

"What must be, must be! But it's really dreadful to think of it all—I would never have believed Philip Errington could have so disgraced himself!"

"He is no gentleman!" said Lady Winsleigh, freezingly. "He has low tastes and low desires. He and his friend Lorimer are two *cad*s, in my opinion!"

"Clara!" exclaimed Mrs. Marvelle, warningly. "You were fond of him once!—now don't deny it!"

"Why should I deny it?" and her ladyship's dark eyes blazed with concentrated fury. "I loved him! There! I would have done anything for him! He might have trodden me down under his feet! He knew it well enough—cold, cruel, heartless cynic as he was and is! Yes, I loved him!—but I *hate* him now!"

And she stamped her foot to give emphasis to her wild words. Mrs. Marvelle raised her hands and eyes in utter amazement.

"Clara, Clara! Pray, pray be careful! Suppose any one else heard you going on in this manner! Your reputation would suffer, I assure you! Really, you're horribly reckless! Just think of your husband——"

"My husband!" and a cold gleam of satire played round Lady Winsleigh's proud mouth. She paused and laughed a little. Then she resumed in her old, careless way—"You must be getting very goody-goody, Mimsey, to talk to me about my husband! Why don't you read me a lecture on the duties of wives and the education of children? I am sure you know how profoundly it would interest me!"

She paced up and down the room slowly while Mrs. Marvelle remained discreetly silent. Presently there came a tap at the door, and the gorgeous Briggs entered. He held himself like an automaton, and spoke as though repeating a lesson.

"His lordship's compliments, and will her la'ship lunch in the dining-room to-day?"

"No," said Lady Winsleigh, curtly. "Luncheon for myself and Mrs. Marvelle can be sent up here."

Briggs still remained immovable. "His lordship wished to know if Master Hernest was to come to your la'ship before goin' out?"

"Certainly not!" and Lady Winsleigh's brows drew together in a frown. "The boy is a perfect nuisance!"

Briggs bowed and vanished. Mrs. Rush-Marvelle grew more and more restless. She was a good-hearted woman, and there was something in the nature of Clara Winsleigh that, in spite of her easy-going conscience, she could not altogether approve of.

"Do you never lunch with your husband, Clara?" she asked at last.

Lady Winsleigh looked surprised. "Very seldom. Only when there is company, and I am compelled to be present. A domestic

meal would be too *ennuyant*! I wonder you can think of such a thing! And we generally dine out."

Mrs. Marvelle was silent again, and, when she did speak, it was on a less delicate matter.

"When is your great 'crush,' Clara?" she inquired. "You sent me a card, but I forget the date."

"On the twenty-fifth," replied Lady Winsleigh. "This is the fifteenth. I shall call on Lady Bruce-Errington"—here she smiled scornfully—"this afternoon—and to-morrow I shall send them their invitations. My only fear is whether they mayn't refuse to come. I would not miss the chance for the world! I want my house to be the first in which her peasant ladyship distinguishes herself by her blunders!"

"I'm afraid it'll be quite a scandal!" sighed Mrs. Rush-Marvelle. "Quite! Such a pity! Bruce-Errington was such a promising, handsome young man!"

At that moment Briggs appeared again with an elegantly set luncheon-tray, which he placed on the table with a flourish.

"Order the carriage at half-past three," commanded Lady Winsleigh. "And tell Mrs. Marvelle's coachman that he needn't wait—I'll drive her home myself."

"But, my dear Clara," remonstrated Mrs. Marvelle, "I must call at the Van Clupps'——"

"I'll call there with you. I owe them a visit. Has Marcia caught young Masherville yet?"

"Well," hesitated Mrs. Marvelle, "he is rather slippery, you know—so undecided and wavering!"

Lady Winsleigh laughed. "Never mind that! Marcia's a match for him! Rather a taking girl—only *what* an accent! My nerves are on edge whenever I hear her speak."

"It's a pity she can't conquer that defect," agreed Mrs. Marvelle. "I know she has tried. But, after all, they're not the best sort of Americans——"

"The *best* sort! I should think not! But they're of the *richest* sort, and that's something, Mimsey! Besides, though everybody knows what Van Clupp's father was, they make a good pretense at being well-born—they don't cram their low connection down your throat, as Bruce-Errington wants to do with his common wife. They ignore all their vulgar belongings delightfully! They've been cruelly 'cut' by Mrs. Rippington—she's American—but then she's perfect style. Do you remember that big 'at home' at the Van Clupps' when they had a band to play in the back-yard and everybody was deafened by the noise? Wasn't it quite too ridiculous?"

Lady Winsleigh laughed over this reminiscence, and then betook herself to the consideration of lunch—a tasty meal which both she and Mrs. Marvelle evidently enjoyed, flavored as it was with the high spice of scandal concerning their most immediate

and mutual friends, who were, after much interesting discussion, one by one condemned as of "questionable" repute, and uncertain position. Then Lady Winsleigh summoned her maid, and was arrayed *cap-à-pie* in "carriage toilet," while Mrs. Marvelle amused herself by searching the columns of "Truth" for some new tit-bit of immorality connected with the royal nobility of England. And at half-past three precisely, the two ladies drove off together in an elegant victoria drawn by a dashing pair of grays, with a respectable apoplectic coachman on the box, supported by the stately Briggs, in all the glory of the olive-green and gold liveries which distinguished the Winsleigh equipage. By her ladyship's desire, they were driven straight to Prince's Gate.

"We may as well leave our cards together," said Clara, with a malicious little smile, "though I hope to goodness the creature won't be at home."

Bruce-Errington's town-house was a very noble-looking mansion—refined and simple in outer adornment, with a broad entrance, deep portico, and lofty windows—windows which fortunately were not spoiled by gaudy hangings of silk or satin in "aesthetic" colors. The blinds were white—and, what could be seen of the curtains from the outside, suggested the richness of falling velvets and gold-woven tapestries. The drawing-room balconies were full of brilliant flowers, shaded by quaint awnings of Oriental pattern, thus giving the place an air of pleasant occupation and tasteful elegance.

Lady Winsleigh's carriage drew up at the door, and Briggs descended.

"Inquire if Lady Bruce-Errington is at home," said his mistress. "And if not, leave these cards."

Briggs received the scented glossy bits of pasteboard in his yellow-gloved hand with due gravity, and rang the bell marked "Visitors" in his usual ponderous manner, with a force that sent it clanging loudly through the corridors of the stately mansion. The door was instantly opened by a respectable man with gray hair and a gentle, kindly face, who was dressed plainly in black, and who eyed the gorgeous Briggs with the faintest suspicion of a smile. He was Errington's butler, and had served the family for twenty-five years.

"Her ladyship is driving in the park," he said, in response to the condescending inquiries of Briggs. "She left the house about half an hour ago."

Briggs thereupon handed in the cards, and forthwith reported the result of his interview to Lady Winsleigh, who said, with some excitement:

"Turn into the park and drive up and down till I give further orders."

Briggs mutely touched his hat, mounted the box, and the car-

riage rapidly bowled in the required direction, while Lady Winsleigh remarked laughingly to Mrs. Marvelle:

"Philip is sure to be with his treasure! If we can catch a glimpse of her, sitting staring open-mouthed at everything, it will be amusing! We shall then know what to expect."

Mrs. Marvelle said nothing, though she too was more or less curious to see the "peasant" addition to the circle of fashionable society—and when they entered the park, both she and Lady Winsleigh kept a sharp lookout for the first glimpse of the quiet gray and silver of the Bruce-Errington liveries. They watched, however in vain—it was not yet the hour for the crowding of the Row—and there was not a sign of the particular equipage they were so desirous to meet. Presently Lady Winsleigh's face flushed—she laughed—and bade her coachman come to a halt.

"It is only Lennie," she said in answer to Mrs. Marvelle's look of inquiry. "I *must* speak to him a moment!"

And she beckoned coquettishly to a slight, slim young man with a dark mustache and rather handsome features, who was idling along on the footpath, apparently absorbed in a reverie, though it was not of so deep a character that he failed to be aware of her ladyship's presence—in fact he had seen her as soon as she appeared in the park. He saw everything apparently without looking—he had lazily drooping eyes, but a swift under-glance which missed no detail of whatever was going on. He approached now with an excessively languid air, raising his hat slowly, as though the action bored him.

"How do, Mrs. Marvelle!" he drawled, lazily addressing himself first to the elder lady, who responded somewhat curtly—then leaning his arms on the carriage door, he fixed Lady Winsleigh with a sleepy stare of admiration. "And how is our Clara? Looking charming, as usual! By Jove! Why weren't you here ten minutes ago? You never saw such a sight in your life! Thought the whole Row was going crazy, 'pon my soul!"

"Why, what happened?" asked Lady Winsleigh, smiling graciously upon him. "Anything extraordinary?"

"Well, I don't know what you'd call extraordinary;" and Sir Francis Lennox yawned and examined the handle of his cane attentively. "I suppose if Helen of Troy came driving full pelt down the Row all of a sudden there'd be some slight sensation!"

"Dear me!" said Clara Winsleigh, pettishly. "You talk in enigmas to-day. What on earth do you mean?"

Sir Francis condescended to smile. "Don't be waxy, Clara!" he urged—"I mean what I say—a new Helen appeared here to-day, and instead of 'tall Troy' being on fire, as Dante Rossetti puts it, the Row was in a burning condition of excitement—fellows on horseback galloped the whole length of the park to take a last

glimpse of her—her carriage dashed off to Richmond after taking only four turns. She is simply magnificent!"

"Who is she?" and in spite of herself, Lady Winsleigh's smile vanished and her lips quivered.

"Lady Bruce-Errington," answered Francis, readily. "The loveliest woman in the world, I should say! Phil was beside her—he looks in splendid condition—and that meek old secretary fellow sat opposite—Neville—isn't that his name? Anyhow they seemed as jolly as pipers—as for that woman, she'll drive everybody out of their wits about her before half the season's over."

"But she's a mere peasant!" said Mrs. Marvelle, loftily. "Entirely uneducated—a low, common creature!"

"Ah, indeed!" and Sir Francis again yawned extensively. "Well, I don't know anything about that! She was exquisitely dressed, and she held herself like a queen. As for her hair—I never saw such wonderful hair—there's every shade of gold in it."

"Dyed!" said Lady Winsleigh, with a sarcastic little laugh. "She's been in Paris. I dare say a good *coiffeur* has done it for her there artistically!"

This time Sir Francis's smile was a thoroughly amused one.

"Commend me to a woman for spite!" he said, carelessly. "But I'll not presume to contradict you, Clara! You know best, I dare say! Ta-ta! I'll come for you to-night—you know we're bound for the theater together. By-bye, Mrs. Marvelle! You look younger than ever!"

And Sir Francis Lennox sauntered easily away, leaving the ladies to resume their journey through the park. Lady Winsleigh looked vexed—Mrs. Marvelle bewildered.

"Do you think," inquired the latter, "she can really be so wonderfully lovely?"

"No, I don't!" answered Clara, snappishly. "I dare say she's a plump creature with a high color—men like fat women with brick-tinted complexions—they think it's healthy. Helen of Troy indeed! Pooh! Lennie must be crazy."

The rest of their drive was very silent—they were both absorbed in their own reflections. On arriving at the Van Clupps', they found no one at home—not even Marcia—so Lady Winsleigh drove her "dearest Mimsey" back to her own house in Kensington, and there left her with many expressions of tender endearment—then, returning home, proceeded to make an elaborate and brilliant toilet for the enchantment and edification of Sir Francis Lennox that evening. She dressed alone, and was ready for her admirer when he called for her in his private hansom, and drove away with him to the theater, where she was the cynosure of many eyes; meanwhile her husband, Lord Winsleigh, was pressing a good-night kiss on the heated forehead of an excited boy, who, plunging about in his little bed and laughing heartily, was evidently desirous of emulat-

ing the gambols of the clown who had delighted him that afternoon at Hengler's.

"Papa! could you stand on your head and shake hands with your foot?" demanded this young rogue, confronting his father with tousled curls and flushed cheeks.

Lord Winsleigh laughed. "Really, Ernest, I don't think I could!" he answered, good-naturedly. "Haven't you talked enough about the circus by this time? I thought you were ready for sleep, otherwise I should not have come up to say good-night."

Ernest studied the patient, kind features of his father for a moment, and then slipped penitently under the bed-clothes, settling his restless young head determinedly on the pillow.

"I'm all right now!" he murmured, with a demure, dimpling smile. Then, with a tender upward twinkle of his merry blue eyes, he added, "Good-night, papa dear! God bless you!"

A sort of wistful pathos softened the grave lines of Lord Winsleigh's countenance as he bent once more over the little bed and pressed his bearded lips lightly on the boy's fresh cheek, as cool and soft as a rose-leaf.

"God bless you, little man!" he answered softly, and there was a slight quiver in his calm voice. Then he put out the light and left the room, closing the door after him with careful noiselessness. Descending the broad stairs slowly, his face changed from its late look of tenderness to one of stern and patient coldness, which was evidently its habitual expression. He addressed himself to Briggs, who was lounging aimlessly in the hall.

"Her ladyship is out?"

"Yes, my lord! Gone to the theater with Sir Francis Lennox."

Lord Winsleigh turned upon him sharply. "I did not ask you, Briggs, *where* she had gone, or *who* accompanied her. Have the goodness to answer my questions simply, without adding useless and unnecessary details."

Briggs's mouth opened a little in amazement at his master's peremptory tone, but he answered promptly:

"Very good, my lord!"

Lord Winsleigh paused a moment, and seemed to consider. Then he said:

"See that her ladyship's supper is prepared in the dining-room. She will most probably return rather late. Should she inquire for me, say I am at the Carlton."

Again Briggs responded: "Very good, my lord!" And, like an exemplary servant as he was, he lingered about the passage while Lord Winsleigh entered his library, and, after remaining there some ten minutes or so, came out again in hat and great-coat. The officious Briggs handed him his cane and inquired:

"'Ansom, my lord?"

"Thanks, no. I will walk."

It was a fine moonlight night, and Briggs stood for some minutes on the steps, airing his shapely calves and watching the tall, dignified figure of his master walking, with the upright, stately bearing which always distinguished him, in the direction of Pall Mall. Park Lane was full of crowding carriages with twinkling lights, all bound to the different sources of so-called "pleasure" by which the opening of the season is distinguished. Briggs surveyed the scene with lofty indifference, sniffed the cool breeze, and, finding it somewhat chilly, re-entered the house and descended to the servants' hall. Here all the domestics of the Winsleigh household were seated at a large table loaded with hot and savory viands—a table presided over by a robust and perspiring lady with a very red face and sturdy arms bare to the elbow.

"Lor', Mr. Briggs!" cried this personage, rising respectfully as he approached, "ow late you are! Wot 'ave you been a-doin' on? 'Ere I've been a-keepin' your lamb-chops and truffles 'ot all this time, and if they's dried up 'tain't my fault, nor that of the hoven, which is as good a hoven as you can wish to bake in."

She paused breathless, and Briggs smiled blandly.

"Now, Flopsie!" he said, in a tone of gentle severity. "Excited again—as usual! It's bad for your 'elth—very bad! *Hif* the chops is dried, your course is plain—cook some more! Not that I am enny ways particular—but chippy meat is bad for a delicatè digestion. And you would not make me hill, my Flopsie, would you?"

Whereupon he seated himself, and looked condescendingly round the table. He was too great a personage to be familiar with such inferior creatures as house-maids, scullery-girls, and menials of that class—he was only on intimate terms with the cook, Mrs. Flopper, or, as he called her, "Flopsie"—the coachman, and Lady Winsleigh's own maid, Louise Renaud, a prim, sallow-faced French woman, who, by reason of her nationality, was called by all the inhabitants of the kitchen "mamzelle," as being a name both short, appropriate, and convenient.

On careful examination the lamb-chops turned out satisfactorily—"chippiness" was an epithet that could not justly be applied to them—and Mr. Briggs began to eat them leisurely, flavoring them with a glass or two of fine port out of a decanter which he had taken the precaution to bring down from the dining-room side-board.

"I *ham* late," he then graciously explained—"not that I was detained in enny way by the people upstairs. The gay Clara went out early, but I was absorbed in the evenin' papers—Winsleigh forgot to ask me for them. But he'll see them at his club. He's gone there now on foot—poor fellah!"

"I suppose *she's* with the same party?" grinned the fat Flopsie,

as she held a large piece of bacon dipped in vinegar on her fork, preparatory to swallowing it with a gulp.

Briggs nodded gravely. "The same! Not a fine man at all, you know—no leg to speak of, and therefore no form. Legs—*good* legs—are beauty. Now, Winsleigh's not bad in that particular—and I dare say Clara can hold her own—but I wouldn't bet on little Francis."

Flopsie shrieked with laughter till she had a "stitch in her side," and was compelled to restrain her mirth.

"Lor', Mr. Briggs!" she gasped, wiping the moisture from her eyes, "you are a reglar one, aren't you! Mussy on us! you ought to put all wot you say in the papers—you'd make your fortin!"

"Maybe, maybe, Flopsie," returned Briggs, with due dignity. "I will not deny that there may be wot is called 'sparkle' in my natur. And 'sparkle' is wot is rekwired in polite literatoor. Look at 'Hedmund' and 'Enery!' Sparkle again—read their magnificent productions, the 'World' and 'Truth'—all sparkle, every line! It is the secret of success, Flopsie—be a sparkler, and you've got everything before you."

Louise Renaud looked across at him half defiantly. Her prim, cruel mouth hardened into a tight line.

"To spark-el?" she said—"that is what we call *étinceler—éclater*. Yes, I comprehend! Miladi is one great spark-el! But one must be a very good jewel to spark-el always—yes—yes—not a sham."

And she nodded a great many times, and eat her salad very fast. Briggs surveyed her with much complacency.

"You are a talented woman, mamzelle," he said, "very talented! I admire your ways—I really do!"

Mamzelle smiled with a gratified air, and Briggs settled his wig, eying her anew with fresh interest.

"Wot a witness you would be in a divorce case!" he continued, enthusiastically. "You'd be in your helement!"

"I should—I should indeed!" exclaimed mamzelle, with sudden excitement—then as suddenly growing calm, she made a rapid gesture with her hands: "But there will be no divorce, Milord Winsleigh is a fool!"

Briggs appeared doubtful about this, and meditated for a long time over his third glass of port with the profound gravity of a philosopher.

"No, mamzelle," he said, at last, when he rose from the table to return to his duties upstairs—"No! there I must differ from you. I am a close observer. Wotever Winsleigh's faults—and I do not deny that they are many—he is a gentleman—that I *must* admit—and with *hevery* respect for you, mamzelle—I can assure you he's no fool!"

And with these words Briggs betook himself to the library to arrange the reading-lamp and put the room in order for his mas-

ter's return, and as he did so, he paused to look at a fine photograph of Lady Winsleigh that stood on the oak escritoire opposite her husband's arm-chair.

"No," he muttered to himself. "Wotever he thinks of some goings-on, he ain't blind nor deaf—that's certain. And I'd stake my character and purfessional reputation on it—wotever he is, he's no fool!"

For once in his life, Briggs was right. He was generally wrong in his estimate of both persons and things—but it so happened on this particular occasion that he had formed a perfectly correct judgment.

## CHAPTER II.

Could you not drink her gaze like wine?  
Yet in its splendor swoon  
Into the silence languidly,  
As a tune into a tune?

DANTE ROSSETTI.

On the morning of the twenty-fifth of May, Thelma, Lady Bruce-Errington, sat at breakfast with her husband in their sunshiny morning-room, fragrant with flowers and melodious with the low piping of a tame thrush in a wide gilded cage, who had the sweet habit of warbling his strophes to himself very softly now and then before venturing to give them full-voiced utterance. A bright-eyed, feathered poet he was, and an exceeding favorite with his fair mistress, who occasionally leaned back in her low chair to look at him and murmur an encouraging "Sweet, sweet!" which caused the speckled plumage on his plump breast to ruffle up with suppressed emotion and gratitude.

Philip was pretending to read the "Times," but the huge, self-important printed sheet had not the faintest interest for him—his eyes wandered over the top of its columns to the golden gleam of his wife's hair, brightened just then by the sunlight streaming through the window—and finally he threw it down beside him with a laugh.

"There's no news," he declared. "There never *is* any news!"

Thelma smiled, and her deep-blue eyes sparkled.

"No?" she half inquired—then taking her husband's cup from his hand to refill it with coffee, she added: "But I think you do not give yourself time to find the news, Philip. You will never read the papers more than five minutes."

"My dear girl," said Philip, gayly, "I am more conscientious than you are, at any rate, for you never read them at all!"

"Ah, but you must remember," she returned, gravely, "that is because I do not understand them! I am not clever. They seem to

me to be all about such dull things—unless there is some horrible murder or cruelty or accident—and I would rather not hear of these. I do prefer books always—because the books last, and the news is never certain—it may not even be true."

Her husband looked at her fondly; his thoughts were evidently very far away from newspapers and their contents.

As she met his gaze the rich color flushed her soft cheeks and her eyes dropped shyly under their long lashes. Love, with her, had not yet proved an illusion—a bright toy to be snatched hastily and played with for a brief while, and then thrown aside as broken and worthless. It seemed to her a most marvelous and splendid gift of God, increasing each day in worth and beauty—widening upon her soul and dazzling her life in ever-new and expanding circles of glory. She felt as if she could never sufficiently understand it—the passionate adoration Philip lavished upon her filled her with a sort of innocent wonder and gratitude—while her own overpowering love and worship of him sometimes startled her by its force into a sweet shame and hesitating fear. To her mind he was all that was great, strong, noble, and beautiful—he was her master, her king—and she loved to pay him homage by her exquisite humility, clinging tenderness, and complete, contented submission. She was neither weak nor timid—her character, molded on grand and simple lines of duty, saw the laws of nature in their true light, and accepted them without question. It seemed to her quite clear that man was the superior, woman the inferior, creature, and she could not understand the possibility of any wife not rendering instant and implicit obedience to her husband, even in trifles.

Since her wedding-day no dark cloud had crossed her heaven of happiness, though she had been a little confused and bewildered at first by the wealth and dainty luxury with which Sir Philip had delighted to surround her. She had been married quietly at Christiania, arrayed in one of her own simple white gowns, with no ornament save a cluster of pale blush-roses, the gift of Lorimer. The ceremony was witnessed by her father and Errington's friends—and when it was concluded they had all gone on their several ways—old Guldmar for a "toss" on the Bay of Biscay—the yacht "Eulalie," with Lorimer, Macfarlane, and Duprez on board, back to England, where these gentlemen had separated to their respective homes—while Errington with his beautiful bride, and Britta in demure and delighted attendance on her, went straight to Copenhagen. From there they traveled to Hamburg, and through Germany to the Schwarzwald, where they spent their honeymoon at a quiet little hotel in the very heart of the deep-green forest.

Days of delicious dreaming were these—days of roaming on the emerald green turf under the stately and odorous pines, listening