

past from the world ; but it is more than me and her father will do if she dies without your bestirring yourself to save her. We—”

“Will you go?” sternly interrupted Colonel Devereux, whose hand was still pointing to the door.

“We will publish the story abroad, sir ; it shall be in all the newspapers in this blessed town. I’ll tell it out aloud as long as there’s a soul left to listen to me.”

Mrs. May dropped a courtesy, for she never forgot her respect to her betters, turned, and left the room. Had the natural lines of his face not been so unsympathetic, his black eyes so hard, she would have fallen down prostrate and clasped his knees, and besought him with tears to accord her prayer. But she saw him at his worst ; and she believed that there was neither goodness nor humanity, no, nor a spark of compassionate feeling, to arouse in Colonel Devereux.

Colonel Devereux’s first movement, on being left alone, was to take a few strides on the library carpet, and give vent to sundry uncomfortable ejaculations. When he had, by these means, a little cooled his wrath and perplexity, he sat down to deliberate.

His imagination took him, and would take him, to the next Monday morning, to the sight which Lord Dooham had invited him to go and witness. The various points rose up before him, one after another, like the pictures in a phantasmagoria. Colonel Devereux, in spite of himself, shuddered a little ; what feeling he possessed was for once touched.

Self was always prominent with him ; and Mrs. May’s concluding words made, perhaps, more impression on him than all the rest—that the truth, if Sophia died, should go forth to the world. At least, what she was pleased to think the truth. That, at any rate, must be stopped, if possible. To have his name bandied about in conjunction with this extraordinary and sensational affair would be, to say the best of it, inconvenient.

Presently he rose up suddenly, as if some plan of action had occurred to him, and went into the drawing-room. His wife was sitting there.

“Do you happen to know whether Sir Archibald is in town?” he demanded.