

I mean to see Amelius and see Mrs. Payson to-morrow morning. Just tell your uncle to hold his hand before he breaks off your marriage, and wait for a telegram from me. Well? and this is your address, is it? I know the hotel. A nice look-out on the Twillery Gardens—but a bad cellar of wine as I hear. I'm at the Grand Hotel myself, if there's anything else that troubles you before evening. Now, I look at you again, I reckon there's something more to be said, if you'll only let it find its way to your tongue. No; it ain't thanks. We'll take the gratitude for granted, and get to what's behind it. There's your carriage—and the good lady looks tired of waiting. Well, now?

'It's only one thing,' Regina acknowledged, with her eyes on the ground again. 'Perhaps, when you go to London, you may see the—'

'The girl?'

'Yes.'

'It's not likely. Say I do see her—what then?'

Regina's colour began to show itself again. 'If you do see her,' she said, 'I beg and entreat you won't speak of me in her hearing. I should die of the shame of it, if she thought herself asked to give him up out of pity for me. Promise I am not to be brought forward; promise you won't ever mention my having spoken to you about it. On your word of honour!'

Rufus gave her his promise, without showing any hesitation, or making any remark. But when she shook hands with him, on returning to the carriage, he held her hand for a moment. 'Please to excuse me, Miss, if I ask one question,' he said, in tones too low to be heard by any other person. 'Are you really fond of Amelius?'

'I am surprised you should doubt it,' she answered; 'I am more—much more than fond of him!'

Rufus handed her silently into the carriage. 'Fond of him, are you?' he thought, as he walked away by himself. 'I reckon it's a sort of fondness

that don't wear well, and won't stand washing.'

CHAPTER XLI.

EARLY next morning, Rufus rang at the cottage gate.

'Well, Mr. Frenchman, and how do you get along? And how's Amelius?'

Toff, standing before the gate answered with the utmost respect, but showed no inclination to let the visitor in.

'Amelius has his intervals of laziness,' Rufus proceeded; 'I bet he's in bed?'

'My young master was up and dressed an hour ago, sir—he has just gone out.'

'That is so, is it? Well, I'll wait till he comes back.' He pushed by Toff, and walked into the cottage. 'Your foreign ceremonies are clean thrown away on me,' he said, as Toff tried to stop him in the hall. 'I'm an American savage; and I'm used up with travelling all night. Here's a little order for you: whisky, bitters, lemon and ice—I'll take a cocktail in the library.' Toff made a last desperate effort to get between the visitor and the door. 'I beg your pardon, sir, a thousand times; I must most respectfully entreat you to wait—' Before he could explain himself, Rufus (with the most perfect good-humour) pulled the old man out of his way. 'What's troubling this venerable creature's mind?' he inquired of himself; 'does he think I don't know my way in?' He opened the library door, and found himself face to face with Sally.

She had risen from her chair, hearing voices outside, and hesitating whether to leave the room or not. They confronted each other, on either side of the table, in silent dismay. For once Rufus was so completely bewildered, that he took refuge in his customary form of greeting before he was aware of it himself.