

fingers
villager,
poetry;
began to
summet.

ip in the
es, one of
roke the
ew little
gh their
ld man's
ed their
jingling
he sleigh
from the
alled out

chief, had
s running
y cold and
ven as he
ne fanciful
is new and
titious and
his trifling
ne bearing
e time an
y arose in
f the lady.
was not her
herefore he
rkshireman
reached the
hand side of
the reins,
But if, on

the strength of the old villager's tattling stories, the doctor had scented a scandal, he was disappointed; for the man beside her, sitting respectfully upright with folded arms, was in livery, and could be no other than the groom.

"Well, what do you want?" asked the lady imperiously, before the stranger had appeared beside her. "Hard times, I suppose, and you've been out of work for weeks, and have a hungry family, and want a night's lodging. Well, here you are, but you ought not to stop people on the public road, you know. It looks like an attempt at highway robbery without the romance of it."

She ended with a ripple of most pleasant, low-voiced laughter, as if it was quite impossible for her happy nature to keep up even the faint semblance of annoyance with which her words had begun. She was feeling in her purse, with her head bent over it, by the time the young Yorkshireman had reached her side and had recovered breath enough to speak. Just as he was raising his hat, and holding out the handkerchief, the ponies started off; and the few paces it travelled before being pulled up by a quick hand on the reins, brought the sleigh within the light from the cottage-windows, which flashed upon the faces both of the lady and of the stranger who stood beside her.

The Yorkshireman held his breath. By some odd result of this sudden revelation of her beauty to his dazed and dreamy mood, it seemed to him that not a flesh-and-blood handsome woman of the nineteenth century, but the incarnate ideal of the Italian painters of the Renaissance, looked straight into his eyes with the frank and fearless gaze of a pictured goddess, and flashed upon his dazzled sight the rose and ivory tints of her skin, the gleam of her blue eyes and of her pearl teeth, the shining coils of her pale golden hair. Lady Kildonan's beauty was that of incontestable, triumphant.