

This letter, short and simple as it was, occupied Maud during the whole morning, and the luncheon bell rang before she had finished it. So, quickly signing her name, she carried it down to her father. He hastily glanced his eye over it, gave a short laugh, and tore the sheet across. The fragments he returned to his daughter, saying, "That will not do. I will write myself. Give me some writing paper."

Maud obeyed, and her father wrote the following note :

"MY LORD,—

"You will, I am sure, be deeply grieved at our loss. I say 'our' advisedly. I am a widower. Think what you could have felt had you been in my place, as I think you once desired.

"I am sure you will wish to pay due respect to the memory of my wife, so pray be here in good time on Tuesday next, the 23d inst. The funeral takes place at Brereton Church at two o'clock in the afternoon of that day.

"Your lordship's, in sad grief,

"JAMES BRERETON.

"To the Viscount Ashburton,
"Adringham Hall."

This document he handed to Maud, and desired her to direct and send it by hand. Then he left her with many injunctions about taking care of herself, and repeating that he should be at home at seven o'clock.

Here was an opportunity for meeting her brother, such as she would hardly have dared to hope for. As long as her father remained at home she could scarcely have ventured to leave the house, for she felt that at any time he might want her. But now she had several clear hours at her disposal. So she went up to her mother's room, feeling more dreary than she had ever done in her life before. She was absolutely alone now. Nobody wanted her. You will think she was morbid, reader, and say, perhaps, "did not her father love her tenderly?" He did; but she was conscious, though she had not acknowledged it to herself, even in thought, that he was more proud of than fond of her—that he considered her a good speculation—that she made his home attractive to himself and others. All that remained for her to do was to try to win him to herself, and through herself she would work and make him forgive her brother. So she knelt down by her mother's side, and taking the cold hand between her own two warm ones, she gazed on the face of her who, in life, had loved her so tenderly. She knelt on, forgetful of all save the lost, until the recollection of her brother, her mother's darling, flashed into her mind, and she remembered her engagement. Drawing out her watch,

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