

The baronet rode away. "Papa will be in to dinner. We shall dine at seven o'clock," said the hostess. "You will want to rest a little, so I will leave you," she added, conducting her guest into the private sitting-room provided for her use.

"Thank you, Miss Brereton. You understand me exactly I see. I am indeed fatigued, and shall be glad of a little rest—repose I should have said. Real rest, true rest is not to be found here!" And the widow sighed and raised her eyes heavenwards. But their upward gaze was unfortunately stopped by the ceiling of the room, and they wandered again to sublunary matters. Maud was closing the door behind her, and the lady took a minute survey of the apartment.

"Pleasant, lady-like room—bedroom next door, I opine? Looks out into the front. That's a good thing, better surveillance! The girl evidently doesn't know what I am here for. I don't think she much likes the "religious dodge," but I'll continue it for a little while, and between my husband and son, and the consolations of religion, I can work upon her feelings, and then we'll see. Sir William does not play his game badly either!"

"Comfortable sofa that looks!" And thereupon the good lady stretched herself out on the couch, and fell asleep until she was roused by the ringing of the dressing bell, and the entrance of the lady's maid.

CHAPTER XII.

"Then we quite understand one another, Mrs. Murray," said Mr Brereton, on the following morning. "You remain here to all appearance as my daughter's guest. You will make yourself agreeable to her, and endeavour to gain her confidence; at the same time you will not attempt to exercise any sort of control over her or her household, but you will keep a strict watch over her movements and her visitors, and if there are any of whom you think I should disapprove, you will inform me of the fact. Your own friend, Sir William, is always welcome."

Mrs. Murray bowed slightly. "You can trust me, Mr. Brereton. I will obey your orders to the best of my ability."

Mr. Brereton was called away, and Mrs. Murray walked deliberately to her own room. After pondering for a few moments, she exclaimed, "I think I see what to do! Confiding obedience wins the father; soft sorrow the daughter. Sir William is harder to please, but he shall have his will if I can give it him. Two thousand pounds down is not to be despised!" And Mrs. Murray seated herself in a comfortable arm-chair, and continued her meditations.