

# **THE BRIDES OF KENSINGTON**

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The Brides of Kensington by Miss Bridges

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**MISS BRIDGES**

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OF KENSINGTON**



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THE  
BRIDES OF KENSINGTON.

BY  
MISS BRIDGES,  
AUTHOR OF 'SIR THOMAS MAXWELL AND HIS WARD.'



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18 PATERNOSTER ROW, LONDON.  
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THE  
BRIDES OF KENSINGTON.



CHAPTER I.

It was sunset on the Lake of Geneva. Mont Blanc was ablaze with glory. Colours which seemed too bright for earth, and which varied every moment, like the hues of a kaleidoscope, transfigured the scene, till it became paradisiacal, and you almost expected that the golden gates would open and admit you into the presence of angels.

An English family group was gathered in the balcony of the Clarence Hotel. It contained first of all a lady, the summer of whose life was verging on the autumnal. Lady Sarah Mowbray was a magnificent woman, tall and majestic, with fine blue eyes, and hair which had once been black as the raven's wing. At first sight her presence awed you, but the moment that you heard her kindly voice, and felt the charm of her perfect manner, you began to love her. Her eldest daughter, Margaret, was the image of herself, only

that her eyes were dark, and her figure had the sylph-like proportions of early womanhood. Her hair was of a rich brown, with golden lights in it when it caught the sun, and a cluster of heavy curls fell behind from a tortoise-shell comb. Her sister, Guendolen, was short and plump, with light hazel eyes and hair to match. She wore a wavy fringe over her forehead, which imparted a certain child-like grace to a countenance which would have otherwise startled you by its premature astuteness.

A gentleman was in attendance, who claimed kinship with these fair ladies. Being the orphan son of a favourite cousin, St. John Munro had always been treated by Lady Sarah with the utmost kindness; and he had been accustomed in his youth to spend his holidays at Lancaster Court, which was a few miles from London.

'How glorious!' exclaimed Margaret, turning to her mother, while her eyes were suffused with tears. 'I wish Emily was here; I cannot think what makes her so late.'

'Haven't you enough beauty to satisfy even you for the present?' asked St. John, withdrawing his eyes from the splendid view to fix them on the girl whom he addressed.

'I always like to have those whom I most love to share my enjoyment,' she replied.

A sort of shadow crossed the marble brow of St. John, his eye flashed a glance of reproach at his cousin, and he remarked sarcastically:

'I always dislike the superlative degree.'

'Are you jealous of Emily before you have seen her?' mischievously inquired Guendolen.



“Like Alexander I would reign,  
And I would reign alone,”

was the playful retort of St. John, as his eye again rested with a look of conscious power on the now blushing Margaret.

At this moment the door opened and the waiter announced—‘Lord and Miss Fitzalan.’

The first of these visitors was a man of stately presence, many years older than his beautiful sister, around whom the ladies gathered with affectionate caresses.

‘What has made you so late?’ inquired the hostess, as she took the arm of her newly arrived guest, and led the way to the supper-room.

‘To tell you the truth,’ he replied, ‘I had a curiosity to hear the Roman Catholic Bishop preach at your cathedral. He is certainly a wonderful man. My little sister here wants to make his acquaintance.’

‘She can easily do that,’ said Lady Sarah. ‘We expect the honour of his presence here to-morrow evening, to meet a few friends, and you must both come.’

The invitation was accepted with a beaming look of gratitude from Emily’s blue eyes, which was not lost on the observant St. John.

Whoever has listened to the thrilling eloquence of Monseigneur Mermillod, will be able to understand the effect which his discourse, delivered with the most glowing unction, produced upon the enthusiastic mind of Miss Fitzalan. She had been brought up, like her brother, in the cold philosophy of Unitarianism. Her intellect had been highly cultivated, but the religious impulses of

her ardent nature had never found a vent. On this particular Sunday evening, Monseigneur Mermillod had chosen for his subject—The Mystery of the Adorable Trinity. It was like the aurora of a new life to Emily. The vision of the Godhead flashed upon her soul with a splendour that was almost intolerable. The eternal generation of the Most High God, 'still begetting, still begotten, still His own perfections seeing,' subdued her intelligence and captivated her heart. But her emotion was so deep, that not even to Adrian, her beloved, her adored brother, could she unbosom herself as yet, even if she could have expected sympathy, which was very far from being the case. His lordship's anti-Catholic prejudices were too notorious.

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## CHAPTER II.

It was a happy party that assembled at the Clarence Hotel on the following evening. There were several visitors, and a murmur of suppressed admiration went round the room when Miss Fitzalan entered on the arm of her brother. She was simply attired in white tarlatane, and her tresses of pale gold were artistically braided. Her countenance was so full of soul that it could not fail to interest the most ordinary spectator. When the Bishop of Geneva was announced a flush of the deepest carnation suffused her cheek. Margaret was standing next to her, and said :

'Monseigneur, permit me to present my special friend, Miss Fitzalan.'

He took her hand with one of his beaming smiles, and expressed his pleasure at making her acquaintance. He was quite the life of the party. Lord Fitzalan, whose powers of conversation were usually great, was more than commonly silent. Towards the close of the evening the young people strolled into the garden. Emily alone remained in the drawing-room. It happened that the Bishop was particularly interested in looking over some choice illuminations which Lady Sarah had just completed. A servant entered on some particular errand to the hostess, who, with a graceful apology, requested Miss Fitzalan to take her place in entertaining her Right Reverend guest until her return. Emily was generally distinguished for the perfect ease of her manner in society, but on this occasion it seemed to desert her; she became flushed, and then pale as death, while the taper fingers of her beautiful hands unconsciously pulled to pieces the bouquet which adorned her corsage. Monseigneur Mermillod saw her embarrassment, and that it proceeded from something deeper than shyness. He seemed to be observing the picture before him, and remarked, without looking at her :

'Lady Sarah, without intending it, has given to this Madonna the features and the expression of Miss Mowbray.'

'Yes,' said Emily, 'it is true;' then after a pause she added, 'That notion of a Divine maternity seems to be a source of great consolation to Catholics.'