

weeks, Rosalind had grown thin : her features were sharpened, her hands white and wasted : her eyes seemed too large for her face, and were surmounted by dark and heavy shadows. Lady Alice was reminded of another face that she had last seen relieved against the whiteness of a pillow, of eyes that had gleamed wildly as they looked at her, of a certain oddness of expression that in her own heart she called "a mad look." Yes, there was certainly a likeness between her and her brother Francis, and it was the sort of likeness that gave Lady Alice a shock.

For a few minutes the two women talked in platitudes of indifferent things. Lady Alice noticed that after every sentence or two Mrs. Romaine let the subject drop and sat looking at her furtively, as if she expected something that did not come. Was it sympathy that she wanted ? It was with difficulty that Lady Alice could approach the subject. After a longer pause than usual, she said softly—

"You must let me tell you how sorry I am for the sorrow that has come upon you—upon us all."

Mrs. Romaine stared at her for a moment ; an angry light showed itself in her eyes.

"You have come to tell me that ?" she said, with chill disdain.

"I came to say so—yes," Lady Alice answered, in her surprise.

"I am very much obliged to you, I am sure." The tone was almost insolent, but the woman was herself again. The oddness, the awkwardness of manner had passed away, and her old grace of bearing had come back. Even her beauty returned with the flush of crimson to her face and the lustre of her eyes. The prospect of combat brought back the animation and the brilliancy that she had lost.

"There were other things I thought that you had perhaps come to say—repetitions of what you said to me years ago—before you left your husband."

Lady Alice rose at once. "I think you had better not touch on that subject," she said gently but with dignity. "I did not come here with any such intention. I hoped all that was forgotten by you—as it is by me."

"I have not forgotten," said Mrs. Romaine, rising also, and fixing her eyes on Lady Alice's face.

"I am sorry for it. You will allow me——"

"No, do not go : stay for a minute or two, I beg of you."