

warmth to the welcome you are prepared to give him. Nothing would be more agreeable than to have a visitor at White Towers."

"Miriam is in one of her dark moods to-day," Stella remarked, going near the window to help Lydia smooth out the damp tangle of wood flowers. "Of course we are very happy here, and Uncle Harcourt is always kind. You mustn't mind what Mollie says; the fact is, she has taken a tremendous dislike to the new secretary, who is coming to night, and I don't think she'll ever get over it."

"I hardly know how she can dislike a man she has never seen," Lydia replied in the same unmoved voice; "and as he happens to be the son of one of papa's dearest friends, there cannot be much said against him. I hope Mollie will not make any of those strange speeches before Dora; it would be painful if the child caught them up and repeated them in the presence of Mr. Lyndoch. By the way, he will be here in time for dinner," she added, without glancing up from her flowers, "and I was to tell you to be sure to make yourselves look as neat as possible before appearing at table."

"And to behave like good children?" Miriam said, with a little mocking laugh. "Thanks, I will take the hint, and, in honor of Mr. Lyndoch's arrival, I will dress for dinner!"

Something in Miriam's clear, vibrating tones made Lydia lift her head, and for the first time the thought that Miriam was beautiful flashed into her brain, as it had often flashed into the mind of Miriam's sister.

Perhaps it was only the warmth of the sunset glow pouring in through the open window, which gave such a bewildering radiance to the girl's face. The frown was gone from the finely marked brows, and beneath, her eyes shone like deep wells of living light—disdainful, imperious, triumphant.

"I don't think you need take the trouble, Mollie, there's not much chance of your being noticed," Lydia observed, bending calmly over her work, after that one quick glance into Miriam's face. "Besides, our dresses are all more or less alike. What could you wear better than the one you have on? You speak as grandly as if you meant to appear in a Court-train and diamonds! I'm afraid your imagination will have to do a lot for you to-night, Mollie."

"We shall see," Miriam said, a smile flitting over her velvety lips, as she gazed outward at the glowing sky. "Mr. Lyndoch must understand that I, at least, am not to be considered as a school-girl, and I shall show him at once how utterly impossible it will be for him ever to treat me with the authority of a master."

Shortly after this Miriam left the room, and for the next half hour she was engaged in searching a great iron clasped case for some fitting garment in which to array herself for the evening's presentation.

The trunk belonged to her mother, who, since the first year of her marriage, had lived abroad with her husband, Colonel Denavon.

Miriam and Stella had both been born in India; but the climate had soon threatened to undermine their health, and, although the separation cost her many bitter tears, Mrs. Denavon had been urged to send her two little girls to England, to be brought up in her brother's house, the home which had been her own until she left it as the bride of Frank Denavon, and where she knew the little ones would be tenderly welcomed by Sir Harcourt Melville and his young wife.

Shortly after their arrival the gloom of a great sorrow fell over White Towers. Lady Melville was dead, and while Sir Harcourt mourned his wife's loss he scarcely heeded the existence of the children beneath his roof, the eldest of whom was his niece, Miriam, the youngest, a year-old baby, little Dora.

The news was a terrible shock to Colonel Denavon and his wife, and they at once offered to relieve Sir Harcourt of the charge of their children; but his reply, briefly worded, had been to the effect that he wished the little girls not to be separated.

"Lydia is of an age to understand the loss she has sustained," his answer ran, "and were she deprived of the companionship of her cousins she would have no other consolation, her little sister being, as yet, too young to take any part in her daily life. I therefore beg you to let your children remain with mine, and I will see that they are well cared for and educated as you would desire."

Perhaps Miriam's mind wandered back to that long-ago period—to the parents of whom she had so tender a remembrance, as she turned over the contents of the huge trunk—boxes of quaintly set jewels, and gowns of rich satin over which these antique ornaments had once been worn.

"Some of these must have belonged to our great, great grandmothers," Miriam thought, as she bent to admire the rich ivory tints of the folded satin.

"How delightful to wear such lovely things! I must try them all on presently, and see which will fit me best."

She might be treated as a child, but she would no longer act as one: Miriam told herself, when, later on, shut away in her own room, she arrayed herself in a shimmering robe in the time of the French Empire; then, as she caught sight of herself in the glass, she gave a little triumphant laugh, and to complete her toilette fastened a fillet of pearls amid the waving coils of her soft, dusky hair.

CHAPTER II. "HE."

The gong sounded for dinner, and Stella knocked impatiently upon the door of Miriam's room.

"Make haste, Mollie," she said, putting her lips to the keyhole that her words might not be heard downstairs; "he is here, and I have seen him already. You had better not come down late—he looks dreadfully severe."

(To be Continued.)

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