

THE EXACTING LOVER:

OR, BACHELOR NOBILITY.

BY MRS. KATHA C. EMERY.

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"Upon my word, Harry, I don't know whether to consider you a rascal, or only a simpleton," exclaimed a young man to his companion, as, a few hours in the evening, they descended the steps of a baroque house in Broadway.

"You do me too much honor in attributing me to either," was the laughing reply. "Indeed, if your polite remark had been uttered by any body but my own good cousin, it would probably have been met by a knock-down argument."

"You deserve far more severe reprehensions, Harry, than I am either able or willing to inflict upon you; it seems to me that you are wantonly trifling with the affections of a young and ardent woman who loves you, and is too careless to consider her attachment."

"If such is your opinion, Tom, I shall certainly make no attempt to change it."

"Why do you act a part so inconsistent with your usual mode of thinking?"

"My dear fellow, my conduct is perfectly consistent. I have a certain theory about women—a certain system in my manners towards them, and that system I mean to adhere rigidly, even in spite of my own impulses."

"For Heaven's sake, Harry, do not attempt to discuss your fragile, fine-spun theories into the web of actual life; you have been a dreamer of theories, and a projector of schemes all your life, but what have you gained by them all?"

"I have gained, as Byron says, 'a deal of judgment.' I am no longer a passionate boy, looking upon women as a being of a higher sphere, whose image is to be 'craved,' assuaged, worshipped."

"Have been in too many love-affairs—have knelt so often before an idol like the image seen in the begonia's vision, whose head was of fine gold, but whose feet were of clay. I look upon women now as only a gentle and loving minister to his happiness—inferior to us in mind and in vigor of character, she is our superior in passion, fortitude and devoted tenderness; the very creature, in short, of whom a slave, not a queen is made. We spoil women by our blind homage, and undo them for the nation they were sent to govern, while all our efforts to elevate them to the position which our youthful fancy allows them, tend to ruin and undo."

"This is quite a new idea, is it not, Harry? I have seen a twelvemonth ago you were an earnest fan for the brilliant and witty Annette Folstre, and then you maintained a coquette's superiority, mental, moral and personal, of the feminine creature."

"You are right, Tom; but Annette cured me of all such foolish fancies; she had been so spoiled byattery, that she was fit for nothing but to occupy the throne of that tyrannical old Indian hag, and we were reading about yesterday. Her whims and caprices led me to reflect upon the manner which she thus transformed a being whom nature had made timid and gentle, into such a proud, exacting, haughty, dominating creature, and I became convinced that the evil might be traced to man's mistaken homage. Henceforth, I meant to treat women as we do children; to regard them as beings capable of reason, but utterly unable to be left to their own guidance, and whose place of being defined, require to be instructed."

"And pray how are you to obtain the opportunity of instructing them, except by interesting the affections?"

"It is by the affections only that they are to be taught, Tom."

"Then there must yet be a season of homage, Harry, for women are not to be won untaught."

"That is true, but neither are they to be wooed by blind and humble devotion as we usually say. Byron knows the female heart well, and has convinced his rule is the true one—'Pledge them and soothe by turns.'"

"Aye, Byron knew the heart of women as it exists in the tainted atmosphere of fashionable life, where the weeds of passion grow the more rankly because nurtured by luxurious self-indulgence; but you would not, surely, follow Byron's rule in your cousin's wife."

"Indeed I should; what would a man gain by wooing himself before a woman during courtship?"

"I think to Harry's delight, Tom, that you will have no ceremony in wooing her, when my slightest wish will be obeyed, and she will have no wish but to please me."

"No pleasure unshared by me, an enjoyment such as is directly derived from my wife's woman, in short, who shall be all that a wife is first designed; a helpmate—subject to his husband, and patient under his will."

"You are as despot as a Turk, Harry, where do you expect to find such a modern Griselda?"

"I have found her already, Tom."

"You do not, certainly, expect to train Isabel Forester to such submission?"

"Indeed I do, and, what is more, I have no doubt I shall succeed. I love her better than I ever did any other woman, but I mean to try her to the utmost, before I place my happiness in her keeping."

"And I suppose this new system of yours will account for your violent flirtation with the new belle, this evening, while Isabel sat neglected in a corner?"

"You have guessed right; I met Isabel in the street this morning, and I managed to instigate a wish that she would refrain from dancing at Mrs. Anson's party, to-night. It was a first experiment in testing my power, but it succeeded perfectly; she is passionately fond of dancing, but she steadily refused all solicitations on the subject."

"And you rewarded her attention to your wishes by almost total neglect?"

"That was part of my policy; she doubtless expected to be rewarded for her self-denial by a double portion of my attention, and had I been weak enough to bestow it, her forbearance would have been no sacrifice. As matters now stand, she has learned that I have power to afflict her, and that is a great point gained."

"So you expect to win her by wounding her—this might do in buffalo-hunting, but will scarcely succeed in love-making."

"Don't you see that I excite a new interest by awakening her apprehensions? She probably felt sure of my preference for her until this evening, and the doubt which my conduct has excited, will make her think of me until we meet again. A woman is easily managed by one who is allowed to engross her thoughts."

"Will you allow me to give my candid opinion of your scheme, Harry?"

"Certainly, my dear fellow."

"I think it a most selfish, cold-hearted, rascally method of trifling with a woman's feelings."

"You are complimentary; but as I import, you are in the toils of a pretty girl, who tyrannizes over you without mercy, Tom, and I cannot hope to bring you to my way of thinking at present."

"Nor in future, I trust, Harry; it seems to me unprincipled."

"You are wrong, Tom; I mean to marry Isabel as soon as she is perfectly broken in."

"And suppose she proves intractable?"

"That will be a sufficient proof of want of affection on her part, and of course I shall be the only sufferer."

"Well, you certainly have a cool and comfortable way of discussing affairs of the heart; but I do not envy you the power. When the feelings are soared as yours seem to be, they must have suffered frequent scathing; and I would not go through such an ordeal of fire, even to obtain the prize of insensibility."

With these words the young man perceived some to dream of his beautiful but coquettish lady-love, the object of speculation upon the effect which his unkindness had produced upon a gentle and loving heart.

Harry Walsingham was one of those 'men about town,' who are always to be met in gay society. He began his career by falling in love at twelve years of age, with his cousin of twenty, and from that time, until he had counted his thirtieth summer, he had been continually under the influence of some fever dream. A bright smile, a soft eye, a sweet voice, a delicate form, a pretty foot, were each in turn sufficient to bewitch him for the time, and the ease with which he became enchanted and disenchanted, seemed to him less the effect of his own fickleness than the result of his over-estimation of the power of woman's spells. His handsome person and elegant manners made him always welcome in the circles of fashion, while his lucrative profession and rising reputation gave him interest in the eyes of prudent parents. He had met with so much success in society, that he had learned to think too highly of himself, as well as

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