

Hannah smilingly studied her face more at leisure.

"I think we will get on together."

"Thank you, I was so afraid that you would say my countenance 'showed character,' and that means just next to nothing, of course, as it may be good, bad, or indifferent character. I keep that phrase for photographs that I can't admire, and must be civil about. It is as convenient as 'suggestive' applied to a dreadful painting or a splay-footed poem. Yes, you must like me, Cousin Hannah."

"That depends. At least I judge that you won't come home to me every night with torn dresses, stained face, and curls full of burrs, as you once came."

"Never! I promise. Oh, it is delightful to see so much out of doors after stone walls."

"I hope you will not be dull, but Cairnes is a quiet place."

"Don't fear. I know that just what I like will be found here: friends, woods, books, and little Brown-eyes to sketch, perhaps, if she will pose for me and be paid in sugar-plums. Oh, here we are on the broad road, and the oaks each side are as grand as I remembered them. But the Bogert House! How it has shrunken! It used to seem like the Doges' Palace."

Hannah did not tell of her own change of abode, and so she was greatly pleased when Kate said: "There is an adorable little house. I will sketch that as a companion picture to Ann Hathaway's Cottage. I know the same flowers must grow in that garden: briar roses, pansies, lavender, rosemary, and rue."

"Yes, some of them are there," said Hannah, stopping her pony and enjoying the surprise that followed explanations. In the midst of them the usually mild-mannered pony began a waltz, and refused to cease capering until a young man who was approaching on a bicycle, lessened his speed and rolled his wheel to the far side of the road. Hannah saw that he had a very pleasing face, and he, in his rapid passage, caught sight of the prettiest girl whom he had seen in a month.

"I believe," said Hannah, the day after Katharine's arrival, "that I will have a tea-party."

"When?" asked Katharine, who was filling vases with garden flowers.

"To-day, this afternoon."

"Why, it is almost noon now."

"Yes, but I am subject to these attacks and they pass off lightly. I have only to make fresh cake. I will go and invite the people and make that when I get back."

Then putting on her sun-hat she crossed

lots to Mrs. Ostrander's, sent Andy to the Hopkines' with an invitation for Hope, and with some misgivings, went herself, last of all, to the Ferrises', whom she had not seen since their return. She hesitated how to enter. It was the height of Cairnes formality to go in at the front door, and often as difficult as formal, for said door was sure to "stick" from disuse. Still, she objected to any interview with Polly Huggins in the kitchen before seeing the mistress of the house, so was glad to find a long-closed side-door open into a sitting-room. Coming near, she saw Mrs. Ferris alone. There was needlework in her quiet hands, but she was absorbed in thought. Making her presence known by a gentle tap, Hannah stepped in at the open door, saying, as Mrs. Ferris rose,

"I hope I have not come too soon, but I thought that you must be rested by this time, after your journey."

She was not a kissing woman, but she kissed Mrs. Ferris, and then, ignoring every topic which might renew unpleasant memories, she talked on as if her neighbourly visit was according to long-established custom. Mary was visibly fluttered. A bright pink spot came out on each pale cheek, and her hands toyed nervously with the ruffle of her morning dress. She recovered her self-possession on finding that her caller was not waiting in silence to be entertained, while it was "supporting" to see how pretty her dainty dress looked by the side of Hannah's dark gingham. She was soon beguiled into talk about a bow-window that John wanted to have built, and when Hannah, who had just been telling of her own house, rather suddenly asked her and her husband to tea that afternoon, she could not refuse before her consent was taken for granted.

When the clock struck twelve, Hannah rose in haste, saying:

"If I do not hurry home, I can give you but one kind of cake, and that might shock Mrs. Ostrander, who always has three. By the way, he warned never to take her for a model. The effort to equal her has nearly killed one or two Cairnes women."

Mary bade her good-bye quite cordially. When she turned back to her sewing, she was rather pleasantly excited. Miss Goddard, after all, had not seemed so terribly intellectual. She had not even spoken of a book, while her chat about home matters had given Mary the idea of several changes that would improve her own rooms.