

man as Ruth, above all others. When I said so to Aunt Janet, she shook her head and sighed, saying that when I was wiser and older and knew as much of the world as she did, I should think that Mr. Ray was a very good husband for her; indeed, far richer, grander, higher in every way than our Ruth, a penniless orphan might have looked for.

I was silenced, but not convinced. I did not like my new cousin, Rupert Ray. When I saw him in his stately home I liked him less still. He was ever courteous and polite, never cordial or friendly; even to his wife he was reserved and cold. It seemed the nature of the man.

I no longer wondered why Ruth had so wearied for a familiar face to look upon. She told me on the day of my arrival with tears standing thick in her beautiful eyes, that it did her good to have me with her, and I believed her. That she was in want of some one or something to cheer her, I could see at a glance. Her bright temper was gone; she was dreamy and quiet, and the laugh that used to ring out so clearly I never heard now. When she was gay, it was not an easy gaiety. Her mirth died out, suddenly as it came, into half-sorrowful quiet. If possible, she was more beautiful than ever, and seeing her, I wondered more and more how she came to marry Rupert Ray.

"You have sprung up into quite a shy little country girl," she said, holding my face between her jewelled hands, and smiling into it. "I must give you a peep into life, now that I have you here. Do you know little Letty, that you are quite pretty! I shall see you spring into a belle before I send you home to Aunt Janet I have no doubt."

"No," I said, "that you never will. No one could think me pretty near you."

She smiled at my earnest compliment, and sat down to examine the pile of cards and letters that, as I afterwards came to know daily littered her table.

My cousin was sought after in society; people, who would never have noticed her husband, cared to know the sweet-faced little wife; so she came to be quiet a fashionable woman, praised, petted and sought after. I don't think she much cared for it at all; but when her husband was away, as he often was, looking after his business in Cottonopolis, she felt lonely and so went into company for a change.

Through the Spring and Summer the quickly following gaieties took up her time and thoughts. From one scene of amusement to another she whirled me, until I began to think that the quiet days in my own lowly had not been so very miserable, after all, and to wonder, if their peace and calm were not preferable to this glare and glitter, that had no shade, no end. Sometimes I begged to be left to myself, if only for one quiet evening; but Ruth would not hear of it.

"These people," she said, "are as much strangers to me as to you, Letty, though their names are on my visiting list, and they call themselves my friends. I need you to help me to endure them."

Then I began to see with clearer eyes, and to know that my fortune-favored cousin was not happy. In the centre of a troop of friends, she stood alone; the envied leader of her set, she herself had no strong arm to rest upon. Her life was barren in the midst of its luxury. The gloss and the shine were only surface deep; underneath it was empty, in spite of its seeming fulness, even as Aunt Janet hinted it might be.

Rupert Ray came less frequently than ever to stay at his grand