

"Oh, yes ; and in her best merino dress, as smart as carrots."

"And her brother came for them early this morning, you tell me?"

"Yes, her brother Brian. Ah ! a clever man that, take him altogether, and one who will do better in the world than his father, or his grandfather, or any of the family. A long-headed fellow, Brian," said Peter Scone "but as conceited a young jackanapes as ever strutted in and out here as though the place belonged to him. I don't like people who think so much of themselves ; they're hateful company."

"Gone away," said Mabel to herself, "because I was expected—gone away to foil me, I am certain. That is what Brian Halfday meant when he asked me to suspend my judgment till we met again—when he talked of acting rashly presently. Why are they all afraid of me, I wonder?"

CHAPTER VIII.

MABEL ACCEPTS MR. SALMON'S KIND INVITATION.

AFTER the unlooked-for announcement of Adam Halfday's departure from the Hospital of St. Lazarus, Mabel Westbrook did not lose much time with Peter Scone. She was excited and angry ; here had come opposition to her wishes, to her amiable scheming, and Brian Halfday had balked her at the outset. He was a man who had objected to her interference, and had stepped between her and her promise, not trusting her, not knowing what that promise was, or how it might affect the future of himself and sister. She could not sit down tamely and wait for the return of these Halfdays, submitting to their will, as if she had not a firm one of her own when her pride was wounded. Brian Halfday had not treated her well ; he had set himself to thwart her ; he had regarded her wishes as nothing and his own as supreme, and had acted almost as her enemy. It was a mean advantage which he had taken of her confidence, she considered, and she should never like the man again. He was crafty and deceitful. Peter Scone had called him "a conceited young jackanapes," and very possibly Peter Scone was right. Certainly his grandfather and his own sister did

not regard him with any great degree of reverence, although they might have learned to fear him.

Mabel Westbrook, forced as it were into antagonism with Brian Halfday, and roused to action by the last move of that gentleman, sought out the Reverend Gregory Salmon forthwith. She crossed the second quadrangle, and passed beyond the precincts of the hospital into a fair landscape lying beyond its walls. A stout oaken door in the garden wall opened upon meadow land and woodland, and on a deep, rushing river glittering in the sunshine. Sitting complacently on the bank, not fifty yards from the hospital, was Mr. Salmon, fishing. He was very glad to see her ; he was as courteous and fussy and profuse in compliments as ever ; he expressed himself highly honoured by her second visit, and he immediately set his fishing tackle aside, with the evident intention of placing his whole time at her disposal. Mabel hastened to assure him that this was only a passing visit, and that she had business, important business, in Penton, before luncheon.

"But you have come to see the church?" said Mr. Salmon.

"No," she answered frankly. "I came to see Adam Halfday, and he has disappointed me."

"To see Adam Halfday!" exclaimed the astonished Master of the hospital.

"If I had placed more confidence in you last night, Mr. Salmon," said Mabel, "it is probable that I should not have been foiled this morning by Adam Halfday's grandson. But I have been anxious for weeks to talk to this old man."

"Bless me ! Is there anything so very remarkable about him?"

"I bring him a message from America. I have business to transact with him, which his son, for some mysterious reason, is anxious to postpone," Mabel replied. "That is all I need say or can say at present."

"Yes—ahem—exactly—how very surprising!" said the clergyman. "The son, though I cannot say I like him myself, is a man very much respected in the city, and of course no stranger to the hospital. To offer to take away his grandfather for a holiday was a something I could not object to, or, indeed, had any power to object to. The brethren are not prisoners here, or I their warder. I gave permission as a matter of course."