

"Mr. Longworth," she says, frigidly, "I have accepted you. I am ready to marry you; I do not dislike you, and I own you are an honourable gentleman. Is anything more necessary? Believe me, I do not expect fine speeches from you—I would much rather not have them. They force me to doubt your sincerity; and I would rather think you sincere."

"You certainly understand plain speaking," he says, drawing a hard breath, but half laughing. "Suppose—only for curiosity's sake—suppose I told you I was in love with you—would you believe that?"

"Most certainly not, monsieur."

"And why? A man might fall in love with you, might he not, Mademoiselle Reine?"

"I do not know why we are talking nonsense," replies Mdlle. Reine, looking at him with brightly angry eyes. "You often do, I know; but this is hardly a time or them for jest. We will leave love out of the question, if you please, once and for all. You will speak to Madame Windsor when and how you choose, but these are the terms upon which I accept you—that half her fortune goes to Marie."

"Good night, Mademoiselle Reine," he says, brusquely, and bows and turns to go, but she lays one hand on his sleeve and smiles in his face.

"Now I have made you angry, and all because I would not talk sentimental nonsense. You always shake hands when you say good night, do you not? Indeed, you are always shaking hands, I think. Let us shake hands Monsieur Laurence."

He laughs and obeys, and she goes with him to the door, still smiling radiantly. Is she developing coquetry, too, he wonders?

"The sort of girl to make a fool of any man," he thinks, half grimly, recalling the brilliant eyes and smile; "piquant, provoking, half bewitching, wholly exasperating, having more than any other I ever met that

Caressing and exquisite grace, never bold. Ever present, which just a few women possess.

The day shall come—that I swear—when she will not only forgive me for bringing her here, and refusing to rob

her, but also for asking her to be my wife!"

Mr. Longworth goes on with his usual routine of office work next day, and it is after dinner before he turns his steps towards the gray Stone House. He finds Mrs. Windsor sitting alone in her favourite room, in her favourite chair, her white hands folded in her black silk lap, her eyes fixed on the gray summer evening outside. No voice in high, sweet singing greets him as he draws near, and he feels a curious sense of blankness and disappointment in the fact.

Mrs. Windsor welcomes her friend, and informs him she is suffering from a slight headache, and wonders why he has come to see her this evening.

"Why not this evening?" the gentleman inquires. "Where are the young ladies?"

"Where I imagined you to be, at the concert. Frank Dexter came here for Marie half an hour ago."

"Oh! to be sure, the concert. I had forgotten all about it. And fully intended to ask Reine. By the way, with whom has she gone?"

"Her bosom friend, Miss Hariott, I believe."

Longworth's brow clears. Mrs. Windsor's eyes are fixed piercingly upon him.

"You meant to ask Reine?" she repeats, slowly. "Do I apprehend you correctly? Reine?"

"Reine. Congratulate me, my dear madame, and consent to receive me into your family. Last night I proposed, and was accepted."

"Proposed!" she echoes, in a bewildered way; "last night! Not to—surely not to—"

"Reine. Of course, to Reine. It appears to me I concealed my intentions well, or every one has been singularly blind. When we talked together that night, coming from the picnic, I meant to offer myself to your younger granddaughter, if to either. And I am happy to tell you she has said yes."

"Laurence," Mrs. Windsor says, in slow wonder, "do you mean to tell me you are in love with her?"

"Madame, excuse me. That is a question your granddaughter herself never put. When I answer it, it must be to