

surely she ought to be more than a match for Silvia ; she ought to be too sensible to let the anger and insolent hate of a child throw definite shadows on her life and destroy all her illusions ?

Mrs. Ambrose flung the socks into the work-basket with something like a passionate gesture. Of course she was weak ; but harshness, ugly words, quarrels were things abhorrent to her. And then she was very proud of Silvia Ambrose.

The girl's delicate, sensitive beauty drew her against herself. Besides this there was in the woman a big measure of justice. She was falling into the trick of putting herself in Silvia's place and seeing things through Silvia's eyes ; and she assured herself quite honestly, that if she were Silvia she would act, and feel, and think, just as Silvia did : in truth she honoured the girl for her unchanging loyalty to her dead mother, even though that loyalty could carry so much hurt to herself.

Silvia Ambrose regarded her stepmother as an intruder, even as a usurper. Her feeling against Helen was something more subtle than mere hatred. It was based on the resentment of a supremely arrogant mind, a mind steeped in the conviction of social superiority. She had it in her to make her stepmother wince and suffer in a way that was almost akin to physical pain. Silvia would not even play at good-fellowship with her father's wife of late.

Mrs. Ambrose had grown to accept this as a fact, and one which probably would never be altered. To-night, however, she recognized definitely that she was doing very wrong in allowing this state of affairs to last.

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