

She fell in love herself for the first time in her life, and he with her, so he declared. But he was miserably poor and with the pride of a Castilian would not woo her because of her money. She hated it, yet she could not live without it.

The minister smiled pityingly.

However she made him marry her, and then proposed as a test, in which he joyfully acquiesced, that he should make himself of use to her, be in fact, her major-domo, steward, butler, amanuensis, anything and everything.

"It is most unprecedented," sighed the minister. "That a man with Castilian blood in his veins—"

Miss De Grammont interrupted him. "He was happier so, dear cousin. But I—I grew most unhappy. And since I have been here, I have been very unhappy still. We are both in a false position and now—thanks to that unlucky hammock—our secret has become common property."

"The hammock!" said Mr. Fielding. "What has that got to do with it? It is a pretty idea."

"So I think," said Miss De Grammont, delighted beyond measure. Then she told him about the paragraphs, large and small, the confidential friends, the small beginnings that had lead insensibly up to the culminating point—that of scandal.

"I am being dropped gradually," she said.

"Of course you are," said the minister. "Of course you are. Soon you will be—forgive me—a dead letter. There is only one thing to be done and that I can do at once. A letter must be written to this paper, stating calmly in as few words as possible that this paragraph is true, that you *are* married to Prince—ah—Corunna, that he *is* a political offender and for that reason the marriage *was* kept secret, but that now of course as informers must already have given the secret away, you are obliged to endorse it yourself."

"But José is not a political offender! Never did anything wrong in his life!"

"Of course not," said the minister. "Some of us others, even clergymen, are not so fortunate. Now that must be included, else there is no good reason for having kept your marriage secret. Other explanations will not be taken. Besides this will entitle you to sympathy at once. Will you write the letter and I can leave it at the office for you? There is time for me to do that before my train starts."