

"Then let me know at once what you mean by this impertinent assumption," cried Embsdenburg in tones of suppressed anger and indignation.

"Lord Embsdenburg," replied his visitor slowly and deliberately, and with the same immovable calmness which had characterized his manner from the first moment he had entered the room, "I am your father's son, his eldest son."

"And who may I ask was your mother, sir? Are you the son of the woman D'Arcy?"

"I am; and that woman, lightly as you may think and speak of her, is pure as your own mother."

At these words Embsdenburg sprang to his feet, his languor and indolence totally gone, his eye lightening with indignation, and exclaimed in a voice of thunder: "Name not my mother in conjunction with such as she, or I will instantly treat you as your insolence deserves, and fling you down the stairs."

But his self-styled brother blenched not at his fiery glance or menacing words; not a muscle of his stern dark countenance moved, "You are not mad enough to attempt it," he coolly though bitterly said, "for many reasons, but chiefly because you know right well that if you did you would find in me your match. I am not one who would submit to insult tamely, and I have a strong right arm with which to defend myself."

"Insolent scoundrel! Tempt me no farther or I will call my servants to chastise you."

"Oh! do so; if your lordship does not care for the disclosures which I can make, and which touch your dignity more perhaps than you are aware of. I fear neither you nor them, but surely one of such high spirit and lofty lineage would not in so petty a manner imitate the great prototype of all unnatural brothers."

"Beware then how you provoke me," said Embsdenburg in a calmer tone, and reseating himself, for he felt the disgraceful character of such an altercation, "and if you have any more to say, speak it at once."

"I have no desire to provoke you, my lord," said the stranger, changing the bitter and ironical tone in which he had lately spoken to the calm and impressive manner in which he had commenced the conversation; "justice, simple justice is all that I ask; I have said nothing but what I can prove. I am your father's honorable son, and my mother was an innocent though a much injured woman."

"Do you mean to say she was my father's wife?" asked Embsdenburg in the tone of one who was determined to command himself and be at least outwardly calm.

"I do."

"Man!" cried Embsdenburg, again bursting into rage, "what are you aiming at? Do you wish to prove me,"—he paused unwilling to utter the disgraceful word.

"I am perfectly aware such an attempt would be fruitless. Understand me, my lord;—I make no pretensions to your title and estate, though I do not hesitate to say that if the law of England was that of right, they should be mine. Frown not, Lord Embsdenburg, but judge for yourself. I have full confidence in your honour."

Thus speaking, he placed before the young nobleman the documents on which all his ambitious hopes depended. One was a certificate of the marriage of Basil Rochfort, Lord Embsdenburg to Una D'Arcy, in a Roman Catholic chapel in Dublin, signed by the priest who performed the ceremony, and also by the late Lord Embsdenburg. Then came some letters addressed to the same Una D'Arcy, by Lord Embsdenburg, in which he frequently styled her his beloved wife; and then, a certificate of the birth and baptism of a boy, and a declaration in the manner of an oath, affirming him to be the lawful son of Lord Embsdenburg and Una D'Arcy, signed by the latter, by the priest who baptised the child, and the prioress, and two sisters of a convent in Paris.

Young Embsdenburg quickly drank in the contents of these papers, and as he did so, his features grew deadly pale.

"I can produce some of the witnesses mentioned in these papers," said the stranger when he saw that Embsdenburg had finished their perusal.

"It is unnecessary," answered Embsdenburg; "my father's hand is proof enough. But how am I to know you are the person mentioned here?"

The stranger drew from his neck a slender hair chain to which was attached a small black silk bag, closely sewed, and cutting it open with his penknife disclosed a parchment wrapper so closely and intricately folded that it defied all his efforts to open it. His knife however quickly solved the mystery, and a sealed paper appeared, which he handed to Embsdenburg. It contained parallel documents to those already mentioned, (excepting the letters of the late Lord Embsdenburg) and a slip of paper stating that the bag and its enclosures were placed round the neck of the infant, Basil D'Arcy Rochfort on the day of his baptism, by the Prioress of the Convent in which he was born.

"Are you satisfied, my Lord?" asked D'Arcy, or Rochfort, or whatever his name might be. "If not I can produce further proof."

"I see no cause to doubt your assertions," said