

taken up by my own worries, that I never noticed it till now; but now as I look at you I see plainly that something is the matter. What has happened? It must be something dreadful. You really look heart-broken about something. Why, my poor, dear, sweet darling Maudie!"

Full of tender pity and affection, Mrs. Lovell went over to her sister, and, kneeling on the floor by her side, she twined her arms around her, and kissed her. Maud sat for a moment as though trying to control her feelings, but suddenly gave way, and, letting her head fall on her sister's shoulder, she flung her arms around her and burst into tears.

"You have some trouble, darling," said Mrs. Lovell. "Tell it to me, tell it to your own Georgie." And then she proceeded to kiss Maud, and soothe her and coax her to give her her confidence, until at length Maud promised that she would. But it was some time before she could recover from the agitation into which she had fallen. She raised herself, and tried to control her feelings; but having yielded to them once, it was not very easy to regain her composure, and it was some time before she could speak.

"O Georgie," she said, at last, "I'm in such dreadful trouble, and I'm sure I don't know how it happened or how it will end, or what I ever shall do."

"O'ily fancy!" said Mrs. Lovell, "and I've been so selfish that I never noticed this; but then, I'm sure I should never have thought of *you* being in trouble, darling. How can trouble ever come near *you*?"

"I'm sure I don't understand it," said Maud, mournfully.

"But what is it all about? Tell me what it is, as far as you know. For my part, I can't imagine even a cause for trouble to *you*."

"I'm in dreadful, dreadful trouble," sighed Maud. "Mr. Carrol, you know."

"Mr. Carrol!"

"Yes. He—he—" Maud hesitated.

"What? he did n't propose, did he?"

not another proposal? Mr. Carrol! Well, Maudie dear, I remember having a vague suspicion that he was fond of you; but then, I was so bothered, you know, that I didn't think very much about it. So he proposed, did he? Well, I always liked him, and I think you did too."

"Yes," sighed Maud; "I did, I really liked him."

"But when did he propose? It's very strange. How very sly you've been, Maudie dear."

"Why, he wrote a letter."

"Wrote? What! wrote? O dear! I thought it was only old men, weary of the world, that wrote when they proposed. To think of Mr. Carrol writing! Only fancy! I'm sure I never would have thought that of him."

"Well," said Maud, mournfully, "he apologized for writing, and said the reason was that he could never see me alone, and was anxious to know his fate. You see you and I were always together, Georgie dear, and so he chose to write to me about it."

"Well, that is certainly a justification, Maudie, for we always are together, as you say; and now that I think of it, I don't see how any one could have ever had a chance to see you alone. But I was always thoughtless. Well, Mr. Carrol proposed, as you say; and what did you say? Did you accept him? I suppose you did, I even hope you did; for now, when I come to think of it, he seems to me to be admirably suited to you. He is young, handsome, and evidently very fond of you; he's rich, too, but of course I don't care for that, for reasons which I have already explained, you know. So I really hope you did accept him."

Maud drew a long breath.

"Yes, Georgie dear, but that was n't all. I received another proposal at the same time."

"Another proposal!"

"Yes, and who do you think it was from? Why, from that odious Frenchman who calls himself the Count du Potiron, and a very suitable name it is for such a man."