

A Mr. Calhoun of Richmond, a suburb of New York, appears to have paid her some attentions. She must have greatly exaggerated them to her mother, for Mrs. Pomeroy evidently believes that it is fully in her power to marry the young man if she likes. It will be a merciful escape for Sir Archibald for a while, even though they can be divorced so easily in New York.

Sir Archibald Maxwell Mackenzie

I KNEW the moment I opened my eyes that morning that the day of the picnic had come. The sun was shining brightly, the birds were singing. Even before breakfast there were tourists sitting on Grey Tor and holding on to the rails. I could see them against the sky. When we were all at breakfast, even the old women were excited about the picnic, and as to Miss Virginia, there was no holding her at all. She pointed out that she had dressed for the picnic in a brand-new frock especially built by one of the smart court dressmakers for such occasions, for which it was about as well suited (I pointed out) as a ball-dress would have been. It was no good my saying anything, that these brilliant mornings were not to be trusted, that the road to Widdington-in-the-Wolds was the worst in the country, that there was nothing

to do or see when you got there; I was overruled on every point, and all the arrangements were made. I must own I was not in a good temper anyway. A man has his ups and downs; I had had a worrying letter from the steward at Kindarroch. My tobacco was done and the fresh packet had n't arrived with the morning post, so that my pouch was filled with a filthy weed from the hotel. Had our party been composed of only Miss Virginia and her mother, it would not have been so bad, for then I should have insisted on giving them lunch at a pothouse, and all the horrors of an *al fresco* entertainment would have been avoided. But Mrs. MacGill and her companion were a part of the show, and the old woman actually hinted that I was to drive her in the pony-shay, while Johnson conducted the rest of the party in the motor! I showed her her mistake both clearly and promptly, and had her packed off about an hour before we started; except for the companion, who is a decent sort of girl,

I could have wished her to capsize on the way.

We got off in the motor all right — Miss Virginia on the box seat with me, and the mother behind with Johnson. The going was all right for the first few miles. Virginia did most of the talking, which was lucky, for I was not brilliant. It seems odd how a fellow's mood can be stronger than circumstances. Here was I, on a lovely day, with a pretty girl on the box beside me, nothing so very much as yet to have put me out, as black as a thundercloud. Of course the idiocy of a picnic (on which I have dwelt before) always puts my back up; I did n't want to come, and yet on this occasion, for some reason or other, I could not stay away. I really think that feeling more than anything else made me so devilish ill-tempered. I had soon good cause enough for ill temper, however. The road was all right at first, as I said, but presently it gave a dip, and then without the slightest warning we found our-

selves on a hill as steep as the sides of a well, and about as comfortable for a motor as the precipices of Mont Blanc. It was dangerous. I hate being in unnecessary danger myself — it is silly; and as to being in danger with women in charge, it is the very devil. I jammed on the brakes, and we went skidding and scraping down, showers of grit and gravel being thrown up in our faces, the whole machine shaking to bits with the strain. It was a miracle nothing happened worse than the loss of my temper. The hill got easier after about a mile. Miss Virginia, who had been frightened to death but had kept quiet and held on tight, began to laugh and talk again; but I showed pretty plainly I was in no laughing or talking mood. I kept a grim silence and looked ahead. I saw her turn and look at me, once or twice, in a surprised way, and then she suddenly became quite quiet too. In this significant silence, we drew up at the village inn, where Mrs. MacGill and Miss Evesham had already arrived.

Guide-books and artists talk yards about this place, Widdington-in-the-Wolds, but as usual there is nothing to see but a church, a particularly insanitary churchyard, a few thatched cottages, two or three big sycamore trees, and an inn, so very small as to be hardly visible to the naked eye.

We found the Exeter artist here before us, and I walked off with him at once, leaving the women to themselves. Otherwise I should certainly have burst, I believe; it is not healthy to refrain from bad language too long. However, all the agonies of picnic had to be gone through, — lunch in a ditch, cold, clammy food, forced conversation, and all the rest of it. Certainly that picnic was a failure; even Miss Virginia was subdued. When the feeding was done, I went off with Willoughby, the artist, again. I don't know what the women did with themselves, I am sure. As I had foretold, the weather had changed; there had been one cold shower already, and the clouds were piling up in the

sky, threatening a wet, cold, and windy afternoon. I knew how it would be, perfectly well, before we started, but no one would heed me.

Cecilia Evesham

*Tuesday evening*

THIS will be a long story to tell. On Monday morning Mrs. MacGill was very lively, perhaps wakened up by the explosion of the previous night. She came down to breakfast, and was persuaded by the Pomeroy's to undertake an expedition to Widdington-in-the-Wolds, an outlying hamlet famous for an old church.

"It is long since I have lunched out of doors, Mrs. Pomeroy," she said, "but the doctor has so strongly recommended carriage exercise and fresh air to me, that I dare say on such a very fine morning I might make the attempt, if you are thinking of it."

Mrs. Pomeroy had been made to think of it by the fair Virginia, as I well knew; for the expedition was to be carried out in Sir Archibald's motor.

"One should always make an effort to see

all places of interest in a neighbourhood," Mrs. Pomeroy observed, with the sigh of the conscientious American sight-seer, and Mrs. MacGill assented. My heart sank. Fancy visiting places of interest in the company of Mrs. MacGill! But, as Browning has it, "Never the hour and the place and the loved one all together!" I have noticed the curious, indomitable tendency of tiresome people to collect and reappear in these exquisite places most favoured by nature; more suited, it would seem, for angel visitants than for the flat-footed multitude, but I digress.

The fact remained that it was in close company with Mrs. MacGill that I was to visit the solitudes of Dartmoor, — Mrs. MacGill in a bead-trimmed mantle, a bonnet ornamented with purple velvet pansies, and an eis-wool shawl tied round her throat.

I was to drive her in the pony cart; even her fears were not aroused by the dejected appearance of Greytoria as that noble animal was led up to the front door.

"I am glad to see that the horse does not look spirited," she said; "for though you say you are so well accustomed to driving, I always prefer a coachman."

With a quick twitch of the reins I raised Greytoria's drooping nose from the dust. She seemed surprised, but ambled off in the indicated direction.

"The road" — to quote Christina Rossetti — "wound uphill all the way," and a long way it was. We crawled along at about the rate of a mile an hour over that rough and stony track. The lines I have just quoted haunted my memory with their dismal significance — Life, life! your long uphill road has little promise of rest for me.

We toiled on. Then the summit was gained at last, and down below us, in a little nest-like green valley, huddled between the swelling brown moors, lay Widdington-in-the Wolds, the Mecca of our pilgrimage.

"There it is at last!" I cried. "See the quaint old church tower!" I actually ap-

pealed to Mrs. MacGill for sympathy, so great was my enthusiasm. It was a mistake.

"I see little to admire, Cecilia," she said, "and do look after the pony."

Her admonition was not unnecessary. In my delight I had risen in my seat and let the reins slip out of my inattentive fingers. Greytoria, in a manner peculiar to herself, had begun the descent of the terrifying hill which leads down to Widdington. Clapping her heels together like a bowing Frenchman, she let herself slide down the decline. I realized this in a moment, but it was rather too late. There was a long, scraping slither; I put on the drag hard, and tried to hold up Greytoria's head. The attempt was vain; she turned round and looked at me, and then, without making any farther effort, quite simply sat down in the traces, the chaise resting gracefully on her back.

Mrs. MacGill cried out with terror, and, indeed, I felt ready to do the same. Not a

soul was anywhere in sight. Only far down below us, at the foot of the terrible Widdington hill, could help be procured.

"Oh, Cecilia, this is what comes of trusting you to drive," cried Mrs. MacGill.

This stiffened me up a little, and I determined to unharness Greytoria.

"Come and sit by the roadside," I said. "I'll get her unharnessed, and once on her legs again there won't be any harm done; it's not as if she had broken her knees."

"I did n't know that horses *could* sit down," wailed Mrs. MacGill.

"Well, it is an uncommon accomplishment," I admitted, tugging at the harness buckles.

Greytoria turned a mild old eye upon me; she seemed accustomed to the process of being unharnessed, but did not make any attempt to rise.

I thought as I tugged at that buckle that the whole thing was symbolical of life for

me. Was n't I forever tugging at obstinate buckles of one sort or another? I dare say such morbid thoughts should have had no place in my fancy at a moment of practical difficulty, but there are some people made in this way; their thoughts flow on in an undercurrent to events. So I tugged away, and my thoughts worked on also.

It was no easy task, this, of getting Greytoria on her legs again; but I achieved it at last, and she stood up, abject, trembling, with drooping head and bowed knees, regarding the hill before her.

"We must walk down to the inn, I'm afraid, Mrs. MacGill," I said. "I've got Greytoria into the chaise again, but if we add our weight to it, she will just sit down a second time."

"Oh, what a hill to go down on foot!" cried Mrs. MacGill, but she saw that it was inevitable, so we began the long descent, I leading Greytoria, Mrs. MacGill trailing behind. Down below us the green valley smiled

and beckoned us forward, yet like every peaceful oasis, it had to be gained with toil and difficulty. As we plodded down that weary hill, shall I confess that my thoughts turned a little bitterly to Virginia's side of the day's pleasuring? Why should she, young, rich, and beautiful, have the pleasant half of the expedition, — a ride in a motor with a nice young man who was falling in love with her, while I was doomed to trail along with Mrs. MacGill? Why did some women get everything? Surely I needed amusement and relaxation more than Virginia did, but it is n't those who need relaxation who ever get it: "to him that hath shall be given," as the Bible cynically and truly observes.

Every few yards Mrs. MacGill would call out to me to stop: she was getting too tired; it was so cold; the road was so rough. But at last the foot of the hill was gained, and with a sigh of relief she bundled into the chaise again. She had, however, no eyes for

the interest or beauty of the place we had reached with such difficulty. All her faculties, such as they are, were concentrated on wondering where and when we would get some food. As we passed the church, she looked the other way. I was almost glad. I flicked Greytoria, her flagging pace quickened, and attempting a trot, we drove up to the inn door.

"I suppose we must wait for the others," Mrs. MacGill sighed peevishly, "but really after all I have gone through, I feel much in want of food."

"They will soon be here," I said, "and on the way home Greytoria will go better."

"Well, as she goes badly up hill, and won't go down at all, I scarcely see how we are to get home so well," she retorted, with a measure of truth.

As I looked at the hill that we should need to recomb before we reached home, my heart misgave me too; but just then the motor hove in sight, a scarlet blot at

the top of the hill, and we became interested in watching its descent. How it spun down! Almost before we could believe it possible, it dashed up to the inn door, and Virginia jumped out. She was in exuberant spirits. The drive had been just lovely; she adored Widdington; the hill only gave her delicious creeps; she was n't a bit tired or cold.

"Yes," thought I, "it's easy to be neither cold nor tired when you are happy and amused and young and rich! Try to drive with Mrs. MacGill when you are feeling ill, and can't afford to buy warm clothes, and see how you like it!"

Mrs. Pomeroy was less enthusiastic, and Sir Archibald was dumbly regarding the tires of the motor, which had suffered strange things.

"Hello," he said, as he glanced up at the window of the inn, "there's that artist fellow who was at Exeter. Suppose he's come to 'see the gorse.'"

He nodded up at the window, took out his pipe, and began to fill it, directing Johnson to take the luncheon basket out of the motor.

Then the artist, Mr. Willoughby, came sauntering out of the door. I dare say he had had enough of gorse and solitude, for he seemed glad to greet even a casual acquaintance like Sir Archibald. The position of being the one man in a party of women had palled upon Sir Archibald only too apparently, for he met Mr. Willoughby with — for him — quite unwonted geniality, and they strolled off together down the road. Virginia put her hand through my arm, and drew me in the direction of the church.

“We’re not going on very well this morning, Cecilia,” she confided to me. “He’s so Scotch, Sir Archibald is, what they call ‘canny,’ and I’ve made him very cross by dragging him off on this expedition. All the tires of the motor are cut, and he hates

eating out of doors. I can see that I’ve vexed him to madness.”

I laughed, and so did she.

“Why did you make him do it?” I asked.

“I wanted to put him to some sort of test,” she replied. “Unless a man will do what he dislikes for you, he is n’t worth much.”

“I’m afraid you are going to play with this young man’s affections,” I said very severely, for her tone was frivolous.

“Am I?” she murmured. “I wonder!”

There was a moment of silence between us. I felt all manner of thrills of interest and sympathy. If you can’t be happy yourself, the next best thing is to see other people happy. If, as I now suspected, Virginia was not playing with Sir Archibald’s affections, then I was eagerly on her side. Words are not necessary, however, and Virginia must have divined my sympathy.

We had reached the lich-gate, and there,