

"I could not do that," said Angelo, alarmed; "you would never advise me to do that, surely?"

"You are not good enough for her."

"I own it, I am proud to own it."

"You have scarcely an idea in common with her," Brian went on; "she is above you in mind and education, and must infallibly look down upon you. She is strong and you are weak—she is a woman and you are a child."

"I do not wish to be anything but her slave. And I shall love her all my life, sir."

Angelo's voice broke again, and he leaned forwards eagerly, as if to reason down Brian's estimate of the position which he had set before him. There were tears in the weak man's eyes, but the strength of the passion at his heart had forced them there to make the child of him which Brian had just said that he was. He had only one excuse, his love. That was pure and child-like, and beat down the hard logic of his companion.

"You can do no more than love her all your life," said Brian, sorrowfully; "tell her so, and win her. A woman is only ungrateful to true affection when she is no true woman."

"I am extremely obliged to you for that advice, Mr. Halfday—and you really think I may win her for a wife?"

"It is possible," answered Brian.

"I was afraid I had not half a chance, but you give me courage somehow. I am so very glad," he added, "that I have called upon you."

"Have you any clue wherewith to find Miss Westbrook?"

"I think I can find her very easily."

"My sister Dorcas is with her still?"

"Yes."

"Dorcas will have to return here, and be housekeeper once more," murmured Brian; "the old life, and the old quarrels from which Mabel Westbrook might have saved her, perhaps, at some cost to herself. Though I did not advise her—though I warned her in every way in my power."

Angelo Salmon did not reply to this—the words were not intended for his hearing, and he took no heed of them. He had no interest in anything that did not immediately refer to Mabel Westbrook, with whom his thoughts were bound up heart and soul.

Suddenly Angelo started to his feet, and put his hat on the back of his head.

"If you don't mind my leaving you, I will go to her at once."

"I don't mind," said Brian, sarcastically, again.

"I had better strike whilst the iron is hot; tell her the whole truth simply and plainly, and that I never thought for an instant of her money when my heart turned towards her, as a flower to the sun."

Brian gave a spasmodic laugh at this.

"Poor sunflower!" he said, arranging his papers; "if you can find your way down stairs without an escort I shall be obliged to you."

"I shall be able to let myself out," said Angelo; "and you will allow me to say again that I am extremely indebted to you."

"For what?"

"For your encouragement to persevere—to tell her my love outright, and win her. 'Win her,' you said."

"Have I said as much as that?" returned Brian, half absently. "Have I told you to save her with your wealth from the poverty of which she does not dream—to give an honest man's love, home, and protection to a woman who is singularly alone, and who has met with singular misfortunes? I have said all this—advised all this, then, after all?"

"Yes. Don't you think I——"

"There, there, seek her out and prove to her that friends are not eager to desert her because the money is flown," said Brian, irritably; "under any circumstances, your friendship or love will not do her any harm. Stay."

Angelo paused at the door.

"Would her rejection of your suit do any harm to you?" asked Brian. "You are not a strong man, and that is to be considered."

"I hardly expect to be accepted all at once," said Angelo, modestly.

"To be taken by instalments, instead, as the robbers took her grandfather's bank shares?" said Brian.

"I am not going to act rashly," replied Angelo, shivering at the idea of any undue precipitation; "I am going to ask for hope—to tell her the state of my feelings, and to leave hers to—to—to grow towards me in good time; as they will, I trust, when she is convinced that mine are deep and lasting."