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The Heiress's Revenge.

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A young, handsome, and richly dressed lady was sitting in one of those splendid apartments which are called "saloons" in poetry, and "drawing-rooms" in prose; her foot rested on an exquisitely embroidered ottoman, and her arm on a purple satin sofa cushion; opposite to her was a *dame de compagnie*, a smiling, lady-like, middle-aged person, unimpeachably and charactistically attired in a dove-colored silk dress, and a band cap, trimmed with white ribbons. Two women at a little distance were employed in covering a table with that variety of substantial refreshments which, when partaken of at the hour of luncheon, enables young ladies so prettily to plead guilty at dinner to the charge of living on love, air, or learning, according to the phraseology of the accuser. It was a scene of plenty, and not of peace; a frown was on the young lady's brow, and a tear was in her eye; no one would have addressed her with the Chinese salutation, "Felicity is painted on your countenance;" she might rather be supposed to sit for the purpose of illustrating the proverb—"All is not gold that glitters;" flattery would have said that she looked very pensive; truth, that she looked very cross. Now, the grand evil which darkened this young lady's horoscope, was one which admitted of no remedy—she did not belong to the magic circle of the aristocracy; and although her wealth permitted her occasionally to step within it, she knew and felt that she was considered as an intruder. Her father had been a grocer, her grand-father a pie-maker; and she would have freely surrendered all the wealth that she inheritied, as the only daughter of an only son, could she by so doing have changed places with any of the "penniless dames with a long pedigree," whose swan-like throats and falling shoulders embellished the "portraits of the female aristocracy."

Now, although there was no positive cure for Miss Garston's affliction, a partial alleviation of it might be attained; she might wed a scion of nobility, and thereby be raised in name and precedence to the station of her husband; but Miss Garston was prudent, and did not like the prospect of being the neglected wife of a spendthrift gamester; she had also warm affections, and had determined never to marry except for love. At length she became introduced to Lord Alfred Harleigh, the handsome and accomplished youngest son of the Marquis of Delfield. She invited him to her house; he waltzed, rode, and flirted with her rather more than young men ought to waltz, ride, and flirt, who mean nothing by their attentions; but he was not a systematic heart-killer, and had not the slightest idea of the mischief he was doing to the heiress and preparing for himself by his thoughtless gallantry.—The preceding evening Miss Garston had been present at a large assembly, where she knew Lord Alfred was expected to attend; she had wandered into the conservatory, and was concealed by a stand of geraniums and a profusion of gigantic myrtles; she heard Lord Alfred's voice speaking to a favorite friend, her own name was mentioned; she might have come forth from her retreat and welcomed her admirer, but instead of doing so, she bent down her head still lower to avoid discovery, and the artificial flowers that garlanded her brow mingled with the natural ones around her. Lord Alfred's friend rallied him on his devotion to the rich heiress,—and asked him, in a phrase which would once have been considered inelegant, but which now met general acceptation, when the match was to "come off." Lord Alfred replied by an indignant burst of wonder, that he could be supposed capable of sullying the dignity of his ancient house by contemplating such a misalliance;—and then dropped his dignity, became playful,—said that the lady would, doubtless, in remembrance of her grand-father, make an exorbitant demand for *pin*-money, but that she must certainly inherit abundance of sugar from her father's stores, wherewith to sweeten the matrimonial cup; he added several other puns equally bad, poor, and pointless, but they were quite suited to the nature of his friend's comprehension, who encouraged him to proceed by vociferous bursts of laughter. Perhaps my readers may be disposed to be severe on Lord Alfred's francy and want of feeling, and I am not going to defend him; but let me just ask them whether they are prepared, themselves, to say that they never spoke of an acquaintance in terms careless, laughing raillery, which, if overheard by that person, would ensure his or her lasting displeasure, although uttered without the slightest spark of ill-will or malice! Happy is it for us, that even those we like and esteem are not always secreted under myrtle trees to hear our comments! Miss Garston was mortified and enraged; she was wounded in the tenderest of her feelings—love and pride. Had Lord Alfred defamed her character, or censured her temper, she thought she could better have borne it than the light-cutting satire in which he alluded to her plebeian extraction, and the words of Minus recurred to her mind—"Injuries we should and do forgive; but insults so debase the man below its own level, that nothing but revenge can satisfy it."

Miss Garston retired early from the assembly; and rose the next morning in the state of nervous dissatisfaction that I have endeavored to describe. Mrs. Allison now addressed her in the usual cut and dried form of speaking to cross young ladies—"I am afraid, my dear Miss Garston, you are not quite well this morning;" and the young friend returned to her the cut and dry answer, "I am very well in health, but my spirits are sadly depressed."

"Dear Miss Garston," replied Mrs. Allison, "one has so many sources of happiness as yours!" and as she spoke her eye glanced on the splendid footmen who re-entered the room, like the slaves of Aladdin's lamp, bearing a reinforcement of silver dishes to the table.

"I meet with ingratitude," replied Miss Garston sentimentally, "where I had hoped to have met with contrary feelings."

"You are a little nervous this morning," said the confidante, looking amiably arch; "Lord Alfred Harleigh's morning call will restore your spirits."

She had touched a tender chord; Miss Garston's colour mounted, and her eyes flashed fire.

"I have ordered myself to be denied to Lord Alfred in future," she said.

Mrs. Allison said nothing; she thought some quarrel had taken place, and determined, in secret mind, that it would be adjusted on receipt of the first pale-pink note or bouquet of hot-house flowers from the offending adorer. Mrs. Allison was well-born, well-bred, tenderly jointured; she liked the large and she received from Miss Garston, and the profits of her house and table, and she was willing to endure the frequent contradiction and ill-humor of her "dear young friend" as a trifling drawback to these advantages. Miss Garston, however, was not ill-humoured on the present occasion, for she wanted some one to whom she could confide her troubles, and she pitied Mrs. Allison of the whole of Lord Alfred's crimes and misdemeanours. The proverb crossed Mrs. Allison's mind—"Listeners hear no good of themselves;" but she did not give it utterance.

"Lord Alfred is quite unworthy your tho'hts," she replied; "he is one of a large family, and there are three lives between him and his elder brother; you may command half a dozen better matches before the end of the season; a connection with him could never have been a desirable one in a prudential point of view, and all love for him must of course be banished from your mind by his insufferable conduct."

"Love him!" repeated the heiress; "I detest and despise him; I shall never be easy till I am amply revenged on him."

"Unless I am much mistaken," said Mrs. Allison, "you will shortly enjoy the revenge you wish; Lord Alfred, I am certain, is a marrying man, and if he resolves only to seek an alliance among the aristocracy, he will plunge himself into poverty and distress, for it is not likely that he will have the good fortune to meet with the rare union of rank and riches in a wife."

"That would be no consolation to me at all," said Miss Garston, gloomily, to the great disappointment of Mrs. Allison, who had expected that her last speech would be a telling point, "I shall never be easy till I see Lord Alfred united to a woman whose connections are still more plebeian than my own, and who does not possess a hundred pounds to gild her degradation."

"That is not likely to happen," said Mrs. Allison; "what motive could he have to marry a portionless girl of obscure family, when he objected to ally himself to a rich one merely on account of her want of birth?"

"Lawyers say," replied Miss Garston, "'prove to us the deed, and we will find out the motive.'"

Mrs. Allison was about to ask, "But how will you manage to bring about the deed that you talk of proving?" but she checked herself in time; she felt that it was not in accordance with her vocation to bandy repartees with her patroness.

"Perhaps after all," she said, "Lord Alfred is fettered by the plans and schemes of his mother and sister, to marry him to his cousin, Lady Adela Sefton."

"Not at all," replied Miss Garston; "I was speaking of the affair to a friend of the family only a week ago; Lady Adela, as a child, had always testified the warmest affection for her cousin, but her father died when she was only twelve years old, bequeathing to her an immense property, and nominating his only brother as her guardian; this brother had a son a few years older than Lady Adela, and felt earnestly desirous that an union might, at a future time, be effected between his son and niece; consequently, he deemed it desirable to remove his ward from the vicinity of his other relations, and the family have resided abroad for ten years. Lady Adela for some time kept up a correspodence with the Ladies Harriet and Esther Harleigh, but it gradually died away; and as, since her majority, which took place a year ago, she has not attempted to renew her intercourse with them, they are as indisposed to seek her society as their brother has always been, who has been prejudiced against her by the reports he has heard, from those who have seen her abroad, of her affected and artificial manners."

"Lord Alfred's mother and sisters are terribly haughty," observed Mrs. Allison, secure that she was on the safe side when abusing the family of the renegade admirer.

"Yes," replied the heiress; "I have not forgotten the cold and distant manner in which they repelled my wish to be introduced to them."

"Well, resumed Mrs. Allison, "you will soon, I hope, receive your promised visit from your charming school friend, Lord Glenallan's daughter; you need have no fear, dear Miss Garston, that the aristocracy will desert you while you are enabled to entertain them in so splendid a manner."

There was something in this speech that grated on the ear of Miss Garston, and she quitted the table, and betook herself again to the sofa, exclaiming that she was the most unhappy being in the world, and that nobody understood her or sympathized with her. Mrs. Allison could not enter into the mystery of her young friend's unhappiness; she was engaged in the discussion of an exquisite ragout, and considered it a balm to all the cares of life; nor must my readers censure Mrs. Allison too severely. I remember a question was once proposed in company, "Who is the happiest of men?" and the cleverest person in the room decided—"He who has the best cook!" Now, the *dame de compagnie* was not at all clever, and must therefore be excused for thinking that the wounds of the heart might easily be healed by the magic of *vol au vents, souffles*, and *fricandeaux*. The luncheon was removed; the carriage came to the door, and Miss Garston enquired if her milliner had sent home a pink satin mantilla which she had promised her should be finished in time for her morning drive. The answer was in the negative; and, although tradespeople's promises, as all ladies know, are as likely to be a subject of laughter to Jove as "lovers' perjuries," and although Miss Garston's wardrobes were teeming with every imaginable variety of wraps, from the furred cloak of January to the lace scarf of July, she yet thought proper to be violently aggrieved at her disappointment, and to declare that "she was destined to be ill-treated, and that the day was sure to prove full of calamities." Miss Garston's idea was not quite so ridiculous as it appears at first reading; let any one of us receive, for instance, a letter by the general post, containing bad tidings, and a succession of little annoyances will be certain to haunt us through the day; harp-strings will break, the wrong books will come from the library, and the wrong people send cards of invitation or notes of refusal; bores will bestow their tediousness on us in an unmercifully elongated morning visit; the lap-dog will throw down a china vase, and the cat will commit petty larceny on the gold fish! Perhaps philosophers may say that these events might take place on any other occasion, but that when, like Miss Edgeworth's Rosamond, we are predetermined to endure a "day of misfortunes," we busy ourselves in looking out for them; be it so, I have nothing to do with the reason, I am only asserting the fact. A part of these annoyances was in store for Miss Garston; he was not a bore, however, but a handsome young man, whom she particularly wished to see. Captain Malcolm had just come from Scotland, where he had been staying with the family of Miss Glenallan. Now, Miss Garston had been at a finishing school with the Honourable Miss Glenallan; and as, even in her girl-hood, she had a great passion for aristocratic connexions, she had plied the noble young lady with presents and flatteries, which were very graciously received. Miss Glenallan had an only brother, who completely engrossed the affections of her father. Lord Glenallan's estates were small, but his personal property was large; and, under the plea that the latter would be required to supply the defects of the former, he unhesitatingly announced his intention of leaving all his wealth to his son, deeming his daughter amply provided for by a showy education, and her maternal five thousand pounds. Consequently, Miss Glenallan was well disposed, when she returned to Scotland, to correspond with Miss Garston, and to continue to receive expensive presents from her; and it had been a long standing promise that, when Miss Garston took a house in a fashionable square and mingled with the gaities of the word, she should receive the honour of entertaining her aristocratic friend during the three months of a London Spring. Miss Garston had boasted of this expected visit to Lord Alfred, and delighted herself with the idea that her friend would now be a star of considerable magnitude in the world. Miss Glenallan had lost her brother about a year ago, but, alas! the alteration which that loss had worked on the prospects of the young lady augured ill for the continuation of her school intimacy. The next heir to the estates was an unprincipled *roue*, with whom Lord Glenallan was not on terms; and his daughter was, therefore, the declared heiress of his large personal property, and suddenly became an object of vast importance in his eyes; he told her that "she must not commit herself by making her first *entree* into London society under the auspices of a *parvenue* like Miss Garston, but that she should visit the metropolis next year in becoming style, and with a proper *chaperon*," and the young lady dutifully acquiesced, and wrote a letter to the dear friend of her youth, declining her invitation now and forever. This letter Captain Malcolm delivered to Miss Garston; It was written in a cold, brief style! and it was quite evident that the head of the writer was somewhat turned by her sudden elevation in the scale of society, and that she felt disposed to signify to her school friend her desire that they might be "better strangers."

Miss Garston knit her brow, folded up the letter without a comment, and gave the Captain an unmistakeable hint to depart, by observing, that "the trampling of her horses without showed that they were unusually impatient that morning." Miss Garston sighed heavily during the drive, and Mrs. Allison did not venture to address her, but occupied herself in thinking how delightfully easy the springs of the carriage were hung. Alas! disappointment and mortification rendered the equipage as uneasy as an Irish jaunting car to its fair owner.

The carriage had been ordered to the house of Mrs. Philipson, a celebrated artificial florist, who, strange to say, was thought to be as ingenious and clever as if she had been French instead of English. Miss Garston had issued cards for a *fete*, and she was desirous that her rooms should be hung with wreaths of flowers, which were to be constructed in a novel manner under her own direction. Another minor disappointment awaited her. Mrs. Philipson was not at home, but she was expected in a few minutes, and Miss Garston condescendingly suffered herself to be shown into a neat front drawing-room, to await her return. A minute had scarcely elapsed before the keys of a piano, in the back drawing-room, were touched with that light, caressing brilliancy, which shows the ability of a performer at the first instant it greets the ear; a sweet symphony was then played, and a ballad sung in an exquisite voice, and in the purest taste. A difficult Italian air followed—the science of the singer was perfection. Miss Garston possessed no voice, to her great regret, for Lord Alfred Harleigh was a passionate admirer of singing; but her judgment was good, and it had been fostered by the instruction of the best masters, and the habit of hearing the best performers; she was quite aware that the singing in question was either professional, or well deserved to be so, and she could not resist the temptation of opening the folding-doors. An elegant girl rose from the piano; her bonnet was thrown on a chair by her side, and her beautiful chestnut ringlets waved over a countenance of surpassing loveliness.

Miss Garston hastily apologized for her intrusion, and withdrew, and the fair stranger, as if to show that she did not resent it, regaled the ears of her auditors with another exquisite song. Miss Garston was convinced that some forthcoming star in the musical world had engaged lodgings at Mrs. Philipson's, and felt very desirous to procure the aid of her talents for her proposed *fete*; for, since her double disappointment in love and friendship, she seemed to have become more than ever desirous of astonishing the world by the magnificence of her entertainment; accordingly she despatched Mrs. Allison down stairs, with the view of obtaining necessary information from one of the officiating priestesses employed in twining garlands and arranging bouquets; and in a little while she returned, bearing with her the tidings that the singing beauty was only a niece of Mrs. Philipson's, that her father was a tradesman in the city, that she had just left a situation where she lived as governess, and that, till she succeeded in procuring another, she was in the habit of paying frequent visits to her aunt for the advantage of practising on her piano. Miss Garston made no commentary on this intelligence, but merely observed that she had waited quite long enough for Mrs. Philipson; wrote a few lines in pencil, which she desired might be given to her on her return, and then re-ascended the carriage; she did not speak during her drive home, and passed the evening in reading "The Lady of Lyons; or Love and Pride."

The next morning was a repetition, in its first few hours, of the one preceding it. Miss Garston rose late, and was out of spirits and out of humor; the liveried slaves of the lamp did their bidding, bringing in divers covered silver dishes at 2 o'clock, and the *dame de compagnie* smiled, soothed, and flattered as usual.

"Pray, Mrs. Allison," asked Miss Garston, suddenly, "did you ever read the Lady of Lyons?"

Mrs. Allison replied in the affirmative, in that fearless, self-complacent tone which a person adopts who feels conscious that they are asserting a fact on which they can bear to be questioned and cross-questioned; the truth was, that she was fully aware that it was the duty of a *confidante* to be "mad in white linen" whenever her principal was "mad in white satin;" and as Miss Garston had been deeply absorbed in the study of "The Lady of Lyons" the preceding night, she had made it a point to be as deeply absorbed in it during the early part of that morning; and having so recently "read up" to the subject, she was fully qualified to discuss it in all its bearings.

"What do you think of the story?" said Miss Garston. "Did not the haughty Lady of Lyons deserve to suffer humiliation?"

"It is a very clever story for a play," returned Mrs. Allison; "but it is not very likely, I think, that such a scheme could be carried into execution in real life."

"And pray, why not?" asked Miss Garston in an irritable tone of voice.

And Mrs. Allison took refuge from the displeasure of her patroness in the convenient, although hackneyed confession of ignorance—"I'm sure I don't know."

"How severely Lord Alfred Harleigh would be mortified," said Miss Garston, "were he to be entrapped into a marriage with a person of low birth!"

"Very severely, indeed," replied Mrs. Allison, who felt that she could not do wrong in assenting to this truism.

"I have written to Mrs. Philipson," pursued Miss Garston, "desiring her to be with me at three to take my directions about the wreaths, and to bring her niece with her."

"Indeed," said Mrs. Allison, "that is just like your kindness, dear Miss Garston; I dare say you mean to patronize this poor girl, and to procure some delightful situation for her."

"I hope it will be delightful," said Miss Garston, with a half smile; "for I purpose that for the present she shall reside in my own family."

The countenance of the *dame de compagnie* changed; destruction seemed to impend over all her highly prized enjoyments; the establishment of an heiress can no more bear two humble companions than the earth can bear two suns.

"My dear Miss Garston," she exclaimed, "are you in your senses—is that low-bred girl fit to accompany you into society! I did not tell you all the particulars yesterday, because it was not fit to trouble you with such vulgar communications; but her name is Hannah Wilkins, and her father keeps a little haberdasher's shop somewhere in Whitechapel, and her mother works upon lace."

"All this has no effect upon me," said the heiress, laughing; "but rather increases my wish to have her with me. Why did you not tell me these circumstances yesterday, Mrs. Allison? You are really very entertaining."

All the entertainment, however, was on the side of Miss Garston. Mrs. Allison looked at her patroness equally in sorrow and in anger.

"However," pursued Miss Garston, "her residence will not, I dare say, be long in my house, and it shall interfere with none of your privileges, my good Mrs. Allison; you are too necessary to my comfort to be slighted by me, and you will not, I hope, refuse to accept this mark of my esteem."

Miss Garston, as she spoke, drew a valuable diamond ring from her finger, and slipped it on that of her companion. There certainly must be a secret power in diamonds to communicate some of their own brilliancy to the eyes of those who receive them. Mrs. Allison's dull grey eyes actually sparkled as she returned thanks to her "dear young friend" with unwonted energy.

"Do you not think," said Miss Garston, "that Lord Alfred Harleigh, who is such an admirer of beauty, and such a connoissieur in music, would be greatly struck with Miss Wilkins' power and talents? She is certainly very lovely."

"Decidedly so," answered Mrs. Allison, whose position in the front drawing-room had only enabled her to see the shoulder, and one of the long ringlets of that young lady on the preceding day. "Lord Alfred cannot fail to admire her."

"May not his admiration lead to the offer of his hand and heart?" asked Miss Garston.

"Dear me! no," exclaimed the *dame de compagnie*, surprised into sincerity by the *outre* supposition. "Lord Alfred would, of course, immediately learn her connections and situation in life; and as pride is his decided characteristic, his love would soon take flight."

"Do you not imagine, however," said Miss Garston, "that even Lord Alfred Harleigh might behold a young lady with favor who was introduced to him as the heiress of Lord Glenallan?"

Mrs. Allison could not restrain an exclamation of horror, even though she felt the pressure of her ring upon her finger, and beheld the sparkle of the diamonds. She was not a woman of decided abilities or strong principles, but she was neither weak nor wicked; she saw the folly and liability to detection of such a plot, and she recoiled from the criminality of it.

"My dear Miss Garston," she said, clapping her hands, "do pray give up such an idea; you can never carry your plan into execution; it will certainly fail."

"Never," said Miss Garston, "I have a foreboding of success that I feel cannot deceive me."

"But success," persisted Mrs. Allison, "would be worse than failure. The whole truth, of course, must be discovered after the marriage, and then what opinion would the world form of you?"

"A woman who wishes for revenge," returned Miss Garston, "cares very little about the opinion of the world."

Mrs. Allison was quite perplexed for an answer: all the conventional pleas and arguments in her vocabulary seemed poor and inefficient to stem the mighty torrent of her patroness's fierce resentment. Luckily at that moment the door opened, and a servant announced that Mrs. Philipson had been shown into Miss Garston's boudoir, at the same time ushering into the drawing room a nameless and veiled young lady, whom Mrs. Allison had no difficulty in concluding to be the phenomenon of the preceding day. Mrs. Allison gladly embraced the opportunity of entering into conversation with Miss Wilkins, earnestly hoping to find that there might be somewhat of *gaucherie*, shyness, or flippancy, in her manner which would disqualify her from acting up to the character of the Honorable Miss Glenallan. But she was doomed to be disappointed. In the same way that Miss Wilkins discovered her musical proficiency merely by a rapid prelude on the keys of the instrument, she evinced her lady like propriety of demeanor, even in the observations that she made upon the common topics of the day. When she became rather more familiar, she delivered her opinion on some new publications lying on the table, in a manner which showed that she had read much and miscellaneously; and when, at length, she threw back her veil, and discovered a countenance beautiful enough to create a sensation at Almack's, Mrs. Allison could not but confess that any Scottish or English noble might be proud of such a daughter, and could only cling to the hope that the good feeling and the good sense, conspicuous in every word uttered by the fair young governess, would induce her to shrink from the idea of being a party to the scheme of imposition devised by Miss Garston. In about an hour the stranger was summoned to the conference in the boudoir: half an hour more elapsed; Miss Wilkins and her aunt departed, and Miss Garston entered the room with a triumphant smile, which struck a chill to the heart of Mrs. Allison, and exclaimed—

"In a few days I expect to receive my long anticipated visit from Miss Glenallan!"

It was the day of Miss Garston's *fete*; Lord Alfred Harleigh was accosted in Regent street, by a lounger of fashion:

"Shall I meet you at Miss Garston's to-night?" asked the latter.

"I hardly know what to say," replied Lord Alfred; "at one time I fancied myself very high in the good graces of Miss Garston, in fact higher than I wished to be, but latterly she has been quite cold and cruel to me; ordering herself to be denied to me more than once, when I was convinced she was at home. Yesterday, however, I received a most gracious smile from her in Kensington Gardens, and an intimation that she hoped I had not forgotten my engagement for to-night; therefore I suppose I must drop in for half an hour, especially as I hear that a young lady is staying on a visit with her, who is a most accomplished singer."

Lord Alfred Harleigh entered Miss Garston's splendid suite of rooms; they were brilliant with company and colored lamps, and Mrs. Phillipson had outdone herself in the wreaths of flowers that adorned them, but the great centre of attraction was the music-room. Thither Lord Alfred bent his steps, directed by the rich, sweet tones of a melodious voice, which an enraptured amateur by his side remarked—"was almost enough to comfort one for the marriage of Sontag." He gained his way to the side of the piano; the beauty of the lady's face at least equalled that of her voice; she concluded her song; he was on the point of advancing towards her, forgetting all the forms of society in his eagerness to pour forth his tribute of admiration, but Miss Garston saved him from the solecism he was about to commit, by taking the hand of the fair songstress in her own, and saying—

"Permit me to introduce Lord Alfred Harleigh to my intimate friend, the Honourable Miss Glenallan."

Lord Alfred scarcely left the side of Miss Glenallan that evening, except for a happy *tete de tete* of a quarter of an hour with Miss Garston, who told him that he must come very often in the morning to practise duets with her friend,—and further, delighted him with an account of Lord Glenallan's high descent and splendid establishment, and enlarged upon the sweetness and excellence of disposition which Miss Glenallan had exhibited, even from her earliest girlhood.—Lord Alfred, instead of limiting his stay to half an hour, prottracted it till colored lamps and champagne had been superseded by sunshine and strong coffee, and till he had feasted his eyes on the unfaded lillies and roses of Miss Glenallan's complexion, and qualified himself to say with Lord Byron—

"I never knew but one (the stars withdrawn)
Whose bloom could after dancing dare be dawn!"

Some weeks elapsed; Lord Alfred Harleigh was the devoted slave of Hannah Wilkins; his mother and sisters were anxious for an introduction to the beautiful and high-born young heiress, whom they considered a most desirable connection for him; and Miss Garston had the long coveted and long-withheld honor of welcoming to her mansion the haughty Marchioness of Delfield, and the dignified ladies Harriet and Esther Harleigh; she exulted in thinking on the motives which had procured her this reluctant attention from them and, anticipated with delight their disappointment and vexation when fully awakened to the horrors of the connection she was providing for them. Mis Garston now thought it high time that the *denouncement* of the tragic-comedy should take place; she spoke to Miss Glenallan on the subject,—the latter acknowledged her affection for Lord Alfred.

"I am, however," she said, "an imposter; I am not the individual Lord Alfred believes me to be; oh! how can I expect happiness from an union with him if that union can only be gained by persevering in a blameable deception."

Miss Garston was not at all disconcerted by this speech; she considered the scruples of her *protegee* only words, of course, plausibly enough arguing that if the young lady had felt any conscientious horror of the scheme, she would not so easily have been persuaded to become an actress in it. Miss Garston next addressed herself to Lord Alfred—

"My dear young friend," she said; "has confessed to me her devoted attention to you, but I fear that difficulties encompass you. Lord Glenallan is mercenary as well as ambitious; the latter feeling would be fully gratified by an alliance with a family distinguished as your own, but he has repeatedly told his daughter that he would never sanction her union except with one possessing equal wealth with herself. You must have recourse to a private marriage; I will venture to predict that you will very quickly obtain Lord Glenallan's forgiveness."

Lord Alfred strongly objected to this plan; the pride which Mrs. Allison had justly enough mentioned as his decided characteristic was wounded, and he declared his resolution never to enter any family clandestinely. Miss Garston expostulated, soothed and argued. Lord Alfred hesitated; the man who deliberates is as surely lost as the woman who does the same, and in a short time he gave his consent to a private marriage, provided Miss Garston would ensure that of Miss Glenallan.

Miss Garston could not help smiling, when Lord Alfred left her, at the idea of the actual position of the family which he had so magnanimously declared "he could not endure to enter clandestinely." She had felt, some days ago, a strong inclination to recreate herself with the sight of the plebeian parents of Hannah Wilkins; and she knew that she might indulge her wish without danger of discovery, since they were not aware of the existence of such a being as herself, merely believing that their daughter was staying on a protracted visit at the house of her aunt, Mrs. Philipson. Accordingly, having obtained from Mrs. Philipson an exact description of the street in which Mr. Wilkins pursued his vocation as a haberdasher, Miss Garston set out on a journey of discovery to that place; her stately coachman looked horrified at the neighborhood to which she directed him, and her milk-white steeds seemed indignantly to paw the plebeian ground which they were compelled to traverse! Miss Garston desired that her carriage might stop at the end of the narrow street where stood the paternal mansion of the future Lady Alfred Harleigh, and alighting from it, pursued her way on foot, strictly forbidding either of her two tall footmen to follow her; she had not, however, calculated on the length of the street, neither had she calculated on the sensation which would be produced in the locality by her blonde veil, pink-satin mantilla, swansdown boa, and white silk parasol. A group of children in the middle of the street stood to look at her in such amaze that they would have been run over by a gig, had not the young doctor who drove it voluntarily reined in his horse, that he might himself enjoy a good view of the splendid incognita; a porter who came behind her, carrying a deal box, actually stepped outside the pavement instead of uttering the usual "By your leave," which is followed by a heavy blow as quickly as the report of a gun follows the flash. Two men smoking on a bench before a public-house removed the pipes from their mouths that they might utter some audible, but not particularly refined commendations of her personal appearance; and a policeman quietly crossed the way, that he might give her, if necessary, that protection which the possessor of a showy person and a showy dress united, is very likely to require in a narrow street in White-chapel. Miss Garston felt relieved when she entered the little dark shop, where old Wilkins was at that moment engaged in selling an ounce of brown packing thread to a woman who had a baby placed before her on the counter; and held the key of the house in her hand. The ignoble customer was soon despatched, and Miss Garston, while asking for gloves, muslin, and ribbon in succession, contrived to make her quick eye thoroughly acquainted with the whole bearing of the establishment; she ascertained, to her great satisfaction, that old Wilkins was vulgar, mean, and servile; that he performed the whole duties of the shop in person, and that every speech he uttered was guilty of that misdemeanour in pronunciation which Mrs. Ramsbottom denominates "exasperating the H!" Miss Garston also cast her eye into the parlour behind the shop, the door of which was open, and beheld a sight which gave her intense gratification; an atrociously fat woman in a red linen gown was industriously working a lace collar, while a dingy, under-sized servant girl was laying the cloth for dinner on a small round table. Miss Garston was not near enough to detect the defects of the table-cloth; but she had the pleasure of ascertaining the presence of a tin pepper-caster, and a pewter pot! With what complacency did she recall the intelligent mind and manly address of her own father, the slender figure and "silk attire" of her mother, and the town and country house, handsome carriage, and establishment of clever and skilful servants which had always been hers since the first period of her recollection. "Lord Alfred," she indignantly soliloquised, "has spoken with contempt of my family and my early habits; perhaps he may find those of Hannah Wilkins rather inferior to them!"

She dropped her purchases into her embroidered satin reticule, paid the price of them, two sovereigns, which was received with more delight by old Wilkins than a draft of two hundred pounds would have elicted in Regent Street; and then pursued her way down the street, followed by the eyes of a mixed crowd of admirers, to which were added those of old Wilkins, who stood at the door with his mouth wide open, and a half terror-struck, half triumphant expression of countenance, such as a young merchant in the Arabian Night's Entertainments might be supposed to wear, when a veiled beauty from the seraglio of the Sultan has come incog to the Bazaar, to make a selection from his choicest silver stuffs, leaving behind her a purse of gold pieces in part payment. Miss Garston desired her coachman to drive back to a civilized locality; she called on two ladies of title, visited the Diorama, a conservatory of rare plants, and an exhibition of fine pictures, but nothing did she behold that inspired her with such delight as the sight of the future father and mother-in-law of the fastidious and exclusive Lord Alfred Harleigh.

Lord Alfred had requested a private interview with Miss Glenallan; he was shown into the boudoir which Miss Garston had allotted to her during her visit; he spoke of love, he spoke of a private marriage. Miss Glenallan wept bitterly. Lord Alfred renewed his protestations; she was silent.

"Only tell me," he warmly exclaimed, "that you object to my attentions, and you shall no longer be oppressed by them."

"These tears are not tears of aversion," said Miss Glenallan, withdrawing her handkerchief.

"Then," replied Lord Alfred, "they flow from fear of your father's displeasure; oh! do not doubt that if he values your happiness, he will soon learn to esteem one who will make it the study of his life to promote it."

"Such is not the cause of my grief," said Miss Glenallan; "Lord Alfred, you behold an impostor in me; I am not what I seem to be, I am not the daughter of Lord Glenallan."

Lord Alfred looked on her with wondering incredulity.

"Impossible," he said, "Miss Garston has known you long; she repeatedly mentioned you to me before I saw you; surely you could not impose on one who was familiar with Miss Glenallan from her childhood."

"No," replied Miss Glenallan, "the imposition has been originated by herself; I was the party to it, and you were intended to be the victim. Miss Garston was wounded and hurt by some satirical observations on her family, which you made without being aware that she was within hearing; she imagined that her vengeance might be best wreaked on you by betraying you into a secret marriage with a girl of low origin, who might be introduced to you as a person of rank and fortune. I fell in her way; she was pleased with my appearance; she suggested her scheme to me, and I had not the strength to resist the temptation."

A pause ensued.

"Do you command me to leave you?" said Lord Alfred.

"Can you need any command to do so?"—asked Miss Glenallan, in astonishment; "do you not detest me for my deception, and despise me for my low birth?"

"Your deception was culpable," replied Lord Alfred, "but it is evident that you sincerely and deeply repent it, and your penitence has been evinced by your voluntary disclosure of circumstances which I should otherwise never have known until united to you. In respect to your birth, I might once have thought it an objection; but since I have known what it is to love I have ceased to be proud; your elegance of mind and person must ennoble all connected with you; they may receive honor from you, but under no circumstances could they give it to you. I cannot be happy without you; I renew my entreaties to you, that you will become mine; say but one word in reply, I ask no tedious recapitulation of the past, no painful allusions to it—a simple monosyllable of consent will suffice for me."

"Then," said Miss Glenallan, a bright beam of sunshine sparkling through her tears, "I cannot be so unkind as to withhold; but it will be necessary that I should make many allusions to the past, although I hope and believe they will not be of a painful nature. Have you patience to hear a long story?"

Lord Alfred promised attention, and his interview with Miss Glenallan was extended to a duration of two hours; at the end of that time he quitted her presence, looking as joyful and triumphant as if he were engaged to be married to a princess of the blood-royal, and Miss Glenallan proceeded to the boudoir of her patroness."

"I have accepted the hand of Lord Alfred Harleigh," said she with a brilliant smile of happiness; "no particulars respecting the marriage have yet been arranged, but he has gone to acquaint his family with his engagement to me, and tells me that he is sure they will be delighted at the intelligence."

Miss Garston told her she was rejoiced that all was so satisfactorily settled, and inwardly ejaculated, "Artful hypocrite, her conscientious misgivings must have been all feigned; no doubt she is delighted at the success of her deception, but I think she will enjoy no enviable lot as the despised, insulted wife of a needy nobleman." The next morning Lord Alfred drove up to the door in his curricle, and preferred a petition that Miss Glenallan might accompany him home in it; as his mother and sisters were most anxious to welcome her. She agreed to his request, and in about an hour a note from her was delivered to Miss Garston, saying that she should feel obliged to her if, in the course of her morning ride, she would call on the Marchioness of Delfield, as there was a reason that made all the family desirous of her presence.—Miss Garston gaily showed the note to Mrs. Allison.

"So," she exclaimed, "my triumph has begun; these haughty dames are anxious to obtain the assistance of one on whom they once looked down with disdain, to give their son and brother clandestine possession of the hand of an high-born heiress; well, they shall be gratified, a special license shall be procured, and at the earliest period they suggest, shall the ceremony be performed in my own drawing-room, and I will fill the station of bridesmaid to Hannah Wilkins. After this kindness on my part, the bridegroom's mother and sisters can scarcely refuse to accompany me on a short excursion, and I will have the pleasure of introducing them to their new relations in Whitechapel."

"My dear Miss Garston," exclaimed the panic-stricken Mrs. Allison, "how can you speak so

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