

had despatched to him that morning, and would never inquire what her secret motive had been in writing it.

She set herself to consider the situation. She did not love Sir Philip. She was not capable of a great deal of love, and all that she had been capable of she had given to Wyvis Brand. But the years of girlhood in her father's house were beginning to pall upon her. She was conscious of a slight waning of her beauty, of a perceptible diminution in the attentions which she received, and the admiration that she excited. It had occurred to her lately, as it had occurred to her parents, that she ought to think seriously of getting married. The notion of spinsterhood was odious to Margaret Adair. And Sir Philip Ashley would have been, as her mother used to say, so *suitable* a man for her to marry! Margaret saw it now.

She wept a few quiet tears for her lost hopes, and then she arrayed herself becomingly, and, with a look of purpose on her face, went down to tea.

"Do you know, mamma," she said, "that Sir Philip Ashley is going to marry Miss Smithies, the great brewer's daughter, and that he has accepted a post in Victoria?"

"Margaret!"

"It is quite true, mamma, he told me so himself. Why need you look surprised? We could hardly expect," said Margaret, with a pretty smile, "that Sir Philip should always remain unmarried for my sake."

"It is rather sudden, surely!"

"Oh, I don't think so. By the bye, mamma, shall we not soon feel a little dull if we are here all alone? It would be very nice to fill the house with guests and have a little gaiety. Perhaps—" with a faint but charming blush—"Lord Southbourne would come if he were asked."

Lord Southbourne was an exceptionable viscount with weak brains and a large rent-roll whom Margaret had refused six months before.

"I am sure he would, my darling; I will ask him," said Lady Caroline, with great satisfaction. And she noticed that Margaret's watch for an unknown visitor had now come to its natural end.

It was not more than a month later in the year when Janet Colwyn, walking in the plantation near the Red House, came face to face with a man who was leaning against the trunk of a fir-tree, and had been waiting for her