

only to find his ally buttonholed by a Philistine, and so lifted his glance reluctantly again to the face above him.

The general's gaze swept the slender figure and delicate features before him with eyes whose consciousness seemed to be coming from a great distance toward some painful reminder. For the moment the two were alone at that end of the room. "Sir," said the soldier, before the other had thought what to do, "I think it my duty to tell you that my son's marriage will not alter the regularity of our present procedure."

"Ah!" replied Corenzio, the sensitive muscles in his face stirring once before he stiffened them.

"When the last payment is made," the general went on, in a lower key, "I shall ask your permission to say a word to you, sir."

"Say it now, pray," replied the younger man, recovering with a snatch the insolence which seemed slipping from him. "This is a festival, I believe. I like contrasts of color. You, too, are dramatic. Out with it, please." He seemed trying to drop his shoulders negligently against the wall as before, but halted half-way, constrained.

"Thank you, sir. It is this." The general moved nearer. "I shall believe in my soul, sir, until I die, that my father never wilfully defrauded yours. Don't go, sir! He lost the money certainly, through some carelessness no doubt. But character tells, sir, character tells. A poor business man, sir,