

SP.—What! Can my own Laura—my future wife—be turned by the frowns or the sneers of the world from a course which her own conscience does not forbid? Ah, think again. The atmosphere of this place surely cannot have changed you so much—our thoughts—our feelings, still are one.

L.—Changed? Never can I change in anything towards you. I regret that circumstances render such a step necessary. To be romantic, has become the affectation of half the brainless young misses in the country; an elopement, the very pinnacle of their wishes. One of these romantic ladies will mope, talk of melancholy, quote from garbled addresses to the moon, until she imagines herself in love, and imagines all the world opposed to her wishes. She then elopes with a fool who wears no cravat, and repents of it all the rest of her life.

SP.—And do you fear, then, this consequence—

L.—Ah, you smile at my silly sensitiveness. True, it is very foolish. I will not be influenced by the opinion of any—no, none but you, and my own conscience.

SP.—And may your own conscience and your husband's will never clash! That is the most sincere prayer of my soul; for well I know, that in the intensity of that prayer, lies the grand secret of real, lasting, connubial happiness.

L.—Happiness! Heaven grant that our fond hopes may not be crushed!

SP.—Oh, they shall not be. I have come here now to receive your hand. I cannot—will not return until you are my wife. We will not look at the dark side of the picture. Let us believe—let us determine, that all shall be as we wish.

L.—It shall be so. (*A rustling among the leaves.*) Heavens! There is some person coming this way. I dare not stay a moment longer. I shall certainly be missed—my aunt is on the alert. Good night. We shall soon meet here again.

SP.—Good night, my angel. (*Exit Laura by the gate.*) Ah yes, this will, henceforth, be to me a sacred spot. But I trust, there will soon be an end to these stolen interviews. Yes, Laura, angel, you will soon be mine—mine alone. (*Exit.*)

*Enter Nero.*

NERO.—Ha! Some blasphemy going on here. I don't deprove of these improprieties. No, I don't approve of them at all. (*Walking up and down and gesticulating violently.*) I don't believe in these things. I won't believe in nobody, that's the fact of it. The world's a mass of rottenness and improprieties. And what's the reason of all this, eh? Just prejudice against colour. Nothing else. The arts and sciences all going to the devil—just for that account. The prejudice of that Missa Topton is—is—oh Lord! May be that's him now. (*Conceals himself among the foliage.*)