

**ALTHEA VERNON; OR, THE
EMBROIDERED HANDKERCHIEF:
TO WHICH IS ADDED, HENRIETTA
HARRISON, OR, THE BLUE
COTTON UMBRELLA**

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Althea Vernon; Or, the Embroidered Handkerchief: To Which Is Added, Henrietta Harrison, or, the Blue Cotton Umbrella by Miss Leslie

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MISS LESLIE

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OR

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TO WHICH IS ADDED,

HENRIETTA HARRISON;

OR,

THE BLUE COTTON UMBRELLA.

BY MISS LESLIE,

AUTHOR OF "PENCIL SKETCHES," &c.

PHILADELPHIA:

LEA & BLANCHARD,

SUCCESSORS TO CAREY & CO.

1838.

ALTHEA VERNON;

92,

THE EMBROIDERED HANDKERCHIEF.

CHAPTER I.

THE clock of St. John's church was striking twelve as the last carriage rolled away from the door of Mrs. Vernon's residence in the neighborhood of Hudson Square. The lady and her daughter were leaning, somewhat fatigued, against the cushions of an ottoman, and talking over the events of the evening which had been devoted to entertaining a small select party, for Mrs. Vernon never gave large ones; the company being invited to meet a southern family from which her late husband received much civility during a winter he had passed in Charleston. One of the cushions having slipped down, Althea, in replacing it found an elegant pocket handkerchief, which she imme-

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diately recognised as belonging to the Carolinian heiress, Miss Fitzgerald.

"Ah!" exclaimed Althea, who was a very young girl, "I should have known this handkerchief to be Miss Fitzgerald's, even without the name she has had so delicately marked in the centre. I wonder at her carelessness in leaving so valuable a thing behind her. I was with her at Stewart's the other day when she was looking at some that were just opened; and she took six at fifty, and four at eighty dollars a-piece. Do you not recollect, mamma, I told you as soon as I came home?"

"I think I do remember something of Miss Fitzgerald's laying out several hundred dollars in one morning at Stewart's—but I thought it had been for what your uncle Waltham calls gown-stuffs."

"Oh! no indeed, mamma—that would have been nothing extraordinary; Miss Fitzgerald, of course, dresses superbly. It was all for pocket handkerchiefs. I wonder you should forget. But really, these southern people must have Aladdin's lamp in circulation among them. The money they spend when they come to the north is almost incredible."

"It is a great mistake," observed Mrs. Vernon, "to suppose that all southern families are rich, or that they universally indulge in a lavish expenditure; on the contrary, many of them are obliged

to use very close economy in their visits to our part of the Union. But the wealth of Mr. Fitzgerald is, I believe unquestionable; and, therefore, it is needless for his daughter to manifest the opulence of the family by throwing away large sums upon gew-gaws."

"Oh, mamma, cried Althea, "do not call these divine handkerchiefs gew-gaws! Only look at this (spreading it out on her hands) examines the work, and see how exquisite it is—like a delicate bas-relief sculptured by the fingers of a fairy. You must look at it closely, or you will be unable to appreciate its excellence."

"The work is certainly very fine," conceded Mrs. Vernon, "and the effect so admirable that color would rather injure than improve it."

"And the design is so beautiful," pursued Althea. "See the peacock's feathers radiating like a star from the centre where their stems cross each other so ingeniously, leaving a space for the owner's name! And the rich border of rose-leaves and buds, with the minuteness of the almost imperceptible thorns on their delicate stalks. And these charming corners—how ingeniously they are turned! And the lovely sprigs thickly scattered between the centrepiece and the border. Then look at the magnificent lace that is quilled round the hem—the ground so fine, and the edge so rich. See, it is

genuine Brussels. There now, mamma, (placing herself before a pier glass,) when I hold the handkerchief bias, gathering it a little beyond the middle, and letting one corner fall gracefully over my hand, the lace has the effect of strings of small white shells meandering about the cambric, and only united to it by transparent wreaths of woven air."

"I cannot see all this, even when you do hold the handkerchief *bias*," said Mrs. Vernon, half smiling, "and you seem to be wasting a great deal of good enthusiasm on a pocket handkerchief."

"Oh, mamma!" replied Althea, "if you would only take it into your own hands, and examine it closely, you would not wonder at my admiration."

"If its beauties are so minute as to be imperceptible without a close inspection," remarked Mrs. Vernon, "it must be a most unsatisfactory piece of finery; for I will not do the thing the injustice to suppose that it is considered otherwise than as a mere ornament."

"And so are ear-rings, mamma, and necklaces, and brooches, and all other articles of jewellery. They, also, are mere ornaments."

"True: and as such I regret that so much money should always be expended on them. But, to say nothing of the intrinsic value of rich jewels, *their* beauty is well defined, and their lustre visible even

at a tolerable distance. It must be acknowledged that the brilliancy of a few rich jewels improves the elegance of a fine head and neck, and sets off the whiteness of a handsome hand. They certainly add much to the splendor of full dress when a lady is of proper age to wear it. Thus, when *grand costume* is considered expedient, a rich satin or velvet is undoubtedly more magnificent than a plain silk. Also, with regard to feathers, flowers and blond, however costly they may be, they still have the advantage of demonstrating at a glance their quality and their beauty, and are really very ornamental. And I confess that lace and fine needle-work make a very pretty show in pelerines, collars and cuffs, particularly when worn with a dark dress. But does a lady look the more beautiful for carrying, gathered up in her hand, a piece of cambric, whose decorations and whose value can neither be perceived nor understood without a close examination. There may be much private felicity in the innate consciousness of having paid an enormous sum for the thing; but I know not how the glories of an eighty dollar pocket handkerchief can be duly manifested to the public, unless the enviable owner should display it to full advantage by pinning it over the front of her dress, spread out as an apron, the price ticketed on one corner. She might, to be sure, affix it to a wand,

and carry it as a flag, with the motto, 'See what *I* can afford.' No doubt it would attract many followers to her standard."

"Now indeed, mamma," said Althea, "you are making the subject too ridiculous. But you see that elegant handkerchiefs are becoming universal, at least among all that can possibly procure them. *Last winter I met in the street a lady leading a little girl, about three years old, and to the muff secured to the child's waist by a ribbon, was pinned a handkerchief covered with embroidery, and trimmed with a quilling of broad lace. The handkerchief was so arranged that the whole of it hung down conspicuously from the end of the muff."

"Poor child!"—remarked Mrs. Vernon—"an infant sacrifice on the altar of vanity. Every new folly is for awhile epidemic."

"Indeed, mamma," proceeded Althea, "this sort of epidemic is now so prevalent that it seems impossible to resist the contagion; therefore, we may as well yield to it at once, and be like other people. I have long been ashamed of my plain cambric handkerchiefs, fine in texture as they are. And if I had twenty dozen, I would gladly give them all for two or three beautiful things like this of Miss Fitzgerald's."

* Fact.