

deep and courtly reverence, with an unmistakable look of admiration in his sleepy tiger-brown eyes—then she turns to Lord Winsleigh and adds in a casual way: "My husband!" Lord Winsleigh advances rather eagerly—there is a charm in the exquisite nobility of Thelma's face that touches his heart and appeals to the chivalrous and poetical part of his nature.

"Sir Philip and I have known each other for some years," he says, pressing her little fair hand cordially. "It is a great pleasure for me to see you to-night, Lady Errington—I realize how very much my friend deserves to be congratulated on his marriage!"

Thelma smiles. This little speech pleases her, but she does not accept the compliment implied to herself.

"You are very kind, Lord Winsleigh," she answers. "I am glad indeed that you like Philip. I do think with you that he deserves every one's good wishes. It is my great desire to make him always happy."

A brief shadow crosses Lord Winsleigh's thoughtful brow, and he studies her sweet eyes attentively. Is she sincere? Does she mean what she says? Or is she, like others of her sex, merely playing a graceful part? A slight sigh escapes him—absolute truth, innocent love, and stainless purity are written in such fair clear lines on that perfect countenance that the mere idea of questioning her sincerity seems a sacrilege.

"Your desire is gratified, I am sure," he returns, and his voice is somewhat sad. "I never saw him looking so well. He seems in excellent spirits."

"Oh, for that!" and she laughs. "He is a very light-hearted boy! But once he would tell me very dreadful things about the world—how it was not at all worth living in—but I do think he must have been lonely. For he is very pleased with everything now, and finds no fault at all!"

"I can quite understand that!" and Lord Winsleigh smiles, though that shadow of pain still rests on his brow.

Mrs. Rush-Marvelle and the Van Clupps are listening to the conversation with straining ears. What strange person is this! She does not talk bad grammar, though her manner of expressing herself is somewhat quaint and foreign. But she is babyish—perfectly babyish! The idea of any well-bred woman condescending to sing the praises of her own husband in public! Absurd! "Deserves every one's good wishes!"—pooh! her "great desire is to make him always happy!"—what utter rubbish!—and he is a "light-hearted boy!" Good gracious!—what next? Marcia Van Clupp is strongly inclined to giggle, and Mrs. Van Clupp is indignantly conscious that the Errington diamonds far surpass her own, both for size and luster.

At that moment Sir Philip approaches his wife, with George

Lorimer and Beau Lovelace. Thelma's smile at Lorimer is the greeting of an old friend—a sun-bright glance that makes his heart beat a little quicker than usual. He watches her as she turns to be introduced to Lovelace—while Miss Van Clupp, thinking of the relentless gift of satire with which that brilliant writer is endowed, looks out for "some fun"—for, as she confides in a low tone to Mrs. Marvelle—"she'll never know how to talk to that man!"

"Thelma," says Sir Philip, "this is the celebrated author, Beaufort Lovelace—you have often heard me speak of him."

She extends both her hands, and her eyes deepen and flash. "Ah! you are one of those great men whom we all love and admire!" she says, with direct frankness—and the cynical Beau, who has never yet received so sincere a compliment, feels himself coloring like a school-girl. "I am so very proud to meet you! I have read your wonderful book, 'Azazel,' and it made me glad and sorry together. For why do you draw a noble example and yet say at the same time that it is impossible to follow it? Because in one breath you inspire us to be good, and yet you tell us we shall never become so! That is not right—is it?"

Beau meets her questioning glance with a grave smile.

"It is most likely entirely wrong from *your* point of view, Lady Errington," he said. "Some day we will talk over the matter. You shall show me the error of my ways. Perhaps you will put life, and the troublesome business of living, in quite a new light for me! You see, we novelists have an unfortunate trick of looking at the worst or most ludicrous side of everything—we can't help it! So many apparently lofty and pathetic tragedies turn out, on close examination, to be the meanest and most miserable of farces—it's no good making them out to be grand Greek poems when they are only base doggerel rhymes. Besides, it's the fashion nowadays to be *chiffonniers* in literature—to pick up the rags of life and sort them in all their uncomeliness before the morbid eyes of the public. What's the use of spending thought and care on the manufacture of a jeweled diadem, and offering it to the people on a velvet cushion, when they prefer an *olla-podrida* of cast-off clothing, dried bones, and candle-ends? In brief, what would avail to write as grandly as Shakespeare or Scott, when society clamors for Zola and others of his school?"

There was a little group round them by this time—men generally collected wherever Beau Lovelace aired his opinions—and a double attraction drew them together now in the person of the lovely woman to whom he was holding forth. Marcia van Clupp stared mightily—surely the Norwegian peasant would not understand Beau's similes, for they were certainly incomprehensible to Marcia. As for his last remark—why! she had read all Zola's novels in the secrecy of her own room, and had gloated over them—no words could describe her intense admiration of books that were so

indelicate realistic! "He is jealous of other writers, I suppose," she thought; "these literary people hate each other like poison."

Meanwhile Thelma's blue eyes looked puzzled. "I do not know that name," she said, "Zola!—what is he? He cannot be great. Shakespeare I know—he is the glory of all the world, of course—I think him as noble as Homer. Then for Walter Scott—I love all his beautiful stories—I have read them many, many times, nearly as often as I have read Homer and the Norse Sagas. And the world must surely love such writings—or how should they last so long?" She laughed and shook her bright head archly. "*Chiffonnier! Point du tout! Monsieur, les divines pensées que vous avez données au monde en sont pas des chiffons.*"

Beau smiled again, and offered her his arm. "Let me find you a chair!" he said. "It will be rather a difficult matter—still I can but try. You will be fatigued if you stand too long." And he moved through the swaying crowd, with her little gloved hand resting lightly on his coat-sleeve—while Marcia Van Clupp and her mother exchanged looks of wonder and dismay. The "fisherwoman" could speak French—moreover, she could speak it with a wonderfully soft and perfect accent—the "person" had studied Homer and Shakespeare, and was conversant with the best literature—and, bitterest sting of all, the "peasant" could give every woman in the room a lesson in deportment, grace, and perfect taste in dress. Every costume looked tawdry beside her richly flowing velvet draperies—every low bodice became indecent compared with the modesty of that small square opening at Thelma's white throat—an opening just sufficient to display her collar of diamonds—and every figure seemed either dumpy and awkward, too big or too fat, or too lean and too lanky—when brought into contrast with her statuesque outlines.

The die was cast—the authority of Beau Lovelace was nearly supreme in fashionable and artistic circles, and from the moment he was seen devoting his attention to the "new beauty," excited whispers began to flit from mouth to mouth—"She will be the rage this season!"—"We must ask her to come to us!"—"Do ask Lady Winsleigh to introduce us!"—"She *must* come to our house!" and so on. And Lady Winsleigh was neither blind nor deaf—she saw and heard plainly enough that her reign was over, and in her secret soul she was furious. The "common farmer's daughter" was neither vulgar nor uneducated—and she was surpassingly lovely—even Lady Winsleigh could not deny so plain and absolute a fact. But her ladyship was a woman of the world, and she perceived at once that Thelma was not. Philip had married a creature with the bodily loveliness of a goddess and the innocent soul of a child—and it was just that childlike, pure soul looking serenely out of Thelma's eyes that had brought the long-forgotten blush of shame to Clara Winsleigh's cheek. But that

feeling of self-contempt soon passed—she was no better and no worse than other women of her set, she thought—after all, what had she to be ashamed of? Nothing, except—except—perhaps, her "little affair" with "Lennie." A new emotion now stirred her blood—one of malice and hatred mingled with a sense of outraged love and ungratified passion—for she still admired Philip to a foolish excess. Her dark eyes flashed scornfully as she noted the attitude of Sir Francis Lennox—he was leaning against the marble mantelpiece, stroking his mustache with one hand, absorbed in watching Thelma, who, seated in an easy-chair which Beau Lovelace had found for her, was talking and laughing gayly with those immediately around her, a group which increased in size every moment, and in which the men were most predominant.

"Fool!" muttered Lady Winsleigh to herself, apostrophizing "Lennie" in this uncomplimentary manner. "Fool! I wonder if he thinks I care! He may play hired lackey to all the women in London if he likes! He looks a prig compared to Philip!"

And her gaze wandered—Philip was standing by his wife, engaged in an animated conversation with Lord Winsleigh. They were all near the grand piano—and Lady Clara, smoothing her vexed brow, swept her ruby velvets gracefully up to that quarter of the room. Before she could speak, the celebrated Herr Machtenklinken confronted her with some sternness.

"Your ladyship vill do me ze kindness to remember," he said, loftily, "zat I am here to blay! Zere has been no obbortunity—ze biano could not make itself to be heard in zis fery moch noise. It is possible your ladyship shall require not ze music zis efening? In zat case I shall take my fery goot leave."

Lady Winsleigh raised her eyes with much superciliousness.

"As you please," she said, coolly. "If *you* are so indifferent to your advantages—then all I can say is, so am I! You are, perhaps, known on the Continent, Herr Machtenklinken—but not here—and I think you ought to be more grateful for my influence."

So saying, she passed on, leaving the luckless pianist in a state of the greatest indignation.

"*Gott im Himmel!*" he gasped, in a sort of infuriated *sotto voce*. "Ze emberor himself would not have speak to me so! I come here as a favor—her ladyship do not offer me one *pfennig*—ach! ze music is not for such beoble! I shall brefer to blay to bigs! Zere is no art in zis country—"

And he began to make his way out of the room, when he was overtaken by Beau Lovelace, who had followed him in haste.

"Where are you off to, Hermann?" he asked, good-naturedly. "We want you to play. There is a lady here who heard you in Paris quite recently—she admires you immensely. Won't you come and be introduced to her?"

Herr Machtenklinken paused, and a smile softened his hitherto angry countenance.

"You are ferry goot, Mr. Lofelace," he remarked—"and I would do much for *you*—but her ladyship understands me not—she has offend me—it is better I should take my leave."

"Oh, bother her ladyship!" said Beau, lightly. "Come along—and give us something in your best style."

So saying, he led the half-reluctant artist back to the piano, where he was introduced to Thelma, who gave him so sweet a smile that he was fairly dazzled.

"It is you who play Schumann so beautifully," she said. "My husband and I heard you at one of Lamoureux's concerts in Paris. I fear," and she looked wistfully at him, "that you would think it very rude and selfish of me if I asked you to play just one little piece? Because, of course, you are here to enjoy yourself, and talk to your friends, and it seems unkind to take you away from them!"

A strange moisture dimmed the poor German's eyes. This was the first time in England that the "celebrate" had been treated as a friend and a gentleman. Up to this moment, at all the "at homes" and "assemblies," he had not been considered as a guest at all—he was an "artist," "a good pianist"—"a man who had played before the Emperor of Germany"—and he was expected to perform for nothing, and be grateful for the "influence" exercised on his behalf—influence which as yet had not put one single extra guinea in his pocket. Now, here was a great lady almost apologizing for asking him to play, lest it should take him away from his "friends!" His heart swelled with emotion and gratitude—the poor fellow had no "friends" in London, except Beau Lovelace, who was kind to him, but who had no power in the musical world—and as Thelma's gentle voice addressed him, he could have knelt and kissed her little shoe for her sweet courtesy and kindness.

"Miladi," he said, with a profound reverence, "I will blay for you with blesure—it will be a joy for ze music to make itself beautiful for you!"

And with this fantastic attempt at a compliment, he seated himself at the instrument and struck a crashing chord to command silence.

The hum of conversation grew louder than ever—and to Thelma's surprise Lady Winsleigh seated herself by her and began to converse. Herr Machtenklinken struck another chord—in vain! The deafening clamor of tongues continued, and Lady Winsleigh asked Thelma with much seeming interest if the scenery was very romantic in Norway.

The girl colored deeply, and after a little hesitation, said:

"Excuse me—I would rather not speak till the music is over. It is impossible for a great musician to think his thoughts out prop-

erly unless there is silence. Would it not be better to ask every one to leave off talking while this gentleman plays?"

Clara Winsleigh looked amused. "My dear, you don't know them," she said, carelessly. "They would think me mad to propose such a thing! There are always a few who listen."

Once more the pianist poised his hands over the keys of the instrument—Thelma looked a little troubled and grieved. Beau Lovelace saw it, and acting on a sudden impulse, turned toward the chattering crowds, and, holding up his hand, called, "Silence, please!"

There was an astonished hush. Beau laughed. "We want to hear some music," he said, with the utmost coolness. "Conversation can be continued afterward." He then nodded cheerfully toward Herr Machtenklinken, who, inspired by this open encouragement, started off like a race-horse into one of the exquisite rambling preludes of Chopin. Gradually, as he played, his plain face took upon itself a noble, thoughtful, rapt expression—his wild eyes softened—his furrowed, frowning brow smoothed—and, meeting the grave, rare blue eyes of Thelma, he smiled. His touch grew more and more delicate and tender—from the prelude he wandered into a nocturne of plaintive and exceeding melancholy, which he played with thrilling and exquisite pathos—anon, he glided into one of those dreamily joyous yet sorrowful mazurkas, that remind one of bright flowers growing in wild luxuriance over lonely and forsaken graves. The "celebrate" had reason to boast of himself—he was a perfect master of the instrument—and as his fingers closed on the final chord, a hearty burst of applause rewarded his efforts, led by Lovelace and Lorimer. He responded by the usual bow—but his real gratitude was all for Thelma. For her he had played his best—and he had seen tears in her lovely eyes. He felt as proud of her appreciation as of the ring he had received from the Czar—and bent low over the fair hand she extended to him.

"You must be very happy," she said, "to feel all those lovely sounds in your heart! I hope I shall see and hear you again some day—I thank you so very much for the pleasure you have given me!"

Lady Winsleigh said nothing—and she listened to Thelma's words with a sort of contempt.

"Is the girl half-witted?" she thought. "She must be, or she would not be so absurdly enthusiastic! The man plays well—but it is his profession to play well—it's no good praising these sort of people—they are never grateful, and they always impose upon you." Aloud she asked Sir Philip:

"Does Lady Errington play?"

"A little," he answered. "She sings."

At once there was a chorus of inately polite voices round the piano, "Oh, *do* sing, Lady Errington! Please give us one song!"

and Sir Francis Lennox, sauntering up, fixed his languorous gaze on Thelma's face, murmuring, "You will not be so cruel as to refuse us such delight?"

"No, of course not!" answered the girl, greatly surprised at all these unnecessary entreaties. "I am always pleased to sing." And she drew off her long loose gloves and seated herself at the piano without the least affectation of reluctance. Then, glancing at her husband with a bright smile, she asked, "What song do you think will be best, Philip?"

"One of those old Norse mountain songs," he answered.

She played a soft minor prelude—there was not a sound in the room now—everybody pressed toward the piano, staring with a curious fascination at her beautiful face and diamond-crowned hair. One moment—and her voice, in all its passionate, glorious fullness rang out with a fresh vibrating tone that thrilled to the very heart—and the foolish crowd that gaped and listened was speechless, motionless, astonished, and bewildered.

A Norse mountain song was it? How strange, and grand, and wild! George Lorimer stood apart—his eyes ached with restrained tears. He knew the melody well—and up before him rose the drear solemnity of the Altenguard hills, the glittering expanse of the fjord, the dear old farm-house behind its cluster of pines. Again he saw Thelma as he had seen her first—clad in her plain white gown, spinning in the dark embrasure of the rose-wreathed window—again the words of the self-destroyed Sigurd came back to his recollection, "Good things may come for others—but for you the heavens are empty!" He looked at her now—Philip's wife—in all the splendor of her rich attire—she was lovelier than ever, and her sweet nature was as yet unspoiled by all the wealth and luxury around her.

"Good God! what an *inferno* she has come into!" he thought, vaguely. "How will she stand these people when she gets to know them? The Van Clupps, the Rush-Marvelles, and others like them—and as for Clara Winsleigh—" He turned to study her ladyship attentively. She was sitting quite close to the piano—her eyes were cast down, but the rubies on her bosom heaved quickly and restlessly, and she furled and unfurled her fan impatiently. "I shouldn't wonder," he went on, meditating gravely, "if she doesn't try and make some mischief somehow. She looks it."

At that moment Thelma ceased singing, and the room rang with applause. Herr Machtenklinken was overcome with admiration.

"It is a voice of heaven!" he said in a rapture.

The fair singer was surrounded with people.

"I hope," said Mrs. Van Clupp, with her usual ill-bred eagerness to ingratiate herself with the titled and wealthy, "I hope you will

come and see me, Lady Errington. I am at home every Friday evening to my friends."

"Oh, yes," said Thelma, simply. "But I am not your friend yet! When we do know each other better I will come. We shall meet each other many times first—and then you will see if you like me to be your friend. Is it not so?"

A scarcely concealed smile reflected itself on the faces of all who heard this naïve but indefinite acceptance of Mrs. Van Clupp's invitation, while Mrs. Van Clupp herself was somewhat mortified, and knew not what to answer. This Norwegian girl was evidently quite ignorant of the usages of polite society, or she would at once have recognized the fact that an "at home" had nothing whatsoever to do with the obligations of friendship—besides, as far as friendship was concerned, had not Mrs. Van Clupp tabooed several of her own blood-relations and former intimate acquaintances, for the very sensible reason that while she had grown richer they had grown poorer? But now Mrs. Rush-Marvelle sailed up in all her glory, with her good-natured smile and matronly air. She was a privileged person, and she put her arm round Thelma's waist.

"You must come to me, my dear," she said with real kindness—her motherly heart had warmed to the girl's beauty and innocence—"I knew Philip when he was quite a boy. He will tell you what a dreadfully old woman I am! You must try to like me for his sake."

Thelma smiled radiantly. "I always wish to like Philip's friends," she said, frankly. "I do hope I shall please you!"

A pang of remorse smote Mrs. Rush-Marvelle's heart as she remembered how loath she had been to meet Philip's "peasant" wife—she hesitated—then, yielding to her warm impulse, drew the girl closer and kissed her fair rose-tinted cheek.

"You please everybody, my child," she said, honestly. "Philip is a lucky man! Now I'll say good-night, for it is getting late—I'll write to you to-morrow and fix a day for you to come and lunch with me."

"But you must also come and see Philip," returned Thelma, pressing her hand.

"So I will—so I will!" and Mrs. Rush-Marvelle nodded beamingly, and made her way up to Lady Winsleigh, saying, "By-bye, Clara! Thanks for a most charming evening!"

Clara pouted. "Going already, Mimsey?" she queried—then, in a lower tone, she said, "Well! what do you think of her?"

"A beautiful child—no more!" answered Mrs. Marvelle—then, studying with some gravity the brilliant brunette face before her, she added in a whisper, "Leave her alone, Clara—don't make her miserable! You know what I mean! It wouldn't take much to break her heart!"

Clara laughed harshly and played with her fan.

"Dear me, Mimsey! you are perfectly outrageous! Do you think I'm an ogress ready to eat her up? On the contrary, I mean to be a friend to her."

Mrs. Marvelle still looked grave.

"I'm glad to hear it," she said; "only some friends are worse than declared enemies."

Lady Winsleigh shrugged her shoulders.

"Go along, Mimsey—go home to bed!" she exclaimed, impatiently. "You are *intense!* I hate sentimental philosophy and copy-book platitudes!" She laughed again and folded her hands with an air of mock penitence. "There! I didn't mean to be rude! Good-night, dear old darling!"

"Good-night, Clara!" and Mrs. Marvelle, summoning her timid husband from some far corner, where he had remained in hiding, took her departure with much stateliness.

A great many people were going down to supper by this time, but Sir Philip was tired of the heat and glare and noise, and whispered as much to Thelma, who at once advanced to bid her hostess farewell.

"Won't you have some supper?" inquired her ladyship. "Don't go yet!"

But Thelma was determined not to detain her husband a moment longer than he wished—so Lady Winsleigh, seeing remonstrances were of no avail, bade them both an effusive good-night.

"We must see a great deal of each other!" she said, pressing Thelma's hands warmly in her own; "I hope we shall be quite dear friends!"

"Thank you!" said Thelma, "I do hope so too, if you wish it so much. Good-night, Lord Winsleigh!"

"Let me escort you to your carriage," said her noble host, at once offering her his arm.

"And allow me to follow," added Beau Lovelace, slipping his arm through Errington's, to whom he whispered, "How dare you, sir! How dare you be such a provokingly happy man in this miserable old world?" Errington laughed—and the little group had just reached the door of the drawing-room when Thelma suddenly turned with a look of inquiry in her eyes.

"Where is Mr. Lorimer?" she said. "I have forgotten to say good-night to him, Philip."

"Here I am, Lady Errington," and Lorimer sauntered forward with rather a forced smile—a smile which altogether vanished, leaving his face strangely pale, as she stretched out her hand to him, and said laughingly:

"You bad Mr. Lorimer! Where were you? You know it would make me quite unhappy not to wish you good-night. Ah, you are a very naughty brother!"

"Come home with us, George," said Sir Philip, eagerly. "Do, there's a good fellow!"

"I can't, Phil!" answered Lorimer, almost pathetically. "I can't to-night—indeed, I can't! Don't ask me!" And he wrung his friend's hand—and then bravely met Thelma's bright glance.

"Forgive me!" he said to her. "I know I ought to have presented myself before—I'm a dreadfully lazy fellow, you know! Good-night!"

Thelma regarded him steadfastly.

"You look—what is it you call yourself sometimes—*seedy?*" she observed. "Not well at all. Mind you come to us to-morrow!"

He promised—and then accompanied them down to their carriage—he and Beau Lovelace assisting to cover Thelma with her fur cloak, and being the last to shake hands with Sir Philip as he sprung in beside his wife, and called to the coachman "Home!" The magic word seemed to affect the horses, for they started at a brisk trot, and within a couple of minutes the carriage was out of sight. It was a warm star-lighted evening—and as Lorimer and Lovelace re-entered Winsleigh House, Beau stole a side glance at his silent companion.

"A plucky fellow!" he mused; "I should say he'd die game. Tortures won't wring his secret out of him." Aloud he said: "I say, haven't we had enough of this? Don't let us sup here—nothing but unsubstantial pastry and claret-cup—the latter abominable mixture would kill me. Come on to the Club, will you?"

Lorimer gladly assented—they got their overcoats from the officious Briggs, tipped him handsomely, and departed arm in arm. The last glimpse they caught of the Winsleigh festivities was Marcia Van Clupp sitting on the stairs, polishing off with much gusto the wing and half breast of a capon—while the mild Lord Masher-ville stood on the step just above her, consoling his appetite with a spoonful of tepid yellow jelly. He had not been able to secure any capon for himself—he had been frightened away by the warning cry of "Ladies first!" shouted forth by a fat gentleman, who was on guard at the head of the supper-table, and who had already secreted five plates of different edibles for his own consumption, in a near corner behind the window-curtains. Meanwhile, Sir Philip Bruce-Errington, proud, happy, and triumphant, drew his wife into a close embrace as they drove home together, and said, "You were the queen of the evening, my Thelma! Have you enjoyed yourself?"

"Oh, I do not call that enjoyment!" she declared. "How is it possible to enjoy anything among so many strangers?"

"Well, what is it?" he asked, laughingly.

She laughed also. "I do not know indeed what it is!" she said. "I have never been to anything like it before. It did seem to me as if all the people were on show for some reason or other. And

the gentlemen did look very tired—there was nothing for them to do. Even you, my boy! You made several big yawns! Did you know that?”

Philip laughed more than ever. “I didn’t know it, my pet!” he answered; “but I’m not surprised. Big yawns are the invariable result of an ‘at home.’ Do you like Beau Lovelace?”

“Very much,” she answered, readily. “But, Philip, I should not like to have so many friends as Lady Winsleigh. I thought friends were rare?”

“So they are! She doesn’t care for these people a bit. They are mere acquaintances.”

“Whom does she care for then?” asked Thelma suddenly. “Of course I mean after her husband. Naturally she loves him best.”

“Naturally,” and Philip paused, adding: “She has her son—Ernest—he’s a fine bright boy—he was not there to-night. You must see him some day. Then I think her favorite friend is Mrs. Rush-Marvelle.”

“I do like that lady too,” said Thelma. “She spoke very kindly to me and kissed me.”

“Did she really!” and Philip smiled. “I think she was more to be congratulated on taking the kiss than you in receiving it! But she’s not a bad old soul—only a little too fond of money. But, Thelma, whom do *you* care for most? You did tell me once, but I forget!”

She turned her lovely face and star-like eyes upon him, and, meeting his laughing look, she smiled.

“How often must I tell you!” she murmured, softly. “I do think you will never tire of hearing! You know that it is you for whom I care most, and that all the world would be empty to me without you! Oh, my husband—my darling! do not make me try to tell you how much I love you! I cannot—my heart is too full!”

The rest of their drive homeward was very quiet—there are times when silence is more eloquent than speech.

CHAPTER IV.

A small cloud—so slight as to be a mere speck on the fair blue sky, was all the warning we received.—PLINY.

AFTER that evening great changes came into Thelma’s before peaceful life. She had conquered her enemies, or so it seemed—society threw down all its barricades and rushed to meet her with open arms. Invitations crowded upon her—often she grew tired and bewildered in the multiplicity of them all. London life wearied her—she preferred the embowered seclusion of Errington

Manor, the dear old house in green-wooded Warwickshire. But the “season” claimed her—its frothy gayeties were deemed incomplete without her—no “at home” was considered quite “the” thing unless she was present. She became the center of a large and ever-widening social circle—painters, poets, novelists, wits, *savants*, and celebrities of high distinction crowded her rooms, striving to entertain her as well as themselves with that inane small talk and gossip too often practiced by the wisest among us—and thus surrounded, she began to learn many puzzling and painful things of which in her old Norwegian life she had been happily ignorant.

For instance, she had once imagined that all the men and women of culture who followed the higher professions must perforce be a sort of “Joyous Fraternity,” superior to other mortals not so gifted—and, under this erroneous impression she was at first eager to know some of the so-called “great” people who had distinguished themselves in literature or the fine arts. She had fancied that they must of necessity be all refined, sympathetic, large-hearted, and noble-minded—alas! how grievously was she disappointed! She found, to her sorrow, that the tree of modern Art bore but few wholesome roses and many cankered buds—that the “Joyous Fraternity” were not joyous at all—but on the contrary, inclined to dyspepsia and discontentment. She found that even poets, whom she had fondly deemed were the angel-guides among the children of this earth—were most of them painfully conceited, selfish in aim and limited in thought—moreover, that they were often so empty of all true inspiration, that they were actually able to hate and envy one another with a sort of womanish spite and temper—that novelists, professing to be in sympathy with the heart of humanity, were no sooner brought into contact one with another, than they plainly showed by look, voice, and manner the contempt they entertained for each other’s work—that men of science were never so happy as when trying to upset each other’s theories—that men of religious combativeness were always on the alert to destroy each other’s creeds—and that, in short, there was a very general tendency to mean jealousies, miserable heart-burnings and utter weariness all round.

On one occasion she, in the sweetest simplicity, invited two lady authoresses of note to meet at one of her “at homes.” She welcomed both the masculine-looking ladies with a radiant smile, and introduced them, saying gently: “You will be so pleased to know each other!” But the stony stare, stiff nod, portentous sniff, and scornful smile with which these two eminent females exchanged cold greetings were enough to daunt the most sympathetic hostess that ever lived—and when they at once retired to different corners of the room and sat apart with their backs turned to one another for the remainder of the evening, their attitude was so uncom-