

vants from the room and followed them out. "Symonds, I wish you to hasten immediately to Regis for Mr. Deavenport, the lawyer," said she, when she had dismissed the other servants down stairs. "Give him this note and drive him back here as quickly as you can drive."

She dropped her note into the groom's hand, and watched him from the oriel hall window, as he hurried from the court below, out into the deepening twilight, from the road which went to the pretty little village of Regis, some two miles distant.

She stood in the waning light, watching for the lawyer's coming, and her thoughts were wild and bitter.

She had a *doom* to confront, as terrible to her as unsought martyrdom is to the quailing victim of a blinded hate; a *doom* from which she fain would court grim death himself if he would open his gates to let her escape; a humiliating and revolting *doom* from which she recoiled with vehement dislike, every nerve in her high-strung frame quivering with horror.

Ethel Brand had ever been capricious in her life, but of all the mad, impulsive freaks which her lonely heart had led her into, her last caprice was the most ill-advised, the most disastrous.

Margaret Walsingham had answered Mrs. Brand's advertisement for a companion four years previously, when she was a pale, timid girl of twenty, clad in orphan's weeds, and scarce lifting her deep, earnest eyes to the inquisitive gaze of her patroness; but her quiet, grave, soulful character had strangely fascinated the haughty old lady, and from the humble post which she had gone to Castle Brand to fill, she quickly rose to be the prime object of all its mistress' dreams, to be beloved, and indulged, and admired as no living mortal had ever been by that closely-guarded heart, save St. Udo Brand. Margaret Walsingham was a sea-captain's daughter. Up to her twelfth year she had sailed the seas in his ship and looked to him for society; and not till then was she sent on shore to be educated. Still the stout captain had been ambitious for his daughter, and had taken care that her education, when it did commence, should be thorough, comprehensive and elegant in all its branches; so that when after eight years of ceaseless learning on her part, and ceaseless voyaging on his, he proposed going home to England and retiring with his daughter upon a handsome fortune, she was well fitted to adorn the society he intended to surround her with. But the ill-starred captain went down in a Biscay gale when also within sight of home, and with him went his whole life's savings, leaving his

Margaret fatherless, homeless and fortuneless.

And that was why she answered Mrs. Brand's advertisement.

St. Udo Brand was an officer in the Coldstream Guards, now in London. He was the only son of Mrs. Brand's only son, Colonel Cathcart Brand, long dead.

Cathcart Brand had been a sad rake, lawless, reckless, and a natural spendthrift. The one act of worldly wisdom which he had ever achieved was his marriage, late in life, with a lady of noble birth, whose ambitious leanings and insatiable vanity had scourged the easy colonel up into the highest social circles, and in some measure covered his *blase* reputation with her gilded arms.

St. Udo Brand was said to have inherited his father's determined extravagance united to his mother's magnificent tastes; his father's careless, dashing, unscrupulous character, and his mother's proud, cynical, bitter temperament. At twenty he was the glory and terror of his chums, the idolized of women, and the ideal of his grandmother's fastidious soul. At thirty he was a man to be feared only, a polished gentleman with a questionable history—a universal scoffer, a world-weary atheist, with a subtle, insidiously sweet influence, a sad and embittered soul, and a heart long closed against all holy whisperings of better feelings. And still his grandmother clung to him with a pathetic belief in his nature's nobility, and ignoring his wild and hopeless life, looked forward with love-blinded eyes to a possible future for him of worthy achievements. So, because she loved this man, and trusted in the goodness of Margaret Walsingham, she had elected hers to be the strong, soft hand to lead him back from ruin and to point him a better way. She had vowed St. Udo Brand and Margaret Walsingham should marry.

"You shall lure St. Udo back from the gates of hell," quoth the grandmother, with an inspired enthusiasm. "You are just the woman to impress that high and royal heart with a true sense of your own pure goodness; you can lead him captive by a secret power; you can lead him where you will. You shall dispute with vice and fatal atheism for that magnificent soul, and when you have routed your foes, you shall be rewarded by his life-long gratitude, and his gratitude is more precious far, my girl, than is the languid love of millions of other men. My Margaret, you are twenty-four, strong, buoyant, pure-minded; my grandson is thirty-four, world-weary and careless. Your fresh enthusiasm shall stir his withering heart-strings and wake his slumbering belief—he shall admire you, study you, and love you."