

"Mercy, I want you to promise me this one thing: that if the day comes when you do marry, it shall not change or spoil the quality of that friendship which you have given me."

"I promise you that, Colin."

The gravely serious eyes lifted to his face with the slow kindling of light in their depths, soon to be merged in the smile which would flood the face with sunshine, brought vividly back to the heart of the man the child's eyes as he had seen them first, as they had looked forth at him, half with welcoming sweetness, half with a certain tentative compassion, when she had first come upon him, with his arms round the neck of Captain Muggs, upon the occasion of the festivities of her seventh birthday.

How long ago it seemed!—and yet it might have been but yesterday! For the eternal spirit of childhood lingered yet in the heart of Mercy the woman. That was one of the qualities which time would never change, an endowment of which the world and its wisdom would never rob her.

Then he smiled back into her face, with that sudden triumphant shining in his eyes which brought the boy Colin back to her—the boy as he had been in those happy moments when no shadow of mystery or of fear lay athwart his path.

"Thank you, Mercy. You have promised. I know how your promises are kept."

Earnestly she looked at him. Into her eyes a tiny spark of wistfulness crept—and with it something of a faintly tentative compassion, which illumined her face with an expression that made him catch his breath.

"Colin . . . and you, yourself . . . those words you spoke once. . . . Do you still feel the same?"

Grave was his face; but full of a high courage and lofty resolution.

"I have not changed, Mercy. I have thought of it again and yet again. There is something . . . shall I call it curse? . . . upon the name of Dare. It breaks out in many forms. We ourselves have seen the tragedy of it. Let the name die with me. It is not a heritage to transmit