

that mood will pass. Listen to me. In the world in which we move there is nothing which is more enjoyed than the private tit-bits of family life. The more intimate and sacred they are the sweeter the morsel in the mouths of those who love to discuss them. You and I have often deplored the personal nature of much of society talk. It would be your desire, would it not, to keep your private and intimate concerns out of their reach?"

"Oh yes," cried Fiona, and she shivered again.

"Well, then, dear, forgive me if I am cruel; but it is the greatest kindness I can show you. Don't you think that the mere fact of your suddenly quitting London in the very height of the season and going back to your old home, leaving your husband here, will be sufficiently commented on? But we must face that. A short separation, I see, is inevitable. I shall do my best, and we must say that your health will not stand it, or else put the blame upon your uncle. Anything, anything to keep them even from surmising the truth."

Fiona sat still answering nothing. The truth and wisdom of the words to which she listened were obvious, but she was too miserable to care at that moment whether her affairs were known or not.

"You will take my advice, will you not, my dear, and go quietly down to Garrows? We are not to have a long season, people say; it will be practically over by the middle of July. That is six weeks hence. In a month you will allow Mr. Orde-Maclean to come down and fetch you back for the last fortnight of the season. That will effectually close people's mouths, and in the meantime I shall fill up the breach as best I can."