

the cottage after that event, with flushed cheeks and flashing eyes, and tempestuously demanded if this shameful story were true.

"What story?" Longworth had asked, wearily throwing himself into a chair. He knew there would be a scene, and shrank from it impatiently.

"This horrible, this cruel story, that Reine Landelle has had to run away, her only friend in the world that poor little O'Sullivan, and you—you, Laurence, chief among her accusers."

He tries to explain—tries to defend himself. She listens, the angry colour deepening in her face, the angry light shining in her eyes.

"And this is Laurence Longworth!" she exclaims; "this man who hunts down a defenceless girl, whose two worst crimes are that she has promised to marry him, and that she is too brave to defend herself at the expense of another! this man who takes sides with a heartless old woman, knowing her to be merciless as only one woman can be to another, whose years and gray hairs have brought her neither charity toward God nor man! Oh! shame, shame! I refused to believe it—I would not believe it; and now, out of your own mouth, you stand condemned!"

He tries to speak, pale, troubled, every word stabbing him, but she will not listen.

"You could look in her face and doubt her—that true, brave, innocent child's face. You could know her nearly six months, and believe her capable of treachery and crime. Oh! man, shame upon you! I tell you that if my own eyes saw, my own ears heard, I would not believe their evidence if she told me they deceived me. If Reine is false, then there is no truth left on earth. Only the night she fled—driven away homeless, friendless, penniless, by you, and that woman—she came here to me all her misery in her despairing face, poor, poor child! all her heart-break in her beautiful eyes, and talked to me of her old home in France, and the brother she loved—full of faults to others but always dear to her. She had not touched food all day, she was fainting with fasting, and we sat together in that room, and she took something before she went away. If I had only known, do you

think she would have gone—do you think I would have let her go? Or if her disgrace and misery were too great to be borne here, do you think I would not have gone with her? Your Mr. O'Sullivan is a true friend and a gallant gentleman, and when he returns, my first act will be to go to your office and thank him. For you, I am your friend no more—I want to see you here no more. I will never believe again that there is honor or common sense left in mortal man."

"What!" Longworth says with rather a dreary smile, "not even in O'Sullivan?" He rises as he says it and takes his hat, "We have been good friends for many years, Miss Hester, but I never liked you so well as I do to-night. I may have been wrong—Heaven knows—passion and jealousy may have blinded me as you say, but I thought I was right. If I have made a mistake, then Heaven help me, for I have ruined and lost forever the happiness of my whole life."

And as he goes, Hester Hariott lays her head on her arm and cries impetuous sorrowful tears for the friends she has lost.

They have not met since, and now he is on his way to tell her that she was right, he wrong.

Candace admits him. Yes, her misses is at home, and he enters without ceremony the familiar room. Miss Hariott is singing, but not very cheerily, and he catches the words she sings:

"Thro' dark and dearth, thro' fire and frost,
With emptied arms and treasure lost,
I bless Thee while my days go on."

"With emptied arms and treasure lost." Could more fitting words greet him? She rises, looking surprised, trying to look displeased, but failing.

"Hester," he says, "I have come back in the character of the prodigal, erring but penitent. I have come to own I have been a fool—the greatest fool that ever drew breath—to tell you Reine Landelle is all you have thought her, and more—noble, brave, true, loving, and loyal unto death."

"I knew it!" Miss Hariott cries joyfully. "Mr. O'Sullivan is back, and she has proved her truth. Thank Heaven for that? And she will forgive you, and all will be well?"