

HER FANCY AND HIS FACT 429

by Heaven, I'd kill him without a minute's grace if I had him in my power!"

Still pacing to and fro and thinking, he wore the slow hours away, and at last the grey peep of a misty, silvery dawn peered through his window. He threw the lattice open and leaned out—the scent of the wet fields and trees after the night's storm was sweet and refreshing, and cooled his heated blood. He reviewed the whole situation with greater calmness,—and decided that he must not be selfish enough to grasp at the proffered joy of marriage with the only woman he had ever loved unless he could be made sure that it would be for her own happiness.

"Just now she hardly knows what she is saying or doing," he mused, sadly—"Some great disappointment has broken her spirit and she is wounded and in pain,—but when she is quite herself and has mastered her grief, she will see things in a different light—she will realise the fame she has won,—the brilliant name she has made—yes!—she must think of all this—she must not wrong herself or injure her position by marrying me!"

The silver-grey dawn brightened steadily, and in the eastern sky long folds of silky mist began to shred away in thin strips of delicate vapour showing peeps of pale amber between,—fitful touches of faint rose-colour flitted here and there against the gold,—and with a sense of relief that the day was at last breaking and that the sky showed promise of the sun, he left his room, and stepping noiselessly into the outside corridor, listened. Priscilla's door was wide open—and as he passed he looked in,—she was fast asleep. He could not hear a sound,—and though he walked on cautious tip-toe along the little passage which led to the room where Innocent slept and waited there a minute or two, straining