

A FATAL RESEMBLANCE

BY CHRISTIAN FABRE. XXXV.

Carnew took his leave of Weewald Place with the best grace he could assume; and he found himself back in C— just four weeks after his departure thence. He had not sent any word to his aunt, preferring to come upon her as suddenly as he had left her, and thus he was surprised to find Macgilivray at the station when he stepped from the train.

"Not waiting for me, Donald, surely," he said, when he had returned the Scotchman's glad and respectful greeting. "Nae, Mr. Carnew; me leddy sent me for visitors that's expected frae this train; but they're no coming as I ken," Carnew said and another gentleman being the only passenger to alight from the car.

"I'll take the place of the visitors," said Alan, stepping into the carriage. "Aye, an' mair welcome," responded the Scotchman half to himself. "How are they all at the house?" resumed the young man.

"They're a weel but me leddy herself, she's a maist daff since Miss Ned's awa'." "Since Miss Ned's away! What do you mean?" And the young man paused in the act of comfortably adjusting his cushions, and almost glowered at the coachman.

Macgilivray's honest face wore a shade of sorrow. "I thought it vera likely that you'd noo ken hoo it happened," and out of the folds of his sympathizing heart he told Ned's story, Carnew taking his seat on the box beside him the better to hear. Donald had heard the account of her summary dismissal from Mrs. Doloran, maid, who had been an unintentional listener to the interview between the lady and her companion, when the latter announced her intention of leaving Rahandabad. He knew from servant gossip long before the unhappy tale of Josephine, and he had been told by the old Scotch wife, with whom Josephine abode, of Ned's constant charity to the unfortunate girl, so that he was sufficiently informed to give Carnew all particulars; and he did so in his homely fashion. Carnew listened with that telltale color that never came only when excited by strong emotions, and even with labored breath.

"And Miss Ned is now boarding here in C—, you say?" he asked, when Macgilivray had finished. "Yes, she's w' her people o' me ain, an' vera weel treated, she says herself." "Drive me back to the village, Donald, to the hotel; I shall stay there for a few days; and tell me where Miss Ned is stopping. On your return to Rahandabad, say nothing of having met me."

"Dinna fear, sir; I kent hoo to keep me ain counsel this morny day." In his room in the hotel, Carnew was almost exultant. To have that about Ned which had so pained him in his aunt's letter quite disproved, as it was disproved by Macgilivray's story that gave the substance, if not the precise language, of Ned's denial of Mrs. Doloran's charge, and to hear of her tender charity to an erring one of her own sex, were like vindications of her character from Heaven itself. How could he longer do violence to his own heart by stifling his affection for one who evinced such admirable qualities? Her very spirit in leaving his aunt endeared her to him. What though there were some secret passages in her life in which she coqueted with affections, and perhaps even broke a heart—that woman was entirely free from the weakness of her sex? And to one who had such estimable virtues as Ned showed, surely much might be pardoned. Besides, she was more of a woman now, and increasing years in such a character as hers must develop unusual strength and steadiness. Thus did he reason with himself, and not until he was in the very flesh of joy from his arguments did the ugly thought of Dykard Dutton come, the young man whom he had once met, and to whom he had seen Ned's letters addressed. Somehow, of late, in thinking of Ned, there had not intruded any thought of Dutton, her possible lover; it was only Ned herself, pure, simple, free, as Carnew had longed for her. Now, however, when he had worked himself into an enthusiasm about her virtues, Dutton's name rose up as if to forbid it; rose up with that honest, manly, brave look that had won such involuntary respect from Carnew on the night of their first meeting. The remembrance of the joy she showed in his company that night, the money she had once sent him, but which had been promptly returned, her letters to him—all came before him now in a most tantalizing manner. His joy was dampened, but even in the midst of his depression his kindly nature asserted itself. For the noble traits she had shown she deserved to be made happy, though her happiness should be bestowed only through his hands. He would bear what prevented or delayed her marriage to Dutton; and if it were poverty, he would sweep away the obstacle. Thus resolved, he took his way to the address which Macgilivray had given him.

shivered into fragments almost at his feet.

She went again the next day, and the third day; by Ordette's advice, she deigned to go herself in her most pompous state with her liveried lacqueys, which fashion she had copied, but grotesquely, as she copied everything else from abroad, and she almost overpowered the good people into whose simple little home she entered, her eccentricities being a frequent theme of conversation in nearly every house in C—.

Ned met her kindly, but as firmly as when she parted from her. "And so you absolutely refuse all my overtures?" said Mrs. Doloran, the half-entrancing air with which she had first spoken entirely disappearing, and a very angry one coming rapidly in its place. "I think it is best for both of us," was the gentle reply, "that I should not return to Rahandabad."

"And what am I to tell Alan?" in her anger raising her voice as if she were at home. "Since you accused me before of misrepresenting you, I refrained from writing means in my own right, I do not know that my aunt will have any authority in this matter. I shall announce my engagement to her to-day, and I shall have preparations made for receiving you at Rahandabad."

"Oh, no!" she shudderingly responded, "after all that has passed between Mrs. Doloran and myself I cannot meet her." "As my affianced, Ned, you will have nothing to fear. You will find Mrs. Doloran, the lady to whom you were companioned, and Mrs. Doloran, the one of the party to whom you are engaged to be married, two very different persons. Also, my pride will not be satisfied unless the guests of Rahandabad receive you as an equal, which they will only be too well pleased to do now. They have had the pleasure of slighting you; I want them to have the agony of receiving you."

"Thus he argued down every objection she interposed, and he was so lovingly firm about it that she was obliged to yield. When he left her she promised to be ready to accompany him to Rahandabad the next morning. And when he left her she went up to her room and cried from very joy. Her happiness was so unexpected, so great, then she wrote to her father, and a full account of everything that had happened, and a whole page filled with her own blissful feelings. Her pen seemed to dance over the paper, and she could have filled another sheet, but that she had some mercy on Dyke's eyes and time. She closed it with:

"I know, dear Dyke, all this will make you as happy as it has made me, and that you will give your choicest blessing to your nephew. "Ows Nen." Dyke received that letter in the midst of one of his busy days; still he could have snatched a few moments for its perusal, but he only pressed it secretly to his lips and put it into his bosom. He preferred to read it in the solitude of his own room that evening when he could drink in all the bliss which his letters gave him. And that day something most unexpected came to him.

The head of the firm sought him, and offered him a partnership in the business. "We have watched you closely, Mr. Dutton," he said, "and we have observed, in your business facilities most valuable, but most rare. They will stand us in the place of money you would otherwise have to give, and they will be of equal assistance to the firm."

Dutton went home with an elastic step. Now would he be able to provide well for Ned without ever waiting for the spring. He could bring both her and Meg to New York for the remainder of the winter, and in the summer he could have the little mountain home improved into a pretty place for all that now. He would have means for all that now. Thus delightedly planning, he was in too high spirits to delay long at his supper, and he hurried to his room to read his precious letter.

After one perusal it fell from his hand, and his head dropped forward on the little table beside which he sat. "What an agony shook him! It seemed as if his heart would burst in that wave of bliss. And for the first fierce moments his soul cried out against fate, which ever seemed determined to snatch joy from him just as it was within his grasp. Then his manhood returned; that true manhood which is brave in adversity and disappointment. He called up all his own hopes and wishes for Ned, that might be a lady, mingling in the society of Rahandabad. But this time, there was no loud and angry words from the lady to shock and amaze them, for she absolutely rushed at Ned and folded her in her ample arms in a way that took the girl's breath for a moment.

"You dear, charming, my creature," she said, "never to let me know that you had won Alan's heart; but then Alan tells me you did not know it yourself. And how mistaken I have been to think he loved that bewitching Elna. And Mascar speaks so beautifully of you. What have you done to win them all? And me! Can you ever forgive those dreadful things I said to you? But I didn't mean them, Ned; it was only my temper that spoke. See how good I shall be to you now." And Ned was subjected to another uncomfortable hour, while Carnew looked on with an expression of such amazement that it came near evoking from Ned a burst of laughter.

Mrs. Doloran had actually worked herself into feeling all that she said. Here was one of those shallow, emotional, though sometimes obstinate natures which may be easily tamed, and she would continue to imagine that she had quite forgiven, and really liked Ned, while nothing occurred to lessen the esteem in which the young lady was held by Carnew or Ordette.

So Ned was triumphantly re-established in Rahandabad; the guests fawned upon her, those who most slighted her being most forward in their attentions; the servants paid as much court to her as to Mrs. Doloran, and that lady fairly lavished attentions upon her. Indeed, Ned might be said to queen it in Rahandabad, and often she was so happy she questioned the reality of it all. Carnew walked with her, and was by her side constantly in the evenings. She bore her honors with a sweet, modest dignity; no one could detect a jot of pride or triumph in her manner; she was so gentle and simple and kind as in the old days, even insisting upon giving something of her old attendance to Mrs. Doloran, until Alan interposed.

quent, and never, Alan thought, had she looked so beautiful. Her love of and gratitude to these simple people was another virtue in her most estimable character, and when she had finished, the confession of her heart, almost as tremulously as she herself had spoken: "Since you are not engaged, may I use for your hand? My heart is already yours."

Had she heard aright? Had he whom she loved so well, actually proposed to her? Was it true, then, that he had not gone to offer himself to Elna, but that he loved her? Heaven was too kind, and with a gasp that was almost a sob, she put her hands into his so appealingly outstretched, and with a great glad thrill of delight he knew that he was answered. "But your aunt," she said, "when the violence of her emotion having passed, she was able to look up and to speak calmly."

Carnew felt like uttering some very profane exclamation in connection with his relative, but he repressed it and said instead: "As I am quite of age and have ample means in my own right, I do not know that my aunt will have any authority in this matter. I shall announce my engagement to her to-day, and I shall have preparations made for receiving you at Rahandabad."

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ness in choice of a wife, after which she laughed and cried in a breath, and then resumed her violent contortions. Everybody in the house, from the latest guest to the newest servant, heard in a very short time the cause of the commotion made by Mrs. Doloran, for gossiping tongues were plenty to repeat all that the mistress of Rahandabad said in the foolish temper; and, on the contrary, she was pointed out, and even some of the most of the feminine guests, especially those who had treated Ned only as a hired companion.

Carnew knew his aunt so well that he was not unprepared for such a scene, and he retired to his own apartment until she should be in a more rational condition. Mascar, where are you, and where am I?" when her temper brought no result save the disappearance of Alan, and an array of attendants, and she raised her head from the couch to which, with main strength, she had been borne, and she affected to speak with so much feebleness that it was extremely ludicrous.

"Here, Mrs. Doloran," and Ordette showed herself from a corner of the room, whether he had taken refuge until her pugilistic efforts should cease. "Won't you give me my sash and find my fan, and arrange this cushion—I am so exhausted," and back went the head with feigned helplessness, while her maid stood aside to let the gentlemen obey the assiduous behests. But she opened her eyes and said, as if she were delivering her last will and testament: "Does not your heart bleed for me, Mascar? Well has the poet said, 'Better is a serpent's tooth, than a thankful child.'"

In her various emotions she was not conscious how she had twisted the quotation. "And what have I not done for you? Brought him up, and loved him as if he were my own son. Oh, my sorrows are greater than I can bear." And she closed her eyes, and her face was closed, and the whole attitude that of one about to faint. With perfect gravity, Ordette motioned the maid to attend her mistress while she surveyed the scene from a little distance. As soon as she pretended to recover he was at her side.

She sat up, trying to appear very weak, and very much of a martyr; her voice was most pathetic as she bade her maid retire to the adjoining room, and as she again addressed Ordette: "You have not delivered your opinion of Alan's shameful conduct." Ordette stroked his mustache once or twice, and then answered quietly: "My opinion is, that Mr. Carnew has shown excellent judgment in his choice of a wife. Miss Ned is a young lady quite worthy of becoming your niece."

She fairly shrieked his name, every trace of her pretended weakness gone. She was even sitting bolt upright, her hand clutching his arm. "Think," she said in her high shrill voice, "Ned had to earn his living; I paid her for being my companion!" "And highly favored you were to get her to be your companion; and working for one's living is rather to be commended, and accept what can neither be controlled nor avoided. Alan will certainly marry this love of his, and if you continue to show your displeasure, you will drive him entirely from Rahandabad. I have heard you say that you loved him, how well you know him; besides, how well to the give him up? I will talk if you permit this rupture to be. Call your accustomed good sense to you, and receive Miss Ned. Accompany Alan when he goes for her, and my word for it, you will be much happier than by seeking to gain your ends in this manner."

But his arguments, weighty with her as they had been at various heretofore, had to be repeated, and made still more forcible before she could bring herself this time to yield, and it was only when he had impressed upon her that Alan would have his way regardless of her, that she consented to send for her nephew. When she had thus consented with her usual talent for quick transitions of feeling she became astonishingly firm, and Alan found her as ready to accede to his wishes as she was before opposed to them; and, even eager to hurry their fulfillment. She could scarcely wait until morning to go for Ned.

In the morning she insisted upon going in the same stylish equipage in which she had made her former call, and Alan, assured that she had the friendliest spirit, did not oppose her. He took his seat beside her without a word of remonstrance, and once more the good people with whom Ned sojourned were surprised by a visit from the wealthy and eccentric mistress of Rahandabad. But this time, there was no loud and angry words from the lady to shock and amaze them, for she absolutely rushed at Ned and folded her in her ample arms in a way that took the girl's breath for a moment.

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"You are not a 'companion' in that sense of the word any longer," he said. Sometimes Carnew yearned to ask about Mackay, for every word of what Elna had once said to him seemed to have been burned upon his brain; but as often he refrained from doing so. If she had been guilty of coquetry with him, a coquetry which had even sent him to his death, he did not, after all, want to know it, and if she were not, he would not for worlds pain her by letting her know that he had entertained such a suspicion. So he was silent on the subject, and she spoke only of the past as it referred to Dyke and Meg and her mountain home; she never spoke of Mr. Edgar, nor of her life in Weewald Place. It was such an unpleasant memory she could not bear to revert to it, and Carnew, divining her dislike to speak of it, would not intrude upon her silence by a single question.

She had not received any letter from Elna since Carnew's return from his visit to her father, so she felt that she might with impunity refrain from writing to her cousin. She was most reluctant to write, as her letter would have to contain an account of her engagement, and that might cause a pang to Elna.

The winter passed as never a winter before she was a child had passed to Ned, for her life was so happy. Often, as she thought of Carnew's strong, true love thrilled her with delight, she exclaimed to herself: "I am so happy; what have I done to deserve it?" It was only the calm before the storm. A cup so bitter was to be ere long at her lips that her worst enemies might look on aghast while she drank it.

I had come up from Bournemouth, and one thing and another had detained me in town; so I determined to return to my little suburban retreat at Alpertown for the night and travel back to the seaside on the morrow. It was nearly 7 o'clock when I arrived opposite my little home. I had to pass it on my way to the general shop, where I had left the door key for safe keeping. I looked up at my bed room window, when to my horror and surprise I saw the curtains move, then a long, thin hand, a man's hand, latched the window and disappeared. For a moment I felt frightened; the evening was fast fading into darkness. My cottage caught to have been as I had left it two weeks ago, empty, and yet unless my eyesight had played me some fanciful trick, there was a hand, and if a hand, as a natural sequence, a man. I do not know what made me do it, if it was the outcome of foolishness or courage, or extreme nervousness, or a mixture of all three, but I marched to the front door and gave a rat-tat-tat that would have roused the seven sleepers.

If it's a thief he will bolt, I thought, and if—the door opened and a young man in his shirt sleeves stood before me. "Well?" said he interrogatively. "Well?" said I, feebly. "Do you want anybody?" "Yes," I answered. "Is Miss Christine Smythe at home?" "Oh, yes; she expected you. Step in, and mechanically I stepped in. "Take a seat in the parlor," said he, affably, and here I must apologize to any of my friends who read this. I, Christine Smythe, a woman noted for her strength of mind and immunity from feminine weaknesses, I who had always derided hysterical and fainting women, well—I fainted.

When I regained consciousness he was standing beside me with some brandy in one of my best wine glasses. "Drink a little; it will do you good, Miss Smythe?" "You know my name?" "Yes. Now drink." I did so. "I will draw the curtains and light the lamp, only don't you move or speak." He said the last three words in such a peculiar manner that I imagined it better to obey him, but I thought I would give a tremendous scream, if I could see anybody passing, and I looked out of the window. He had lit the lamp, and, having drawn the curtains, turned to me. "I shouldn't do that," he said. "Do what?" "I asked. "Scream for help if you saw anybody pass the window. I should have to—and he stopped and smiled pleasantly at me. "Have to what?" "Ever see a woman gagged, Miss Smythe?" "No," I answered. I felt quite a creepy sensation all over me. "You will excuse my shirt sleeves, but I took off my coat when I was working about the house this afternoon." He sat down on the easy chair opposite me.

He wasn't at all a bad-looking young man. In fact, perhaps he was rather handsome; and then his eyes were so ingenuous, his manner so candid. "I suppose you are wondering who I am?" he said, pleasantly. I looked round the room, and my accustomed eye missed my silver candlesticks, my beautiful clock, my bronza statues; even the Persian hearthrug was rolled up and stood waiting in a corner. "Well," I said, "I should think you were a—" I stopped. I was alone in a country cottage with a desperate criminal, and candor seems strangely out of place. "Go on," he remarked, persuasively. "Remember that you are my guest, and that you will be treated with all the deference and chivalry which your charming sex commands; that is, of course, as long as you don't scream."

I did not like to say a burglar; besides, he was so unlike one; and as for calling him a thief, I couldn't and so I compromised matters and said, "I suppose you—are a robber." "Now, that is where you are wrong, entirely wrong; and really I am surprised that a young lady, who is not the usual brainless female—you will pardon the reflection on your sex—but who has written so clearly and explicitly on the questions of capital and labor and on the division of wealth, should call me a robber! Surely, Miss Smythe, the word is misplaced." I really felt quite ashamed. "It is not often," he continued, "that in the pursuit of my profession I have the opportunity of a tete-a-tete with a charming authoress whose books have given me such great pleasure, and if you would allow me to make use of the opportunity and converse with you, I should be obliged. Understand me, madam, I do not insist. The few things that I have thought worthy of collection are now mine, if not legally, at least morally. Shall we exchange ideas?"

Involuntarily my eye fell upon a little sack in the corner of the room, peeping out of the mouth of which I could discern the only piece of silver which I possessed. I sighed. "Why sigh?" he urged. "Surely a lady endowed with so much philosophy as yourself has a mind above the trivial exchanges of every day life; or can it be that your books are only a sham? Why, only lately a charming little treatise of yours fell into my hands during a professional visit which I paid one evening to the house of a well-known money lender. It was entitled 'The Inequality of Wealth,' a charming pamphlet, most logical and so true." His expressive eyes dwelt upon me with an admiring glance.

I began to feel indignant. "Surely," I remarked, with asperity, "having robbed me of my valuables, you can now spare me your brutal wit." "Oh, madam, you pain me! But, with your permission, I will resume my coat." I made no response, but stared at him in my latest manner. "Then, madam," and he put on his coat, "without your permission. But there," he continued, "I am forgetting my duties as a host. While inspecting the lower regions I discovered six half-pint bottles of champagne. Three have gone—the other three are here." He placed two glasses on the table, fetched a bottle from the sideboard, and continued: "Unfortunately, the nippers are down stairs. To procure them I should have to leave you. I could not be so rude—ergo we must have recourse to the poker." He poured it out with a steady hand, and I noticed with a pang that two rings I had foolishly left upstairs decked his aristocratic fingers.

"It is rather an inferior brand," he remarked, filling his own glass. "Accept my apologies. Madam, may I have the honor to clink glasses with you?" I tried to freeze him with a glance of supreme contempt. He looked at me, reproachfully. "Is it possible," he murmured, "that I am mistaken in you; that your works, which I have studied with such delight and benefit to myself, are merely theoretical; that you, who have propounded a scheme perfect in every detail, a scheme by which Dives should share equally with the poorest of his brethren his ill gotten riches, that you cannot rise superior to the annexation of a silver teapot or a little useless bric-a-brac?" and he contemplated the empty mantelpiece and the deserted sideboard. "Great heavens!" he said, suddenly. "Why, you must take me for—and he stopped. "Do you?" "Yes," I answered, promptly. "A thief or a burglar?" he asked. "Both," I rejoined. "You misjudge me; you do, indeed. You are very hard, very hard. The few years that I have been in my profession I have had many clients, but never yet have I been called a thief." He heaved a deep sigh, and added by way of explanation, "You are the first one I have met personally." He took out my little silver watch. "You left it on your dressing table," he said, suavely, in answer to my look of recognition. "I see I have half an hour to spare, and I will point out to you where you are mistaken, and if you would like to embody my short history in a newspaper article you have my sanction, and he bowed graciously. "With your permission I will take one of your essays as the text whereon to hang my sermon. The essay I refer to is entitled 'Our Right to Live.' It is a charming piece of work for a woman—logical, clear and convincing. There is one passage only to which I will refer. It is impressed indelibly upon my memory." He took up the poker, opened another bottle of champagne, replenished the glasses, drank and proceeded. "The passage is this: 'All men who can work and who will work have a right, a divine right, to live, not exist merely, but to live, and share freely in the world's superabundance.' Do you remember that excerpt?" I nodded assent.

"Well," he continued, "four years ago I was eighteen. I had just left Rugby, when my father, who had occupied a high position as a building society director, passed unobtrusively away to another sphere, leaving liabilities of about a million. The widow and the orphan, in fact, all the imbecile idiots who had lost their savings—vented their rage upon me. I was flagellated by the press, cartooned by the comic papers, and verbally assailed at every street corner, so I changed my name and disappeared. You would be surprised at the difficulty a young man fresh from a public school experiences in obtaining employment. In fact, there is none for him. It was then I came across your little treatise."

"You are not a 'companion' in that sense of the word any longer," he said. Sometimes Carnew yearned to ask about Mackay, for every word of what Elna had once said to him seemed to have been burned upon his brain; but as often he refrained from doing so. If she had been guilty of coquetry with him, a coquetry which had even sent him to his death, he did not, after all, want to know it, and if she were not, he would not for worlds pain her by letting her know that he had entertained such a suspicion. So he was silent on the subject, and she spoke only of the past as it referred to Dyke and Meg and her mountain home; she never spoke of Mr. Edgar, nor of her life in Weewald Place. It was such an unpleasant memory she could not bear to revert to it, and Carnew, divining her dislike to speak of it, would not intrude upon her silence by a single question.

She had not received any letter from Elna since Carnew's return from his visit to her father, so she felt that she might with impunity refrain from writing to her cousin. She was most reluctant to write, as her letter would have to contain an account of her engagement, and that might cause a pang to Elna.

The winter passed as never a winter before she was a child had passed to Ned, for her life was so happy. Often, as she thought of Carnew's strong, true love thrilled her with delight, she exclaimed to herself: "I am so happy; what have I done to deserve it?" It was only the calm before the storm. A cup so bitter was to be ere long at her lips that her worst enemies might look on aghast while she drank it.

I had come up from Bournemouth, and one thing and another had detained me in town; so I determined to return to my little suburban retreat at Alpertown for the night and travel back to the seaside on the morrow. It was nearly 7 o'clock when I arrived opposite my little home. I had to pass it on my way to the general shop, where I had left the door key for safe keeping. I looked up at my bed room window, when to my horror and surprise I saw the curtains move, then a long, thin hand, a man's hand, latched the window and disappeared. For a moment I felt frightened; the evening was fast fading into darkness. My cottage caught to have been as I had left it two weeks ago, empty, and yet unless my eyesight had played me some fanciful trick, there was a hand, and if a hand, as a natural sequence, a man. I do not know what made me do it, if it was the outcome of foolishness or courage, or extreme nervousness, or a mixture of all three, but I marched to the front door and gave a rat-tat-tat that would have roused the seven sleepers.

If it's a thief he will bolt, I thought, and if—the door opened and a young man in his shirt sleeves stood before me. "Well?" said he interrogatively. "Well?" said I, feebly. "Do you want anybody?" "Yes," I answered. "Is Miss Christine Smythe at home?" "Oh, yes; she expected you. Step in, and mechanically I stepped in. "Take a seat in the parlor," said he, affably, and here I must apologize to any of my friends who read this. I, Christine Smythe, a woman noted for her strength of mind and immunity from feminine weaknesses, I who had always derided hysterical and fainting women, well—I fainted.

When I regained consciousness he was standing beside me with some brandy in one of my best wine glasses. "Drink a little; it will do you good, Miss Smythe?" "You know my name?" "Yes. Now drink." I did so. "I will draw the curtains and light the lamp, only don't you move or speak." He said the last three words in such a peculiar manner that I imagined it better to obey him, but I thought I would give a tremendous scream, if I could see anybody passing, and I looked out of the window. He had lit the lamp, and, having drawn the curtains, turned to me. "I shouldn't do that," he said. "Do what?" "I asked. "Scream for help if you saw anybody pass the window. I should have to—and he stopped and smiled pleasantly at me. "Have to what?" "Ever see a woman gagged, Miss Smythe?" "No," I answered. I felt quite a creepy sensation all over me. "You will excuse my shirt sleeves, but I took off my coat when I was working about the house this afternoon." He sat down on the easy chair opposite me.

He wasn't at all a bad-looking young man. In fact, perhaps he was rather handsome; and then his eyes were so ingenuous, his manner so candid. "I suppose you are wondering who I am?" he said, pleasantly. I looked round the room, and my accustomed eye missed my silver candlesticks, my beautiful clock, my bronza statues; even the Persian hearthrug was rolled up and stood waiting in a corner. "Well," I said, "I should think you were a—" I stopped. I was alone in a country cottage with a desperate criminal, and candor seems strangely out of place. "Go on," he remarked, persuasively. "Remember that you are my guest, and that you will be treated with all the deference and chivalry which your charming sex commands; that is, of course, as long as you don't scream."

I did not like to say a burglar; besides, he was so unlike one; and as for calling him a thief, I couldn't and so I compromised matters and said, "I suppose you—are a robber." "Now, that is where you are wrong, entirely wrong; and really I am surprised that a young lady, who is not the usual brainless female—you will pardon the reflection on your sex—but who has written so clearly and explicitly on the questions of capital and labor and on the division of wealth, should call me a robber! Surely, Miss Smythe, the word is misplaced." I really felt quite ashamed. "It is not often," he continued, "that in the pursuit of my profession I have the opportunity of a tete-a-tete with a charming authoress whose books have given me such great pleasure, and if you would allow me to make use of the opportunity and converse with you, I should be obliged. Understand me, madam, I do not insist. The few things that I have thought worthy of collection are now mine, if not legally, at least morally. Shall we exchange ideas?"

Involuntarily my eye fell upon a little sack in the corner of the room, peeping out of the mouth of which I could discern the only piece of silver which I possessed. I sighed. "Why sigh?" he urged. "Surely a lady endowed with so much philosophy as yourself has a mind above the trivial exchanges of every day life; or can it be that your books are only a sham? Why, only lately a charming little treatise of yours fell into my hands during a professional visit which I paid one evening to the house of a well-known money lender. It was entitled 'The Inequality of Wealth,' a charming pamphlet, most logical and so true." His expressive eyes dwelt upon me with an admiring glance.

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