

"I hope so," said Langdon, speaking in a low, subdued tone of voice, and looking towards Venetia and Valdemar, who were now approaching.

As they drew near, the keen eye of Langdon detected him in an instant—he, the coward and assassin—the unprincipled adventurer—who, behind the church of Notre Dame, in Paris, had slain in a duel, foully and unjustly, his best and dearest friend!

As he looked at him, he could scarcely suppress the wild torrent of passion that swelled his heart. He took the hand that was extended to him; but their conversation was soon interrupted by the presence of Markham.

After an exchange of compliments and congratulations between the two friends and the ladies, Markham and Valdemar walked away in the direction of the wreck.

Their conversation, it is unnecessary to set down here; but Markham was fully impressed by Valdemar's manner and speech, that he was very derelict in regard to his duty as master of a vessel.

But his countenance changed, and his feelings were strongly excited, when told by Miss Steadman, that Valdemar was in the confidence of Venetia, who loved him with all the devotion of a young, inexperienced, and guileless heart.

The interview between Markham and Valdemar occupied a considerable length of time: and, while separate from the rest of the party, Langdon had gained from Miss Steadman much information, concerning the last named gentleman and Venetia.

At last Markham came from the wreck, and entered into conversation with Venetia, whom he beheld for the first time in many years. She was now a tall, graceful and beautiful woman—matured in mind, character and form—with that extreme modesty and gentleness of manner, which characterized her in days gone by, and which is, after all, the crowning excellence in a woman's character. Markham, however, was displeased with the reception he met, evidently expecting, on her part, a greater warmth of manner and of feeling.

"Do you return this evening to the city, Mr. Markham?"

"Such is my intention; but I shall visit Norwich again, as I wish to see your father on some important business. And you too, Venetia," said he, taking her hand, and speaking in a subdued tone of voice: "do you think I shall ever forget you again as I have in the past? Ah! no. I love you now more intensely and devotedly than ever, and all I seek is your love in return."

The tone of pathetic feeling in which these words were uttered, and the strange earnestness of his manner, quite startled her as she meekly replied—

"O Mr. Markham! speak not to me of that now. I fully believe your sincerity; but this is not the time and place for conversation such as yours!"

Markham's brow lowered, as he inwardly

thought—Can she be false to me? Alas! I doubt her now. Can it be possible that that deceitful, intriguing Valdemar, who, not satisfied with the unhappiness he has brought upon me, is now tampering with the heart of the only one I loved? His heart sickened at the thought, and bowing low, he bade her farewell.

That evening after visiting the wreck, Markham started in the cars for the city, and, arriving at a late hour, proceeded instantly to his home.

Langdon remained for several days in Norwich, visiting his friends, and watching with the greatest attention, the manner and movements of Valdemar.

It was during this time that the astounding intelligence reached his ears—the suspicion of which, more than once flashed like light across his mind—of the villanous and fiendish plot of Valdemar and his co-mates, which was to take the vessel to some Southern port and there trade to the best advantage. This dishonourable scheme, however, was providentially balked by the winds and waves.

Here is something for Markham's ears,—thought he. Little does he know of the traitorous designs which have been formed against his fortune and his happiness. I shall wait patiently for stronger proof of what I have heard to-day, and will then unmask the villain to his face.

On the evening of the day when the news was first communicated to him, he called on Miss Steadman. She was sitting in a tastefully furnished room, surrounded with ornaments of ormolu and buhl—arrayed in a beautifully fitting evening dress—her dark hair falling in luxuriant ringlets over her shoulder.

"I return to the city to-morrow, Miss Steadman. Intelligence of the most painful nature, which I have heard to-day concerning this wreck, and which Mr. Markham should be informed of at the earliest opportunity, makes it necessary for me at once to depart."

"Indeed; I am very sorry that anything should be revealed which would cause Mr. Markham sorrow. I think him a very estimable person, and hear his name spoken of in the highest respect."

Langdon then mentioned his long acquaintance and with his friend—their old associations of youth—and how much they had since become attached to each other.

"I go now, Laura," he said, speaking in a tone of tenderness and love; "but I shall return again soon, for I cannot conceal from you the fact that your society is very dear to me!—for you alone are the sole object of my thoughts."

Space will not permit us to state the whole of their conversation;—sufficient to say, that Langdon left Norwich on the morrow with feelings very far different from those with which he had entered it. He had gained that which, to a young man on first setting out on the journey of life, reveals visions of bliss and domestic contentment—the possession of a pure, affectionate and trusting heart.