

week. Forget, indeed! That's not the kind of child as'll ever forget. The boy might after a bit. He's younger, and has a wonderful spirit of his own, and can throw off trouble, as is right and proper children should. The Lord made them so, and a blessed thing for them He did, poor lambs! But the little girl she'll not forget day nor night, and she'll just break her heart and pine away—that's what she will do!"

I was growing infected by my companion's excitement of manner, and was more and more resolved to embark on this new crusade, and rescue these little ones from the power of their tyrannical brother. He might be generous and liberal in money matters, but he would be certain to separate the children and send them off to school; indeed, I did not see exactly what else he could do, since they had no relations, and his work lay in India. He would not understand the sensitive nature of Maudie, and though Mrs. Marks might speak her mind freely, no young autocrat fresh from India would need much what the lodging house-keeper thought about the situation. No, the children needed a stronger champion than the worthy Mrs. Marks; and in a moment my mind was made up. I resolved that I would be that champion, and would if necessary carry off the children in the very teeth of the enemy's guns.

"Something must certainly be done," I said, with a great show of quiet assurance; "I must think what it had better be. Meantime I should like to make the acquaintance of the children. Will you send them to my house some day this week to have tea with me?"

"To Sea-Gull's Haunt, ma'am? I'm sure I'll be pleased and proud to do it. I've been wishing all this while as there was any real gentry as would notice the poor lambs a bit; for they are gentle-born if ever children were, and I can't have them mixing up with folks such as most of the visitors here are. Their dear mother was just the same. She kept herself to herself; and the little ones do it by instinct, as you may say. I never have to speak a word; they seem just to know that the folks they see about are not fit company for them. Children of the right sort are so wonderful sharp to know a deal more than they can understand, bless them! But it would be a real treat to them to go up to the 'pretty big house,' as they call it. They always play right away that side of the bay, because it's quieter there, and they like being near the pretty gardens where the flowers grow. I suppose, ma'am, that your are the young lady—the new mistress as folks have been talking about? I hope I see you better than when you first got down here?"

"Yes, I am getting stronger, thank you. Your air here is very good. I hope to be quite well soon. Then you will send the children to me, please? Suppose they come on Wednesday—the day after to-morrow. They can come by the sands if they like, and up the steps in the rock to the little garden door. I will see that it is unlocked before they come. I am often out there by the sea wall. We

will have our tea there, and they can tell me all about themselves."

The good woman's face fairly beamed.

"There! that will be a treat for them! I don't know what the little boy won't say when he finds he is asked to the gardens they are so fond of talking about! He always says when he is a man he will buy the pretty big house, and come and live there with Miss Maudie, and that I'm to come and take care of them, and look after them as I do now. Thank you kindly, ma'am, for thinking of them. I'll be sure to send them. And when would you like them to come?"

"Oh, about three o'clock, and that will give them nice time to see everything they want. And now I think I must be going. But I will come and see you again, and have a talk about the children."

"Thank you kindly, ma'am. It will be a real comfort to think that somebody else takes an interest in them," returned Mrs. Marks, who was one of those good, simple-minded souls who would never pause to consider what business it was of mine to talk over the affairs of her lodgers. She seemed to think it perfectly natural that anybody who had seen the children should be interested in them, and I drove off feeling decidedly elated at the result of my first negotiation. If everything were going to be as easy, I should have no trouble at all in carrying out my plan of adopting the pair if I found I liked them well enough to do it.

(To be Continued.)

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