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A SAD OCTOBER HOUR

On the lowest terrace overlooking the park a woman was standing, leaning one elbow against the stone edge of the balustrade and wistfully regarding the autumnal foliage.

The woman's face was full of happy expectation. It was no longer very young or fresh, but it was still of charm and tenderness. Under her hat the glossy waves of her hair were scarcely touched with a gray thread.

Mrs. Chesney was conscious that in taste and education she belonged to a different epoch from that of the lively guests round her. They were absolutely modern, and she had very little in common with them. Since her husband's death she had lived quietly and almost alone in a country house, gardening, studying, working for the poor. When at last she had made up her mind to accept the invitation of a cousin of her husband's the effort had been painful and depressing. She had grown slier and more silent in those years of quietude. Even in her new fashioned clothes she somehow looked of a different world from that of Miss Vincent and Lady Norledge, who were the beauties of the party.

"My dear, she is essentially early Victorian!" was the verdict of the lively Lady Norledge as she discussed Mrs. Chesney with a friend. But now on this October afternoon, standing alone in the fleeting sunshine and among the falling leaves, Mrs. Chesney felt young, triumphant and absolutely indifferent to the opinions of every living soul excepting those of the person whose advent she was awaiting.

She had felt as if she were in a dream when her host a few days ago had announced the approaching arrival of a new and distinguished guest. The name of General Trebovir was in everybody's mouth.

Some ten years ago Hilary had parted from this man with an anguish that was no less unbearable because she had known that his love for her was as strong as her own and perhaps even the motive for much that was noblest and best in his life. During those years, which had seemed an eternity, these two had held no communication with one another.

This had been her wish alone, for he had strongly maintained that, unhappily married as she was, a friendship so pure and devoted as his for her must at least make it easier for her to exist under what was too heavy a load for a solitary woman. But she had remained firm, and he had gone away in bitterness of spirit. Now, to-day she felt sure he was coming here for her, and her alone, and she was joyfully waiting.

Then, though she could not help noticing how gorgeous the chrysanthemums seemed as the sunlight fell in a long streak across their faces, she knew that he was coming down the steps at the corner and straight toward her. Her knees were shaking, and there was a curious singing in her ears, through which she heard his pleasant voice speaking. Half mechanically she put out both her hands.

"My dear Mrs. Chesney, this is indeed a pleasure! I had not the remotest idea when Franklin told me that I should find a charming party that his words were to be so truly fulfilled."

Hilary had let one hand drop and looked at him, still half smiling. His words and his manner had hurt her, but she was emphatically brave, and her tremulous expression had suddenly given way to one that was calm and friendly.

"I, too, was delighted," she said, "when they told me you were coming." Then, with a sudden impulse, she added, "But my stay here is very short, for I am afraid I must go tomorrow or the next day."

"Oh, what a pity! Can't you put off duty engagements—for I am sure that is what they are—and stay on just a little longer?"

He spoke kindly and as if he wished her to remain, but without a trace of emotion.

The general took out his watch.

"It was very good of you to want me to come and see you out here, but I must, I fear, go in and write something rather important for the post. I wish I could have stayed on longer now and chatted about old times."

"Yes; I wish you could."

A streak of light fell on his face. Yes, he was not much altered, and his gray hair became him.

"Well, we will go on with our talk later," said he.

He raised his hat and turned away to mount the steps.

On the topmost terrace another figure now caught her eye. It was that of a young woman, very graceful and alert and dressed in an exquisite gown of crimson and fur. This person paused and held a hand up to her eyes. Then Hilary saw her start off, walking very quickly down the gravel path that led toward the first flight of steps. The sight of her jarred upon Mrs. Chesney. She represented the incarnation of all the qualities that Hilary most despised. She was empty headed, shallow, vain and looked upon the world with no sense of the proportion of things. And yet it was impossible to deny that she was superlatively graceful and that her dark eyes were as beautiful as they were undoubtedly reckless in expression. Mrs. Chesney watched her as she went along, and at the corner by the clipped yew tree Lady Norledge stopped. The figure of a jail man had climbed the topmost step. In the clear, still air Hilary heard their voices. His sounded just as it used to do years ago. He had taken Lady Norledge's two hands and was holding them in his.—Chicago Times-Herald.

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