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THE COQUETTE.

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"I will not marry yet," was her reply—her face half averted from the kneeling figure beside her, whom still she suffered to retain her hand—whose arm still encircled her waist, unforbidden. "I will not marry yet;" and love was in the tone of the very accents that withheld the boon of love, or deferred the bestowal of it.

St. Aubyn was a young man of moderate fortune; accomplished, unsophisticated, of quick sensibilities. A student, and fond of retirement, he had selected for his summer residence a small fishing hamlet, on the romantic coast of Devonshire; where, between his books and the sea-shore, along which he loved to ramble, his time passed anything but heavily. Here he had resided about a month, when the little community received an addition, in a young lady and her mother, who joined it for the purpose of a temporary residence; and St. Aubyn stepped back, in surprise, when, issuing one morning from the cabin in which he lodged, he beheld two females, in the attire, and with the air, of fashion—the one leaning upon the arm of the other—approaching the humble portal whence he had just emerged. He bowed, however, and passed on.

He had scarcely more than glanced at the strangers; but, transient as was his survey of them, he saw that one of them was an invalid—the younger. "How touching is the languor which indisposition casts over beauty!" exclaimed St. Aubyn to himself. "Health would improve the loveliness of that face, but the interest which now invests it would vanish. No visitation," he continued, "but late hours and crowded rooms have sent her hither—for I prophesy she comes to make some stay. Sidmouth would be change of scene, not change of occupation!" He was right. St. Aubyn returned from his ramble earlier than was his custom. His thoughts that day, were in the hamlet, and not upon the shore. He approached his lodging with something like the emotions of expectation and suspense. He looked at his landlady, on entering, as if he expected her to communicate something; and was disappointed when she merely returned the ordinary response to his salutation. He entered his apartment, dispirited, and threw himself into a chair near the window, the sash of which he threw up, as if he wanted air. For the first time, he felt the oppression of loneliness. "They have not come to stop," said he to himself, and absolutely with a sigh—and no wonder! In an assembly, a lovely, graceful, and delicate woman, beheld for the first time, would have exacted from him only the ordinary tribute which beauty shares with beauty; but, in a remote little fishing hamlet, inhabited by beings as rude as their neighbours, the sea and rocks, such a vision could hardly come, and vanish, without leaving a strong impression upon the beholder. St. Aubyn sat abstracted, chagrined—mortified.

The opening of a window, in a cabin opposite, roused him. The sash was thrown up by a white arm shining through a sleeve of muslin, thin as gauze. Presently, a dimpled elbow reposed upon the sill; and a cheek of pensive sweetness sank upon a hand, so small, so white, that it seemed to have been modelled for no other office than to pillow such a burden. A thrill ran through St. Aubyn, quickening him into wakeful life.

How the hand talks! What passion, thought and sentiment are in it! What tongues are the fingers! Oh! the things that the hand which St. Aubyn sat watching, discoursed to him, as it changed its posture—now with the palm, now with the back, kissing its owner's cheek—now extending one finger upon the marbled, ample temple—now enwreathing itself with one jetty curl and another—now passed over the arched bright forehead—now lowered, and languidly drooping from the window frame, upon which the arm to which it belonged lay motionless—then raised again, with slow and waving motion, till it closed with the cheek that half met it—then gradually crossed over the bosom that seemed to heave with a sigh as it passed, and pressed it to the heart—then clasped with its beautiful fellow, and carried to the back of the head, the full elastic arms swelling and whitening, as they contracted!

St. Aubyn gazed on entranced. Hitherto, the cheek of the fair invalid had been presented to him, but now her head turned: her eyes met his and dropped,—she rose and withdrew.

Only glimpses of her did St. Aubyn catch again, that evening,—but they were frequent. A hand—an elbow—the point of the shoulder—once or twice her figure, flitting backwards and forwards as she paced the apartment. Dusk fell; still he remained at his post. Was it a guitar that he heard? It was but awakened as the first tones of an Eolian harp, which you hold your breath

to hear. Her hand was on the strings: one chord at length she struck full; another succeeded—and another. Then all was silence, for a time. St. Aubyn still remained at the window,—nor in vain. The music woke again, as fairly soft as before; and a voice—soft as the music, but oh! far sweeter—awoke, along with it. She was singing, but he could hear nothing except the strain; and yet he heard enough to tell him that it was the theme of tenderness, though sung by fits, that rather seemed to help than mar the passionate mood. The stars shone out; the moon, in her first quarter half completed, showed her bright crescent clear though setting; the folds of a white drapery shone dimly through the still open casement. Did the wearer approach, to look out and gaze upon the fair knight? No. The sash was pulled down; the string and the voice were hushed; the interesting minstrel had retired. St. Aubyn retired too; but, though his head was upon the pillow, not a moment of that night were his vision and his ear withdrawn from the open window.

It was broad day before forgetfulness cast her spell over the excited spirits of St. Aubyn, nor was it broken till high noon. He arose, emerged from his chamber, and took an anxious survey of the habitation opposite. The room appeared empty. He partook of a slight repast; and sallying out, made his way to the shore. He had not proceeded far, when, turning a point, he beheld the elder female, about a hundred yards in advance of him, standing still, and looking anxiously upwards towards the cliff. He followed what appeared to be the direction of her eyes, and saw the younger, half way up, reclining upon her side. Some thing appeared to be amiss. He quickened his pace; and, joining the former, learned, from her, that her daughter, attempting to reach the top of the cliff, had incautiously turned, and, unaccustomed to look from a height, was prevented by terror from proceeding or descending; that, from the same cause, she had slipped down several feet; and that she, herself, durst not attempt to go to her assistance. St. Aubyn had heard enough; he bounded up the steep. As he approached the fair one, modesty half overcome terror, and she made a slight effort to repair the disorder into which her dress had been thrown, by the accident. St. Aubyn assisted to complete what she had effected but imperfectly; he encouraged her, raised her, and propping her fair form with his own, led her, step by step, down to the beach again. Nor, when she was in perfect safety, did he withdraw his assistance,—nor did she decline it; though, as apprehension subsided, confusion rose, colouring her pale cheek to crimson, at the recollection of the plight in which she had been found. Her ankle was slightly sprained, she said, having turned under her, when she slipped. What was this, if not a warrant for the proffer of an arm? At all events, St. Aubyn construed it as such, and escorted the fair stranger, leaning upon him, back to her lodgings. From that moment, a close intimacy commenced. They were constantly together,—sometimes accompanied by the mother,—more frequently, and at last wholly alone. Communing in solitude, between the sexes and in the midst of romantic scenery, where there is no impediment, no distaste on either side, is almost sure to awaken and to foster love. St. Aubyn loved. The looks, the actions, all but the tongue of Amelia assured him that his passion was returned. Her health had improved rapidly; the autumn was far advanced, and the evenings and nights were growing chill. The mother and daughter now talked of returning to town: a day was fixed for their departure; and, on the eve of that day, St. Aubyn threw himself at the feet of the lovely girl, and implored her to bless him with her hand. Yet, though she did not deny that he had interested her—though her eyes and her cheek attested it—though the hand which was locked in his, locked his as well—though she suffered him to draw her towards him, by the tenure of her graceful waist—still was her reply,—"I will not marry yet."

St. Aubyn did not require to ask if his visits would be permitted in town:—he was invited to renew them there. An excursion to Paris, however, on a matter of pressing necessity, respecting the affairs of a friend, prevented his return for a month. At the expiration of that time, he found himself in London; and with a throbbing heart, repaired to the habitation of his mistress, on the very evening of his arrival. The house was lighted up;—there was a ball. He was scarcely dressed for a party; yet he could not overcome his impatience to behold again the heroine of the little fishing hamlet. He rang, at the same moment when a knot of other visitors came to the door; and entering along with them, was ushered into a ball-room, the footman hurriedly announcing the names of the several parties. The dance was proceeding. It was the whirling waltz—

The dance of contact, also.

Forbid! abandoning to the free hand
The sacred waist; white face to face—that breath
Doth kiss with breath, and eye embraceth eye,—
Your tranced coil relaxing, straightening,—round
And round, in wavy measure, you entwine
Circle with circle—till the swimming brain
And panting heart, in swoony leaps give o'er!

It was the waltz, and the couple consisted of a man of the town and—Amelia!

The party who had entered with St. Aubyn, immediately took seats; but he stood, transfixed to the spot where his eyes first caught the form of his mistress, in the coil of another. She saw not him. With laughing eyes, and cheeks flushed with exertion, she continued the measure of licence, her spirits mounting, as the music quickened, until she seemed to float around her partner, who freely availed himself of the favourable movement of the step, to draw her towards him, in momentary pressure. They, at length, sat down amidst the applauses of the company. St. Aubyn writhed! He retired to a quarter of the room where he thought he should escape observation, and threw himself into a chair.

"Who think you, now, is the happy man?" said one of the group of gentlemen who stood within a few paces of him.

"Why, who, if not Singleton?" replied another; "he has waltzed himself into her heart. This is the twentieth time I have seen her dance with him."

"Oh! another will waltz him out of her heart," interposed a third; "she is an incorrigible coquette, from first to last."

Here the party separated. St. Aubyn, scarcely knowing what he did, after sitting abstracted for a few minutes, rose, and passed out of the ball-room.

He descended the staircase, with the intention of quitting the house; but the supper-room had been just thrown open, and the press carried him in. Nor was he allowed to stop until he had reached the head of the table. Every seat but two, close to where he stood, was occupied. "By your leave, sir!" said a voice behind. He stepped back; and the waltzer led his mistress to one of them, and placed himself beside her. St. Aubyn would have retreated—but could not without incommoding the company, who thickly hemmed him in. Amelia drew her gloves from the white arms they little enhanced by covering—the waltzer assisting her, and transferring them to the custody of his bosom. His eyes explored the table in quest of the most delicate of the viands, which, one after another, he recommended to her; until she made a selection. He filled a wine-glass with sparkling Burgundy, and presented it to her; then crowned a goblet, till the liquid almost overhung the brim—breathed her name over it, in a sigh—and quaffed it off to the bottom, at a draught. He leaned his cheek to her's, till the neighbours almost touched. He whispered her—and she replied in whispers. He passed his arm over the back of her chair, partly supplanting it in the office of supporting her shoulders. He pressed so close to her, that it would have been the same had both been sitting in one seat. She was either unconscious of the familiar vicinity, or she permitted it. The whispering continued; the word "marriage" was uttered—repeated—repeated again. St. Aubyn heard her distinctly reply, "I will not marry yet;" as she rose, and, turning, met him face to face!

"St. Aubyn!" she involuntarily exclaimed. St. Aubyn spoke not, save with his eyes, which he kept fixed steadfastly upon her.

"When did you arrive?" she inquired hurriedly, and in extreme confusion.

"This evening," replied St. Aubyn, without removing his eyes.

"When did you join our party?"

"While you were waltzing," returned St. Aubyn, with a smile.

"And how long have you been standing here?"

"Since supper commenced; I made way for your partner to hand you to that seat, and place himself beside you."

"You have not supped? sit down, and I will help you."

"No!" said St. Aubyn, shaking his head, and smiling again.

"My mother has not seen you yet! Come and speak to her."

"No; I have not a moment to spare. I leave town immediately."

"When?"

"To-night!—Farewell!" said he, turning to go.

"You surely are not going yet?" earnestly interposed Amelia.

"I must not stay," emphatically rejoined St. Aubyn. "For one object alone I came to town. That is finally disposed of. The necessity for my departure is imperative. Remember