

opening the door: "You go right in, and the old lady will be up in a minute; she is seeing what'll be for dinner."

Bess went into the library, which looked strange to her until she saw it was only that the shades were pulled up crooked, letting in a bolder light than usual. A box of candy, a lot of paper-covered novels, an immense bouquet of hot-house flowers, and some fancy-work covered the library table. A pug arose from a cushion and barked as if his works needed oiling; a moment after, his mistress appeared from a whole pile of cushions heaped together on the venerable hair-cloth sofa. Bess' first thought was that she was the most beautiful girl she had ever seen; on closer, cooler scrutiny, she decided it was not perfection of feature so much as coloring. Louise was like a rare ripe peach for velvet bloom of cheek, for rose pink, and golden, glowing warmth. Her sleepy, great eyes grew black with animation, when, lifting her long, feathery lashes, she discovered Elizabeth. She cuffed the pug's ears, and then held out her jewelled hand, saying: "I must introduce myself to Miss Hogarth, who knows I am one of the family now. Aunt Hannah will be up soon. I am so glad you came. Auntie is ever so nice, but not the jolliest company for a girl, you know."

Bess was a little confused, not knowing just how to begin an acquaintance, but Louise spared her any effort. She talked while she asked Bess to take off her hat and wraps, she talked as she cleared a space on the sofa for her, and soon Bess felt that all she need do was to listen. Aunt Hannah came in about twenty minutes, but before she appeared Bess seemed to have known Mrs. Clarence Welles half her lifetime.

"I hope you do not think it awful of me to do as I have done, but I could not marry Clarence any other way; and that Monroe papa was wild to have me take, was bald—actually bald—and so heavy, don't you know! It is horrid in papa to act as he does, but mamma is coming around, and maybe papa will, if we give him time. I just worked on mamma's feelings, and she wrote me when he did not know it. She sent a maid with her letter, and there were three twenty-dollar bills in it. I knew she would relent when she knew I hadn't bought a pound of candy in ten days, nor flowers—I did not need to—Clarence keeps me supplied. How he laughed at my 'teasing mamma for pennies like a baby girl,' he says; only he made me agree

not to tell John. How awfully high-toned John is! I presume he is worth a dozen of Clarence, but Clarrie does dance like a seraph (if they dance, or is singing their forte?) My! but isn't it mild and peaceful here, and slow? Actually" (Louise's voice sank to a hollow intensity of earnestness) "slow enough some days to make me long to be a fly, so I could walk wrongside up on the ceiling just for a break in the monotony. And this furniture! Did you ever see its like outside of Cypher's? I hate antiques, either old maids or claw-legged centre-tables. I don't hate Aunt Hannah, only I can't hear many more long tales of her pre-historic wardrobes, and linen closets and antediluvian festivities, without saying something shocking. Do you listen to them time after time?"

There was no ill-nature, but mere frivolity in Louise's questions. Bess suddenly wanted not to rebuke, but to help her—and Aunt Hannah.

"Why, I enjoy it all, and you will if you stop to think. Everybody can have new furniture and new houses and new friends, but don't you like to see a house with some individuality to it? I do, and then fancy how charming Aunt Hannah must have been when she was young and these things new; she is so unlike the scores of common old people as we see all the time. I think she is delightful now as she is."

"She is a lady, there is no contradicting that, but—we don't know what to do with one another," and Louise laughed at some amusing recollection, then she added: "Clarence promised that we shall go to a small, elegant hotel to board after a little."

It did not occur to Mrs. Welles that any other topic could possibly be as entertaining to a guest. To talk of herself was always her first impulse. After a while Aunt Hannah came to welcome Bess, and apologize for not appearing sooner. Her cheeks were flushed, her lace-cap a little awry, and Bess was sorry to see that she looked more tired than she had ever seen her. She glanced about the room, its untidy aspect annoying her, though she tried to talk quietly with Bess, while Flip, the pug, upset her work-basket and tasted of all her spools of silk.

"How dark it is getting! I hate to sit in the twilight," exclaimed Louise. "Shall I ring for—"

"I will light the gas. I have matches right here," said the old lady.