

HUMFREY JORDAN'S "PATCHWORK COMEDY"*

Antony Carfew, the heir to an ancient name and great wealth, has followed the traditional course of the Carfew heirs in that he is a wanderer on the face of the earth. His name is well known as an explorer. On his return to England when the story opens, he is still young, but for a man who apparently has those desirable things, wealth, position, and fame, his life to himself seems singularly empty. Through his intimate friend, Michael Morton, a young sculptor, he meets Lady Gillanby, a young and beautiful woman whose husband is notoriously unfaithful to her. The world condemns her for having made a purely mercenary match, but her friends realise that she had been romantically in love with her husband until his infidelities disgusted her.

Carfew finds his father strangely changed and aged. At a conference with Bentham, the family lawyer, he first learns that his father has been paying heavy blackmail to a scoundrel who had learned of a misstep made by his mother when a slip of a girl before she had met his father. The blackmailer, who has lived in various places abroad under numerous aliases, is really the uncle of his friend Michael Morton, the black sheep of the family. Carfew, while equally anxious with his father to protect the family name, discovers the blackmailer's address in Paris and goes over to confront him. By a happy accident, Lady Gillanby is able to furnish him with a weapon which silences the blackmailer for a time. Under one of

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his many aliases he had once forged her father's name to a note of hand. The scoundrel is given forty-eight hours to leave Paris. By an unfortunate chance Carfew has given him a clue to the source of his information. The elder Carfew and Lord Gillanby both die suddenly of heart disease.

Morton contrives to compromise Lady Gillanby in an ingenious manner out of revenge. On the pretext of asking her opinion as to the genuineness of several paintings supposedly by her late father, a famous painter, she is persuaded to go to the house of one of the most notorious procuresses in Paris. She is seen and recognised by several persons. But once more the blackmailer is thwarted by Carfew. He escapes from the inn in Switzerland where they have confined him and meets his death in the mountains after having murdered his guide, it would seem rather gratuitously. The book ends with the marriage of Lady Gillanby and Carfew. The best characters in the book are Lady Gillanby and Morton, the villain. Carfew and Michael, the sculptor, who may be said to divide the rôle of hero, are somewhat vague and sketchy and are not particularly sympathetic.