[From Chambers' Journal]

LADY LESINGHAM'S DIAMONDS.

I was the eldest of five girls early left fatherless and unprovided for, except by a small annuity; and when Uncle Charles, the rich, and, as we thought, predestinated bachelor of our family, thought proper to marry, it became advisable for me to do something, by way of lessening the strain upon house-hold resources.

The something which young ladies could do, or get to do, were nearly as few and far between in my youth as they are now; after advertising myself and my accomplishments in the most approved manner, and studying the *Times* for some months, I felt proud on my promotion one morning when the postman brought me a note from the Dowager-Countess of Lesingham, requesting to see me immediately, at a certain house in Bryanston Square. The note was in reference to one of the many advertisements I had answered. It was that of a lady who wanted a companion; and within an hour after the receipt of it, I had walked from our little house on the confines of Hammersmith, and was knocking at one of the gloomy mansions in that ancient haunt of rank and fashion. There was no sign of life about the house, and it gave back a hollow, sepulchral echo to my knock that frightened me. I was not 20, and had been little from home at the time, and the solemnity of the wigged and powdered footman who opened the door completed my dismay. Having heard my business, he left me to sit in the hall for a few minutes, then returned and marshalled me to the library. A heavy room it was, with costly but old fashioned furniture; and there, behind a screen and before a bright fire (for it was the middle of October, when all the rest of the titled world were out of town), sat an elderly lady without a gray hair, though I was conscious she wore a wig. Her figure was stiff fine, though cast in a large mould, and did justice to the rich morning dress she wore. Her features were of that prominent order which is said to indicate Norman descent. She had a dark but clear complexion, eyes at once deep and keen, and such a terrible composure of look and manner as made me wish myself at home again.

At the opposite side of the fire, and with open books in their hands, but evidently perusing me, sat two discontented looking girls, both extremely like the old lady, but by no means as handsome as she must have been in her youth, and attired in morning dresses that had seen service.

"Good morning, Miss Fenton," said the Dowager, with haughty condescension. "Please to take a seat; I am glad to see you." And she proceeded with a series of questions regarding my abilities, tastes and inclinations, which I trust were answered to her satisfaction; for my confusion of mind was great, and her keen eyes were upon me all the time, as if taking stock and measure of all within.

"Well," said her Ladyship at last, to my great relief, for the thought of being companion to such a dame was becoming too much for me, "it is not for myself, but for my daughter-in-law, Lady Lesingham, that I wish to engage you. Her health has suffered from the loss of friends and relatives; in fact, she is somewhat peculiar in her habits, and requires a companion to remain with her and amuse her. I think you would suit; but she ought to see you, I suppose. Clementina, my dear, ring the bell."

One of the discontented looking-girls accordingly rang; the footman re-appeared, and what the Dowager said to him I could not catch; but he marshalled me out of the library, up the grand stair, and along a passage which I knew led to the back of the house. At the end of it, he knocked at a door which was opened by a wizened little women in shabby clothes, to whom he said something equally inaudible to me. She responded "Humph!" and without further sign of notice or salutation, admitted me first into a small ante-room, then into a larger apartment, where a lady was sitting listlessly on an easy-chair by the fire, to whom she said: "Here is Miss Fenton, the young person who is to be your companion."

The style of address struck me as singularly unlike that which prevailed in the front division of the grand gloomy house, and so did the surroundings. Old, worn, and faded to the last degree, was all the furniture of the room, from the tattered easy-chair on which the lady sat, to the crazy piano in the corner. The lady's attire was of a piece with all about her—a soiled, faded dressing-gown, and the remnant of an old shawl; but the dressing gown had been of a bright color and richly embroidered, the shawl had come from India, and the lady had been a pretty woman in her day, with finely-moulded features and fair hair. But the day was done. She was thin, and pallid, and withered before the time, as one knew at the first glance; and had a look half melancholy and half wild, which would have told a better judgment than mine of a wandering mind.

The dowager had said she was peculiar, and I was inclined to think the same; but for all the melancholy and uncertainty of her look, I felt nothing of the fear and dread that fell on me in the presence of the dame in the library. She gazed at me for a minute or two without speaking, and then said: "I am glad you are come, and I hope you will be a good girl; but I can't talk to you now—I am not myself to-day. The Countess has been here. You won't find me always so bad. My maid, Moesrose, here"—and she looked at the wizened woman—"can tell you all about it."

"O yes," chimed in the damsel so incongruously designated, "my lady is apt to be a little upset after a visit from her friend, the Countess of Tunbridge, talking of old times and acquaintances, you see; but that dont last; she'll be all right to-morrow, and right enough always, I'll warrant, if you can play whist with her and read stories. It's a good place, I can tell you, for any young person. You are coming on Tuesday next, I hope; that is as long as we can do without somebody; and if you don't, another will." Here the Moesrose stopped, for there was another knock at the door. The footman came to ask if Lady Lesingham thought I would suit, and also to inform me that the Dowager was occupied for the present, but she would write to me on the subject of the engagement; with which intimation he conducted me down stairs and out of the street door.

I went home more surprised than delighted at my first prospect of a situation. My mother was of the same mind when she heard my tale; but the salary was a good one, and companion to Lady Lesingham sounded well; so when the Dowager's note arrived next day, appointing me to the office, in her own grand manner, and commanding me to enter upon its duties on the following Tuesday at one p.m., the offer was accepted with becoming acknowledgments. In the meantime, we were naturally curious concerning the family history of my titled employers. Cousin Frederick was then in a solicitor's office, and I am sure he exerted himself on the subject; but all that his professional opportunities enabled him to make out was, that Lord Lesingham—the son of the commanding Dowager, husband of the peculiar lady, and father of the discontented-looking girls—had sunk his estate and himself in all sorts of debt by his untiring devotion to the turf and the gaming-table; that the family mansion was in consequence possessed by strangers, and a writ of outlawry made his Lordship prefer a continental residence; while his prudent mother, having taken care of her own jointure and dower-house, also took charge of his wife and daughters, and maintained the honors of the ancient line in Bryanston Square.

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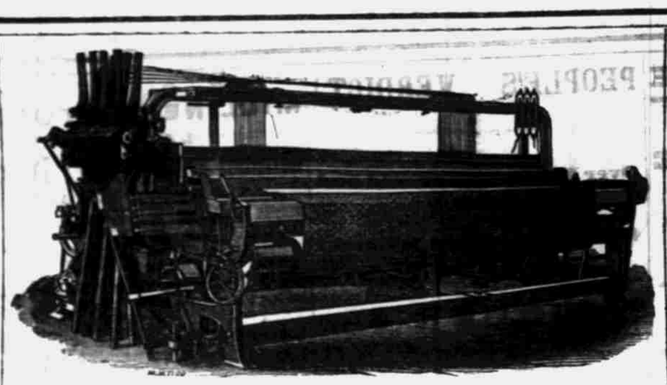

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9 53 PM	2 10 "	Sacramento	11 15 AM	7 30 AM
	4 10 "	Marysville	9 10 "	
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EASTWARD.	2 20 "	Sacramento	11 45 "	WESTWARD.
	5 25 "	Colfax	8 45 "	
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	9 10 "	Winnemucca	4 05 "	
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