

he did. She sat still for a moment, stroking Una's hair. Then she said,

"Will you take a little letter from me to your father, Una?"

"Oh, are you going to marry him, Miss West?" asked Una eagerly.

"Perhaps—if he really wants me to," said Rosemary, blushing again.

"I'm glad—I'm glad," said Una bravely. Then she looked up, with quivering lips. "Oh, Miss West, you won't turn father against us—you won't make him hate us, will you?" she said beseechingly.

Rosemary stared again.

"Una Meredith! Do you think I would do such a thing? Whatever put such an idea into your head?"

"Mary Vance said stepmothers were all like that—and that they all hated their stepchildren and made their father hate them—she said they just couldn't help it—just being stepmothers made them like that"—

"You poor child! And yet you came up here and asked me to marry your father because you wanted to make him happy? You're a darling—a heroine—as Ellen would say, you're a brick. Now listen to me very closely, dearest. Mary Vance is a silly little girl who doesn't know very much and she is dreadfully mistaken about some things. I would never dream of trying to turn your father against you. I would love you all dearly. I don't want to take your own mother's place—she must always have that in your