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A Castle To Let

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"The Daughter Pays," "The Lonely Stronghold"
"The Kings Widow," etc.

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It was like a muffled rattling or shaking. It was intermittent, sometimes being prolonged, sometimes in jerks. It was so faint that had any other noise competed she could not have heard it. In the present stillness it was just audible. She supposed it to be made by some small animal, scratching in the grass near, and amused herself by trying to locate it. Then, while she was listening quite eagerly—for it seemed to come now from this side, now from that—it ceased, and was followed by a faint reverberation, as though some one let something drop a long way off or from beyond some barrier.

Instinctively she looked behind, but nothing was to be seen. It occurred to her that she was perhaps hearing some echo from the town so far below, carried up by a trick of acoustics. She heard several more faint, booming sounds, as of things being moved about, and was just going to rise and go nearer to the wall behind her in order to listen, when a movement in front of her caught her attention and made her jump horribly.

The creepers which veiled the rock at its base parted in the midst, and young Esler came, apparently, out of the rock itself.

He was in the shadow, and at first she could not see who he was, for he wore a sheepskin coat over his white costume. She sprang to her feet in a hurry. The young man, on the contrary, could see her plainly—her dark furs, rose-coloured robe, and sparkling shoe-buckles being all plain in what light there was, and also in the rays of a lantern which he carried, which shed a most brilliant light.

"Oh, how you startled me! Where did you come from?" she cried, with a little laugh of relief, when he came forward and she saw who it was.

"I am very sorry, gracious one. I did not know you

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"To mix with soil which is too heavy," he replied.

"You were sifting it just now—I could hear you, and wondered what it was," she laughed. He made no reply. "You work late," she added.

"I have some potting to do to-morrow," he answered.

"Well, thank you, for gratifying my curiosity," she said. "This is a very nice cave. It would be handy if I were caught in the rain. Why do you keep it locked?"

"My master's orders," he replied shortly.

It was not until they were outside and had proceeded some way up the hill towards the castle that she remembered he had so held the lantern as to light up the immediate foreground only, and to give no idea of the extent of the cave.

Her mind did not, however, dwell upon this, which was only in keeping with the proud peasant's general air of fixed resentment. She did find herself wishing that she had not hurt his pride by insisting upon his accepting her gratuity. But, after all, what did it matter? His feelings were nothing to her.

It was all forgotten in the delight of disrobing and going to bed in her state chamber. The communicating door between her own room and Mizpah's was left open, in case the latter lady might sleep badly or feel nervous; but when the morrow dawned both of them had slept without once rousing.

Camiola was in such spirits that she danced in and out of Mizpah's room all the time she was dressing, with chatter and nonsense. She opened her casement, hung perilously out to gather roses from the wall, sang snatches of songs, and declared herself ready to kiss the very stones of the castle which she loved so dearly.

Captain von Courland rode up from Ildestadt in time for lunch, and it was a very festive meal indeed. The mountain mutton proved to be excellent, and there were

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