

ember. Progress and attention were both suddenly arrested by an eager, musical voice behind her calling:

"Mademoiselle, Mademoiselle!"

Turning quickly she gave a gasping cry of: "Monsieur!" and stood face to face with M. Le Grand.

"*Mon Dieu! Mon Dieu!* At last, at last!" he exclaimed, tears filling his dark, melting eyes. "But *ma chere* will not run away from her Antoine again, I have searched for you months and was almost in despair. *Ma petite* will be mine now, she will go back to France with me and be a duchess—the Duchess La Grande. Don't say nay or I will drown myself in the river, or ocean maybe."

They were walking together now, and his tones were deep and passionate. More than one turned to note the striking contrast between the man's dark, fiery face and the girl's delicate blonde beauty. She was trembling violently, and her voice was scarcely audible as she faltered:

"But I told you in my note, Monsieur, that I could not marry you, that—"

"*Mon Dieu!* what note?"

"Why the one I sent you by—by Cousin Arthur the day before I started for home."

"He never gave it to me, Mademoiselle, never, but he told me when I went to ask him what was your sickness—that I was never to cross their threshold more, that I scared you into your sickness, and other such things."

Pet was speechless with mingled surprise and easiness. How strange and dreadful it all was, Arthur had not delivered her letter and Monsieur had gone on loving her and searching for her all these months, while she had hardly thought of him. How he must have suffered, and how she pitied him. Her own heart was sore, and therefore she could feel for others.

"We are almost home," she said irrelevantly.

"Then promise me, Mademoiselle Pet, to be my wife." He spoke calmly now, and with a voice and manner wholly foreign to himself.

She raised her eyes to his face and noted for the first time how pale and haggard he looked, and there was a look in the lustrous eyes that she quailed before but could not understand. She dare not refuse him, and why should she? He loved her evidently, and if she could make him happy, ought she not to do it? But as she asked herself the question, another thought came to mind, and she said gently:

"Oh, Monsieur, do forget me, do cease to love me. I am not worthy of you, I am only a poor, foolish girl, not fit at all to be the Duchess La Grande."

"*Ma chere*, I am determined. Promise me what I ask at once or before the noon-time I will be cold in death. I am one who can love but once. I have given to you the whole wealth of my southern nature, involved

on you all that is within me. When you positively refuse to marry me my interest in life will be done, I shall snap at once the brittle cord of existence, I may not drown myself, there is a quicker way," and he touched his breast significantly.

She shuddered.

"This once more I ask you, *ma chere*, this one and last time."

They had reached the gate now.

"Come in, Monsieur, and I will answer you later."

"No, you must answer me now, once for all. An hour, more or less, can make no difference to you, to me it means a great deal."

His strange magnetic eyes were on her, looking, it seemed to her, into the innermost recesses of her soul. She faltered and turned her glance aside, but he drew it back again.

"Is it yes or no? Speak!"

His long white fingers moved menacingly toward that inner breast pocket, and before she knew it, she had uttered an agonized "Yes!"

Some two weeks previous to the events last recorded, Arthur Draper astonished and horrified his mother by announcing his intention of "seeing the west and taking in Aunt Mason's family enroute."

"Why, Arthur!" and then she closed her lips in a manner the young man knew well how to interpret.

Without seeming to notice her he went on: "The bank does not need father and me at the same time now, since young Slocum has got the hang of things; and I can be better spared now than after the new year."

"Y-e-s," began Mrs. Draper in a tone of hesitancy, "but I really do not think you ought to leave your father with so much care just when he is feeling so poorly. Maybe you have not noticed it, but I am quite uneasy about him, and he is very restless nights."

"Indeed! I certainly had not observed that he was worse than usual," he said coldly.

"Well, well! arrange it between you," she answered with affected indifference; but she took care to meet his father before he did.

When again he spoke of the matter to the scholarly banker, the latter ran his long white fingers nervously through his iron-gray hair, and looked uncomfortable, but remained silent.

"Do you still think that I can be spared, father?" Arthur asked at last.

"Why Arthur, my son, I can not tell—that is I—well I am not feeling commonly well, and if you would as lief not—that is postpone this a little for the present—it might—might be as—that is, would give me time to recuperate."

The young man flushed, and a torrent of angry, sarcastic words crowded for utterance, for only too