

kindliness of heart would have been more willing to save one from pain and mortification than to inflict it. After all, my offence was not so very great as to be unpardonable. It only consisted in the avowal of my love for you.

"I might say very much more, but I think it is better to leave it unsaid. At any rate you and I now part forever; but whether your peculiar mode of dealing with me will make you very much happier or not, the future alone can determine.

"Yours truly,
"PAUL CARROL."

Mrs. Lovell read this letter over twice. Then she sat and thought. Then she read it again. After this, she looked fixedly at Maud, whose pale face confronted hers with an expression of utter woe that was pitiable to witness.

"This is horrible, simply horrible," said Mrs. Lovell. "My poor darling, how could it have happened? It's all some frightful mistake."

"And, O Georgie dear! I wrote him the very kindest, kindest letter," said Maud. "I told him how I —" But here a great sob burst from her, and choked her utterance, and she buried her face in her hands and wept aloud. Mrs. Lovell drew her towards her, and tried to soothe her with loving caresses and gentle words; but Maud's grief was too great for consolation, and it was very long before she was able to overcome it.

"He's gone, gone forever, and I'll never see him again!" she murmured over and over again amid her tears. "And I was expecting him, and wanting to see him so!"

"Poor dear darling!" sighed Mrs. Lovell; after which she sat for some time with an expression of deep perplexity on her pretty face, endeavoring to fathom the mystery of this somewhat singular affair.

"Of course, Maudie dearest," said she, at last, "there has been some mistake, and you yourself must have made the mistake. There is only one thing

possible, yet it really seems too absurd. After all, though, it is positively the only thing that can account for it, and it is just possible. Don't you think so, darling?"

"Don't I think what? You don't say what it is?"

"Well, I was thinking that it was just possible that you, in your excitement, which was very natural under the circumstances, you know, — that you might have made a dreadful blunder in the address, and directed the Count's letter to Mr. Carrol, and Mr. Carrol's letter to the Count."

"And that's the very thing I have been suspecting," exclaimed Maud, in a tone of dismay; "but it's so shocking that I don't dare to think of it."

"Well, darling, won't you acknowledge that it is possible?"

"Certainly, it is possible, but not probable."

"Well, now let us see about the probability of it," said Mrs. Lovell, putting herself in an attitude of profound reflection. "In the first place you answered the Count's letter."

"Yes."

"And then Mr. Carrol's."

"Yes."

"Now do you remember whether you addressed each one immediately after writing it, or waited till you had finished your writing and then addressed both?"

"O, I remember that perfectly well. I did not address the letters until after I had finished both. I never do when I have more than one to write."

"Well, of course, you were a little agitated, particularly after your last effusion to Mr. Carrol. It was very natural. And you were excited, you know, Maudie dear. You know you were."

"I suppose I may have been a little excited."

"Well, is n't it possible, or even probable, that in your excitement you may have put the letters in their envelopes and addressed each of them to the wrong person altogether?"

Maud gave a heavy sigh, and looked despairingly at her sister.