

that there was no delirium, and that Maud Heathcote would never have uttered those words to him. That mixture of teasing absurdity and inconsequential badinage, with evident knowledge of the secret contents of the tin box, could not possibly be expressed by any person except one. Yet what possibility was there that this one should be here by his side calmly driving home? The thought was so bewildering that his brain reeled.

In an instant all his gloom and abstraction vanished. His heart beat fast. A wild idea, a wilder hope, filled mind and heart. Yet in the midst of this excitement one thought was prominent. He remembered his past mistakes. He was aware that they had arisen from a too credulous yielding to his own belief or fancy. He was now resolved to accept nothing from credulity, or hope, or fancy, or even belief; but to see with his own eyes the actual fact. Who was this person who was here with him? That was what he wanted to know.

He was intensely excited, yet he was resolved to undergo no more deceptions. He determined to see for himself. It was now quite dark, and, though he peered through the gloom, yet nothing satisfactory was revealed. He certainly saw the outline of a lady's figure, — but what lady? Was it Miss Heathcote, or was it — could it be, — might it be, — dare he hope, — was it possible?

He could endure his suspense no longer.

With trembling fingers he fumbled in his waistcoat-pocket! He found a match! — a thing he always carried there! He drew it forth! He struck it wildly against the side of the brougham!!!

The light flashed forth! He held up the blazing match, and with eager gaze looked at the face of his companion.

Astounded at this unexpected incident of the match, and confounded by this abrupt discovery, Mrs. Lovell, though not unwilling to be discovered,

shrank back and made a faint effort to drop her veil, which had been raised since she had entered the brougham. But Grimes arrested her hand.

And there, illuminated by the blaze, close beside him, just before him, he saw unmistakably the face of Mrs. Lovell. Her eyes were downcast, there was a flush of confusion and timid embarrassment upon her face, yet that face was the face of the one being on earth who was worth far more to him than all the earth and all that it contained; yea, verily, and even more than life itself.

The sensation was tremendous. How came she here? It was unaccountable. It was miraculous. A thousand emotions of wonder rushed through him, but all at length found utterance in one exclamation.

“Wal! I’ll be darned!”

The burning match dropped from his hands, and he caught her in his arms. Mrs. Lovell uttered a little deprecatory shriek.

“I’ve got you now at last,” murmured old Grimes, in a dislocated sort of way, doddering, in fact maundering, and all that sort of thing. — “I’ve got you now, and I ain’t goin’ to let you go. I don’t know how’n thunder you got here, and I don’t want to. I only know it’s you, and that’s enough. Don’t explain, I beg; let me only have the rapture of knowin’ that this is really my darling and no other —”

“O dear! I’m sure I don’t know what in the world I am *ever* to do,” sighed Mrs. Lovell.

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On the return of Carrol and Maud to the inn, the latter had at once gone to find her sister. On seeing no signs of her she had become terribly alarmed; and Carrol was utterly bewildered. They had questioned everybody, and at last found out that the gentleman who had engaged the carriage had returned with it, and had gone off with some lady. Several of the people of the inn had seen the lady enter the carriage, and the gentleman go in after her. After this they had driven away.