

and delight me; because, truth to tell, I never thought you much of a diplomatist before. Now don't be offended—because, you see, I have cried *mea culpa*, and owned myself mistaken already, and I can do no more. How do I look to-night?"

Mrs. Bruce's brow, which had frowned majestically a moment back, cleared at this appeal, and her lips smiled benignly.

Miss Singleton was looking her prettiest to-night, and knew it. The crushed "strawberry" dress she wore gave the glow of color that her pale moonlight beauty usually lacked; her light hair was puffed and crinkled all over; her small head glittered and sparkled like spun glass with every movement; a touch of art had darkened the faint brows and lashes and made the large colorless eyes weirdly brilliant.

"My dear, you are beautiful!" Mrs. Bruce cried, with genuine impulsive admiration that ended in a regretful sigh. "It is you that should be the peeress, not that poor spiritless Nora, who is as like as not to fret herself into her grave before she has worn her coronet a year."

Cristine drew up her slender figure and regarded her own reflection in the glass with evilly sparkling eyes.

"Yet he had eyes, and chose her!" she quoted between her little glistening teeth. "I should have done him more credit! The world would never have said of me—as it will of her—that I pined away 'neath the burden of an honor unto which I was not born."

"Ah, well!"—Mrs. Bruce paused, powder-puff in hand, stung by a latent sense of justice into protesting speech—"that is hardly fair to Nora, you know! She is as high-spirited a girl as any in England, and, if she were heart-whole and fancy free, would make as good a Countess. It is not Lord de Gretton's rank, but the memory of Arthur Beaupre that haunts and daunts her."

Cristine's fair face hardened and darkened with an indefinably cruel look.

"The more fool she!" she said sternly. "She should tread down all memories and all loves, as I would in her place."

"Ah, that is easy enough to say!" Mrs. Bruce answered, with a prodigious sigh and a semi-sentimental look. "But you never were in love, Cristine."

Cristine looked at her mother for a second or so with an odd bewildered sort of stare; then suddenly the absurdity of the stout prosperous-looking matron posing as the exponent of romantic passion seemed to strike her. With a shrill hysterical cry she sank upon the nearest couch, and laughed till she could laugh no more, till the tears ran down her cheeks, and Mrs. Bruce forgot to be offended, in her real merriment.

"Cristine, for Heaven's sake compose yourself!" she cried, shaking the slender shoulder in her agitation. "Are you mad, child, or what ails you?"

"Nothing," Cristine said, recovering her calmness. "You looked so supremely absurd—that was all."

Mrs. Bruce appeared uneasily dignified, but dared say no more—such another outburst would drive her or her daughter crazy—if indeed Cristine were not a little touched already. The doubt expressed itself so plainly in her face that Miss Singleton had much ado not to laugh again.

"Please do not," she cried, with a gesture of mock entreaty. "Another such joke would be my death. Come, it is time we went to Nora's relief. I wonder why she and Lord de Gretton find to talk about in these duty *tele-a-tels*? She cannot bewail her dead lover to him, and I am not sure that she can think or speak on any other subject."

But Mrs. Bruce was too deeply offended to enter into her daughter's inquisitive speculations.

"I shall go," she said, drawing her velvet skirt majestically round her; "but you—I think you will see that your toilette is a little disarranged by your late strange—I had almost said unseemly—outburst."

Mrs. Bruce's exit was at least as mirth-provoking as anything that had occurred in the course of the interview; but it won no laughter from Cristine. As the door swung to behind her mother, the girl's fair head fell forward on her hands, and a fierce moaning cry rang drearily through the room.

"How well I act!" she cried, with a sort of savage pride. "How little they guess that Nora Bruce hurt more than my pride when she stole Arthur Beaupre from me—that I hate her with a deeper hate than ever wounded vanity could teach me! And yet"—she clasped her hands and laughed a strange unnatural laugh—"what an excellent Christian I am growing! This marriage, which lifts her over all our heads and should be a perpetual blister to my pride—I would give my life itself rather than let it be broken off."

A step in the corridor disturbed her, and in another minute she stood before the mirror brushing out the soft fleecy curls that clustered so gracefully round her white temples and small shell-like ears, humming a gay little tune for the edification of casual passers-by.

Meantime the interview between Lord de Gretton and his fair betrothed had been a much less oppressive affair than she supposed or than poor Nora usually found it. Lord de Gretton, though sufficiently brilliant when he chose to exert himself, preferred, in a general way, the pleasure of being entertained to the labor of entertaining; and Nora was guiltily conscious that she fell lamentably short of his expectations in this respect. Not wilfully; apart from the love that was not hers to give, she was honestly anxious to fulfill all duties imposed on her by the betrothal bond, and tried with a pitiful earnestness to ascertain what subjects interested him, and to educate herself in them.

It was up-hill work as she pursued it, though the task would have been simplicity itself to an ordinary guileless nature. Lord de Gretton, who was tired of most things and took special interest in none, required only to be amused and flattered in equal proportions. But this Nora did not guess, and, even had it been made plain to her, she was too heart-sick to amuse and too proud to flatter, so things would have been much as they were. To-night however she was spared all trouble in the matter; she had only to mention Lady Olivia Blake's visit and his attention was at once enchained. He stood with his back to the fireplace, thoughtfully twisting his long gray moustache and looking down with a curiously cruel smile at the slender white-robed figure in the low lounging-chair.

"So! I hardly expected that from Lady Olivia," he said, after a little pause; and, had Nora been one shade less apathetic, she must have noted the strange triumph of his tone, must have seen the quick lighting of the sunken eyes, the quick flush of the usually impassive face. Lord de Gretton looked like a man who by a sudden spell had subdued some savage creature and brought it tamely to his feet.

But Nora did not raise the dark head that drooped so listlessly; the gray eyes rested in a dreamy stare upon the gold-handled peacock's-feather fan, but saw nothing of its iridescent splendour. Lord de Gretton was speaking. For the moment her thoughts were free; and, with mechanical impulse, they took their accustomed journey to the African danga where, beneath the scorching sky, her lover's bones lay bleaching.

"Well, do you like her?" Lord de Gretton's voice roused her as the whip stirs the sleeping slave; in a second she was back at her duty.

"Lady Olivia? Yes, she was kind and friendly, and she is very handsome."

"As to that there is no doubt," he said, with a little sneering laugh, and yet with very evident sincerity. "She is as handsome as—as Lucifer; but, as to kind and friendly, I would as soon trust a tigress as Olivia Blake. You poor little lamb, I half believe she came prepared to eat you!"

"Why?" Nora asked, shocked and startled by something in Lord de Gretton's look. Perhaps the real nature of the man peered for a moment through the sunken eyes to give her timely warning. "Why?" she persisted, with a sort of tremulous bravery. "Why should Lady Olivia hate me?"

He laughed again, and threw one arm round the slender white-robed figure, for Nora had risen now and stood beside him, wide-eyed, eager, and thrilling once again with her wild foolish hope.

"Why, you foolish child? I believe you are the only girl in London who need ask the question."

"Is it because—" Nora shrank from his touch; her heart throbbled so fiercely she could hardly find breath to frame the question—"Oh, Lord de Gretton, as a gentleman, you must tell me this—because she once—"

"Once jilted me? Yes," he cried, with a quick fierce flush, "and has repented her folly ever since; that is the reason, Nora. But if she is content to bury the hatchet and do homage to the new Lady de Gretton, why, let her, say I."

And, as the gray moustache touched her cold cheek, Nora knew that her last hope had passed and her fate was sealed. (TO BE CONTINUED.)

I could never think well of a man's intellectual or moral character if he was habitually unfaithful to his appointments.

There is no policy like politeness; and a good manner is the best thing in the world, either to get a good name or supply the want of it.

Pride, like the magnet, constantly points to one object, self; but, unlike the magnet, it has no attractive pole, but at all points repels.

Society is composed of two great classes—those who have more appetite than dinner, and those who have more dinner than appetite.

President Arthur.

A colored attaché of the White House thus describes a peculiarity of his master: "Mister Arthur nobber goes to bed in cold wedder widout a big blazin' fire in his room, wedder here, or out to Soldiers Home, an' we as has ter clean up and look arter de fires, hez ter take up a bundle ob dis hyar lightnin' wood obbery night, so as he kin frow it in de fire an' make er blazo, an' sit dar an' tink whilo a-watch-in' ob de shadows on de wall. When he uses de lightnin' wood, he nobber uses er light, an' when he gets tired he jumps in de bed an' watches de flames flicker till he goes ter sleep. He's mighty pertickler about dis lightnin' wood, an' if de supply gins out, dar is some fun til' dar's more put in de bin."

It is our own vanity that makes the vanity of others intolerable to us.

How much better it is that he should speak ill of me to all the world, than all the world speak ill of me to him.

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