

"Oh, Mrs. Grantley, I know you are a good scholar," the landlady said, "but are you well enough to write?"

"Bless you, my dear, I'm well enough for anything," was the ready answer; and the letter was written in peace.

Becky went back to her rooms with a holiday feeling in her heart. She carried a sheaf of long grass and buttercups, and arranged them loosely in her favorite pitcher. They lasted long enough to gladden her through the hours of a quiet Sunday, and when the afternoon was nearly over, she was surprised at hearing footsteps in the corridor.

"I hope it isn't Carry," she said to herself.

No, it was not Carry; it was Mrs. Saunderson.

"Here you are, alone in your pretty bower," her friend said. "Becky, you may give me a cup of tea; for once I have an hour to spare. Oh, the buttercups!"

"They make me feel like a child," Becky remarked gaily. "I remember the days when I filled my pinafore with them."

"They make me feel like an old woman," Mrs. Saunderson answered. "It is a long, long time since I had my pinafore on, but you have never taken off yours, Becky."

They both laughed: Becky hoped that she wasn't quite a baby, but confessed a liking for childish things.

Tea came upstairs, and Mrs. Saunderson admired the shape of the white china cups, and coveted the brown earthenware teapot; everything was pretty; things need not be hideous because they are cheap. It was evident that Becky had the art of making a little money do a great deal. So the rich, married woman appreciated the thrifty maiden, and sat drinking her tea in sweet content.

"Mrs. Willington called yesterday with one of her girls," said Mrs. Saunderson, enjoying a second cup. "What funny people they are! They seem to exist to give concerts and dramatic entertainments, and anybody who doesn't sing, or play, or act, is a nobody. They have always been enthusiastic about Miss Lancaster, you know."

"Yes," Becky answered.

"They tell me that she is going to marry old Mr. Seacombe. She wished to conceal the engagement for the present; but he has announced it himself with great satisfaction. They settled the matter after she had been singing at the Willingtons'; about a fortnight ago. Have you seen her lately?"

"No," said Becky. "But—do you think she will be happy?"

"Happy is not the word," Mrs. Saunderson responded. "She will have a very good time in her own way. You don't understand her in the least, my dear; she is the most earthy woman I have ever met, and I've known a good many. We thought she was rather jealous of you."

"Oh, I daresay she will drop me," said Becky comfortably, as her friend rose to go.

She did not look as if she cared about being dropped. Mrs. Saunderson patted her smooth cheek, and said that it was quite refreshing to have had a glimpse of her.

A few days passed by, and then Carry herself came to call on Becky Selwood. She entered the olive-green room with a swish of soft draperies, and looked taller and more important than she had ever been before. Becky welcomed her at once, and openly congratulated her on the engagement.

"I wanted to keep it a secret for a little while," Carry said, with a furtive glance at the other's happy face. "But Mr. Seacombe is so absurdly glad that he insisted on telling everybody."

"How kind he must be!" exclaimed Becky. "Wasn't it sweet of him to buy Mr. de Warrenne's bracelet, and give it to you? And I think you would value it all the more, if you knew that Mr. de Warrenne sold it to get some money for a poor old friend."