

"Where have they gone?" asked Mabel.

"I don't know," was the reply. "Brian Halfday mentioned the seaside, that is all."

"Did you see him?"

"No."

"Good morning, sir. I have not a moment to spare."

"But we shall have the pleasure of——"

"Yes, soon," said Mabel abruptly, as she turned and went with quick steps across the quadrangle to the first courtyard, and under the archway to her hired carriage. She was back in Penton before twelve—it was only chiming the hour by the cathedral clock when she was making her inquiries at the museum for its missing custodian. But all inquiries were in vain; Brian Halfday had taken every precaution, as though he had feared the pertinacity of Miss Westbrook from the first. No one knew in what direction Mr. Halfday had gone. He had asked for and obtained his holidays that morning—three weeks per annum were lawfully his, although he had never asked for them before. He had urged pressing and sudden business, and departed. He had spoken of writing for his letters in the course of a day or two, but it was very probable that he would not write at all, concluded a flippant youth with red hair, who was left in charge till Brian Halfday's return, and whom Mabel had discovered on an office stool catching the early flies of the spring season.

Mabel Westbrook went back to the "Mitre" smarting with the same sense of slight and injustice which she had experienced that morning at the hospital. She was annoyed at the flight of the Halfdays; she was still more annoyed at her own helplessness. Here was a man who in a few hours had thwarted the mission of her life—in whose power it might still lie to defeat her project. She had told Brian Halfday of her promise, and he had shown no sympathy with her, or respect for the solemn task that she had undertaken. He had set his own will in opposition to her, and was now exulting probably in that success which had discomfited and humiliated her. She should never like the man. He had showed his want of confidence in her too completely for her to forgive him, whatever might be the motives which had led him to act in this strange fashion. She had offered friendship and assistance, and this was her reward. She had come to do good, and no one would put faith in her profession. What

had she said or done, what was there in her manner, to lead these people to distrust her so completely? Verily, she must be a most objectionable young woman in strangers' eyes, and that was a very nice thought to begin her English life with. Still, she was not a girl disposed to submit tamely to distrust or defeat. She was high-spirited and courageous. In America she had been her own mistress early in life, having two old sick folk and a big house to manage and control, and there was more of the clear-sighted, matter-of-fact woman about Mabel Westbrook than is generally to be found in ladies of her age. She was looking keenly out at the world now, and its aspect did not daunt her. She had known trouble in the past, she was prepared even for trouble in the future, and with youth and strength she felt that she should fight through the obstacles in her way. She had faith, and she had money, and they are two excellent aids to most projects under the sun; especially the money, those wisecracks will declare who have long outlived faith in anything but themselves, and their balance at the banker's.

This Brian Halfday should not have his own way so completely as he had bargained for if she had a voice in the matter, and she thought she had. When she discovered after two days' waiting that no tidings had been received at the museum, she and her maid started on a flying expedition to the nearest watering places from Pentonshire, taking half a dozen of them in turn, and ransacking visitors' lists, and exploring parades and piers and sands in their vain quest. The telegraph wires were kept busy in her service, and Mr. Gregory Salmon, the trustees of Penton Museum, and the landlord of the "Mitre" were asked daily by electricity if there were any news, and had daily to reply to Miss Westbrook in the negative.

When a fortnight had elapsed, Mabel and her maid were back in the old city, but Mr. Brian Halfday had not returned to his duties at Penton Museum. There was a week of his holidays still to the good, and he had determined to make the most of his vacation. He must come back was Mabel's consolation; he must face her again; his father and Dorcas must return to the shelter of St. Lazarus. They had achieved their object, and gained time—whether she should learn for what reason time was wanted by the grandson was a matter of some doubt. If he