

"Hem, hem! My little daughter is growing imperious—must speak, indeed!"

"I cannot bear this any longer. Let me speak to you, papa," and without leaving him time for a refusal, Maud took her father's hand, and drew him after her into the library. It was strange to see the self-asserting, passionate, elderly man yield to the soft, almost childish, pleadings of the girl.

Once in the library, however, Maud's real difficulties began. How could she tell her father that her mother was gone? (She could not bring herself to say she was dead.) What words could she use? And more than all, how could she endure what would follow? All this flashed through Maud's mind as she led her father from the staircase to the study. Once there she could not delay. So with a great effort she managed to keep her voice steady and her face composed, as she said, "I thought, papa, you ought to be told immediately how very ill dear Mamma has been."

"I am sure I am very sorry for it. I suppose she has seen the doctor, has she not? I'll tell you what, Maud, you will have us both on your hands if you keep me here, for I am absolutely famishing. I should faint, I dare say, if I were a woman," interrupted Mr. Brereton, with a sardonic smile.

Maud found her task even more difficult than she had anticipated. Her father evidently felt no alarm—no fear of what her next words might be. Still when he ceased speaking she went on, "Mamma grew rapidly worse after you went away this morning, and I was obliged to send for Doctor White. He came, but it was no use; he could give her no relief, but he was very kind, and did every thing he could to prevent the constant return of her attacks of faintness, but ——" Here Maud's forced calmness forsook her, and she burst into tears.

"You know I hate a scene. Do stop this. You ought really to have more self-control. You will never be useful as a nurser, as long as you give way in this manner," said Mr. Brereton in a severer tone than was his wont in speaking to his daughter.

As Maud was still unable to recover herself he turned away, and walked towards the door, saying he should send Sophy to her with a glass of port wine—which, by the way, he considered an universal remedy.

"Oh, papa, please don't go. I am better now, and I do not want any port wine," entreated Maud.

I am not angry—only be quick, for I am desperately hungry. I had barely time to get through a plate of cold beef for my luncheon," was the reply.