

there, there, do not let us talk about it any more. It is not worth the waste of words we have given to it, Angelo."

"If you remember, it is not my fault that we have dwelt upon it so long," said Angelo.

"Is it not?" she answered absently. "Ah! well—perhaps I was curious a little. And now, you will promise me never to speak of this again—to take my answer as final—to accept my thanks once more for the honour you have done me—and to remain my friend for the little while longer I am on English ground."

"Are you thinking of leaving England, then?" he faltered forth.

"Yes, I shall go back to America very soon."

"You have not said anything of this before to me," he said, half reproachfully.

"I have not had much time," answered Mabel with a smile; "but there are many friends over there who can help me—and will help me."

"I fancied you had no very intimate friends there. I—I thought you said it was your grandfather's wish you should remain here in England," remarked Angelo.

"He thought I should be a rich woman. In England there is not much sympathy for a poor one."

"Oh! Miss Westbrook!"

"What is the matter!"

"I did not think you could speak so bitterly as that."

Mabel laughed.

"You see, I am not perfection," she said, "but a cross-grained female whom a little puts out. You will find me my own self to-morrow if you care to call."

"If I care!" exclaimed Angelo; "of course I care—although I am awfully distracted in mind, and dare hardly see you yet."

His voice shook a little with its old feebleness, and Mabel looked critically at him.

"No; upon second thoughts, don't come, Angelo, to-morrow."

"Very well—if you wish me not."

"Take a holiday. Go to your chambers in London—or to the sea-side, where a change will do you good. I am sure of it," added Mabel.

"I am not."

"You have taken Mr. Halfday's advice—now, do me a favour and try mine."

"And go away from you?"

"Yes—for awhile."

"It might be for ever. You will disappear, and never tell me where you are again."

"No, I will not. Although it would be as well, perhaps," she answered.

"I will go," he said, rising; "I am sorry I have troubled you so much this evening, but I felt I should like to explain the true state of my feelings, and I have done so—with a vengeance," he added in so dismal a tone, and with so odd a look, that Mabel Westbrook might have laughed pleasantly under different circumstances.

She was in no laughing mood that evening, however; Angelo had said much to disturb her, and there remained food for thought in his confession. She was sorry now that he had come wooing to her. Only a little while ago it had seemed better for him and her that they should clearly understand each other, but she was scarcely certain now of the wisdom of the step he had undertaken. It had been done in a hurry, and there was confusion in consequence. She was glad when he had shaken hands with her, and quitted the house; there was a sense of relief in his absence—in the loneliness that seemed to come to her by way of comfort after he had gone.

She did not move from the seat where he had left her, but drifted at once into thoughts born of the interview and of her stay in England, and both strangely intermixed. Life had been a whirl of events with her since she had acted for herself in it, and there had ensued much responsibility, some mystery, and more mistakes. All her girlish thoughts, her girlish happiness even, seemed to have vanished in these latter days, and to have left her a cold, hard, matter-of-fact woman. She had looked for peace and rest in England, but they had not come to her; she had dreamed of friends here, and she was only surrounded by people whom it was impossible to comprehend. The world had been full of sudden changes, and it was natural that she should change with it; but she was not growing more content.

A soft pressure of two folded hands upon her shoulder aroused her from thought at last, and to the consciousness of the night's being an hour older since her guest had withdrawn.

"You are very sad, my mistress," said the