

"No," she replied obediently; "I admire him, and am grateful—that is all."

"Right! Now, Sybil, I want you, while I am holding your hands and looking into your eyes, to tell me something. Don't let your pride start off like a big drum beating inside you, but listen to the still small voice in the bottom of your dear heart for an answer. Do you not return my love—just a little?"

"Let me go," she said, "and I will speak as freely as you have spoken."

He did as he was bid, and then she resumed:—

"I used to look down upon you, Tom. We all looked down on your family—more shame for us!—just because we imagined we were better born. You were a rough sort of a chap, and of course, following the calling you did, you couldn't be always clean and tidy, like ourselves. But I was mean enough to take your admiration and your presents, though I wouldn't take yourself. And now things have changed. You are going up in the world, while we are going down, if that is possible. It serves us right, and I think both Reggie and I are learning a wholesome lesson. But you don't think I'd be so mean as to take up with you now after—after the way I treated you in the old days?"

"I've nothing to say against that if you think it's true," said Tom quietly. "But you have not answered my question. What you may have felt a year or two ago has nothing to say to what you feel now. You've a right to change your mind, I suppose, as well as anybody

else. It was quite natural that one who was a lady born should not care about a rough, greasy little chap such as I was. It is about what you feel now that I am anxious. They say that 'absence makes the heart grow fonder'; and I know that is true for my own part. Now tell me, my lass, during all the time you have been out here, far away from home and friends, has it not been a comfort to think of those that loved you? Have you never thought that there was one who had you always in his heart, who would do anything for you, who lived for you?"

"How could I help it? I was so very lonely, so very miserable," she faltered.

"And was that thought a comfort to you—just one little bit?"

She nodded, but did not trust herself to speak.

"Then why should you be lonely and miserable any more?"

"Because I deserve it, because my lesson is not yet learnt!" she exclaimed, rousing herself, and starting from the seat upon which they had dropped.

"And what do I deserve?" he said quietly.

"You deserve everything!" she cried passionately.



"I WOULD NOT BE ADVISED."