

CARMELITA.

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(CONCLUSION.)



GRANDMAMMA'S mind was a little dulled, it is true, but she had not not forgotten everything. The answer did not discourage her.

"Well, if he should be a Catholic and should say anything about marryin', I want you to promise that you'll try and take him."

"Oh, grandmamma, think," cried Carmelita, "he has never spoken of such a thing."

"Hepzibah, she's no fool," cried the old woman, with some of her former querulousness, "and she says he's just crazy about you, only you won't give him any chance to say so. Oh, Carmelita, if this is so, do try to care some for him. I should hate to think of this old place being shut up or sold to strangers."

Somehow Carmelita herself hated to think of the old place being closed or in hands of strangers, and she herself far away from all her new interests and occupations. And yet this other idea was so new, so strange. Her grandmother's voice sounded dreamily in her ears.

"Just think it over and if you can care any for him, you'll be doin' a wise thing."

After that they sat in silence, the old woman contented now that she had unburdened her mind. But Carmelita's thoughts were strangely confused and disordered. Her grandmother's words had been suggestive of so many reflections. The perfume of newly opened flowers came floating through the open windows, but even the birds were silent, their twitterings all hushed in their nests amongst the new-budding leaves. Carmelita often recalled that evening afterwards. In almost every

life there is some such hour, making an epoch in one's history.

"Carmelita, child," said the old woman, after a long silence, "forgive me all them things I said against Catholics. I knew no better till you came. The Lord he knows I'd be one if I could. But I can't. It's too late, and now you may go, I'll sleep."

As Carmelita bent to kiss her in the growing darkness, the old woman muttered:

"Verily, have you been a staff to my hand and a light to my eyes."

VI.

When Mr. Rutherford came next he observed a change in Carmelita. She was out in the courtyard, busy among the robins, welcoming back the rooks, scattering crumbs and bits of wool or wadding broadcast, the latter to be used in the lining of nests. Her manner struck him forcibly, at first he thought it augured sadly for his hopes. But, presently he could scarcely tell why, he believed it to be rather hopeful than discouraging. She was perhaps more distant, less frankly glad to see him, less impulsive, and yet—she was no longer unconscious.

"Some one has enlightened her," he thought with true instinct, "and now if I cannot win her, at least, I shall soon know the worst."

On the occasion of that first visit, however, he took no apparent notice of her altered manner, and contented himself with telling her of his formal intention to become a Catholic. This so pleased and interested her that for a time she forgot her new shyness.

"The idea has been a long time in my mind," he said, "but I must frankly own that your influence has had much to do with my present, definite resolve."

"It is God who has done it," said Carmelita, blushing as she could not have done a week before.

"God sometimes chooses instruments,"