

DR. WINSOM'S WOOING.



R. WINSOM, M.D., was an eminently respectable man. His residence, a handsome modern mansion in a west-end square, was the perfection of respectability.

Respectability blazed in the shining brass plate on his hall door, it glowed in the deep red velvet of his dining-room curtains, it peeped modestly over the precise muslin blinds of the upper chambers, it resounded in the sonorous blows of his massive knocker, it pealed in the metallic tinkle of his area bell, it vivified itself in the demure propriety of his immaculate man-servant, it stared at you from the busts and pictures that adorned his walls, and awed you into a state of nervous admiration in the mahogany substantiality of the equipments of his consulting room.

But the double distilled essence of the intensity of respectability culminated in the person of the doctor himself. It pervaded his whole presence, from his cravat to his boots.

Medical opponents might sneer at his skill, question his nerve, or laugh at his pedantry, but they could as soon have robbed him of his shadow as of his respectability. It was his stock-in-trade, and he throve upon it. Canton might make the blind see, and Yearsley the deaf hear, but men of all ailments flocked to Winsom simply because he was such a respectable man.

"Pompous brute!" said Johnson.

"Ignorant as a pig!" said Robson.

"Knows literally nothing of even the elements of his profession!" said Dodson.

But the voices of Johnson, Robson, and Dodson were drowned by the calls of costermongers in the slums of Whitechapel; and Winsom lived and moved, and had his being in Belgravia.

Dr. Winsom confessed to one fault, he was short-sighted. It was a vulgar failing, but he rendered it exquisitely respectable by the supreme classicality of his gold-mounted spectacles. He had lived the two score and ten years of his life unblessed by much of the society of ladies, and he was peculiarly reserved and retired in their presence; but as only vulgar people are confident and assuming, this was a failing rather in his favour.

He had several admirers; maiden ladies of uncertain ages, who came to receive his alimetary admonitions, and expressed their vehement anxiety as to the accurate carrying out of his prescriptions by repeated visits to his sanctum.

One young lady of fifty peculiarly distinguished herself by the warmth of her fossilized affections. Miss Euphemia Dodd had long set her cap at the doctor. For years she had hunted him down, but although he would pocket all the superfluous guineas the ancient maiden could spare from her attenuated resources, not one word of love came from his recalcitrant lips.