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THE BRIDAL VEIL.

CHAPTER I.

A YOUNG and beautiful girl was leaning over a balcony in one of the largest houses in Eccleston Square. It was a lovely summer night, lovely even in London, now that the glare and heat had been exchanged for a soft breeze and the light of the moon. Even by this light the girl's beauty admitted of no dispute. Hers was a face Sir Peter Lely would have painted; a face that hundreds had turned back to look at once more, as she had ridden in the Row that morning. It was her *face*, people said, that had won her an offer of marriage from Sir Henry Sefton, a man who had been already talked of as the best match of the London season. Young and beautiful as Ada Willingham was, until this man came upon the scene she had played with all realities; and, like a butterfly, only sported in the sunshine, taking her homage as a queen might claim her rights, like the proud young beauty that she was. Sir Henry's wealth

and position had perhaps dazzled her a little at first; but he ended by winning her love, and, when she promised to be his wife, she gave him her heart.

As she listened for his coming footsteps that evening, her face resting on a bouquet of flowers which he had sent her, and which she had found on her dressing-table before going down to dinner, her eyes had the restless unsettled look of expectation, and one of the little feet that peeped out from beneath the soft folds of her white dress was beating impatiently on the floor. In a few minutes a cabriolet drove quickly round the corner, and a young man sprang out. The girl's face flushed in the soft light, and both her hands wandered over the bouquet, which she laid in her lap as she sat down on a low chair; but an expression of satisfaction came into her deep blue eyes, and a smile to her parted lips. A moment afterwards and the drawing-room door had opened, the lace curtains which separated the balcony had been drawn apart, and Sir Hen-