

The victoria moved forward a little, so that Lady Caroline could obtain a clearer view of what was going on. The vehicle which caused the obstruction—evidently a hired fly from an inn—was uninjured, but the horse had fallen between the shafts and would never rise again. The occupants of the fly—a lady, and a much younger man, perhaps her son—had got out, and the lady had then turned faint, Lady Caroline heard, but was not in any way hurt. Janetta was kneeling by the side of the lady—kneeling in the dust, without any regard to the freshness of her cotton frock, by the way—and had already placed her in the right position, and was ordering the half-dozen people who had collected to stand back and give her air. Lady Caroline watched her movements and gestures with placid amusement, and went so far as to send Steel with the offer of her smelling salts; but as this offer was rejected she felt that nothing else could be done. So she sat and looked on critically.

The woman—Lady Caroline was hardly inclined to call her a lady, although she did not exactly know why—was at present of a ghastly paleness, but her features were finely cut, and showed traces of former beauty. Her hair was grey, with rebellious waves in it, but her eyebrows were still dark. She was dressed in black, with a good deal of lace about her; and on her ungloved hand Lady Caroline's keen sight enabled her to distinguish some very handsome diamond rings. The effect of the costume was a little spoiled by a large gaudy fan, of violent rainbow hues, which hung at her side; and perhaps. It was this article of adornment which decided Lady Caroline in her opinion of the woman's social status. But about the man she was equally positive in a different way, He *was* a gentleman; there could be no doubt of that. She put up her eye-glass and gazed at him with interest. She almost thought that she had seen him somewhere before.

A handsome man, indeed, and a gentleman; but, oh, what an ill-tempered one, apparently! He was dark, with fine features, and black hair with a slight inclination to wave or curl (as far at least as could be judged when the extremely well-cropped state of his head was taken into consideration); and from these indications Lady Caroline judged him to be "the woman's" son, He was tall, muscular, and active looking: it was the way in which his black eyebrows were bent above his eyes which made the observer think him ill-tempered, for his manner and his words expressed anxiety, not anger. But that frown, which must have been habitual, gave him a distinctly ill-humored look.

At last the lady opened her eyes, and drank a little water, and sat up, Janetta rose from her knees, and turned to the young man with a smile, "She will soon be better now." She said. "I am afraid there is nothing else that I can do—and I think I must go on."

"I am very much obliged to you for your kind assistance," said the gentleman, but without any abatement of the gloom of his expression. He gave Janetta a keen look—almost a bold look—Lady Caroline thought, and then smiled a little, not very pleasantly. "Allow me to take you to your carriage."