

and who cast rueful glances at her cheerless pen, so different from her airy chamber at home.

So Rosamond's trunks were taken to No. 20, whether she herself followed them. The first occupant, it would seem, was quite an invalid, for though it was four in the afternoon, she was still in bed. Great pains, however, had evidently been taken with her toilet, and nothing could have been more perfect than the arrangements of her pillows—her hair—her wrapper, and the crimson shawl she wore about her shoulders. Rosamond bowed to her politely, and then, without noticing her particularly, went over to the side of the room she supposed was to be hers. She had just lain aside her hat when the lady said, 'That open blind lets in too much light. Will you please shut it Miss—I don't know what to call you.'

'Miss Leyton,' answered Rosamond, 'and you are—'

'Miss Porter,' returned the speaker.

'Rosamond started quickly, for she remembered the name, and looking for the first time directly at the lady, she met a pair of large black eyes fixed inquiringly upon her.

'Leyton—Leyton,' replied the lady, 'where have I heard of you before?'

'At Atwater Seminary, perhaps,' suggested Rosamond, a little doubtful as to the manner in which her intelligence would be received.

A shadow flitted over the lady's face, but it was soon succeeded by a smile, and she said graciously, 'Oh, yes, I know. You annoyed me and I annoyed you. It was an even thing, and since we are thrown together again, we will not quarrel about the past. Ain't you going to close that blind? The light shines full upon my face, and, as I did not sleep one wink last night, I am looking horridly to-day.'

'Excuse me, madam,' said Rosamond, 'I was so taken by surprise that I forgot your request,' and she proceeded to shut the blind.

This being done, she divested herself of her soiled garments, washed her face, brushed her curls, and was about going in quest of her companions, when the lady asked if she had friends there. Rosamond replied that she had, at the same time explaining how uncomfortable they were.

'The Hotel is full,' said the lady, 'and they all envy me my room; but if I pay for the best, I am surely entitled to the best. I shall not remain here long, however. Indeed, I did not expect to be here now, but sickness overtook me. I dare say I am the subject of many anxious thoughts to the person I am going to visit.'

There was a half-exultant expression upon the lady's face as she uttered these last words, but in the darkened room, Rosamond did not observe it. She was sorry for one thus detained against her will, and leaning against the foot-board, she said, 'You suffer a great deal from ill health, do you not? Have you always been an invalid?'

'Not always. I was very healthy once, but a great trouble came upon me, shocking my nervous system terribly, and since then I have never seen a well day. I was young when it occurred—about your age, I think. How old are you, Miss Leyton?'

'I am eighteen next October,' was Rosamond's reply, and the lady continued, 'I was older than that. Most nineteen. I am twenty-eight now.'

Rosamond did not know why she said it, but she rejoined quickly, 'Twenty-eight. So is Mr. Browning!'

'Who?' exclaimed the lady, the tone of her voice so sharp—so loud and earnest, that Rosamond was startled, and did not answer for an instant.

When she did, she said, 'I beg your pardon; it is Mr. Browning who is twenty-eight.'

'Ah, yes, I did not quite understand you. I'm a little hard of hearing. Who is Mr. Browning?'

The voice had assumed its usually soft, smooth tone, and Rosamond could not see the rapid beatings of the heart, nor the eager curiosity lurking in the glittering black eyes. The lady seemed indifferent, and smoothed carelessly the rich Valenciennes lace, which edged the sleeve of her cambric wrapper.

'Did you tell me who Mr. Browning was, dear?' and the black eyes wandered over the counterpane, looking ever where but at Rosamond, so fearful was their owner lest they should betray the interest she felt in the answer.

'Mr. Browning,' said Rosamond, 'is—is—I hardly know what he is to me. I went to his house to live when I was a little, friendless orphan, and he very kindly educated me, and made me what I am. I live with him still at Riverside.'

'Ye-es—Riverside—beau-ti-ful name—his country-seat—I—sup-pose,' the words dropped syllable by syllable from the white lips, but there was no quiver in the voice—no ruffle upon her face.

Raising herself upon her elbow, the lady continued, 'Pray don't think me fidgety, but won't you please open that shutter. I did not think it would be so dark. There, that's a good girl. Now, come and sit by me on the bed, and tell me of Riverside.'