

was rippling and bubbling. Caroline could see its silver light sparkling through the tangle of greenery that partially concealed it. The long, flat meadows of the valley were flowerless, and their verdure faded, one or two cows were lowing plaintively, with their heads over the hedge, looking out, in wistful fashion. Beyond, the long belt of pines shut in the picture. They rose, dark and inexorable, against the vaporous, colourless sky, and a cloud of rooks was gathering above them, with a loud noise, that in itself appealed almost as much to the eye as to the ear.

Beacon's Cottage stood on a hill among hills. The country just there was broken into abrupt dells and steep ascents, like stormy waves of a great sea. On winter nights, the wind held festival among those hills; crashed among the fir-trees, careered fiercely about the treeless moorland, and wailed round the white cottage, with arrandah and trellis, told mockingly of its summer warmth and luxuriance. The green garden sloped down towards the woody valley, where, even in the dark days of cold and withering blasts, there was ever a little nest-like oasis, as of well-protected innocence and peace. It seemed to smile, now, on Caroline, as she stood within the garden, on the breezy slope, looking around her. Very low down seemed the happy nook, very lofty appeared the hill on which she stood. The clouds seemed nearer than the valley, and the air, which had been so still awhile before, on this height thrilled and tingled as with stronger life.

Unheard by her, one of the long windows which looked out on the garden was deftly unfastened and opened. Miss Kendal came behind her, and spoke over her shoulder.

"You have found your way, then? That says well for the invalid. He is better?"

Caroline nodded.

"You are a good child to give me a glimpse of you. And what do you think of my castle? It's a nice place, is n't it?"

"I like it. I should like to live here, I think. It is pleasant to feel at the top of things—like this."

"Do you feel that dignity? Is n't it rather a cold one, after all? Come, I want to show you over the place. I'm proud of my new character of housekeeper, know. First, let us walk round the garden."

So they walked round, Miss Kendal talking the while, rather more continuously and more trivially than she was accustomed to do. Something in Caroline's face told, perhaps, that she would sooner be listener than speaker. And, in truth, the young girl's heart was throbbing tremulously between a certain depression and joyful haste of expectancy, that made it hard for her to keep within the narrow centre-way of self-possession.

"
then
And
letter
by F
aunt
all so
hill-t
"
H
where
of sw
her ar
" Y
up yo
apprec
Th
unqui
going
—Mis
with h
notice
which
walk.
on toge
path o
Twil
eagerly
subject
" Va
sometim
led to t
station
" No,
" Ho
gesture
for the r
be sent a
" My
had a lo
coming t
" O, v