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FISHING FOR A HUSBAND.

"THERE, Sarah, that will do. No no—stop! Why, you careless creature, you've left a blotch as big as a dollar on my left cheek. O, what a frightful object. Now fix it as it should be. Look in the glass and see your own cheeks. There; now I want mine something like that. Do you understand?"

"Yes, ma'am." "Then hurry about it." Lovina Gilbert sat down again in her chair, and Sarah Pabor took the rouge-cup and began to remodel the offensive cheek. There was a chance for study in those two girls. It may be an "old story," but it is, nevertheless, a true one, and one, too, which true humanity gives no occasion for. It is a false, evil, pernicious system of things that makes such stories true.

Lovina Gilbert was reputed to be an heiress. She was the daughter of a widow who was thought to be rich, and she passed for a "prize." Yet she had not been "drawn." She was still in the great lottery-box of life, waiting for some eligible man to come and draw her out. She had passed her twenty-fifth year, though she seemed to have forgotten that she had lived so long. She had a peculiar memory about some things, and with regard to years, she remembered to have seen only nineteen, admitting, as a natural conclusion, that she "might be twenty in a short time." She had, in fact, become a desperate husband-catcher.

Miss Gilbert possessed some beauty, and though long years of fashionable dissipation had taken away the color of health, and dragged down the form of beauty, yet the rouge-cup remedied the one, and the milliner hid the latter. She thought not of reforming any evil of life—she only sought to hide them. Her mind was more unhealthy than her body. Of the true joys of a virtuous life she knew nothing. She had only floated along upon the surface of fashion, gathering bubbles and surf, never having looked down after those heavier treasures that lie at the bottom of life's ocean. Then she had some qualities that were positively bad. She was overbearing and proud, quick-tempered and nervous, morally base and deceitful. In former years she had shown these qualities, so that prudent men had avoided her; but lately she had been schooling herself to hide them, and, at the present time, she had fairly learned to appear the very opposite of what she really was.

Lovina Gilbert's waiting-maid was, in reality, much more beautiful, and a deal better, than her mistress could possibly appear. She bore with meekness and patience all the imperiousness of the would-be belle. She had been with Miss Gilbert two weeks—a longer time than any girl of fine feelings had staid there before, for some years.

"There—I see not how I can fix it better," said Sarah, as she laid the rouge-cup and pencil upon the dressing-table. "Those who did not know the deceit would think 'twere your own blushes that thus—"

"Stop, hussy! Deceit, indeed! Learn manners before you speak to me;" and thus speaking Lovina Gilbert arose and surveyed herself in the glass.

"That will do better," she continued. "You are improving. Now place these things out of sight, and then hold yourself in readiness to answer my call, for I may want you."

With these words Miss Gilbert left the dressing-room. A look of calm contempt curled about the lips of the pretty

waiting-maid, and something, almost like a smile, but if it was a smile, it was one of bitterness.

"And this is the woman who would palm herself off upon Captain Lincoln, as a woman fit for a wife. Ah! she little dreams what a crashing there may be among her wicked hopes. She be the wife of a kind and virtuous man! O, Heaven! help the poor unfortunate who falls into her meshes."

All the time that the girl was handling the rouge-cups, flesh-powders, perfume-boxes and bottles, her features wore that same look of contempt, and when she had finished the arrangement, another bitter smile passed over her face, and then she left the room.

It was nearly dusk when Lovina descended to the drawing-room. Her mother was there, and so was her brother, Watson, who had just come in from his business. Watson was a year and a half older than his sister, and as his character had been mostly formed away from home, he was a noble-hearted, upright man. The example of his mother and sister had made him disgusted with the deceit he found in society, and he had, consequently, learned to take things for their intrinsic value. He had inherited a few thousand dollars from his father's estate, and was now engaged in a lucrative business of his own.

"Ah, Lovina, I give you joy," exclaimed Mrs. Gilbert, as her daughter entered the room. "Upon my soul I never saw you look better. Such a charming freshness about your cheeks. I declare, the lily and the rose outvie each other. Doesn't she look beautiful, Watson?"

Now the young man would have said nothing if he had been left alone, but, since his judgment was thus called for, he felt at liberty to speak.

"She may look beautiful to those who know her not," replied the brother; "but paint cannot hide—"

"O, you brute!" interrupted Lovina, with a look and tone of passion.

"There, my sister, your paint cannot hide that disposition," said Watson, with a faint smile.

"Get out! you miserable torment."

"O, O, Lovina; that makes you look worse still."

"Watson," spoke the mother, "such conduct is unpardonable. Have you no sense of delicacy?"

"Yes; and so have I a sense of truth and honor. Ah! my mother, let me tell you that ere you can make my sister beautiful you will have to commence deeper down into the soul. You may cover up noxious weeds as much as you please, but they will only gain strength until they are rooted out."

"I wish you would go out of the house and never come into it again as long as you live," uttered Lovina, as she stamped her shoe-pinched foot with rage.

"Now that is a wicked wish, sister.— You know I speak the truth."

"No, you don't speak the truth."

"Wherein do I not?"

"No matter."

"Now, sister, be honest for once, and tell the truth. What would you give if you could possess the rouge that dwells upon the cheeks of your fair waiting-maid? Ah, that is the God-given rouge of health and sweet content. When you can but gain that, then will you be indeed beautiful."

"Watson, I command you to leave the room," peremptorily pronounced Mrs. Gilbert.

"With pleasure," returned the son; and suiting the action to the word he arose and turned towards the door.

"Dirty brute!" he heard his sister say, as he passed out.

"Don't think anything of what your brother says, my daughter," urged Mrs. Gilbert, after her son had gone. "You know his nature."

"He comes to set himself up as a pattern," chimed the offended Lovina.— "But only think, mother, of his bringing up my waiting-maid. How very abominable!"

"It's only one of his ridiculous ideas, my child. But we must turn our attention to other matters. Captain Oliver Lincoln will be here before long, and you, Lovina, must secure him. It does seem to me that you have been reserved for him, and he for you. If you do manage to secure him, you may consider it a blessing that you have not got a

husband before this. You know his disposition and I hope you will manage him rightly."

"O, never fear for that, mother."

"Ah, you must not be too sure. You must be careful, very careful, for he is a peculiar man to deal with. I have conversed with him, and I noted his peculiarities well. He has spent much of his time at sea, and you know he was poor once. In fact, though his family was a very good one, yet he has been poor most of his lifetime. Consequently he has some very curious notions. He is what is commonly termed a noble-hearted man, and he loves to think that everybody is as good as he is—everybody whom he calls honest and virtuous.— Now I have extolled your amabilities to him, and I have told him how charitable you are, and all that sort of stuff. Now you must carry it all out. You must not put on your fashionable airs, for he won't appreciate them; but be off-handed and sociable. It would be a good idea to shudder at the vices of fashionable life, and, if you think you can do it naturally, you might speak favorably of honest virtue; and a few words on religion might not be out of place, if you think you can bring them in without exposing yourself. The captain has a confiding disposition, and he will be easily taken if you only keep the right side out."

Lovina smiled as her mother finished.

"Leave it to me now, mother," she said. "I know him, and you may be assured that I shall not lose him."

"Hark!" uttered Mrs. Gilbert, suddenly starting. "There is some one in the other room. Go and look."

Lovina hastened to the folding doors and threw them open, but she could see no one, and she closed them again and resumed her seat. She had not looked as carefully as she might have done, for scarcely had she drawn the doors together, when her waiting-maid moved out from behind a heavy window-curtain, and glided noiselessly from the room.

At eight o'clock Captain Oliver Lincoln was announced to the occupants of the drawing-room. He was a comparatively young man, being only eight and twenty years of age; very handsome in his external appearance, and just such a man as a true-hearted woman might have loved. He had been left an orphan at an early age, and most of his life had been spent upon the sea, where he had proved himself a capable and trustworthy man; but lately he had been the recipient of an immense fortune, by the will of a deceased uncle. Thus was he at once made the object of all sorts of flattery by the would-be fashionables, who thought more of the money than of the man, and, in his honest, confiding nature, he believed all this friendship to be true. He had never known those hearts that, Judas-like, could smile to betray.

Mrs. Gilbert and her daughter had been among the first to welcome him into society, and so well had they managed their plans that he believed he had found in them a worthy widow and a modest, retiring daughter. He felt flattered by their delicate attentions, and he was grateful for the kindness they professed.

On the present occasion the young captain was received with the utmost show of grace and cordiality. Lovina fairly outdid herself in modesty and prettiness of manners, and as soon as Mrs. Gilbert found that her daughter was in the right track she made an excuse for leaving the room.

Oliver Lincoln was left alone with the schemer. O, how perfectly she had learned her trade. She knew all his essential points of character, and she ministered to them in the sweetest, fondest, and most pleasing manner. The young man was completely enchanted; the words that he heard were so full of goodness and purity that he thought she, who spoke them, could be little less than an angel. The schemer saw the impression she was making, and she followed up her success with renewed efforts.

When Captain Lincoln left the widow's house he had resolved to make Lovina his wife, if the thing were possible. Mrs. Gilbert had contrived to meet him just in season to press upon him an invitation to call again, which invitation he had gladly accepted.

"Well, Lovina, uttered the widow, when they were alone in the drawing-room, "how goes on the work?"

"Ah, bravely, mother. He is trapped, trapped. His wings are clipped, and he lays at my feet. I didn't miss one single play; I moved up my men most properly, and he has surrendered."

"Not proposed?"

"O, no; I wouldn't have had him done that to-night. But he's good for it. I shall let him propose the next time he comes."

"Be careful, Lovina. Don't let him run too long, for you know there may be other influences brought to bear upon him. It is policy to secure him as soon as possible."

The daughter agreed with her mother on this subject, and then they separated for the night.

CHAPTER II.

At a short distance from the great city, in a quiet, lovely spot, there stood a neat, white cottage. It was the home of Widow Atkins. Her husband had been a sea captain, and, on his death, he had left property enough to support his wife and only child comfortably, though they were forced to be economical; and they labored some to gain the means of procuring a few of those enjoyments that come not under the head of bare sustenance. Caroline Atkins had seen her twenty-first year, and she was one of those kind, good beings whom everybody of moral worth and discernment loves. It was on the same evening that Captain Lincoln was at the dwelling of Mrs. Gilbert, that Mrs. Atkins and her daughter sat in their comfortable sitting-room—the former engaged in sewing, while the latter had just laid aside her work. They had been consulting about Capt. Oliver Lincoln, and Kate's hands trembled so that she could not well ply her fine needle.

"I really hope he will come and see us, just for old acquaintance sake, if nothing more," said Mrs. Atkins.— "Your father was the first man with whom he sailed."

"Perhaps Oliver does not know where we live?" suggested Caroline.

"Very likely; but then he might inquire."

"And then he is rich now," continued the fair girl, as her eyes were bent to the floor. "Perhaps he would not wish to renew an acquaintance with those as poor as we are."

"I do not believe that riches could change Oliver Lincoln into such a man as that. If they do, then I will never trust in character again. No, no, Caroline, I believe he will come and see us yet."

"I hope he will."

"And I know he will."

"Mother," said the daughter, after a moment's hesitation, and while her voice trembled, "I heard that he was quite familiar at Mrs. Gilbert's, and one of the girls who used to work there told me this afternoon that Lovina was going to be his wife."

"Mercy sake alive," ejaculated Mrs. Atkins, raising her eye-brows in utter astonishment. "Don't think for a moment that Oliver would be such a fool. What! marry that thing of paint and nonsense. Heaven help him if he falls into her trap. But really, my child," added the woman, with a smile, "we have no occasion for trouble on his account, only it would be a shame to see him thus throw all his happiness away."

"Caroline said no more, but she took up a paper and tried to read. Mrs. Atkins watched her a moment, and then a flash of the truth, for the first time, came to her mind. A question trembled upon her lips, but when she saw how much her daughter was already moved she refrained from asking it. She had not dreamed that Caroline felt any other attachment for the young man than the mere friendship that might linger with the memory of playmates; but now she saw that there might be a deeper, firmer attachment. She spoke not of it, however, then; but a pang shot through her heart as she thought that her noble child might suffer from bitter disappointment."

"Watson," said Mrs. Gilbert to her son, one morning, just as the latter was going out to his business, "where were you last night, while Lovina and myself were at the opera?"

"At home, mother mine."

"Ay, I know you were at home. But who did you have for company?"

"Most delightful company, I assure you. When I came home I found you and my sister gone, and Miss Pabor was here in the drawing-room; so I sat here and conversed with her. Upon my soul, dear mother, she is a sensible, intelligent girl."

"And have you no sense of propriety?" uttered Mrs. Gilbert, perfectly astonished at the frank avowal of her son. "If you wish to carry on such conduct, you must find some other place for your plans."

"You do not understand my motives, mother. I find in Sarah Pabor a very excellent girl, and as such I enjoy her society."

"Ridiculous! Enjoy her society, indeed! A fine pass you are coming to."

"You will, at least, allow me the right to be judge of my own opinions," said Watson, without betraying any offence at his mother's remarks.

"As you please about that; but allow me to tell you that I shall be mistress in my own house. As for Miss Pabor, she will soon leave my employ, and then you may follow her if you choose. She is getting to be too independent, altogether."

"Have it as you will, mother mine; only let me assure you that I shall treat Miss Pabor with respect whenever and wherever I may meet her, even though it be in your own house. Let me tell you, too, by way of expressing an honest opinion, that she is worth a whole nation of your laced and painted belles."

"If you have business, Watson, you had better go about it."

"Certainly, mother, I was going when you called me back."

"He's the very torment of my life," impatiently uttered Mrs. Gilbert, as her son left the room. "But I'll turn the hussy off as soon as I can find another to take her place. A pretty pass we are coming to. Treat her with respect, indeed! I shall have Watson find another dwelling. I can endure him no longer."

With such thoughts and expressions the scheming mother threw herself upon a sofa and began to fan herself. During the day Sarah Pabor received a very severe lecture for the part she had acted on the previous evening, but she did not seem to wince a bit beneath the indignation of the offended woman. On the contrary she was very bold and independent, and informed Mrs. Gilbert that at any moment when her conduct did not suit her she was ready to leave.

The widow was taken all aback by the manner of her maid, for the girl not only spoke very plainly and boldly, but she looked very calm and dignified at the same time. When she left her mistress it was with the understanding that her place would be filled by another very shortly.

That evening Captain Lincoln was to call again, and Lovina had exercised more than usual care in her personal appearance. The rouge had been most tastefully applied, and, acting from a hint she had received from her mother, her dress was very simple and neat. She did not fancy the *tout ensemble* herself, but then the end she had in view made the means more bearable.

At length Mr. Lincoln came. With a smiling welcome he was ushered into the drawing-room, and Miss Lovina's love-batteries were opened upon him, as Mrs. Gilbert left them alone together.

An hour passed away, at the end of that time, Oliver Lincoln was completely smitten. He had just taken one of Lovina's hands within his own, and she had let her head droop forward till it rested upon her companion's shoulder. She had acted her part to perfection, and she was trembling upon the brink of her hopes' consummation. In another moment Lincoln would have proposed, for he had pressed her fingers, and was upon the point of passing his arm about her waist. But, alas! the moment was lost, for just then Watson Gilbert entered the apartment.

Lovina sprang to her feet, but the color could not forsake her cheeks, for it was fast.

"Ah, captain," said Watson, without seeming to notice his sister, "did you wish to see me?"

"Really, Mr. Gilbert, stammered the captain, while the blushes arose to his face, "I am happy to see you, but I had