

gling with a host of her own thoughts, and then said quickly:—

"Did Angelo Salmon tell you why he called on me?"

Mabel hardly cared for a leading question of this character, and she hesitated before giving him an answer. It came at length, however, and was brief enough.

"Yes," she replied,

"What reason did he give?" asked Brian; "pardon me, you look surprised—but I wish to know. He is a weak young fellow, and prone to exaggeration—and he may have said more than he intended in a moment of excitement."

"Was he likely to be excited?"

"He was excited when he came to me."

"I do not know that I am called upon to answer you, Mr. Halfday, but I will do so for a motive of my own."

"Thank you."

"He told me that he came to you for advice about offering me his hand in marriage," she added frankly, "and that you gave him in return very foolish counsel."

"Did he call it very foolish?" said Brian, with a surprise that was amusing in the naive conceit which it betrayed; "I thought it impressed him a good deal at the time."

"No—but I call it very foolish," said Mabel, angrily; "I do not see the wisdom of his step in coming to you at all. He should have acted on his own judgment, as he knew better than yourself the feelings of his heart. What did you know about him or me that warranted you in giving him advice in this matter?"

"It was good advice, I am still inclined to consider," Brian muttered

"It was unwarrantable."

"I did not think you were offended with me," said Brian, thoughtfully regarding her.

"I am not offended exactly. I should not have said a word about it had you not dragged in Mr. Salmon's name, just now, without any rhyme or reason."

"I thought you liked Mr. Salmon."

"What put that in your head?" asked Mabel, speaking as quickly as her companion.

"He is a man that a girl should like—gentle, affable, generous, straightforward, tolerably well educated, and immoderately modest."

It was Mabel's turn to look at him inquiringly.

"You are satirical."

"No—it is the man's true character."

"You have forgotten one attribute by which it struck you I might be tempted into an acceptance of his suit."

"What is that?"

"His wealth," answered Mabel; "Mr. Angelo Salmon is very well off, if you remember."

"Do you think I would have recommended a poor man to come to you?" said Brian.

"Then you think I am fond of money, after all?"

"No—I have seen in you too great a disregard for it," was the reply; "but I feel assured you would not be happy as a poor man's wife."

"Why not?"

"You have never experienced poverty in any shape, and you have no knowledge of what a struggle it is for some people to live," said Brian; "you have been surrounded by riches all your life, and though you have not been spoiled by them, you will never bear up against their loss. You are not much more than a child——"

"Mr. Halfday!"

"And," he continued, not heeding her indignant exclamation, "you will feel as bewildered as a child when the hard truth of your position is closer to you than it is."

"I am sorry you have so poor an opinion of me, after all," said Mabel, compressing her lips; "what a weak creature you must think me!"

"Hence, Miss Westbrook, when this honest fellow from St. Lazarus divulged his secret, which he had allowed every one to see beforehand very clearly," Brian continued, "it struck me that here was the solution to the perplexity which your sudden reverses had created. Here was a gentleman of position to save you from the world, and to keep you in that sphere to which you have always been accustomed."

"And are so well calculated to adorn," added Mabel; "that is how all this rodomontade should wind up."

"If you consider it rodomontade, I have done," said Brian, feeling indignant himself now at the manner in which his explanation had been received.

"You have been talking dreadful nonsense for the last ten minutes."

"Oh, have I?"