

THE LENNOXVILLE MAGAZINE.

THE BRERETONS.

CHAPTER I.

“**T**OO late, then, Maud! God have mercy on me!” cried a young man, apparently about twenty years of age, as he threw open the door of the drawing-room at Brereton House.

The sole occupant of the room was the young lady whom he addressed, Maud Brereton, of Brereton House. She was sitting listlessly in the bay window, with her back turned towards the door, gazing out upon, evidently not seeing, the gay autumnal tints of the trees which studded the park, nor the gorgeous purple and crimson glow of the sunset which dyed the woods with a deeper, richer colouring than they ever knew even when decked in their full summer glory.

This evening Maud was not dreaming, as girls of her age delight to do, of the time when she, too, with all her charms, would be fading away, and wondering whether anyone would regret her, or whether she would sink silently and uncared for into her grave, as the leaves sank to the ground. No. This evening life and death were realities, for she had before her mind an ever present vision of one loved and trusted, as few mothers are loved and trusted, lying cold, pale, calm, upon her bed of death.

So deeply was she thinking, that she neither heard the door open, nor the exclamation that followed; and it was not till she felt a hand upon her shoulder, and saw an agitated face looking into her own, that she started up, and the colour flushed into her cheek.

“Answer me, Maud—am I too late? Oh, how I have travelled night and day since I heard she was ill. Say I am not too late!”

“Oh, Frank! How you startled me! When did you come back? Where did you come from? Are you come to stay?” inquired Maud eagerly, and then paused for replies to her various questions.

“Answer me, Maud, I say—am I too late to see her?” cried Frank, impatiently.

“Yes, you are. Would that you were not!” returned Maud, so-