

perfectly free. I waited until you came of age, and I was careful to find out that your affections were not placed elsewhere before I spoke to you of my earnest wish."

The girl turned upon him sharply, the corners of the beautiful mouth quivered for an instant.

"You were careful to find out! And what have you found out?" she exclaimed indignantly. "Have you been spying upon me?"

"No—no—no! As if I should! anything so base! I only judged by your own ways, your talk, your looks. If the constant delight of gazing upon you, of hearing your voice—if the one hope that has possessed me ever since I came from Jamaica means spying upon you, you're right. I plead guilty to nothing else."

There was intensity, passion, in the hard, rasping voice, but the girl was not impressed. It was as much as she could do to preserve her calmness under the strain of nervous irritation.

Some student of human nature once said that women take the compliments of young men to mean love, and the love-making of old men as mere compliments. Alicia shrugged her shoulders. The earnestness of David Haggar possibly struck her as ludicrous. If so, she was not without justification. The union of one so fresh and fair with David Haggar, the drawback of his sixty years accentuated by his shrivelled body, his dried waxy-like complexion, his colourless lips and his pale sunken eyes, most people would call unnatural, if not unholy. As ideas go now-a-days sixty is not considered old, but Haggar's long residence in a hot climate had aged him by at least ten years.