

an hour. Alison came with him to the door to utter a warning note.

"I don't know that I ought to permit it, but as it is a very special occasion, I suppose I must. But only twenty minutes or half an hour, Stephen, dear, or we shall have your father so excited that he won't sleep a wink all night."

She smiled upon them a little unsteadily as she closed the door, and just on the landing before she went down to the girls paused to wipe her eyes. No one save Alison herself knew what it meant to have such peace in the house, to have a united family all under one roof. To see the understanding between his father and Stephen was the crowning touch. It did not occur to her that it was all her doing, she only thanked God quietly in her heart, and went downstairs.

"Sit down there, Stephen; it's your mother's seat," said Mr. Crewe, motioning to the foot of the bed. "But first walk twice across the room, till I see whether the leg is really quite straight."

"It's nearly, father, and I feel ever so fit," said the boy, as he pushed his eager fingers through his hair. Professor Kellner happened to be in Milan this winter, and I met him by accident in the street, and he remembered me, by Jove he did, and stopped me at once. He was most awfully pleased. He says I shall never have any trouble with it in future. Isn't it fine?"

"It is fine, and you've been working hard, your mother tells me. She believes in you right through, lad. She's been the making of you, as well as of me. It is going to pan out, isn't it, the painting business, I mean?"

"I think so, dad."

"And at least it'll provide you with something to do; you will have enough to live on after I'm gone."

"Don't speak like that, dad, because of course you're getting well fast."

"Perhaps I am; yes, I'm getting well fast, my son."