

do hope he'll come back to-morrow, as he said.'

'She likes him. I hope he is a good man, poor child.' So Hope's thoughts ran.

The sweet-faced girl was now all the hostess ag in, seeing that the new-comer's few wants were supplied. Hope could not help feeling cheered and grateful. A night in this pleasant refuge would do her good, and on the morrow she would leave before the gentlemen came back. She shrank from anything like society just now.

She was just leaving the room, when a merry laugh from the garden called her to the window again. Miss Flora, with dancing blue eyes, and fluffy hair of bright gold, was struggling with a refractory pet lamb, which had made its way into the flower-garden, and insisted on feeding on roses. She nodded up to Hope. 'My spoilt child,' she cried.

It was a picture. The girl had beauty, youth, and goodness in her delicately tinted face. The sight touched Hope. 'God keep the child!' she said softly. She could hardly have told why. Then she went down to the bountifully spread table, over which Miss Furniss presided, and really enjoyed the good tea, the hot cakes, the well-cooked mutton chops, and the home-made peach jam spread before her. She would not tell her tale yet, would not tell it at all to bright Flora. When she could get Miss Furniss alone, she would question her concerning her late visitors, of any new-comers into the region. With the Bay of Plenty actually in sight, she must hear now of Harold if he had come this way. If not, she thought she would return to Auckland; when Harold was ill or weary he might come back to her there.

After her meal Flora reinstated Hope again in the cushioned chair. 'You are not to talk a word,' she said; 'you are to go to sleep, and I shall play to you. I like my piano better than the sewing machine.'

The girl played softly and sweetly. 'Sing me something,' Hope asked. And Flora turned over a heap of old ballads. 'Mother's music,' she said; 'I like these old songs.'

So did Hope. Her mother had sung some of them to baby Charity in the days long past.

Flora's voice brought back those dear hours.

The girl suddenly swung round on her stool in the middle of 'Home, sweet Home.' 'Oh, if you like my singing,' she said, 'what would you think of Mr. Wentworth's? It's beautiful! We sing duets together sometimes; you must stay and hear him.'

Then Flora's fingers returned to the keys again, but she sang no more, only seemed to set her happy wandering thoughts to low harmonies of her own.

'She is in love with Mr. Wentworth,' now decided Hope.

It gently interested her to map out this rich, pretty girl's future—her engagement to an honest kindly Englishman, her occupation of a new home, of which she would be the gay, sunny mistress, spreading joy wherever her sway extended. 'Oh, I hope he is a good man!' again thought Hope. *He* was still Mr. Wentworth.

Flora's thoughts were always running on this absent guest. And when she left the room towards evening on some household errand, and Hope began to nerve herself to tell her tale, the kind elderly aunt, too, was so full of Mr. Wentworth's good qualities and attractions that she could not edge in a word. Well, it was a rest to the poor wife to be silent on her own painful affairs. Evidently these people were possessed of no vulgar curiosity. Hope was a stranger, and they had gladly taken her in. She was asked to explain nothing.

By-and-by, as the light waned, Miss Furniss grew more confidential. Dear Flora, her niece, must marry some time. Girls did marry early in the colony, and she was always afraid of her not getting a good husband.

Now Mr. Wentworth, he hadn't spoken yet, but she saw through him; he couldn't keep his eyes off Flora all day long; he would be a husband worthy of the girl—an English gentleman with means, too—good means. Of course dear Flora, brought up as she had been, must have comforts. Miss