(BY WILKIE COLLINS.)

Late in the autumn, not many year since, a public meeting was held at the Mansion House, London—under the direc-

tion of the Lord Mayor. The list of gentlemen, invited to address the audience, had been chosen with two objects in view. Speakers of celebrity, who could rouse public enthusiasm, were supported by speakers connected with com-merce, who would be practically useful in explaining the purpose for which the meeting was convened. Money, wisely spent in advertising, had produced the customary result: every seat was occupied before the

proceedings began.

Among the late arrivals, who had no choice but to stand or to leave the hall, were two ladies. One of them at once decided on leaving the hall. "I shall go back to the carriage," she said, "and wait for you at the door." Her friend answered, "I shan't keep you long. He is advertised to support

the second resolution; I want to see him—and that is all."

An elderly gentleman, seated at the end of a bench, rose and offered his place to the lady who remained. She hesitated to take advantage of his kindness, until he had reminded her of what she had said to her friend. Before the third resolution was proposed, his seat would be at his own disal again. She thanked him, and, without further ceremony, took his place. was provided with an opera glass, which he more than once offered to her when famou orators appeared on the platform. She made no use of it, until a speaker-known in the city, but not known elsewhere stepped forward to support the second

resolution. His name (announced in the advertise-

ments) was Ernest Lismore.
The moment he rose the lady asked for the opera glass. She kept it to her eyes for such a length of time, and with such evident interest in Mr. Lismore, that the curiosity of her neighbors was aroused. Had he anything to say in which a lady (evidently a stranger to him) was personally interested? There was nothing in the address that he delivered which appealed to the enthusiasm of women. He was undoubtedly a handsome man, whose appearance proclaimed him to be in the prime of life—midway, perhaps, between 30 and 40 years of age. But why a lady should persist in keeping an opera glass fixed on him all through his speech, was a question which found the general ingenuity

at a loss for a reply.

"I beg your pardon, sir, for keeping it so long." Having returned the glass with this excuse, she ventured on putting a question next. "Did it strike you that Mr. Lismore seemed to be out of spirits?" she asked.

"I can't say it did, ma'am." "Perhaps you noticed that he left platform the moment he had done?"

This expression of interest in Mr. Lis more did not escape the notice of a lady seated on the bench in front. Before the old gentleman could answer, she volunteered an explanation.
"I am afraid Mr. Lismore is iroubled by

anxieties connected with his business," she said. "My husband heard it reported in the city yesterday that he was seriously

embarrassed by the failure ——"

A loud burst of applause made the end of the sentence inaudible. A famous member of Parliament had risen to propose the third resolution. The polite old man took his seat, and the lady left the hall to join her friend.

"Well, Mrs. Callender, has Mr. Lismore disappointed you?"
"Far from it! But I have heard a

report about him which has alarmed me. He is said to be seriously troubled about money matters. How can I find out his address in the city?"

shop we pass and ask to look at the directory. Are you going to pay Mr. Lismore a visit?"

I am going to think about it."

The next day a clerk entered Mr. Lismore's private room at the office, and presented a visiting card. Mrs. Callender had dected, and had arrived at a decision Underneath her name, she had written these explanatory words: "On important

Does she look as if she wanted money?' Mr. Lismore inquired. "Oh, dear no! She comes in her car-

'Is she young or old?"

"Old, sir."
To Mr. Lismore—conscious of the disastrous influence occasionally exercised over busy men by youth and beauty—this was a recommendation in itself. He said, "Show

Observing the lady, as she approached him, with the momentary our osity of a stranger, he noticed that she still preserved the remains of beauty. She had also escaped the misfortune, common to persons at her time of life, of becoming too fat. Even to a man's eye, her dressmaker appears to have made the most of that favorable circumstance. Her figure had its defects concealed, and its remaining merits set off to advantage. At the same time, she evidently held herself above the common deceptions, by which some women seek to conceal their age. She wore her own gray hair; and her complexion bore the test of daylight. On entering the room she made her apologies with some embar rassment. Being the embarrassment of stranger (and not of a youthful stranger) failed to impress Mr. Lismore favorably. "I am afraid I have chosen an incor

venient time for my visit," she began. 'I am at your service," he answered. "Especially if you will be so kind as to mention your business with me in few words."

She was a woman of some spirit, and that reply roused her. "I will mention it in one word," she said smartly. "My business is-gratitude."

was completely at a loss to under stand what she meant; and he said so plainly. Instead of explaining herself, she

Do you remember the night of the 11th of March, between five and six years He considered for a moment. "No." he

said, "I don't remember it. Excuse me, Mrs. Callender, I have affairs of my own to attend to, which cause me some anxiety. "Let me assist your memory. Mr. Lismore; and I will leave you to your affairs. On the date that I have referred to, you

were on your way to the railway station at Bexmore, to catch the night express from the North to London." As a bint that his time was valuable, the ship-owner had hitherto remained stand-

ing. He now took his customary seat, and began to listen with some interest. Mrs. Callender had produced her effect on him already.

"It was absolutely necessary," she proceeded. " that you should be on board your ship, in the London Docks, at 9 o'clock the next morning. If you had 'os the express, the vessel would have sailed without The expression of his face began to change to surprise. "Who told you that?"

he asked.
"You shall hear directly. On your way into the town, your carriage was stopped by an obstruction on the high road. The people of Bexmore were looking at

He started to his feet. "Good Heavens! are you the lady?"

She held up her hand in satirical protest.

"Gently, sir! You suspected me just now

rashly conclude that I am the lady, until you find that I am acquainted with the "Is there no excuse for my failing

recognize you?" Mr. Lismore asked. "We were on the dark side of the burning house; you were fainting, and I——"
"And you," she interposed, "after saving me at the risk of your own life, turned a

deaf ear to my poor husband's entreaties when he asked you to wait till I had ecovered my senses."
"Your poor husband? Surely, Mrs

Callender he received no serious injury from the fire?"

"The firemen rescued him under circumstances of peril," she answered, "and at his great age, he sank under the shock. I have st the kindest and best of men. Do you remember how you parted from him-burnt and bruised in saving me? He liked to talk of it in his last illness. 'At least,' he said to you, 'tell me the name of the man who has preserved my wife from a deadful dooth.' You three your card to dreadful death.' You threw your card to him out of the carriage window and away you went at a gallop. In all the years that have passed since, I have kept that card, and have vainly inquired for my brave sea centain. Vest captain. Yesterday I saw your name on the list of speakers at the Mansion House. Need I say that I attended the meeting Need I tell you, now, why I come here and

interrupt you in business hours?"
She held out her hand. Mr. Lismore took it in silence and pressed it warmly.
"You have not done with me yet," she resumed, with a smile. "Do you remember what I said of my errand when I first

"You said it was an errand of grati tude.'

"Something more than the gratitude which only says Thank you," she added.
"Before I explain myself, however, I want
to know what you have been doing, and how it was that my inquiries failed to trace

you after that terrible night."

The appearance of depression, which
Mrs. Callender had noticed at the pucie meeting, showed itself again in Mr. more's face. He sighed as he answered her

" My story has one merit," he said, is soon told. I cannot wonder that you failed to discover me. In the first place, I was not captain of my ship at that time; I was only mate. In the second place, I inherited some money, and ceased to lead a sailor's life, in less than a year from the night of the fire. You will now understand what obstacles were in the way of your tracing me. With my little capital Istarted successfully in business as a ship owner. At the time I naturally congratulated myself on my own good fortune. We little know, Mrs. Callender, what the future has in store for us."

He stopped. His handsome features

hardened, as if he was suffering (and concealing pain). Before it was possible to speak to him, there was a knock at the door. Another visitor, without an appoint ment, had called; the clerk appeared again

with a card and a message.

"The gentleman begs you will see him, sir. He has something to tell you which is too important to be delayed."

Hearing the message Mrs. Callender rose

mmediately.
"It is enough for to-day that we under stand each other," she said. "Have you any engagement to-morrow, after the hours

She pointed to her card on the writing table. "Will you come to me to morrow evening at that address? I am like the gentleman who has just called; I, too have my reason for wishing to see you."

He gladly accepted the invitation. Mrs.
Callender stopped him as he opened the

door for her.

"Shall I offend you," she said, " if I ask a strange question before I go? I have a better motive, mind, than mere curiosity.

Are you married? "Forgive me again," she resumed. "At my age you cannot possibly misunderstand She hesitated. Mr. Ligmore tried to

Pray, don't stand on ceremony, Mrs Callender. Nothing that you can ask me need be prefaced by an apology.' Thus encouraged, she ventured to pro

"You may be engaged to be married." she suggested, "or you may be in love?"

He found it impossible to conceal his surorise. But he answered without hesit

"There is no such bright prospect in my

life," he said. "I am not even in love."
She left him with a little sigh. It sounded

like a sigh of relief. Ernest Lismore was thoroughly puzzled. What could be the old lady's object in ascertaining that he was still free from matrimonial engagement? If the idea ha occurred to him in time, he migh have alluded to her domestic and might have asked if she had children. With a little tact he might have discovered more than this. and She had described her feeling towards him as passing the ordinary limits of gratitude and she was evidently rich enough to be

above the imputation of a mercenary motive. Did she propose to brighten thos dreary prospects to which he alluded, in speaking of his own life? When he presented himself at her house, the next evening, would she introduce him to a harming daughter?

He smiled bitterly as the idea occurred to him. "An appropriate time to be thinking of my chances of marriage!" he said to himself. "In another month I may be a ruined man."

The centleman who had so urgently requested an interview was a devout friend who had obtained a means of helping Ernest at a serious crisis in his affairs.

It had been truly reported that he was in a position of pecuniary embarrassment, owing to the failure of a mercantile house with which he had been intimately con-nected. Whispers affecting his own solvency had followed on the bankruptcy of the firm. He had already endeavored to obtain advances of money on the usual conditions and had been met by excuses for delay. His friend had now arrived with a letter of introduction to a capitalist, well known in commercial circles for his daring specula

tions and his great wealth. Looking at the letter, Ernest observed that the envelope was sealed. In spite of that ominous innovation on established usage in cases of personal introduction, he pre ented the letter. On this occasion he not put off with excuses. The capitalist flatly declined to discount Mr. Lismore's bills, unless they were backed by responsi

ble names. Ernest made a last effort.

He applied for help to two mercantile nen, whom he had assisted in their difficulties, and whose names would have satisfied the money-lender. They were "most sincerely sorry"—but they too refused.

The one security that he could offer was open, it must be owned, to serious objecons on the score of risk. He wanted an advance of twenty thousand pounds, secured on a homeward-bound ship and cargo, worth double the money-if the vessel reached her port in safety. She was now more than a month overdue; the season was stormy, and unfortunate shipowner returned to his

office, without money, and without credit.

A man threatened by ruin was in no state of mind to keep an engagement at a lady's tea-table. Ernest sent a letter of apology to Mrs. Callender; alleging ex-treme pressure of business as the excuse for breaking his engagement.

"Am I to wait for an answer, sir?" "No; you are merely to leave the letter."

In an hour's time—to Ernest's astorish

of wasting your valuable time. Don't ment-the messenger returned with a reply. "The lady was just going out, sir, when I rang at the door," he explained; "and she took the letter from me herself. She didn't appear to know your handwriting, and she asked me whom I came from. As soon as I told her. I was ordered to wait.

Ernest opened the letter.
"Dear Mr. Lishore,—One of us must speak out, and your letter of apology forces me to be that one. If you are really so proud and so distrustful as you seem to be I shall offend you. If not, I shall prove

nyself to be your friend.

"Your excuse is 'pressure of; business.'
The truth (as I have good reason to believe) is 'want of money.' I heard a stranger say, at that public meeting, that you were seriously embarrassed by some failure in the city.

failure in the city.
"Let me tellyou what my own pecuniary position is, in two words. I am the childless widow of a rich man ——"

Ernest paused. His anticipated discovery

of Mrs. C. lender's charming daughter was in his mind for the moment. "That little romance must return to the world of dreams," he thought-and went on with the letter.

"After what I owe to you I don't regard it as repaying an obligation—I consider myself as merely performing a duty, when I offer to assist you by a loan of

money.
"Wait a little before youthrow my letter into the waste-paper basket.
"Circumstances (which it is impossible for me to mention more particularly until

meet) put it out of my power help you, unless I attach to most sincere offer of service a very unusual and very embarrassing con-dition. If you are on the brink of ruin that misfortune will plead my excuse-and your excuse, too, if you except the loan on my terms. In any case, I rely on the sym-pathy and forbearance of a man to whom I

we my life.
"After what I have now written, there is only one thing to add. I beg to decline accepting your excuses; and I shall expect to see you to morrow evening, as we arranged. I am an obstinate old woman : but I am also your faithful friend and servant. MARY CALLENDER.

MARY CALLENDER. Ernest looked up from the letter. "What can she possibly mean?" he wondered. But he was too a sensible man to be content with wondering: he decided on keeping

What Doctor Johnson called "the insol ence of wealth" appears far more fre-quently in the houses of the rich than in the manners of the rich. The reason is plain enough. Personal ostentation is, in the very nature of it, ridiculous. But the ostentation which exhibits magnificent pictures, priceless china and splendid furniture can purchase good taste to guide it, and can assert itself without affording the smallest opening for a word of deprecia-tion or a look of contempt. If I am worth a million of money, and if I am dying to show it, I don't ask you to look at me-

ask you to look at my house. Keeping his engagement with Mrs. Cal-lender, Ernest discovered that riches might

be lavishly and yet modestly used. In crossing the hall and ascending the stairs, look where he might, his notice was insensibly won by proofs of the taste which is not to be purchased, and the wealth but never exhibits its purse Conducted by a man servant to the landing on the first floor, he found a maid at the door of the boudoir, waiting to announce him. Mrs. Callender advanced to welcome her guest in a simple evening dress, per-fectly suited to her age. All that had looked worn and faded in her fine face by daylight was now softly obscured by shade lamps. Objects of beauty surrounded her, which glowed with subdued radiance their background of sober from

color. The influence of appearances is the strongest of all outward influences, while it lasts. For the moment, the scene produced its impression on Ernest, in spite of the terrible anxieties which consumed him. Mrs. Callender, in his office, was a woman who had stepped out of her appropriate sphere. Mrs. Callender, in her own house, was a woman who had risen to a new place in his estimation.
"I am afraid you don't thank me for forcing you to keep your engagement," she said, with her friendly tones and her

pleasant smile.
"Indeed, I do thank you," he replied. "Your beautiful house and your gracious my troubles -for a while.

The smile passed away from her face. Then it is true?" she said gravely. " Only too true."

led him to a seat beside her, and waited to speak again, until her maid had brought in the tea.
"Have you read my letter in the same

friendly spirit in which I wrote it?" she asked, when they were alone again. friendly "I have read your letter gratefully. "But you don't know yet what I have to say. Let us understand each other before we make any objections, on either side.

Will you tell me what your present position is—at its worst? I can and will speak plainly when my turn comes, if you will honor me with your confidence. Not if it distresses you!" she added, observing him He was ashamed of his hesitation—and

he made amends for it. "Do you thoroughly understand me?" he asked, when the whole truth had been laid before her without reserve.

She summed up the result, in her own "If your overdue ship returns safely.

within a month from this time, you can borrow the money you want, without difficulty. If the ship is lost, you have no alternative (when the end of the month comes) but to accept a loan from me or to suspend payment. Is that the hard truth?"

"And the sum you require is -£20,000?"

Yes." "I have twenty times as much money as that, Mr. Lismore, at my sole disposal—on one condition." The condition alluded to in your

letter ?" "Does the fulfilment of the condition depend, in some way, on any decision of

"It depends entirely on you."
That answer closed his lips.

With a composed manner and a steady hand, she poured herself out a cup of tea. "I conceal it from you," she said; "but I want confidence. Here" (she pointed to the cup) " is the friend of women, rich or praise of myself. I don't like it—let me get over it as soon as I can. My husband was very fond of me. He had the most bsolute confidence in my discretion, and

poor, when they are in trouble. What I have now to say obliges me to speak in in my sense of duty to him and to myself. His last words, before he died, were words that thanked me for making the happiness of his life. As soon as I had in some degree recovered, after the affliction that had fallen on me, his lawyer and executor produced a copy of his will, and said there were two clauses in it which my husband had expressed a wish that I should read. It is needless to say that I obeyed.' She still controlled her agitation; but

she was unable to conceal it. Ernest made an attempt to spare her.
"Am I concerned in this?" he asked.

"Yes. Before I tell you why, I want to know what you would do—in a certain case have heard of men, unable to meet the demands made on them, who began business again, and succeeded, and in course of time paid their creditors."

"And you want to know if there is any likelihood of my following their example?" he said. "Have you also heard of men,

who have made that second effort—who have failed again—and who have doubled the debts they owed to their brethren in business who truted them? I knew one of those men nyself. He committed

She laid her had for a moment on his. 'I understand you," she said.

"If ruin comes" he interposed, "a without money and without credit can make but one ast atonement. Don't made an effort to be cheerful, which it distressed him to see. He allowed her to think that she had relieved him of any speak of it now. She looked at him with horror. "I didn't mean that" she said.

"Shall we go back to what you read in the will?" he suggested. "Yes-if you will give me a minute to

In less than the minute she had asked for, Mrs. Callender was calm enough to interest in my husband's fortune." she said. The money is to be divided, at my death, among charitable institutions—excepting a certain event which is provided for in the will. I am to inherit the whole four hun-

dred thousand pounds, and I may use it at my own sole discretion—" her voice dropped, and her eyes looked away from him as she spoke the next words—" on this one condition, that I marry again."

He looked at her in amazement.
"Surely, I have mistaken you?" he said. words, took him by surprise. She was unquestionably confused, and, instead of looking at him, she trifled with the fruit on her 'You mean 'on this one condition, that you do not marry again?"
"No, Mr. Lismore; I mean exactly what
I have said. You now know that the cer-

tain recovery of your credit and your peace of mind rests entirely with yourself? After a moment of reflection, he took her hand and raised it respectfully to his lips.

"You are a noble woman," he said.
She made no reply. With drooping head
and downcast eyes she waited for his decision. He accepted his responsibility "I must not, and dare not, think of th hardship of my own position," he said; "I owe it to you to speak, without reference to the future that may be in store for me. No man can be worthy of the sacrifice which your generous forgetfulness of yourself is willing to make. I respect you; admire you; I thank you with my whole heart. Leave me to my fate, Mrs. Cal-

lender—and let me go."

He rose. She stopped him by a gesture. "A young woman," she answered, "would shrink from saying what I, as an old woman, mean to say now. I refuse to leave you to your fate. I ask you to prove that you respect me, admire me, and thank me with your whole heart. Take one day to think-and let me hear the result. You

He promised. "Now go," she said.

The next morning Ernest received a letter from Mrs. Callender. She wrote to him as follows : "There are some considerations, which l

ought to have mentioned yesterday evening, before you left my house.
"I ought to have reminded you—if you consent to reconsider your decision—that the circumstances do not require you to pledge yourself to me absolutely.
"At my age, I can, with perfect propriety, assure you that I regard our mar-

riage simply and solely as a formality which I must fulfil, if I am to carry out my intention of standing between you and ruin.
"Therefore—if the missing ship appears

in time the only reason for the marriage is at an end. We shall be as good friends as ever, without the encumbrance of a formal tie to bird us.
"In the other event, I should ask you to submit to certain restrictions which, re-

membering my position, you will under stand and excuse.
"We are to live together, it is unneces sary to say, as mother and son. The mar-riage ceremony is to be strictly private; and you are so to arrange your affairs that, im-mediately afterwards, we leave England for any foreign place which you prefer. Some of any friends, and (perhaps) some of your friends, will certainly misinterpret our

motives—if we stay in our own country—in a manner which would be unendurable to a woman like me.
"As to our future lives, I have the mos perfect confidence in you; and I should leave you in the same position of independence which you occupy now. When you wish for my company you will always be velcome. At other times, you are own master. I live on my side of the house and you live on yours—and I am to be allowed my hours of solitude every day, in the pursuit of musical occupations, which have been happily associated with all my past life, and which I trust confidently to

I must beg you to excuse my absence at breakfast time." She called him back as he was about to withdraw. "Remember," your indulgence. "A last word to remind you of what you she said, "when you return from the gal may be too kind to think of yourself. lery to-day, I expect that you will not re-"At my age, you cannot, in the course of nature, be troubled by the society of a turn alone." grateful old woman for many years. You are young enough to look forward to another The young lady's services as a copyist were at his disposal. She had returned with marriage, which shall be something more than a mere form. Even if you meet with him to look at the drawings.

The sitting room was empty when they entered it. He rang for his wife's maid the happy woman in my lifetime, honestly tell me of it—and I promise to tell her that

she has only to wait. "In the meantime, don't think because I and was informed that Mrs. Lismore had write composedly that I write heartlessly. gone out. Refusing to believe the woman. You pleased and interested me when I first he went to his wife's apartments. She was not to be found. saw you, at the public meeting. I don't think I could have proposed what you call this sacrifice of myself to a man who had personally repelled me—though I might ave felt my debt of gratitude as sincerely as ever. Whether your ship is saved or been put on her: but he was inexpressibly whether your ship is lost, old Mary Callender likes you-and owns it without false coarse manner-in which she expressed

either personally or by letter-whichever you like best."

VIII. Mrs. Callender received a written answer long before the evening. It said much in few words.

'A man impenetrable to kindness might be able to resist your letter. I am not that man. Your great heart has conquered

The weeks passed-and no news was received of the missing ship. With the marriage license in Ernest's possession, they waited until the day before the shipowner's liabilities became due. Mrs. Callender's lawyer and Mrs. Callender's maid were the only persons trusted with their secret. Leaving the chief clerk in charge of the business, with every pecuniary demand satisfied in full, the strangely-

married pair quitted England.

They arranged to wait for a few days in Paris, to receive any letters of importance which might have been addressed to Ernest in the interval. On the evening of their arrival, a telegram from London was waiting at their hotel. It announced that the missing ship had passed up channel— undiscovered in a fog until she reached the

than ever.

"I have a fertile fancy," she went on;

"and your absurd way of taking a joke
only encourages me! Suppose you could
transform this sour old wife of your's, who Downs—on the day before Ernest's liabili-Do you regret it?" Mrs. Lismore said to her husband. "Not for a moment!" he answered. has insulted me, into the sweetest young

They decided on pursuing their journey as far as Munich. Mrs. Lismore's taste for music was matched by Ernest's taste for painting. In his leisure hours be cultivated the art, and delighted in it. The picture galleries of Munich were almost the only galleries in Europe which he had not seen. True to the engagements to which she had pledged herself, his wife was willing to go wherever which I am unwilling even to suppose. I it might please him to take her. The one suggestion she made was, that they should hire furnished apartments. If they lived at an hotel, friends of the husband or the wife (visitors like themselves to the famous city), might see their names in the book, or might meet them at the door.

They were soon established in a house

When he had sufficiently recovered to Letro Mich Circulars free

large enough to provide them with every accommodation which they required. think, he put her back from him. "Is there an end of the disguise now?" he asked sternly. "Am I to trust you in your Ernest's days were passed in the galle-

Mrs. Lismore remaining at home, new character or not?" You are not to be harder on me than I devoted to her music, until it was time to deserve," she answered gently. "Did you ever hear of an actress named Miss Max?" go out with her husband for a drive. Living together in perfect amity and concord, they were nevertheless not living happily. Without any visible reason for the change Mrs. He began to understand her. "Forgive me if I spoke harshly," he said; "you have Lismore's spirits were depressed. On the one occasion when Ernest noticed it, she

put me to a severe trial."

She burst into tears. "Love," she answered, " is my only excuse." From that moment, she had won her pardon. He took her hand, and made her

sit by him.
"Yes," he said, "I have heard of Miss Max, and of her wonderful powers of per-But, when two people are living together, in a state of artificial tranquility, it seems to be a law of Nature that the elements of sonation - and I have always regretted not having seen her, while she was on the stage."
"Did you hear anything more of her,

further anxiety. Whatever doubts he might feel were doubts delicately concealed,

disturbance gather unseen, and that the

outburst comes invariably with the lapse

In ten days from the date of their arri-

val at Munich, the crisis came. Ernest

returned later than usual from the picture.

gallery, and-for the first time in his wife's

experience-shut himself up in his own

He appeared at the dinner-hour, with a

Her manner, when she said those few

plate. Embarrassed, on his side, he could

only answer, "I have nothing to tell."
"Were there many visitors at the gallery?" she asked.
"About the same as usual."
"Any that you particularly noticed?" she wenton; "I mean among the ladies."
He language the versely. "You forget how

He laughed uneasily. "You forgot how nterested I am in the pictures," he said. There was a pause. She looked up at

he saw it plainly; there were tears in her

"Do you mind turning down the gas,"

she said. "My eyes have been weak all

day."
He complied with her request—the more being

readily, having his own reasons for being glad to escape the glaring scrutiny of the

light.
"I think I will rest a little on the sofa,"

she resumed. In the position which he occupied, his back would have been now

turned on her. She stopped him when he

tried to move his chair. "I would rather not look at you, Ernest," she said, "when

Not the words, but the tone, touched all

" Am I not unworthy of you?" he asked,

when it was over. She pressed his hand in silence. "I should be the most ungrateful wretch

living," he said, "if I did not think of you, and you only, now that my confession is made. We will leave Munich to-morrow,

and, if resolution can help me, I will only

remember the sweetest woman my eyes

ever looked on as the creature of a dream.

She hid her face on his breast, and re-

minded him of that letter of her writing, which had decided the course of their

lives.
"When I thought you might meet the

happy woman in my lifetime, I said to you, 'Teil me of it, and I promise to tell her that she has only to wait.' Time must

perform my promise. But you might let me see her. If you find her in the gallery

Her request met with no refusal. He was only at a loss to know how to grant it.

"You said she was a copyist of pictures," his wife reminded him. "Tell her of the portfolio of drawings by the great French

artist, which I bought for you in Paris; and ask her to come and see them, and to

He felt her heart beating fast on his

bosom. In the fear that she might lose

all control over herself, he tried to relieve

her by speaking lightly. "What an invention your's is!" he said. "If my wife

ever tries to deceive me, I shall be a mere

She rose abruptly from the sofa—kissed

him on the forehead-and said wildly, "I

move or speak, she had left him.

shall be better in bed!" Before he could

XI.

The next morning, he knocked at the

loor of his wife's room, and asked how she

"I have slept badly," she answered; "and

Three hours later, he was home again,

When he returned to the sitting room, the

young lady was, not unnaturally, offended.

little out of temper at the slight that had

"I have been talking to your wife's maid, while you have been away," she said. "I find you have married an old

lady for her money. She is jealous of me,

"Let me beg you to alter your opinion," he answered. "You are wronging my wife; she is incapable of any such feeling as you attribute to her."

The young lady laughed. "At any rate,

you are a good husband." she said satiri

cally. "Suppose you own the truth! Wouldn't you like her better, if she was

He was not merely surprised—he was isgusted. Her beauty had so completely

fascinated him, when he first saw her, that the idea of associating any want of refine-

ment and good breeding with such a charm

ing creature never entered his mind. The

disenchantment of him was already so

complete, that he was disagreeably affected

by the tone of her voice; it was almost as

enellant to him as the exhibition of unre-

strained bad temper, which she seemed

I confess you surprise me," he said,

The reply produced no effect upon her.

On the contrary, she became more insolent

creature that ever lived, by only holding ur

This passed the limits of his endurance.

"I have no wish," he said, " to forget the consideration which is due to women—and

I have but one alternative. I must leave

She ran to the door as she spoke, and

placed hereelf in the way of his going out.

She suddenly threw her arms round his

neck-kissed him passionately-and whis-

pered, with her lips at his ear, "Oh, Ernest, forgive me! Could I have asked

you to marry me for my money, if I had

not taken refuge in a disguise?

He signed to her to let him pass.

your finger-wouldn't you do it?"

young and pretty like me?"

perfectly careless to conceal.

of course !"

disgusted.

coldly.

the room.'

He could make allowances for her being

tell you if she can make some copies."

child in her hands "

had passed the night.

to morrow you might bring her here."

Ernest, before it can be needful to

that was generous and noble in his nature. He left his place—and knelt beside her—and opened to her his whole heart.

you have lost confidence in me."

nim, and suddenly looked away again

from that time forth.

the truth."

Ernest? Yes. I heard that she was a pattern

of modesty and good conduct, and that she gave up her profession, at the height of her uccess, to marry an old man." "Will you come with me to my room?" she asked. "I have something there which

wish to show you."

It was a copy of her busband's will. "Read the lines, Ernest, which begin at the top of the page. Let my dead husband

futile excuse. Mrs. Lismore waited until the servant had withdrawn. "Now, Ernest," she said, "it's time to tell me speak for me." The lines ran thus:

"My motive for marrying Miss Max must be stated in this place, in justice to her—and, I will venture to add, in justice to myself. I felt the sincerest sympathy for her position. She was without father, mother, or friends; one of the poor neglected children whom the mercy Foundling Hospital provides with a home Her atter life on the stage was the life of s virtuous woman—persecuted by profli gates; insulted by some of the bases creatures associated with her, to whom she was an object of envy. I offered her a home and the protection of a father—or the only terms which the world would recognize as worthy of us. My ence of her, since our marriage, has been the experience of unvarying goodness sweetness and sound sense. She has be haved so nobly, in a trying position, that I wish her (even in this life) to have her reward. I entreat her to make a second choice in marriage, which shall not be a mere form. I firmly believe that she wil choose well and wisely—that she will make the happiness of a man who is worthy of her—and that, as wife and mother, she will set an example of inestimable value in the social sphere that she occupies. In proof of the heartfelt sincerity with which I pay

this tribute to her virtues, I make the disposition of my personal estate which follows:"
With the remainder of the clause, Ernes was already acquainted.
"Will you now believe that I never loved till I saw your face for the first loved till I saw your face for the first time?" said his wife. "I had no experience

time?" said his wife. "I had no experience to place me on my guard against the fascination—the madness some people might call it—which possesses a woman when all her heart is given to a man. Don't despise me, my dear. Remember that I had to save you from disgrace and ruin. Besides, my old stage remembrances tempted me. I had acted in a play in which the heroine did-what I have didnet end with me as it ended with her in the story. She was represented as rejoicing in the success of her disguise. I have known some miserable hours of doubt and shame since our marriage. When I went to meet you, in my own person, at the pic ture gallery (oh, what relief, what joy felt, when I saw how you admired me!) was not because I could no longer carry on the disguise. I was able to get hours of rest from the effort—not only at night, but in the day-time, when I was shut up in my retirement in the music room, an when my maid kept watch against discovery. No, my love! I hurried on the disclosure, because I could no longer endure the hateful triumph of my own deception Ah, look at that witness against me! I

can't bear even to see it!"

She abruptly left him. The drawer that she had opened to take out the copy of the will also contained the false gray hair which she had discarded. It had only at that moment attracted her notice. snatched it up and turned to the fire-place. Ernest took it from her before she could destroy it. "Give it to me," he said.

He drew her gently to his bosom, and answered, "I mustn't forget my old wife!" HAYESVILLE, Ohio, Feb. 11, 1880.

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D. C N. L. 2. 84. CHAPTER II. "Malden, Mass., Feb. 1, 1880. Gontlemen-I suffered with attacks of sick headache."

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