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CHAPTER XXIX.

COKE did not stay to luncheon with Nora Black. He went away saying to himself: "Either that girl don't care a straw for Coleman or she has got a heart absolutely of flint, or she is the greatest actress on earth or—there is some other reason."

At his departure, Nora turned and called into an adjoining room. "Maude!" The voice of her companion and friend answered her peevishly. "What? Don't bother me. I'm reading."

"Well, anyhow, luncheon is ready, so you will have to stir your precious self," responded Nora. "You're lazy."

"I don't want any luncheon. Don't bother me. I've got a headache."

"Well, if you don't come out, you'll miss the news. That's all I've got to say."

There was a rustle in the adjoining room, and immediately the companion appeared, seeming much annoyed but curious. "Well, what is it?"

"Rufus Coleman is engaged to be married to that Wainwright girl, after all."

"Well, I declare!" ejaculated the little old lady.