

"Ah, Frank, we listen to nonsense to avoid going to sleep; a little common sense now and then would be a real refreshment; but really we must conclude the brains of all this generation of men have run into whiskers and mustachios,—such an elaborate outside, and such a blank within! Just look round the room, and point me out one exception."

"I will," said Frank, smiling, and turning from her. A moment after, he returned, and, to her infinite surprise, introduced his old friend Horace Manners, who had only just entered. In spite of herself, Bella felt the blood mount to her cheeks, and her manner was constrained and formal. Frank felt annoyed; he believed her prejudice had died away, and, as he chanced to meet Manners unexpectedly, who had just returned from travel, with the frankness of their early friendship, urged him to join their evening party.

If Manners observed any coldness in Bella's manner, he was too much a man of the world to suffer it to make any impression on him; but he at once led the conversation with so much ease and spirit, such good sense and intelligence, that she was forced, in her own mind, to admit her brother's exception in his favor. They had never met before in a private circle, for Bella had left home very early, to complete her education at a fashionable seminary, and afterwards passed two years in travelling with her aunt, to whose care she was committed on her mother's death. He had never thought of her as a woman; even the recollection of his friend's little sister passed from his mind, and his surprise as he now looked on her in the bloom of lovely girlhood, bordered closely on a feeling of admiration.

Bella wished he would not make himself so agreeable; she was vexed that politeness would not allow her to refuse dancing with him, and so half pouting and half pleased, her varying mood just served to make her more piquante and interesting.

The winter passed on rapidly, and one gaiety succeeded another, till Bella wearied of the rapid excitement, and would have resumed her more quiet habits, had her aunt permitted it. Manners who was a proud and ambitious man, but never a votary of pleasure; now entered with an ardor, quite new to him, into fashionable amusements, and he, who had seemed so changed, so moody and reserved since his engagement to Clara, was again an animated and interested man. The world smiled and made remarks, often bitter and far from flattering; many said he hurried into

pleasure to forget the past and drown the remembrance of his own bad faith.

But soon the rumor spread that his fickle heart had turned to a new object, and that Bella Elwyn was the star of his devotion. His conduct sanctioned the rumour, for he followed her like a shadow, and at all times offered her the incense of a most refined and delicate regard.

But her manner towards him, though frank and cordial never passed the limits of indifference, and was never tinged by the slightest coquetry. She met his gaze with a clear eye, and her heart beat no quicker at his approach. Her indifference, only piqued his self love, he would fain believe it maiden coyness, and his attentions were redoubled. Had he spoken freely she would have undeceived him.

"Your heart is hard to win, sweet Bella," he one day ventured to say.

"Too hard to win, for the poor triumph of casting it aside," she calmly answered. And the rebuke, keenly felt, for a time, chilled his hopes and kept him silent.

"Really Bella," said her brother on one occasion, "your conduct perplexes me, you have surely punished Manners sufficiently for his past folly, and it is time for you to come to a better understanding. You cannot mean to trifle with his affections!"

"My conduct is quite explicit enough, and my words too," replied Bella, "if he persists in misconstruing them, the cause must be sought in his own vanity, not in me, and truly Frank you may talk of a woman's vanity, but believe me, it exists in a tenfold degree in every son of Adam."

"Then after all Bella, my poor friend is doomed to disappointment?"

"It will not kill him," said Bella laughing, "you know, that 'men have died and worms have eat them, but not for love.' Seriously though, he might have taken his answer long ago, if it pleased him to. I tell you Frank, I would sooner marry that bland coxcomb Ellis, who three months since inscribed, 'erected by her disconsolate husband,' on his late wife's tombstone, and now, like a modern Bluebeard, is looking for another young and fair to fill her place,—yes, sooner would I marry him, and wait patiently to have my own name written in the place left vacant on that stone for the next incumbent; than to be the wife of Horace Manners, surrounded as he is with all the world most covets."

"Well Bella," said Frank gravely, "a confirmed bachelor like myself cannot pretend to read a woman rightly, and yet I have a shrewd suspicion that Manners might have found more favor in your