

"Of course," she answered brightly.

"Did they tell you about Mr. Clay's arrival?" he asked, holding her hands, and looking down into her face with an expression she could by no means fathom.

"Yes; Mary told me about him. She said he was a horrid little man. Is it true?" Katherine asked, smiling at the remembrance of Mary's energetic utterances.

"I think he means to be very kind," Jervis answered; "but the journey has got on his nerves rather. However, I helped him to a hot bath, and now he has gone to bed in a happier frame of mind; and he wants to be best man to-morrow, so I have squared matters with Miles. Do you mind?"

"Of course not," she answered brightly, thrusting back the feeling of not wanting any more strangers to intrude themselves into that holy of holies which was to take place to-morrow.

"Mr. Clay is the—— I mean, he is a friend of the family, and he has been good to my mother," Jervis went on, a curious air of constraint showing itself in him, which might have been due to nervousness, although he was not wont to be troubled in that fashion. "Cousin Samuel died in February, and affairs have been at sixes and sevens since, wanting my presence in England."

"You will have to go, then?" she asked quickly.

"We must start next week, I think," he answered, with an emphasis on the pronoun that set her heart at rest. "Mr. Clay is going on to Marble Island with the bishop to-morrow. He wants to see if there is any boat there which will serve to take us round to Halifax when the Strait is open. If not, we