
THE GRAVENORS

her hand. There was a quaint, old-time comfortableness about her that was not at all unpleasing. These afternoon reading hours, out in the open, were her special delight. She was not an intellectual woman, but she was schooled in the philosophy of good living, and, had it not been for her coming into the Gravenor household, things would have gone hard with the two small children when they became orphans. When Muriel was but a child and Mrs. Gravenor's life hung merely by a thread, the frail little woman pressed Aunt Hawkins' hand and, with tears in her eyes, begged her to take care of her two little ones. And when, fifteen years later, the father felt that he was also to be taken away, his last words were: "Auntie! be good to the children. It breaks my heart to leave them. Continue to be a mother to them, for they have only you now." And the good woman fulfilled her promise. She guarded them as jealously as a bird would its young. They looked up to her in all things. She was a second mother to them in every sense. Mrs. Gravenor herself had christened the matronly, tender-hearted woman "Aunt," and thus she was called by all who knew her intimately.

Muriel, unknown to Aunt Hawkins, had stolen into the garden some minutes previously. She loved to be out there amongst the flowers. They were like so many com-