



"Flung the bottle itself into mid-stream."

It would be good for me, they would be good for me?" he said.

"If you drink any deadly thing it shall not hurt you," quoted Alice.

"My!" said Theodosia, "you'd better become a Christian Scientist at once, Silas. Silas adores, he just adores English beer, but it's absolute poison to him. Now, Lady Yardly, how did he get the idea that English beer was poison to him? It disagreed with him from the first moment he put his lips to it."

"Theodosia," began Silas. But he was not permitted to continue. "Intoxicant drinks are in themselves evil things," said Alice. "You will find that in Mrs. Eddy's miscellaneous writings, I never touch them."

Count Villars joined in. "That is taken to prove it?" he asked politely. "Is Mrs. Eddy always inspired? Cannot she have attacks of error or mortal mind? Is it not, as Oliver Cromwell said, just possible that Mrs. Eddy made a mistake? I should have thought one might find instances where intoxicating fluids had possibly saved life in cases of exhaustion or exposure to cold."

Maud broke in again. "Dear Alice, you are leading everybody away from the point, you know," she said; "you really do go on saying 'Cuckoo, cuckoo,' long after the hour has struck. I want to talk about one thing, and you are encouraging Thurso and Count Villars to talk about others. I did see, and I stick to it, I did see a man, who was past human power, pulled back into life by Mr. Cochran. Also—I have only his word for it, but that seems to me a very sound thing, as you would all think if you knew him—he told me he was demonstrating over the whole outbreak of fever. Well, no fresh case occurred after he had begun doing that."

"My!" said Theodosia again, "I wish he would come to New York when the influenza was about. I guess influenza needs a lot of demonstration. Why, if there isn't the motor coming round, and I'm not ready yet."

Thurso got up too. "Well, who wants to go over to Windsor, and who wants to go on the river, and who wants to do nothing?" he asked.

This broke up the conference, as it was designed to do. Count Villars and Lady Yardly expressed a preference for the river, Thurso and Theodosia with her husband went to Windsor, Ruby Majendie and Jim had already vanished, and Lord Yardly murmured something about letters and went toward the house. In consequence, Maud and her sister-in-law, both of whom preferred to do nothing whatever, were left alone. There had been a certain design about this, though successfully veiled, on Lily's part. She wanted to talk to Maud, and very gentle hinting had been sufficient to make other people choose other things. Count Villars seemed disposed to reconsider the respective values of the river and the lawn when he realized what the disposition of the party was, but he was already committed and did not attempt diplomatic evasions which would have deceived nobody.

The rest of the party dispersed in their various directions, and it was not till the motor had crunched the drive, and the steam launch puffed its way past the yew hedge, that Lily spoke again.

"Tell me more about this Mr. Cochran," she said. Maud was already half-immersed in her book: she had been quite unconscious of Lily's diplomacy. She started, however, when the question was put to her, and flushed a little.

"There really is no more to tell," she said. "I think I have told you all. By the way, he is coming to town some time this month. You could see him if you wanted. He did cure Sandy; also he cured Duncan Fraser's wife. I am convinced of those things. Then there is the other fact: the typhoid ceased when he, so to speak, took it in

hand. Of course, you may say it was a coincidence; you may say that those cures, too, were coincidences. But when coincidences come in a bunch like that, one wonders if there is not some—well, some law—which governs them and accounts for them."

"A lot of apples and other things fell to the ground," she said, "and Newton deduced the law of gravity from them."

Lily Thurso lit a cigarette, and threw the match away with quite unnecessary vigor.

"What a fool Alice Yardly is!" she observed. "She isn't she? Somehow if a person talks such abject nonsense as that about anything, one concludes that the subject she is talking about is nonsense, too. But it doesn't follow. And Mr. Cochran doesn't talk nonsense?" she asked.

"No. He isn't the least nonsensical. As you see, he goes and cures people when they are really ill, instead of—well, guessing. He's a very good fisherman, too."

Lily could not help laughing, Maud had mentioned this in a voice of such high approval.

"But isn't that inconsistent?" she asked. "If you don't believe in the reality of death, it seems to me odd to go and kill things."

"Oh, I think it's inconsistent," said Maud, "and so does he. But did you ever see anybody who wasn't inconsistent? I never did. I never want to, either—he would be so very dull. Like a chronometer."

"And Mr. Cochran isn't?"

Maud raised her eyebrows, and dropped the book she was reading.

"Dear Lily," she said, "are you fishing?"

Lily laughed again.

"I think I am," she remarked. "About me? Of course, I will tell you, then, and save you the trouble. I am not in the least in love with Mr. Cochran, nor have I the smallest reason to believe that he is in love with me. That was the sort of fishing you meant, wasn't it? Brutally put, was it that?"

"Yes, to be frank. Now, I want to talk about something quite different. I went straight to Thurso's room last night after seeing you. He had just taken laudanum. Not because he had any pain. He told me so. But he let me pour the rest of it out of the window, which I did."

For obvious reasons Lady Thurso omitted all mention of her action's sequel.

Maud's face, which had been one of amused merriment at her accurate conjecture as to her sister-in-law's fishing, grew quite grave again.

"That is something," she said. "Yes, it is a bit of cotton wool with chloroform on it, which you put into a decayed tooth to stop its aching," she said. "But what afterwards? Something permanent has to be done."

Lily bent forward and picked up the book that Maud had let fall.

"Advise me, dear Maud," she said. "You are troubled about it?" she asked. "You are really troubled? I was, too, by the way, but all this delicious week in London made me forget."

"I am horribly troubled," said Lily. "I—I am troubled all round. Do talk—do reassure me. You are so simple and straightforward."

This was quite true. Maud was possessed of a well-spring of transcendent honesty; sometimes she found that to be a convenient gift, because people trusted her; sometimes it was inconvenient, since she had to live up to it, and at this moment was forced to reconsider a recent statement of hers.

"O Lily! how tiresome you are," she said, in a tone of deep reproach. "I tell you the truth, as far as I can, then you probe me further. At least I suppose you are fishing again."

Lily smiled. "I was not, but I am," she said. "What is it?"

"Oh! it's me," said Maud despairingly. "It's me and our Mr. Cochran. Lily, I do like him awfully; I like him most awfully. No one has ever attracted me like that. I—I could put all my affairs into his hands with the utmost confidence. He is so strong, you know. We women want somebody awfully strong, don't we? Somebody who would make you go on playing bridge in the middle of an earthquake. Well, he is like that. I said I was not in love with him. I thought it was true—but I don't know. Perhaps being in love means that. You see, it has never happened before to me. I can't recognize it, or say 'This is love,' because I haven't seen it before. But you can tell me. When you said you would marry Thurso, was it that, or something like that? O dear, poor Mr. Cochran! He hasn't shown the slightest inclination to ask me to marry him."

There was a fine irony about this, and Lily Thurso, despite the previous discussion on Christian Science, felt at that moment much inclined to believe in the inherent malice of chance questions. But her answer was accordance to the spirit, though not strictly in accordance with the letter.

"Give him his chance, then, Maud," she said. "I think entirely as you do. It is strength that is to us the adorable thing. And that," she added with sudden adroitness, "is what bothers me about Thurso just now. It is so weak to allow yourself to make habits that you know all the time are harmful. I always give up anything I want before I want it very badly."

There was irony about this, too. But it was necessarily unperceived by Maud.

"You, who get all you want!" she said.

Lily got up, and began walking up and down the lawn where they sat that bordered the deep flower bed. All June was in flower then, just as in herself all June appeared to be flowering. It was no wonder that Maud thought that. But all the emotional baggage, that she had consistently thrown away all her life, seemed to her