

specially dear to her. With the singular taste so common to old age, she turned to infancy. Ray's little daughter became her idol, and when it lay asleep upon her knee her whole countenance changed. The child had been called "Mary," after Cassia's mother, and, much to everyone's surprise, madam approved the choice.

"It is the sweetest of names," she said; and then, almost in a whisper, "My mother was called Mary."

And so little Mary Briffault reigned in the place of many other idols, dead or deposed, and she ruled madam absolutely.

During these three years things had not gone well with Raymund. His crop for two seasons had been a failure; he was beginning to feel the anxiety which comes of straitened means. Unfortunately his was neither the eye nor the hand of the diligent master. He had occasional fits of careful oversight but they did not last. Madam had managed affairs much better, and in her days the income had never fallen below the expenditure of the place. But Raymund could not grapple with small difficulties nor enter into petty details. He began to talk of renting the land and of going into some other business. He visited Galveston frequently, and he returned home, after such visits, in very variable moods.

One morning, nearly three years after Gloria had left her home, Raymund received three letters. The first he lifted was an urgent request for money overdue. He read it, shrugged his shoulders, and threw it into the fire. The second was from Gloria. He glanced at the post-mark, a small town upon the Rio Grande, and, without opening it, threw it also into the fire. The third was from Dick Ratcliffe. He read it carefully, and looked at Cassia. Breakfast had just been brought in, and she was making coffee. Usually he was content to feel the charm of her sweet beauty and calm, gracious ways, without any accurate notice of them. But he was conscious of a more particular estimate at this moment, as she lifted her large, dark eyes, beaming with love, to his face. He had not intended to tell her about Ratcliffe's letter, but, somehow, the matter slipped from him.

"Ratcliffe is dying, and he says he would like to see me, Cassia, dear."

"Poor fellow! How terrible to die in such a place!"

"He was good to me when I took the fever."

"Very good. I shall never forget it. God remember it to him at this hour!"

"I think I ought to go. The Ratcliffes have been connected with us for four generations."

"If you could say one word, Ray, he might listen to you; or, if you don't like to speak, you might ask John to do so. He is in Galveston, at the Tremont; ask him to pray with the poor soul. Do, Ray; he got you a bed and a physician, and called