

tized intermediaries this time, but unintercepted open communication with the chieftain—briefly direct holographic letter, asking if it will suit the convenience of "My dear Brentwood" to join us as Lord Custodier.

And, in reply, somewhat more lengthy holograph from our dear Brentwood, saying that he is very sensible of the honour done him by the offer, but he finds himself for many reasons unable to accept the offer.

What could the reasons be? Whimsical, irrational, minor-poetical reasons they must indeed be—not a business-like reason among the lot. He had denuded himself of all visible means of subsistence: he had given, or was pledged to give everything—even his half share in Schiller's fruit gardens, even the life interest in that three hundred a year left to him by his mother. And the post of Custodier, though considered as a grand ornamental office, has this much that is substantial attached to it: the holder gets a salary of three thousand per annum. Yet Seymour turned his back on post and wage, as if both alike were futilities. He was penniless, he had no work to do, he wished to work—and yet he refused an income of three thousand pounds for doing practically nothing.

Curiously enough, too, it was something of the kind of post that he really desired to obtain. Trying to explain his reasons for the refusal, he spoke to Gladys with a hesitating vagueness of this other post that he was looking out for. It was, he said, not yet unoccupied; but it was the same sort of thing—only with some real work, and not sham work, to be done,—another custodiership, held by another white-haired old man who has served long and well, and who will probably be glad to retire if a painstaking successor can be appointed.

"It has been in my thought, Gladys—that I might venture to apply for it. I should like it. I wonder if I may venture."

"I am sure you may. I don't believe they would deny you anything."

"But this is quite a personal matter. Not a Party office—not in the gift of the Government."

"In the gift of the King?"

"No. In your gift. . . . Gladys, will you make me the Bailiff of Dykefield Castle? I promise to serve you with all my heart and with all my strength."