

"Oh pray do not think of it," cried Mabel in alarm. "Let us have no further complications. It is all over for good!"

"It strikes me that it is only just beginning," said Brian drily.

"There is no atonement to be made to me, and I am the only one left," replied Mabel. "Your grandfather's crime drove James Westbrook to America, where he made his fortune. What harm did Adam Halfday do to him, after all? I will have no further talk of this," she cried passionately.

Brian regarded her with evident interest.

"You are irritable at times, I fancy," he remarked.

"Oh, I am a dreadful temper," Mabel confessed.

"That is all right," said Brian coolly; "it will enable you to make a little allowance for me, should I say something in a rude or careless fashion presently."

"Have you much more to say?" asked Mabel quietly.

He looked hard at her again.

"You are getting impatient, and yet you will not let me begin," he said.

"You talked of restitution to me. Why, it would drive me mad," replied Mabel.

"Very well. As it is probable that a quarter or half a century will elapse before the chance of restitution presents itself, it is a supererogatory proceeding to discuss the question further this evening," said Brian. "Now, let me explain the present position. I have been to Penton Bank, and there is only one way of getting this money into your hands again."

"I have too much money already. I promised my grandfather——"

"Who was an idiot, and believed anything," said Brian unceremoniously.

"What!" cried Mabel.

"And who would have been the last to send Adam Halfday a halfpenny, had he known the truth," Brian continued. "Hence Adam obtained his money under false pretences. All this we could not explain to the banker; neither would the banker listen to us. Therefore, I am compelled to take out letters of administration as joint heir with Dorcas to the estate, and the money shall be paid back to you when the law allows me, as trustee, to receive it. I say shall be paid back, every atom's worth of it," he added fiercely and firmly.

Mabel gave way before this stronger nature. It was impossible that she could argue with Brian Halfday, and it was evident that there was no atonement to be made to the man who had died on Penton Downs. He had been no sufferer. From the beginning to the end he had worked all the mischief in that selfishness which had only died out with himself. James Westbrook had been the victim of a mistake, and this man before her was more honest than his grandfather. She must accept the position, marvelling at it all, but rebelling not against it, and biding her time to be of service in a different way. The promise which she had made a dying man did not seem to grow fainter because it was based on error, and she would be very watchful still, she thought.

All she said at present, however, was "Very well."

"That ends the business between us," said Brian, closing the pass-book, "and we arrive at an amicable settlement for the first time in our lives. There will be much delay, and the funds will not be readily forthcoming; but you will have patience with me."

"I shall not be in a hurry," answered Mabel calmly. "Pray take your time."

"My own time would be to-morrow," cried Brian. "To get rid at once of this money incubus which hangs round my neck and chokes me, I would give a year of my life willingly."

"Because——"

"Because my mind is distracted from its natural work," said Brian; "because at a time when I would be clear, there is this miserable complication to distress me."

"It need not distress you. Don't think of it."

"But you don't know that——here, there, we will say no more about it," he cried, stamping his foot upon the carpet; "only, it is all your fault—you will allow that?"

"Yes."

"You have played a noble, but a thankless part," he continued; "and in striving to do good, you have approached harm very closely. That is the way with us all, at times, and a weak woman is no exception to the rule."

"Yes, I did harm. That old man's death will shadow all my life," said Mabel.

"I did not mean that," cried Brian quickly.

"For heaven's sake, do not take any blame