

power, please comfort father.' And now he was telling her that he needed her—that he could bear his loneliness no longer. But the next moment he was drawing her towards him.

'My darling, I see you understand, only my abruptness has startled you.' Rancee, I have loved you very dearly for a long time, and I think you have grown to care for me a little. Will you be my wife, dearest? I know I could make you happy.' But Rancee's answer was hardly audible except to a lover's ear.

And so this wonderful thing had come to pass: the man whom she had secretly worshipped, and who had saved her life, loved her so well that he had asked her to be his wife. She Roger Ashton's wife! No marvel that Rancee trembled and hid her face. But as soon as she could speak she repeated Alix's words.

'Dear Alix asked me to comfort you if it should ever be in my power,' she whispered. And then, lifting her eyes shyly, 'Do you think she meant this?' Then Mr. Ashton's face grew grave for a moment.

'I cannot help thinking so,' he said quietly; 'the dear child implied as much to me. "I hope Rancee will comfort you," she said that last day; "she is so sweet and good, and I love her so." But she could say no more. I think Alix understood how it was with me, and she hoped that you would take her place as mistress of the Garth.'

Rancee flushed, and her lip quivered for a moment as though tears were not very far off. 'It seems almost too wonderful to be true,' she sighed. But Mr. Ashton smiled as he kissed her.

'You will find it true, I hope, when the spring comes,' he said quietly. 'Rancee, I am so glad you love it as you do—"the haunt of ancient peace." And