

her sister, but still more fragile in form ; a kind of caricature of her sister. The white in her face was whiter, and the red redder ; her hair was of a shade more brilliant brown ; and she looked altogether like some wonderful hectic ghost. If you were delighted with her sisters beauty you were awed with hers ; not awed because there was anything commanding or determined in the expression of her face, but because she was so very fragile and gentle. The first glance of her great hazel eyes put her under your protection to the death. You had a feeling of awe, while you wondered why it had pleased God to create anything so helpless, so beautiful, and so good, and to leave her to the chances and troubles of this rough world. You could no more have willingly caused a shade of anxiety to pass over that face, than you could have taken the beautiful little shell parakeet, which sat on her shoulder, and killed it before her eyes.

The Secretary set his jaw, and swore, to himself, that *it* should never be ; but what was the good of his swearing ?

"See, James," she said to him, speaking with a voice like that of a stock-dove among the deep plack shadows of an English wood in June, "I am going to fill all your vases with flowers. Idle Agnes has run away to you, and has left me all the work. See here ; I am going to set these great fern boughs round the china vase on the centre table, and bend them so that they droop, you see. And then I shall lay in these long wreaths of scarlet Kennedia to hang over the fern, and then I shall tangle in these scarlet passion-flowers, and then I shall have a circle of these belladonna lilies, and in the centre of all I shall put this moss-rosebud——

For the bride she chose, the red, red, rose,
And by its thorn died she.

"James, don't break my heart, for I love him. My own brother, I have never had a brother but you ; try to make the best of him for my sake. You will now, won't you ? I know you don't like him ; your characters are dissimilar ; but I am sure you will get to. I did not like him at first ; but it came upon me in time. You don't know how really good he is, and how bitterly he has been ill-used. Come, James, say you will try to like him."

What could the poor Secretary do but soothe her, and defer any decided opinion on the matter. If it had been Mr. Cornelius Murphy making a modest request, the Secretary would have been stern enough, would have done what he should have done here - put his veto on it once and for ever ; but he could not stand his favourite little sister in law, with her tears, her beauty, and her caresses. He temporised.

But his holiday, to which he had looked forward so long, was quite spoilt. Little Gerty Neville had wound herself so thoroughly round his heart ; she had been such a sweet little confidant to him in his courtship ; had brought so many precious letters, had planned so many meetings ; had been, in short, such a dear little go-between, that when he thought of her being taken away from him by a man of somewhat queer character, whom he heartily despised and disliked, it made him utterly miserable. As Gerty had been connected closely with the brightest part of a somewhat stormy life, so also neither he nor his wife had ever laid down a plan for the brighter future which did not include her ; and now !—it was intolerable.