

apologies. He wished in some sort to relieve Miss Brereton's mind. He had seen and spoken with her brother, and had made him promise not to leave the neighbourhood without seeing her. That was all.

So the days dragged on drearily enough, until that last, weariest, saddest of all,—when she who had been to Maud “her dearest, first on earth,” was to be buried out of her sight.

I will not tax the reader's patience with a detailed account of the arrangements for the funeral. It shall suffice to say that no expense was spared, that everything was done with a considerate regard for the feelings and comfort of the guests; that friends came in large numbers to condole with the disconsolate widower; that half the country sent their carriages to join in the procession, and, in short, Mr. Brereton was entirely satisfied with the successful carrying out of his schemes, and that he repeatedly assured Mr. Wellby, the undertaker, that he might depend upon him for a recommendation.

One thing, only, caused him a shade of annoyance. Lord Ashburtown declined to come to the house; he would meet the funeral party at the church.

Maud and her father drove there alone, and the young drooping figure, draped in deep mourning, drew down upon it many a pitying glare. But although she was the object of such compassionate observation, Maud was unconscious of it, for she never raised her eyes, and the only sign she gave of emotion was at the instant when the earth fell with a hollow sound upon the lid of the coffin, as the priest pronounced the doom of all flesh: “ashes to ashes, and dust to dust.”

Then Maud shuddered, but no more, and she “neither moved nor wept,” until she found Lord Ashburtown at her side, begging she would allow him to conduct her to the carriage.

She looked up as she was about to answer him, and opposite to her, though at some distance, stood Frank. He was watching her steadily, as if anxious to see how far he might trust her powers of self-restraint. These were taxed to the uttermost in order to repress even a start of surprise and pleasure. But her habit of self-control gained the victory, and the only sign she gave was that the colour flushed slightly into her cheeks. This, however, was of no consequence, for her thick veil effectually concealed any such manifestation of feeling.

At this instant Mr. Brereton turned round, and said to Lord Ashburtown: “May I consign my daughter to your keeping for a few moments, as I find there is some difficulty in connection with our family vault?” and he moved off.

“You will be safer in the carriage, Maud,” whispered his lordship, offering her his arm, and as he said so Frank joined his sister.