

appearing to strive, to capture the object of their ambition. There was such subtle tact exhibited and such powers of delicate blandishment displayed that he was convinced women were born diplomatists, and he now had some conception of how it was that in a broader field some of the sex had wielded such an influence over kings and statesmen as to be the powers behind the throne which ruled empires and kingdoms for their benison or their bane. He certainly would have possessed extraordinary attributes if his vanity had not been flattered, by being conscious he was thought worthy of such flattering attention; though his thoughts were tinged with cynicism when exhibitions of selfishness were not wanting in his fair friends, and as, sometimes, delicate hints were faintly outlined which darkened character, and inuendoes were whispered to the detriment of rivals, by lips that seemed moulded only to breathe blessings or whisper love.

As we have previously stated, Richard Ashton had met his fate years before, when, as a young man of eighteen, he attended a social party given by a Mrs. Edmunds, whose husband was a great friend of his father's, and a member of the same guild. He was there introduced to a modest, unpretentious, but yet cultivated and refined country maiden, Ruth Hamilton by name, who was a niece of his host. We will not say it was a case of love at first sight, though they certainly were, from the first, mutually attracted each to the other, for, when he entered into conversation, he found