

"What an interesting study the Laurie family would make" said Reginald Brown coming forward to the fire place where his sisters were sitting.

"What are you in the blues about Ju?" he asked, throwing himself on to the well-worn old sofa and stretching out his immense length of limb.

"She does not like the idea of going to the Lauries," answered Dorothy, as Judith remained silent.

"Why Ju, you are the best off of us all, you won't have to work," said Reggie, who did not himself take kindly to labor of any description.

"That is nonsense!" retorted his sister sharply; "I would rather work—I would do *anything*, if only Mr. Lennox would let me, instead of going to Eastville."

"My dear Judith! do you not think it is rather ungrateful of you to talk in this way and to be so discontented. Just pause for a moment and think how truly kind it was of Mr. Laurie to make the offer he did, and also remember my dear girl that it rests entirely—or almost so—with yourself whether your life at Bonny Dale will be moderately happy or not."

"Oh Dolly! you are right—quite right I know, and believe me I am not as ungrateful as I seem, only I—oh! let me get rid of all my discontent to-night, it is the last peaceful one we shall have together—and then, Dolly, when I am away alone at Bonny Dale, I will remember all your wise advice, and be as grateful and happy as I can."

"That is right; and I am sure you will not dislike Mr. Laurie; he is very gruff and difficult to understand; but I think he is kind at heart. Stick up for your rights and don't seem to be afraid of him, whatever you do. A man like that admires pluck in a woman, but cringes to him and he is your tyrant at once" said Reggie sententiously.

"I am afraid his wife must have cringed to him then, for he is certainly a tyrant to her, poor thing" said Dorothy smiling.

"But to return to our muttons; I think you have the hardest lot of us all Dorothy. It is a shame, By Jove! to think of you going out as governess. I say! wouldn't you rather have a situation in an office of some kind? ladies do all sorts of office work now; a fellow told me to-day that his cousin or his aunt or somebody went to New York or somewhere in the States, and got a situation in an office at a salary of forty or forty-five dollars a month; that is more than you will earn, teaching some wretched children to spell."

"Perhaps so," answered Dorothy with her quiet smile—"But I fear I have no taste for office work, and would not care to go to the States; while I rather like teaching and am fond of children, so I think I shall content myself with the smaller salary I shall earn as a governess."

Dorothy was going to Montreal as governess in a wealthy family there. The circumstances which necessitated this scattering of the Brown family we will briefly scan.

A few years previous to the opening of our story, Colin Brown had been a prosperous merchant in the city. Mrs. Brown had died when Judith was a little lisping baby of three years and Dorothy a staid, fair little maiden of thirteen; Reginald came in between the two girls and was at the time our story opens a tall stripling of nineteen, Judith being nearly two years younger. In the midst of their prosperity, reverses came; loss followed loss until ruin, gaunt and bare, stared them in the face. To his credit be it said, Mr. Brown struggled manfully to retrieve his fallen fortunes, and when that hope had fled, he struggled still to keep his family in common comfort, aided by the noble efforts of his elder daughter who managed by teaching music and painting to add something to their small income.

But after several years of desperate fighting for the necessities of life he was forced to own himself defeated and quietly and mournfully laying down his arms, did what was, perhaps, the best thing he could have done both for himself and his children, peacefully and unobtrusively departed from a world which of late had used him so scurvily.

Thus the brother and sisters found themselves alone in the world; for they had no near relations and such distant ones as they had, took no notice of them (with the exception of Mr. Laurie) and the young people were too proud to ask for the help which had never been proffered. What money remained, when the late Mr. Brown's affairs were settled,

was a mere nothing; when divided equally between the three, it brought to each an annual income of sixty dollars—"Just enough to starve upon" as Reggie said. They had absolutely nothing else. Mr. Lennox, the lawyer, who had been a friend of the dead man, and had had the management of his affairs, was the only one the orphans had to rely upon for aid and advice. It was now about three months since their father's death, and on the day but one following that on which our story opens the lease of the cottage in which they lived would expire and they were then to leave the place which had sheltered and been home to them in spite of the iron grip of poverty, for the last ten years—bid each other farewell and go their separate ways. Reginald was to board in the city; he was already in a situation in a wholesale house, which Mr. Lennox had some time before obtained for him. The position was a humble one and the salary not large, but, as the lawyer tritely remarked "you cannot get to the top of the ladder till you've passed the bottom rung." Dorothy as we have mentioned, was going as governess to two little girls in another city. A good woman was Dorothy Brown—gentle, unselfish and womanly. Losing her mother at an early and impressionable age, she had grown into a sweet, helpful woman before she had reached her seventeenth year. Since her mother's death she had supplied her place to father, brother and sister, and they in return had all looked up to her and loved and revered her. Yes, even the poor, heart-broken father in his latter days had leaned on her and taken comfort from her wise, loving words of cheer.

It was little wonder then, that Judith should grieve at parting from her sister, and that sister's heart was very heavy at the thought of sending amongst strangers the child who had been her care and her treasure from baby-hood.

Hugh Laurie was a cousin of Judith's mother; and report said that years ago he had been madly in love with her, but his fierce temper repelled the girl, who otherwise might have loved him. He subsequently married a pretty but inane young lady who beneath the iron rule of her husband had degenerated into the nonentity described by Judith, who as a child had twice visited Bonny Dale farm.

When the young Browns had been left destitute at their father's death, Mr. Laurie had offered to adopt Judith, thereby giving color to the story of his early love for her mother who had also been named Judith.

The girl had rebelled against the acceptance of this offer, but Mr. Lennox thought it too good an arrangement to be laid aside for a mere childish whim; so by that peculiar inductive reasoning for which the man of law is noted, he brought her into accordance with his wishes and so her fate, for the present was settled.

Reginald mentally accused his younger sister of selfishness in being so discontented with her own lot, when Dorothy, who had a prospect of hard work and little pleasure to look forward to, uttered never a word of complaint. But, in truth, Judith thought much of the disagreeableness of her sister's future, and when alone with her spoke regretfully of it. But Dorothy Brown was not a woman to bring her troubles to the fore. Always sweetly ready to listen to a recital of another's woes, to sympathize with, and give the pity craved; yet she never sought from others the pity and sympathy she gave so unstintedly to them. People said she was a very self-contained woman, and so she was; but the term need not be used as a reproach. She was emphatically a brave woman, in a moral sense. Reggie said she was a "trump" and never bored a fellow with her grievances, if she had any.

So Dorothy smiled calmly, and spoke cheerfully of her future life, and her young sister never suspected the strong aversion to the drudgery that awaited her, slumbering deep in her brave heart.

Having thus explained the circumstances in which the Browns were placed, let us now return to the little sitting-room where we found them on that last evening but one of their home life. The three sat there discussing their past, present and future; the conversation was serious sometimes, but anon flashed into brighter channels mingling with gentle mirth at one another's little jokes and exaggerated pictures of future greatness and grandeur, when the present crisis had passed and they had made their fortunes in various ways, practicable only in the marvellous dreams of youth. But in these bright prognostications Dorothy took no part,