

A WOMAN'S PREFERENCE 11

"Then I suppose neither the brother nor sister knows about us?"

"God forbid," cried my father, fervently. "Unless, of course, Madame Chansette has told them. But she's a discreet woman, although she is Spanish; and I don't think she'd be so stupid as to tell them."

"It's a rum kettle of fish," I said, meditatively; and my father winced at the expression.

"What Lascelles said is rather true, you know, Ferdinand. You are very slangy in your conversation. I really think, now that you have to climb the diplomatic ladder, you should try to curb the habit. Elegance of diction stands for so much in diplomacy."

"It is certainly a very involved situation, sir, was what I meant," I answered, gravely.

"That's much better, Ferdinand, and quite as expressive. I wish to feel proud of you, my boy, and hope you will be very successful. I have great trust and faith in you, I have indeed, if you will only try always to do your best."

"I will try to be worthy of the trust, sir," I said, earnestly, for he was more moved than I had ever seen him.

"I am sure you will, Ferdinand, God bless you;" and he gave me his hand. Then I was guilty of an anticlimax.

"I think I should like to say, sir, that I know, of course, the reason why my absence is desirable, and I hope that it will serve its purpose. I am not in the least troubled about going."

"I am glad to hear that, my boy. Of course, Lascelles must make a wealthy marriage if possible. We've all known the—the limitations inevitable where