

"I did not think you would want me, papa," answered the girl, in a low voice. "I did not think you would ever miss me, and so—I did not come."

Mr. Tremaine raised the tear-wet face, and looked at his little daughter searchingly. "Was it jealousy?" he asked himself, and the idea perplexed and annoyed him.

But all he said was—"Come and be introduced to your new mother; she is longing to make your acquaintance, and you will soon be the best friends in the world," speaking with a confidence he did not quite feel.

"Thank you, papa," Sophy answered, withdrawing herself from his embrace, "but I think I would rather not. Mrs. Tremaine will not care to see me, and you will not miss me. I would rather stay here with Mrs. Gray."

"Nonsense!" cried Mr. Tremaine, sharply. "I will not hear of such a thing. Don't be shy and silly, child, but come with me without any nonsense."

The tone was sharper than he had ever used to his little daughter, and the girl winced at it. But she made no reply, and followed her father in perfect silence from the schoolroom which had felt such a safe refuge to her. Down the corridor they went, up the oaken staircase, and into the amber drawing-room, where Mrs. Tremaine, in her tasteful travelling-dress of Paris manufacture, was warming herself before the fire, and toying with her fragile cup and saucer, while she glanced round the room with pleased curiosity.

"Here, Evelyn, I've brought my shy little girl to make your acquaintance." And Sophy, as the words were uttered, caught a glimpse of the graceful figure, fair face, soft brown eyes, and golden hair. Then the lady arose, and with gracious condescension, held out both hands to the shrinking girl, and drawing her to her side, kissed her on both cheeks.

Sophy did not return the embrace, nor did she lift her eyes from the ground after that momentary glance. She felt as if she hardly could have done so if it had been to save her life. The gracious kisses seemed to burn her cheek; her whole being revolted against the caress. To her unreasonable young prejudice, the very beauty and graciousness of the young bride were so many offences.

Young Mrs. Tremaine's face showed some little surprise at the manner in which her salute was received. She was unaccustomed to have her favours met so coldly; besides which, her husband had given her a very different idea of his only child. He had always painted her as a gentle, timid little creature, docile and meek, and capable of being led by the least kindness, so that his bride had come prepared to greet her step-daughter full of kindly benevolence and gracious condescension, and at the outset she was met by this chilling rebuff. Arthur had deceived her, or else he was egregiously mistaken in his estimate of his daughter's character.

This latter conclusion was the right one. Sophy entertained a most profound love and admiration for her father, which had always made her meek and submissive in his presence. It was her absorbing affection which made it her pleasure to wait upon him meekly at all times, try to anticipate his slightest wish, and find her greatest happiness in making his will her law.

But it did not follow that this ready and loving allegiance was to be transferred to his bride—to her whom Sophy regarded as an interloper between her father and herself, and the destroyer of her own happiness. The girl's heart was far too full of angry jealousy and impotent rebellion to dream of submitting meekly to the new rule, and her father had yet to learn the strength of purpose and stubborn will in his daughter's character, whose existence he had never guessed at hitherto.

He marked Sophy's cold reception of Mrs. Tremaine's advances, and his brow clouded over with vexation at her treatment of his bride. A flush of annoyance had spread, too, over the young wife's face, but it faded almost immediately, and she addressed the rebellious child as calmly as if she had greeted her with ordinary politeness.

"Oh, you and I will soon be very good friends, Sophy; you will be such a nice companion for me when your father has to attend to his duties and engagements away from home. Won't you have a cup of tea with me, by way of commencing our friendship?"

"Thank you, Mrs. Tremaine," answered the girl, in a cold, constrained voice, "but I am going to have tea directly with Mrs. Gray in the schoolroom. I am going back to her now, and so will say good-afternoon to you."

"Nonsense, Sophy!" cried her father; "I'll not have you running away directly you have come. It's absurd for you to pretend to be shy. You shall dine with Mrs. Tremaine and me in honour of its being our first evening at home; and see if you cannot dress yourself to a little more advantage. You might have honoured us by paying a little more attention to your toilette, my dear," eyeing with disfavour the well-worn serge dress, usually devoted to the schoolroom, which Sophy had made no attempt to lighten or embellish.

"Very well, papa," she replied, meekly. "I had not thought you would care about seeing me: but I will dine with you if you wish it."

"Of course I wish it," he answered; and he watched her as she left the room, with a puzzled, anxious expression on his face. He hardly understood the girl's manner, and wondered vaguely what ailed her, and whether his marriage was going to bring trouble and dissension into his household. Mr. Tremaine was a kind-hearted, easy-going man, who hated trouble and annoyance with all his heart, and would have sacrificed almost anything rather than see the domestic horizon overcast and its peace broken.

Sophy came down to the dinner-table very cold, very pale, and very silent. She had followed her father's wish, so far as putting on another gown went, but the black velvet was plain almost to severity, relieved by nothing but a simple collar and cuffs, and innocent of the least ornament of lace or flowers.

She was a striking contrast to the young bride in her pale-blue dress, pearl ornaments, and the knot of glorie de Dijon roses at her throat. She looked very young, very bright, and very lovely; but to poor Sophy's jealous heart her every charm was an offence, for, with grudging admiration, she was bound to confess to herself that her new mother was both charming and beautiful.

The poor girl was in no enviable state of mind as she sat through the courses of dinner, listening in stony silence to the light talk which her father and his bride kept up between themselves, after sundry ineffectual attempts to draw her into the conversation. She was lonely and sore at heart, at war with herself and all around her, and feeling—unreasonably enough—that she had been grievously ill-used by her father.

Dinner came to an end at length, and as Mrs. Tremaine rose to go to the drawing-room her husband rose too.

"You don't fancy I'm going to sit alone over my wine, Evelyn, do you?" he said, as he passed his hand through her arm, and went upstairs with her, Sophy following behind.

"I do not want to show you over your new home until to-morrow," he said, as they seated themselves by the hearth, on which a goodly pile of logs was blazing cheerily. "I want you to see it by daylight; besides, you will be tired after our journey. Come and sit down