

with a good many pangs of conscience, and some uneasiness as to the result, breathed freely again, and congratulated herself upon having done quite the wisest and best thing for her step-daughter's welfare.

"She has quite got over it—very soon she will have forgotten his existence!" she said to herself.

But there was a change in Juliet which no one around her noticed, because none of those by whom she was surrounded loved her well enough to detect it.

She was altered. The old brightness, the old impatience were almost gone; her cheek was a shade paler, her sweet lips had a sadder droop: her step had lost something of its lightness, her eyes something of their fire; and to the end of her life these things never wholly came back to Juliet Blair.

But Mrs. Blair saw nothing of all this. In her suffering, as in her joy, the girl was alone—utterly alone.

Ernestine had discontinued her morning walks. Two days after the arrival and subsequent destruction of Colonel Fleming's letter, Mrs. Blair remarked to her maid that she looked so much better that there was no longer the necessity for that daily exercise which she had prescribed for her.

So Ernestine gave back the key of the letter-bag to James.

"Here, Monsieur Jams, is your key," she said, shaking her head mournfully; "*he is dead!*" in allusion to the French lover.

"Dead, is he?" cried James eagerly; "and the money—have you heard?"

"Alas!" said Ernestine, "it is no use, my friend; the perfidious one has left it all to his cousin Annette."

#### CHAPTER XIV.

##### WHAT THE BROWN MARE DID.

SOON after the departure of Colonel Fleming on his return voyage to India, a hard frost set in which stopped the hunting for a fortnight.

During this fortnight Squire Travers was intensely miserable; he spent his days in alternately tapping the barometer, and going out to look at the weathercock.

"I think it's half a point to the west of north, Georgie," he would say excitedly,

coming in from these excursions of inspection; "just you come out and see." And Georgie would obediently throw a shawl over her head, and run out into the keen, frosty air to stare up at the top of the house.

"Well"—doubtfully—"hardly, papa; and I am afraid the smoke is *very* due north, and that is the safest guide."

"Not at all; the chimneys all want sweeping; that sends the smoke all ways at once. I stick to the weathercock—but you're right; there isn't much sign of its changing yet."

And then the Squire would stroll disconsolately round to the stable, and go into every stall, and mutter grievous things below his breath as he gazed sorrowfully at each sleek-coated animal—dire words relative to the process of "eating their heads off,"—that strange and mysterious feat which horses are supposed to accomplish in frosty weather.

"D'ye see any signs of its giving?" he would ask a dozen times of Davis, the stud groom, who followed him about from stall to stall, taking off the clothing from each idle hunter's back.

Davis, who was of a sanguine disposition, would remove the everlasting straw from his mouth, and answer cheerfully:

"Oh, bless you, yes, Squire; it can't last much longer. We shall have rain before night, most likely." And though these enlivening prophecies had not yet been fulfilled, the Squire pinned his faith to Davis, and derived much consolation from his hopeful assurances.

Georgie regretted the frost as well as her father, but not so keenly as she would once have done. A good deal of the pleasure had gone out of the girl's life since Mr. Travers had so sternly banished Wattie Ellison from her side. She never thought of rebelling against his decision; in the long run she felt sure he was right. But sometimes she found it hard to bear. Her letters from Cis were a great comfort to her; from them she learnt that her lover was well, and that he thought of her, and that he was, as Cis said, "working hard;" and she, too, had her dreams of the fortune which his genius, in which she had unbounded faith, might some day achieve for her sake. Buoyed up by these hopes, she tried to bear her life cheerfully and patiently, and to be the same bright sympathising companion to her father as she used to be; but it had become an