

my wife to be made love to by another man. Could anything be plainer?"

"And you heard no more—not Reine's reply?"

"I heard no more; I wished to hear no more. The following evening I sought out your sister, upraided her with her falsity, and told her what I had heard."

"And she?" Marie asks, clasping her hands, "what said she?"

"Not one word. Let me do your sister this justice, mademoiselle; when she is found out she never attempts futile vindication. She accepts discovery and does not add to treachery by lies."

"Oh!" Marie says, bitterly, "you are indeed without pity or mercy—you are indeed a stern and cruel man. My little one! my little one! what have I not made you suffer—what shame, what pain, what humiliation. And Léonce too! Ah, Léonce has paid dearly for the keeping of a secret."

"Secrets are like firebrands, mademoiselle, we can't expect to carry them about and go unscorched. But in your commiseration for your sister, are you not talking a little wildly, Miss Landelle? If a wife weaves her plot to win an inheritance, and fools men into making her offers of marriage—"

"Monsieur, be silent! You have said enough. Reine Landelle is no man's wife; she is pure, and true, and innocent of all wrong as an angel."

He regards her frowning; doubt, anger, distrust in his face.

"What do you mean? Am I not to believe what my own ears hear, what my own eyes see?"

"If your ears tell you she is false—not if your eyes that she is not what she claims to be—no! a hundred times no! I tell you she is no man's wife, and I think she has reason to rejoice she will never be yours."

"Enough of this mystery!" Longworth exclaims, rising in angry impatience. "Speak out the whole truth, or do not speak at all. Where then—who then, is the wife Durand spoke of?"

"She is here! I am Léonce Durand's most wretched wife!"

"You!" he stands stunned: he looks at her in blank silence. "You! Mademoiselle Marie."

"I am not Mademoiselle Marie—I have deceived you all. I own it now, when it is too late. I came to this place Léonce Durand's wife, and, as you say, for the sake of an inheritance, denied it."

He sits suddenly down. His face still keeps that stunned look of utter amaze, but with it mingles a flush of swift, half incredulous hope.

"If you only say this," he begins, "to vindicate your sister—"

"Bah! that is not like your customary sound sense, Mr. Longworth. Am I likely to do that? Reine is of the kind to make sacrifices, to be faithful to death through all things—not I. You are glad that I have told you this—yes, I see you are, and when all is explained, and you can doubt no longer, you will cease to doubt. You will even be ready to forgive her for having been falsely accused and condemned, and condescend to take her back. But, monsieur, if I know my sister, she will not come back. Faith ceases to be a virtue where all is open and clear. If you believe in her, and trust her, because doubt has become impossible, where is your merit as a lover and a friend? Reine will not return to you. She is proud, and you have humbled her to the very dust. In spite of you, I can see that you love her, and will lament her, and I am glad of it. Yes, monsieur, I say to your face—I am glad of it. You do not deserve her, you never did. She is an angel of goodness, and fidelity, and truth—and you are—what are you, Monsieur Longworth? What is the man who accuses and hunts down a helpless girl—the girl he has asked to be his wife? Do you suffer? Well I am glad of that too; you deserve to suffer. Listen, and I will tell you all the truth—the truth which Reine knew, and which she might have told, and so saved herself. But she would not, for a promise bound her. She loved me and Léonce, and was true to us. Listen here!"

It is evident Marie can speak when she chooses, habitually silent as she is. All her languor, all her indolent grace of manner are swept away, and her words flow forth in a stemless torrent. Deep excitement burns in her steadfast eyes, her hands are tightly clasped in