

try . . . I hope. I mean it always to be for the best," she said piteously.

"It can't be for the best if you do a thing of that sort," he answered her, in his old dictatorial fashion. "I'm not going over the whole story again. We don't serve any good purpose, and besides, I want to put it all behind me as fast as I can," he added irritably; "but this part about you has got to be threshed out between us. I'm not going to stand any rotten nonsense! Of course, you know quite well that if I consent to let things go on as Sir Thomas says they must go, it doesn't mean that I like the position any better than I did yesterday, but I've found out what you said was true. I'm fixed up legally with the name, and the money is mine legally also. To go against this would not only mean making everything public for no particularly good reason, but it would spoil Belle's life, and I've got to think of her.

Olivia Mary waited as he paused and took some impatient turns to and fro.

Suddenly he faced her.

"I've got the right to take care of you, and I'm d——d if I'll let anyone else do this! So that's flat."

Her lips quivered and her eyes dilated a little. "But if—if I really *want* to make a fresh life for myself, . . . if I really prefer to do what Sir Thomas told you I intended doing?"

It was the old familiar John Cheston who answered her.

"You can't! You aren't free to make plans or change things; you were left to my charge, and if it stands that I must keep to what I've got, no matter how I feel