lunatic in a private dwelling-house, or in any house not especially licensed for the accommodation of lunatics?"

"Who said he was a lunatic?"

"You did, just this minute."
"I said he was a little wrong in his head."
"Which in plain English means that he is mad. Come, now, Lady Perriam, I'll put this matter as simply as I can. If he is sane you have no right to deprive him of his liberty. If he is mad you have no right to keep him in this house."

"I do not deprive him of his liberty."

"I do not deprive him of his liberty."

"Don't you? Would you object to my hearing him acknowledge as much with his own lips? Will you allow me to ask him the plain question—is he satisfied with his mode of life? If he answers that question in the affirmative, I will answer for you to all Monkhampton. No one shall dare to slander you if once I am in a position to give them the lie."

Sylvia had wiped her pale brow with a cambric handkerchief, a little square of thinnest tissue. She held it now in her clenched hands—held it twisted into a rag by the writhing

her clenched hands-held it twisted into a rag by the writhing

of those restless hands.

"Mordred objects to see anyone," she said; "he has shrunk

from every one since his brother's death. He is perfectly happy in his own way. Why cannot you let him alone?"

"The world will not consent to his being let alone, Lady Perriam. If you refuse my advice in this matter, if you won't let me help you, as I can help you, other people will step in."
"One of the magistrates? Would they dare to come here
and question me? Cannot I do as I like in my own house?"
"Unhappily, no. The law has a knack of looking inside

people's houses. Come, Lady Perriam, be reasonable. I am here for your own good, for your own safety. Let me see Mr. Perriam, and judge for myself as to his condition."
"You shall not see him," cried Sylvia, rising suddenly and

confronting him; still marble pale, but with a desperate look in her face which meant defiance.

"You refuse me so slight a favour?"

"You shall not see him; no one shall see him unless I choose, or until 1 choose. Let the magistrates come here. I will show them that I can be mistress in my own house."

"What reason can you have for denying me access to him?" "I have no reason. But I will not accept dictation from anyone, least of all from you. You have long tried to be master in this house. I will show you that it is not so easy to be my master as you may have thought."

She sank down upon the bench again, exhausted by that burst of passion. One little spot of crimson gleamed in the white cheeks, and the restless hands were still working

"Lady Perriam, you are wrong when you say I have wished to be your master," said the steward, bending over her, and speaking in an altered voice, a softer tone than was common to Shadrack Bain's lips, yet with the old grave earnestness of the business man. "From the first hour I saw you I have been your slave. Nay, you need fear no torrent of passionate words from me. I am not versed in the language of passion. I only know that I love won. I will not say that I loved you I only know that I love you. I will not say that I loved you from that first hour when you came into my office, brighter and lovelier to look upon than anything I had ever seen in a

dream, but from that hour I was your devoted servant-considered your interest before all others—pleaded your cause with the husband who would have stinted your dower, watched over your welfare, so far as it was in my power to protect and benefit you."

"You have always been very good to me," replied Sylvia, looking up at him with a quick, questioning glance, as if to

gauge the depth of his meaning.
"In those days, at least, my devotion must have been disin-You had a husband—I a wife. What two people could be further apart than you and I? I served you, because I admired and respected you; and if, even at that time, some warmer feeling lurked in my heart, I had never confessed as much to myself. But now the day has come when I dare speak plainty. You standard to the most the most had not a process of the confession. speak plainly. You stand quite alone in the world, Lady Per-riam—a world not too kind to defenceless youth and beauty. I am your equal in education; before your marriage with Sir Aubrey, I was more than your equal in social status. I am too well off to be open to the charge of mercenary motives.

Nothing remains but the disparity of our years. I dare to hope that the strength of my devotion is enough to weigh against that. Sylvia, I love you. The one hope of my life is to be your husband."

Lady Perriam gave no indication of astonishment, audacious as this address may have seemed to her. She sat motionless, looking downward. The agitation of a few minutes ago had passed away, and left her very calm.

To be continued.

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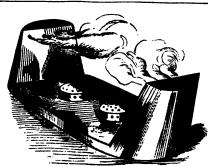
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