

her as you do your favourite dog; if she ventured to uphold a different opinion from your own, you would scorn her; if she tried to carry out her own high principles, you would trample upon her. I know you!"

Sir William writhed under the sharp tongue of this woman, and yet he durst not use violence to compel her to silence. She knew him, as she said. He could not quarrel with her.

"I vow I adore the girl! I would peril my soul for her sake!"

Mrs. Murray sneered. "Your soul! Mammon-worshipper! Well, I will play your game for a while, but I am not sure that I am proof against her innocent fascination, but I will see!"

At this moment the bell rang for luncheon, and Maude reappeared.-- "Will you come down at once, Mrs. Murray," she said, "I have ordered the carriage round in half-an-hour, for I have undertaken an important mission for a poor woman who is dying, and I must start at once. I dare say you will not care which direction our drive takes. Oh! Sir William, I beg your pardon, I did not see you."

"Whether they come soon or late, Miss Brereton's recognitions must always be refreshing," replied the baronet, holding out his hand.

Maud gave an almost invisible shrug of her shoulders. "Will you lunch with us?—I am afraid we must go at once."

"Thank you; with pleasure."

"Is this the way in which you spend most of your days, Miss Brereton? Do you devote the whole of your time to your poorer neighbours? I am told you give little enough to the richer ones."

"Until this week I have not been into the village for a long time. There has been so much fever about, that papa would not hear of my going amongst the poor."

"Fever!" exclaimed both Maud's visitors, in one breath.

"Do not distress yourselves," said Miss Brereton, while a sarcastic smile curled the corners of her mouth. "There is no cause for anxiety. It was merely low fever, nothing contagious—only I am so very precious, you know, that my father was nervous and kept me at home. There is not a case left in the place now."

"Who would not be careful with such a charge?" sighed Sir William. Then recovering himself, he said: "If you have been out so little I am afraid you will not be able to give me the news I was going to ask you for of Mr. Carlton."

Maud vainly tried to check her rising colour, but she answered in an indifferent tone:

"I very rarely see him. You probably know more of his movements than I do." Then she added, "What is it you want to know about him?"