

for romance, just think of romance in connection with broadcloth and upright hats!"

His jesting tone made her laugh, and with the laugh ended their talk; but not its impression on her simple, implicitly credulous mind. The first blow had been dealt at her faith in goodness; the poisonous sneer at humanity had entered into her ears, and had every chance of fructifying in her heart.

But at present life was stirring around, and demanded attention. The guests were most of them thinking of leaving, and Mr. Hesketh's courtly hospitality was manifested, at first in urging their longer stay and then in facilitating their departure. The old gentleman passed through the corridor and into the wide hall, with ladies on his arm, his gray head bent deferentially towards them—his whole manner a fine example of the chivalric courtesy of a past generation. Vaughan was idle in comparison, as he leaned on a chair near where Caroline was standing, and bowed or shook hands with a retiring visitor, as occasion suggested.

"How thoroughly my uncle seems in his element," the young man remarked; "so active and busy to the last minute. It is quite admirable to see his unwearied politeness to all these people; going out, too, into this chilly night air, assisting these fair dames into their carriages. Really, Caroline, I begin to repent me of saying the age of chivalry was past."

Caroline was too much occupied with leave-takings to reply. Vaughan's words fell on her ear pleasantly, but the full sense of them escaped her. It was Mr. Farquhar who presently suggested to her the danger of Mr. Hesketh's hasty transitions between the hot ball-room and the cold entrance-hall. She was equally touched by his thoughtfulness and her own negligence. She ran out, and was just in time to see the bare gray head bowing adieux to a last carriageful of county beauty and fashion. Eagerly she drew him from the open door, mingling reproaches with compliments to his gallantry, which the old gentleman received with great complacency.

They all four gathered in a group in the deserted ball-room, for a brief, desultory chat, much interspersed by ejaculations of weariness from Vaughan. Then they separated; Mr. Farquhar adding to his good-night to Caroline a reminder of the promised excursion for to-morrow.

"O, you may rest quite easy, my friend," interposed Vaughan; "I won't suffer her to forget."

Mr. Hesketh and the two younger men watched Caroline trip lightly up the stairs.