

month to month, along the quiet path of life. And what was worse, I had no hope of caring ever for them more.

Presently a little knock sounded through my gloomy room, and supposing it to be the doctor, I tried to rise and make my bow. But to my surprise it was little Ruth, who had never once come to visit me, since I was placed under the doctor's hands. Ruth was dressed so gaily, with rosettes, and flowers, and what not, that I was sorry for her bad manners; and thought she was come to conquer me, now that Lorna was done with.

Ruth ran towards me with sparkling eyes, being rather short of sight; then suddenly she stopped, and I saw entire amazement in her face.

'Can you receive visitors, Cousin Ridd?—why, they never told me of this!' she cried: 'I knew that you were weak, dear John; but not that you were dying. Whatever is that basin for?'

'I have no intention of dying, Ruth; and I like not to talk about it. But that basin, if you must know, is for the doctor's purpose.'

'What, do you mean bleeding you? You poor weak cousin! Is it possible that he does that still?'

'Twice a week for the last six weeks, dear. Nothing else has kept me alive.'

'Nothing else has killed you, nearly. There!' and she set her little boot across the basin, and crushed it. 'Not another drop shall they have from you. Is Annie such a fool as that? And Lizzie, like a zany, at her hooks! And killing their brother, between them!'

I was surprised to see Ruth excited; her character being so calm and quiet. And I tried to soothe her with my feeble hand, as now she knelt before me.

'Dear cousin, the doctor must know best. Annie says so, every day. Else what has he been brought up for?'

'Brought up for slaying and murdering. Twenty doctors killed King Charles, in spite of all the women. Will you leave it to me, John? I have a little will of my own; and I am not afraid of doctors. Will you leave it to me, dear John? I have saved your Lorna's life. And now I will save yours; which is a far, far easier business.'

'You have saved my Lorna's life! What do you mean by talking so?'

'Only what I say, Cousin John. Though perhaps I overprize my work. But at any rate she says so.'