

festation that England can make to him personally in acknowledgment of his genius.

But will he ever forget the almost terrible pathos of the moment when Beard, the great singer, sang these strains from "Samson Agonistes,"

"Total eclipse! No sun, no moon,  
All dark amid the blaze of noon!"

Handel himself, having years before set the music to those words, little dreaming of their future application to himself!

And then came the climax, when the audience, transported beyond themselves, would have Handel forward, and he came to the front, led by Smith, his friend and fellow musician, and there presented his sightless eyes to the applauding thousands, whose applause, however, was of slight value in contrast with the deep emotion that everywhere lay beneath.

The festival is over. The crowds are hurrying away. Lord Langton sits still, too deeply influenced by what he has seen and felt to care to mingle just yet with the world.

Then he begins to notice that there is by his side a figure dressed in black, the figure apparently of a youthful and extremely elegantly-formed woman, but whose face is so shrouded by her veil, that he cannot catch a single glimpse of it.

Why does he wish to see that face?

Simply because he sees she is suffering from deep emotion.

He fancies now, on recollection, that he had heard her before sob once or twice during the performance, but had taken no notice, as there were so many people deeply moved, and the women especially, by the touching circumstances we have referred to.

Wondering to see her stay so long, and remembering his own secret search, but guarding himself from the absurdity of supposing he was going now suddenly to find his unworthy sister, he drew near to her, and said—

"Pardon me, an older man than yourself, and one used to trouble, if I ask you what is the matter?"

She turned, lifted her veil, and lo! there beamed upon him the very loveliest face he thought he had ever seen in his life. Its very tearfulness, strange to say, did not seem able to spoil the brilliant sparkle, the delicious play of expression, over that youthful, fascinating countenance.

The earl was too much dazzled by it for a moment to go on speaking with quite such a tone of abstract philanthropy as before.

Looking again, he found his thoughts a little—just a little—changing as to the beauty. Something seemed wanting to it that was difficult to express in words, but that, in fact, seemed the want of all wants to Lord Langton.

Was it conscience, honesty, truth?

He could not tell, but confessed himself very much interested.

And then, at yet a third glance, he fancied he must have seen that face before. Yet where, he could not for the life of him recollect.

Why, surely, it was like the lady he had seen at a distance bow to Paul, and whom he had then fancied he had seen before at Rome, when she dropped her fan and he had picked it up.

But that face had evidently never known a sorrow, while this was buried in grief.

The dress, too! That lady was almost in the extreme of fashion: this one, even if in grief, might still have shown some trace of the same foible; but no, her dress was studiously plain, simple, and seemed to express a severe and faultless taste.

She did not, at first, reply to the gentleman's kind question, but wept only the more vehemently.

Again he pressed her, and then she said, drying her tears—

"I—I am very sorry to distress you, but I was very unhappy. I have lately lost my only friend, and now I have nobody: and I was thinking, when I saw Mr. Handel, whether he or I was the most to be pitied: he with thousands of dear friends all about him, but with no eyes to see them; or, I, with eyes only too well able to look

for my friends, if I had them, but having not one left in all the wide, wide world."

Again her emotion overpowered her, and there was a painful pause.

"But you have relatives?"

"No, not one. Or, if I have them, this cruel institution has taken care I shall never know them."

"How is that? Pray tell me," said the earl, with increasing interest in this beautiful mourner.

"Why, I was a foundling; and of course a child sent here never knows anything more of father or mother, and might, in my opinion, be as well dead!"

"A foundling! You! Is that possible?"

"Are you so much surprised? You fancy, perhaps, paupers ought not to look other than like paupers!"

Avoiding comment on the slight acidity of tone that accompanied these words, Lord Langton said to her—

"Pray, if it is not too much trouble, tell me your story. I really feel much interested in you, and I could, I think, find a lady of great respectability, who might, for my sake, help you, if—"

"If I am good enough. I dare say I am not. I only wish I was!"

Here issued a fresh burst of tears, which Lord Langton was obliged to watch for a time in silent embarrassment—half in sympathy, half in doubt.

"Come," said he, "tell me, I entreat you what you know about your history."

"Ah, yes; that's easily done. The people here take care you shan't know much. I was brought here by a man and his wife, and they left a motto with me—"

"Do you happen to have that motto with you?"

"Yes; I never move without it, for how do I know what blessed chance might happen to restore me to my relatives, who, I believe are grand people?"

"What—what is that you say?"

"I have reason to believe," said the lady in black, "that my father and mother were people of rank."

"Why?"

"Because of the motto. Here it is."

And she produced a scrap of parchment where, in faded letters, the earl read—

The higher you look, the nearer the truth.

Anything else? said the earl, in visible and increasing emotion.

"Yes; the name shows the same. Don't you think so? It's the same as the mother of the Young Pretender."

"Your name, then, is—?" demanded the earl, taking the scrap of paper from his pocket that had been given to him by the official, and looking at it.

"Maria Clementina Preston!"

The earl's face underwent a great change; still, he concealed the emotion he felt, and let her go on.

"The Preston, I dare say, was to show that it was about the time of the last insurrection that I was born in the neighbourhood of Preston."

"And to whom do you think these strange and, I own, strikingly interesting facts point as your father?"

"How can I venture to say?"

"But have you never guessed?"

"Yes! To the Pretender himself!"

"Indeed! Of royal blood?" said the startled earl; and there was a strange mixture of scorn and indignation in his voice at her obvious pride in the idea, and the seeming insensibility of this fair young creature to the baseness of her birth under such circumstances, even if her hypothesis was true; for certainly she could not, as she must know, be a child by marriage.

This incident seemed to shock the stranger so much, that Mistress Preston, who had for the moment been revelling in a bit of true enjoyment—true character—saw the mischief she had unintentionally done, and hastened to remedy it by a wonderfully frank and naive confession.

"There, now, you are ashamed of me because, having no father at all, I am glad even to claim

acquaintance with one who was, at all events, a gallant gentleman and a warrior."

"True—true!" said the earl, cheerily, and thinking to himself it was natural a woman so brought up should feel as she did.

An embarrassing pause.

Mistress Clementina wondered what her neighbour was thinking about, and became very restless, as she looked round and saw the place was rapidly emptying, and as she caught a glimpse at the door of a face that was always terrible to her—now more than ever so—that of the chief.

The earl noticed her restlessness and continual glances backward.

Suddenly he turned to her, and said, in an earnest and slightly severe tone of voice—

"Madam, we are as yet quite strangers to each other; but, if what you have said be true, we shall be strangers no longer."

"Do you doubt its truth?" asked Mistress Clementina, turning her pretty face to look up innocently in his.

"No; but I must, for serious reasons, have confirmation?"

"You do not mean that—that—"

And now, indeed, Mistress Clementina's face became a study. One of the most extraordinary changes came over it in an instant that it would be possible to conceive. All the infantile petulance and pretence—the charming affectation—died out, and the look was grave, intense, eager, the eyes flashing with excitement, the cheeks reddening with even new and deeper colour, as she added, after a moment's pause—

"You know me! You do! You are my relative! Oh, God! perhaps my brother!"

"Pray—pray be calm. Whatever the truth be, we will find it out. I will not leave you till the truth is made known to us both, one way or the other."

Turning over in his own mind a thousand schemes for the moral redemption of the relative so strangely and unexpectedly restored to him, the earl forgot, for a brief time, his own personal interest in the past doings of pretty Mistress Clementina.

But when he remembered the confession she had made, he saw the necessity of learning, once for all, whatever she knew that might guide him as to his own future actions.

What a disgusting recital it was, in spite of the beauty and piquant provokingness of the lips through which that recital passed! His cheek burned; his step became hurried, impetuous, abrupt; his voice, as he questioned her, harsh and unreal; his eyes and his whole countenance averted from her in instinctive dislike.

"Is it not my sister?" then he suddenly asked himself—"my sister, whom I am bound to love and cherish?"

She strove to hide from him one fact—her character as a double spy; but he was too keensighted, and so got it all out of her. Then, wondering what she really was driving at, he questioned her as to whether she had been intending to be faithful to either.

"Yes—to King George!" she unhesitatingly replied. "But not now!"

"Why not now?" demanded the earl.

"Because you are a Jacobite; and because I like the Jacobites best; and because my family are all Jacobites!"

It was delicious the way in which she pronounced the words, "my family." It was evident that Mistress Maria was quite prepared to assume queenly dignity itself, if only she had the chance. And then she poured out all the secrets that her late occupation had made known to her, and a most painfully-interesting revelation it was. Lord Langton saw that, if her account were true, the Government was really alarmed, the people of England more inclined to the Stuart cause than he himself had of late believed, and that, in short, he would have no excuse for not prosecuting his mission.

"Come, let us go forth," said he.

A sudden pallor overspread the cheeks of his companion as he said this.

"Come, give me your arm," he added seeing her hesitate.

"Ah, yes—yes. Do not let go of me, not for the world!"