

fortable feeling of independence, sir," Jackson replied. "I have never aspired any further than that."

Thain returned to his desk. He gave letter after letter, and more than once his secretary, who had received no previous intimation of his master's intended departure, glanced at him in mild surprise.

"I presume, as you are returning to the States, sir," he suggested, "that we must try to cancel the contracts which we have already concluded for the restoration of this place?"

Thain shook his head.

"Let them go on," he said. "It makes very little difference. I have a seven years' lease. I may come back again. The letters which I gave you with a cross you had better take into your own study and type. I shall be here to sign them when you have finished."

The young man bowed and departed. David listened to the closing of the door and turned his head a little wearily towards the night. The French windows stood open. Through the still fir trees, whose perfume reached him every now and then in little wafts, he could see one or two of the earlier lights shining from the great house. Once more his thoughts travelled back to the ever-present subject. Could he have done differently? Was there any way in which he could have spared himself the ignominy, the terrible humiliation of those few minutes? There was something wrong about it all, something almost suicidal — his blind obedience to the old man's prejudiced hatred, his own frenzied tearing to pieces of what might at least have remained a wonderful dream. One half of his efforts, too, had fallen pitifully flat. The Marquis had only to keep the shares to which he was justly entitled, to free for the first time for generations his far-spreading estates, to take his place once more as the greatest