

THE PORTRAIT.

I remember perfectly how it happened. I received an invitation from my old friend and fellow artist, Stanley Harcourt, to spend a week with him at Harcourt park. It was early in the season, and only a few other guests were invited. Although my friendship with Stanley dated back to days at Eton, I had never visited the park, and I accepted with alacrity.

As I scanned the room to see if everything was the same as when I went to bed, the position of each chair and table was identical. I looked up at the faces. They were one confused mass. Then I followed the tapestry hangings with my eyes, beginning at the left and looking into every fold. As I scanned the right my attention was riveted on what seemed to be a full length portrait of a young and beautiful girl. How, in my close examination of the room, I had failed to notice it seemed to me inexplicable.

The light that streamed in from an adjacent window showed every line. The face was pale, with dark, luminous eyes, while the hair, equally dark, was parted and pulled slightly on the sides. As nearly as I could make out, it was the fashion of 30 or 40 years back. The gown was white, soft and clinging, with short waist and long sleeves. The face seemed to be wonderfully clear.

I now felt certain that the picture was not there when I entered the room, and yet how was its existence to be accounted for? Could the wind have drawn back the tapestry, thus revealing some old family portrait? And who was this charming girl? I now noticed points which had escaped me at first—the exquisite molding of the arms and hands, the jeweled dagger in the coils of dark hair, which even in paint seemed to change and flash, and the background, which appeared to be copied from the very tapestry of the room. The face fascinated me. The eyes, so dark and magnetic, seemed to burn beneath their arched brows, and as I gazed, they dropped, almost closed, then dilated.

I sank back in my chair. "Why, good heavens, Hal, how pale you are! Why, what is the matter, man?" "Nothing," I answered. "Go on. Your tale interests me strangely."

"After dinner, as the ladies were leaving the dining room, I saw the portrait. It was the same as the one I had seen in the room before—the same dark eyes, the pulled hair—even the gown was the same. The portrait was of a young girl, the only difference in the two being that the diamonds in mine were of inferior quality, and a suspicion now flashed across my mind that they were not the original stones."

"I went to the portrait, and I saw the portrait. It was the same as the one I had seen in the room before—the same dark eyes, the pulled hair—even the gown was the same. The portrait was of a young girl, the only difference in the two being that the diamonds in mine were of inferior quality, and a suspicion now flashed across my mind that they were not the original stones."

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