

"I will not change my mind. It is simply impossible."

"Not even," she says, looking at him fixedly, "If I refuse once and for all to have these French girls here, and leave the fortune you despise to the town?"

"Not even then. Nothing can alter in the slightest degree the decision I have just expressed."

"You are indeed a man of iron mould," she says, with that slight, bitter smile. "Well, I will not press the matter. Only one point more. Suppose at my death the will I have just made is found intact—what then?"

"Then it will become my duty to search out your granddaughters, and transfer it to them without an hour's loss of time."

"Very well." She takes from the pocket of her dress a letter, removes the envelope, and passes it to him. "Read that," she says, briefly.

Longworth obeys. It is written in delicate feminine tracery, and is brief enough—

"London, April, 17th, 18—.

"MADAME OUR GRANDMOTHER,—Two months ago our father died, and his latest wish was that we would write this letter and go to you. All the letters we have sent have been unanswered, even that written by our mother on her death-bed, beseeching you to take pity on her children. Under these circumstances we would not force ourselves upon you had we any other home, but our aunt in Rouen is also dead. You are our sole remaining parent; yours is the only home, the only protection, we can claim on earth. We come to you therefore. We will sail from Liverpool for New York early in May, and if you will have the goodness to send some one to meet us there we will be deeply grateful. We desire to know and to love you, madame, and with the most affectionate sentiments we are, your granddaughters,

"MARIE AND REINE LANDELLE."

Longworth finishes the letter and looks up with a half smile.

"Did you ever read anything more coolly audacious?" she demands, in suppressed anger.

"It is a cool production, certainly; its author I judge to be an eminently self-possessed and resolute young lady.

Still she is quite right. She obeys the dying wishes of her parents, and comes, as she says, to her rightful home."

"I deny her right. Her parents had no shadow of claim upon me, and neither have the Demoiselles Landelle."

"Have you answered this letter?" asks Longworth, looking at it curiously.

"Certainly not."

"Then they may even now be on their way here."

"They are not only on their way, but their steamer is due in New York the day after to-morrow. They cabled at starting, like a pair of princesses."

"Had I accepted your offer," he says, still half smiling, "how would you have acted in this complication?"

"There would have been no complication. Had you accepted my offer, as you would have done were you a wise man, I would not have shown you this letter. I would have gone to New York, met them, then taken a return passage for them in the next ship, and sent them back where they came from."

"Madam, you would not have been so cruel."

"Do you call it cruel? This beggar, Landelle, carried off my daughter, a silly fool of seventeen, for her fortune, hoping, no doubt, that, like stage parents, the flinty father and mother would relent. He robbed me of my daughter—why should I receive his? I might not have sent them back penniless; I might have settled a life annuity upon each, and am ready to do so still if you will do as I desire. Think it over, Laurence—it is no bagatelle of a few thousands you are rejecting—and I will send them back. I do not want them here. You have only to say the word."

"I would be a brute and a scoundrel if I said it. Do not let us speak of the inheritance again. Let us consider that question for ever at rest. Your granddaughters must come, and they must be met in New York as they say. I wonder, by the by, what steamer they cross in?"

"The Hesperia."

"The Hesperia! Why, that is Miss Harriott's ship. They will have crossed together."

"Probably," says Mrs. Windsor.

She does not like Miss Harriott—they are of different orders of women, and