

the remaining apartments. I considered this an intimation that I was not to intrude upon his quarters, and I scrupulously avoided every approach to them. I knew from the first that all attempts to win him would be useless, and indeed I felt too sorrowful and humiliated to try. During the few weeks that we remained under the same roof we seldom met, and I am afraid I did not make these rare interviews at all pleasant. I felt wronged and miserable, and my wan face and heavy eyes were only a reproach to him."

"Oh, what a monster, Kate!"

"Not quite that, Selina. One day I saw a paragraph in the *Times* saying that Lord Richard Talbot intended to accompany a scientific exploring party whose destination was Central Asia. I instantly sent and asked my husband for an interview. I had intended dressing myself with care for the meeting, and make one last effort to win the kindly regard, at least, of one whom I could not help loving. But some unfortunate fatality always attended our meeting, and I never could do myself justice in his presence. He answered my request at once. I suppose he did so out of respect and kindness; but the consequence was, he found me in an unbecoming dishabille, and with my face and eyes red and swollen with weeping.

"I felt mortified at a prompt attention so malapropos, and my manner, instead of being winning and conciliating, was cold, unprepossessing. I did not rise from the sofa on which I had been sobbing, and he had made no attempt to sit down beside me or to comfort me.

"I pointed to the paragraph, and asked if it was true.

"'Yes, Lady Talbot,' he said, a little sadly and proudly; 'I shall relieve you of my presence in a few days. I intended Writowell to call on you to-day with a draft of the provisions I have made for your comfort.'

"I could make no answer. I had thought of many good things to say, but now in his presence I was almost fretful and dumb. He looked at me almost with pity, and said, in a low voice, 'Kate, we have both been sacrificed to a necessity involving many besides ourselves. I am trying to make what reparation is possible. I shall leave you unrestricted use of three-fourths of my income. I desire you to make your life as gay and pleasant as you possibly can. I have no fear for the honor of our name in your hands, and I trust that and all else to you without doubt. If you would try and learn to make some excuse for my position, I shall be grateful; perhaps when you are not in constant fear of meeting me, this lesson may not be so hard.'

"And I could not say a word in reply. I just lay sobbing like a child among the cushions. Then he lifted my hand and kissed it, and I knew he was gone."

"And now Kate that you have become the most brilliant woman in England, what do you intend to do?"

"Who knows? I have such a contrary streak in my nature; I always do the thing I do not want to do."

Certainly it seemed like it; for in spite of her confession, when Lord Talbot sent the next morning to request an interview, Kate regretted that she had a prior engagement, but hoped to meet Lord Talbot at the Duchess of Clifford's that night.

My lord bit his lips angrily, but nevertheless he had been so struck with his wife's brilliant beauty that he determined to keep the engagement.

She did not meet him with sobs this time. The centre of an admiring throng, she spoke to him with an ease and composure that would have indicated to a stranger the most

usual and commonplace of acquaintanceships. He tried to draw her into a confidential mood, but she said, smilingly "My lord, the world supposes us to have already congratulated each other; we need not undeceive it."

He was dreadfully piqued, and the pique kept the cause of it constantly in his mind. Indeed, unless he left London, he could hardly avoid constant meetings which were constant aggravations. My lady went everywhere. Her beauty, her wit, her splendid toilets, her fine manners, were the universal theme. He had to endure extravagant comments on them. Friends told him that Lady Talbot had never been so brilliant and so bewitching as since his return. He was congratulated on his influence over her.

In the meantime he kept strictly at the distance he himself had arranged four years ago. It was evident that if he approached any nearer his beautiful but long neglected wife, he must humble himself to do so. Why should he not? In Lord Talbot's mind the reason against it had dwindled down to one; but this was a formidable one. It was his valet. This man had known all his master's matrimonial troubles, and in his own way sympathized with them. He was bitterly averse to Lord Talbot's making any concessions to my lady. One night, however, he received a profound shock.

"Simmons," said Lord Talbot, very decidedly, "go and ask Lady Talbot if she will do me the honor to receive a visit from me?"

My lady would be delighted. She was in an exquisite costume, and condescended to exhibit for his pleasure all her most bewildering moods. It was with great reluctance he left her after a two-hour's visit. The next night he stayed still longer. My lady had no other engagement, and he quite forgot the one he had made to be present at the Marquis of Stairs's wine party.

The following week my lady received every morning a basket of flowers and a little note with them containing a hope that she was in good health.

One morning she was compelled to say that she was not very well, and Lord Talbot was so concerned that he sent Simmons to ask if he might be permitted to eat breakfast with her. My lady was graciously willing, and Lord Richard was quite excited by the permission. He changed his morning-gown and cravat several times, quite regardless of Simmons's peculiar face, and, with many misgivings as to his appearance, sat down opposite the lovely little lady in pale blue satin and cashmere and white lace.

It was a charming breakfast, and during it the infatuated husband could not help saying a great many sweet and flattering things. Kate parried them very prettily. "It is well," she said that "no one hears us. If we were not married they would think we were making love."

"And if we are married, Kate, why not make love, dear? We had no opportunity before we were married."

"Ah, Richard, in fashionable life we should make ourselves ridiculous. Everyone now says our conduct is irreproachable. I should have dearly liked it when only a shy, awkward country girl; but now, my lord, we should be laughed at."

"Then, Kate, let us be laughed at. I for one am longing for it—dying for it. If time shall run back and fetch the age of gold, why not love? Let us go back four whole years and a-half. Will you Kate?—dearest, sweetest Kate."

"We should have to run away to the country, Richard, and now I think of it I have not been to Escher since we—were—married—love."