



'Margaret,' The GIRL ARTIST, OR, The Countess of Ferrers Court.

CHAPTER VII. It was a peculiar look, critical, analytical; it was the look a surgeon bends on a patient who is a curious and, perhaps, difficult case. "Well!" she said, sinking into a chair, and fidgeting with the handle of her whip. The footman entered with the teatray, and Austin Ambrose, instead of answering, said: "No sugar in mine, please." She poured him out a cup with not too carefully concealed impatience, and as he rose and fetched it, taking it leisurely back to his chair, she beat a tattoo on the ground with her small feet. "How tiresomely slow you can be when you like," she said. "I believe you do it to—to exasperate me."

desire you may have in that direction. He is always ready to fight, and on the smallest provocation," remarked Austin Ambrose, with icy coldness. "No," she said, "he is not! He is not easily provoked, but when he is—but what does it matter? We don't want to waste time quarreling about him. I want to hear all—that that occurred." "I came to tell you," he said, slowly. "The earl, notwithstanding his anger at the brawl outside the Court gates, offered to lend Blair the money to help him out of this difficulty, but Blair refused."

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significance which she did not appreciate. "You and he were engaged, the engagement is broken off; it is my task to see that it is renewed. I am engaged in that task now. Between us, it is understood there should be no concealment. Concealments would be fatal. You ask me to tell you all concerning this visit of Blair to the Court. I intend doing so. There is not much difficulty, for I have just left Blair, who has found out his heart after his fashion."

"His heart! About what?" she demanded, taking up her tea cup. "About a girl he met there," he said, quietly and coldly. The fragile and priceless piece of porcelain fell crushed by her fingers. He rose courteously and picked up the fragments. "It will spoil the set," he remarked. "Girl!—girl! What girl?" she demanded. She was white to the lips, and her gray eyes seemed to have grown dark and almost black. "A girl whom he found staying in the house," he rejoined, with a cool ease that maddened her. "I can describe her, for Blair is minute to weariness. She is tall, graceful, has a burn hair, large and expressive eyes, a small mouth, a clear, musical voice, an angelic smile—"

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