

Lady Brooksbury shuddered.

"Shakespeare can be so coarse, at times," was her thought—but on the lips of Miss Bradles quite unbearably so. Her look of disdain discomfited the little woman again. Anne had not laughed either; and Lydia Markham, irritated by anything that was outside her mental range, was frankly bored. Miss Bradles was glad enough, therefore, when the object of Miss Joscelyn's grave mockery stopped in her gyration, advanced staggering, and let herself fall apoplectically into the vacant arm-chair by the chimney—blocking from sight the argent lion passant regardant, langued and clawed gules, of Weyford, who seemed to be heraldically jeering at his own presence (between three mill-wheels of the same) on the Hanks escutcheon.

The Duchess's partner, a pretty, red-lipped, cocked-nosed girl, made a hideous grimace at Mrs. Markham behind her exalted mother's unconscious back; kicked derisively into the air, flung out her arms in expressive pantomime of relief, and waltzed off alone, farcically exaggerating the rhythm.

"Pen is getting above herself," said Lydia Markham, in the soft voice with which she, and those of her set, enunciated their most malicious sentiments, following the flying figure with inimical eyes. "Dear Brooksbury made a positive fool of her, last night."

"You see, darling," said Lord Brooksbury's wife, in her deep, slow voice, "Brooksbury—loved her mother so!—or was it her grandmother? I forget. It was a wonderful story."

A melodious sigh floated out in a pause of the Auto-Viola-Playelle activities. The Duchess's voice, which through the din had been uplifted quite as frankly as that of Miss Bradles, was now left unsupported:

"Well, just a nip of *crème de menthe*, perhaps."