

effort to her, and the squire was dimly conscious of it. It made him irritable, and often sharp to her; her patient little face, with its somewhat sad smile, was a perpetual reproach to him. He knew at the bottom of his heart that he had not behaved quite fairly or rightly to his favourite child; he did not want to be reminded of it. He wanted everything to be as it was before that unwelcome episode about Wattie had taken place; and yet, somehow, everything was different, and the Squire did not like it.

He had numberless little ways of trying to make up to her for his one great injustice. He took to making her endless presents: first, there was the saddle; then a new hunting crop; then a set of gold horse-shoe studs; then a number of books he had heard her say she liked—almost every day something came down from town for Georgie: and she was very grateful to him. She smiled, and kissed him, and tried to look as pleased as he expected her to be; but all the while she saw through it all perfectly.

"Poor papa!" she would say to herself, with a sigh, as she carried away his latest present; "poor papa! he wants to make it up to me."

Georgie's hunting was, as ever, her greatest resource. It took her out of herself; and the active exercise was good for her, and prevented her from moping; so that when it was stopped perforce by the frost, she was nearly as anxious for a thaw as her father.

"It's a good thing the brown mare has laid up just now; she couldn't have chosen a better time," said the Squire, cheerily, in family conclave one evening, trying to derive comfort from the smallest causes under the untoward state of the weather.

The brown mare, after she had been ridden for the first time, had caught a bad cold, which had prevented Georgie from using her since, for which she was not altogether sorry. Georgie was suspicious of the brown mare—there was not, when she was on her back, that complete understanding between the horse and his rider which it is thought should exist between the two to constitute a perfect mount.

If Georgie wanted to go one way, the brown mare had a habit of wanting to go the other, and an unseemly struggle would ensue. True, she was good-looking and fast, and withal an undeniable fencer; but, in spite of all these good qualities, Georgie did not

like her—she could not forget that Wattie Ellison had warned her against her.

When, therefore, the Squire congratulated himself upon the mare's being laid up during the frost in preference to any other time, Georgie answered that she was sorry she didn't go dead lame altogether.

"I can't imagine why you dislike her so," said her father testily. "She's a very nice mare. What's wrong with her, I'd like to know?"

"Well, papa, I was told she had a bad character," answered Georgie, looking down.

"Who told you?" and then his daughter turned very red, and was silent; and the Squire knew perfectly well who it was that had told her. The discovery did not tend to improve the old man's temper.

"I will thank you not to go listening to tales against your father's horses from every ignorant young upstart who thinks he can give an opinion on what he knows nothing about," he said angrily, and bounced out of the room, with a slam of the door behind him that made his wife jump and utter a little squeal like a shot rabbit, at which Flora laughed aloud behind her book of fairy tales.

"Your father is so rough," said Mrs. Travers to her assembled daughters.

Mary sympathisingly agreed with her mother, as she made a point of doing on every occasion, having no independent will or opinion of her own, and Georgie looked miserably into the fire, and said nothing.

All the world was out of joint with poor Georgie just now, there was no comfort for her anywhere. Everything was going wrong, with her parents, with Cis, and with herself—they were all at odds together, and there wasn't even the hunting to fall back upon, she reflected dismally!

A few days later Mrs. Travers and Mary went away together for a visit to an uncle in Devonshire, and the Squire was left with Georgie and the two little girls.

The weather was still frosty, and the old man still grumbled; but things were rather better between the father and daughter; the smaller-sized party, and the absence of the mother, who was always a firebrand in the family and never a peacemaker, made the home circle brighter and happier. During the last three days of that long frost Georgie was almost the gay light-hearted Georgie of old days; afterwards, when what was t