

And Maud waited in vain. And as a quarter to six sounded from the turret clock, she turned and moved sadly homewards. Just entering the wood, she perceived her father. He had come to meet her, and as he said so, he looked curiously round, but seeing no one, he offered his arm to his daughter.

"It is not often, papa, that you get through your business more quickly than you expect."

"No, my dear, it is not." And as this answer was not calculated to elicit any further reply the conversation dropped.

CHAPTER V.

So the days dragged wearily on. Evening after evening Maud set out for her walk in the wood, comparatively light of heart—for was there not a possibility that she might see Frank? And evening after evening she returned home sad and disappointed. Once in the distance she perceived the tall slight figure of Mr. Carlton, and her heart throbbed with anxious hope. He saw her too and quickened his steps, but before he could reach her Maine lomed into view, so merely raising his hat he passed on. But at the same moment he let a note fall from his hand amongst the ferns.

Maud walked carelessly forwards past the spot where the letter lay, then appearing to change her mind, she returned and seated herself on a bed of bracken, where, judging from the manner in which she bent over them, she seemed to have discovered some beautiful or interesting botanical specimens.

Immediately afterwards Maine came up to her, bearing a message from her father. Maud looked up quietly enough from the leaves she was arranging, and her gentle "thank you, Mr. Maine," went to the heart of the rough man, for it had a soft place after all, where once an image very fair to him had had a place.

"That girl with her angel's face and soft voice is enough to turn any fellow's head!" he muttered as he left her. "I could almost find it in my heart to give up the search if she would only ask me. Yet the reward is great if we do find him!"

"How strange it is that whenever I come here either that man or my father think it necessary to come and look for me!" pondered Maud. "Can papa suspect me?"

What became of the note? Maud gathered it up with her ferns and carried it with them to her own room. It contained news of Frank but it was not from him. It was from Mr. Carlton, who wrote with many