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**THE Lady of the Night**  
—OR—  
**Amelia Makes a Success**

CHAPTER VI.  
MISS FLORENCE AT WORK.

Florence had a suspicion that the young man Elliot Graham was other than he seemed, and that he was playing an unconscious part in some scheme of Sir Joseph's; the young fellow was evidently a gentleman, yet he occupied the position of a servant. She was not an impressionable girl where the other sex was concerned, for she had long since told herself that she could not afford to be; but she was conscious that Elliot Graham had made an impression on her. That he should have done so was logical enough. He was a man, every inch of him; the gravity of his manner, the firmness of his speech, in vivid contrast to the fawning ways, the affected languid drawl of the young men in whose society she moved, impressed her deeply. Had he been a young fellow of wealth and position, she would have laid herself out to win him; for he was just the kind of man to whom such a girl as Florence Bartley would have surrendered body and soul. "One must love the highest," she had yet crossed her path.

Elliot led her to the stables, and, in a business-like way, conducted her from stall to stall, showing her the mares and their foals; and, of course,

gradually lost himself, and forgot the lady he was chaperoning. Miss Florence expressed the greatest interest, and now and then got into somewhat dangerous proximity with some of the stud. Once she approached too near the heels of an equine lady who was in the habit of resenting intrusion, and as the mare let out, Elliot caught Miss Florence bodily, and whisked her out of the reach of harm as if she were a bundle of straw.

"Oh, thank you!" she exclaimed, with a little catch of her breath, and a dash of colour in her London complexion. "How strong you are! If I ever had the ill-luck to offend you, I should apologise before you had time to strike. I am awfully obliged to you for taking so much trouble in showing me your horses. They seem very fond of you," she added, as a short-tempered mare nuzzled her soft mouth against Elliot's waistcoat. "You are evidently very kind to them. But strong men are always kind and gentle, aren't they?"

"Are they?" said Elliot, unmoved by the outrageous flattery.

"I must come and see them again," said Miss Florence. She still felt the pressure of the strong arm, and she looked at him with a lingering side glance which is one of woman's most effective weapons.

"I shall be very pleased to show them to you at any time," said Elliot, quite unconscious of the glance; and yet half such a glance from Nora would have made his boyish heart leap.

They were returning to the jingle when a pitiable object came in sight. It was Mr. Selwyn Ferrand, coming home by a back way. He looked a deplorable specimen; for it must be admitted that even the most presentable of men must appear to disadvantage when he is wet from foot to crown, and his drenched clothes are sticking to him like the shirt of Nessus. Miss Florence's lips twitched, her expressive eyelids quivered, and a smile of deplorable enjoyment lit up her beautiful face.

"Why, Mr. Ferrand!" she exclaimed. "I know," he said suddenly; "I have fallen into the water—after a big trout. It's of no consequence."

He had been staring at her with a self-conscious terror of ridicule; but now his light eyes wandered to Elliot, who stood with a perfectly grave countenance.

"What are you doing here?" he demanded, blusteringly.

"I am putting this lady into the jingle," replied Elliot.

"I will do it," said Mr. Ferrand; "and you may go about your business, whatever it is."

Elliot, as if he had not heard the order, helped Miss Bartley into the diminutive vehicle, handed her the whip, and closed the door; doing it

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all with a deliberation which infuriated the woolf-looking Selwyn.

Miss Florence glanced from one to the other, from the stalwart young man, cool as a cucumber, to the narrow-chested Selwyn, who was fuming with impatience and irritation. She longed to see the fun brought to a climax, but her sharp ears had caught the sound of footsteps coming through the brake behind them. It did not suit her to be caught in the present situation, and she took up the reins, saying—

"Can I give you a lift home, Mr. Selwyn?"

But Selwyn Ferrand's self-consciousness shrank from the prospect of driving up to the Hall in his present condition, in Miss Bartley's ironical company.

"Thanks, no," he drawled. "I think I would rather walk; I might take a chill."

With a nod and a smile, which they might divide between them, she drove off, and the two men were left confronting one another.

"Look here," said Ferrand, with an air of hauteur which was sadly incongruous with his dilapidated condition. "I don't know who you are or what you are, my man; but I suppose you are one of our—my father's—servants."

Elliot nodded. "That's right enough," he said; "I am Sir Joseph's servant."

"Well, you are behaving very badly," said Selwyn. Miss Florence's smile was still rankling, and Mr. Ferrand was growing warm, notwithstanding his wet clothing. "You seem to me to be an impudent fellow, and one who requires to be taught his place."

"I don't think so," said Elliot, with his slow, good-tempered smile. "I know mine right enough, and it isn't at the bottom of the river. If I were you, I should go home as quickly as possible and change; rather a keen wind blowing this evening, and you might catch cold."

Selwyn grew red, and he stammered as he burst out with—

"You mind your own business, my man. I suppose you have been telling that lady how—how I fell into the river?"

"Not a word," said Elliot; "I had clean forgotten you."

"Well, I'll give you cause to remember me," spluttered Selwyn.

"What now?" responded Elliot, with cheerful alacrity. Then his face fell, for he remembered his promise to Nora. And yet what a world of good a sound hiding would do the fellow!

Selwyn shrunk back a little at Elliot's tone, and he made haste to explain that his intentions were not pugilistic. "I shall speak to Sir Joseph, my father," he said; "it is quite evident that he does not know the kind of man you are, or he would not keep you about the place. You will find yourself discharged to-morrow morning."

Elliot shrugged his shoulders. "I am not so sure of that," he said, in a reflective way which maddened Selwyn. "I don't know much about Sir Joseph, but I fancy he knows when he has got a good servant; at any rate, he is not the kind of man to discharge one without sufficient reason."

"Oh, you think so, do you?" said Selwyn, with something like a snarl. "Then you can take your discharge from me."

"I should prefer it from Sir Joseph," remarked Elliot, as if he were saying that he would prefer a fine day.

At this moment the footsteps drew nearer, but both men were so much engrossed that neither of them heard them.

"You insolent scoundrel!" cried Selwyn, and he was so carried beyond himself by the imperturbability of his opponent that he was unwise enough to advance a step or two and raise his arm.

Elliot caught it in his left hand, which closed like a grip of steel. His right hand was raised, and it looked for the moment as if Mr. Selwyn's chilled frame were going to be effectually warmed; but Elliot again remembered his promise, and checked himself with an inward groan.

At this psychological moment the god out of the machine appeared.

"Hullo!" cried a voice, and Elliot, glancing over his shoulder, saw Sir Joseph's purdy form approaching.

"What the devil are you two fellows about?" he demanded. Sir Joseph was a little out of breath, for he had heard the voices raised in anger, and had hurried to the spot with quite unusual speed. He stood, with his hat in his hand, wiping his wet brow, and looking from under his thick eyelids at the two young men. "What is it, Selwyn?"

Elliot had released Selwyn's arm, and Selwyn rubbed it unconsciously as he stammered and stammered—

"This fellow, this man here, has been insolent. He is an impudent beggar; kind of man who ought not to be about the place. I was—discharging him."

Sir Joseph put on his hat; the hard square one of felt which the City man considers appropriate to wear in the country. His flat, sallow face was quite impassive, but his small, beady eyes shot a sharp glance from under their heavy brows.

"What has he done?" he asked. "And what have you been doing? You seem to me to be wet through, drenched to the skin."

"I am," said Selwyn, biting his lip in annoyance; "I—I—had an accident—fell into the river. There was a girl—he stopped and bit his lip again. Sir Joseph's lids drooped until they hid his eyes; he took out a gold cigar case, lit a cigar, and drew some preliminary puffs before he said—

"A girl! I see"; he nodded once or twice, and turned the cigar over between his thick lips, as if he were lubricating before proceeding to swallow it. "The usual game, I suppose, Selwyn? And Elliot here interfered, eh? Yes; and you got the worst of it. What have you got to say, Elliot?"

"Nothing," replied Elliot succinctly.

Sir Joseph shot a glance of reluctant admiration at him.

"This man ought to go," blurted out Selwyn.

"I dunno about that," responded Sir Joseph quietly. "I will see. You had better go up to the house and get changed. You go on, and I will catch you up directly."

Few of his dependents were in the habit of disobeying Sir Joseph, and after only a momentary hesitation Selwyn walked away, with as much dignity as he could command; there was not a great deal of it.

Sir Joseph sucked at his cigar in silence for a moment or two, his face a fallow mask; presently he raised his eyes and said—

"Fifty you should quarrel with my son, Elliot; you have got a hot temper. I'm afraid. That's a pity—for your sake. A man with a hot temper had better keep it under ice, or he won't get on in the world. You need not pay any attention to what Selwyn said. I am master here, and you will stay until I tell you to go. Understand!"

Elliot laughed; he had quite recovered his habitual good humour by this time.

"It is not difficult to understand," he said.

"You had better keep out of Selwyn's way," said Sir Joseph. "You two bloods are better apart."

(To be continued)

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