

paper, and like the rest of them, she won't waste attentions on a ruined man !”

But even as he spoke a woman crossed his threshold. As he stared at her his heart almost stopped beating. Surely this was a ghost ! Surely that sweet, worn face, framed in white hair, belonged to the mother whose death had shadowed his boyhood ! But no, — the figure moved, and a well-remembered voice said, “ Jack !”

“ Jack !” His old pet name ! How long it was since he had heard it, and how good it sounded ! Involuntarily he held out his arms and the next instant she was clinging to him.

“ Jack ! My dearest and best ! I've just heard of your trouble and I've come to bring you home. Money isn't everything, my brother, and we'll all be happy together. We haven't much, but we'll share our last penny with you so gladly, so lovingly ! My husband is here too. Dear, you'll let him come in ?”

John Raymond's throat hurt him. He could not speak, but he nodded.

Beatrice Langdon called out, “ Robert,” and a tall, broad-shouldered man entered.

“ Glad to see you, Mr. Raymond ! Merry Christmas, — very many of them ! Has Beatrice told you how anxious we are to have you with us ? If you'll so far honor us I'll take it very kind, — very kind indeed !”

He rattled on nervously, but no matter what he said or how he said it, the exquisite courtesy which confers a favor as though it were accepting one, permeated every word.

Raymond was overcome, and turning away he covered his face.

That newspaper was a canard which he had considered it beneath his dignity to notice or deny ; his immense fortune was quite safe, but the two whom he had so cruelly neglected, and who now offered to share their little all with him, did not know this.

After a moment Robert Langdon said, “ Beatrice, I'd better leave you alone with him for awhile. He's quite upset. I'll wait for you both outside,” and he tiptoed from the room.