

career, simply because he learnt Dutch so well; all on his own merits, for he has no interest, Mr. Valentine, none whatever. Unless perhaps they remembered that his father and his grandfather were both killed in action, one at Sevastopol, and one in Afghanistan."

"Most creditable, I'm sure," said Mr. Valentine, encouragingly, as she paused for breath.

"But I haven't seen him for five years, though I am his twin-sister," she said, rather mournfully.

"Do you mean to say *you* are five and twenty?"

"I am always taken for younger. It is annoying," she said, abashed by his genuine astonishment.

Mr. Valentine looked at the round, childish, wistful face, with its bright eyes and red bloom of health, and smiled. He would have laughed, but for the solemnity of the occasion.

"Most people would be anything but annoyed. I am afraid you would not be particularly surprised if I told you I was sixty-five?"

"No, I should not," said honest Jeanne, very simply.

"And yet I am only fifty-eight," said Mr. Valentine, rather ruefully. "But, however, to return to business—I must apologise for all my elaborate explanation, but you see I had fancied myself talking to a young lady just out of the schoolroom."

"The explanation made everything clear," said Jeanne, "and I do not suppose I know much more of these things than a young lady just out of the schoolroom would; for I have no experience at all, as Louis says. I have just lived all my life in the same place—a very lonely place, in the country, with my uncle, who is a farmer."

"Then may I be permitted to ask what you will do now?"

"If this house belongs to Louis—but indeed it seems hardly to be believed——"

"It is undoubtedly your brother's house."

"Then I must stay here till he comes home, and take care of it for him," said Jeanne, decidedly. "Aunt Caroline said