

Literature.

A MONSTROUS WYANDOTTIC.

CHAPTER XLII.
IN THE PARK.

Fate was playing into the hands of Gifford Melcombe upon that mild and sunny March afternoon.

It was quite like the old story of the horse, who, after having been taught to live upon a single stair per diem, inconspicuously died, and so frustrated the economical plans of his master.

She acted upon the resolve at once. Thoroughly selfish in the matter, thinking only of her own interests, the portly, red-faced widow yet managed to conduct her negotiations in agreeable terms, and Dolores who had been longing for recreation and fresh air, accepted it with gratitude.

At four o'clock Mrs. Darnton's little brougham, with its groom in livery and tall cocked hat, drew up before the garden-door of Primrose Villa, and Mrs. Darnton, stout and overdressed, glittering with jet beads, and wearing a coat of black velvet decorated with purple feathers, came down, the walk leisurely and entered the vehicle, settling herself comfortably upon the seat, and closed the door.

Her daughters, the Misses Mary and Martha Darnton, large and overgrown for their years, with round, full faces, and dressed with an ostentatious juvenility that made them appear not far from being were, came running out to the street. They wore short dresses, their hair 'banged' over their foreheads in Sheldahl pony style, and stretched out on their shoulders, and each wore a small affair that perched upon the extreme back of the head.

"My dear Martha, together upon the opposite seat, per" she said. "You fit me so when you sit beside me that you quite drive me wild. Miss Wynne sits here by me, James, drive to Hyde Park."

"What! then you have a most interesting experience before you," said the widow, in an air of patronage. "You will see the nobility out for a airing—one of the finest sights, I think, that can be seen in the world always had a passion for the nobility. I may say, indeed, and her voice took a tone of pride and superciliousness, "that I belong to the nobility. My step-mother's cousin married a gentleman who is fourth cousin to a viscount."

"I suppose that no one knows better than I the names and faces of the nobility," Mrs. Darnton continued. "Not that I go much into society, a noble being a widow and poor baronet, but I have been in his grave five years, yet there's no one in England has studied Burke's Peers more thoroughly or to better advantage than I. I have taken to it, as I have often taken to drive, as I am taking you out now, who have pointed out to me nearly every peer of the realm. Oh, I am quite an expert on that aristocratic cency, I do assure you. I have, pets, do not be too giddy, dear, here we are at the park. The eyes of the world, so to speak, are upon us."

"There is his highness the Prince of Wales!" she exclaimed suddenly. "He is in my hand from Langrisham for a day or two. The lady sitting here is the Princess Alexandra. She's looking pale, I think. She is going off a little in her looks," added Mrs. Darnton, critically. "The next carriage, the merrily brougham, belongs to the Duke of Hamilton. That's the duke, the man with the seal on his forehead. Something has evidently gone wrong with him. Perhaps his boots pinch, and he is a little out of humor and reflective. 'Peers have corns and tender toes, just like other people.'—Strange, that even the most exalted position in life is not free from the petty weaknesses of poor humanity."

Dolores smiled under the friendly cover of her veil. Her sympathetic companion was a revelation to her.

land, who is making such a sensation this season—her first London season. Is she not magnificent with that golden hair and that superb face, and that wavy sort of air, as if she were tired of everything?"

"Dolores looked as directed and beheld her own mother.

Her eyes had an amazement. She could scarcely believe their evidence. It must be some marvellous coincidence—a wonderful resemblance. Surely this was not a hired-looking governess, under the tyrannical of a hard employer—this gloriously beautiful woman, in all the splendor of his rakes robes and costly habits, with the sparkling of unbroken health about her. The high-stepping horses, the coachman and two footmen in livery, the dainty white fur rugs—all these belonged to some great personage, no doubt. This could not be her mother Queenie Redburn.

"That is her employer!" thought the girl. "But it is not singular that the governess should drive out with her employer, and take her carriage, as if she were a mistress of all these splendors. How magnificently she is dressed!"

"These reflections, with the recognition that she had not to them, scarcely occupied an instant.

"It's the most fortunate thing that this blockade should occur just here," said Mrs. Darnton, and turning her eyes to the belle of the season. Every one is raving about her. I've read about her balls and dinners in the papers, and about her toilet and her jewels. That's her husband with her."

"Her husband?" Dolores gave a queer little gasp for breath.

"For whom do I take her? For herself of course. How can I be mistaken, Miss Wynne? Your words are decidedly brusque. Mistaken? Did I not tell you that I knew the nobility thoroughly? That lady is the marchioness of Glenmorris, one of the wealthiest ladies in England in her own right. The gentleman she married two years ago in Florence, Italy, she has only recently returned to England."

Dolores was astounded. Could this be possible? Was not her mother a hard-working governess, after all? This lady in the carriage was not a noble gentleman with the cold, proud visage her mother's husband? Her brain was in a whirl. Everything seemed reeling upon her, and she felt as if she were falling, and hidden by her veil, else its deadly pallor, his ghastly whiteness, would have drawn attention upon her.

"There she sits!" she asked in a husky whisper.

Mrs. Darnton barely caught the words. "At her husband's ancestral estate of King'sholm in Sussex, she answered Dolores, and then, in a low voice, she said in Cornwall, and a castle in Wales, beside a shooting-box, and a mountain and moor in Scotland. He is immensely wealthy. They were not yet seated when Dolores made her appearance. In her simple black dress, with a small black round hat and a blue veil drawn over her beautiful young face, Dolores presented a striking contrast to her gaily-dressed companions. Mrs. Darnton staid approval. The girl's modest toilet and covered face seemed to her a tacit confession of social inferiority to the widow, and the latter, flattered at the idea she had conceived, was unusually courteous to her guest.

if she were mamma or not—had the air of being mistress of that equipage and wife of that proud lord. With I could see that superb face, and that wavy sort of air, as if she were tired of everything?"

Pondering upon the question she returned to Primrose Villa. "Tea was waiting for her. The little pot was singing on the hob, the table was spread, the muffins were toasted and buttered, and a tiny pot of jam gave her a look of festivity to the faint feast.

Dolores drank her tea in a sort of abstraction. Her life had been eventless during the past few months, and after all that monotony the incident of the afternoon drive had wrought a great change in her. Her keenest excitement, taking entire possession of her mind and soul.

"Elspeth," she said, when she had finished eating, "am going out a little while this evening."

"Yes, Miss Dolly," answered the old woman, as if going out in the evening were a matter of course, "I will be ready at any moment."

It had been the girl's intention to alone to make her little pilgrimage to Grosvenor Square, and gaze upon the house that sheltered Lady Glenmorris and the old Lord Lincolnton, but her head ached so much, she would not allow her to go out in the evening unattended.

"Well," she said, "we will go together. It is getting dark and the night is raw, but we won't mind that. We'll take a cab to Oxford street, and we will then walk."

"But where are we going?" "To see some of the houses of the nobility, Elspeth. I have a fancy that way."

"There was something in the manner of her young mistress that checked further questions on the part of her old servant. Elspeth hastened to get her supper, and get ready for her excursion. Dolores exchanged her cloak for a long waterproof garment, and the two presently quitted the house together.

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