

Miss Chichester gave a kind of snort of contempt.

"I only said that Jolliffe thinks she's ill, and you must know what fools these doctors are. For my own part I don't believe a word of it! Alice is a chilly mortal and somewhat lazy, and she won't go out this weather. If she did, she'd be all the better for it. But Jolliffe declares she requires amusement, and we must get a companion for her."

"A companion!" repeated Sir Alan knitting his brows, "a companion, when she has *me*!"

"And *me* too! That's just what *I* said, but he was obstinate, and declared he should speak to you himself on the subject."

"I shall send down the groom to ask him to come up again to-night," said her brother as he dismounted at the hall door. "I shan't rest till I've heard the truth of it. Alice ill! Why! I have never heard her make the slightest complaint!"

He turned abruptly from his sister and his friend as he spoke, and walked straight into the drawing-room, where his wife was lying on the couch before the fire, with her book in her hand. But she had heard his footstep, and her large eyes were turned towards the door, expectantly. As she caught sight of him, and saw that he had not stayed to change his dress, before seeking her presence, her pale face lighted up with pleasure which increased to the verge of making her tremble, as he came up to her side and kissed her. He was a man to be proud of. His two and forty years had but perfected his muscular figure until assimilated with his height. He had a small head, covered with close-cropped curling hair, brown