

obleege a leddy—anything to obleege a leddy,” and he looked at the other men, “but this—why—*this* is different?” addressing one of the men.

“Yes, a damn sight different,” assented that man, a stranger to Cecile, who was regarding her with fascinated eyes.

“You must ’scuse Dave, mem—but that’s it—that’s it—a damn sight different, *this* is, and—Where was I? Oh, yes. Anything to obleege a leddy, *of course*, but this,” and looking at all the men again he shook his head solemnly, whereupon each of the other men shook his head solemnly, gazed reflectively into his empty cup, and shook his head solemnly again.

“Listen to me, sirs,” said the girl. “You will hang this man you say: suppose him to be innocent: doubtless he is innocent. He was coming this way, which he would not have been doing with a horse stolen from here; he says a man sold the horse to him. What will you do when you find that he is innocent, you having hanged him?”

“We’ll hunt up the other feller and hang him too,” said Dave, with tipsy gravity.

“And you will have murdered this man to no purpose, this stranger from the East, from some part of which you all come”—and here she turned her eyes upon the bound stranger, who was watching her eagerly. Her face lighted with swift gladness; she took a step forward and reached out her hands toward him.

“Robert! oh, Robert!” she cried, using the name by which she called him in her thoughts. Their eyes met for one happy moment, and then the confusion of voices recalled her to the gravity of the present time. She faced the men with a new determination, a sudden defiance.

“Listen,” she said. “I know this man. I know him to be incapable of theft as of any other evil thing. He was my friend long ago.”

“Was he your sweetheart?” asked

Mr. Berry, forgetting himself so far as to leer at her.

“He was not, sir; he was my teacher. You have been pleased, all you men, by the manner in which I have taught your children; all things that I have taught to them he taught to me, and I know that he is an honest man.”

Had these men not been drunk, they would without doubt have believed her; but as it was, by some artful suggestion of Berry, who seemed to know how to impress an idea upon a tipsy consciousness, they thought that he was an old lover of hers, whom she was attempting to shield; he had led her astray, was Berry’s insinuation.

In the meantime, noticing that they did not heed her statement, she said, looking calmly at Mr. Allen:

“Have you no proofs of your innocence, Mr. Allen?”

He had forgotten his bound self; he was only conscious of being very sorry that Cecile should be put to such annoyance for him, and he wanted to knock the men down: now recollecting himself, he answered, “Why, there was a receipt I insisted upon receiving from the man from whom I bought the horse. This man took it from me when he was also kind enough to take my purse and other trifles. I told him its nature, but he, as well as all these others, professed not to be able to read. There it is, on the shelf, together with the other things.”

Cecile went over to the fireplace and took from the shelf the slip of paper. She glanced at the signature, and then at Mr. Berry with eyes lighted dangerously. “This is undoubtedly a receipt from the man who sold the horse,” she said.

“Some trick of hisen,” said Berry, shrugging his shoulder at his captive.

“No, I think not; especially as it is signed by your son, whose name he could not have known.”

“What?” demanded Berry, glancing half fearfully at his companions.