

her enough pain already, cruel pain, and I do not wish to add to it. Surely you have some friend whom you can bring forward to prove your words?"

Again she laughed.

"I have borne Natalie's name lately, of course," she said—"the name she took when you refused her yours—and have been known as Madame de Beranger, since my income depended upon this, as you are aware. Her friends have been mine naturally, and mine hers. One of us was known to be dead; but the one who had the rich husband who would not acknowledge her, was supposed to be alive. I had to play the part I had chosen, you know!"

"And you will swear that you were acting—swear that you are not Natalie Beranger, but Josephine?"

"I will swear this for the sum I named."

"Who was your husband? Is he dead?"

She shrugged her shoulders, and laughed aloud.

"I am happily rid of him!" she said.

"What was his name?" persisted Biddulph.

"Why do you want to know?"

"I want to trace your past history—to find out that you are not deceiving me again."

"I don't want my past history traced out. My life has not been quite a bed of roses, I can tell you; but I am ready to swear *you* are not my husband—ready to swear I took you in for the sake of getting Natalie's income, as I had none of my own. There! Will that not satisfy you? It will the young lady, I am sure, for she's so desperately fond of you that she said she would give her whole fortune to know that you were free."

Biddulph's face slightly flushed.

"And you will go to her and swear that I am?" he said—"swear before her friends that you deceived me when you pretended my wife still lived?"

"I will swear this—you know what for?"

"Yes, I know."

"And you will give me this money before I do this?"

"I will give you half of it, and my bond for the rest."

"All right. I can bring forward a friend, if you like, too, who will swear I am—Josephine."

"You had better do this. When can you bring forward this friend?"

"Let me consider—this is Tuesday. He can be down to this benighted region by Thursday. He lives in town; he is half a Frenchman."