

he set eyes on me. He has a weakness for fair complexions. You see what a wreck mine is now. But what can you expect? Seven children in nine years," she repeated mournfully.

"I think, Cecilia, if you ask me, that you are much better-looking than you used to be," said Jeanne, consolingly, "and you know you were always pretty. Of course you are a little plumper. But not more than is becoming."

"I'm sure it's very kind of you to say so," said Cecilia, in pleased and softened tones. "Of course I have every advantage of dress now to set me off. I will say Joseph doesn't grudge me that," and she glanced with some complacency at her own reflection in the pier-glass opposite the sofa. "Well, Jeanne, we were always friends, you know, off and on—and if I was a little reserved when you first came in, I hope you will put it down to"—she paused imperceptibly—"to my thinking you were on mamma's side, and all that; and come to reproach me, as the Pen-y-waun neighbours do whenever we meet. As though a celebrity's wife, in another sphere—*could* keep up with them all."

Jeanne accepted her friend's apologies very willingly; and if any doubts of Cecilia's sincerity still lurked in her heart, did her best to suppress them. She was at once too lonely and too generous to desire any quarrel with her first friend. Even if Cecilia were not so disinterested in her affection as could be wished it must still be more lively to sit and talk with her, than to mope in solitary silence at home.

"So your aunt left you no money. I must say that was a great shame," said Cecilia, warmly. "What will become of you when Louis marries? So good-looking as he used to be, he is certain to marry now. Why, even in the old days I used to think—if he hadn't been younger than I——"

"He never showed the slightest inclination to marry anybody," said Jeanne, jealously.

"Not to you, I daresay," said Cecilia, shrewdly. "One's brothers don't tell one everything."

"My brother does," said Jeanne.