

IN THE TUMULT OF THE STORM 9

"You've said all that before, Mr. Haggard, and I refused to listen. I thought you'd given up your mad idea. If I'd any notion you were going to re-open the tiresome business I'd never have promised to see you off at Southampton. You must own I only did so at your urgent entreaty, and on condition that we should travel as ordinary acquaintances."

"Not ordinary acquaintances, Alicia—don't say that. We are friends, surely. I was your father's friend, and before he died—ten years ago—I promised him I would always look after you. I've done so to the best of my ability. I took the greatest trouble in selecting the best possible school for you; I've invested the small sum your father left you to such advantage, that in ten years it has more than doubled itself, and you, at twenty-one, have now an income of £100 a year, and—and——"

"And as a reward for all your trouble I was to have the privilege of becoming your wife," she interposed icily. "No thank you. If you wish me to carry out my promise don't say another word on what to me is the most unpleasant subject in the world. I refuse to listen."

She turned her face from her companion and stared into the frowziness of Waterloo Road. There was nothing to interest her there, indeed, to judge by her look of absorption, it is doubtful whether she saw anything. The Waterloo Road is not particularly inspiring at any time, and just now it was at its worst. The rain was coming down with a persistency which meant long continuance. It was the middle of an unusually wet July.