

wish I could offer you what you so nobly give me, my peerless love—a heart that *never* before held another image!”

She looked at him with gravely earnest eyes.

“That is your mistake, monsieur. Permit me to rectify it. My heart *has* held another image. Eleven years ago I was as passionately, as infatuatedly in love as it is possible for any romantic girl of seventeen to be. I am eight-and-twenty now, monsieur, and many men have loved me, or said so, but until to-night they have told me in vain; for the man I loved so strongly and impetuously well-nigh broke my heart, and all those years have scarcely healed the wound. I loved him very dearly, and he—monsieur, I was no more to him than the dirt under his feet.”

The artist listened in pale surprise.

“He was a brute—an idiot—a blind, besotted imbecile! Good heavens! that the man should exist whom *you* could love in vain! But you have forgotten this cold-blooded ingrate—you love only me?”

Only you,” with her most radiant smile. “Have I not said so? And now that we have made our mutual confession and settled our future plans, suppose we return to the drawing-room? They will certainly miss us, and—who knows?—they may guess the truth. We will find Leonie looking carving-knives and strychnine, I am positive. Come!”

Without waiting for him, she glided away, with a last brilliant glance and smile, and mingled calmly with her guests.

But he did not follow immediately. He lingered behind, to try and realize his supreme bliss—to try and still the mad throbbing of his undisciplined heart.

He tried in vain; for when he came forth, his worn, dark face told his joyful tale to all beholders, glowing with inward delight.

“Gad!” said George Waldron, pulling his mustache meditatively, “Bartram’s been hoisted to the seventh heaven since he went into that little room. Look, Mrs. Rutherford—look at that ecstatic face! Your cousin was in there, too. Do you suppose that she has had anything to do with it? He may have proposed—I have seen it coming for some days past—and she may have refused;