

utterly irresponsible manner. Do you understand?" and she looked at the stenographer.

"I guess we are all rather nervous," Mary answered quietly; "but I don't know but that we can be counted upon in a crisis quite as well as men can be."

"Oh," exclaimed Mrs. Maughm, "how wonderful of you to think that! But of course you would."

Miss Moreland did not have time to reply.

"I have always thought," said Mrs. Maughm, "that we were far superior to men in everything, until perhaps" — she hesitated — "this last week. I haven't sent for you on any business matter. I had no right to send for you at all, but I did, because — you are a woman."

Miss Moreland stiffened. She was on guard instantly, and reflected that Mrs. Maughm must have known — judging from the address-book — quite a number of people for whom she could have sent "because they were women."

Mrs. Maughm went on:

"Now and then I have thought of you, working down there as you do — as you have — day after day, for five years, by my husband's side — I mean to say, near him. I have been glad to think he had such a splendid woman — such a fine woman — in his employ. And I feel that you must know Tom awfully well. Of course you do know him, in a way that perhaps I don't; have seen him in a way I haven't seen him; have grown near to him in a way that I haven't been able to."

Mrs. Maughm was holding her handkerchief tightly. She threw back her head, as though she defied the emotion that was evidently struggling to express itself, and looking into the glowing coals, said:

"I can't help it. I just had to send for you. I am terribly unhappy," she finished; "terribly, terribly unhappy."