

"Let down the curtain," he cried to an attendant in the wings. "What devil's work is this?" he continued, turning fiercely upon his wife. "Let it cease! Restore my father to his normal state. You have mesmerised him, and, mistress of his mind, you are making him say whatever you wish. Do you think that any one here believes him?"

One word from her, one imperious gesture, one flash of her eyes, was sufficient to quell Ivar's opposition.

"*Malvazia!*" she whispered, pointing to the sapphire cup.

The viscount shrank back, knowing that the hour of his fall and humiliation was at hand.

"Let none intervene," said Lorelie, addressing her audience with quiet dignity.

And during the remainder of the scene there was neither movement nor sound on the part of the spectators, not even from Idris and Ivar, the two persons most interested in the dialogue.

In cold measured tones Lorelie proceeded with her merciless catechism.

"Was he a younger brother?"

"My senior by three years."

"Why was he not acknowledged by your father, the late earl?"

"He was the son of a secret marriage—a marriage with a village maiden named Agnes Marville."

"Where can the record of this marriage be found?"

"In the parish church of Oakhurst, in Kent."

"Your father did not tell this Agnes that he was a peer of the realm: and, as soon as a son was born, he deserted her: nay, more, while she was still living he made a second marriage, which, therefore, renders your own birth illegitimate. Is not this so?"

"Yes."