when she was out of his sight. It was excusable, Travers thought, for Kate had never looked more charming—there was a soft joyousness in her eyes and voice, a sparkle in her pleasant natural talk, which made his heart ache with the knowledge that he must not attempt to win so bright, so precious a "jewel," as her father justly termed her. However, Travers practised the prudence Tulloch talked about, and bestowed his conversation and his care on the elder sister.

On the whole, it was a pleasant day. They roamed about chiefly in the gardens, though the courts were also visited.

"It is nonsense attempting to keep together," said Tulloch early in the afternoon. "Let us fix a meeting place for six-thirty, as we'll have plenty of time then to dine before securing places to see the fireworks."

"I fancy it would be more lively not to separate," exclaimed Kate, "but if we do drift apart let us meet near that screen at the east end, with all the kings and queens on it."

Travers highly approved of her suggestion, but was rather puzzled by the decided flirtation which Kate not only permitted but encouraged. Could she really like this rather animal relative, who was undeniably a handsome man, and had the merit (always great in a woman's eyes) of being her warm admirer. Travers did not like the way things were drifting, and did his best to avoid separation. But Tulloch who represented the centrepiece force on this occasion, managed to circumvent him—till meeting in the Pompeian Court, where Travers was doing showman's duty, as he had frequently visited the original, he exclaimed:—"Come, Kate, I shall not submit to be cut in this fashion. Why, I haven't seen you for ten days."

Tulloch never could quite stand up against Travers when he was in earnest, so in another minute Kate found herself walking beside her kinsman towards the wide southern balcony.

"You are very tyrannical, Cousin Dick," she said, with a sweet upward glance.

"I deny that. I am not inclined to be done out of my rights, and Tulloch must be content to come second; excuse my audacity, but I am your first love." Kate laughed merrily, dropped her parasol and stooped to pick it up.

"Certainly you are our first friend, our best friend, dear Dick," she added in a lower tone.

"Don't be grateful," Kate. That is too trying," returned Travers, and something in his tone brought the warm blood to her cheek. "Come, let us sit here and enjoy the view. It is almost best here about this big show, and he found a couple of chairs which he drew to the front of the balcony, where they sat for a few minutes in silence.

"How much beauty there is in these grey days," said Kate at last. "Brilliant sunshine is vulgar compared to this tender neutral colouring."

"Yes, but I am afraid it betokens a wet evening. We have a cruelly uncertain climate."

"I suppose the uncertainty seems especially unpleasant to you after your frequent sojourn in sunny land."

"Well, it is, though I must confess that in climates full of sunshine, though splendid their eyes, but I find the odours the flowers shed about it. The mist and the cloud of our own weeping skies. That draw their full spirit of fragrant out?"

"I am glad you read Moore. He is sweet," she murmured.

"Sweet, but not strong," said Travers. "He is full of the femininity of your race, which makes your woman irresistible—but your men—"

"Don't say disagreeable things about them, Dick! I do not want to quarrel. It is a sort of day that ought to be sacred to friendship, with its soft subdued tint. I suppose you begin to weary of the shadows and the sameness, for Jamie Tulloch tells me you are thinking of this exploring expedition to Africa!"

"Tulloch must be at a loss for conversation to trouble you with such vague reports. I have been asked to join an expedition, certainly, as I mentioned, but have refused."

"Yet I am sure you do not like London?"

"I get sick of it, but I return to it with a sort of zest. At present, however, I am going to stay here."

"I suppose Lord Balmuir cannot part with you?"

"He might survive the parting, but I stay for reasons of my own."

"Though you are so fond of adventure and sport and wandering in wild places? I always notice, Dick, that if you drift into talk about your past exploits there is more life and earnestness in your voice than when you are speaking of other things. You must be sick of sitting at a desk nearly all day after the freedom you have been accustomed to."

"It was all my trouble I should endure it well enough," said Travers as if to himself.

"We all have our troubles which nobody knows anything about," returned Kate; "and we must bear with them until they wear themselves out. I suppose most of them fly away in time." She sighed as she spoke, and gazed dreamily away over the rich country spread out like a map before them.

"I wish life was brighter for you my dear cousin," he said, stealing a glance at her face. "For a creature gifted with a keen sense of enjoyment—such an appreciative taste for pleasure—the routine of your existence must be dreary enough."

"I do not think it is. Don't you remember, Dick, that some historians in his account of the woeful retreat from Moscow mentions that the troops who took to the cruel cold and hardships but were the Southern Italians who had been steeped in sunshine all their lives. I enjoy so much, when I have a little enjoyment, that the glow lasts me for quite a long spell of outside dreariness, and gives me strength."

"Ah, Kate, I suspect that the light which surrounds you, the warm b, which invigorates you, is all from within, from the central fire of your own great heart, my sweet cousin, and I Travers looked into her eyes with an expression which was a caress.

"No fine speeches, Dick," she exclaimed, laughing, but blushing also. "We are too friendly, too sincere for such compliments."

"I never am guilty of paying you compliments, Kate, as you well know." He paused an instant, and went on, "So you managed to pick up some crumbs of comfort, some blossoms of pleasure on this dusty road of everyday life. The joy of sitting with Tulloch for instance. By-the-way, what are you going to do with that ingenious youth?"

"Why, Dick, he is very little younger than you are."

"Oh yes, he is younger in hope and achievement, but I repeat as you him—boozing him or—!" He looked straight at her as he paused.

"I am amusing myself," said Kate, with much composure.

"Are you not afraid that what is play to you may be death to him?"

"Not a bit!" she exclaimed, with a delicious smile, half-sweet, half-mocking. "Jamie Tulloch will take a great deal of killing, and I, who have so little to amuse me, manage to contrive a good deal of harmless fun in the process."

"And perhaps he'll excel the excellent Caledonian's wounds finally?"

"All things are possible," returned Kate, demurely.

"Possibly you might do worse. Jamie is on the high road to wealth."

A consideration to which I am by no means indifferent," she said, with a thoughtful air.

"Few women are!" exclaimed Travers, feeling uncomfortably surprised.

"Or men either, and small wonder. Is there anything worse than want of money, real downright want of money?"

"Yes, it is pretty bad. Then love in a cottage, a struggle for life with the man of your heart, will not be your line?"

"Of course not! With a gay laugh. 'Have I not had enough of poverty and pinching? And you see, Dick, I could only marry a very rich man—a man who could afford to marry me! What a rare bird he would be!—a man who was equally rich and generous. Do you think all the gold in Ophir—all the gems in Golconda—all the love of which his nature is capable would enrich Jamie Tulloch