

GREEN ANNA KATHARINE

A STRANGE
DISAPPEARANCE

Anna Green

A Strange Disappearance

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Anna Katharine Green

A Strange Disappearance

A STRANGE DISAPPEARANCE

CHAPTER I. A NOVEL CASE

“Talking of sudden disappearances the one you mention of Hannah in that Leavenworth case of ours, is not the only remarkable one which has come under my direct notice. Indeed, I know of another that in some respects, at least, surpasses that in points of interest, and if you will promise not to inquire into the real names of the parties concerned, as the affair is a secret, I will relate you my experience regarding it.”

The speaker was Q, the rising young detective, universally acknowledged by us of the force as the most astute man for mysterious and unprecedented cases, then in the bureau, always and of course excepting Mr. Gryce; and such a statement from him could not but arouse our deepest curiosity. Drawing up, then, to the stove around which we were sitting in lazy enjoyment of one of those off-hours so dear to a detective's heart, we gave with alacrity the required promise; and settling himself back with the satisfied air of a man who has a good story to tell that does not entirely lack certain points redounding to his own credit, he began:

I was one Sunday morning loitering at the – Precinct Station, when the door opened and a respectable-looking middle-aged woman came in, whose agitated air at once attracted my attention. Going up to her, I asked her what she wanted.

“A detective,” she replied, glancing cautiously about on the faces of the various men scattered through the room. “I don't wish anything said about it, but a girl disappeared from our house last night, and”—she stopped here, her emotion seeming to choke her—“and I want some one to look her up,” she went on at last with the most intense emphasis.

“A girl? what kind of a girl; and what house do you mean when you say our house?”

She looked at me keenly before replying. “You are a young man,” said she; “isn't there some one here more responsible than yourself that I can talk to?”

I shrugged my shoulders and beckoned to Mr. Gryce who was just then passing. She at once seemed to put confidence in him. Drawing him aside, she whispered a few low eager words which I could not hear. He listened nonchalantly for a moment but suddenly made a move which I knew indicated strong and surprised interest, though from his face—but you know what Gryce's face is. I was about to walk off, convinced he had got hold of something he would prefer to manage himself, when the Superintendent came in.

“Where is Gryce?” asked he; “tell him I want him.”

Mr. Gryce heard him and hastened forward. As he passed me, he whispered, “Take a man and go with this woman; look into matters and send me word if you want me; I will be here for two hours.”

I did not need a second permission. Beckoning to Harris, I reapproached the woman. “Where do you come from,” said I, “I am to go back with you and investigate the affair it seems.”

“Did he say so?” she asked, pointing to Mr. Gryce who now stood with his back to us busily talking with the Superintendent.

I nodded, and she at once moved towards the door. “I come from No.— Second Avenue: Mr. Blake's house,” she whispered, uttering a name so well known, I at once understood Mr. Gryce's movement of sudden interest “A girl—one who sewed for us—disappeared last night in a way to alarm us very much. She was taken from her room—” “Yes,” she cried vehemently, seeing my look

of sarcastic incredulity, “taken from her room; she never went of her own accord; and she must be found if I spend every dollar of the pittance I have laid up in the bank against my old age.”

Her manner was so intense, her tone so marked and her words so vehement, I at once and naturally asked if the girl was a relative of hers that she felt her abduction so keenly.

“No,” she replied, “not a relative, but,” she went on, looking every way but in my face, “a very dear friend—a—a—protegee, I think they call it, of mine; I—I—She must be found,” she again reiterated.

We were by this time in the street.

“Nothing must be said about it,” she now whispered, catching me by the arm. “I told him so,” nodding back to the building from which we had just issued, “and he promised secrecy. It can be done without folks knowing anything about it, can’t it?”

“What?” I asked.

“Finding the girl.”

“Well,” said I, “we can tell you better about that when we know a few more of the facts. What is the girl’s name and what makes you think she didn’t go out of the house-door of her own accord?”

“Why, why, everything. She wasn’t the person to do it; then the looks of her room, and—They all got out of the window,” she cried suddenly, “and went away by the side gate into – Street.”

“They? Who do you mean by they?”

“Why, whoever they were who carried her off.”

I could not suppress the “bah!” that rose to my lips. Mr. Gryce might have been able to, but I am not Gryce.

“You don’t believe,” said she, “that she was carried off?”

“Well, no,” said I, “not in the sense you mean.”

She gave another nod back to the police station now a block or so distant. “He didn’t seem to doubt it at all.”

I laughed. “Did you tell him you thought she had been taken off in this way?”

“Yes, and he said, ‘Very likely.’ And well he might, for I heard the men talking in her room, and—”

“You heard men talking in her room—when?”

“O, it must have been as late as half-past twelve. I had been asleep and the noise they made whispering, woke me.”

“Wait,” I said, “tell me where her room is, hers and yours.”

“Hers is the third story back, mine the front one on the same floor.”

“Who are you?” I now inquired. “What position do you occupy in Mr. Blake’s house?”

“I am the housekeeper.”

Mr. Blake was a bachelor.

“And you were wakened last night by hearing whispering which seemed to come from this girl’s room.”

“Yes, I at first thought it was the folks next door,—we often hear them when they are unusually noisy,—but soon I became assured it came from her room; and more astonished than I could say,—She is a good girl,” she broke in, suddenly looking at me with hotly indignant eyes, “a—a—as good a girl as this whole city can show; don’t you dare, any of you, to hint at anything else o—”

“Come, come,” I said soothingly, a little ashamed of my too communicative face, “I haven’t said anything, we will take it for granted she is as good as gold, go on.”

The woman wiped her forehead with a hand that trembled like a leaf. “Where was I?” said she. “O, I heard voices and was surprised and got up and went to her door. The noise I made unlocking my own must have startled her, for all was perfectly quiet when I got there. I waited a moment, then I turned the knob and called her: she did not reply and I called again. Then she came to the door, but did not unlock it. ‘What is it?’ she asked. ‘O,’ said I, ‘I thought I heard talking here and I was

frightened, 'It must have been next door,' said she. I begged pardon and went back to my room. There was no more noise, but when in the morning we broke into her room and found her gone, the window open and signs of distress and struggle around, I knew I had not been mistaken; that there were men with her when I went to her door, and that they had carried her off—"

This time I could not restrain myself.

"Did they drop her out of the window?" I inquired.

"O," said she, "we are building an extension, and there is a ladder running up to the third floor, and it was by means of that they took her."

"Indeed! she seems at least to have been a willing victim," I remarked.

The woman clutched my arm with a grip like iron. "Don't you believe it," gasped she, stopping me in the street where we were. "I tell you if what I say is true, and these burglars or whatever they were, did carry her off, it was an agony to her, an awful, awful thing that will kill her if it has not done so already. You don't know what you are talking about, you never saw her—"

"Was she pretty," I asked, hurrying the woman along, for more than one passer-by had turned their heads to look at us. The question seemed in some way to give her a shock.

"Ah, I don't know," she muttered; "some might not think so, I always did; it depended upon the way you looked at her."

For the first time I felt a thrill of anticipation shoot through my veins. Why, I could not say. Her tone was peculiar, and she spoke in a sort of brooding way as though she were weighing something in her own mind; but then her manner had been peculiar throughout. Whatever it was that aroused my suspicion, I determined henceforth to keep a very sharp eye upon her ladyship. Levelling a straight glance at her face, I asked her how it was that she came to be the one to inform the authorities of the girl's disappearance.

"Doesn't Mr. Blake know anything about it?"

The faintest shadow of a change came into her manner. "Yes," said she, "I told him at breakfast time; but Mr. Blake doesn't take much interest in his servants; he leaves all such matters to me."

"Then he does not know you have come for the police?"

"No, sir, and O, if you would be so good as to keep it from him. It is not necessary he should know. I shall let you in the back way. Mr. Blake is a man who never meddles with anything, and—"

"What did Mr. Blake say this morning when you told him that this girl—By the way, what is her name?"

"Emily."

"That this girl, Emily, had disappeared during the night?"

"Not much of anything, sir. He was sitting at the breakfast table reading his paper, he merely looked up, frowned a little in an absent-minded way, and told me I must manage the servants' affairs without troubling him."

"And you let it drop?"

"Yes sir; Mr. Blake is not a man to speak twice to."

I could easily believe that from what I had seen of him in public, for though by no means a harsh looking man, he had a reserved air which if maintained in private must have made him very difficult of approach.

We were now within a half block or so of the old-fashioned mansion regarded by this scion of New York's aristocracy as one of the most desirable residences in the city; so motioning to the man who had accompanied me to take his stand in a doorway near by and watch for the signal I would give him in case I wanted Mr. Gryce, I turned to the woman, who was now all in a flutter, and asked her how she proposed to get me into the house without the knowledge of Mr. Blake.

"O sir, all you have got to do is to follow me right up the back stairs; he won't notice, or if he does will not ask any questions."

And having by this time reached the basement door, she took out a key from her pocket and inserting it in the lock, at once admitted us into the dwelling.

CHAPTER II. A FEW POINTS

Mrs. Daniels, for that was her name, took me at once up stairs to the third story back room. As we passed through the halls, I could not but notice how rich, though sombre were the old fashioned walls and heavily frescoed ceilings, so different in style and coloring from what we see now-a-days in our secret penetrations into Fifth Avenue mansions. Many as are the wealthy houses I have been called upon to enter in the line of my profession, I had never crossed the threshold of such an one as this before, and impervious as I am to any foolish sentimentalities, I felt a certain degree of awe at the thought of invading with police investigation, this home of ancient Knicker-bocker respectability. But once in the room of the missing girl, every consideration fled save that of professional pride and curiosity. For almost at first blush, I saw that whether Mrs. Daniels was correct or not in her surmises as to the manner of the girl's disappearance, the fact that she had disappeared was likely to prove an affair of some importance. For, let me state the facts in the order in which I noticed them. The first thing that impressed me was, that whatever Mrs. Daniels called her, this was no sewing girl's room into which I now stepped. Plain as was the furniture in comparison with the elaborate richness of the walls and ceiling, there were still scattered through the room, which was large even for a thirty foot house, articles of sufficient elegance to make the supposition that it was the abode of an ordinary seamstress open to suspicion, if no more.

Mrs. Daniels, seeing my look of surprise, hastened to provide some explanation. "It is the room which has always been devoted to sewing," said she; "and when Emily came, I thought it would be easier to put up a bed here than to send her upstairs. She was a very nice girl and disarranged nothing."

I glanced around on the writing-case lying open on a small table in the centre of the room, on the vase half full of partly withered roses, on the mantel-piece, the Shakespeare, and Macaulay's History lying on the stand at my right, thought my own thoughts, but said nothing.

"You found the door locked this morning?" asked I, after a moment's scrutiny of the room in which three facts had become manifest: first, that the girl had not occupied the bed the night before; second, that there had been some sort of struggle or surprise,—one of the curtains being violently torn as if grasped by an agitated hand, to say nothing of a chair lying upset on the floor with one of its legs broken; third, that the departure, strange as it may seem, had been by the window.

"Yes," returned she; "but there is a passageway leading from my room to hers and it was by that means we entered. There was a chair placed against the door on this side but we easily pushed it away."

I stepped to the window and looked out. Ah, it would not be so very difficult for a man to gain the street from that spot in a dark night, for the roof of the newly-erected extension was almost on a level with the window.

"Well," said she anxiously, "couldn't she have been got out that way?"

"More difficult things have been done," said I; and was about to step out upon the roof when I bethought to inquire of Mrs. Daniels if any of the girl's clothing was missing.

She immediately flew to the closets and thence to bureau drawers which she turned hastily over. "No, nothing is missing but a hat and cloak and—" She paused confusedly.

"And what?" I asked.

"Nothing," returned she, hurriedly closing the bureau drawer; "only some little knick-knacks."

"Knick-knacks!" quoth I. "If she stopped for knick-knacks, she couldn't have gone in any very unwilling frame of mind." And somewhat disgusted, I was about to throw up the whole affair and leave the room. But the indecision in Mrs. Daniels' own face deterred me.

"I don't understand it," murmured she, drawing her hand across her eyes. "I don't understand it. But," she went on with even an increase in her old tone of heart-felt conviction, "no matter whether we understand it or not, the case is serious; I tell you so, and she must be found."

I resolved to know the nature of that must, used as few women in her position would use it even under circumstances to all appearance more aggravated than these.

“Why, must?” said I. “If the girl went of her own accord as some things seem to show, why should you, no relative as you acknowledge, take the matter so to heart as to insist she shall be followed and brought back?”

She turned away, uneasily taking up and putting down some little matters on the table before her. “Is it not enough that I promise to pay for all expenses which a search will occasion, without my being forced to declare just why I should be willing to do so? Am I bound to tell you I love the girl? that I believe she has been taken away by foul means, and that to her great suffering and distress? that being fond of her and believing this, I am conscientious enough to put every means I possess at the command of those who will recover her?”

I was not satisfied with this but on that very account felt my enthusiasm revive.

“But Mr. Blake? Surely he is the one to take this interest if anybody.”

“I have before said,” returned she, paling however as she spoke, “that Mr. Blake takes very little interest in his servants.”

I cast another glance about the room. “How long have you been in this house?” asked I.

“I was in the service of Mr. Blake’s father and he died a year ago.”

“Since when you have remained with Mr. Blake himself?”

“Yes sir.”

“And this Emily, when did she come here?”

“Oh it must be eleven months or so ago.”

“An Irish girl?”

“O no, American. She is not a common person, sir.”

“What do you mean by that? That she was educated, lady-like, pretty, or what?”

“I don’t know what to say. She was educated, yes, but not as you would call a lady educated. Yet she knew a great many things the rest of us didn’t. She liked to read, you see, and—O sir, ask the girls about her, I never know what to say when I am questioned.”

I scanned the gray-haired woman still more intently than I had yet done. Was she the weak common-place creature she seemed, or had she really some cause other than appeared for these her numerous breaks and hesitations.

“Where did you get this girl?” I inquired. “Where did she live before coming here?”

“I cannot say, I never asked her to talk about herself. She came to me for work and I liked her and took her without recommendation.”

“And she has served you well?”

“Excellently.”

“Been out much? Had any visitors?”

She shook her head. “Never went out and never had any visitors.”

I own I was nonplussed, “Well,” said I, “no more of this at present. I must first find out if she left this house alone or in company with others.” And without further parley I stepped out upon the roof of the extension.

As I did so I debated with myself whether the case warranted me or not in sending for Mr. Gryce. As yet there was nothing to show that the girl had come to any harm. A mere elopement with or without a lover to help her, was not such a serious matter that the whole police force need be stirred up on the subject; and if the woman had money, as she said, ready to give the man who should discover the whereabouts of this girl, why need that money be divided up any more than was necessary. Yet Gryce was not one to be dallied with. He had said, send for him if the affair seemed to call for his judgment, and somehow the affair did promise to be a trifle complicated. I was yet undetermined when I reached the edge of the roof.

It was a dizzy descent, but once made, escape from the yard beneath would be easy. A man could take that road without difficulty; but a woman! Baffled at the idea I turned thoughtfully back, when I beheld something on the roof before me that caused me to pause and ask myself if this was going to turn out to be a tragedy after all. It was a drop of congealed blood. Further on towards the window was another, and yes, further still, another and another. I even found one upon the very window ledge itself. Bounding into the room, I searched the carpet for further traces. It was the worst one in the world to find anything upon of the nature of which I was seeking, being a confused pattern of mingled drab and red, and in my difficulty I had to stoop very low.

“What are you looking for?” cried Mrs. Daniels.

I pointed to the drop on the window sill. “Do you see that?” I asked.

She uttered an exclamation and bent nearer. “Blood!” cried she, and stood staring, with rapidly paling cheeks and trembling form. “They have killed her and he will never—”

As she did not finish I looked up.

“Do you think it was her blood?” she whispered in a horrified tone.

“There is every reason to believe so,” rejoined I, pointing to a spot where I had at last discovered not only one crimson drop but many, scattered over the scarcely redder roses under my feet.

“Ah, it is worse than I thought,” murmured she. “What are you going to do? What can we do?”

“I am going to send for another detective,” returned I; and stepping to the window I telegraphed at once to the man Harris to go for Mr. Gryce.

“The one we saw at the Station?”

I bowed assent.

Her face lost something of its drawn expression. “O I am glad; he will do something.”

Subduing my indignation at this back thrust, I employed my time in taking note of such details as had escaped my previous attention. They were not many. The open writing-desk—in which, however I found no letters or written documents of any kind, only a few sheets of paper, with pen, ink, etc.; the brush and hairpins scattered on the bureau as though the girl had been interrupted while arranging her hair (if she had been interrupted); and the absence of any great pile of work such as one would expect to see in a room set apart for sewing, were all I could discover. Not much to help us, in case this was to prove an affair of importance as I began to suspect.

With Mr. Gryce’s arrival, however, things soon assumed a better shape. He came to the basement door, was ushered in by your humble servant, had the whole matter as far as I had investigated it, at his finger-ends in a moment, and was up-stairs and in that room before I, who am called the quickest man in the force as you all know, could have time to determine just what difference his presence would make to me in a pecuniary way in event of Mrs. Daniels’ promises amounting to anything. He did not remain there long, but when he came down I saw that his interest was in no wise lessened.

“What kind of a looking girl was this?” he asked, hurrying up to Mrs. Daniels who had withdrawn into a recess in the lower hall while all this was going on. “Describe her to me, hair, eyes, complexion, etc.; you know.”

“I—I—don’t know as I can,” she stammered reluctantly, turning very red in the face. “I am a poor one for noticing. I will call one of the girls, I—” She was gone before we realized she had not finished her sentence.

“Humph!” broke from Mr. Gryce’s lips as he thoughtfully took down a vase that stood on a bracket near by and looked into it.

I did not venture a word.

When Mrs. Daniels came back she had with her a trim-looking girl of prepossessing appearance.

“This is Fanny,” said she; “she knows Emily well, being in the habit of waiting on her at table; she will tell you what you want to hear. I have explained to her,” she went on, nodding towards Mr.

Gryce with a composure such as she had not before displayed; “that you are looking for your niece who ran away from home some time ago to go into some sort of service.”

“Certainly, ma’am,” quoth that gentleman, bowing with mock admiration to the gas-fixture. Then carelessly shifting his glance to the cleaning-cloth which Fanny held rather conspicuously in her hand, he repeated the question he had already put to Mrs. Daniels.

The girl, tossing her head just a trifle, at once replied:

“O she was good-looking enough, if that is what you mean, for them as likes a girl with cheeks as white as this cloth was afore I rubbed the spoons with it. As for her eyes, they was blacker than her hair, which was the blackest I ever see. She had no flesh at all, and as for her figure—” Fanny glanced down on her own well developed person, and gave a shrug inexpressibly suggestive.

“Is this description true?” Mr. Gryce asked, seemingly of Mrs. Daniels, though his gaze rested with curious intentness on the girl’s head which was covered with a little cap.

“Sufficiently so,” returned Mrs. Daniels in a very low tone, however. Then with a sudden display of energy, “Emily’s figure is not what you would call plump. I have seen her—” She broke off as if a little startled at herself and motioned Fanny to go.

“Wait a moment,” interposed Mr. Gryce in his soft way. “You said the girl’s hair and eyes were dark; were they darker than yours?”

“O, yes sir;” replied the girl simpering, as she settled the ribbons on her cap.

“Let me see your hair.”

She took off her cap with a smile.

“Ha, very pretty, very pretty. And the other girls? You have other girls I suppose?”

“Two, sir;” returned Mrs. Daniels.

“How about their complexions? Are they lighter too than Emily’s?”

“Yes, sir; about like Fanny’s.”

Mr. Gryce spread his hand over his breast in a way that assured me of his satisfaction, and allowed the girl to go.

“We will now proceed to the yard,” said he. But at that moment the door of the front room opened and a gentleman stepped leisurely into the hall, whom at first glance I recognized as the master of the house. He was dressed for the street and had his hat in his hand. At the sight we all stood silent, Mrs. Daniels flushing up to the roots of her gray hair.

Mr. Blake is an elegant-looking man as you perhaps know; proud, reserved, and a trifle sombre. As he turned to come towards us, the light shining through the windows at our right, fell full upon his face, revealing such a self-absorbed and melancholy expression, I involuntarily drew back as if I had unwittingly intruded upon a great man’s privacy. Mr. Gryce on the contrary stepped forward.

“Mr. Blake, I believe,” said he, bowing in that deferential way he knows so well how to assume.

The gentleman, startled as it evidently seemed from a reverie, looked hastily up. Meeting Mr. Gryce’s bland smile, he returned the bow, but haughtily, and as it appeared in an abstracted way.

“Allow me to introduce myself,” proceeded my superior. “I am Mr. Gryce from the detective bureau. We were notified this morning that a girl in your employ had disappeared from your house last night in a somewhat strange and unusual way, and I just stepped over with my man here, to see if the matter is of sufficient importance to inquire into. With many apologies for the intrusion, I stand obedient to your orders.”

With a frown expressive of annoyance, Mr. Blake glanced around and detecting Mrs. Daniels, said: “Did you consider the affair so serious as that?”

She nodded, seeming to find it difficult to speak.

He remained looking at her with an expression of some doubt. “I can hardly think,” said he, “such extreme measures were necessary; the girl will doubtless come back, or if not—” His shoulders gave a slight shrug and he took out his gloves.

“The difficulty seems to be,” quoth Mr. Gryce eyeing those gloves with his most intent and concentrated look, “that the girl did not go alone, but was helped away, or forced away, by parties who had previously broken into your house.”

“That is a strange circumstance,” remarked Mr. Blake, but still without any appearance of interest, “and if you are sure of what you say, demands, perhaps, some inquiry. I would not wish to put anything in the way of justice succoring the injured. But—” again he gave that slight shrug of the shoulders, indicative of doubt, if not indifference.

Mrs. Daniels trembled, and took a step forward. I thought she was going to speak, but instead of that she drew back again in her strange hesitating way.

Mr. Gryce did not seem to notice.

“Perhaps sir,” said he, “if you will step upstairs with me to the room occupied by this girl, I may be able to show you certain evidences which will convince you that our errand here is not one of presumption.”

“I am ready to concede that without troubling myself with proof,” observed the master of the house with the faintest show of asperity. “Yet if there is anything to see of a startling nature, perhaps I had best yield to your wishes. Whereabouts in the house is this girl’s room, Mrs. Daniels?”

“It is—I gave her the third story back, Mr. Blake;” replied that woman, nervously eyeing his face. “It was large and light for sewing, and she was so nice—”

He impatiently waved his hand on which he had by this time fitted his glove to a nicety, as if these details were an unnecessary bore to him, and motioned her to show the way. Instantly a new feeling appeared to seize her, that of alarm.

“I hardly think you need trouble Mr. Blake to go up-stairs,” she murmured, turning towards Mr. Gryce. “I am sure when you tell him the curtains were torn, and the chair upset, the window open and—”

But Mr. Gryce was already on the stairs with Mr. Blake, whom this small opposition seemed to have at once determined.

“O my God!” she murmured to herself, “who could have foreseen this.” And ignoring my presence with all the egotism of extreme agitation, she hurried past me to the room above, where I speedily joined her.

CHAPTER III. THE CONTENTS OF A BUREAU DRAWER

Mr. Blake was standing in the centre of the room when I entered, carelessly following with his eyes the motion of Mr. Gryce's finger as that gentleman pointed with unwearying assiduity to the various little details that had struck us. His hat was still in his hand, and he presented a very formidable and imposing appearance, or so Mrs. Daniels appeared to think as she stood watching him from the corner, whither she had withdrawn herself.

"A forcible departure you see," exclaimed Mr. Gryce; "she had not even time to gather up her clothes;" and with a sudden movement he stooped and pulled out one of the bureau drawers before the eyes of his nonchalant listener.

Immediately a smothered exclamation struck our ears, and Mrs. Daniels started forward.

"I pray, gentlemen," she entreated, advancing in such a way as to place herself against the front of the bureau in a manner to preclude the opening of any more drawers, "that you will remember that a modest woman such as this girl was, would hardly like to have her clothing displayed before the eyes of strangers."

Mr. Gryce instantly closed the drawer.

"You are right," said he; "pardon the rough ways of a somewhat hardened officer of the law."

She drew up closer to the bureau, still protecting it with her meagre but energetic form while her eyes rested with almost a savage expression upon the master of the house as if he, and not the detective, had been the aggressor whose advances she feared.

Mr. Blake did not return the look.

"If that is all you can show me, I think I will proceed to my appointment," said he. "The matter does seem to be more serious than I thought, and if you judge it necessary to take any active measures, why, let no consideration of my great and inherent dislike to notoriety of any kind, interfere with what you consider your duty. As for the house, it is at your command, under Mrs. Daniels' direction. Good morning." And returning our bows with one singularly impressive for all its elegant carelessness, he at once withdrew.

Mrs. Daniels took one long deep breath and came from the bureau. Instantly Mr. Gryce stooped and pulled out the drawer she had so visibly protected. A white towel met our eyes, spread neatly out at its full length. Lifting it, we looked beneath. A carefully folded dress of dark blue silk, to all appearance elegantly made, confronted our rather eager eyes. Beside it, a collar of exquisite lace—I know enough of such matters to be a judge—pricked through by a gold breast-pin of a strange and unique pattern. A withered bunch of what appeared to have been a bouquet of red roses, surmounted the whole, giving to the otherwise commonplace collection the appearance of a relic from the tomb.

We both drew back in some amazement, involuntarily glancing up at Mrs. Daniels.

"I have no explanation to give," said that woman, with a calmness strangely in contrast to the agitation she had displayed while Mr. Blake had remained in the room. "That those things rich as they are, really belonged to the girl, I have no doubt. She brought them when she came, and they only confirm what I have before intimated: that she was no ordinary sewing girl, but a woman who had seen better days."

With a low "humph!" and another glance at the dark blue dress and delicate collar, Mr. Gryce carefully replaced the cloth he had taken from them, and softly closed the drawer without either of us having laid a finger upon a single article. Five minutes later he disappeared from the room.

I did not see him again till occasion took me below, when I beheld him softly issue from Mr. Blake's private apartment. Meeting me, he smiled, and I saw that whether he was conscious of betraying it or not, he had come upon some clue or at the least fashioned for himself some theory with which he was more or less satisfied.

“An elegant apartment, that,” whispered he, nodding sideways toward the room he had just left, “pity you haven’t time to examine it.”

“Are you sure that I haven’t?” returned I, drawing a step nearer to escape the eyes of Mrs. Daniels who had descended after me.

“Quite sure;” and we hastened down together into the yard.

But my curiosity once aroused in this way would not let me rest. Taking an opportunity when Mr. Gryce was engaged in banter with the girls below, and in this way learning more in a minute of what he wanted to know than some men would gather in an hour by that or any other method, I stole lightly back and entered this room.

I almost started in my surprise. Instead of the luxurious apartment I had prepared myself to behold, a plain, scantily-furnished room opened before me, of a nature between a library and a studio. There was not even a carpet on the polished floor, only a rug, which strange to say was not placed in the centre of the room or even before the fireplace, but on one side, and directly in front of a picture that almost at first blush had attracted my attention as being the only article in the room worth looking at. It was the portrait of a woman, handsome, haughty and alluring; a modern beauty, with eyes of fire burning beneath high piled locks of jetty blackness, that were only relieved from being too intense by the scarlet hood of an opera cloak, that was drawn over them. “A sister,” I thought to myself, “it is too modern for his mother,” and I took a step nearer to see if I could trace any likeness in the chiselled features of this disdainful brunette, to the more characteristic ones of the careless gentleman who had stood but a few moments before in my presence. As I did so, I was struck with the distance with which the picture stood out from the wall, and thought to myself that the awkwardness of the framing came near marring the beauty of this otherwise lovely work of art. As for the likeness I was in search of, I found it or thought I did, in the expression of the eyes which were of the same color as Mr. Blake’s but more full and passionate; and satisfied that I had exhausted all the picture could tell me, I turned to make what other observations I could, when I was startled by confronting the agitated countenance of Mrs. Daniels who had entered behind me.

“This is Mr. Blake’s room,” said she with dignity; “no one ever intrudes here but myself, not even the servants.”

“I beg pardon,” said I, glancing around in vain for the something which had awakened that look of satisfaction in Mr. Gryce’s eyes. “I was attracted by the beauty of this picture visible through the half open door and stepped in to favor myself with a nearer view. It is very lovely. A sister of Mr. Blake?”

“No, his cousin;” and she closed the door after us with an emphasis that proclaimed she was anything but pleased.

It was my last effort to obtain information on my own account. In a few moments later Mr. Gryce appeared from below, and a conversation ensued with Mrs. Daniels that absorbed my whole attention.

“You are very anxious, my man here tells me, that this girl should be found?” remarked Mr. Gryce; “so much so that you are willing to defray all the expenses of a search?”

She bowed. “As far as I am able sir; I have a few hundreds in the bank, you are welcome to them. I would not keep a dollar back if I had thousands, but I am poor, and can only promise you what I myself possess; though—” and her cheeks grew flushed and hot with an unnatural agitation —“I believe that thousands would not be lacking if they were found necessary. I—I could almost swear you shall have anything in reason which you require; only the girl must be found and soon.”

“Have you thought,” proceeded Mr. Gryce, utterly ignoring the wildness of these statements, “that the girl may come back herself if let alone?”

“She will come back if she can,” quoth Mrs. Daniels.

“Did she seem so well satisfied with her home as to warrant you in saying that?”

"She liked her home, but she loved me," returned the woman steadily. "She loved me so well she would never have gone as she did without being forced. Yes," said she, "though she made no outcry and stopped to put on her bonnet and shawl. She was not a girl to make a fuss. If they had killed her outright, she would never have uttered a cry."

"Why do you say they?"

"Because I am confident I heard more than one man's voice in her room."

"Humph! Would you know those voices if you heard them again?"

"No."

There was a surprise in this last negative which Mr. Gryce evidently noticed.

"I ask," said he, "because I have been told that Mr. Blake lately kept a body servant who has been seen to look at this girl more than once, when she has passed him on the stairs."

Mrs. Daniels' face turned scarlet with rage and she hastily rose from the chair. "I don't believe it," said she; "Henry was a man who knew his place, and—I won't hear such things," she suddenly exclaimed; "Emily was—was a lady, and—"

"Well, well," interposed Mr. Gryce soothingly, "though the cat looks at the king, it is no sign the king looks at the cat. We have to think of everything you know."

"You must never think of anything like that."

Mr. Gryce softly ran his thumb around the brim of the hat he held in his hand. "Mrs. Daniels," observed he, "it would greatly facilitate matters if you would kindly tell us why you take such an interest in this girl. One glimpse at her real history would do more towards setting us on the right track than anything else you could offer."

Her face assumed an unmistakable frown. "Have I not told you," said she, "what is known of it? That she came to me about two years ago for work; that I liked her, and so hired her; that she has been with us ever since and—"

"Then you will not tell us?" exclaimed Mr. Gryce.

Her face fell and a look of hesitation crossed it.

"I doubt if we can do anything unless you do," continued he.

Her countenance settled again into a resolved expression.

"You are mistaken," said she; "if the girl had a secret—as nearly all girls have, brought low as she has evidently been—it had nothing to do with her disappearance, nor would a knowledge of it help you in any way. I am confident of this and so shall hold my peace."

She was not a woman to be frightened or cajoled into making revelations she did not think necessary, and seeing it, Mr. Gryce refrained from urging her further.

"However, you will at least tell me this," said he, "what were the knick-knacks she took away with her from her bureau drawer?"

"No," said she, "for they have nothing to do with her abduction. They were articles of positive value to her, though I assure you of little importance to any one else. All that is shown by their disappearance is the fact that she had a moment's time allowed her in which to collect what she most wanted."

Mr. Gryce arose. "Well," said he, "you have given us a hard sum to work out, but I am not the man to recoil from anything hard. If I can discover the whereabouts of this girl I will certainly do it, but you must help me."

"I, how?"

"By inserting a personal in the Herald. You say she loves you; and would come back if she could. Now whether you believe it or not this is open to doubt; therefore I would advise that you take some such means as that to inform her of the anxiety of her friends and their desire to communicate with her."

"Impossible," she cried vehemently. "I should be afraid—"

"Well?"

“I might put it that Mrs. D—, anxious about Emily, desires information of her whereabouts—”

“Put it any way you like.”

“You had better add,” said I, speaking for the first time, “that you would be willing to pay for information.”

“Yes,” said Mr. Gryce, “add that.”

Mrs. Daniels frowned, but made no objection, and after getting as minute a description as possible of the clothing worn by the girl the night before, we left the house.

CHAPTER IV. THOMPSON'S STORY

"An affair of some mystery," remarked Mr. Gryce, as we halted at the corner to take a final look at the house and its environs. "Why a girl should choose such a method of descent as that,"—and he pointed to the ladder down which we believed her to have come—"to leave a house of which she had been an inmate for a year, baffles me, I can tell you. If it were not for those marks of blood which betray her track, I would be disinclined to believe any such hare-brained adventure was ever perpetrated by a woman. As it is, what would't I give for her photograph. Black hair, black eyes, white face and thin figure! what a description whereby to find a girl in this great city of New York. Ah!" said he with sudden gratification, "here is Mr. Blake again; his appointment must have been a failure. Let us see if his description will be any more definite." And hurrying towards the advancing figure of that gentleman, he put some questions to him.

Instantly Mr. Blake stopped, looked at him blankly for a moment, then replied in a tone sufficiently loud for me to hear:

"I am sorry, sir, if my description could have done you any good, but I have not the remotest idea how the girl looked. I did not know till this morning even, that there was such a person in my house as a sewing-woman. I leave all such domestic concerns entirely with Mrs. Daniels."

Mr. Gryce again bowed low and ventured another question. The answer came as before, distinctly to my ears.

"O, I may have seen her, I can not say about that; I very often run across the servants in the hall; but whether she is tall or short, light or dark, pretty or ugly, I know no more than you do, sir." Then with a dignified nod calculated to abash a man in Mr. Gryce's position, inquired,

"Is that all?"

It did not seem to be, Mr. Gryce put another question.

Mr. Blake gave him a surprised stare before replying, then courteously remarked,

"I do not concern myself with servants after they have left me. Henry was an excellent valet, but a trifle domineering, something which I never allow in any one who approaches me. I dismissed him and that was the end of it, I know nothing of what has become of him."

Mr. Gryce bowed and drew back, and Mr. Blake, with the haughty step peculiar to him, passed by him and reentered his house.

"I should not like to get into that man's clutches," said I, as my superior rejoined me; "he has a way of making one appear so small."

Mr. Gryce shot an askance look at his shadow gloomily following him along the pavement. "Yet it may happen that you will have to run the risk of that very experience."

I glanced towards him in amazement.

"If the girl does not turn up of her own accord, or if we do not succeed in getting some trace of her movements, I shall be tempted to place you where you can study into the ways of this gentleman's household. If the affair is a mystery, it has its centre in that house."

I stared at Mr. Gryce good and roundly. "You have come across something which I have missed," observed I, "or you could not speak so positively."

"I have come across nothing that was not in plain sight of any body who had eyes to see it," he returned shortly.

I shook my head slightly mortified.

"You had it all before you," continued he, "and if you were not able to pick up sufficient facts on which to base a conclusion, you mustn't blame me for it."

More nettled than I would be willing to confess, I walked back with him to the station, saying nothing then, but inwardly determined to reestablish my reputation with Mr. Gryce before the affair was over. Accordingly hunting up the man who had patrolled the district the night before, I inquired

if he had seen any one go in or out of the side gate of Mr. Blake's house on – street, between the hours of eleven and one.

“No,” said he, “but I heard Thompson tell a curious story this morning about some one he had seen.”

“What was it?”

“He said he was passing that way last night about twelve o'clock when he remarked standing under the lamp on the corner of Second Avenue, a group consisting of two men and a woman, who no sooner beheld him than they separated, the men drawing back into Second Avenue and the woman coming hastily towards him. Not understanding the move, he stood waiting her approach, when instead of advancing to where he was, she paused at the gate of Mr. Blake's house and lifted her hand as if to open it, when with a wild and terrified gesture she started back, covering her face with her hands, and before he knew it, had actually fled in the direction from which she had come. A little startled, Thompson advanced and looked through the gate before him to see if possible what had alarmed her, when to his great surprise, he beheld the pale face of the master of the house, Mr. Blake himself, looking through the bars from the other side of the gate. He in his turn started back and before he could recover himself, Mr. Blake had disappeared. He says he tried the gate after that, but found it locked.”

“Thompson tells you this story, does he?”

“Yes.”

“Well,” said I, “it's a pretty wild kind of a tale, and all I have got to say is, that neither you nor Thompson had better go blabbing it around too much. Mum is the word where such men as Mr. Blake are concerned.” And I departed to hunt up Thompson.

But he had nothing to add to his statement, except that the girl appeared to be tall and thin, and was closely wrapped about in a shawl. My next move was to make such inquiries as I could with safety into the private concerns of Mr. Blake and his family, and discovered—well, such facts as these:

That Mr. Blake was a man who if he paid but little attention to domestic affairs was yet rarely seen out of his own house, except upon occasions of great political importance, when he was always to be found on the platform at meetings of his constituents. Though to the ordinary observer a man eminently calculated, from his good looks, fine position, and solid wealth to enjoy society, he not only manifested a distaste for it, but even went so far as to refuse to participate in the social dinners of his most intimate friends; the only table to which he would sit down being that of some public caterer, where he was sure of finding none but his political associates assembled.

To all appearance he wished to avoid the ladies, a theory borne out by the fact that never, even in church, on the street, or at any place of amusement, was he observed with one at his side. This fact in a man, young—he was not far from thirty-five at that time—rich, and marriageable, would, however, have been more noteworthy than it was if he had not been known to belong to a family eminent for their eccentricities. Not a man of all his race but had possessed some marked peculiarity. His father, bibliomaniac though he was, would never treat a man or a woman with decency, who mentioned Shakspeare to him, nor would he acknowledge to his dying day any excellence in that divine poet beyond a happy way of putting words together. Mr. Blake's uncle hated all members of the legal profession, and as for his grandfather—but you have heard what a mania of dislike he had against that simple article of diet, fish; how his friends were obliged to omit it from their bills of fare whenever they expected him to dinner. If then Mr. Blake chose to have any pet antipathy—as for women for instance—he surely had precedent enough in his own family to back him. However, it was whispered in my ear by one gentleman, a former political colleague of his who had been with him in Washington, that he was known at one time to show considerable attention to Miss Evelyn Blake, that cousin of his who has since made such a brilliant thing of it by marrying, and straightway losing by death, a wealthy old scapegrace of a French noble, the Count De Mirac. But that was not

a matter to be talked about, Madame the Countess being free at present and in New York, though to all appearance upon anything but pleasant terms with her quondam admirer.

Remembering the picture I had seen in Mr. Blake's private apartment, I asked if this lady was a brunette, and being told she was, and of the most pronounced type, felt for the moment I had stumbled upon something in the shape of a clue; but upon resorting to Mr. Gryce with my information, he shook his head with a short laugh and told me I would have to dive deeper than that if I wanted to fish up the truth lying at the bottom of this well.

CHAPTER V. A NEW YORK BELLE

Meanwhile all our efforts to obtain information in regard to the fate or whereabouts of the missing girl, had so far proved utterly futile. Even the advertisements inserted by Mrs. Daniels had produced no effect; and frustrated in my scheme I began to despair, when the accounts of that same Mrs. Daniels' strange and unaccountable behavior during these days of suspense, which came to me through Fanny, (the pretty housemaid at Mr. Blake's, whose acquaintance I had lately taken to cultivating,) aroused once more my dormant energies and led me to ask myself if the affair was quite as hopeless as it seemed.

"If she was a ghost," was her final expression on the subject, "she could'nt go perambulating this house more than she does. It seems as if she could'nt keep still a minute. Upstairs and down, upstairs and down, till we're most wild. And so white as she is and so trembling! Why her hands shake so all the time she never dares lift a dish off the table. And then the way she hangs about Mr. Blake's door when he's at home! She never goes in, that's the oddest part of it, but walks up and down before it, wringing her hands and talking to herself just like a mad woman. Why, I have seen her almost put her hand on the knob twice in an afternoon perhaps, then draw back as if she was afraid it would burn her; and if by any chance the door opened and Mr. Blake came out, you ought to have seen how she run. What it all means I don't know, but I have my imaginings, and if she is'nt crazy, why—" etc., etc.

In face of facts like these I felt it would be pure insanity to despair. Let there be but a mystery, though it involved a man of the position of Mr. Blake and I was safe. My only apprehension had been that the whole affair would dissolve itself into an ordinary elopement or some such commonplace matter.

When, therefore, a few minutes later, Fanny announced that Mr. Blake had ordered a carriage to take him to the Charity Ball that evening, I determined to follow him and learn if possible what change had taken place in himself or his circumstances, to lead him into such an innovation upon his usual habits. Though the hour was late I had but little difficulty in carrying out my plan, arriving at the Academy something less than an hour after the opening dance.

The crowd was great and I circulated the floor three times before I came upon him. When I did, I own I was slightly disappointed; for instead of finding him as I anticipated, the centre of an admiring circle of ladies and gentlemen, I espied him withdrawn into a corner with a bland old politician of the Fifteenth Ward, discussing, as I presently overheard, the merits and demerits of a certain Smith who at that time was making some disturbance in the party.

"If that is all he has come for," thought I, "I had better have stayed at home and made love to the pretty Fanny." And somewhat chagrined, I took up my stand near by, and began scrutinizing the ladies.

Suddenly I felt my heart stand still, the noise of voices ceasing the same instant behind me. A lady was passing on the arm of a foreign-looking gentleman, whom it did not require a second glance to identify with the subject of the portrait in Mr. Blake's house. Older by some few years than when her picture was painted, her beauty had assumed a certain defiant expression that sufficiently betrayed the fact that the years had not been so wholly happy as she had probably anticipated when she jilted handsome Holman Blake for the old French Count. At all events so I interpreted the look of latent scorn that burned in her dark eyes, as she slowly turned her richly bejeweled head towards the corner where that gentleman stood, and meeting his eyes no doubt, bowed with a sudden loss of self-possession that not all the haughty carriage of her noble form, held doubly erect for the next few moments, could quite conceal or make forgotten.

"She still loves him," I inwardly commented and turned to see if the surprise had awakened any expression on his uncommunicative countenance.

Evidently not, for the tough old politician of the Fifteenth Ward was laughing, at one of his own jokes probably, and looking up in the face of Mr. Blake, whose back was turned to me, in a way that entirely precluded all thought of any tragic expression in that quarter. Somewhat disgusted, I withdrew and followed the lady.

I could not get very near. By this time the presence of a live countess in the assembly had become known, and I found her surrounded by a swarm of half-fledged youths. But I cared little for this; all I wanted to know was whether Mr. Blake would approach her or not during the evening. Tediously the moments passed; but a detective on duty, or on fancied duty, succumbs to no weariness. I had a woman before me worth studying and the time could not be thrown away. I learned to know her beauty; the poise of her head, the flush of her cheek, the curl of her lip, the glance—yes, the glance of her eye, though that was more difficult to understand, for she had a way of drooping her lids at times that, while exceedingly effective upon the poor wretch toward whom she might be directing that half-veiled shaft of light, was anything but conducive to my purposes.

At length with a restless shrug of her haughty shoulders she turned away from her crowd of adorers, her breast heaving under its robing of garnet velvet, and her whole face flaring with a light that might mean resolve and might mean simply love. I had no need to turn my head to see who was advancing towards her; her stately attitude as countess, her thrilling glance as woman, betrayed only too readily.

He was the more composed of the two. Bowing over her hand with a few words I could not hear, he drew back a step and began uttering the usual common-place sentiments of the occasion.

She did not respond. With a splendor of indifference not often seen even in the manner of our grandest ladies, she waited, opening and shutting her richly feathered fan, as one who would say, “I know all this has to be gone through with, therefore I will be patient.” But as the moments passed, and his tone remained unchanged, I could detect a slight gleam of impatience flash in the depths of her dark eyes, and a change come into the conventional smile that had hitherto lighted, without illuminating her countenance. Drawing still further back from the crowd that was not to be awed from pressing upon her, she looked around as if seeking a refuge. Her glance fell upon a certain window, with a gleam of satisfaction. Seeing they would straightway withdraw there, I took advantage of the moment and made haste to conceal myself behind a curtain as near that vicinity as possible. In another instant I heard them approaching.

“You seem to be rather overwhelmed with attention to-night,” were the first words I caught, uttered in Mr. Blake’s calmest and most courteous tones.

“Do you think so?” was the slightly sarcastic reply. “I was just deciding to the contrary when you came up.”

There was a pause. Taking out my knife, I ripped open a seam in the curtain hanging before me, and looked through. He was eyeing her intently, a firm look upon his face that made its reserve more marked than common. I saw him gaze at her handsome head piled with its midnight tresses amid which the jewels, doubtless of her dead lord, burned with a fierce and ominous glare, at her smooth olive brow, her partly veiled eyes where the fire passionately blazed, at her scarlet lips trembling with an emotion her rapidly flushing cheeks would not allow her to conceal. I saw his glances fall and embrace her whole elegant form with its casing of ruby velvet and ornamentation of lace and diamonds, and an expectant thrill passed through me almost as if I already beheld the mask of his reserve falling, and the true man flash out in response to the wooing beauty of this full-blown rose, evidently in waiting for him. But it died away and a deeper feeling seized me as I saw his glances return unkindled to her countenance, and heard him say in still more measured accents than before:

“Is it possible then that the Countess De Mirac can desire the adulation of us poor American plebeians? I had not thought it, madame.”

Slowly her dark eyes turned towards him; she stood a statue.

“But I forget,” he went on, a tinge of bitterness for a moment showing itself in his smile: “perhaps in returning to her own country, Evelyn Blake has so far forgotten the last two years as to find pleasure again in the toys and foibles of her youth. Such things have been, I hear.” And he bowed almost to the ground in his half sarcastic homage.

“Evelyn Blake! It is long since I have heard that name,” she murmured.

He could not restrain the quick flush from mounting to his brow. “Pardon me,” said he, “if it brings you sadness or unwelcome memories. I promise you I will not so transgress again.”

A wan smile crossed her lips grown suddenly pallid.

“You mistake,” said she; “if my name brings up a past laden with bitter memories and shadowed by regret, it also recalls much that is pleasant and never to be forgotten. I do not object to hearing my girlhood’s name uttered—by my nearest relative.”

The answer was dignity itself. “Your name is Countess De Mirac, your relatives must be proud to utter it.”

A gleam not unlike the lightning’s quick flash shot from the eyes she drooped before him.

“Is it Holman Blake I am listening to,” said she; “I do not recognize my old friend in the cool and sarcastic man of the world now before me.”

“We often fail to recognize the work of our hands, madame, after it has fallen from our grasp.”

“What,” she cried, “do you mean—would you say that—”

“I would say nothing,” interrupted he calmly, stooping for the fan she had dropped. “At an interview which is at once a meeting and a parting, I would give utterance to nothing which would seem like recrimination. I—”

“Wait,” suddenly exclaimed she, reaching out her hand for her fan with a gesture lofty as it was resolute. “You have spoken a word which demands explanation; what have I ever done to you that you should speak the word recrimination to me?”

“What? You shook my faith in womankind; you showed me that a woman who had once told a man she loved him, could so far forget that love as to marry one she could never respect, for the sake of titles and jewels. You showed me—”

“Hold,” said she again, this time without gesture or any movement, save that of her lips grown pallid as marble, “and what did you show me?”

He started, colored profoundly, and for a moment stood before her unmasked of his stern self-possession. “I beg your pardon,” said he, “I take back that word, recrimination.”

It was now her turn to lift her head and survey him. With glance less cool than his, but fully as deliberate, she looked at his proud head bending before her; studying his face, line by line, from the stern brow to the closely compressed lips on which melancholy seemed to have set its everlasting seal, and a change passed over her countenance. “Holman,” said she, with a sudden rush of tenderness, “if in the times gone by, we both behaved with too much worldly prudence for it now to be any great pleasure for either of us to look back, is that any reason why we should mar our whole future by dwelling too long upon what we are surely still young enough to bury if not forget? I acknowledge that I would have behaved in a more ideal fashion, if, after I had been forsaken by you, I had turned my face from society, and let the canker-worm of despair slowly destroy whatever life and bloom I had left. But I was young, and society had its charms, so did the prospect of wealth and position, however hollow they may have proved; you who are the master of both this day, because twelve months ago you forsook Evelyn Blake, should be the last to reproach me with them. I do not reproach you; I only say let the past be forgotten—”

“Impossible,” exclaimed he, his whole face darkening with an expression I could not fathom. “What was done at that time cannot be undone. For you and me there is no future. Yes,” he said turning towards her as she made a slight fluttering move of dissent, “no future; we can bury the past, but we can not resurrect it. I doubt if you would wish to if we could; as we cannot, of course you will

not desire even to converse upon the subject again. Evelyn I wanted to see you once, but I do not wish to see you again; will you pardon my plain speaking, and release me?"

"I will pardon your plain speaking, but—" Her look said she would not release him.

He seemed to understand it so, and smiled, but very bitterly. In another moment he had bowed and gone, and she had returned to her crowd of adoring sycophants.

CHAPTER VI. A BIT OF CALICO

It was about this time that I took up my residence in a sort of lodging-house that occupied the opposite corner to that of Mr. Blake. My room, as I took pains to have it, overlooked the avenue, and from its windows I could easily watch the goings and comings of the gentleman whose movements were daily becoming of more and more interest to me. For set it down to caprice—and men are often as capricious as women—or account for it as you will, his restlessness at this period was truly remarkable. Not a day that he did not spend his time in walking the streets, and that not in his usual aimless gentlemanly fashion, but eagerly and with an intent gaze that roamed here and there, like a bird seeking its prey. It would often be as late as five o'clock before he came in, and if, as now frequently happened, he did not have company to dinner, he was even known to start out again after seven o'clock and go over the same ground as in the morning, looking with strained gaze, that vainly endeavored to appear unconcerned, into the faces of the women that he passed. I not unfrequently followed him at these times as much for my own amusement as from any hope I had of coming upon anything that should aid me in the work before me. But when he suddenly changed his route of travel from a promenade in the fashionable thoroughfares of Broadway and Fourteenth Street to a walk through Chatham Square and the dark, narrow streets of the East side, I began to scent whom the prey might be that he was seeking, and putting every other consideration aside, regularly set myself to dog his steps, as only I, with my innumerable disguises, knew how to do. For three separate days I kept at his heels wherever he went, each day growing more and more astonished if not to say hopeful, as I found myself treading the narrowest and most disreputable streets of the city; halting at the shops of pawnbrokers; peering into the back-rooms of liquor shops; mixing with the crowds that infest the corner groceries at nightfall, and even slinking with hand on the trigger of the pistol I carried in my pocket, up dark alleys where every door that swung noiselessly to and fro as we passed, shut upon haunts of such villainy as only is known to us of the police, or to those good souls that for the sake of One whose example they follow, lay aside their fears and sensitiveness to carry light into the dim pits of this wretched world. At first I thought Mr. Blake might have some such reason for the peculiar course he took. But his indifference to all crowds where only men were collected, his silence where a word would have been well received, convinced me it was a woman he was seeking and that with an intentness which blinded him to the commonest needs of the hour. I even saw him once in his hurry and abstraction, step across the body of a child who had fallen face downward on the stones, and that with an expression showing he was utterly unconscious of anything but an obstacle in his path. The strangest part of it all was that he seemed to have no fear. To be sure he took pains to leave his watch at home; but with such a figure and carriage as he possessed, the absence of jewelry could never deceive the eye for a moment as to the fact of his being a man of wealth, and those he went among would do anything for money. Perhaps, like me, he carried a pistol. At all events he shunned no spot where either poverty lay hid or deviltry reigned, his proud stern head bending to enter the lowest doors without a tremble of the haughty lips that remained compressed as by an iron force; except when some poor forlorn creature with flaunting head-gear, and tremulous hands, attracted by his bearing would hastily brush against him, when he would turn and look, perhaps speak, though what he said I always failed to catch; after which he would hurry on as if possessed by seven devils. The evenings of those three days were notable also. Two of them he spent in the manner I have described; the third he went to the Windsor House—where the Countess De Mirac had taken rooms—going up to the ladies' entrance and actually ringing the bell, only to start back and walk up and down on the opposite side of the way, with his hands behind his back, and his head bent, evidently deliberating as to whether he should or should not carry out his original intention of entering. The arrival of a carriage with the stately subject of his deliberations, who from her elaborate costume had seemingly been to some kettledrum or private reception, speedily put an end to his doubts. As

the door opened to admit her, I saw him cast one look at her heavily draped person, with its snowy opera-cloak drawn tightly over the sweeping folds of her maize colored silk, and shrink back with what sounded like a sigh of anger or distrust, and without waiting for the closing of the door upon her, turn toward home with a step that hesitated no longer.

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