

front, fond of showing his handsome face, and turning it almost full on the audience; Raymond farther back, and half hidden by the silk curtains.

The drop-scene fell, and the buzz of conversation rising from the stalls, invaded the place wherein sat the two.

"Who is the lovely girl in the box yonder, George?"

"The one with the abundance of false hair? That is Blanche Stockleigh, the belle of the season, and the most accomplished flirt within the four seas."

"Worse than Fanny Ellesmere?"

"Far. Fanny had one redeeming point which gave a fellow a chance of escape."

"What was that?"

"Her appetite. But Miss Stockleigh is unattackable by ridicule, and so far safe."

"Is not that Burleigh who is sitting beside her?"

"Yes, and as woful an example of a modern Hercules at the feet of an Omphale of the period as you can desire. Firmly bound by her chains he has not once made an effort to free himself. I wonder occasionally whether she means to leave anything of spirit in him. As for marrying him"

"Well?"

"She would as soon think of entering a convent. Burleigh is a reckless, mad lover, but were he a husband—*nous verrions changer tout cela*."

"Excuse my boring you with questions, but as I have been out of London so long, I really feel quite a stranger, and cannot help wishing to know all the new faces."

"Make yourself easy on that score. I warrant that before the week is out you will be more extensively known than you may care to be. I pity you."

"Pity! Why?"

"Have you not shared in that Abyssinian campaign? Every fair here will be boring you for a detailed account of your perils and triumphs. If you are not hooked to write a book, or at the very least a tract, I am a Dutchman."