

"What is he talking about?" said Lawrence, who was rather slow-witted in reading riddles of this kind, appealing to his wife. "Has the man gone crazy? or what is the matter with him?"

"I do indeed congratulate you," said Edith, warmly; "you deserve it. You have won a prize. But I could have told you that before you left. You men are so stupid in reading our sex." And she laughed archly at both her husband and the Doctor.

"But what has the fire to do with it?" asked Lawrence, upon whom a glimmer of the facts of the case began to dawn.

"Well, you know, I'm as proud as Lucifer," replied the Doctor, "and so long as Miss Burton was a millionaire's daughter and I a poor physician, my lips were sealed. But when his riches took to themselves wings of flame and flew away, why, I mustered courage to plead my suit—and—and, well, I was not rejected."

"And would not have been before," said Edith. "Beneath her levity of manner, Nellie Burton had a noble soul, one of great depth and strength of feeling, and incapable of a sordid thought."

"Yes! yes! that is true, every word of it," said the Doctor with exultation, "but the stern parent guards her like a dragon. She is his only child, and he lavishes on her the wealth of affection his strong nature bestowed upon her mother, long since dead. He thinks there is no man on earth good enough for his daughter, in which he is not far astray. He is richer since the fire than before it. It has revealed to him what a treasure he has in his daughter. He is prouder of her than ever. She is the apple of his eye. 'Well, young man,' he said, as I asked her of him, 'I'm getting old, and can't long take care of my little girl, and I've very little to leave her. I don't know but I can die all the more content if I know that some honest fellow will love and cherish and protect her, and I think you will. I like you. You weren't scared away by our misfortune, like some of them popinjay fellows from