

“Depends upon what, Monsieur?”

“Upon the celerity with which M. the Préfet of Ste. Cécile accomplishes the preliminary examination of Mlle.’

“Maintenant, I will keep the jewels.’

“Maintenant, I will keep the jewels.’ That said to me, Maintenant, I will keep your letter and your papers. That said to me, when the Préfet sees your papers, your property will be restored to you, you will be exonerated from all suspicion, but your family trouble and your mother’s name will ere long be the basis of numberless sensational paragraphs in journals, French and English. That said to me, finally, ‘During the day of your detention, Creswell Charters may die—die ignorant as ever of his wife’s sacrifice.’

“But, Monsieur,’ I cried, ‘You cannot, you dare not detain me, I am an English girl. Those jewels are my property.’

“An English girl with the French face, and the French accent! Justice dares all things, Mlle.’

“There was no good hoping for mercy from this brown, sneering atom. With his low bow, and eternal ‘Mademoiselle,’ he would have passed from the room, but I pushed him aside and ran towards the stairway. I thought, Céleste and Baptiste will remember me, will swear to me, if I recall some little event of the past. Better that they two, who had known my mother, should know the sadness of her life, than that her name should be dragged up to be criticised by the world.

“I ran down stairs and into the room so impetuously, that three persons, sitting in front of the fire, started and looked round at me. They were Céleste, Baptiste, and a young man, probably the third guest of whom Céleste had spoken; certainly the owner of the fair face and hair, that I had before seen indistinctly in the subdued light. He stood up and offered me his chair; I looked irresolutely from him to the two French people. I had supposed there were only two people to whom I could apply for help; now the choice was extended to three. Now, I don’t believe in any nonsense about the instantaneous recognition of all that is virtuous, or all that is vile, in persons’ characters by merely looking at *their* faces; I hold that courage or cowardice, tenderness or brutality, fidelity or treachery, are qualities distributed quite irrespective of muscle, or colour, or nationality; but there is one thing I have faith in, and that is the strength and reliability