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of his steady head to look into the face beside him—the face that looked up again into his with those candid blue eyes and a smile on the soft parted lips. The smile seemed to reflect itself upon Mark's grave face for an instant, and then he took up a little hand lying on his arm, and kissed it tenderly. "She let me infer it." "Infer—fiddled-dee. Nothing like plain speaking to express a judgment." "But you are so cold and make your own self. Hester, that I could not just take it for an answer to what I came to ask. Did Milly tell you that yesterday—for I have grown to love the little girl dearly—Hester, Hester, what have I said? What is the matter?" "I hated, despised myself for the weakness, but the mortal struggle of yesterday was not done yet. I could not bear this man, when I had loved so long so deeply, avow to my face his transferred affection to my sister and be unmoved. Involuntarily I grasped the arm of my chair for support, for my life seemed fading from me in the struggle. He bent over me, he lifted my faint head to his broad breast, but I shrank from him feebly. "It is nothing. I am often faint. I am quite well again. You were saying—yes, go on Mr. Sutherland."

"I do believe you have forgotten all about him," Milly went on. "and let me tell you, I wonder at that, for I remember he used to scold me for talking to you, Hester, and he is the only man that would be proud to be called by none the less because he loves my little, I should say, for woman in general."

"Really, Milly dear, you seem to have studied Mr. Sutherland very closely, considering this may be called your first acquaintance with him." She laughed, blushed, and threw back her beautiful golden hair. "No, I don't know that I have devoted myself to me a good deal this evening, and I couldn't help forming my opinion, you know. I was at a croquet party so-morrow in the Hall, and Mr. Sutherland was there, and he would come, and bring you, if you would come; but I told him beforehand that I knew you would not, knowing your dislike to the detestable means for the promotion of anything. And after this it happened that Milly sister went or was out for every day up at the Hall—where, indeed she was very much in the habit of going; while I, who had been used to see Mr. Sutherland once every week, yet dreading with a sickening dread, to see the careless estranged glance of his side fall of love."

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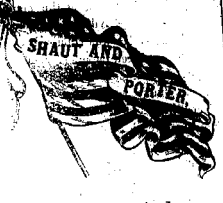
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