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MAD DUMARÈSQ.

A NOVEL.

BY

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MAD DUMARESQ.

CHAPTER I.

The Dumaresqs at Home.

A WILD, bitter night in March: the wind howling round the houses in the squares, and the rain pelting as it only can pelt in the British Isles and the Burmese Empire, where they get up an excellent imitation of an English shower for nine months in the year. Down it comes, hitting the wet and shining pavements so mercilessly that it sounds like hail, and each drop as it touches earth springs up again, and forms a tiny waterspout. The gutters run continuously with a red greasy compound of liquid clay, and from end to end of Brook Street there is not an umbrella or a cab to be seen.

It is not an evening to tempt even the poor to venture forth to gain their daily bread, and yet the rich have braved it in order to obtain what they get every day—a dinner.

Every one, that is, every one who is any one, knows Lady Olivia and Colonel Dumaresq's dinner parties, and Colonel Dumaresq intends that they shall be so known—and appreciated.

Indeed, should any luckless guest, fearing the weather, or feeling lazy, or permitting business to elbow pleasure to one side, believe, in the innocence of his imagination, that he may be excused from accepting Lady Olivia's summons, and that a similar chance at a more favourable opportunity will be afforded him, he finds himself woefully mistaken—he is never again asked to dine in Brook Street.

Not that Lady Olivia would prove so hard-hearted—it is Colonel Dumaresq, who cannot overlook the smallest slight, though unintentional; it is Colonel Dumaresq, indeed, who orders everything and everybody in that establishment, from the servants' leave of absence and cap ribbons to the Drawing-room which his wife and daughter shall attend, the opinions they promulgate, and the religion they profess.

He is a bright specimen of that charming institution, the domestic autocrat, and believes that all his pronouns, whether personal or possessive, should be headed with a capital letter. Of good birth, and married into a station above his own (although he will not acknowledge that the members of the Royal Family are his superiors), he has one great hobby, that no one of the name of Dumaresq shall ever forget he bears it—more, that no one allied with the name of Dumaresq shall lose sight of the honour attached to him—more still, that no one who serves, or nothing that is served up for, a Dumaresq shall fall short of the high standard he has