THAT UMBRELLA.

Patter! pat! pat! The rain was pouring down on the glass portico. A sudden storm had sprung up out of a clear sky. Every one was caught unawares. The other rain were edged in a moment, the coachmen crowded before you could look around. There was actually no one available to the stand by the door of the Cafe de Paris. I stood, in a new hat and a light gray frock coat, and eyed the umbrella speculatively. I knew the owner. He had just gone in hastily. He was a large and long machine. I was in a hurry. Perhaps the owners would pass. I could send it back by a commissionaire. I was very apt to take cold, and my appointment was really too important.

Thus prompted of sorts, I put forth my hand toward the umbrella. At the moment I perceived, for a stage of life, that I was observed. In fact, I was not alone. A young lady of most attractive appearance stood a few feet from me, who under the circumstances scrutinized me with no little interest. She looked at my watch, then again at the storm, and murmured, inconsiderately, "Oh, I shall be late." An instant of positively extraordinary. Without another thought to my sensitive coat or my light gray cap, with a firm, proprietary air, I laid hold of Dawson's umbrella.

"Allow me," said I, "as rain seems unfashionable, to offer you an umbrella."

A glad light leapt into her eyes. "Oh, I couldn't," she said. "What would you do?"

"I don't mind a wetting," I answered heroically. "Pray take it. You are sure it isn't just at your house?" Decency would not have much more than finished his reply.

"I couldn't think of it," she repeated. "You will get soaked through."

A sudden thought crossed me. After all, I had no business to lose sight of Dawson's umbrella.

"Perhaps," I continued tentatively, "we could be the same way. It's a large umbrella." And I opened it. It was not a very large umbrella, but how could I know that?

"I go this way," said she, with a motion of her lissel waistband.

"My way," I said. "Come, this is providential."

We started.

"If you wouldn't mind taking my arm," said I, "we should be better sheltered."

"Oh, perhaps we'd only. Thank you!" And she seemed quite close to me. We walked along, talking. My left shoulder got all the drippings, but somehow I was insensible to that.

"Are you sure you are thoroughly sheltered?" I asked.

"Perfectly," she answered. "But you're not. I'm afraid. You're too kind. Mamma will be so grateful."

I liked this simple friendliness.

"I thought there was no chance of rain today. You are more careful, Mr. Dawson."

I could not repress a little start.

"You know my name!"

She laughed merrily.

"It's on the umbrella—half an inch long," she said. "I couldn't help reading it."

There it was—"Joshua Dawson, 4 Calcutta Villas, West Kensington, W." Somehow the address annoyed me—I myself live in St. James street.

"A strange way to make acquaintance, isn't it?" she added, with a coquettish glance.

"Delightful. But you haven't allowed me to make acquaintance with you yet. Haven't you your name anywhere about you?"

"My name is Lydia Lovelock," she said. "Don't you like it? It's prettier than yours."

"Certainly prettier than Joshua Dawson," said I, wishing Dawson had chosen to be a duke.

"Joshua Dawson isn't pretty," she observed, with candid eyes; "now, is it?"

"Then you wouldn't take my name instead of yours?" I asked, to keep up the conversation.

"Your umbrella's enough to take for one day," she said, with a blush. As she spoke she tripped and all too fell on the shining pavement. She gave a little cry. "Oh, my ankle!" and leaned heavily upon me. I held her up.

"I believe I've sprained it badly," she added. "Oh, what a lot of trouble I'm giving you Mr. Dawson!"

She leaned heavily—I gave you my word, positively lovely—in her pain and distress. I don't think I said so, but I said something, for she blushed again as she answered:

"That's very nice of you, but how am I to get home?"

"I must come with you," I said.

She shook her head.

"I can manage now."

"But you'll never be able to get out."

"Oh, yes. Bits—perhaps—the pain's almost stopped—may I keep the umbrella? There are some steps to mount to my door, and"——

Now, could I do anything else than gave Dawson's umbrella upon her? She took it, and with a last bewildering smile vanished from my sight. I turned and almost ran back to the Cafe de Paris, determined to make a clean breast of it to Dawson. When I was in particular, I saw him under the portico. The manager and four waiters stood aloof him in deferential attitudes. One or two of his comrades—he was talking very loudly—passed my ears. I changed my mind. I would wait till he was calmer. I turned away, but at that moment Dawson caught sight of me. A hound later he was pouring the story of his escape into my ear.

Here came my first surprise. He felt no ill. He took me by the arm and walked me off. I could not resist him, and all the way he chattered against the clock.

"If it could not be 1st, I'd bring you to justice" he indignant. Finally I dared not look it to him yet yet.

Suddenly from behind a piano corner there came upon us almost running to us—it was Lydia Lovelock herself, with Dawson's umbrella in her hand. It had been unusually raining—her umbrella unopened. He stopped dead and cried, during forward:

"My umbrella!"

With a little woman little sweet and bad, Dawson was after not lost on a row. I passed Dawson. Why, oh, why, did he run away? Surely we must have recognized me.

It was a very quiet meal we have eaten together and our strange proceedings at Dawson's expense. The clock was near over. I caught Dawson, yet in mid-flight, a glance—a look we all much prefer not. Then Dawson looked again "Mr. umbrella! Paid!"

I assumed my airiest attitude. Of course I refuse to let Dawson." Avoiding Dawson's eye, I hastily told my absurdity. Lydia's face brightened, but still there was apprehension in her looks.

"The duke, Mr. Dawson," I said, "is a great diplomat. Of course she thought the umbrella was my own. My idea was solution. Instead of to think that had you been in my place you would have done the same."

"I don't see," remarked Dawson rudely, "why it should be up to Lydia for a duke."

I presented a dignified silence.

"Because," he continued, "if this young lady has quite finished with my property, perhaps she will be good enough to give it to me back."

Lydia did not take the hint. She clung to the umbrella.

"If—if you would be so kind," she stammered, "as to lend it to me for today—the weather is still threatening—I would return it tomorrow."

"Your mamma wants it, is it, madam?" observed Dawson sarcastically. "Well, as you choose, the weather is threatening, and I want no umbrella. Kindly give it me."

"Really, Dawson, to oblige a lady"—I began.

"Why don't you buy her an umbrella?" growled Dawson.

"If she would accept it, I should be"—I stopped. To my surprise, Lydia laid her hand on my arm and said, "Oh, the phone!" And may I keep this till we get to the shop?

I did not understand her, but we turned round and began to walk, looking for a shop. She was a very strange girl. She lagged behind. I had to wait twice for her. Once she took a turning as though to leave us, and when I called her back she pouted.

Suddenly Dawson turned up.

"It rains," he said.

It did rain.

"Put up the umbrella," said Dawson roughly.

"Let the lady have it," said I indignantly.

"We'll share it," grinned Dawson. "You can get wet."

But Lydia did not put it up.

"The rain's not much," she faltered. It was now pouring. With a muttered oath, Dawson snatched the umbrella from her. Lydia shrieked and ran away like a frightened rabbit—run at the top of her speed up the street again.

"Stop, stop!" I cried. "Stop, my dear Miss Lovelock!"

"Holy powers!" exclaimed Dawson.

He had opened the umbrella. As he did so there was a thud on the pavement—two, three thuds. In amaze I looked down. There lay a silver cigarette case, two purses and a gold watch. Dawson leant into material lengths to point at Lydia's retreating figure. That girl could run.

For a moment I stood disembodied. What a revelation! Dawson chuckled in satanic glee. Sadly I stooped down and picked up the purses, the cigarette case and the watch.

"Great Scott!" I cried, and my hand flew to my waistcoat pocket.

It was my watch!

I did not remonstrate Lydia because I could not have overtaken her, and for other reasons. It was altogether too sad, too disheartening, too disappointing a recovery. Dawson, however, observed that it seemed to him an excellent example of poetic justice in real life.—St. James Gazette.

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