

throwing her arms round her father's neck—'but what I love and honour!'

'Your family will never consent to this marriage,' put in Mrs. Smith with a weary kind of air, like one tired of the struggle and desirous to hasten even the worst that she might lie down at last in peace. 'I made you understand my reluctance from the first; and I say now what I said then, that I cannot allow Muriel to be forced on your people against their will.'

Arthur turned to her and involuntarily drew himself up to his height. If his mother's opposition had not influenced him Mrs. Smith's was even less likely to stir him, save with a certain disdain at her presumption in making it. For with all his natural good temper, he was not very tolerant of opposition; and though in a certain sense democratic, yet it was the democracy of a man who held himself stronger than circumstance, and the one to give, not to take, the determining value of his surroundings. It was Muriel, not her people, with whom he had to deal; and the chances of their pleasure or displeasure had not been taken into his calculation at all.

'I have made my choice,' he said a little sternly; but his tone softened as he added—looking at the girl for whose sake he had just offended and renounced his mother—'Muriel is more to me than the whole world beside, and nothing can separate us but her own will.'

'And that must,' said Mrs. Smith; 'for your own sake we must not allow you to enter our family.'

'As I said before, I am the best judge of that,' he returned haughtily. 'I want no one to think for me or to arrange my affairs.'

'Poor boy!' said Mrs. Smith, her eyes filling with tears. 'We must protect you against yourself.'

The young man made an impatient gesture. At other times Mrs. Smith's maternal compassion would have pleased and warmed him; now it came with a galling sense of incongruity and interference, highly wrought as he was after that last scene with his mother, and feeling as he did that with all his love for Muriel, he had need also of some of his strength to make him overcome the aversion which such a man as he naturally felt for such a man as Edmund Smith.

'All this is beside the question,' he said proudly. 'My business lies with Muriel only, and I will take my answer only from her, after her long and deliberate choice. What do you say, Muriel? will you marry me and come with me to Australia, or am I to go there alone—my career in England destroyed, my old