

His lordship still refused to change his mind, and the Breretons turned homewards.

"Maud," said Mr. Brereton, suddenly looking full into her face, as he asked the question, "Maud, who was that tall young man who was talking to you at the door of the carriage?"

"He was a friend of Lord Ashburtown's, I think, papa."

"What was his name?"

"He was not introduced to me."

"Well, I do call it great presumption to allow a man to talk to my daughter, and neither to mention his name to her or to me, but it is just like Ashburtown. And the fellow was ashamed of it himself, for he bolted as soon as he saw me!" fumed Mr. Brereton.

Here, to Maud's great relief, the conversation dropped. Presently her father began again:

"Did it occur to you, Maud, that that man was like anybody you have ever seen?"

"Yes," returned Maud, after a moment's hesitation, in which it might be fairly surmised that she was endeavouring to recall the faces of her friends. "Yes, papa, now you mention it, I do think he was a little bit like Frank. Don't you, papa?" Then, as if she were still considering the subject, she added, "only he had a moustache."

Mr. Brereton was completely at fault.

"It is clear she knows nothing of the boy, and therefore she can't know where he is," thought Mr. Brereton, "as she would never have dared to answer me so. She is too meek, too much like her mother."

Mr. Brereton imagined he understood his daughter's character. He was incapable of feeling what a power a great and deeply tried affection may exercise over an habitually yielding disposition.

As Maud showed no inclination for conversation, Mr. Brereton relapsed into a good-humoured silence, which lasted until they came in sight of Brereton House, when he uttered a sigh of relief, and an exclamation of "Thank Heaven. The blinds are drawn up at last!"

As Maud got out of the carriage, her father raised her veil and kissed her forehead. "You will come down stairs and see the visitors as soon as you have taken your things off?" he said.

But Maud pleaded a severe headache, and retired to her room until the evening, when she knew her father would be alone.