

"Philip! Philip! I am dying; and my girl will be left all but penniless."

"Good God! it cannot be as bad as that! You must be mistaken, Mrs. St. John! You are weak and ill, and matters look worse to you than they really are. Put the management of your affairs into my hands, and I will see that they are set right again."

"It is beyond your power. You cannot think how mad I have been. When Tom died, and I found it would be impossible for us to live in the style to which we had been accustomed, I thought it would be better to give Irene a season or two in town—to let her be seen, in fact. She is so pretty she ought to have made a good marriage; and I never thought the money could run away so fast until I found it was nearly all gone."

"But who are your trustees? What have they been about to permit you to draw upon your principal in this manner?"

"There are no trustees. I am sole legatee and executrix. The money was left absolutely to me. I wish now it had not been so."

"And—and—Irene," says Colonel Mordaunt, presently, "she is not then in a position to make a good match you speak of?"

"Ah! there's my worst trouble, Philip! I was so sure she was going to be married—such an excellent connection, too. I looked upon the matter as settled, and then it came to nothing."

Colonel Mordaunt's brow lowers, and he commences to play with the ornaments on the table.

"And who may the gentleman have been?"

"Well, I mustn't tell you, for my child's sake, she behaved in the most dishonourable manner to her, Philip; dangled after her all the season, paying her everywhere, and paying her the most disguised attention, and then, when I felt bound to ask him what he intended by it all, he turned round and said he had never considered her as any thing more than a friend."

"The scoundrel!" cries Colonel Mordaunt, jumping up from his chair and pacing the room, "the unmitigated scoundrel! Mrs. St. John, let me have his name and bring him to book, as he deserves."

"Ah! not for worlds. Irene would never forgive me! You cannot think how angry she was even at my asking him the question."

"And I suppose she—she—felt the business very much?"

"I cannot tell you. She assured me at the time that she was utterly indifferent to him; but I have had my suspicions since. Anyway, it has broken my heart! To hear my child refused in

marriage by a man who had caused her name to be so openly connected with his own that it was quite unlikely any one else would come forward, and when I had been risking her dependence in order to further her prospects in life. I shall never recover it, Philip: that blow has been the death of me."

"Why should you say so? You are not really ill."

"I am sinking fast, my dear friend; I am growing weaker every day; and very soon I shall be gone, and my Irene will have to suffer for my imprudence. O Philip! for the sake of old times, promise me you will befriend my girl."

"For the sake of both past and present," he replies warmly, "trust to me. I will do every thing in my power to assist her. I am rich, as doubtless you know; the income which poor Tom and I equally inherited from our mothers has, in my case, never been fully used, for I have had no one to spend it on, and so long as I have a pound Irene shall never want one."

"Generous as of old. Ah, Philip! if I had only known what you were; if I had only had the sense—"

"My dear lady, what is the use of reverting to the past? You acted as you thought right. It has all been for the best."

"For the best that I should have deceived one of the noblest and most honorable of men?"

"Hush, hush! not deceived; you must not call it by so harsh a term," replies the colonel, with the ready forgiveness which we find it so easy to accord to an injury for which we have long ceased to grieve; "you are too hard upon yourself. Remember how young you were."

"I should have been old enough to recognize your worth," replies the poor lady, who, like many of her fellow-creatures, has committed a great error on setting out in life, and never discovered her mistake until it was past remedy; "but it is something to know that I leave you Irene's friend."

"You may rest on that assurance with the greatest confidence," he replies, soothingly, and tells himself that the past, when the poor faded wreck of a woman who lies before him took back the hand she had promised to himself to bestow it on his cousin, will indeed be amply atoned for if he can only claim the friendship of the bright creature who has sprung from the union which went far to make his life a solitary one.

He really believes that he shall be satisfied with her friendship. So we deceive ourselves.

Mrs. St. John's conversation appears to be