

...at the bottom of the page...
...a dark carpet with a rich...
...the light-colored paper, pick...
...with a blue-tinted transparency of...
...pink under white, like sunset on snow...
...rather say like a muslin dress...
...and there was a charming...
...in which I could contem...
...my whole person from top to toe, with...
...of the perpendicular...
...The look-out was into Lady Scapegrace's...
...a little by a of a place that bore...
...witness to the good looks of its mistress...
...Every shrub had been transplanted under her...
...own eye, every border filled according to her...
...personal directions. She tied her own car...
...tations, and lugged her own roses, like the...
...most exemplary clergyman's wife in Eng...
...land. I do believe she would have been a...
...good wife to anybody but Sir Guy.

However, it was too dark for me to see any...
...thing of her ladyship's garden. It was al...
...ready getting dusk when we arrived, and al...
...though it wanted three mortal hours of dim...
...mer, all the ladies, including the hostess, had...
...retired to their own rooms, to while away the...
...time by writing letters, reading novels, and...
...going to sleep. I was much too restless to...
...embark in any of these occupations. It would...
...have been a relief to write, certainly—to pour...
...out all one's thoughts and feelings before...
...some sympathising correspondent, but I...
...knew none such; I could not have settled...
...to read, no, not the most interesting novel...
...that was ever penned, although I might have...
...left it off the day before in an agony of un...
...certainty at the critical place which is always...
...to be found near the conclusion of the second...
...volume; and as for sleep—sleep, indeed! I...
...felt as if I should never sleep again.

When I am unhappy, and particularly...
...when I am angry with myself, I must always...
...be doing something to matt what—but I...
...must be occupied, so I hurried Gertrude, and...
...bustled about, and got myself dressed, and...
...found my way to one of the drawing rooms...
...where I hoped to be at least secure from in...
...terruption, and to brood and worry myself...
...for an hour or two in unbroken solitude. I...
...ought to have been safe enough here. As I...
...had wandered through unknown passages and...
...passed uncertain doors, I had heard the click...
...of billiard-balls, the sound of many voices...
...and the harsh laugh of Sir Guy; I knew con...
...sequently that the gentlemen were all busy...
...at 'pool, or some equally intellectual pas...
...time, and had not yet gone to dress. I was...
...sufficiently conversant with the habits of my...
...own sex, to be aware that no lady would...
...willingly tarnish the freshness of her dinner...
...to sit by coming down before the very last...
...minute, and I anticipated therefore no fur...
...ther interruption than a housemaid coming...
...to put the fire to rights, or a groom of the...
...chambers to light fresh candles, functionaries...
...especially the former, who would be more...
...inconveniently by my presence than I should...
...be by theirs. Good gracious! there was a...
...gentleman down and dressed already; sitting...
...with his back to me, immersed in the thril...
...ling pages of *The Drawing-Room Scrap*...
...Book, which he was studying upside-down...
...I came in very softly, and he never heard...
...me, nor turned his head, but I knew the...
...back of that head pretty well. It was...
...Cousin John. I also took a book, and sat...
...down.

...perhaps, I thought, 'It's not going to...
...spare me at all. Well, what do...
...I care? I've a temper, too, if it comes to...
...that.'

...So I read my book assiduously, it was...
...the *Comic Annual*, but I don't know...
...that it made me feel very much inclin...
...ed to laugh. The clock ticked loud and dis...
...agreeably. I determined not to speak till I...
...was spoken to, but after a time the silence...
...grew irksome, and the ticking of the clock

...in a moment all the other days of the year...
...son also over the course. I rank was more...
...attentive to me than I had ever known him...
...although there was something in his man...
...ner that I did not altogether like, a sort of...
...freedom that I had never remarked before...
...and which made me colder and more re...
...served than usual. It was evident he...
...thought he might venture as far as he liked...
...with a young lady who drove four horses...
...and smoked a cigar to white. If it was blus...
...hing under my skin, but I was determined...
...to brave it all out, and hide in every living...
...sou my own vexation and self-contempt...
...Once I caught a telegraphic signal exchange...
...between my neighbor and Miss Molasses...
...after which she seemed more at ease, and...
...went on with her dinner in comfort. I was...
...so angry now that I turned my shoulder...
...towards Master Frank, and took refuge with...
...my dear old friend Mr. Lumley, who, utterly...
...regardless of the noise and flirtation his bet...
...ter half was carrying on at the other end...
...of the table, discussed his cutlet quite conten...
...tedly, and prosed away to me in his usual...
...kind, consolatory manner. I was one of his...
...great favorites; in fact, he told me so, then...
...and there. He always called me 'my dear,'...
...and often vowed that if he had only the use...
...of his legs he would walk to the end of the...
...world to make me a thorough-going natura...
...list like himself. I was getting more at ease...
...under his dear old wing. I had gone through...
...so much excitement during the day, that this...
...comparative inaction was a positive relief...
...and I was really beginning to enjoy a sort of...
...repose, when the baronet's horrid voice...
...from the bottom of the table aroused...
...me once more to an agony of shame and...
...despite.

'Do me the honor to drink a glass of...
...champagne; the champagne to Miss Cove...
...ntry!' shouted Sir Guy, 'you must require it...
...after your exertion. Egad! my team won't...
...get over it in a hurry—the roads were woolly...
...and the time short—hey, Miss Kate? But...
...a—n me n the whipcord was scarce. I...
...have done that seven miles in all weathers...
...and seven miles it is, out I never came any...
...thing like the pace we did to-day. Your...
...good health, Miss Kate, I'll have a fresh...
...team put together for you to-morrow, and a...
...better cigar to smoke than the one I gave...
...you to-day.'

I could willingly have sunk into the earth...
...—nay, crept under the table-cloth—anything...
...to hide my dishonored head. The ladies...
...looked at each other against, and then at me...
...The gentleman, even the stiffest of them...
...turned boldly round to survey such a phenom...
...enon as the tobacco-smoking, four-in-hand...
...Miss Coventry. Mrs. Lumley showered her...
...long ringlets all over her face with one toss...
...of her pretty little head, that I might not see...
...how artfully she was laughing. Lady Scape...
...grace good-naturedly made an immense clat...
...ter with something that was handed to her...
...to distract attention from my unfortunate...
...self; but I believe I must have left the room...
...had not Cousin John come adroitly to the...
...rescue. He had not been studying the daily...
...paper for nothing, and his voice rose loud...
...and clear through the awful si...
...lence that succeeded Sir Guy's polished re...
...marks.

'Did you see that article in to-day's Times...
...about Ministers?' asked John, of the public...
...in general; 'there's another split in the...
...Cabinet—this time it's on the malt-tax. To...
...day, in the City, they were betting five to...
...two there's a general election within...
...a fortnight, and taking two to one Am...
...bidexter is Premier before the first of next...
...month.'

John! if you had saved my life I could not...
...have been more obliged to you. Many of...
...the present party were members of Parliam...
...ent—all were deep in politics. Most of...
...them had seen the film, but none, like...
...John, had the earliest intelligence from the...
...City. I have since had reason to believe he...
...invented every syllable of it. However, such

...lived down stairs was quite equal to that...
...which elicited ecouiums from *bon-vivants*...
...and connoisseurs above. Nevertheless...
...it was but just that they too...
...should have their share of relaxation...
...and amusement; therefore did Sir Guy in his...
...generosity give an annual servants ball...
...which he attended and opened himself in a...
...state of hilarity not calculated to inspire...
...much respect amongst his retainers. He...
...had, however, sufficient self-command un...
...varrably to select as his partner the prettiest...
...maid-servant in his establishment. But if...
...the baronet failed in his dignity as head...
...of the house, her ladyship had enough for both...
...She looked like a queen as she sailed in...
...amongst her own domestics, and all the re...
...tainers and niggers-on for miles round. On...
...the evening in question, it amused me much...
...to see the admiration, almost the adoration...
...she elicited from old and young. No won...
...der: that stately form, that queenly brow...
...had been bent over many a sick bed; those...
...deep thrilling tones had spoken words of...
...comfort to many a humble sufferer; that...
...white hand was ever ready to aid, even open...
...to relieve; good or bad, none ever applied...
...to Lady Scapegrace in vain.

'The virtuous it is pleasant to believe and...
...make friends of,' she has often said to me, in...
...her moments of confidence; 'the wicked it...
...is a duty to assist and to pity. Who...
...should feel for them, Kate, if I didn't?...
...God knows I have been wicked enough my...
...self.'

The men-servants never took their eyes off...
...her, and I fear made but sorry partners to...
...the buxom lassies of the household, till 'my...
...lady' had left the room. I saw two stable...
...boys, evidently fresh arrivals, who seemed...
...perfectly transfixed with admiration, at at...
...an apparition such as they had never pic...
...tured to themselves in their dreams; and...
...one rough fellow, a sort of under keeper in...
...velveteen, with the frame of a Hercules, and...
...a fist that could have stunned an ox, having...
...gazed at her open-mouthed for about ten...
...minutes without winking an eye-lash, struck...
...his hand against his thigh, and exclaimed...
...aloud, to his own inexpressible re...
...lief, though utterly unconscious of any...
...thing but the presence which so overpowered...
...him—

'Noa, dashed if ever I did!'

This was soon after 'my lady' had sailed...
...into the servant's hall at the head of her...
...guests. It was the custom of the place for...
...all the 'fashionables' and smart people who...
...were actually in the house to attend the ser...
...vants' ball, most of us only staying long...
...enough to set the thing going with spirit...
...though I believe some of the young dandies...
...who found partners to their liking remained...
...to the end, and kept it up till daylight. Down...
...we all went, as soon as the gentlemen had...
...finished their wine and discussed their coffee...
...in the drawing-room—down we went...
...through stone passages and long under...
...ground galleries into a splendidly lighted...
...apartment, somewhat devoid of furniture...
...but decorated with evergreens, and further...
...adorned by a sort of muslin transparency...
...hanging from the roof. This was the ser...
...vants' hall, and although on a stone floor, a...
...capital room for dancing it was. We were...
...all soon provided with partners. Sir Guy...
...much to our triumph, selected my maid...
...Gertrude. Lady Scapegrace paired...
...off with the steward, a fat rosy...
...man, who quite shone with delight at...
...the honor. The French cook carried of Miss...
...Molasses, with whose native stupidity I...
...thought the vivacious torrent seemed a...
...little disappointed. Frank Lovell was taken...
...possession of by the fat house-keeper, to whom...
...we did 'the amiable,' as Frank and the knack...
...of doing to anything with a petticoat. Cousin...
...John handed off a stately dame, whom...
...I afterwards recognized as the upper house...
...maid, and I claimed by a dapper little second...
...horse-rider, of whom I flatter myself I made

...of all the women towards the door...
...and as the centre of the room was cleared...
...I saw what had happened. The...
...muslin transparency had caught fire—a...
...large fragment of it was even now blaz...
...ing on the floor, and the consequences...
...amongst all those light floating dresses and...
...terrified women might have been indeed...
...awful. For an instant everybody seemed...
...paralysed—everybody but Cousin John;...
...during that instant he had flung off his coat...
...and kneeling upon it, extinguished the...
...flames; they were still blazing over his head...
...with a desperate bound he tore down the ill...
...fated transparency; regardless of singed...
...hair and blistered hands, he clasped and...
...pressed it, and stamped upon it, and smoth...
...ered it. Ere one could have counted fifty...
...the danger was over, and not a vestige of...
...the fire remained. How handsome he looked...
...with his brave face lighted up, and his eyes...
...sparkling with excitement! Nobody could...
...say John wanted expression of countenance...
...now. The next moment he was quietly...
...apologising in his usual tone to Lady Scape...
...grace for 'spoiling her beautiful trans...
...parency,' and parrying her thanks and en...
...comiums on his courage and presence of...
...mind, with an assurance that he 'only pulled...
...it down because he happened to be directly...
...under it,' but he could not help turning to...
...me and saying—

'Kate, I hope you were not much fright...
...ened.'

The words were not much, but they were...
...uttered in the old kind voice; they rang in...
...my ears all the evening, and I went to bed...
...happier than I ever thought I could have...
...been after such a day.

CHAPTER XXI.

The Sunday at Scamperley, I am sorry to...
...say, was hardly observed with that degree of...
...respect and strictness which is due to the...
...one sacred day of the week. Very few people...
...went to morning service, as indeed the late...
...hours over-night kept most of us in our rooms...
...till eleven or twelve o'clock, when we daw...
...dled down to a breakfast that seemed to...
...lengthen itself out till luncheon-time. To be...
...sure, when the latter meal had been dis...
...cussed, and we had marked our reverence...
...for the day by a conversation in which we...
...expressed our disapproval of the personal ap...
...pearance, faults and foibles, and general...
...character of our friends, some of us would...
...declare an intention of attending afternoon...
...church—on which subject much discussion...
...would arise, and the probability of the...
...weather holding up would be volubly com...
...mented on; the church being situated about...
...a quarter of a mile from the house, and the...
...way to it through the Park being so com...
...pletely sheltered by evergreens, that to have...
...got wet, save in a downright pour of rain...
...was next to impossible. At last we got under...
...way, the ladies mincing along with their...
...magnificently-covered prayer books, affect...
...ing an air of unwilling decorum; the dandies...
...carrying cloaks, suns, and umbrellas for...
...their respective goddesses, and fol...
...lowing them, so to speak, under protest...
...as if there was something to be...
...ashamed of in the whole proceeding...
...Lady Scapegrace always went early, and...
...quite by herself; she sat apart, too, from...
...her guests and relatives. Not so Sir Guy...
...It was his first delight to create as much noise...
...and confusion as possible, that on his en...
...trance the respectable women and humble...
...parsons might be dazzled with his glory...
...and whisper one to another, 'That be Sir...
...Guy,' as he marched to the front of his...
...family pew in a blaze of wondrous apparel...
...It was natural that he should create a sensa...
...tion with his red face and gaudy-colored...
...clothes, and huge, eyed whiskers, and the...
...eternal flower in his mouth, which was al-

...making up to him, and, thinking he...
...was fond of field-sports, pretended to...
...take an interest in everything connected with...
...those pursuits for his sake.

'Come and see the tame pheasants, Miss...
...Coventry,' said Sir Guy. I knew what this...
...meant: I knew it would entail a tete-a-tete...
...walk with my aversion, and I cast an im...
...ploing look at Frank, as much as to say...
...Do save me.' He caught my meaning in...
...an instant, and skilfully interposed. Of...
...course, as he accompanied us, so did Miss...
...Molasses; but Frank and I lingered a little...
...behind the rest of the party, made a wrong...
...turn in the shrubbery, and found ourselves...
...I never knew exactly how, taking a long...
...walk all alone in the waning twilight. I...
...don't know what Aunt Deborah would have...
...said to such proceedings; and I am quite...
...sure Lady Horsingham would have been un...
...speakably shocked; but this Sunday was...
...were the custom of the country at Scamper...
...ley—and, after all, it was not my doing, and...
...consequently not my fault.

I wonder why it is, that in the very con...
...venient code of morality which the world has...
...adopted for its private use, places and people...
...should so completely alter facts. You may...
...do things with impunity in London that...
...would destroy the character of a Diana in...
...the country; and again, certain rural prac...
...tices, harmless—nay, even praiseworthy—...
...when confined to a picturesque domain, if...
...flourished before the eyes of the metropolis...
...would sink the performer to the lowest...
...depths of social degradation. It is not what...
...you do that matters one whit, but what the...
...world thinks of your actions; and the gen...
...tlemen use a proverb which I have often heard...
...in connection with certain racing enormities...
...that 'One man may steal a horse, while an...
...other must not even look at a halter;' and if...
...this be the case with that sex who arrogate...
...to themselves the exclusive privilege of doing...
...wrong, how much more does the adage hold...
...good with us poor, weak, trampled-upon...
...women? Lady Straightlace may do what...
...she likes: she assumes a severe air in society...
...is strict with her children, and harsh with...
...her servants. In all ranks of her acquaint...
...ance (of course below that of a countess)...
...she visits the slightest dereliction from female...
...propriety with unrelenting bitterness. Woe...
...be to the trespasser, high or low! The wea...
...pon is always ready to probe and gash and...
...lacerate; the lash is constantly raised...
...swift to smite and never to spare. But who...
...would venture to speak a word against the...
...decorum of Lady Straightlace? If she goes...
...out in the dark, 'tis to visit a sick friend;...
...if she encourages young Auntings to be what...
...ladies call continually 'in her pocket, that...
...is only in order to give the lad good advice...
...and keep him out of mischief. Major Ram...
...rod is never out of the house; but what then?...
...The visits of fifty Major Ramrods would not...
...entitle the world to breathe a whisper against...
...a person of such strict propriety...
...as Lady Straightlace. But how that...
...same scorching world indemnifies...
...itself on poor Mrs. Peony. It is...
...never tired of shrugging its worldly...
...shoulders and raising its worldly hands and...
...eyebrows at the sayings and doings of unfor...
...tunate Mrs. Peony.

'Did you hear of her going to the tache...
...lors' ball with three gentlemen in a fly? (No...
...body thinks it worth while to specify that the...
...three Lotharios consisted of her grandfather...
...her husband, and her nephew). 'Did you...
...see her drop her bracelet, to make young...
...Stiffneck pick it up? Do you know that...
...she takes morning walks with Colonel Char...
...ticle-r, and evening strolls with Bob Bulbul?...
...She chatters, she laughs, she flirts, she makes...
...eyes; she's bad style, she's an odious woman...
...upon my word, I don't know whether mamma...
...will go on visiting her.

And why should the world make this dead...
...set at poor Mrs. Peony?

(To be continued.)