

"Father!"

Mr. Jacobs went on talking across the table.

"Father! why can't we fly like the birds?"

"Haven't I told you a hundred times not to ask questions when I was talking? If you speak again, you shall be sent from the table!"

Philip cowered down in his chair, looking frightened. But his young eyes were just opening upon a world of wonderful things, each of which but half revealed itself. He was what is called a "bright child," by some; and troublesome child by others. To all who would tolerate him he was an eager questioner. Too soon he forgot his father's threat to send him from the table if he spoke again. Ere the story was finished, he said in a loud voice,

"Mother! Does sugar grow on trees?"

"Philip!"

The child started and flushed as if caught in an evil act.

"Leave the table!"

Philip left the table slowly, and went in tears from the room.

"I never saw such a boy!" exclaimed Mr. Jacobs, with an irritated manner, and then fell into a silent, moody state. He did not finish his pleasant story.

"Nobody answers his questions," said the mother. There was a troubled murmur in her voice. "I can't do it; it would take all my time, and the wisdom of Solomon into the bargain. What do you think he asked me yesterday?"

"If the moon was made of green cheese probably?"

"Just what he did ask! Somebody imposed upon his young curiosity, and he came to me for the truth."

Now it was the father himself who had done this. On the preceding morning, just as he was leaving the house, Philip had caught hold of him and put the question,

"What is the moon made of, father?"

"Of green cheese," was the thoughtless answer—we might call it by a severer name. And Mr. Jacobs dragged himself away from the child's earnest grasp.

"Well, what reply did you make?" inquired Mr. Jacobs.

"I was amused, and laughed heartily."

"Well, what then? Was he satisfied with being laughed at?"

"No. He pressed the question."

"How did you answer him?"

"I began by trying to make him understand that the moon was another world like this?"

Mr. Jacobs laughed out loud.

"He was easily satisfied, I presume?"

"Indeed, then, and he was not. In less than two minutes he had asked me more questions than any astronomer could have answered to his satisfaction in a month."

"So you gave it up?"

"I did, and told Jane to give him a saucer of sweet-meats and bread in which to drown his curiosity."

"Wise woman! It was effectual I suppose. You heard no more about the moon and green cheese?"

"Nothing more. When I next saw him, he was asleep on the floor, his face daubed with syrup from chin to eyebrows."

Mr. Jacobs laughed. A moment after, he said, looking serious,

"I must answer Mary's letter to-day."

"O yes. It won't do to put it off any longer," replied his wife. "Poor Mary! I feel sorry for her. I wonder what kind of a girl Anna is?"

"An ordinary girl, no doubt. Mary's husband was a coarse man; and they've always been very poor. The children have had few opportunities for improvement."

"I'm sorry," said Mrs. Jacobs. And her dreamy-looking eyes sunk to the floor. After a brief silence she looked up, adding,

"We shall have to give Anna a home."

"I don't know about that," replied her husband. "It might not be the best for our children."

"They are very young."

"So much the worse. She might give their young minds a twist that we could never get out again. I'm afraid."

"The poor girl will have to go out alone and friendless, to make her way in the world. She is your sister's child; and, for appearance sake, if nothing else, we must not abandon her to such a fate. Evil consequences might follow, that would occasion a life-long regret. I think we had better send for her. We need not offer her a home, now, but merely invite her to make us a visit."

"If you are willing," said Mr. Jacobs, "I will write to sister Mary to send Anna here for a few weeks. If we don't like her we can manage a quiet transfer to other quarters."

"Send for her by all means," replied his wife. "You can not do less under the circumstances."

So the letter was written, and the niece invited to make them a visit.

When Philip learned that his Cousin Anna—he had never heard of her before—was coming to make them a visit, he had a hundred curious questions to ask about her, to none of which he could get a satisfactory answer. As usual he annoyed his father with his singular and persevering inquiries; and the child got into trouble about his Cousin Anna, more than a dozen times before he looked into her face.

At last, the day came when she was to arrive. Mr. Jacobs did not greet the morning with much pleasure; and his wife felt nervous about the unpromising relative, who might prove a disagreeable inmate of their family. She knew that it would be much easier to receive her into the house, than to get rid of her, should her presence be found an injury to the children. As Anna was to come to the city in charge of a gentleman from the town where she lived, who would bring her to her uncle's house, Mr. Jacobs did not feel called upon to put himself out on the occasion, by meeting her at the cars. It was rather later in the evening than usual when Mr. Jacobs came home from his store. He felt more than a little uncomfortable about the young relative he was to meet. A dozen times during the day, he expressed to himself regret for having extended the invitation. "Trouble will grow out of it, I am sure," he said, as he walked homeward. "When I saw her, ten years ago, she was the image of her father, and that isn't saying much in her favor. He was always a coarse, vulgar man. What Mary ever saw in him to like is more than I can imagine."

When Mr. Jacobs entered the family sitting-room, a slender girl, with a pale, delicate face, and large, dark eyes, that had in them a singular depth and brightness, arose and advanced a few steps toward him. There was a modest grace, an ease of manner, and an air of refinement about her that made a favorable impression at the first glance.

"Your uncle," said Mrs. Jacobs.

"Is this Anna Freeman?" There was no concealment of surprise on the part of Mr. Jacobs, as he took the young girl's hand and welcomed her cordially. He was pleased beyond measure at finding in his niece one so very different from the individual his thought had pictured. A brief conversation with her about her mother and younger sisters, and her own views of life and prospects, sufficed to give Mr. Jacobs the impression of a superior and well-cultivated mind.

Philip had attached himself to her almost from the moment she came into the house, plying her with questions that were patiently answered, and in a way clearly intelligible to his dawning intellect. He was hanging upon her words when his father came home and interrupted some attractive piece of information he was gathering from her lips. Impatient at the prolonged conversation, he at last broke in with a question.

"Philip!" Mr. Jacobs raised a finger and spoke sternly.

The child was standing by the side of his newly found relative, who drew an arm around him in an affectionate way, and looking into his face with a gentle smile, said,

"Wait a little while, dear, and I'll tell you all about it."

"I'm afraid he'll worry you to death with his questions," said Mr. Jacobs. "He plies them without mercy, in season and out of season."

"I am used to answering children's questions," replied Anna. "Philip and I have made friends already," she added, tightening the arm that was around the child.

"Have I troubled you with questions?" There was a shade of feeling in the boy's tones as he looked in the face of his Cousin Anna.

"No dear," she answered, "you'll never trouble me with questions. Ask as many as you please."

"May I ask one now?"

"No, not now," said Mr. Jacobs. "There is a time for all things. Never ask questions when older persons are conversing. I am talking with your Cousin Anna."

A shadow fell across the countenance of Philip. But Cousin Anna withdrew her hand from his waist, and lifting it up to his forehead, laid it among his glossy curls, and drew them tenderly back against her bosom.

"We'll have our talk all in a good time," she said, softly.

The child made a strong effort to repress his eager curiosity. Very, very long, as it seemed to him, did his father hold Cousin Anna in conversation. In several of the pauses he threw in a question; but was rebuked, or threatened, each time.

"Go away from your Cousin Anna!" Mr. Jacobs at length said, almost angrily. "She is tired with a long journey, and you are