

"You must take no part in anything of the kind, Edward, for my sake as well as your own; is this your chivalry to make war against an old woman?"

"But, dear cousin, you have no idea what a mean old thing she is. There is not a bit of scandal and evil speaking in the place but she is at the bottom of it. She goes into the boys' room and reads their letters, and for that matter I caught her once reading one of mamma's, and she hates me ever since."

"I cannot say that I like Mrs. Cadgett, Edward; in fact, as you see, I have been so foolish as to let something I heard her say annoy me and make me cry. But, believe me, it is a very foolish thing to let oneself be led by any reprisals against such people. It is unchristian. You know malice is one of the deadly sins, and it is a sin that grows up so rapidly, Ned, when we once harbour it. And, Ned, I think quarrelling is unmanly, and for that matter unwomanly too; it is always a sign of weakness."

"Well, Edith, I will do what you wish. But I cannot help feeling indignant that you should be so hurt."

"Mrs. Cadgett is not a lady, she is a coarse vulgar old woman."

"With the appearance of a cook, and the manners of a fisherwoman."

"Don't interrupt me, Sir; I mean that she does not know perhaps what annoyance her words cause. I confess, Ned, it did pain me to have her talk so, and before so many strangers."

"But, Edith, none of us believe a word of it, and you must not call me a stranger or Cyril either. I know I did not believe her, and I know Cyril did not. He knows all the truth about how you lived in London in the great lonely chambers in Grey's Inn. I told him all about it myself."

"Oh, Edward, how could you tell him!"

"Well, I did not think you would mind. Cyril is such a very good fellow, he would never tell any one else, you know, and besides really, Edie, he likes you so much; he has never said so, but he talks so much to me about you; and do you know he has got a picture in his room in College which is just like you?"

"Well, perhaps it does not matter much, but now good night, and thank you so very much, dear cousin Ned, for thinking of coming up stairs to comfort me; you have made me feel myself again, for I know now that I have one true friend in the house, have I not?"

"That you have, dear Edie."

"But stay," and going to the bureau, she took out a little book curiously bound in antique calf. It was her copy of the "Christian Year." "I am not likely to see much of you for some time; I want you to promise me that you will read one of these poems every Sunday and Saint's day morning before you leave your room. I know no other book next to the Bible and Prayer Book which gives one so much comfort. I can only lend it to you—but here is a little remembrance of your cousin Edith, which you must take from me; wear it always, and when you are tempted to evil, look at it and try to control yourself by the thoughts it will suggest." And she threw round the boy's neck a ribbon by which hung a small gold cross.