

The squire heard him all through with a strange and ominous silence. Not even then did he answer. He walked first several times across the long, low room; then, striking the table violently, he declared in a voice husky with passion that "the hour which made Alice Hugh's wife made him childless and Hugh homeless."

"I have not the power," he added, "to take from you the succession, and if I had I would not do it, for the land must go to a Pierson though he be the greatest fool that ever lived. But it will be the bare land, lad, be sure of that, and I have saved more than twenty thousand pounds. Then with a sudden burst of tenderness, "Hugh, my lad, twenty thousand pounds! Don't throw it away. You can have it as easily as lose it."

"Your love is dearer to me, father, than all the gold in the world; than every thing except—"

"That—that girl—"

"Except my honour and Miss Atherton."

Then the old man condescended to reason and to temporize. "The preacher's daughter is doubtless well enough; but, Hugh, it is as easy to love a rich girl as a poor one, and though I do not say marry for money, it is good, my lad, to go where money is. There is your cousin Jane, or Grace Strickland; take your choice, Hugh, and you shall furnish over the dear old house as you wish, every room in it except my own. Come, Hugh, I have loved you longest; don't desert me for a girl you have only known two summers."

It was hard for Hugh to refuse the pleading of one so dear to him, whose slightest wish had always carried the weight of a command. Indeed, it would have been omnipotent to sway him but for a low and pleasant voice which had stepped into his heart like light, filling all its chambers silently and sweetly with the persuasions of a dearer love, dearer now for its very helplessness and loneliness. How could he desert her? He entreated as strong men moved by great passions do entreat. His eloquence would have moved Reason, but it only strengthened Prejudice.

Then the anger which had been restrained burst impetuously forth. His father's taunts and sneers at the woman he loved, and the friend and pastor whose memory was holy to him, roused the young man's slow indignation; and even the passionate old squire trembled before him. Hugh did not know how nearly he had conquered, when he turned at the door, and in a voice wherein love and anger strove for mastery cried out, "Farewell, father! We shall meet no more in this world."

This hour had not come unexpected; for many months its possibility had been ever present to Hugh's mind, so it was not unprepared for. He and Alice were privately married, and left at once for Sydney, in Australia.

It was soon after this event that I paid my first visit to "Pierson Fell." I think my feelings at that time were all in favour of the lonely, proud old man, whose sorrow and sense of wrong faced me every day in such sad, hopeless eyes. I sympathized keenly