

arranged for Mrs. Brookes upon the same floor as the bedroom, and tapped lightly at the door. A maid, who had been instructed to remain with the invalid during the short absence needed by Wynne to make her farewell, opened it.

"I wish I were leaving you better," said her step-daughter, taking the hand which lay limp and passive in Mrs. Brookes' lap. "You must make haste and get well, you know."

But the afflicted woman understood nothing of the good wishes, or farewell words. True that she still nodded the yellow rose into just the same unbecoming positions as of yore; but her smile had become vacant and meaningless, whilst upon her features the only expression was one of perpetual puzzlement.

"It's very kind o' you. But I *ham* fairly well in my 'ealth. Yes, fairly well," she muttered, indistinctly. And Mary left her still repeating the words.



"THE MOTHER GAZED DOWN AT THEM."

"Movvy will be at home in one more five minutes," Ivy was instructing May, some hours later in the day. "Five whole minutes!" A sigh, then "Oh, Granny, what a long time!"

"Is it, my treasure? Well, then, let us have a game. See, May shall be a visitor, and you the lady receiving her. Now do it prettily."

The elder child entered into the spirit of the thing at once, and even May's flickering smile brightened into ready delight. To play visitors was always enchanting.

"How do you do?" asked Ivy, in her daintily precise tone, with the last lingering touches of the baby lisp, adding its inimitable music. "I am so glad to see you! Do you know that my velly own movvy is coming home to-night, Mrs. Snooks?"

The faintest touch of colour crept up into May's cheeks, and she drew herself up with dignity.

"Me is not Mrs. Snooks, Ivy! Me is Mrs. Borwick Jones."

Happily for the preservation of Mrs. Jaxon's gravity, she was able at that moment to announce the approach of a fly; and all squabbles were speedily forgotten by the two dancing, ecstatic mites, who rushed into their mother's ready arms.

But not even for one evening after her return was Mary destined to be quite free

from other interests than those of home. Just as she and Walter were leaving the dining-room after a long-delayed dinner, a single knock was heard at the hall door. An Irish voice was in another moment heard inquiring whether "the misthress was disengaged."

"Oh, it's you, O'Hara, is it?" from Mary, who went forward. "Come in. Do you want to speak to me?"

Not the red-headed lad whom she numbered amongst her most constant scholars was it who at once accepted the invitation, but his father, a man of about forty-five, with a weak and careworn countenance, and a manner indicating far more good nature and civility than strength of will. Mary had made his acquaintance in consequence of a fitful attendance at the school, where he would occasionally come and sit amongst his juniors, quite indifferent to the contrast his own features presented to the surrounding faces.

"Yer know, ma'am, as oi've lost me woise this twelve-month and more?" he began.

Mary was aware of the fact, as well as of the condition of his home at present, where a girl of about seventeen was doing her best to maintain order and cleanliness amongst her eight younger brothers and sisters. It was an endeavour meriting better success than it obtained; for the children were unruly,