

ESMERALDA

DeWynt, wife of the famous Republican senator, *grande dame* in a fashion that can only be acquired through at least three London seasons, leader of Long Hampton's most exclusive circles—such a person, in short, as my dear patroness can scarcely be said to be in any wise blemished, no matter what happens to her! Still, it must be admitted that things seemed a little queer; the girl was her niece, and Mrs. DeWynt was undoubtedly responsible for bringing her on from the West—insisted upon doing so, I might add, in spite of my warning. But the simplest way of doing the dear lady justice is to tell the story, exactly as it occurred, from the very beginning; which was, of course, the moment when the unfortunate idea occurred to her.

We were sitting on the west terrace, I remember, and Mrs. DeWynt had just finished authorizing the invitation list to a bridge drive we were having for the benefit of the Red Cross. I had prepared the list with great care and discretion. Of course, the guests were to