

In that moment the two girls seemed to have changed places. Becky, cool, smiling, and secure, was quite a woman of the world. Carry, startled, was shaken out of her usual composure. A pang of envy shot through her heart, and she felt mean and small beside the unsophisticated little governess.

"It was a sacrifice of course," she said stiffly. "Mr. Seacombe was with me in a jeweller's shop one day, and we saw the bracelet there. He wants to load me with ornaments, but I won't let him give me too many. Now, Becky, I must say adieu, for I am going to meet him at the Willingtons'."

It was a very brief visit, never repeated. The preparations for the wedding were hastened to please the bridegroom; and, as the bride had no near relations, she was to be married from the Willingtons' house. Becky did not receive an invitation; but before the wedding-day came, a letter was written to her, which altered the whole aspect of her life.

The letter was from Edmund de Warrenne, and it told her the secret which had already been confided to his old nurse. He loved her; he had succeeded in getting another secretaryship, but the pay was small. Had she love and patience enough to wait until he could provide a home? Yes, she had; and Mrs. Saunderson rejoiced in her quiet happiness. So that memorable summer glided away, and Nurse Grantley was laid to rest when the leaves fell.

One morning when Becky entered her sitting-room, she realized all at once that winter had verily come. December had been only a continuation of autumn; but here was a bitter January day; snow was driving fast against the window, and the little iron balcony, where the birds used to perch and sing, was covered with white. But the table was not left uncheered by a touch of green; the quaint pitcher was filled with shiny laurels, for flowers there were none. A letter from Edmund lay on Becky's plate, and although the birds were silent, her heart began to chant its song of thanksgiving. She was not afraid of the snow; presently, well shielded with mackintosh and umbrella, she would go to her pupils. Life was full of blessings; love's steady light was shining on the daily path; and there was not a happier girl in Oak-embury than Becky Selwood.