

The Inglenook.

A Diplomatic Mission.

BY SOPHIE SWEET.

Continued from last week.

"We told your father, Robena and I, that Leander was dead to us and we didn't care to hear anything about him—after the way he had treated us," said Miss Caddy with an effort; "but—but I don't know as it's any harm for me to hope that he's been brought to a better mind and has got a good wife—though I don't expect that Robena would let me mention his name! Olive—" Miss Caddy leaned forward suddenly and spoke in a husky whisper—"does the baby take after our folks any?"

"It's the dearest little girl! I went to see them last spring in New York—mother says she looks just like your mother," said Olive.

"Oh, wouldn't I like to see her," gasped Miss Caddy, lying back upon her pillows. "But Robena would never let me. Oh, if I haven't had a time with Robena! But there she is calling you! Run and get your tea, and come back again as soon as you can. If I didn't almost forget! Such a sight of trouble makes folks selfish—you're going to be married, ain't you?"

Olive turned a painfully flushed face towards her from the doorway.

"No, I'm not going to be married," she said.

"Why for the land's sake!" exclaimed Miss Caddy, "we heard—" But Olive had gone to the dining room.

"I expect Caddy told you that I was driving her crazy," said Miss Robena, tentatively while they sipped their tea.

"I have been wondering why you and Aunt Caddy don't have separate rooms," said the diplomatist reflectively. "It is nice to hang your things on just what hook you like!"

Miss Robena dropped back in her chair and gasped for breath.

"We've always had the same room. I never dared to think of such a thing!" she said in a thrilling whisper. "Besides, there is no other room that I could have. There's mother's room that we could not bear to use, and the spare room—we must have a spare room, of course—and little Leander's that we never have opened."

"I should take that if I were you," said Olive boldly. "It isn't as if he were dead. Just invite him here with his wife and baby and you'll get all over that feeling!"

Miss Robena arose and shut the dining-room door. "If Caddy should hear you I expect she would faint away!" she said. "But when Hippobah Driver comes for the fall cleaning I'm going to have that room cleaned and take it for my own! I've gone so far, now, that I may as well go a little farther, though I do feel a terribly reckless and wicked woman. It fairly makes me feel lightheaded to think of having a room where I could put things where I liked and move them every day if I wanted to! You don't think it would kill Caddy, do you?" she leaned towards Olive and spoke with tremulous earnestness. "I say there's nothing the matter with her, but, after all, I'm a little afraid! Caddy is so sensitive."

A cry, sharp and insistent, came suddenly to their ears before Olive could think of a diplomatic answer—a cry of distress.

"She is dying! O Caddy, Caddy, and I have killed her!" cried Miss Robena, as they rushed up stairs.

Miss Caddy was sitting up in bed trembling violently.

"I don't know what's the matter, the coldness and the trembling came so suddenly," she gasped. "I expect I'm dying, sister dear, I wa'n't hardly a mite sick when I went to bed, yesterday! I thought you would be scared and put the things back, I expect I haven't treated you right Robena. I've been so set—"

"You had a right to have the things as they had always been if you felt so about it, and 'twas mean and selfish in me to insist!" cried Miss Robena with penitent tears. "I've worried you into a fit of sickness, and I shall never forgive myself!"

Olive flew for the doctor. He said that Miss Caddy had a nervous chill, she was in danger of having nervous fever, but with great care that might be averted. Miss Robena tearfully set about restoring the secretary and the parlor organ to their old places. Miss Caddy heard her and sent Olive to remonstrate.

"Tell her if she don't want to kill me to let them be!" she cried. "I've got a realizing sense of how mean and selfish I've been. She's young" (Miss Robena was fifty, and her sister fifty six), "and she ought to have a chance to be a little mite frivolous if she wants to!"

Olive called to Miss Robena to come upstairs.

"I've thought of a compromise," she said. "We have some paper in our attic that is exactly like that on the sitting room wall. Leander's room was father's once, you know, and he remembered the paper, and when he saw some like it, he bought it for our guest chamber. There were two or three rolls left—fully enough to paper the discolored place. Then, Aunt Robena, you won't be mortified if there isn't anything to cover it but Aunt Lucy's hair wreath—and Aunt Caddy won't feel as if you were."

Miss Robena said that it did seem as if it were a real providence that Olive had some paper like it. She never had been to Portsmouth since she could remember without looking for it at all the paper hangers'. And Miss Caddy wept feebly and said that it was more than she deserved, but if Robena could be happy so, she should die happier knowing that the old secretary stood between the windows just where it had stood when she was a girl.

Robena cried and clung to her when she talked of dying. She said hard things didn't matter anyway when people loved each other. She wondered how she could ever have been so foolish as to think they did.

"If the Lord will only spare us to live together, Caddy, I'll never move another thing round! never in this living world!" she cried, exultingly.

"Yes, you shall!" cried Miss Caddy firmly. "And you shall have the dining-room clock over on the bracket! How did I know it? Lizzy Forbush told me you'd moved it, when she came over to see me

this morning! And I said to myself that I would never get up off this bed till you had moved it back again. I was as wicked as that, and now the Lord has punished me with these terrible feelings! I want you should leave it on the bracket, Robena!"

"It's just a little bit of a thing, Aunt Robena," Olive interposed soothingly. "Small differences ought not to count when people have a real affection for each other. And, Aunt Caddy, you must make haste to get well and have Leander and his wife and baby to visit you, for I know Aunt Robena wants them!"

The two elderly women looked in each other's faces and laughed a little and cried a little, both at once.

"He was only sixteen. I've been wondering, that you couldn't forgive him, Robena!" murmured Caddy.

"Why, I did, long ago! I thought you were too—too set," faltered Robena.

"I have been a terribly set old woman," said Miss Caddy penitently. "But I never shall be again. Only—I will live long enough to see little Leander and his wife and baby! It's such a ridiculous thing that he's got a wife and baby!" and Miss Caddy smiled into her sister's face.

"Olive, I'm glad you came!" said Miss Robena. "Now we must go away and let dear Caddy get calm."

"No, not yet—not yet!" interposed Miss Caddy, anxiously. "I want to know about Olive. I've been so selfish not to think of Olive. She says she is not going to marry Frank Thurston, as her mother wrote—"

"I broke the engagement, that's all," said Olive, nervously handling the knob of the door. "Frank wouldn't give in about living in his old house away out of the village and—"

"You let such a little thing as that come between you?" gasped Miss Caddy from her pillows.

"Such a little mite of a thing!" echoed Miss Robena. "I don't see how you could! Of course there wasn't any real affection between you."

"Yes, there was," faltered Olive. And then she firmly strangled a sob in her throat. "I've been taught better here. I'm going straight home to make up with Frank!"

Miss Caddy sat upright in her bed as Olive fled. "Now what can she mean, sister, by saying she has been taught better here?" she said. "We never should have had a difference about any little thing."—Interior.

The Essay Bob Did Not Write.

BY GRACE S. RICHMOND.

It was with a melancholy face and discouraged legs that Robert Kendrick dragged himself into the family sitting room on his return from school on Tuesday afternoon. He was greeted with interrogations.

"What's the matter, Bobby?"

"Plunk'd in English lit again, Bob?"

"Won't Bess go to the rink with you?"

"Are you not feeling well, Rob, dear?"

This from his mother. It was small wonder. Her son's countenance suggested severe inward pain of some sort.

He flung his school-books upon the table, his cap and ulster upon a chair, and himself full length upon the sofa-pillows on the couch.

"Worse'n any of those," he grunted.

"Well,—tell us what!"

"Got to write a thing on 'Mozart as a Composer,'" Bob groaned, burrowing among the cushions and kicking out with both feet