

prompted to do so, as she was sure they were, by no motive save that of sheer curiosity.

But nobody observed either her restlessness or her rather pointed movement towards the door, and her mother went on talking.

"The ways of Providence are very wonderful! I remember quite well the night on which my brother Edgar left home. We lived quite in the country in an old manor-house near the New Forest."

This was stretching a point with a vengeance, the mansion in question having been merely a farmhouse belonging to quite a small holding that had been held by her family for a period of years from the adjacent manor of Lipscombe.

"The spirit of adventure had come upon him, and he did not want to occasion unnecessary pain to the old people by any sort of leave-taking. So he left without saying good-bye, but he could not go without telling me, for we had always been inseparable. It was in the dead of night, and we parted in the moonlight at the back door. I gave him five pounds that I had saved up and kept in an old money-box; and it was veritably bread cast upon the waters. I never could have expected such a return!"

"Then your poor brother, though an exile, died a rich man abroad?" suggested Mrs. Craddock, who was always the chief spokeswoman of the working-party.

Mrs. Rodney inclined her head.

"He has left a great estate," was her answer, "a sheep-farm and a great deal of money. He has never married, and I, his only sister, am his sole legatee. Now, my dear friends," she added, "in the circumstances I am sure you will excuse me, for this is a great upset and I must be alone with my family to recover myself."

They all rose rather hastily, murmuring that of course she was perfectly right.