

back. During the past few days, ever since, in fact, her last visit to the studio, she had told herself that a self-respecting woman must respect others. Michael had refused to give her confidence; nay more, he had warned her against curiosity. When he bade her leave the past alone she vowed to herself that she would obey him. And yet, she had been unable to withstand the temptation to listen to Clinton Carne; and now she was equally unable to turn her back on père Hyacinthe. She had the grace to blush, as she asked:

“To whom, then, does he give his money?”

“It is given to girls.”

“That is certainly odd,” Téphany murmured, with a little gasp.

“What I have told you is between ourselves, Mademoiselle. For the rest, it is not so odd after all, Monsieur himself said to me that the lives of the young are often spoiled for the lack of a little money, and the lives of the old have been lived.” He sighed, and his shrewd eyes softened, becoming sombre and full of shadows. Looking at him now Téphany saw that he was a Breton indeed under his soutane. Upon the impulse of the moment she leaped barriers.

“My father,” at the tone of her voice the Breton vanished, the priest, alert, inviting confidence, strong in his power to comfort and advise, smiled paternally, “it must have struck you that Monsieur Ossory, who helps others, needs help himself.”

“Do we not all need help?” he asked keenly.

“Ah, yes; but he—in particular——” Her voice faltered.

“You know him well, Mademoiselle?”

“I knew him long ago, very well indeed. He was my father’s friend and mine.” She spoke warmly of Michael’s kindness to her when she found herself an orphan. The curé nodded sympathisingly. “And now,” she concluded, “I come back after ten years, and I am told by—by—I will be quite frank—I am told by Yvonne, who was once his friend, that he is lost—her word. *Lost!*”