

The Lady Paramount

It was very still in the garden. The birds were taking their afternoon siesta. The breeze faintly lisped in the tree-tops. Even the sunshine, as if it were not always still, seemed stiller than its wont.

"Oh, what—what—what will he think, what will he say, what will he do, when I turn round, and he sees who I am?" The question repeated and repeated itself in Susanna's mind, rhythmically, to the tremulous beating of her heart, as she heard Anthony's footsteps coming near.

He walked quickly, but a few paces short of where she stood he halted, and for a breathing-space or two there was silence.

Then at last, in English, in his smoothest, his most detached, his most languid manner, but with an overtone of exultancy that could not be subdued, he said—

"These ingenuous attempts at mystification are immensely entertaining; but are there to be many more of them, before you can permit our little comedy to reach its happy dénouement?"

"Good heavens!" thought Susanna, wildly.

She did n't turn round, but presently her shoulders began to shake. She could n't help it. The discomfiture was hers; she had been "awfully dished" indeed. But her shoulders shook and shook with silent laughter.