

"I always decorate my friends," she observed. "Willie says I have an artistic element in my character."

She flew off suddenly and left me before the glass, and I tried to realize that the pleasant picture reflected was myself, and to marvel at the power of dress as a beautifier.

"You will find the young people in the hall," said Mrs. Trelawney, observing that I was alone.

I found my way to the stairs, and then paused to look down into the hall. My eyes feasted on the glowing firelight, on the scarlet berries and trailing ivy which decorated the walls.

Looking toward the fire, I saw that only one girl sat before it. Her dress of soft crimson satin swept the floor, and her dreamy eyes were fixed upon the flames; her exquisite face wore a sad expression—as of one who had waited long and suffered patiently.

William Trelawney advanced from the shadows with a bunch of Christmas roses in his hand.

"Ethel, will you wear these in your hair?" he said gently.

She looked up, and I saw that her lips quivered. He laid the roses in the braids of her hair, and then took her hand and pressed it to his lips.

"A Merry Christmas," said he. Then looking up he saw me.

A new arrival. The hall door opens and the snow drifts in; a wild wind whirls the flakes to the hearth. Ethel shakes them lightly from her crimson robe; the eager girls come trooping down the stairs.

"What! John Graeme!" cried William Trelawney, as a man entered snow-covered.

"John Graeme, of course," cried Cousin Joe, drawing him up to the fire-side. "Just in time for the fun, my lad."

"I came in answer to your letter," said the new comer, unwrapping him-

self, and showing a kind, shrewd face. "I must return as soon as I can."

"And how did you leave the old man?" said Cousin Joe, dropping his voice, so that only those round the fire could hear. Seemingly to them the question had no interest, for all except the Trelawneys drifted away to join the fun in the next room.

"I left him looking dismal enough—alone in that large house—solitary, caring for no one, and cared for by none but myself."

"I wish you could have brought him," said Cousin Joe.

"He is immovable," said John, sadly. "A victim to his pride in the Graeme temper."

"And I find Lucy as hopeless a case as ever," sighed Cousin Joe. "She loves her uncle, but she loves the pride in this Graeme peculiarity of temper far more. She will not stoop and ask forgiveness, nor will she express any sorrow for the unhappiness she has caused her relatives."

"Then I have made an unnecessary journey," said John. "I hoped much from your letter, and set out with the hope of taking back the child on whom he once lavished all the affection he was capable of. *Now*, I must return, and I suppose Christmas-tide must always come and go as solitary for him as this one is."

"It's hard upon you, too, lad," said Cousin Joe. "Dull times for you in your short, hardly-earned holiday."

"I am too sorry for him to think much of the trouble on my own account. He was once so different. He has always been such a steady friend of mine also."

"Well, well, lad, it is a disappointment all round. Thank goodness, the Graeme temper is confined to so few members of the family. It's a kind of madness. Here are two people, who have both injured one another, who love one another, of whom each is too proud to ask pardon of the other."