

"She is so scandalously selfish! Because Mrs. Preston is sick, and she wants to go to her every day of life, she won't take me to Austin. It is a shame!" said the girl, indignantly. And madam was delighted at the complaint, and carefully nursed it.

"She is jealous of your beauty, jealous of your singing, jealous of the little love and attention Ray gives you."

The two women talked over Cassia's conduct almost constantly, and, as they were bent upon finding faults in her, they usually succeeded in their search. And if Raymund did not himself notice their animosity, Cassia soon found out that it was a dangerous thing to open his eyes. If he recognized the cruelty or injustice of any attitude, his anger was so extreme as to be painful to every one, and to very likely produce a reaction on the other side. If he did not, or would not, see the malice so evident, a complaint only weakened her power, and gratified those so mercilessly and continually plotting against her.

And no malice is absolutely powerless. If it does not injure in one way it does in another. Madam had gained a most important victory when Raymund said, petulantly, one day: "I do wish you three women would bear and forbear a little. Of course madam is wrong, but she can hardly be alway and entirely to blame. Don't notice her peculiarities, Cassia."

That very afternoon, as Raymund was lifting his gloves and whip, and the horses were waiting at the door, madam sent for him. It was a taunt from Cassius that drove Cæsar to the capital to meet his assassins, and how often a momentary impatience, a passing pique, makes us say or do something which we know at the time is foolish or wrong, but which we have no will to resist saying and doing.

"Don't notice her peculiarities," quoted Cassia.

There was a ring of sarcasm in her voice, and Raymund looked at his wife in astonishment. Then, with an excessive politeness, he turned to Souda, and answered, "Tell madam I will wait upon her immediately."

Cassia perceived her mistake as soon as it was made, and as Raymund threw a robe over her feet, she said, timidly, "It was your own advice, Ray."

"It was suitable advice for you to follow. I hope I shall never, under any circumstances, neglect to respond to a lady's call; especially when the lady is so much my senior."

"Will you remember, then, that my waiting here is a 'call' upon your kindness, also?" Perhaps the question was an imprudent one, but Cassia was pained and perverse, and, of course, imprudent. Raymund bowed stiffly to her request; he was only away a few minutes, but the pleasure of the ride was quite gone. Raymund was offended, and bored; Cassia hurt and silent. She understood that madam had seen them going hand