

ently unfitted to be the husband of the woman at his side.

For a woman she was unusually tall. She was also unusually handsome. She had a magnificent figure, a commanding presence, good features, hair, and eyes; yet the impression that she produced was anything but pleasant. The flashing dark eyes were too bold and too defiant; the carmine on her cheeks was artificially laid on, and her face had been dabbed with a powder puff in very reckless fashion. Her black hair was frizzed and tortured in the latest mode, and her dress made in so novel a style that it looked *outré*, even at a fashionable watering-place. Dress, bonnet and parasol were scarlet of hue; and the vivid tint was softened but slightly by the black lace which fell in cascades from her closely-swathed neck to the hem of her dress, fastened here and there by diamond pins. If it were possible that, as Lisette had said, Mr. and Mrs. Alan Walcott were poor, their poverty was not apparent in Mrs. Walcott's dress. Black and scarlet were certainly becoming to her, but the effect in broad daylight was too startling for good taste. To a critical observer, moreover, there was something unpleasantly suggestive in her movements: the way in which she walked and held her parasol, and turned her head from side to side, spoke of a desire to attract attention, and a delight in admiration even of the coarsest and least complimentary kind.

There was certainly something in the bearing of husband and wife that attracted notice. Her vivacity and her boldness, a certain weariness and reluctance in his air, as if he were paraded up and down these garden walks against his will, led others beside inquisitive French waiters to watch the movements of the pair. And they were in full view of several gazers when an unexpected and dramatic incident occurred.

A man who had sauntered out of the hotel into the gardens directed his steps towards them, and met them face to face as they issued from one of the side-paths. He was not tall, but he was dapper and agile: his moustache curled fiercely, and his eyeglass was worn with something of an aggressive air. He was perfectly dressed, except that—for English taste—he wore too much jewellery; and from the crown of his shining hat to the tip of his polished pointed boot he was essentially Parisian—a dandy of the Boule-