

rule, that among them your wealth and your birth are absolutely of no account, so long as you yourself are not objectionable.

She had dreaded the women she might meet, yet they were all amiable, uncritical, and pleasant, and the dowdiest were the greatest. The stout young man who had talked to her about horses was the Duke of Suffolk, and a plain old lady who had evidently taken a fancy to her, was the Princess of Gratzenberg. The visit to the nursery had completed the charm.

"Well," said Julia, "how have you been getting on? Aren't they delightful people? So simple and homely. I'm not a bit ashamed of my poor old evening frock any more. I've been to see the children in the nursery, they are perfect ducks."

"Yes, they are nice people," said Jack, stretching himself on a couch and lighting a cigarette.

"I saw you at the window and someone looked out, the governess, I suppose?"

"She's a dear," said Julia. "The children seem to love her, and I don't wonder."

She had resumed her work on the dress she was altering, and said nothing more for a while, whilst Candon, lying on a couch smoking his cigarette and looking at her, felt as though a strong and honourable man were standing at the end of the couch looking at him with scorn, and saying: "You cheat!"

The strong man was himself, the Jack Candon he had always known, the Jack Candon who had never dreamed of any other woman than Julia.

Then the strong man vanished for a moment, and right between the couch and Julia the girl in the brown dress presented herself, framed in a window space. Absolute loveliness saying to him with that terrible backward glance: "You please me—I am yours!"

He rose from the couch and walking to the window looked out at the view.

He was himself again. The act of rising from the couch had dispelled his dreams and fancies, and the absurdity of the position appeared before him fully in all its harlequin dress. A steady-going married man stricken by the glance of a governess! Cupid darts at forty!

Then, leaving the window, he walked over to where Julia was working, and bending down kissed her on the neck, whilst Julia, looking up with a smile, held up her lips to be kissed also.

Eased in his conscience he took his seat, this time on the side of the bed, and sat watching her as she put the last stitches to the frock.

After dinner a band of wandering musicians, who had arrived at the Château, struck up in the gallery of the hall, and there was a dance which lasted till midnight.

At half-past twelve Candon went to bed tired out, happy, and with no thought at all for anything but the festivity, the sounds of which were still ringing in his ears. He awoke at eight o'clock and his first thought was of the beautiful girl to whom he had almost lost his heart.

The vision scarcely disturbed him. He had mastered its power, and he no longer felt self-reproach for the momentary foolishness that had overcome him. The girl had looked at him—well, what then? There was nothing in that. And he might be very well assured that she had not cast that glance at Jack Candon. Seeing him with the Duc she had fancied him, no doubt, one of the great people who frequented the place. She had fancied she was fascinating a Lord or a Duke. She was a governess with ambitions, a forward hussy—aye—but how pretty she was all the same!

He was considering the latter fact when the valet, entering with hot water, disturbed his meditations. The valet looking about for his dressing-gown—which he had not brought—quite put to flight all ideas of everything but the poor figure he must be