

"Mr. Longworth," she says earnestly, "why has Reine gone?"

"Miss Landelle, need you ask? Did not Miss Harriott write explicitly enough? Because Monsieur committed the robbery, and she was present at the time."

"Present at the time? Do you mean to say Reine aided him in robbing Madame Windsor?"

"Mademoiselle, these questions are very painful. You oblige me to tell the truth. Yes."

"My grandmother believes this?"

"She does."

"You believe this, Mr. Longworth?"

"I have no alternative, Miss Landelle."

She is still for a while, silently looking at him as if trying to read him as she sits there, impassive, inflexible, coldly stern before her.

"Monsieur," she says, leaning forward, the flood of gas-light falling on her beautiful, colourless face, "will you answer me a question? You asked my sister to marry you—did you love her the least in the world?"

"I decline to answer the question, Miss Landelle."

"You need not," she says, contemptuously; "you could not love any one. But surely, without love, you might have trusted her. What had she done to be thought a thief?"

"Perhaps you will inquire next, mademoiselle, by what right we stigmatize your friend and hers by that opprobrious epithet—why we dare brand Durand as a robber?"

"No," she says, sudden, profound emotion in her tone; "no I know too well what was his motive and temptation. But that you should doubt Reine—believe her guilty of crime—yes, that indeed bewilders me. How could any one look in her face and believe her guilty of any wrong?"

"Mademoiselle we learn as we grow older 'how fair an outside falsehood hath'; your sister stands condemned out of her own mouth."

"What did she confess?"

"By her silence, by her refusal and inability to answer the questions that she was with him when he committed this robbery."

Marie still sits and looks at him, a

touch of scorn in her face that reminds him of Reine.

"But surely, monsieur, a thief would not stick at a lie. If she could steal, or aid a thief, she could tell falsehoods to screen her crime. And yet you say she preferred standing silent to speaking falsely."

"I do not pretend to understand a lady's motives," Longworth says impatiently; "at least she would not betray her lover."

"Reine would betray no one. She was true as truth itself—who should know better than I? But monsieur, pardon my curiosity: why do you say 'her lover'?"

"Her husband, then, if you prefer it. Her secret of course is no secret to you."

He says it with a passionate gesture that shows her the pain this self-possessed man is suffering, in spite of himself. She listens and watches him, and a light breaks slowly over her face.

"His wife!" she repeats, "Reine the wife of Léonce! Oh! *Mon Dieu!*" what a strange idea! Monsieur, I beg of you, tell me why you think this? Surely she has never said anything that could make you think so extraordinary a thing. For the whole world Reine would not tell a falsehood."

"And this would be a falsehood?"

"The falsest of falsehoods."

"And yet I heard his own lips proclaim it, heard him call her his wife. I charged her with it and she did not deny."

"She did not! Oh! my sister, even I have not known half your goodness. Mr. Longworth, there is a terrible mistake here which I alone can clear. Tell me the exact words, if you remember them, that Léonce spoke—for indeed I cannot understand how he ever could have called her his wife."

"I remember them well," Longworth sternly answers, "they were words not easily forgotten. It was the night of the theatricals—you remember it—the place Miss Harriott's garden. He was excited that night—you probably remember that also, for I saw you were annoyed—and consequently off guard. The words were these—'I will not go. I had the right to come, I have the right to stay. I will not go and leave