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"BUT WHAT AM I TO DO, THEN?" SHE SAYS INNOCENTLY."

"NO INTENTIONS."

BY FLORENCE MARRYAT.

Author of "Love's Conflict," "Veronique," etc.

CHAPTER III.

Colonel Mordaunt is the best specimen of a fine old English gentleman that Irene has ever come across. She sees that at the first glance. Of middle height, with a well-knit figure, florid complexion, good features, and hair with the lustre of grey satin on it, he presents all the outward qualifications that go to make up the

picture of a man of birth and breeding, and she takes a fancy to her new relative at once. Mrs. St. John, too, who is in an unusual state of flush and flutter, seems to have been quite overcome by the unexpected encounter.

"Is it not strange," she keeps on repeating, "that we should have met here—in Brussels—after so many years? Irene, my dear! you will welcome Colonel Mordaunt, I am sure, if only for your poor father's sake."

The girl comes forward with her hand extended, and the stranger, with old-fashioned politeness, and dead and gone chivalry, raises it respectfully to his lips.

"Poor Tom!" he murmurs as he does so; "poor Tom! I can trace a slight likeness to him as he was, even in your blooming face, my fair young cousin."

"She was always thought to have a look of him," sighs the mother, "but I scarcely imagined it was so apparent. Oh, Irene! you cannot think was a comfort it is for me to have stumbled on your cousin in this way—so weak and good-for-nothing as I am. You will never need to stay at home now for want of an escort—Colonel Mordaunt says he will be charmed to take you anywhere."

"With your own kind permission," interposes Colonel Mordaunt.

"You are very good," replies Irene. "Are you, then, staying in Brussels?"

"I am here for a few days, on my way back to England. I have been spending the summer at the Baths."

"Not remedially, I trust?" says Mrs. St. John, with a sudden anxious glance of interest at the robust-looking man who stands before her.

"Well, I cannot quite say no: though precautionary would be the better word. You remember our family tendency to gout, Mrs. St. John? Poor Tom used to have a twinge of it occasionally, and it was the complaint that carried off my grandfather. I have had one or two warnings during the last four years, and so I took advantage of the hot weather to put myself to rights for the season."

"The season!" echoes Mrs. St. John, to whom there is no season but one.

"The hunting season! It sounds very dreadful, does it not? but I fear there is no other season that conveys any interest to my ears. I am master of the hounds down in my part of Leicestershire, and spend my days between the stables and the kennel. It is a fine sport, Mrs. St. John, and a man must have something to do."

"Then I suppose you are anxious to get home again," remarks Irene.

"I was anxious to do so, I confess, but I have no intention of stirring now, so long as I can be of any use to you or to your mother."

"How kind!" murmurs Mrs. St. John; and her daughter adds, "I am afraid you will find shopping and sight-seeings very tame work for which to exchange the pleasures of the field, Colonel Mordaunt."

"Without their motive, perhaps—yes. With their motive, they can admit of no rivalry in my eyes!"

"What an extremely polite old gentleman!" exclaims Irene, as soon as the Colonel has disappeared. However did you find him out, mother?"

"By the simplest accident in the world. He opened the door of my sitting-room in mistake for his own. I never was so surprised in my life. I nearly screamed!"

"Then you have met him before?"

"Yes—O yes!—of course—many years ago."

"But why have I never seen him, then? He says he lives in Leicestershire: why did he never come to my father's house?"

Mrs. St. John looks uneasy. She shifts about in her chair, and rolls up her satin cap-strings till they are ruined, and talks rapidly with a faint guilty color coming and going in her faded cheeks.

"Well, to tell you the truth, dear, your father and Colonel Mordaunt, although cousins, were not the best of friends; that is to say, they once

