

"You two are going to fight about the King Charles question," said Edward, "like Amy and Philip in the Heir of Redcliffe?"

"You compliment Miss Sorrell by comparing her to that piece of insipidity—"

"Oh, Mr. Cyril, don't say such dreadful things about one of my favourites. What fault can you possibly find in Amy?"

"Precisely that she is faultless. When Grey is 'under a cloud,' she is quite ready to give him up at mamma's bidding. She has too many conventional proprieties to have much real feeling. I cannot endure that model good young lady of the novels with morals in them. Give me 'Jane Eyre,' or even 'Miss Gwilt,' rather."

"And it is just because characters ranging between the Jane Eyre and Miss Gwilt type are so popular just now, that I think Miss Young's novels deserve credit for returning to the far purer and higher ideal of Scott. Have you ever re-read (of course you have read them) the best of the Scott novels?"

But before Cyril could reply they were all re-called to real life by the entrance of Mrs. Cadgett.

"Them boys should have been in bed half an hour ago; fine doings I declare! encouraging them in such goings on, let alone the waste of keeping the lamps burning and the stove lighted all night. And I just make so bold as to tell you now, Miss, with Mrs. Ellis' compliments to you, that we are both agreed that it is entirely unnecessary for you to take the trouble of keeping these young gentlemen company in the evenings any longer."

"Major Ellis requested me to do so."

"Well, and now you understand that you are requested to keep to your own duties, and mind your own business. I consider it highly indelicate in you to make companions out of them boys. I suppose our society is not good enough for you."

"I do not wish to discuss the subject, Mrs. Cadgett," said Edith, "but I will obey Mrs. Ellis' instructions. Good night, boys." And she had just firmness enough to escape without crying, which would have been a victory to the enemy. As she gained the stairs, Mrs. Cadgett's voice reached her, "fine doings, indeed," was again the burden. "So our fine London bred Miss is to turn the house upside down, is she? I know all her history, Cyril, my dear, and a dis-respectable one it is; her father married an opera dancer, and we all know what to expect from the daughter of such a character," &c., &c.

At last Edith gained the shelter of her room. She sat down listlessly in the cold without even caring to light her lamp. Long she sat there in the dark, feeling very friendless and disheartened, until she was startled by the gleam of a lamp outside her room, and a step which she knew was Edward. "Why, dearest Edith! you have been crying. Well, I could almost cry myself for vexation at the impudent way she spoke to you. But I came to tell you that you must cheer up. We have all noticed the way she treats you, and we intend to sign a round robin to papa, asking him to send her away."

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