

to speak to me, who am still a comparative stranger to him, I will wish you good evening, Miss Brereton," returned Mr. Carlton, and he held out his hand. For one instant he retained Maud's as he said, "you may be sure I will use all my influence with your brother, to induce him to remain here until you have seen him again. Do not fail to come here to-morrow and the following days at the same hour, and perhaps he will meet you."

Then they parted; Maud moved quickly towards the edge of the wood and out into the evening light without once turning round. Mr. Carlton, after he had shaken hands, plunged into the bracken forest, whence, himself concealed from any but the closest observation, he could watch the young heiress's retreating steps. He watched until she and her father were out of sight, and then set out in the direction of a neighbouring village.

"You finished your business earlier than you expected, papa, did you not?" asked Maud, as she joined Mr. Brereton.

"Yes, my dear, I am at home earlier than I intended. But the thought of leaving you so long alone weighed on my mind, and as the rest of my business can be as well done to-morrow, I preferred coming home to letting you remain solitary for so many hours," and Mr. Brereton glanced sideways at his daughter.

She saw nothing, and only replied, "I am very sorry you hurried home on my account."

Mr. Brereton made no reply, and the pair walked back to the house in silence, each buried in his own reflections.

"I wonder whether he saw me talking to Mr. Carlton. If he did I wonder whether he minded it," thought Maud.

"I wonder whether that meeting with Carlton was chance, or whether it was prearranged? I wonder whether she has any suspicion that I know Frank is in the neighbourhood, or whether she has seen him herself," pondered Mr. Brereton.

In the course of the evening after an hour's silence, during which he had sat with closed eyes, Mr. Brereton turned suddenly to Maud, who thought he was asleep, and said, "Frank was very fond of your mother, wasn't he?"

The colour flushed into Maud's face in spite of the strong effort she made to keep herself composed, and her heart beat so violently that it almost choked her as she replied: "Yes, papa, he would have come many a mile to see her again, I dare say, if he were asked?"

"I am sure he would. No exertion would seem great to him. He loved her so dearly."