

influence he had with Mrs. Hopkinson in his favour. "You see," he said explanatorily to DeLaney, "she has a good deal to attend to lately, and I suppose has got rather careless—that's women's ways. But if I can't bring her round I'll speak to Gashwiler—I'll get him to use his influence with Mrs. Hop. So cheer up, my boy; he'll make it all right."

The appearance of a bouquet on the table of Mrs. Hopkinson was no rare event; nevertheless Mr. Gashwiler's was not there. Its hideous contrasts had offended her woman's eye—it is observable that good taste survives the wreck of all other feminine virtues—and she had distributed it to make *boutonnieres* for other gentlemen. Yet when he appeared she said to him hastily, putting her little hand over the cardiac region:

"I'm so glad you came. But you gave me such a fright an hour ago."

Mr. Gashwiler was both pleased and astounded. "What have I done, my dear Mrs. Hopkinson?" he began.

"O, don't talk," she said sadly. "What have you done? Indeed! Why, you sent me that beautiful bouquet. I could not mistake your taste in the arrangement of the flowers—but my husband was here. You know his jealousy. I was obliged to conceal it from him. Never—promise me now—never do it again."

Mr. Gashwiler gallantly protested.

"Not I am serious! I was so agitated; he must have seen me blush."

Nothing but the gross flattery of this speech could have clouded its manifest absurdity to the Gashwiler consciousness. But Mr. Gashwiler had already succumbed to the girlish half-timidly with which it was uttered. Nevertheless, he could not help saying:

"But why should he be so jealous now? Only day before yesterday I saw Simpson of Duluth hand you a nosegay right before him!"

"Ah," returned the lady, "he was outwardly calm then, but you know nothing of the scene that occurred between us after you left."

"But," gasped the practical Gashwiler, "Simpson had given your husband that contract—a cool fifty thousand in his pocket!"

Mrs. Hopkinson looked as dignifiedly at Gashwiler as was consistent with five feet three, (the extra three inches being a pyramidal structure of straw-coloured hair), a frond of faint curls, a pair of laughing blue eyes and a small belted waist. Then she said, with a casting down of her lids:

"You forget that my husband loves me." And for once the minx appeared to look penitent. It was becoming, but as it had been originally practised in a simple white dress, relieved only with pale blue ribbons, it was not entirely in keeping with befouled lavender and rose-coloured trimmings. Yet the woman who hesitates between her moral expression and the harmony of her dress is lost. And Mrs. Hopkinson was *victrix* by her very audacity.

Mr. Gashwiler was flattered. The most dissolute man likes the appearance of virtue. "But graces and accomplishments like yours, dear Mrs. Hopkinson," he said oleaginously, "belong to the whole country." Which, with something between a courtesy and a strut, he endeavoured to represent. "And I shall want to avail myself of all," he added, "in the matter of the Castro claim. A little supper at Welcker's, a glass or two of champagne, and a single flash of those bright eyes, and the thing is done."

"But," said Mrs. Hopkinson, "I've promised Josiah that I would give up all those frivolities; and although my conscience is clear, you know how people talk! Josiah hears it. Why, only last night, at a reception at the Patagonian Min-

ister's, every woman in the room gossiped about me because I led the German with him. As if a married woman, whose husband was interested in the Government, could not be civil to the representative of a friendly Power!"

Mr. Gashwiler did not see how Mr. Hopkinson's late contract for supplying salt pork and canned provisions to the army of the United States should make his wife susceptible to the advances of foreign princes, but he prudently kept that to himself. Still, not being himself a diplomat, he could not help saying:

"But I understood that Mr. Hopkinson did not object to your interesting yourself in his claim, and you know some of the stock—"

The lady started, and said:

"Stock! Dear Mr. Gashwiler, for Heaven's sake don't mention that hideous name to me. Stock! I am sick of it! Have you gentlemen no other topic for a lady?"

She punctuated her sentence with a mischievous look at her interlocutor. For a second time, I regret to say, that Mr. Gashwiler succumbed. The Roman constituency at Remus, it is to be hoped, were happily ignorant of this last defection of their great legislator. Mr. Gashwiler instantly forgot his theme—began to ply the lady with a certain bovine-like gallantry, which, it is to be said to her credit, she parried with a playful, terrier-like dexterity, when the servant suddenly announced, "Mr. Wiles."

Gashwiler started. Not so Mrs. Hopkinson, who, however, prudently and quickly removed her own chair several inches from Gashwiler's.

"Do you know Mr. Wiles?" she asked pleasantly.

"Not That is, I—ah—yes, I may say I have had some business relations with him," responded Gashwiler, rising.

"Won't you stay?" she added pleadingly.

"Do!"

Mr. Gashwiler's prudence always got the better of his gallantry. "Not now," he responded, in some nervousness. "Perhaps I had better go now, in view of what you have just said about gossip. You need not mention my name to this—er—this—Mr. Wiles." And with one eye on the door and an awkward dash of his hand at the lady's fingers, he withdrew.

There was no introductory formula to Mr. Wiles' interview. He dashed at once *in medias res*. "Gashwiler knows a woman that, he says, can help us against that Spanish girl who is coming here with proofs, prettiness, fascinations and what not! You must find her out."

"Why?" asked the lady, laughingly.

"Because I don't trust that Gashwiler. A woman with a pretty face and an ounce of brains could sell him out; ay, and us with him."

"O, say two ounces of brains. Mr. Wiles, Mr. Gashwiler is no fool."

"Possibly, except when your sex is concerned, and it is very likely that this woman is his superior."

"I should think so," said Mrs. Hopkinson with a mischievous look.

"Ah, you know her, then?"

"Not so well as I know him," said Mrs. H., quite seriously. "I wish I did."

"Well, you'll find out if she's to be trusted! You are laughing—it is a serious matter! This woman—"

Mrs. Hopkinson dropped him a charming courtesy and said,

"*C'est moi!*"

CHAPTER XII.

A RACE FOR IT.

Royal Thatcher worked hard. That the boy