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TAKEN FROM LIFE.

BY THE AUTHOR OF “LADY AUDLEY’S SECRET.”

“You wouldn’t think it, to look at her now, sir,” said the old clown, as he took the ashes out of his blackened clay, “but madam was once as handsome a woman as you’d see for many a long day. It was an accident that spoilt her beauty.”

The speaker was attached to a little equestrian company with which I had been during a summer day’s pedestrianism in Warwickshire. The troupe was quartered at a roadside inn, where I was dawdling over my simple mid-day repast, and by the time I had smoked my cigar in his companionship, the clown had fallen upon a footing of perfect friendliness.

He had not been a little struck by the woman of whom he spoke. She was tall and slim, and had something of a foreign look, as I thought. Her face was especially remarkable for the painful impression which it gave to a stranger. It was the face of a woman who had undergone some great terror. The sickly paleness of the skin was made conspicuous by the hectic brightness of the large eyes, and on one cheek was a scar—the mark of some deadly hurt inflicted some years ago.

My new friend and I had strolled a little way from the inn, where the rest of the company were still occupied with their frugal dinner. A stretch of grass common lay before us, and seemed to invite a ramble. The clown filled his pipe, and walked on meditatively. I took out another cigar.

“Was it a fall from horseback that gave her that scar?” I asked.

“A fall from horseback! Madame Delavanti! No, sir, that seam on her forehead was made by the claws of a tiger. It’s rather a curious sort of story, but don’t mind telling it, if you’d like to hear it; but for the Lord’s sake don’t let her know I’ve been talking of her, if you should happen to scrape acquaintance with her when you go back to the inn.”

“Does she such a dislike to being talked about?”

“Rather think she has. You see she’s not quite right in the upper story, but she rides beautifully, and doesn’t know what fear means. You’d believe how handsome she looks at night when she’s dressed for the theatre. Her face lights up almost as well as it used to do ten years ago, before