

But, no; I would go on to the end, was my thought when she continued: "Some have honors without merit, titles which they have never earned, position which birth has thrust upon them, while you have nobly earned both honors and position, and, as I believe, you care not for titles."

"Titles!" Why should she speak so lightly of them, when so soon she would bear one? I could not resist saying: "Helen, you surprise me in thus speaking of titles, when the world has already connected your name with one which it says is soon to be yours!"

"Oh, Ruben! are you, too, one of that foolish world? I could not have believed this of you, Ruben!"

I scarce knew what I was saying in my surprise and joy, when I exclaimed: "What! are you not going to marry the earl?"

"Marry the earl! I marry the earl! Oh, 'Mister Ruben!' you never believed that story, did you?" and her merry laugh was so hearty that for the first time in years she seemed the child again. I clasped her hand—I could not help it—as I asked: "Then you are free to have me tell you why my life has been saddened?"

"Free as the child whose life you once saved."

"Then, Helen, it was because I felt that I had lost forever the only one I have ever truly loved—that child whose life I saved! May I ever protect, as my own, that life?"

"Ruben, I will be your Helen forever and ever, and will never forget you. I will love you always!"