

"If we could rest there for a day or two, Dorcas," said Mabel, "I should be glad."

"But your rooms are at the 'Mitre'?"

"Oh! I must give them up, and the maid who is waiting for me there—I haven't told you that I am down in the world, Dorcas."

"Down in the world!" said Dorcas, opening her dark eyes to their fullest extent at the announcement, for she had heard not a word of the loss of fortune which had befallen her companion.

"Yes—I will tell you when we are settled."

And when they had settled in these quiet country quarters, and Dorcas had heard and been amazed by the news—and had only found time to express a little sympathy, and give way to several showers of tears, at which Mabel Westbrook laughed—it was formally announced by the landlady that Mr. Angelo Salmon was waiting below, and would be very glad to be honoured by an interview with Miss Westbrook.

The gentleman in attendance would have been scarcely flattered had he heard the frank expression of Miss Westbrook's opinion upon his advent.

"How very tiresome!" she exclaimed; "then he has found us out already."

"He is always prying about," said Dorcas, in a more angry tone than her mistress; "he is——"

"Hush! child," said Mabel, very quickly now, "this is a dear friend of mine, of whom we cannot afford to think unkindly."

"A dear friend!" said Dorcas, with her eyes widening again, "you don't mean that——"

"That he is anything dearer than a friend. Oh! no," she added, with another little laugh.

"Ah!" said Dorcas, "but he may be presently. There is no telling what may happen after the first start."

"That's philosophy, Dorcas," answered Mabel, "but we will leave the consideration of it for the present."

The subject was postponed, and Mr. Angelo Salmon sent for instead. He came in softly, as though a noise were likely to disturb the inmates of the room, and blushed and stammered as he said "Good evening," and bowed low over the extended hand of Mabel Westbrook.

"You have soon found us," said Mabel.

"Yes, I have found you," he replied, "and I am very glad."

"How did you obtain the address?"

"I met the flyman—accidentally, just now, in the High Street—and it struck me he would know," replied Angelo, blushing more vividly than ever.

"Yes,—but how did you know the flyman?"

"The flyman?—oh! the flyman, I think you said," was the confused reply, "well, Hodsman told me that there was a piebald horse to the fly, and there are only three piebald horses in Penton, and I—but I am very glad to see you again, Miss Westbrook."

"I did not anticipate the honour would arrive so speedily. You might have given me more time to collect my thoughts," said Mabel.

"I was uneasy—I was anxious—I was really miserable, Miss Westbrook, to think you had left us," answered Angelo.

"Indeed."

"And I hope you are not angry with me for taking the first opportunity of coming to see you," he said imploringly.

"No," said Mabel thoughtfully, "I am not angry at a kind attention, or a generous impulse—no true woman should be."

True woman! He remembered Brian Halfday's words of consolation and encouragement at once: "A woman is only ungrateful to true affection when she is no true woman!" They gave him courage to speak out by degrees all that was in his heart, poor nervous being though he was, at his best. And Angelo Salmon was certainly at his best that night.

"I did not feel I could rest until I had discovered you," he continued, "and I hope you are not in any way vexed because I have arrived so quickly after your departure from my father's house. I have not acted hastily, or entirely on my own judgment in this matter."

Mabel looked surprised.

"I do not understand you, Mr. Angelo," she said.

"I will explain in one minute, Miss Westbrook," he replied.

He took time to recover that amount of composure which he had lost, and whilst absorbed in the process, Dorcas stole from the room, like a considerate young woman as she was on that occasion. Angelo did not notice her departure; but Mabel let her go for purposes of her own. It might be as well that this folly of Angelo Salmon's