

Mrs. Wilson, energetically, of the ceiling as she closed the study door behind her and left her master attempting to pick up his broken thread of thought on the subject of the decay of modern culture.

But while Mrs. Wilson's question remained yet unanswered, and before poor Jonas succeeded in regaining his interest in his interrupted study, the library door was flung open and Daisy and Rose ran in.

"We've come to bid you good-night," said Rose, putting up her face to be kissed.

"And when are we to get our presents?" questioned Daisy.

With unusual gentleness, and an awkwardness that would have been very funny to an observer, but to which the children were entirely oblivious, Jonas lifted his little charges upon his knees, and assured them of the forthcoming of their presents on the morrow, and his hope that they would find the old house a happy home. Then he dismissed them to bed.

And certainly his hopes were fulfilled, however his appreciation of his charges may have fluctuated.

The Misses Hetherington took most kindly to their new home, and at times, not a few, turned into a small pandemonium. Martha humored them most injudiciously, Mrs. Wilson stormed at them and made them hate her, but acquired not the slightest control over them, and their guardian locked himself in his study and let them go their own gait, though he often shuddered at the racket they made through all the once quiet house. Still, with it all, the little intruders wormed themselves into Jonas Everard's affections by their sweetness of manner and their daily night and morning caresses.

But matters came to a climax when, one day in the early spring, Daisy dug up Mrs. Wilson's choicest mound of bulbs. It was more than that much-exercised woman could bear, and she informed her employer that he must part with either her or the Misses Hetherington.

"Then I'll advertise for a new housekeeper to-day," announced Jonas Everard, bluntly.

"Very well, sir."

Mrs. Wilson retired with an injured air. She felt that superior virtue is seldom, if ever, rewarded in this world. After seven years of faithful service the Misses Hetherington were preferred before her.

The Misses Hetherington themselves expressed unbounded joy at her approaching departure.

"And don't you think, guardy," suggested Rose, who was a remarkable combination of womanliness and mischief, "that you'd better get some one who would teach me some lessons as well as look after the house? Mammy says I ought to be learning something."

"True enough, Rose," assented Jonas,

well pleased; "I will act upon your suggestion. Now run away and play, and don't let Daisy dig up any more hyacinth beds."

It was some weeks before Mrs. Wilson's place was filled; but when Mrs. Latimer was engaged Jonas Everard flattered himself that he had gained a prize.

Her application had been earnest, her references unexceptionable, her letters lady-like and polished.

It was nearly June when she arrived at the homestead—a tall, lissom woman, dressed with a severe simplicity that was yet decidedly stylish as well as becoming to her pale face, with its full blue eyes and shining brown hair.

The children "took to her" immediately, and Jonas Everard, delighted, after a few days of observation, left home for a short sea voyage to Greenland, where he had lately heard of some curious geological formations which he was anxious to inspect.

Short—and yet it lengthened into months.

It was almost September when Jonas returned to his home and the tender mercies of the Misses Hetherington. But what a change had come over the place in his absence! There was not a room in it but what was well aired and lighted, and bore the stamp of a refined and womanly presence. Everything everywhere was bright, cheerful, dainty, home-like. And Rose and Daisy had shared in the general improvement—gay and affectionate as ever, they were no longer enfants terrible in untractable mischievousness and outbursts of stormy passion.

It occurred to Jonas Everard instantly that these were Mrs. Latimer's doings, and almost as instantly that he could not treat such a woman as he had treated Mrs. Wilson. It cost him a struggle, but before night he astonished Thomas by informing that personage that the big dining-room must be put into use, and that he, Jonas Everard, would no longer eat alone in his study, but with Mrs. Latimer and the Misses Hetherington.

Whether Jonas ever consciously acknowledged to himself that he was rewarded for his self-sacrifice in this respect is doubtful, but he certainly came to actually enjoy meal-times—even to enjoy, most of all, the late dinners at which Rose and Daisy did not appear—and to regard Mrs. Latimer as an extremely sensible and agreeable woman.

As the weeks drifted on he even fell into a habit of spending an hour or so with her of an evening in the little sitting-room she had chosen just off the dining-room. You see how things were going.

In early spring a letter from Mr. Felton summoned the Misses Hetherington's guardian to New York. He was gone some weeks, and he had never dreamed how dear his home was to him until he felt all his veins thrilling with delight and expectation