

in poverty and disgrace, should be the first to desert us in our prosperity.'

Bergen did not immediately reply. He lit the lamp overhead and put fresh fuel on the fire. He dared not resume his work. She might discover his weakness. From her, above all others, he must keep his sad secret. 'I don't know that I can explain it in a way that you will understand. You must not overlook the fact that the ways of wealth and poverty lie far apart—far enough to destroy sympathy. It *should* not be so, but it *is* so. There appears to be no harmony between the cottage and the mansion. Wealth seems to lack the *will* and poverty the *courage* to bridge the gap.'

'Do you mean to say,' she cried, rising with tears of indignation in her eyes, 'that you have a moral right to estrange yourself because we became rich accidentally? Is that true democracy?'

Bergen winced. She little knew the strain she was placing upon him. He dared not look at her in tears. 'I respect and honour you all as much as I ever did, but—' He stopped abruptly for lack of words and pumped thoughtfully at his bellows till the fire waxed brighter.

She looked at him through her eyelashes with an inward glow of admiration. His arms were bare to the elbows, his cap was pushed back from his forehead and his earnest face was lit up with the glow of the fire. He was in deep study.

'But what, Bergen?'

'I don't know that I am at liberty to make any further explanation.' The words came with a deep sigh.

'The gulf has been of your making. You told mother you thought it was her duty to let me mingle with the rich and great of the Old World before forming an attachment. She asked your advice. You gave it and it was acted upon. You seemed anxious to get us away.'