



Lady Hypocritus Ironside

by Pauline Walden

Lady Hypocritus Ironside, with principles as rigid as her tall imposing presence, blossomed into late middle age.

This transformation came about with the reappearance of Endo Stinkweed, her long-lost, wayward nephew, who popped up apparently from nowhere.

'Nowhere' turned out to be Mozambique where, Endo said, he'd been researching a new strain of tea.

His dark good looks stirred the leaves of memory, of his handsome, rakish father, whisked from under Milady's overlong nose by her younger, prettier sister.

She had resigned herself to spinsterhood, good works and the management of a thriving market garden inherited from her father, together with Old Loco, so-called not for any mental deficiency but rather prophetically as one who would come to no good. He nevertheless supported her with undeclared devotion, to which Her Ladyship remained oblivious and, anyway, would have dismissed as an unsuitable emotion for the lower orders.

Her principles, in addition to her dedication to the work ethic, dictated that one should always encourage enterprise, particularly when laced with a healthy dose of imagination. Her nephew exhibited both. Added to which a new project never went amiss, especially when it promised to further fill the coffers already straining at the seams.

And so it was that, with the addition of a couple of polytunnels, her nephew was encouraged to continue his research, with unprecedented enthusiasm from Old Loco.

Her Ladyship later reflected that one good deed had indeed deserved another and the coffers had indeed swelled, beyond capacity, with the sale of her market garden and those dreary little tea plants which had so excited her nephew's friend from Soho. He had quite fallen in love with what he described as a 'slice of Paradise' and couldn't close the deal fast enough.

Now, here she was, on the terrace of her opulent chalet in the Swiss Alps, the *Green goddess*, as she was known affectionately, enjoying the fruits of her selfless generosity, having insisted that her nephew be kept on as manager of the market garden, to continue his research.

She would never understand his opposition to the scheme; but then, one had only to look at his father to understand ingratitude.