

milton Miller is the rightful heir. We are beggared?"

He covered his face with his hands as he concluded. Florence was very pale, but calm. She acknowledged the justness of the claim, yet she could have surrendered their wealth to any one better than Hamilton Miller. After a pause she said,—

"Papa, surely he will not call upon you to pay all that back which you so innocently spent, knowing how impossible it is for us to find the means?"

"He does—he will—my child! He mentioned one condition alone that would make him forget it. I rejected it. He refused to hear me; he said rejection or acceptance must come from your lips and no other's."

"Mine!" ejaculated Florence. "Nay, papa, do not speak. I can divine the condition such a man would make. He would have me recall my words. He would have me become his wife."

"Oh, papa!" she cried, bursting into tears, as she fell on his shoulder, "forgive me, but I cannot do it!"

"Florence I do not ask you. Truly to accept would give your wealth."

"With Hamilton Miller to share it!" she interrupted. "Better ruin, death! Heaven pardon me!" she added, abruptly. "How selfish am I! How will you bear penury?"

"Better than see you that man's wife."

A joyous smile broke over the girl's face.

"Papa," she cried, "can this really be?"

"It is, my child. Preferable all the misery we may have to endure, to my mind, than to see you, so good, so pure, wedded to one so dissipated, heartless, cruel and vicious as Hamilton Miller. Your noble decision has filled my heart with pleasure indeed."

He clasped her to him, and, strong in each other's love, the sad future lost its terrors.

The next morning when Hamilton Miller rode up to Mr. Edwards' residence, to learn Florence's decision, he found father and daughter gone and a brief letter conveying to him a cold refusal. A dark, stormy expression settled upon his face.

"Never mind" he muttered, "I can

be revenged. Walter Edwards shall pay every penny, or toil in a workshop?"

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The red blush of autumn had been drowned in the wintry rains, which had disappeared under the balmy breath of spring; and Walter Edwards and Florence, in a poor apartment, was still struggling hard for bare subsistence. Hamilton Miller, had proved inexorable, the debt must be paid. Their sad reverses had told much on Walter Edwards, now a grey-haired, melancholy man. They had made the young girl, too, thin and quiet. But in her existence remained one bright spot—hope—in Morton Barris. She had written to him, telling him all that had happened to them, and when she thought he would soon be in California, her fingers worked more nimbly, while the smile with which she cheered her father grew brighter. Never once did she doubt Morton's love. True, he had not written, but many things might have prevented that; and Florence bright and expectant, waited—waited till her heart grew sick, for there came no word no sign. Ah! how bitter it is when the young find their sweetest hope, their firmest trust, deceived! Florence was beginning to experience this. With a cruel, dull agony she was commencing to think that he she so fondly loved was but of common clay—that Morton Barris had left her. Yet it was difficult to renounce all hope, and Florence trusted on, till one day she could doubt no longer.

She was returning from giving a music lesson, when on the other side of a crowded street, she beheld Morton Barris himself. The old, well remembered smile rested on his manly face; only—poor Florence!—it was even brighter than usual. He was in San Francisco, then, and had not seen her. Could he have smiled thus had he really loved her, knowing her misery? No. Thankful she had not been recognized, with a dull weight on her brain, a numbness on her limbs, like one in a dream, she walked melancholy home, entered their simple apartments, and fell insensible to the floor.

Days elapsed before she recovered sufficiently to tell her father what had happened; but he knew it already; in