

anything of the kind. Here is your room. Now do make yourself quite comfortable and at home, and look upon me as a mother all the time you're here, my dear, for I'm very fond of chaperoning girls, never having had daughters of my own."

Jeanne was quite astonished at so much kindness, but before she had time to utter her gratitude, the great lady was already speeding away down the passage, calling to her favourite boarhound, who had followed her upstairs with stately velvet tread.

The bark of the Duchess, it was always said, was worse than her bite; but she barked so loud and so long that a bite might have been more easily endured. Thus, though she was in no sense a bad-hearted woman, but, on the contrary, a very kind one, she was unpopular among her father's people and on her own estate, where her kindnesses were received so thanklessly that she might be almost excused for forming a poor opinion of her tenants' capacity for gratitude.

But a sharp tongue may inflict wounds that cod-liver oil, chicken broth and port wine cannot cure; nor do coals and blankets necessarily warm hearts chilled and offended by fault-finding carried to excess; so that, whilst her sons, and more especially Lord Dermot, who was to inherit her property, were exceedingly popular at Challonsleigh, their mother, who had been born and bred there, was at once disliked and feared, to an extent of which she was, happily, very little aware.

Dunham had paused in her unpacking, and made her old-fashioned curtsy as her Grace entered the apartment, receiving a good-natured nod in reply; and the Duchess was in high good humour as she stumped away to her own rooms.

She hated smart, self-assertive young ladies, and pert independent maids; but Jeanne's maid was ancient and respectable to such a degree that her mere appearance was a voucher for her mistress, and Jeanne herself was timid and gentle as could be wished, whilst she evidently preferred listening to her elders to talking herself.