

"By all means, and at once."

"Well, be civil to him for my sake, and invite him up for to-morrow, like a darling, so that I may meet him again under favourable circumstances."

Letty glided off and soon returned leaning on the arm of the tall, light haired officer who had formed one of the group congregated near the door of Christ Church Cathedral on Virginia's wedding day. This gentleman she introduced as Captain Dacre.

"I have had the pleasure of seeing Mrs. Weston before, on the morning of her marriage," he said with a low bow.

"And I should hope you saw myself, the first bride's maid also, though you have not seen fit to allude to the circumstance in my case."

Captain Dacre imperturbably smiled—nothing could disconcert or discompose him. "You are really too severe, Miss Maberly," he languidly rejoined. "Pray be merciful! Virginia, with more curiosity than politeness, studied at her leisure the new idol that ruled her friend's fickle fancy, somewhat wondering at her choice. Regular but expressionless features, large, light, sleepy looking eyes, drawing voice and intonations, such was Henry Dacre; but what she saw not at first sight was a fund of astuteness—a gift of delicate, insidious flattery, all the more dangerous that it was generally concealed beneath a veil of listless indifference and apathy. The invitation bespoken for him by Miss Maberly was after some moments of gay conversation accorded, and he then moved off with his partner in the direction of the dancers, having first asked and obtained the hand of his hostess for her next disengaged dance.

Partly through Letty's management, partly through his own tact, Captain Dacre soon found himself received at Weston Villa on the most intimate footing. Thrown off her guard by the knowledge that he was her friend's admirer, Virginia soon granted him more privileges than she extended to any

other of her gentlemen visitors, a circumstance speedily observed and in many cases misinterpreted. Wealthy, fastidiously particular in his dress, horses, indeed in all his belongings, he was to a certain extent a valuable addition to the fashionable circle of which she formed one of the leaders, and soon no project of gaiety was started at Weston Villa in which he was not included.

His first introduction to the master of the house was not propitious. Having called by appointment at a certain hour for Mrs. Weston and her friend, he was leaning against the drawing-room window and looking out on the lawn, inwardly thinking what unpunctual creatures women were, when Mr. Weston entered. The latter, on seeing a stranger standing there in a wearied attitude, courteously enquired if he wished to see the ladies of the house. Without discontinuing the monotonous rapping of his cane on the window sill, he shortly rejoined: "Thanks. The ladies know I am here."

Irritated by the visitor's supercilious manner, Weston threw himself on a lounge, and taking up a magazine, endeavoured to occupy himself with it.

Soon gay voices and rustling silks sounded in the passage, and the lady of the house and her friend entered, ready equipped for walking. The ceremony of introduction was gone through, the gentlemen favouring each other with almost imperceptible bows, and after a few gay words from Mrs. Weston to her husband, the three went down the steps. Clive stood looking after them a moment, and as he noted the intimate terms on which this supercilious stranger seemed to be with his wife, his brow darkened, and with a short sigh he turned away. He had returned to bring Virginia to town with him for the purpose of selecting some ornaments that he had promised her, but pride had kept him silent in this obtrusive visitor's presence, and now there seemed nothing for him but to retrace his steps to the office, which he accordingly did. He