

face, and with lingering, affectionate lips to kiss the tear-stained cheeks, and to remove the stiffness from his eyelids.

To the man of loneliness, these attentions were exquisitely delightful. They soothed and fortified him. They calmed his nerves and ministered to clarity of thought. This was well, for there were things that needed to be said as well as those which needed to be done.

Dusk was falling. John arose, lighted a pendant lamp in the center of the long attic, and sat down again, taking Bessie's hand in his while he told her the story of the diamonds as he had told it in court — told her so much and no more; then stopped. The cessation was abrupt and decisive, but also interrogatory. John could not tell Bessie more than he could tell any one else and be true to his vow. Would she appreciate this and acquiesce? Or would she resent it?

Bessie understood the question in the silence. Her answer was to snuggle closer and after allowing time for this action to interpret itself, to say:

"That must be the bravest, hardest thing you have done, John dear; to stop just there, when telling me."

"It was," he answered softly.

"It makes me trust you further than ever," she assured him, passing her hand under his chin and pulling his cheek to hers, again with that instinct of possession. "You must not be less true but more, because of me," she breathed softly.

"But there is one thing I can tell you," he continued, "which no one else knows nor can know now."

And then he told her of Marien's visit. The girl listened at first with cheeks flaming hot and her blue eyes fixed and sternly hard. Yet as the narrative proceeded she grew thoughtful and then considerate, breaking finally with: