

The Lady Paramount

XXV

SUSANNA, Miss Sandus, a white peacock, and six ring-doves were taking refreshments in the garden, in the shade of an oleander-tree. There were cakes, figs, and lemonade, grains of dried maize, and plenty of good succulent hemp-seed. The ring-doves liked the hemp-seed and the maize, but the white peacock seemed to prefer sponge-cake soaked in lemonade.

"I know a literary man who once taught a peacock to eat sponge-cake soaked in absinthe," Miss Sandus remarked, on a key of reminiscence.

"Really? An unprincipled French literary man, I suppose?" was Susanna's natural inference.

"No, that's the funny part of it," said Miss Sandus. "He is an eminent and highly respectable English literary man, and the father of a family into the bargain. I dare n't give his name, lest he might have the law of me."

"He ought to have been ashamed of himself," Susanna said. "What became of the poor peacock? Did it descend to a drunkard's grave?"