

Margaret was unaccountably frightened, dreading the following day's post. Maude, though determined, yet looked forward with dismay to the struggle she well knew was before her; still, she thoroughly gave herself up to the happiness of the moment, fairly startling Margaret and Jack by her wild spirits and girlish devotion to her lover, as if bent on indemnifying herself beforehand for future trouble.

Gerald was thoroughly happy, though even he was worried when thinking of his promise to Jack, and also of his mother. The Honorable Mrs. Foulis had cost her husband his father's affection and his share of the parental inheritance; and, when the eldest son died unexpectedly in the hunting-field, the old lord bequeathed to a favorite niece every sixpence he could possibly alienate, leaving his grandson Gerald (the father being long since dead) nothing but the title and the wreck of the family property. Thus Gerald, when he returned to take up his inheritance, found that there was only too great cause for his mother's off-repeated dictum, "Gerald must marry money," and soon had a shrewd suspicion that the worldly old lady's affection for her "sweet cousin," Lord Foulis's niece and heiress, could be accounted for by her desire once more to bring together the Foulis title and property. His first sight of Maude at once dissipated even the haziest idea of such an arrangement; and now he was firmly resolved that in the present matter he would have his own way, even if, to get it, he had to go to the Colonies in search for a living.

But, when counting on the morrow's post, they had not reckoned on Mrs. Alverton herself.

Gerald instinctively drew Maude to him, while Margaret sprang forward to meet her aunt, and if possible to stem the first rush of her anger.

"My dear aunt, how good of you! We did not expect—"

"I suppose not, Margaret; but a letter I received from Maude this morning made me uneasy, and I determined to come at once and see her. Maude, my dear"—and she turned to her daughter, who, recovering from her surprise, now came forward calmly and quietly—"your uncle has returned, and I fear I must cut short your pleasant visit, even at the risk of interfering with some of your arrangements. Sir Ralph has brought back Lord James Bertie."

"I hardly see what possible connection there can be between Lord James Bertie's movements and mine," exclaimed Maude haughtily; "and, as matters stand at present, I do not

think Sir Ralph would care very much to see me. But, mother, you seem strangely to overlook the cause of my yesterday's letter. Allow me to introduce Mr. Gerald Foulis, my future husband."

"It's all her height and statuesque beauty," said Mrs. Melford later, when talking over the scene with her husband. "I was shaking in my shoes, and am morally certain Gerald would have preferred being a few miles away; but there she stood so calm and haughty that I should have thought her utterly unmoved, had not her face worn the cold hard look it had when she first came to us."

Mrs. Alverton seemed at first struck dumb; but in a very few minutes she recovered herself. A perfect tornado of words fell upon their ears; her suave company-manners were thrown to the winds, and the natural temper of the woman showed itself.

She railed at Maude for her selfish ingratitude, her monstrous folly, in throwing up Sir Ralph's heiressship for the sake of a penniless adventurer, of whom no one knew anything. Then she opened the flood-gates of her wrath upon Gerald, declaring in the same breath that he was scheming to secure Maude's fortune, that he intended to deprive her of her inheritance, but that Sir Ralph Alverton would not allow his niece to throw herself away in such a fashion, even if Miss Alverton were such a consummate fool as to do so.

Gerald had hitherto stood quietly at Maude's side, as if asserting his right to protect her even from her mother; but, when he heard her name, he turned toward her, exclaiming—

"Miss Alverton! Maude, what does this mean?"

"It means, sir," exclaimed the angry mother, "that that silly girl will lose all claim to Sir Ralph Alverton's estate and affection, simply from listening to your foolish wooing. Don't imagine you will profit by her fortune! Not one penny will she get if she marries an artist."

"Oh, hush, mother, hush!" cried Maude, driven at last from her composure. "Don't look at me like that, Gerald! I know I deceived you about my name; but don't you know what a life mine has been; and, when I saw you despised poor Maude Alverton, I had not the courage to tell you I was she. But do trust me; for indeed, indeed there are two sides even to Captain Warburton's story, black as it seemed to you!"

Margaret could scarcely believe her ears. Was this passionate, pleading woman her cold stately cousin? Even