

if properly exerted, would in all probability have finally wrought a decided change in hers. She set herself to the task of pleasing him; she studied his peculiarities, she adopted his tone of thought, she acquired those pretty phrases of sentimental diction which are always so agreeable from the lips of a pretty woman, and already her work was half done, when one little trait, so habitual as entirely to escape her own attention—one evidence of selfishness and unwomanly disregard to the comfort of another, spoiled her plans, and marred her happiness. That evening and that dress completed his disenchantment. The wan face of the poor seamstress seemed to meet his eye whenever he looked on the gorgeously attired belle, and Julia Grey no longer possessed a lover in her eccentric cousin.

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Some two years afterwards, the cousins were again seated in the apartment where we first found them. The same rich decorations were around them, the piano was open as if the lady had just turned from it, but the harp stood silent in its nook, and something seemed to tell of change in the hearts and minds of both. There was a mournfulness in Julia's eye, as she glanced around the room, and the changeful color on her cheek told of some suppressed emotion, but her brow was calm, and her beautiful lip displayed a placid smile, as if she had worn the mask of fashion so long that her features had become moulded into its false expression. Charles Lilbourne was grave and thoughtful as usual, but there was a fire in his eye and a nervous movement of his heavy brows, as if some hidden feeling was at work within him.

"To-morrow, Julia, to-morrow," said Lilbourne, "you will be another creature; to-morrow you will assume the duties and responsibilities of a wife—you will take upon yourself the keeping of another's happiness, are you not startled when you reflect upon the magnitude of your life-long task?"

"It is too late to reflect now," replied Julia, while a laugh of forced gaiety echoed strangely from her lips; "I dare say I shall be very happy, I have outlived the age of romance, and, as I expect little sympathy, I shall meet with few disappointments. Mr. Debere is rich, complaisant and kind: he loves to spend his vast fortune, and he will be as proud of his wife as of his blood horses."

"For Heaven's sake, Julia, how can you talk in so frivolous a strain?"

"I tell you, Charles, I have survived my own affections; the time has been when I could have

given up wealth and fashion, and all the homage of society for the love of one true heart, but the hour is gone by. I respect Mr. Debere's many virtues, I am willing to tolerate his eccentricities and defects, and I have a most decided preference for the advantages his fortune and good temper ensure to me, and I have very philosophically adapted my ideas of happiness to my capacity for obtaining it. Now, say no more on the subject, Charles; you know not, you cannot know, how painful are the feelings you awaken. I have chosen my path and mean to pursue it fearlessly."

"You are a strange creature, I wish I could understand you."

"You might once have fathomed the depths of my nature, Charles, but you scorned to do so; the weeds thrown up to the surface deterred you from seeking the pearls that might have been found beneath, and now they will never be brought to light. Leave me to be happy in my own way, and God grant that you may find greater happiness in yours."

"Julia, do you know that I also am engaged to be married?"

"To whom?" was the earnest, almost passionate question; for no woman ever listens coldly to such tidings respecting one whom she has loved.

"Do you remember the dress you wore at Mrs. Lawton's party?"

"Perfectly well; more by token, as the Scotch say, that it enabled me to attract the admiration of the somewhat fastidious Mr. Debere."

"Indeed! well, that confirms my belief in the doctrine of compensations, for as that dress won you a husband, it certainly lost you a lover. When I heard you coldly condemn your sister woman to unbroken labor and privation, in order that you might obtain the trappings of variety, I felt that you were not all my fancy had painted—not all that I desired in woman. I watched from my window the progress of that solitary task; I saw the grey dawn of morning break upon the sleepless eyes of that pale girl, who toiled for a blind and helpless mother; and when I saw you robed as the idol of fashion, my thoughts went back to her who was the victim as well as the priestess of your vanity, and the spell of your beauty became powerless. I sought out the aid of a friend, an aged and benevolent woman, who might be my agent in rescuing your dependant from the thralldom of necessity. For the girl's sake no less than for my own, I avoided all personal interference, and when I found that her father's bankruptcy and sudden death, had thus reduced the family to poverty, I feigned to have