

employer she looked him full in the face with her speaking eyes. Sir Alan was certainly surprised, and somewhat startled. The first impression made upon him by Miss Murray was not that she was the handsomest woman he had ever seen, but certainly the most remarkable. He had not enjoyed a large experience of women, for he hated London, and seldom left Glebe Royal, except when obliged to do so. His circle of acquaintance, therefore, had been narrowed (like that of his sister), and the ladies of the county families who visited his wife had never appeared either entertaining or interesting in his eyes. Indeed, for a man of his age, he was singularly innocent of the wish or intention of wrong-doing; and disappointing as his married life had proved, he had never dreamed of letting his thoughts stray from their legal resting-place. He was all the more likely therefore to prove a deserter, when a stray temptation was placed in his way, because he was so ignorant that he ran any risk in encountering it.

The new-comer struck him as remarkable at first sight, because she formed so great a contrast to what his eyes had been accustomed to see. Clad in a perfectly plain and perfectly fitting cloth dress, which showed every line of a figure replete with grace—with her abundance of dark hair piled upon her head, and a kind of subdued passion smouldering in her eyes and playing about the curves of her mouth, Miss Charlotte Murray (without being a beautiful woman in the strict sense of the word) doubtless formed a very beautiful picture. It has been too often proved to need repetition, that it is