

"The scoundrel! How dare he write such a vile letter! No woman could have been a more faithful wife than you have been. Too faithful, I think, for you should have thought of your children's interests as well as your husband's. It is easy to find an excuse when one wants to commit a wrong against an innocent person. Somebody has slandered both of us, and Guy Pierce was only too glad to make use of the cruel slander. So far as I am concerned, I don't care much what people say, but if I hear anyone saying a word against you, I shall do my best to make him eat his words. But I do not think that because the gossips of this place have been busy telling lies about us that you should reject my offer."

"No, I cannot accept your gift. Please do not ask me."

"Would you not accept it from your husband?" asked Hastings, tremblingly.

"I have no husband. I am that most miserable and despised being, a divorced woman."

"You are a free woman, free now to marry one whom honor forbade to tell his love, one who has loved you in silence since your gentle hands bound up his wound, one who feels strong enough to face the world in your behalf, one who feels that the rest of his life will be well spent if he may be allowed to devote that portion of his life to your service. Think no more of him who has forsaken wife and children to gratify his own selfish passions. Can you not trust me with the happiness of yourself and that of your children?"

Mrs. Pierce could hardly realize that the man to whose passionate outburst she was listening was in-