

almost touching the coils of pale gold hair, and the shruhs and the twilight sky made an effective background for the tall figure in the light blue dress. But Edmund, who knew the ways of the world, smiled at Carry Lancaster's "bit of show-off," and met an answering glance from quiet Miss Rayne, who was the third person in the group.

"Don't appropriate a family treasure," Miss Rayne remarked demurely. "Mr. Warrenne has not decided on the wearer, has he? Some day we shall know, I suppose."

"Some day," Edmund repeated, "some day I hope it will be worn by my bride!"

Carry was looking at him, but his gaze had sought Becky's face openly and with a slight smile full of tender meaning. Miss Rayne smiled, too; then Becky lifted her clear brown eyes, and saw just what he meant her to see. Very little more was said, but if Carry was annoyed, she showed nothing. She restored the bracelet to its owner, stepped back into the drawing-room, and spoke to the hostess, who asked her for a song.

She sang twice to everybody's satisfaction; the pink flush on her cheeks was very bright; she had never seemed in better spirits. But when it was time to separate, and Mr. Saunderson pleaded for one song more, she went across to the piano and gave them all a surprise. There was a brief prelude, and then, brilliantly, and almost recklessly, she burst into the old Scotch ballad:—

"O, Brignall banks are fresh and fair,
And Greta woods are green
I'd rather rove with Edmund there
Than reign our English queen."

She had thrown so much spirit and meaning into her song that there was a momentary silence when it ended. Then they all thanked and praised her, but there was just a shade of reserve in the praise. The good-nights were spoken, and the guests departed.

The church clock chimed the quarter after ten as Becky's cab stopped at the gate of the grey house. She got out, and went quietly up to her room like a girl in a dream. Carry's behaviour had surprised and puzzled her; something in Mrs. Saunderson's face had expressed astonishment; and so to Edmund, she had been too shy to lift her eyes to his when she said good-night.

At the same time, Edmund Warrenne reached his lodging in rather a dreary mood. He was fresh from the presence of the girl he truly loved; but no sooner was he alone in his room than he realized the difficulty of his position. He had lost one post, and had not yet heard of another; funds were getting low; hope deferred was making the heart sick. He had no home to offer, no money to support a wife; and yet in a wordless fashion, he had plainly told the tale of his love.

"And there's poor old nurse to be considered," he said to himself, as he put out the light. "She has been my mother's most devoted servant, and the best friend that I've ever known. I must contrive to keep the dear old soul in comfort, let come what may!"

He slept soundly that night, but woke in the morning to take up his burden again. The sum paid monthly to Nurse Grantley was due to-day. He began to reckon as he rose and dressed, and presently felt for his purse. It was missing!

He searched calmly, refusing to believe in his own misfortune; but the truth had to be faced at last. His little store was gone!