

so happy, that he felt no need of their society; but certain hints began to find their way to his ear, that he was no longer his own master; that he could not, if he would, invite them, and worse than all, that he wished to save his wife. There was no bearing this. He resolved to give a dinner, at which they should all be convinced, that, though his wine was worth some care, he had no desire to spare it.

It was difficult to make Eleanor fully understand the nature of this dinner. She wished to have Mr. and Mrs. West invited; and though her husband earnestly requested her to make no addition to the party he had named, not liking to be the only lady at table, she requested, as a particular favour, that Miss Masterman would come and assist her through the day. It was a great pleasure to her, to superintend the arrangement of every thing precisely to her husband's satisfaction; to spare no expense in procuring exactly what was then in season, and to hear him say, on returning home to dress for dinner, that she had left him nothing to ask, or to wish for.

"But why is Miss Masterman and your sister?" here, my love?

"I asked them to come and assist me."

Frederick bit his lip. "You must get them away early, Eleanor; and remember I never lay a charge upon you without reason. I would rather have given fifty pounds, than that you should have disgraced me in this."

"I thought," said Eleanor meekly, "that you liked Miss Masterman; and my sister can offend no one."

"Miss Masterman is a snake in the grass, Eleanor; and your sister may toll tales, if she cannot invent them."

The last words were spoken in an under tone, but, even had they been more audible, they would only have added to Eleanor's astonishment, for the whole affair was a mystery to her; and had not her husband cleared his brow, and spoken kindly to her again, she would probably have added to her former imprudence, by immediately sending the unwelcome guests away.

The hour of meeting arrived, and Frederick Bond had scarcely more pride in introducing his lovely wife, than in the perfect adjustment of every thing relating to the dinner. Sir James Mornford, of course, was one of the guests, and he evinced his satisfaction by being in the best possible humour. He was a grave—some said a deep feeling man; but of that the world had little proof, for to no one being alone was his heart laid open. He seldom praised any thing, for his forte seemed to lie in quiet sarcasm. Yet, while others exhausted their eloquence in profuse encomium, he, with a few looks, and tones of approbation, could at any time reward the endeavours of those who sought to give him pleasure. Thus, to have had Sir James to dine, and to have had him in good humour, was a thing to be told of the next day, as the highest honour which the town of — afforded.

To this honour, Frederick Bond was peculiarly alive on the present occasion, as well as to all other sources of satisfaction.—His dinner was excellent, his wines were approved; and when the ladies rose to leave the table, he seemed to have nothing left to wish for beneath the sun.

While he and his guests were enjoying themselves to their heart's content, Eleanor, her sister, and Miss Masterman, began to feel the time hang heavily on their hands. They opened the piano, but there was no audience to hear them play. They took out their worsted work, but still an involuntary yawn betrayed at intervals that they thought the evening both long and dull: nor was their situation rendered more agreeable by hearing peals of laughter from the dining-room below.

"The gentlemen appear to be merry," observed Miss Masterman; "I have heard that Sir James, when he has taken a pretty liberal quantity of wine, is one of the most entertaining companions imaginable, not, however, so merry himself, as the cause of mirth to other men. But of all persons under such circumstances, I have the greatest horror of the little gentleman who sat on your right hand. I am told, he thinks nothing of chasing the ladies from room to room, and that neither age nor dignity are secure from his impertinence."

All this was a new style of conversation to Eleanor. In her father's house there had been no dinner parties for gentlemen alone; and she had, hitherto, been ignorant enough to believe, that to be, what is called affected by wine, a man must make some sacrifice of his dignity, if not of his character, as a gentleman. What then was her astonishment, to hear the laughter from the dining-room grow louder, coarser, and in every way less like the sounds that might be expected to celebrate the meeting of rational and enlightened men. There were songs, too, at first

deep and full-toned, but afterwards in broken voices, and all the while she felt that Miss Masterman's keen searching eyes were fixed full upon her face, while her ear was set forth listening, and her smile seemed at intervals to say, "Do you hear that?"

"Let us have tea," said Eleanor, and she rung the bell with violence, glad of any thing that would make a bustle, and help to drown the discord below.

"Tell your master," said Eleanor to the footman, "that coffee wants in the drawing-room."

The footman did not return, and the three ladies sat and sipped their tea in almost unbroken silence.

In the course of an hour, Eleanor renewed her message to the gentlemen, but still no answer, and both tea and coffee were growing cold. At last, about eleven o'clock, the dining-room door was heard to open, and a creaking step came deliberately up the stairs.

The gentleman who entered, was a philosopher, or rather a man of science; and the ladies consequently felt it incumbent upon them to reach the highest range of their own intellect, for a subject on which to engage his attention. He had bowed to them with great majesty on approaching the table, and having taken a seat, he looked rather vaguely, this way, and that, but still not a word was spoken.

"I suppose it is the way with men of genius," thought Eleanor, to have nothing to say to ladies," but yet, as the mistress of the house, she thought it necessary to make some farther attempt. In vain she tried the effect of common-place. Still there was no answer. The gentleman, however, took the coffee that was handed to him, and not the coffee alone, for he poured out the cream, until both cup and saucer were filled.

"It is one of the singularities of clever men," thought Eleanor, in the simplicity of her heart; and again she searched through her own little store of scientific information to find something more fitting the occasion, and more worthy of being said. At last she thought of something.

"Pray Dr. —" she asked, "what is your opinion of animal magnetism? Do you think it possible that the nervous system should be affected by laws so mysterious; or do you consider it a deception altogether?"

Still there was no answer. Eleanor looked in the gentleman's face. He had raised the coffee to his lips, and a pair of little twinkling eyes were winking at her over the edge of the cup; while a nod more than familiar, convinced her, that although wise men might sometimes look singular, singularity did not always look wise.

Miss Masterman understood the case better. She had understood it from the beginning; and she was more than rewarded for the dull evening she had spent, by the rich treasure she hoped to lay up for the amusement of future evenings elsewhere.

The next outlet from the dining-room was of a very different description. It was a complete explosion. Amongst the screams of the maid-servants, the laughter of the foot-men, and the derangement of all the furniture in the hall, in shot the little gentleman, the terror of all nervous ladies, the delight of all stable-boys and grooms.

The sister of Mrs. Bond was a well-looking girl of sixteen; gentle and timid as a young dove, she was exactly the kind of subject the little gentleman was wont to choose for his boisterous and absurd attentions.

Eleanor looked on with astonishment equalled only by her indignation. The maternal feelings of an elder sister rose in her heart, and glowed upon her cheek as she saw the poor girl struggling, almost in tears, beneath his familiar and insulting treatment. One of her attempts to escape had rent her white muslin frock from the top to the bottom, and her hair, which she usually wore arranged around her brow with classic order, was torn from its bandage, and lay loose and flowing upon her neck.

Eleanor could bear it no longer. Towering high with the majesty of insulted feelings, she advanced towards the offender, and demanded in the most imperative tone she had ever assumed, how he dared to treat a lady, and her sister, in such a manner.

It was a scene which Miss Masterman was often afterwards heard to describe as being worthy of Hogarth; for while Eleanor stood, beyond her usual height, in this commanding attitude, the little gentleman, not in the slightest degree daunted by her authoritative manner, let go his former prize, and seizing both her hands, compelled her to perform various rapid evolutions round the drawing-room; during which, notwithstanding the giddiness of her brain, and the agony of her vexation, Eleanor retained the power of perceiving, that through the partial opening of the door,