

herself with thought and taste for his coming, but but by some mischance her sleeve was torn, laying bare the white shoulder and part of the rounded arm and here she was chatting and laughing, quite oblivious to the disaster. As she moved so gracefully about the room, this perfect shoulder occasionally gleamed at him, and he caught his breath like a vota who has a glimpse of the forbidden shrine. But a desperate courage came to him. If he spoke not now she might never permit him to set foot over her threshold again, so humiliated would she be when she discovered this disarray, knowing she had laughed and talked with him, he witnessing; whereas if he spoke at once and she took offence he was within the stronghold to beg forgiveness.

"O—Miss Van Ness—you will pardon me—but your dress is torn—there, at the shoulder."

She was standing, and when he spoke turned her head to look at the rent, her clear-cut exquisite profile etched against the window, reminding him in her attitude of marble he had seen of a girl glancing thus at a butterfly that had alighted on her arm.

"So it is," she said brightly, without the slightest trace of embarrassment in her tone; he thanked his stars for that, and breathed again. "Well, I think whoever did the damage should mend it; don't you?"

She was rose-tinted as she faced him bravely.

"It—it probably caught on some nail," he ventured.

"I see that I am bewildering you. That comes from my liking for the story I mentioned. But let us get down to practical things. Here is a pin. You see I cannot reach the rent. Will you oblige me?"

He rose and came to her, attempting the task set to him, his fingers trembling as they touched the firm shoulder.

"Be careful!" she warned him, as breathless as himself.

"Lord! I have need," he cried, whereat she whisked herself free and retreated, leaving him standing there, his eyes aglow. "You pretend not to know where responsi-