

home were progressing. The same man had bought him a commission in another regiment, and he should shortly be on the waves. India would probably be his destination, but he would write again before long. He still maintained his incognito. Then he concluded, begging only that Mr. Carlton would let Maud hear his news, for he dare not write to her himself.

Maud had scarcely finished reading her brother's letter, when a servant entered the room and announced the arrival of Sir William Dinacre.

"Did you not tell Sir William that my father was not at home?"

"Yes, ma'am. But he asked if he could see you."

"Very well. I will be down immediately. Do not bring up luncheon. I will ring when I am ready for it," said Miss Brereton, resolving that nothing should induce her to invite her visitor to take any refreshment, although the hour for luncheon had already arrived.

Several moments elapsed before Miss Brereton could make up her mind to go and speak to her guest. The disagreeable task, however, had to be got through, and she went down stairs.

Her greeting was cold and dignified, while the paleness of her face was enhanced by the deep mourning dress which she wore.

Sir William rose on her entrance, and advanced to meet her with a half-mocking air. "I called to enquire how you were after the fatigues of last evening, Miss Brereton. But I see it is hardly necessary for me to ask. Your cheeks have temporarily lost the peach-like bloom that——"

"I am perfectly well, I thank you, Sir William."

"Then, why that icy manner? Do you thaw only towards evening? Are you cold winter in the morning, and lovely gleaming July in the evening?" He waited, and finding that Maud made no reply to his banter, he continued, "Is it only under the light of wax candles that you wear tropical lines in your cheeks?"

"In common with the flowers and fruits of our own country, I find the forcing process a weakening one. Therefore the sooner it leaves, the better for all such as can bear the free air of Heaven," returned Maud, warmly.

"But in our climate some fruit comes to perfection only in a hot-house."

"Injudicious heat, however, though it may ripen the fruit, is apt to take away its flavour."

"It is impossible to gainsay your wisdom, Miss Brereton," said Sir William, surveying his hostess from head to foot with a strange and doubtful look upon his features—a look of complete indecision as to the