

and what I don't care who knows!" cried Angelo, enthusiastically.

"What is that?"

"Oh! Mr. Halfday, can't you guess?" said Angelo, colouring.

"That you love the American lady."

"Yes—that's it."

"Ah!" said Brian, mournfully, "that's it!"

"You cannot imagine what a dear, tender-hearted, clever, lovable girl she is," Angelo continued.

"Yes—I think I can," was the response.

"What a——"

"And Mr. Gregory Salmon?—he was surprised at your confession. Go on with your love story. It is becoming interesting."

"My father was very much surprised and shocked," he said, replied Angelo. "He had no idea that my feelings had become engaged so seriously, he said too. He was amazed at my thinking deeply of a young person—he called her a young person—who, upon her own showing, was not worth a penny in the world, and of whose character and antecedents I had not had a fair opportunity of judging. He said——"

"Yes, yes—I know what a careful man like him would say," interrupted Brian again, "and he is right enough after the fashion of the world to which he belongs. What did you say, who are less conventional?"

"That I would marry Miss Westbrook to-morrow, if she would have me," replied Angelo; "that I felt it my duty to seek her out at once, and offer her my hand and heart, so that she should not think her loss of fortune had in any way made a difference in me."

"What did Mr. Salmon senior say to that?"

"That I was a fool," answered Angelo, with excitement, "and that my grandmother was a fool—that is his own mother, mind you!—to leave me all this money to throw away on the first woman who chose to flatter me. As if money had ever done me any good—as if I would not be only too happy to lay it at Mabel's feet, and beg her to take care of it and me!"

"Yes, yes—but don't talk of your money," said Brian, "especially to so proud a woman as Mabel Westbrook. Money has been her trouble up to this day's date, and not her consolation. You cannot bribe her into marriage with you."

"I should be sorry to think I could," answered Angelo.

"What do you want with me?" asked Brian, after a few minutes' silence, during which he had been brooding very deeply; "in what way do you imagine I can help you?"

"She has great faith in you."

Brian shook his head.

"I scarcely believe it," he said, "and at the best, faith is quickly disturbed in a man like me."

"She has said so often that I needed such a friend as you to keep me strong by his advice and example, that missing her suddenly, I came to you at once."

"You are very kind."

"For you *are* strong, and I—I can't help being weak."

"Your love for Mabel Westbrook is not weak?"

"Oh, no."

"That should give you strength and teach you the right way to act, without coming here for advice that I do not care to offer you. That I will not offer you," he shouted at his visitor.

"God bless me—why not?" exclaimed Angelo.

The astonishment on the face of the last speaker recalled Brian Halfday to himself.

"My advice brings ill-luck," he replied in a different and calmer tone; "I can't look back and see where it has been of profit to my fellow-creatures, where it has been often followed or cared for. I have a hard way of telling plain truths, a rough manner of pointing out what I may consider the right course—and hence I have made many enemies and not one friend."

"Miss Westbrook is your friend, I am sure."

"I am grateful for her good opinion of me, but I cannot consider her my friend," said Brian, "and I dare not think of her too much," he added in a lower tone. "I do not follow you," said Angelo, politely.

"As for my advice, unless it suited with your inclination, you would not follow it," Brian continued.

"I am sure you would advise me for the best."

"I might say, 'Give up all thought of Mabel Westbrook;' what then?"