

fail to respect goodness. And I made up my mind that if you would ask me I would try and make the best of it, and say yes quietly. I am not a brave girl, monsieur; I have always been cared for and cherished, and as the thought of being turned on the world alone and poor was terrible. There was Marie, too; I had to think of her. So I made up my mind to say yes if you spoke, and offend you no more. But when you came—and sitting here alone I was thinking of France—oh, my France!" she stretches out her arms, a heart-sob in every word—"and it all took me so by surprise that I was shocked, and you saw it. But that is over now, and I have shown you my heart as the good God sees it. And if you go to madame, my grandmother, and tell her you cannot take me, it will only serve me right."

The impassioned voice ceases, and the silence that follows is long. Mr. Longworth breaks it at last.

"It is for the home and the fortune you consent to marry me then? Only this?"

"Only this? What else could there be?"

Again silence. Again Mr. Longworth speaks in a curiously constrained voice.

"You do not absolutely dislike me, you say? You are sure of that?"

"I am quite sure. If I owed you less I might like you more."

"You mean if I had not refused to rob you and your sister of your birth-right, if I had not pleaded with your grandmother to do you a simple act of justice, if I had not closed at once with her wish that I should marry you, closing with my own at the same time, you mean that you might even like me?"

"Yes, monsieur," she says, frankly, and at the absurdity of it she half smiles, "I mean that. For it would not be so hard to—to like you, I think."

"Well," he says, "these are my crimes. I stand arraigned and must plead guilty. I must also, as you do not absolutely dislike me, peril your good opinion still further by persisting in wishing to marry you. It sounds like a paradox somehow," he says, a smile breaking up the gravity of his face. "You are quite certain, made-

moiselle, you do not wish me to give you up? I will do it if you say so."

"Indeed I do not," she answers, with almost startling candour. "I should be very sorry if you did."

"I would not marry an unwilling wife," says Mr. Longworth, steadily. "We are situated so oddly, I hardly know what to do—you unwilling, yet willing. Perhaps when the time comes you may give yourself to me of your own free will. And until you can our wedding day must be put off."

"Our wedding day!" She thrills and shrinks under his look, under the solemn meaning of these words.

"We stand plighted now," and as he says it he takes her hand, "and I will wait with what patience I may. If the day ever arrives when you can put both your hands in mine like this, and say, 'Laurence, I love you, and can never let you go,' then I will thank heaven for my happiness, and claim you. If it never comes—if, as time goes on, your distrust of me goes on too, then be sure I will know it, and be the first to break the bond we are binding now."

He releases the hands he holds, and Reine feels, with a sort of wonder at herself, that her eyes are looking at him, admiringly, as he stands, brave, fair, noble, earnest, true before her.

"Shall we go back?" he says, changing his tone, and looking at his watch. "They will think me a woefully tardy messenger."

She descends from the wall, and takes the arm he offers, her face drooping, her fearless frankness gone, silent, shy.

"One last word," he says. "Reine—may I call you Reine free from prefix? It is the prettiest name in the world."

"Surely," she answers, readily.

"It would be asking too much, I suppose, to ask you to call me Laurence?"

She smiles and shakes her head.

"I am afraid so. And yet it is an easy name to say."

"We will wait. I think all will come in time. May I tell Mrs. Windsor?"

"Oh! yes, yes—the sooner the better. Let all be open—let all be told. I hate—yes, I abhor secrets."

Some of the old passion rings in her voice. He looks at her in surprise. What can this outspoken child know of