

otherwise. But they avoided each other. When the mother began to notice this, it seemed very unaccountable—but, nevertheless, it was true.

The boy was half sitting, half leaning against his sister's sofa, and just as Lady Elmsdale entered he had exclaimed:

"Oh, Mary, how pretty you look!"

Her very long golden-hair, free from the trammels of art, had been left to stray, at its own sweet will, in natural waves of silken sheen, far below her waist. She had caught the burnished mass in her left hand, and thrown it back with the careless grace so perfectly natural to her, as she half-raised herself on the sofa to examine some of Freddy's treasures which he had brought to show her: some shells he had gathered the day before on the beach at Dalkey. Her hair had fallen partly over her right shoulder, and partly in rich folds over her right arm. Her clear violet eyes were raised, in asking a question, to her brother's face, and he thought for the moment he had never seen eyes so beautiful. The traces of delicacy remained, perhaps always would remain, in the transparent skin, with just a flush of color. Her lips, apart, were asking the question, by their very expression, as much as by the words which came forth from them.

It was no wonder that Freddy had exclaimed: "Oh, Mary, how pretty you look!"

"Where is Harry?" inquired Lady Elmsdale.

"I don't know, mother," the boy replied, still remaining where he knelt. "I seldom see him now," he added with something as like a sigh as a boy could utter.

Lady Elmsdale did not press the matter further. She could not understand Harry's present feelings, but she thought it best to leave him to himself.

She supposed the shock of his father's death had reacted on a very sensitive nature, and that in time he would be her own bright boy again.

There was silence for some moments. Freddy had ceased his conversation when his mother came into the room, not from any dislike to continuing it when she was present, but from a sense

which he always felt now, that any cheerful talking was incongruous when she was listening.

Mary Elmsdale was wishing she might return to school again; but she knew it was not possible, for she had taken final leave of her mistress and young companions before Christmas. She was wondering where her mother would take her, and if they should really leave Elmsdale in a few days.

Freddy was thinking how pleased he would be to go back to college, and hoping Harry would get all right again when he was with the boys. Lady Elmsdale was musing sadly upon Edward's future, and wishing she had made home pleasanter to him in past times—wishing she had taken some pains to have him married; and then she thought of Ellie McCarthy, and wondered would it have been better if he had been allowed to take his own way in this affair; but her natural good sense convinced her, after a short reflection, that such a marriage would only have increased the miseries and complications of the family. However good the girl might have been, she could not have had the influence over him that an educated lady might have possessed.

Lady Elmsdale's maid came to the door at this moment, and broke the reveries of the three dreamers.

"A note, my Lady. It's Colonel Everard's servant has brought it, and he waits for an answer."

It was simply a request that if Lady Elmsdale would be disengaged between twelve and one o'clock she would favor Colonel Everard with a private interview. He added a request that she would not give herself the trouble to write: he had sent his own servant, and a verbal message would be quite sufficient.

Lady Elmsdale knew the man. "Oh, yes, Rose," she replied, after hastily glancing at the contents of the note. "Tell Thomas I can see his master any hour he may find it convenient to call. I shall not leave the house to-day."

The Colonel arrived, with that military precision which he loved to practice and to enforce, at the exact hour which he had named. There was precision in his manner, in his words, in his very habiliments: surely this was not the