

honest and unscrupulous. Years ago I remember how she used to work and work with that soft playful manner, and yet with untiring perseverance, at anything she wanted to get out of my poor father. Young as I was, I could see perfectly through her lies and her artifices. I believe she moved heaven and earth to get my father to make a will that would give her a life interest in Sotherne, curtail my rights, and place me under her guardianship and control. But my father was too wise for that: and when she found how things had been left, she hated me. Outwardly she was all sweetness and affection, because it suited her interests to be so; but in reality she hated me bitterly because I was rich and she was poor, because Sotherne was mine and she only a guest in it at my pleasure.'

'But still,' argued Colonel Fleming, 'why should she have stopped my letter? it seems such a senseless, meaningless piece of spite.'

'She stopped your letter because—because—' said Juliet hesitatingly, and a deep flush covered her face as she nevertheless ended her sentence bravely—'because she knew that had I received it I should have married you.'

Hugh Fleming shaded his face with his hand and was silent.

'She had found out that much about me,' continued Juliet after a short silence; 'she was sharp enough for that; and you know I was never very clever at hiding my feelings,' she added with a little sad smile that was unspeakably touching.

Still Colonel Fleming did not speak, and Juliet went on after a pause—

'Had things turned out so, it is certain that Sotherne and not London would have been my permanent home—and in that case Mrs. Blair would certainly not have continued to live there. I could never have tolerated her presence—she would have been forced to seek another home; and Sotherne is a comfortable house, and she gets it rent-free. It would not at all have suited her to leave it. She did not want to leave it. What she wanted is exactly what has happened. I see perfectly through all her devices now: she wanted me to marry a man who had no country tastes, whose society was not a sufficient resource to me to enable me to endure it in the retirement of a country home, and as whose wife I

should probably prefer the excitement and variety of a London life. Everything,' added Juliet very bitterly, 'everything has turned out perfectly to her satisfaction: she first intercepted and tore up your letter—she then urged a marriage with Cis upon me in every possible way; other circumstances—poor little Georgie's death and my own utter recklessness and misery—played most conveniently into her hands. Mrs. Blair has remained in undisturbed possession of Sotherne Court, and I—have made a shipwreck of my life!'

Juliet ceased speaking, and bowed her head down upon her hands; whilst Hugh Fleming hastily left her side, and, walking away to the window, stood for some minutes with his back turned to her.

When he turned again and spoke to her, his voice was hoarse and trembling.

'Tell me one thing,' he said. 'You have said that your faith in me was broken; is that faith now restored, Juliet? will you trust me again now?'

'Trust you!' she exclaimed, rising quickly and stretching out both her hands towards him. 'Trust you! How can you ask it! Yes, through life unto death!'

'God bless you for that!' he answered. For one moment he bent over the hands he held within his, and pressed them passionately to his lips—then suddenly dropped them hastily, and without another word turned away and left her alone.

As the front door closed behind Hugh Fleming, the luncheon bell rang. Juliet hastily roused herself, brushed away the traces of her emotion, and went downstairs.

It is all the same—if our hearts are breaking, if we have lost our money or our happiness, if our eldest son has been rusticated, or our daughter has run away with the doctor's assistant—all the same we must go down to our meals at their stated hours, sit unmoved and impassive through the ordained number of courses, talk of the weather, or of any trivial subject we can think of, with a calm and smiling face; and all that we may conceal our wounds from the servants who wait upon us, and who would certainly, if we departed from the ordinary routine of our lives, begin to wonder and chatter over what ailed us.

Juliet Travers would have given a great deal to have escaped the tedious luncheon hour, with the two solemn men-servants in