

her lap, two spots of colour gleam feverishly on her cheeks.

For Longworth, he sits mute and stricken, like a man who listens to his own sentence of doom.

"You know this much of our history, Mr. Longworth, that I lived with my father in London, and Reine went when a child to our Aunt Denise Durand in Rouen. She and Léonce grew up together, she loving him with an innocent, admiring, sisterly affection. He at the age of seventeen, taking it into his foolish boy's head that he was in love with her. It was nonsense, of course, and she laughed at him, and in a fit of pique he left home and came over to pay his first visit to us, to my father."

She pauses for a moment with a wistful, saddened look, as if the memory of that first meeting arose before her reproachfully.

For Longworth there comes to him another memory—the memory of the scene by the garden wall, where he asked Reine that imperious question. "Was Durand ever your lover?" And the low, earnest voice that answered, and that he refused to believe: "It was only fancy—he was but a boy—he was too young to be any one's lover."

Even then she had been true as truth; and he—well, he had always heard whom the gods wish to destroy they first make mad. The madness of coming destruction must have been upon him; he can understand his besotted folly in no other way.

"I am not going into details in this story I am forced to tell you," Mario goes slowly on. "Léonce's visit lasted all that winter, and when he returned to Rouen he was my lover, not poor Petite's. It was our first meeting, for though I had visited Rouen once or twice, Léonce had always been absent. We did not meet very often after that, but we corresponded regularly. I liked him always. I was never a romantic girl, but his handsome face won my fancy from the first, and no one has ever supplanted him to this day.

"Well, our lives and years went on. Aunt Denise wished Léonce to become a lawyer, but dry studies were never to his taste. He had a voice and a face that all the world told him might make a fortune, and he was ready enough to

believe the pleasant flattery. He went to Paris and studied for the operative stage; he urged Reine to study likewise for the same profession. And, as you know, for a time she did. He made his first appearance and was successful. But success spoils some natures. Léonce in its sunshine developed traits that nearly broke his Mother's heart. He became by slow degrees, but surely, a gambler, until at last he almost entirely gave up the stage for the table of the croupier. He was always at Baden, and Homburg, and Monaco—when he was not, he was in London with us. My Aunt Denise knew it, Reine knew it—the fact of his gambling, I mean; but they loved him, and hoped for him, and held their peace. Neither my father nor I knew anything of it; it is all I can say in my own defence. His pockets were always full of money, he was invariably dressed in the most elegant fashion, and we thought he made all his money in his profession. We were engaged, but secretly. Papa was ambitious for me, and thought I might do better than marry a mere singer, and we felt instinctively that neither Aunt Denise nor Reine would approve. So we met often and held our peace and were quite happy, but there was one drawback—Léonce was inclined to be jealous.

"Our house was well filled with artists of all kinds, and men of a much higher social grade. And I—well, monsieur, I did not often appear, but I was held as a sort of belle, made much of accordingly, and Léonce grew at times moodily jealous. He never had any cause, that I will say; I cared for him only, and he knew it. Still the jealousy was there, and we quarrelled and parted, and met again and made up, after the usual foolish fashion of lovers.

"Then came the time when Aunt Denise died, and the war began. Léonce went away among the first, and I learned at last in misery and sickening fear, how dear he was to me, and how miserable I would be without him. Months passed, and although he was a prisoner he was safe and well, and I resolved with my whole heart that when we met again he should have no grounds for jealousy from me, that I would be all the most exacting lover would re-