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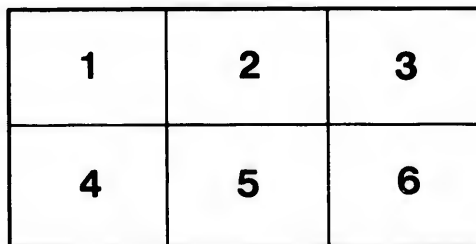
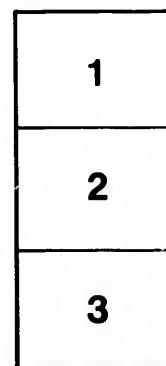
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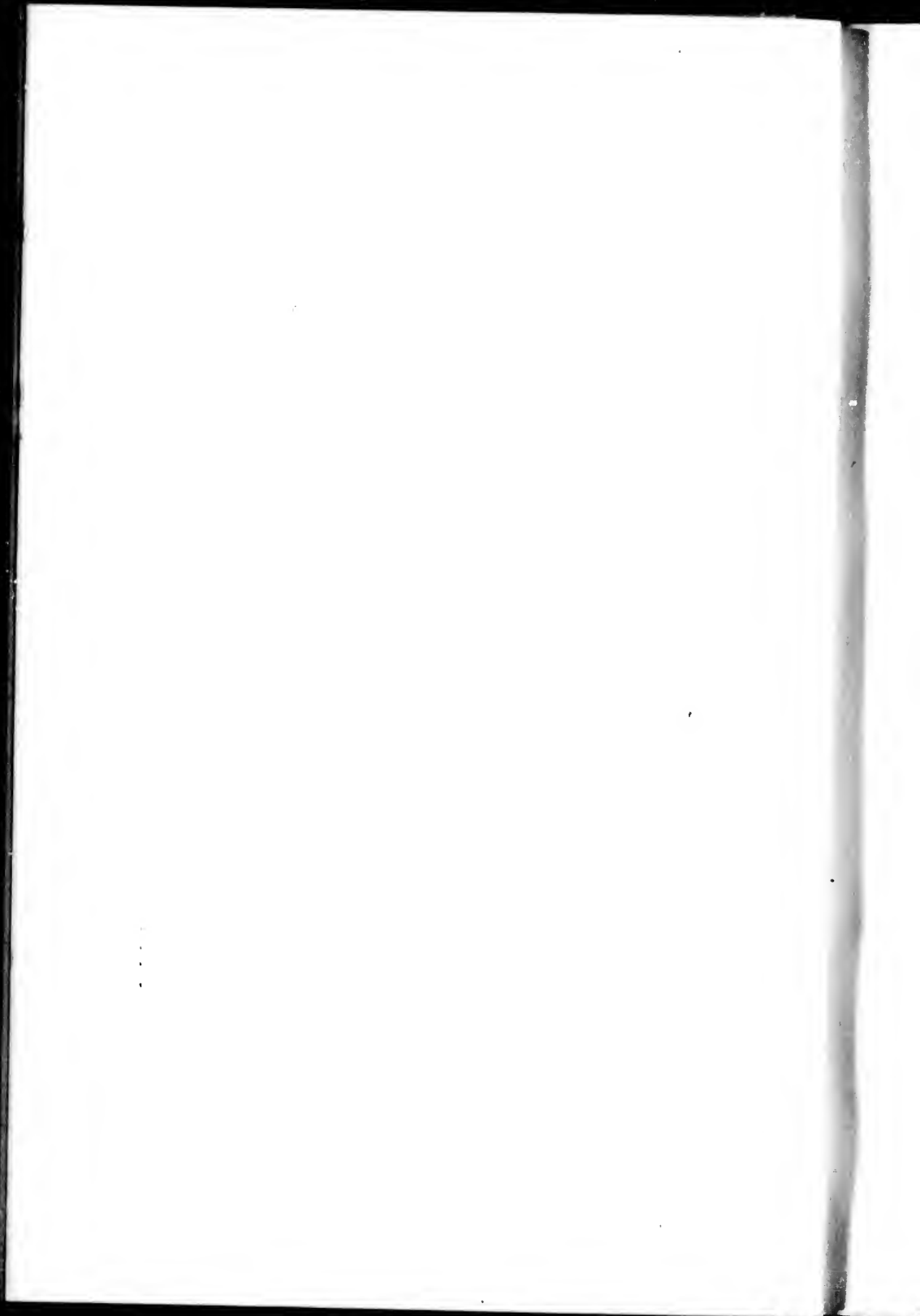
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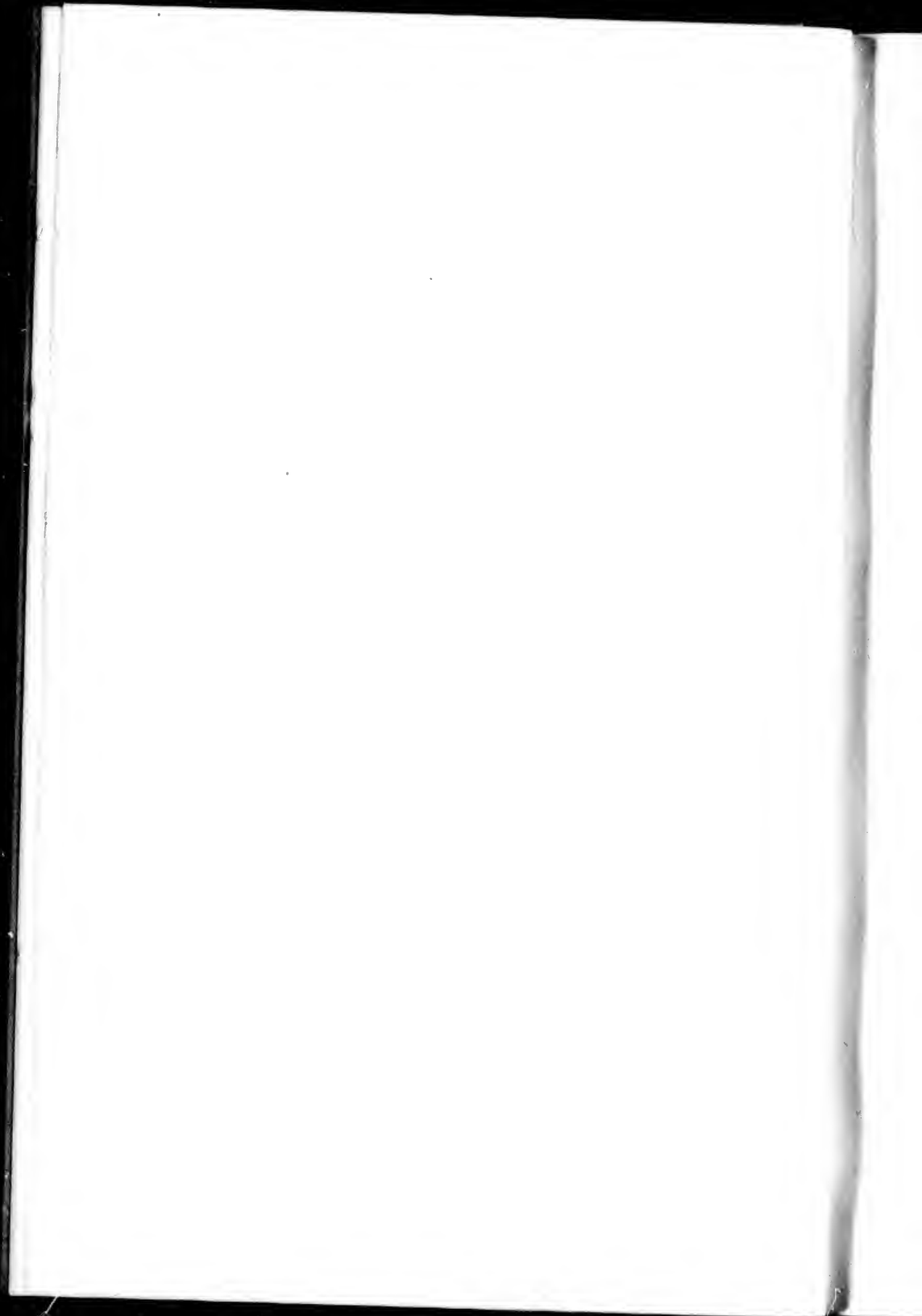
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MEMORIES OF MARGARET GRAINGER,  
SCHOOLMISTRESS.







MEMORIES  
OF  
MARGARET GRAINGER,  
SCHOOLMISTRESS.

BY  
ANNIE S. SWAN  
(*Mrs. Burnett-Smith*),

AUTHOR OF  
"ELIZABETH GLEN, M.B.," "HOMESPUN," "A BITTER DEBT,"  
"A VICTORY WON," ETC.

*With twelve full-page illustrations*

BY D. MURRAY SMITH.

TORONTO, CANADA  
WILLIAM BRIGGS

LONDON  
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## MEMORIES OF MARGARET GRAINGER.

### I.

#### A PASSING SHADOW.

I HAVE long had the desire to set down certain experiences which have come to me in the course of a long and busy life, to make some record of the glimpses, sometimes very near and sacred, I have been permitted into the inner sanctuary of other lives. I am a plain woman, laying claim to no special originality or literary ability, and I am now old, though those who love me will not permit me to say so.

It has been my lot to share the joy and sorrow of many, to see behind the scenes, to witness the downfall of cherished hopes as well as the crowning of many ambitions, and it has occurred to me that

in these experiences might be found something helpful to others. These privileges have not been accorded me in recognition of any special gift or service, but chiefly, I suppose, because through all the stress of life I have striven to keep my heart young, and my sympathies large and wide.

I am an old maid, and I have no history. I have never even had a romance. I suppose I have always been too busy, and my lot in life has ever been cast far from opportunities for love-making or marrying; anyhow, I have never had a love story, and the sun-time of my youth was spent in the interests and concerns of those committed to my charge.

My father was an army man, a colonel, whose regiment distinguished themselves in the Mutiny. He fell, himself, fighting at the Delhi gate. My mother I never knew; and I last saw my father when he was home on furlough the year before the Mutiny broke out.

I was brought up by my grandmother, the widow of a Norfolk rector, and my youth was entirely passed in a quiet, quaint little village on the Norfolk broads.

Army men do not, as a rule, leave large fortunes behind; my father was no exception to the rule.

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He was a free-handed, generous man, of simple tastes himself, but unable to resist a tale of distress or a plea for help; a disposition too readily taken advantage of in this world. He died not only penniless, but even in debt, the result of his reckless generosity.

My grandmother's means were also straitened, and when she died I could only pay off certain of my father's obligations which weighed heavily on my heart, and then go forth to earn my bread. I was fortunate in having had a most thorough education, and further, in having a singular aptitude for the acquiring and imparting of knowledge. I made the most of my opportunities, and through my father's connections was fortunate in securing a speedy engagement in a ladies' school, kept by a distant relative of my own.

She was an intellectual and God-fearing woman, somewhat narrow, perhaps, in her ideas and outlook, but who nevertheless turned out from her establishment good women, well equipped in every sense for the battle of life.

To the influence and example of my cousin I attribute the larger share of my own success, though my theories differed considerably from hers.

Through the march of circumstances I found myself at thirty the head of that large establishment, my title and designation being :—

“MARGARET GRAINGER,

“PRINCIPAL.

“FLEETWOOD COLLEGE, DARTFORD,

“MIDDLESEX.”

The place was north of London, and accessible to it by train under an hour ; the house was large and commodious, the grounds well laid out and picturesque. When I entered into possession, we had fifty boarders and an equal number of day scholars from the neighbourhood. I was the absolute head. Able for my work and thoroughly enjoying it, life opened for me very fairly.

With the ultimate destinies of my day scholars I was not so much concerned, but the resident pupils, left absolutely in my care, occasioned me a great deal of anxiety and care. The early years of girlhood are so impressionable, that it is well-nigh impossible to entirely counteract the influences which are then brought to bear upon the young mind. Thus I felt my responsibility very great, and though, looking back, I have much to be grateful for, there

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remains the sad fact that some of these lives have been shipwrecked. It is sometimes impossible to combat successfully inherited tendencies.

When I entered into possession at Fleetwood, there was among the pupils a girl named Judith Sale, a strange, reticent, unlovable kind of creature who, among so many, kept herself entirely isolated. She had been with my predecessor for two years, and we knew practically nothing of her. Her parents were in good circumstances; she paid the highest board, which included, among other little luxuries, a room to herself. I have since abolished the system of granting such indulgences for money, as I found it tended to discontent, rivalry, and various other undesirable qualities among my pupils. When all are equal, paying for and receiving the same advantages, no comparisons can be drawn.

These abuses of the old régime had to be abolished by degrees, and changes gradually introduced. Judith Sale was a girl of good parts, brilliant indeed in some particulars, and she worked most conscientiously and constantly. But she took no joy in her work. Her dark, expressive, and by no means unattractive face wore a look of habitual depression seldom seen in one so young; and she was also

subject to fits of temper, which I found most difficult to deal with. Miss Brooke had believed in the stern rule, and seldom attempted to win the confidence of her charges. Judith had always interested me, and when she came entirely under my control, I began by trying to understand her. I was sitting in my own room one day, busy with the correspondence which was daily growing heavier, when there came a light, hesitating tap at the door. My orders were that, after seeing the work for the day begun, I was not to be disturbed till eleven o'clock; and I felt a little impatient with the intruder. I was surprised when Judith Sale entered the room, the classes for the day being at their morning work.

"Well, my dear," I said rather brusquely, "what brings you here?"

I think I see her now as she stood that day, a lank slip of a girl in a straight blue serge gown, her black hair in a long, thick plait down her back, and her large, melancholy eyes set like blue gems in her dark face.

"I have had a letter from home, Miss Grainger," she said, "and I want to leave to-day."

"When did the letter come," I asked, "and what does it say? Is it from your father?"

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"Yes, ma'am ; please I want to go at once."

She spoke quietly, but with a certain decisiveness which I felt to be a part of her character. She was repressed, but there were worlds of possibility in that face. She was one who would steer no middle course, who with one grand sweep would make or mar her destiny.

"You can't expect me, Judith, to let you go in this fashion. I have had no communication from your father. Until he writes and requests me to send you home, I can't allow you to go."

"I am going," she replied, quite calmly ; "I am going now."

She did not speak rudely ; nor did her calm ignoring of my authority irritate me, as it must have done in another. I looked at her very steadily, and I saw that underneath that outward calmness there was a great deal of nervous agitation.

"Would you mind letting me see the letter you have received?" I suggested. Her colour rose swiftly, and her hand instinctively sought her pocket.

"There isn't anything in it," she replied hurriedly. "Only I know I must go."

I put out my hand and drew her to my side.



"My dear child, you ask an impossibility. It will be better to trust me a little. I will not betray that trust. Tell me something about your home."

She drew back from my touch, and the colour fluctuated in her face. "I can't ; there isn't anything to tell ; only I must go home," she reiterated.

I simply shook my head.

"Not until I know why. I shall write to your father this morning, and inquire the meaning of your behaviour."

Her eyes flashed in momentary anger. I met her glance with a smile, and I saw her soften.

"It is my father ; if I don't go she'll marry him, as sure as fate."

She gave her foot a little passionate stamp, and her mouth trembled with ill-repressed anger.

I was entirely mystified, because I knew nothing about Judith's home, nothing of her father, from whom I received the yearly payment for his daughter, unaccompanied by even a formal note. I did not know what to say, and was puzzled how to act.

"I don't want to go without your permission, Miss Grainger," she said presently, with that queer, old-world, unnatural decisiveness. "But I am going, and this very afternoon."

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"Very well," I said quietly. "You can get ready, and I shall take you myself."

She started, eyed me keenly, then without any warning burst into a wild storm of weeping, and threw herself at my feet. With this mood it was less difficult to deal, and I soothed her as best I could, feeling my heart strangely softened to the still, self-contained, passionate child. When she grew quieter she drew the letter from her pocket, and gave it me to read. It was written by an illiterate person, and ran as follows :—

"SOUTH WOLD, SURREY, *February 18th.*

"DEAR MISS JUDY,—If you don't come home soon it'll be all up with all of us, an' there won't be no place for any on us. Please come. Me and Perry and Wilkes too 'll give notice if you don't come. The master nor none o' us can't call our souls our own, an' South Wold ain't no better than the county gaol.

"Yours respectful,

"ANN BARLOW."

"Dear me, child," I exclaimed, "what's the meaning of this? Who is Ann Barlow?"

"Oh, that's my old nurse; she's kept house for papa since mother died."

"And what is it all about?"

"There's a woman at South Wold, Miss Grainger, the nurse papa has had since his illness last winter. Oh, she is horrid, a wicked woman, I feel sure. She has stolen papa from me. When I was home at Christmas she would not let me speak to him. I hated her then. I told her one day I should kill her, and she was frightened."

I felt shocked and pained, and my heart was sore because I had been so little of a friend to this poor, undisciplined, suffering creature, who had been eating her heart out in our midst all these weeks, neglected and misunderstood.

"We were all in all to each other, papa and I, before that, and now you see what Barlow says. He will marry her, and then I shall have no home or no father. Oh, Miss Grainger, what shall I do?"

She was momentarily becoming more excited, and I felt at a loss what to say. To allow the child to depart to her home in Surrey in this frame of mind, and alone, was not to be thought of.

"It is not well, dear, to act upon hasty impulse.

Would it not be generous and just to your father to write to him first and send him this letter ? ”

“ I must not do that, Miss Grainger, in case poor dear Barlow might suffer. I must go myself.”

I reflected for a moment, and then came to a hasty decision, a course most unusual with me.

“ If you like, Judith, I will go down to South Wold to-day and see your father.”

“ Oh, if you only would ! ” she cried ; and her face positively shone. “ You are so good, every one loves you, everybody wants to do what you say. I will be so content and diligent and good if only you will go.”

I was deeply moved, and tears stood in my eyes.

“ Hush, my dear, you praise me too much. I have failed in loving-kindness to you all these weeks, and I shall never forgive myself nor forget your trust in me.”

“ Tell papa my heart is breaking. Tell him I have been diligent, that I have tried to learn all you could teach me here, so that I might sooner get back to him. I want to be his little housekeeper, and I am sure I could nurse him faithfully—oh, I should try.”

She spoke with a wistfulness which betrayed the passionate longing of her heart. I saw, that he was the idol of her heart, that her stillness, her repression, her habitual reticence had hidden a very deep, loving, and passionately sensitive heart. My own heart with a sad pain as I turned to lock my bureau. I knew from experience and from observation how much it is possible for such highly strung natures to suffer.

I looked at the time-table, and found that it was possible for me to go and return from South Wold before night fell. Within the hour I was in the train, and it was only after I was seated and had time for reflection that I began to think of the painful and delicate nature of my errand. It was so unlike me to interfere in any way with the affairs of others, but this had been thrust upon me. I did not know Mr. Sale, but I hoped to find him a courteous gentleman, who would appreciate the singleness of my motive. South Wold was one of the quaintest and prettiest of Surrey villages, and the young spring, not tardy in that sheltered nook, was busy everywhere. The catkins were downy on the willows, and the smell of the brown fields filled the air with a delicious freshness suggestive of life and

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hope and fragrance to come. I had no difficulty in finding The Park, which was the manor house of the village, and as such respectfully regarded. I found it an imposing and lovely old red mansion house set like a gem in a noble park, a heritage to be loved and rejoiced in by those who called it home.

I was surprised, I confess, to find the birthplace of my unpretending and hitherto uninteresting pupil so fine a place. A man-servant met me at the door. It was my fancy to think he seemed gloomy and depressed. I inquired for Mr. Sale, and was bidden come in, and left for what I thought a very long time in a comfortable, well-warmed morning-room. At last some one entered, a gentleman not much past middle age, strikingly handsome, but rather worn and delicate-looking, as if he had but recently recovered from a serious illness. I rose a little nervously. Mr. Gresham Sale did not look like a person to be trifled with.

"I am Miss Grainger from Fleetwood," I said; and he visibly started.

"Miss Grainger from Fleetwood? I trust my little Judith is well."

"She is quite well," I said, a trifle lamely, for I

did not really know how to brouch the subject, or how explain my errand.

"I expected to see a much older lady," he said, with that fine courtesy I have never seen excelled. "It is wonderful that you should be the head of an establishment like Fleetwood at such an age."

I smiled faintly, and plunged boldly into the matter. It was the only way.

"Your daughter had a letter from some one here which has much distressed her. She wished to come at once, but I thought I had better come myself. I ought to apologise, I feel, for this unwarrantable intrusion upon your family affairs; but I trust you will acquit me of any desire to pry."

"You may rest assured on that point," he said, gravely and kindly. "I know quite well to what you allude, and I am glad you have come, and that you did not permit Judith to fly down here in a passion to-day. It would have been most awkward."

I waited, regarding him inquiringly. He reddened slightly, and cleared his throat.

"You can take back my love to Judith," he said then, with a slightly defiant air. "I will write myself; but you can break the news to her perhaps more

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judiciously yourself. Tell her I was married to Miss Wilbur this morning."

I bowed a trifle confusedly. The matter was ended; there was nothing for me to do but go.

"You will do your best, I am sure, Miss Grainger, to advise Judith wisely," he said formally. "She is passionate, and when excited unreasonable. Warn her that any exhibition of hostility towards Mrs. Sale will only recoil upon herself."

"I will advise her wisely, Mr. Sale, and do what I can to reconcile her to the change," I replied civilly but coldly. "May I tell her you will write or come?"

"I shall write, of course, but I cannot come at present. We are going on this very evening to the Riviera. The doctors say the change at this trying season of the year is imperative, and I am of course extremely fortunate in having my dear wife with me. Give Judith my love, and say I shall write from San Remo."

He spoke with apparent calmness, but was still not quite at his ease. I did him the justice to believe that his heart was sore for his motherless and now unhappy child. I rose to go, and Mr. Sale pressed me to remain. They would bring tea, he said, and



he should like me to see Mrs. Sale. My natural curiosity to behold the woman who had played her cards so well induced me to accept the invitation, but she did not appear. As I came out, however, I saw a lady cross the hall, and she paused a moment to look at me. She was a woman about my own age, dark, and with a stern cast of face; not unhandsome, but unscrupulous, even wicked, I could see. My heart sank anew; the hope had sustained me that one following so noble a profession would be all that a woman can be, and might prove a blessing to that wifeless and motherless house. That hope expired as I looked upon her face, and I hurried out, feeling her slightly impertinent inquiring look upon me, and her question put pointedly and rudely to a servant, "Who is that?"

I walked very fast down the avenue, and had got beyond range of the windows, when I heard a quick foot behind me; and looking round, I saw a stout, motherly-looking woman wearing a big white apron hurrying after me. I stood still, of course, till she came up.

"Excuse me, ma'am, but I am Barlow. P'raps Miss Judy--bless her poor dear sore heart--may have spoke of me. Isn't this orful? How is the

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dear lamb, ma'am? Tell her not to take on too much."

Her face was so truly kind that I could not help responding to her anxious concern.

"I fear it will be a great blow to Miss Sale. I dread going back."

Barlow shook her head and wiped her eyes.

"We was all to give notice, ma'am, every one, for it's not like that we could serve that woman, no better than she should be. We saw what she was up to the moment she set foot in the 'ouse, wi' her soft ways, her trailing gowns, and her frilled cap; but there's claws aneath all that, as the master 'll find out. Oh, ma'am, why are men folk such blind creturs? Anybody could a' seen through 'er from the first."

I shook my head. Barlow's question was beyond my capability to answer.

"It may turn out better than we expect, Barlow," I said, trying to speak cheerfully. "Don't leave, if you can possibly stay on, for Miss Sale's sake."

"Oh, I'll stop as long as flesh an' blood can stand it, for I've served, girl an' woman, in the house for thirty year, an' my heart cleaves to it. That I should live to see the day! Give Miss Judy my love, an'

all our loves, an' tell her not to take on. I know you'll be kind and good to 'er; it's writ on your sweet face, just as cruelty and wickedness is writ on hers."

I shook hands with Barlow hastily and went my way, though in no hurry to get back to Fleetwood, and the ordeal awaiting me there. There seemed not a ray of hope or gladness I could offer in compensation for the child's bitter sorrow, and I prayed, as I was borne rapidly back to Dartford, that I might be given fitting words to soothe her distress.

Dinner was over when I arrived. I sent for Judith to my own sitting-room, and I had scarcely laid aside my bonnet when she came, eager, white-faced, trembling with apprehensions and excitement. I shut the door and took her in my arms.

"God will comfort you, my dear, dear Judith," I said falteringly. "Try to be brave, for your own sake and for mine."

"Then he will marry her?" she said, in a still, passionless voice.

"He has married her, my dear, this morning, and they have gone to the Riviera. Your father sent his kind messages to you, and you will hear from him very soon."

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She withdrew herself, shivering a little, from my clasp.

"Sent his kind messages to me, did he? They mean nothing. He has broken my heart."

"Hush, Judith; it may not be so bad. Remember your father was very lonely; he required a companion now——"

I stopped, as a vision of the forbidding face I had seen a few hours ago in the hall at South Wold rose up before me, seeming to mock me.

"He need not have chosen her; she was wicked. No, don't reprove me. I know she was. One knows these things, and though I am not old I have thought a great deal. Now I must work even harder, so that I may soon be able to get my own living."

Not a tear or a reproach; her quiet acceptance of the inevitable struck me as being unnatural in one so young. I saw that Judith Sale was no longer a girl; the bitterness of that one experience had changed her into a woman, who looked at life through saddened eyes.

"My dear, you must not talk of that; your father still loves you dearly, still has all your interests at heart. Don't harden your heart against him. There

may come a time when he may need all your love."

She shook her head.

"She will part us if she can for ever. I know that now I have no home."

"She may try, dear, but he will not allow it. She may influence him for a little, but a man cannot forget his own child, the child of the wife of his youth. Promise me that you will not brood on this too much."

"I won't brood, but I must think. Sometimes I think too much, and my head gets wild. Oh! do you not think God is sometimes cruel, Miss Grainger? He gives us those terrible keen feelings, and slays us through them."

It was not like a girl's speech. Again I reproached myself for having so little understood this deep, brooding young heart committed to my care. It is always the case that the clamourers who demand our care and attention partake of our first and best. I took her hot hands in mine, and looked down into her large, beautiful, troubled eyes.

"Judith dear, I am older than you, not too old to sympathise with you, but I have seen much, and

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had my own share of loneliness, of heartache, of bitter sorrow. God will not try us beyond our strength. I have proved it."

"He tries us, then, to our utmost limit. I can scarcely believe in His goodness and mercy eternally preached to us."

"By-and-by, my child, you will see how mercy walked side by side with sorrow, even in this. The purpose is hid, but it is there; one day it will be revealed. You can learn great lessons of self-sacrifice, of patience, of heavenly heroism from this, Judith, and by the silent lesson of your life teach us all."

God gave me the words, and I saw that they touched her. Many fine enthusiasms lay unawakened in that reserved heart; it was not without its ideals.

Her face grew softer, and her eyes shone.

"I will try, and you will help me. I have been so happy here, working and hoping to be fit to be papa's companion. Perhaps I have thought about it too much, and not been so kind to others as I might. I will try to be a better girl."

I was inexpressibly touched, and my tears fell. I knelt down with her, and prayed very falteringly



that this experience might be blessed to us both. From that day the bond between us was very sacred and close. There was a great change in the child, a change observed of all. She became less reserved, more companionable, more attractive in every way. She won love where before there had been a little distrust. Among the younger children she was simply adored, and I saw that she was less unhappy than I had dared to hope. No letter came from San Remo, and when I saw the wistful look deepen in her eyes, my heart was sore and bitter against Wyndham Sale. As no instructions came from abroad or from South Wold, Judith spent Easter with me. I took her to Bournemouth with me, and I grew to love her more and more. She had a fine, strong nature, capable of great unselfishness, of much achievement ; but she wanted the sunshine of sweet surroundings to bring it all out. I had many strange thoughts during these weeks, doubts even of the goodness of God. The shadow cast so early on the child's heart seemed to me so needless and cruel. But we were very happy together. The Easter-tide communion knit us together in the bonds of a love which no time or circumstance has ever dimmed.

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Easter fell early that year. By the middle of April we were again settled down to the usual routine of work at Fleetwood. Judith was much in my mind, and seeing that the sickness of hope deferred was beginning to set its weary mark on the girl's face, I made up my mind to write to Mr. Sale, sending the letter to South Wold. One wet morning I sat down, as usual, to my desk, and having observed at breakfast that Judith looked unusually depressed, I began my letter to her father. I had not got very far when my maid brought a card to me.

Mr. Wyndham Gresham Sale.

I hurried down to the drawing-room, feeling as excited as if it had been a concern of my own; and somehow, when I saw him, all my hard thoughts of him melted away. He looked worn and grey and old, but the second glance revealed to me a certain peace of expression which had been absent before.

"I am very glad to see you, Mr. Sale, for Judith's sake."

His lips quivered.

"How is she?"

"Physically well, but you cannot be surprised

that she has suffered much. It is nine weeks this very day since you and I met at South Wold."

"Nine weeks, is it? It seems like nine centuries," he said, with a curious vehemence, and then there was an awkward silence.

"Is Mrs. Sale well?" I forced myself then to say, as courteously as I could.

He flung up his head, and gave his hands a deprecatory wave.

"Miss Grainger, I thank God there is no Mrs. Sale."

I looked at him blankly, not knowing what he meant. Curiously it did not occur to me that she might have died. I often wondered at it afterwards.

"I married a woman without principles, Miss Grainger, and my punishment has not been lacking. God has been more merciful to me than I deserve."

I waited, wondering, to hear more, never taking my eyes from his handsome, careworn face.

"We went abroad, as arranged, to San Remo. Before we had been there many days I discovered and deplored my mistake, my infatuation, which I can only account for by my weakness of body and by her constant presence and winning ways. She

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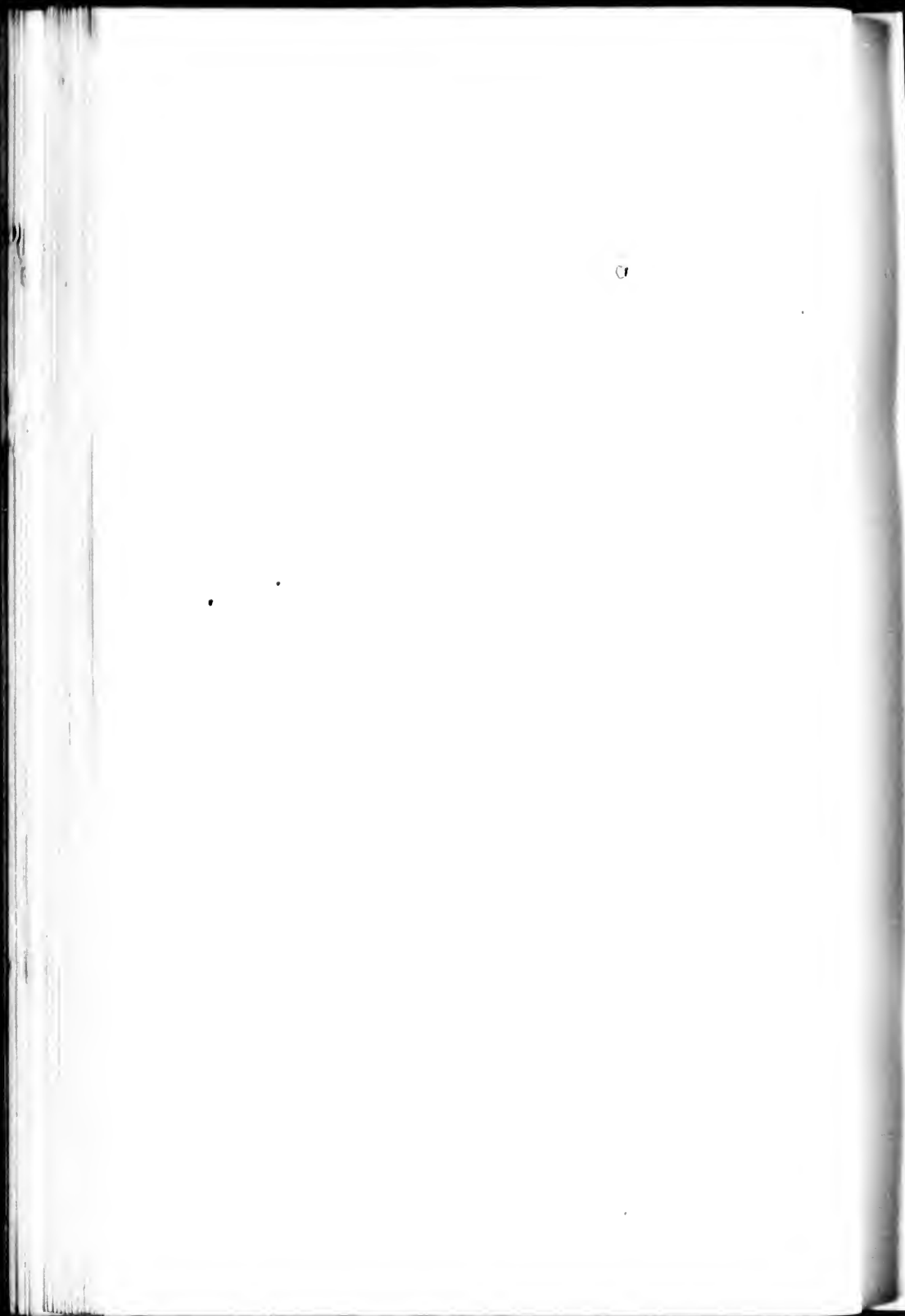
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could be very winning and attractive when she liked, and when anything was to be gained by it. Before we had been a month married I discovered that she was a married woman already, with a husband living."

"Then you are free, of course?"

"Entirely so. I owe her nothing, but I have given her a sum of money sufficient to keep her for some time to come. She will not go back to her husband. She will probably go on with her profession, and perhaps take in some other fool, but it will not be in this country. She knows that if I hear of her here she will be punished, even though I should have to expose my own folly. Do you think my little girl will ever be able to forgive me?"

I could not repress a smile, though I tried. I wished him to know that she had suffered cruelly, more cruelly than he, because he deserved the punishment which had followed him.

I rang the bell.

"Go to the French class and tell Miss Sale I want her here," I said to the maid; and before the girl came back I left the room. When I ventured to return, I saw that the sun had risen, never to set again on these two happy lives. The term was

broken, and Judith returned to South Wold with her father, and there she is to this day. She devoted herself to him till his death, and though often asked to marry, she has elected to remain single, and is likely so to remain now, being a middle-aged woman, whose hair is tinged with grey.

But I know of no life, married or single, so crowded with blessed usefulness as that of Judith Sale. She is the steward of great wealth, which is used for the furtherance of every good and noble work. She is not one of whom the world hears very much, but I always think of her as one of those "who will shine as the stars for ever and ever."

To me, grown old and frail, living alone with my memories, South Wold is always open, a home of rest and change whenever I feel that I can avail myself of it. And we have many long talks over the problems of life, its complex mysteries, its many hardships. Praise be to God that we can both say even yet, "Goodness and mercy have followed me all the days of my life."

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## II.

### A TOUCH OF COLOUR.

IT was one afternoon near the end of the mid-summer term when I first saw Geoffrey Vance.

His name was brought to me as I was having my four o'clock cup of tea in my own room. I finished it leisurely before I went down.

I found him in the drawing-room—a good-looking, honest-faced fellow, looking about eight-and-thirty, gentlemanly in manner and speech—and I was favourably impressed with him even before he spoke.

"Your establishment has been highly recommended to me, Miss Grainger," he said, at once coming to the point without hesitation. "I have called to inquire whether you have any vacancies for boarders, and whether you would be willing to take entire charge of my two little girls."

"I have vacancies, Mr. Vance," I replied. "But



the term is about to end, and we do not reopen until the first of September."

His face clouded, and he gave his fair moustache rather an impatient tug.

"I know it is an awkward time, but don't you sometimes take charge of children whose parents are abroad?"

"Yes, but I have none at present, and I was looking forward to a holiday in Scotland," I replied, not very cordially, for, of course, to take new resident pupils just then would knock all my little plans on the head, and I needed my holiday very badly. I had earned it well.

"Then you can't take them—you won't, in fact?" he said quickly. "It isn't a question of money."

"I am quite in the dark, Mr. Vance," I said suggestively. "Suppose you tell me something of the children and the circumstances which necessitate their being left in England. Is your home abroad?"

"I live in Trinidad," he said; and I fancied his voice took a sterner tone.

"Is it not a healthy place for children?"

"Quite healthy, but I do not wish, for reasons you may afterwards learn, to bring up my children there. They have had an English governess here—

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tofore, but neither Mrs. Vance nor I am satisfied with their progress, and they are just at the age when they ought to advance rapidly."

"They have a mother then?" I said, rather bluntly. He looked at me in surprise.

"Yes, they have a mother, thank God," he said, so simply and reverently that I felt quite touched.

"She would have come with me but she is not strong. She is with the children at Filey, near Scarborough, just now. She will see you later if any arrangement can be come to. I had to be in town to-day on business, and thought I would make a preliminar" call. We must return to Trinidad next month."

"How long would you wish the children to remain here, Mr. Vance? Would they spend all their holidays?"

"Except a month at midsummer, when either Mrs. Vance or I would come to England."

"It is a great sacrifice for you to make."

"It is necessary," he replied curtly. "Will you consider it, Miss Grainger? I have heard so much about Fleetwood; our hearts would be entirely at rest about our children if we could leave them in your care."

"I will consider it," I replied, and he thanked me gravely.

"If you do not return to Trinidad till next month there are still three weeks to make arrangements," I said; then, "Curiously enough, I have an engagement in Scarborough next Saturday. I shall stay there till Monday, and could then call on Mrs. Vance at Filey if we agree to come to terms."

"Money is practically no object to me, Miss Grainger. You may name your own terms," he said quickly. "It will relieve my wife's heart very much when I tell her you are favourably considering it. May I tell her so?"

"You may say I have decided to take your children," I said, more impulsively than is usual with me; there was something about the man that won me, in spite of myself. "And I am sure about terms there will be no difficulty at all."

"I will write to me where and at what hour I can find you next Saturday, Miss Grainger, I can drive you out to Filey. I am afraid my wife will not be able to call on you."

"I shall let you know," I said. "Will Mrs. Vance then not be able to come here at all?"

"Possibly; we sail from Southampton; if she

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So, apparently well satisfied, he went away. The following Saturday, according to arrangement, Mr. Vance drove me from Scarborough to Filey to see his wife and children. He drove a very smart turnout, a high dogcart and a lovely horse; an immaculate groom sat immovably behind, and I sat with Mr. Vance while he drove. He was a most delightful companion. In the course of the drive he told me he had heard of me through the Wyatts of Trinidad. Mr. Wyatt's brother had been an aide-de-camp to my dear father in India. And though we became very friendly and even confidential as we drove, he never said why it was necessary to leave his children in England, when they had such a lovely home abroad. I understood afterwards that the subject was too sore and bitter to be mentioned except when it could not be avoided. They had taken for the season a large house on the Filey cliffs, and both without and within were evidences of abundant wealth. I was at once taken to the drawing-room, a spacious apartment, with windows so shaded that to one coming from the brilliant sunshine it seemed almost in semi-darkness, and the

air was quite heavy with the odour of hot-house flowers.

"Lola dearest," said Mr. Vance—and his voice became inexpressibly tender—"here is Miss Grainger."

There was a soft rustle of silk, and some one rose from the couch ; a figure of such indescribable grace, and a face so lovely, with that dark, subtle loveliness peculiar to the South, that I was for the moment spellbound. She wore a tea-gown of yellow silk, and had a bunch of red roses at the open throat.

"How do you do, Miss Grainger?" she said, in a sweet, languid voice. "Take this comfortable chair. So kind of you to come all this way to see us ; but we expected it of Colonel Grainger's daughter, didn't we, Geoff? She is just like what Nannie Wyatt said she would be."

I sat down suddenly with a lump in my throat, drawn to these two people in a way which, to my practical matter-of-fact nature, seemed utterly absurd. But there it was. I felt as if they were my brother and sister, and as if I had known them all my life. Had they asked me, I would have given up twenty Scotch trips to do them the smallest service. A maid brought in tea presently as we talked, and

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drew up one of the blinds; then I saw that though distinctly and wonderfully beautiful, Mrs. Vance's skin was very dark—that she was, in fact, a creole. But still I did not associate that with their desire to leave the children in England.

They came in presently, two lovely little girls, so utterly unlike that it seemed ridiculous to think of them as sisters. Gertrude, the elder of the two, was fair-haired and fair-skinned like any English child, the image of her father; Lola, the younger, had her mother's dark skin and eyes. I noticed even then a slight melancholy about her, and her father's tenderness towards her was a thing to marvel over. We had a long talk, the children took to me, and I found them intelligent beyond their years, though of course I learned nothing of their educational acquirements that day. All the arrangements were made, and it was decided that Mr. Vance should himself bring the children to Fleetwood the day before he and his wife sailed for Trinidad. They did not seem to realise yet that it was a long parting, but seemed much interested in their new home, asking a great many questions about the other girls and our life at the old college.

Mrs. Vance came out to the drawing-room door,

and laid her hand on my shoulder as she bade me good-bye.

"You will be kind to my darlings. It is like death to leave them, but their father thinks it best, and I do too—yes, I do too. I can better leave them than him ; but oh, it is hard."

Her magnificent eyes swam in tears. She was violently trembling, and seemed on the verge of a passionate outbreak.

"I will treat them as my own, Mrs. Vance, as Heaven is my judge," I said, speaking as if I were taking a vow. "You can trust them with me."

"I feel I can ; your face is good, your eyes kind and true. Money will never pay you for this, Margaret Grainger, but the undying gratitude of a mother's heart will be yours."

My eyes were full of foolish tears as I ran down the stairs. Mr. Vance saw them as he helped me once more into the dogcart.

"You need not come, Hewitt," he said to the groom. "Take off the back seat. One moment, Miss Grainger. Yes, that's right."

He swung himself into the seat beside me, tucked the apron about me, took the reins, and drove off. We went about a mile in complete silence.

"This is a terrible blow to my poor wife," he said at length in a low voice.

"Yes, it is. Mr. Vance, as you are trusting me so far, will you not tell me why, as the climate is not injurious, your children cannot remain in Trinidad?"

"I thought, having seen Mrs. Vance, you would not need to ask the reason," he replied curtly.

I was completely mystified, and looked it.

"I see you do not understand," he said, with a touch of sad impatience, "and that I must explain. You do not know, then, of the prejudice against colour in Trinidad, that any one even suspected of being tainted with creole blood is ostracised from English society? My wife is a pure creole. She belongs to an old family, and is herself one of the finest gentlewomen, as well as one of the sweetest, whitest souls God ever made, yet she is not received in English society; and that will be the fate of our children. They begin to feel it already."

I looked as I felt, inexpressibly shocked.

"Do you mean to tell me, Mr. Vance, that prejudice is carried so far among Christian people in this nineteenth century?"



"I do. Prejudice dies hard always. Lola and I thought ourselves strong to conquer everything. I was well warned that in marrying her I was accomplishing my social ruin. That was true. I do not regret it. God bless her, she has been a true and loving wife to me; my only sorrow is that I have been unable to shield her from the bitterness of her position."

"Why do you remain in Trinidad, Mr. Vance?" I could not help asking. "You owe nothing to a place which behaves in such an idiotic and wicked manner."

"I have a good position. It is easy to throw up a good post, not so easy to find another in these days. True, my wife has plenty of money, but I could not live on that. I have again and again applied for a change; it has been promised me, but again and again I have been disappointed. We were in hopes that I should be removed this year to London, but another has been preferred before me. We are quite determined not to take the children back to Trinidad, and can only hope that I may be more fortunate soon."

"You are intimate with the Wyatts," I said after a moment. "Do they not belong to good society?"

"Certainly ; but we are not intimate with them. Nannie Wyatt comes to see us in the face of her whole family's opposition, but we are not asked back. We are practically tabooed."

I was silent, filled with a vague wonder over the unspeakable folly and unreasonableness of that section of the human family representing "good society" in Trinidad.

"Perhaps my wife's pedigree would not bear the strictest investigation," he said gloomily. "But how many pedigrees would? There, it is no use arguing ; we only knock ourselves against the stone wall of race prejudice, which is as cruel as the grave. We've got to accept it, I suppose, and meanwhile we are glad that we have found a haven for our children. You see the younger of the two has inherited the characteristics of her mother's family. You will not suffer it to influence you, Miss Grainger?"

I was touched by the wistfulness of his tone, but a flush of indignation rose to my face.

"God forbid !" I said quickly. "I thought you trusted me, Mr. Vance."

"So I did, so I do ; pray forgive me, and let us talk of some happier theme."

We parted at the door of my hotel in Scarborough

like old friends, and, as may be expected, I thought much of my new pupils during the next few weeks. I was able after all to make out my Scotch visit, though it was somewhat shortened, and towards the latter end of August returned to London, where I saw Mr. Vance and received my charges from him. Their mother had not been able to come from Ventnor, where the last part of their furlough had been spent, and from which she was to travel direct to Southampton to join the steamer. Mr. Vance was deeply moved as he parted from them. I saw that his heart was wrung. Gertrude indulged her natural grief after the manner of a healthy English child, weeping copiously, and making a great deal of excusable noise.

Lola made no sound, shed no tear, but I saw her lips grow white, and it seemed to me that her face grew old and shrunken as she huddled herself in the corner of the carriage which bore us away. She was one who would bury grief, heartache, disappointment, and who would taste the bitterness of that inward pain which, finding no vent, feeds upon itself. My heart was sore, and not without cause, for Lola Vance.

For four years I had these children entirely under

my care. During that time they only once saw their parents. Needless to say, I grew to love them dearly. Many pupils have come and gone from Fleetwood, and I have given to all a measure of affection, but these two I regarded as my own. The peculiar circumstances under which they came to me, the uncertainty of their future, their brilliant gifts and winning personality, all combined to make them specially dear to me. New-comers were drawn first to Gertrude, who was high-spirited, full of fun and happy nonsense, and naturally demonstrative. Lola was beloved by few. She was shy, self-contained, sensitive to a degree. Then she had a passionate temper, and her pride was amazing—pride in her own birth, in her mother's family, in the touch of colour which divided her from others. What others regarded as a reproach was her glory; her brown skin, her velvet eyes, her dark curly locks, she loved them all. I found the key to her heart, and had no trouble with her, but to others she was sometimes disagreeable and intractable. The old domineering spirit handed down to her from a race who had ruled their slaves with a rod of iron too often showed itself in her. I often thought of her future and trembled. I did my best to guide that wayward heart, to show

her the beauty of holiness, the ornament of a meek and quiet spirit. I have lived, thank God, to see the harvest of that anxious sowing, and that is much.

I shall not soon forget the day their father took them away. It was winter time, a few weeks before Christmas. Government business had brought him to London, and it was a good opportunity, their education being ended, for them to return with their father. He had not seen them for three years, but he asked first for me. I found him a little older and more careworn, but the same frank, noble, trust-inspiring face smiled upon me as we silently shook hands.

"I cannot say I am glad to see you," I replied, and I felt my voice trembling. "I cannot imagine Fleetwood without my two children."

He did not say much, but I felt I had his deep gratitude, that he owed me a debt he could never repay. I had done no more than my duty, and my reward was passing sweet. They came in presently, two lithe, healthful, lovely girls, of whom I was passionately proud. What then must their father have felt in looking upon them, so changed after that long, sad parting?

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They answered half laughingly, half in tears. Naturally elated and excited over their home-going, they were yet sad at parting from me, and from Fleetwood, where they had found a happy home. I saw that their father's pride in them was chastened by a kind of anxious sadness which I well understood. We had another opportunity, while they dressed for their journey, to touch upon the question of their future.

"You are still in Trinidad and likely to remain?" I said inquiringly.

"I am ; as I said before, posts are not so easily got, and I have given up hope of a change. It may become necessary to do as my wife has often wished, retire from the service and take a country place in England. But I am loth to give up my work. We sometimes think the prejudice is less harsh, and we hope our girls may make a place for themselves. Are they not lovely creatures, Miss Grainger, enough to set a whole town by the ears?"

I smiled at his pardonable pride, sharing it to the full, and encouraged the hope he expressed.

"I am the bearer of a message from Mrs. Vance,

that you will try to arrange a visit to us in Trinidad ; we have a beautiful home. Of your welcome I need not speak."

My eyes shone, and the sorrow of the imminent parting was softened.

"How long would it take?"

"It could be comfortably done in three months, even less. Have you a responsible person you could leave?"

"Yes ; next year I shall come, Mr. Vance, if all is well and you are still of the same mind."

So I parted from my darlings, and long, long seemed the time till I again looked upon their sweet faces. Two years passed before my promise was fulfilled. At last, upon a lovely October day, my steamer landed at that far-off port, and the whole family met me, with a welcome which nearly broke me down.

Their home was the old family house of the Tavedos, where Geoffrey Vance wooed and won his wife. It had been the centre of a coffee plantation in the old days, and was surrounded by lovely grounds. Within, it was spacious and magnificent, filled with every luxury and all the beautiful things money can buy when a correct and artistic taste dictates. Sitting

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out on the verandah that evening after dinner, the odorous air wrapping us as in a tender veil, I thought these people to be envied. They seemed to live remote from care, and yet how closely it pursued them I was soon to learn. Of my pupils, I found in Lola the greatest change. Gertrude was still a girl, with a schoolgirl's taste for fun and frolic. Lola had shot up into slender womanhood, maturing early, like all the women of her mother's race, and, watching her closely, I detected in her the awakening of a woman's heart.

It came upon me quite suddenly next morning, as we sat in the verandah indolently, I too tired after my long voyage to do anything but lounge. The relaxing, enervating atmosphere, the absolute absence of any incentive to effort or activity, accounted to me for the indolence which characterised Mrs. Vance. The place was lovely as a dream, but I felt glad it was not my home. Well, that morning, as my two girls waited in their riding habits for their father to come and ride with them, as he did every day before lunch, a horseman came riding up the leafy avenue, and raised his hat to the ladies as he approached. He was young and very handsome, English, I could see, to the backbone.

Happening to glance at the girls, I saw something in Lola's face that startled me and gave me a sudden terrible pang. Mrs. Vance rose and went down the verandah steps to speak to him, and he alighted presently and came up to be presented to me.

"Mr. Rupert Dare."

It was a good name, and suited him, I thought. He greeted me in his frank, winning, boyish way, and after a few courteous inquiries about my journey, turned to the girls. Gertrude chaffed him most unmercifully. Indeed, it somewhat scandalised me to hear them, though their mother smiled indulgently, evidently well pleased. But though Mr. Rupert Dare had most to say to Gertrude, his eyes were oftenest on Lola's dark, grave face, which sometimes grew hot at his look. When Mr. Vance came round on his horse, I thought he seemed annoyed to see young Dare on the verandah steps.

"Here already, Dare? I shall have to talk to your father. When do you work? May you ride with us this morning? No, my boy, you mayn't."

The girls' faces fell, and Rupert bit his lip.

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"Now that's too bad, Mr. Vance. What have I done to deserve such a snubbing? Won't you put in a good word for me, Mrs. Vance?" he asked, turning pleadingly to the elder lady in the lounging chair.

"Let him go to-day, Geoff, as he has come up all the way," she said indulgently.

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"Well, it is the last time, Rupert, remember that," said Mr. Vance, quite ungraciously for him, whose manners were always so courteous.

As we watched the party ride away, I saw that Mr. Vance rode closely by the side of his younger daughter. He thought, as I did, that Gertrude was perfectly safe.

"Who is that remarkably prepossessing young man?" I asked Mrs. Vance.

"Why, the son of one of our great men, Sir Percival Dare, of the Turret."

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"He is in love with Lola," I said bluntly. I could not forget the circumstances in which the pair had come to me, and I wondered that no anxiety visited the mother's heart.

"Oh, nonsense. Everybody knows Rupert Dare. He is only a boy, and falls in love and out of it once a week."

"Lola is not indifferent to him," I said then, wondering anybody could be so blind.

"Oh, I think you are mistaken. Rupert is more like brother or cousin to them," she replied.

"Do his parents visit here?" I asked, putting an awkward question, because my terrible anxiety would not let me rest. Mrs. Vance coloured slightly and shook her head.

"No, but the girls have been asked to a dance at the Turret. I know what you are thinking of, but we believe and hope that bitterness is past."

"I think Mr. Vance is wise, dear Mrs. Vance, in seeking to discourage young Mr. Dare's attentions here," I said; and the subject dropped.

When the riding party returned minus Mr. Dare, the cloud had deepened on Mr. Vance's brow, and during lunch he scarcely spoke. He asked me to walk round the orchard with him while he smoked a cigarette, which soothed him a little.

"You saw that little play this morning, Miss Grainger?" he began, quite suddenly. "Do you think there was anything in it?"

"Yes, I think Lola and young Dare are in love with each other."

He looked at me with such anguish in his eyes that I was afraid.

"Don't say it has gone so far as that," he said hoarsely. "His father and mother would never consent; you know why. They are the proudest people in Trinidad, and the most bitter against those with the race taint."

We talked long and earnestly on this bitter and unsatisfactory theme, and decided in the end that I should take Lola back with me to Fleetwood. I acquiesced in his suggestion, but mentally shook my head. Of what avail was it to lock the cage after the bird had flown? Lola's heart was no longer in her own keeping.

That evening, as we lingered over dessert, a message was brought to Mr. Vance. I saw him flush, and he rose hastily and left the room. We had been a long time in the drawing-room when he joined us. He asked the girls to leave the room for a little, and then turned to his wife, signing me to sit still.

"That was young Dare, dearest, asking me to give him Lola."

Mrs. Vance became deadly pale, and began to tremble.

"Oh! Geoffrey, the trouble over again!" she

wailed. "It is all my fault. I have been too careless—too blind. Oh, my poor, poor child!"

"I have sent him away, and Lola must leave home to-morrow. He says he thinks his father may be induced to consent, but I told him I would allow no child of mine to enter on sufferance another home. God help the child; the blow has fallen at last."

"Does Lola know he has been, and on what errand?" I asked, my heart bleeding for the unhappy parents.

"No, and I dare not tell her," said Mr. Vance. "She looked at me so wistfully this morning because I would not permit her to ride with him. Will you speak to her, Miss Grainger?"

"I will," I replied; and I did. That night in my own room, with the child's dear head on my knee, I told her as gently as I could of the pain and disappointment in store. She received it quietly, and again that wan, weary look which betokened heavy sorrow dwelt on her face.

"There is a curse upon us, Aunt Margaret. You have taught me to believe that God is loving. How can He bear to have things so? It must hurt Him too."

I was silent before her questioning. How vain is it to seek to still the young heart's first hot rebellion with wise words even from Holy Writ ; they fall on the ears in mockery.

There were several sad, sleepless hearts that night in the luxurious home of the Vances, and more than one pillow wet with tears. We met at breakfast quietly, and no allusion was made to the event of the preceding night. Mr. Vance went off to the town earlier than usual, and said nothing to Lola. Shortly afterwards Gertrude disappeared, and nobody knew where she had gone. She did not even return to lunch. We had finished that meal, and were beginning to be anxious about the child, though thinking it likely she had gone to see some acquaintance in the town, when a roll of wheels sounded in the avenue, and a carriage, elegantly equipped, and drawn by a pair of handsome bays, came rapidly up to the door. From it, to our amazement, alighted Gertrude and a lady whom I did not know, a slender little person, with very aristocratic features and the whitest of hair.

"Lady Augusta Dare," said Mr. Vance ; and he looked like a man in a dream. Anybody could see that Gertrude was wildly excited. Her pink cheeks



were as red as the reddest rose, and her eyes almost glittering. I shall never forget that moment when we trooped out to the hall to meet them, all but Lola.

"I have brought your runaway daughter, Mr. Vance," said Lady Augusta; and of all sweet voices that was surely the sweetest. "And I ask your pardon, my dear Mrs. Vance, because this is the first time I have set foot at Tavedos."

The grace of her speech was indescribable. We looked at her spellbound.

"I may as well out with my story," she said sunnily. "Our boy, of course, told us last night of his interview with you, and of your positive rejection of him on certain grounds. You were justified, Mr. Vance, in your decision; too much justified, I regret to say. I will admit it was a disappointment; he is our only boy, and we had other views. I will say this because the dear girl of his choice, I see, is not present to hear it, and frankness is best generally. But all these doubts this runaway daughter of yours has dissolved, and she has shown me in five minutes the mistake, the injustice of a lifetime. Dear friends, my husband knows I have come to-day, and for what purpose. May I hold in my arms the girl my son

loves—the daughter I trust you will permit him to give me?”

Gertrude, her work done, and in tears, fled; so did I, and the parents were left. What passed between them I do not know; only I know that when Lady Augusta left, the sunshine she had made remained. What had tempted Gertrude to go and plead her sister's cause, or what arguments she had used, we do not know to this day. She kept her own counsel, and Lady Augusta never told.

So the marriage, the talk of Trinidad, came off before I left them. The Dares being the leaders of society in everything, set an example which did more towards killing an unrighteous prejudice than anything else could have done, and to their influence is due the fact that Trinidad has become tolerable even for those afflicted with a touch of colour.

Many a holiday have I spent at Tavedos and at the Turret, where abide Rupert and his lovely wife, his father and mother having retired to a smaller demesne. She has made a man of him, giving to his character the necessary touch of earnestness, and bringing out all that was noblest in him; and I am blessed, looking on, because it pleases them,

just because they love me so much, to say that I have made her what she is. And though I know very well it is only their love for me that makes them say so, yet it is passing sweet to my heart to believe it, even to this day.

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### III.

#### A REVOLTING DAUGHTER.

I HAVE always been interested in the characteristics of families, which my profession has afforded me many opportunities of studying. I have been much struck, as every observer of human nature must be, by the extreme contrasts of character presented by different members of one family, and the relentlessness of the laws which govern heredity has been brought home to me again and again. In common with all thinking men and women who face the problems of life, I have constantly deplored the thoughtlessness with which unsuitable persons marry without giving a thought to the possible hostages they may give to fortune.

A very striking instance of this came under my observation a good many years ago ; one which confirmed my conviction that very few persons are

fitted for the great and high responsibilities of parenthood.

At the beginning of one of my school terms, a lady called upon me at Fleswood regarding her two daughters, about whom she had previously written. The arrangements were indeed all but completed, and Mrs. Bellamy only came because she wished to satisfy herself by a personal visit to the place where her daughters would reside for the next few years. I had had a somewhat lengthy correspondence with her, and had formed rather an unpleasant opinion of her. I believed her to be a woman of the world, full of ambition, and extremely anxious to get the fullest value for any outlay of time, or money, or opportunity.

This opinion my interview with her confirmed. When I entered the drawing-room, I found myself confronted by a tall, handsome woman of singularly youthful appearance and unmistakably aristocratic bearing; a woman of keen observation too, I gathered from the swift, keen scrutiny with which she favoured me. I was, however, inured to that, and did not flinch under it.

"You look rather young, Miss Grainger," she said affably, yet with a touch of condescension I was not

slow to resent. "In fact, I may say you look quite objectionably young. Are you sure you can maintain order and discipline in a large establishment like this?"

I could not repress a smile at this question, but I answered quite courteously: "That I have been at the head of it for seven years, Mrs. Bellamy, surely proves some degree of fitness."

She showed her faultless teeth in a faint, apologetic smile.

"Of course it does, and I stand corrected; but after all, no woman can resent being thought young, so you need not look so grave. Well, now that our arrangements are nearly completed, I thought I should like to see the school, and I must say everything looks perfection."

"You can see through it now if you like, Mrs. Bellamy."

"Oh, by-and-by. I don't think it is really necessary. I am sure everything is satisfactory, but I thought I should like a little final talk about the girls before they come. There are some things it is not easy to express in a letter. I told you, I think, that they are very different; my younger daughter Andrey is so much brighter in every way than her

sister that really I can hardly believe them to be sisters. I am only sorry Audrey is not the elder instead of Margaret."

"It is quite possible that Margaret may develop and become more brilliant than her sister. We are constantly seeing instances of it," I said hopefully; but Mrs. Bellamy shook her head.

"You will not say that when you see her. Poor dear Margaret, there is no use denying the fact that she is positively unattractive. In fact, I often say to Colonel Bellamy that I cannot imagine how we came to have such a plain child. It was a disappointment, to begin with, that she was not a son, and I was quite inconsolable till my sweet Audrey came. She is as lovely as a dream, and you will not wonder that we idolise her, though her father is always warning me to be just to Margaret."

"Is she Colonel Bellamy's favourite, then?" I asked, growing more and more interested.

"Well, I could hardly say that; he has seen very little of them, being stationed at Malta, which I cannot endure. I have promised to go, however, while the girls are here, and afterwards, it is to be hoped, his regiment will come home. I do not

wish them to come into the society of a garrison town; they are apt to meet so many ineligible." And so on, after the usual manner of the society mother, whose one desire and aim in life is to launch her daughters well, and to gain for them a great position.

Next day the two girls arrived, and I went myself to meet them at the station. The contrast between them was undoubtedly great. Audrey did justice to her mother's description; she was certainly lovely as a dream. Margaret was decidedly plain, big, awkward, undeveloped, with a sallow face and heavy features, and a rather sullen expression. It was impossible not to be drawn at first towards the younger; Audrey the bright and gay—poor Audrey, who made such shipwreck of her life. But there was a sad uplifting of Margaret's eyes to mine at the moment of greeting, which revealed a fleeting glimpse of the hidden heart, hungering for the affection, the attention, and the praise Audrey received so royally everywhere as her due. It passed in a moment, leaving her cold, impassive, uninteresting as before, but I never forgot it; it gave me the key, never again lost, to Margaret Bellamy's great, loving, sensitive heart.



Very quickly the two made themselves at home in Fleetwood, and I, watching them closely, as I did all my pupils, soon learned the outstanding qualities of each, marked the contrast between them. Audrey was her mother's child. She was only fifteen, but was already in thought, mind, and feeling a woman of the world. Her accomplishments, easily acquired, were only regarded as the necessary weapons of warfare when she should go forth to conquer and win the great position her mother desired and expected for her. She had a certain happy way, a gay, laughter-loving manner, which won her many friends, but which was only the outward cloak of a quick temper, an unreasonable selfishness, a boundless self-will. These I did my utmost to check, but I cannot truly say that I have seen any fruit of my labour where Audrey Bellamy was concerned.

Margaret was entirely different. She applied herself to work for the love of it. Her studies were prosecuted conscientiously, and what she learned she made her own absolutely. She was slow and solid rather than brilliant. Her mother had unconsciously used the word which best describes her. She was unattractive, and her stillness of demeanour and reserve

repelled most people. Audrey treated her with a species of affectionate contempt, which Margaret did not appear to resent. That she felt it keenly, I afterwards learned. They were attached to each other beyond doubt, but Audrey invariably spoke of her sister as "poor Margaret." But the whirligig of time brings in its revenges. The sisters remained with me for three years, and then suddenly their father died at Malta, and they were removed from my care by Mrs. Bellamy, who took them abroad.

I heard no more of them for more than twelve months, and was one day considerably surprised to receive a letter from Mrs. Bellamy written from Brighton, asking me to come and spend a few days with them and renew my acquaintance with my old pupils, who, she assured me, had never forgotten me. I was not surprised to read towards the close of the letter that she had a particular reason for wishing to see me. Mrs. Bellamy was not the woman to cultivate the friendship of a schoolmistress out of pure kindness of heart. My interest in the sisters was still so lively that I at once accepted the invitation, and went down to Brighton on Friday afternoon. Mrs. Bellamy, looking more youthful

and handsome than ever in her becoming widow's garb, met me at the station cordially, even effusively, I thought.

"So good of you to come; the dear girls are delighted. I did not let them come, as I wished a little talk with you before you saw them. Great changes since we last met, Miss Grainger."

"Yes," I said, rather lamely, for somehow the regret in Mrs. Bellamy's voice did not sound sincere. We stepped out of the station, and entering the well-appointed carriage waiting for us, drove off towards Hove. Judging from outward appearances, the death of Colonel Bellamy had not in any way reduced the circumstances of his widow. But appearances cannot always be trusted.

"You will find a difference in your pupils. Margaret especially has grown quite a woman. Audrey is as sweet as ever, and my greatest comfort. I have a little trouble with Margaret, but not more, perhaps, than was to be expected. She has always been peculiar. I wished to consult you about her."

"There is a great deal that is sweet and lovable in Margaret, Mrs. Bellamy," I said warmly. "It is deeply hidden, and she requires careful handling."

Mrs. Bellamy gave her shoulders a little shrug.

"It is very good of you to say so. I find her headstrong and unmanageable, and she is so totally ignorant of the ways of the world, it seems impossible to drive any common sense into her."

Mrs. Bellamy suddenly stopped, and turning round, regarded me keenly.

"I am about to talk very plainly to you, Miss Grainger, because I rely upon your common sense and sound judgment. I want you to help me with Margaret, whom you seem to understand. She adores you—yes, adores you—there is no other word for it, and because you have such an influence over her, I hope you will exert it for the furtherance of her best interests."

"I shall endeavour to do so," I replied, though thinking it likely that Mrs. Bellamy's idea of her best interests and mine were likely to be wide as the poles.

"Well, then, to begin with, Colonel Bellamy's death has made a great change in my circumstances—in fact, I may say we are quite poor. It is with the utmost care and economy I manage to keep up appearances at all, and of course it must be done for the girls' sake, lest their prospects should be

seriously damaged. They must make good marriages ; it is their only chance."

I did not agree with Mrs. Bellamy, of course. My father's death had left me almost totally unprovided for, and I had made a career for myself, not disdaining to work, though better born than the woman who had always treated me with that patronage those of her class bestow upon persons they regard as inferiors.

"I do not expect any trouble with Audrey. She is lovely enough to achieve anything ; but Margaret has always occasioned me a good deal of anxiety. She is so sadly uninteresting, and now she has developed a more serious characteristic, and has become quite aggressive—talks of earning her living even, and cannot be made to see the monstrous unreasonableness and ingratitude of her wish. Why, it would ruin Audrey's future, to say nothing of her own."

I remained silent, because I could think of nothing to say, only my heart went out in a great wave of pity and love to the lonely, high-souled, sensitive girl, who regarded her womanhood as too precious a thing to be bartered as an article of commerce.

"What I want particularly to say—and I must

make haste, because we are almost home—is that I have had an offer of marriage for Margaret, a very advantageous offer, and I want you to co-operate with me to induce her to accept it. She must accept it; she will certainly never have another.”

“Who is the gentleman?” I asked eagerly, more deeply interested than I could say.

“A very wealthy man, well connected, and most generous; true, he is some years older than Margaret, but that is nothing, and the difference is on the right side. Why, it would simply be the making of the whole family if she would consent to become Mrs. Godfrey Darrell.”

“Darrell, of the Sussex Darrells, Mrs. Bellamy?” I asked.

“The same family, as old as the hills; is she not fortunate?”

“Their record is not very good. The wild Darrells were a by-word in the last generation.”

“Oh, well, granted. Our Mr. Darrell has sown his wild oats, and is now a respectable middle-aged gentleman, a justice of the peace, and everything that is proper in his own neighbourhood, and Kingscote is a lovely place, with a rent-roll of twenty thousand a year.”

"But these things cannot make a woman happy, Mrs. Bellamy," I said boldly, "especially a woman of Margaret's type."

"Oh, that is all nonsense, Miss Grainger. Happiness is not everything. We owe a duty to society, and ought not to look for mere selfish happiness. I am sure Margaret's duty is plain. I am very poor, and not in robust health; then there is Audrey. Margaret ought to be charmed, I think, to have a chance of doing so much for her family. I have sacrificed myself for my children, Miss Grainger, for I could marry again any day I liked."

"I should like to know what you wish me to say to Margaret, Mrs. Bellamy. I do not wish to enter the house under false pretences."

"Oh, well, I can hardly specify; only I should like you to tell her her duty is plain. She has a great fortune offered to her; tell her it would be criminal to refuse it. You and I, as women of the world, know quite well that poverty is the unpardonable sin of to-day. If one has no money, one might as well be dead."

Before I could reply the carriage drew up before one of the handsomest houses in Hove. As we entered, Mrs. Bellamy turned to me inquiringly :

"Can I rely upon you at least not to bias Margaret in the wrong direction? You can at least speak from experience, and tell her how hard and unsatisfactory it is for a lady to try to earn her bread."

I was too much astonished to speak. I could only vaguely wonder whether I had ever expressed any such opinion to Mrs. Bellamy. She had the curious effect of causing me to doubt my own opinions. I began to think her a very clever woman. The girls were both in the hall to meet me, and I had no fault to find with the greeting of either. Andrey had developed into a wonderfully beautiful woman, with her mother's ease and grace accentuated by the special charm of youth. But my heart did not warm to her as it did to the grave, dark-browed girl whose future we had just so seriously discussed. She also had become a woman; and I thought her mother blind when she saw no attractiveness in her. She looked older than her years, which numbered only twenty, and a woman's soul, questioning, beautiful, and pure, looked from out her serious eyes, troubled too soon by the sore problems of life.

There was plenty of gay chatter over the tea-table, spread in the bay window looking to the sea; but



Margaret did not say very much. I caught her once or twice regarding me with a kind of steadfast look which puzzled me. It seemed to ask something—help, guidance, strength, to tread a difficult way.

After dinner Mrs. Bellamy and Audrey departed to some private theatricals at a friend's house, leaving Margaret and me alone.

"Suppose we go upstairs, Margaret," I suggested. "This big drawing-room looks rather formidable. We can sit down by the fire in my room and have a cosy chat. I want to hear so much all that has happened in the interval since we met."

She assented readily, and we adjourned upstairs. Margaret went before me, and I rather admired her figure which was tall and well developed. She wore a black gown with a touch of scarlet in the bodice, which suited her sombre colour; and she carried herself gracefully. In ten or even twenty years, I decided, Margaret might be the handsomer of the two. We sat down opposite each other and talked, at least Margaret talked and I listened, much struck by the keenness of observation evinced in her description of the places they had visited and the

people they had seen. Suddenly, however, Margaret stopped, and sitting forward in her chair, regarded me keenly.

"I was awfully surprised, Miss Grainger, when mamma told me you were coming, and I want to know what it means."

There was no chance to evade that straight questioning, even if I had wished to do so ; therefore I answered truthfully :

"Your mother wanted to consult me about your future. She has told me about your prospects."

"And she wants you to urge me to accept them ; isn't that it?" she asked calmly ; but I saw the colour fluctuate in her cheek.

"Yes ; but I made no promise. I want to understand it all, and to hear what you feel about it."

"It is quite easy to understand. I will not marry Mr. Darrell, and that is the end of it."

"You do not care for him, then ?" I hazarded, simply to draw an expression of opinion from her.

The supreme contempt in her face answered me before her words.

"That is out of all question, but is the least of it. The point is, Godfrey Darrell is a bad man, has lived a scandalous life, which everybody knows, yet my

mother will urge me to marry him simply because he is rich. It is intolerable that such a suggestion should even be made to me. I am only a girl, Miss Grainger, and have not much experience of life, but I know that it is an iniquitous thing to ask a girl to be wife to such a man. If I ever marry it will be a man whom I can respect—not one whose very presence pollutes the moral atmosphere.”

These were strong words, giving forth no uncertain sound. My heart glowed within me to think that one woman had still the courage to be true to the best instincts of her sex. She saw by my look, I feel sure, that I loved her for what she had said.

“I see you will help me. I knew you would, for it is your teaching which has made me feel so about such things. But let me hear you say it with your own lips that anything would be preferable to such bitter, such degrading bondage. Why are you so silent? Am I wrong in thinking you will look at it from the same standpoint?”

“No, dearest; I was but wishing your father had lived to hear you speak so nobly.”

Her dark eyes filled with passionate tears.

“My father was a good man, and God forgive me if I judge my mother harshly, but I cannot think it

was right to cut him off as she did from his children simply because she did not like the place where his lot was cast. I am so weary thinking of these problems, and trying to reconcile the fearful contradictions of life. My mother I do not love; sometimes I find it hardly possible to respect her. Who is to blame? Am I quite unnatural, and ought I to love her simply because she is my mother? I am always regarding her from the critical standpoint of an outsider. I judge her as one woman would judge another; it is misery to me, but I cannot help it. I often wish I were more like Audrey. She regards everything lightly, and means to waltz through life, as she says, to gay music. I believe it is the better way."

I shook my head.

"Life is real, dear Margaret, and the day will come when Audrey will be forced to face it."

"My mother professes to love me, to have what she calls my best interests at heart; yet since I said decidedly I would not marry Mr. Darrell, she has been positively cruel in a thousand petty ways I could not bear to tell you. She has said that I have always been a thorn in her flesh because I am plain and uninteresting. I have often begged to be

allowed to earn my own living. You know that I am capable, and I have kept up everything I learned at dear Fleetwood, and honestly tried to improve every opportunity; but the very suggestion appears to make mamma so angry that I am afraid to mention it. What am I to do?"

I hesitated a moment. A grave responsibility was cast upon me, and I had to consider all the consequences.

"Mamma has led Mr. Darrell to think I do not know my own mind, and that I will ultimately accept him, if he perseveres. He is coming again this week, and she has said that if I persist in refusing him, she will cast me off."

"In that case you will not forget that Fleetwood is open to you, dear child, and that what I have is yours."

She burst into tears; the long strain gave way at last.

I could not sleep that night for thinking of her position, and my anger waxed hot against the wicked woman who so poorly fulfilled the obligations of motherhood. Though I am an old maid, I hold that a wise marriage is the happiest of all earthly conditions, but I also hold that the degradation of that

blessed estate, so common in these days, is the worst of all fates which can befall man or woman. And it has been my aim in my years of dealing with girls and young women to place before them the highest ideal. It was therefore no mean reward to me to hear Margaret Bellamy speak with the very words I should myself have chosen. Mrs. Bellamy did not question me next day regarding my conversation with Margaret. I was rather astonished at her confidence in me, and I felt even a trifle guilty, knowing how little sympathy or aid I could give her.

Next day I had an opportunity of seeing Mr. Godfrey Darrell, who came to luncheon. I must say he was quite different from what I expected, gentlemanly in appearance, deferential in manner, entirely agreeable in conversation. He could be entertaining, and evidently exerted himself to the utmost to be so. Audrey talked gaily to him, that species of gay badinage such girls use as a constant weapon. Margaret sat silent, cold, and stately, never opening her lips. The meal was not particularly enjoyable. There was a peculiar suspense in the air indicative of something about to happen. Once or twice Mrs. Bellamy looked at me appealingly,

and then significantly at Margaret. Once involuntarily I shook my head. I found myself impelled to join in the conversation, the fascination of Mr. Darrell's manner extending even to me. Watching him closely, I observed that, though he talked to others, Margaret was entirely in his thoughts. It needed no special vision to see that he loved her, and the mystery of it appeared to me unsolvable. For what a man of Godfrey Darrell's type could find attractive in the still, cold personality of Margaret Bellamy it was difficult to say. Truly life is full of curious anomalies.

After luncheon Margaret at once went to her own room. Audrey and I adjourned to the drawing-room. Mrs. Bellamy remained at the table with Mr. Darrell. About half-an-hour afterwards a maid came and requested me to go downstairs. I found Mrs. Bellamy and Mr. Darrell in the little library, and both turned expectantly to me. To my astonishment and considerable embarrassment, Mrs. Bellamy, without speaking a word, left the room. I then saw that Mr. Darrell had something to say to me, and he said it well. Had I not known him by repute, I fear I might that day have been won to his side.

"Miss Grainger," he said courteously—and I could not help, woman-like, admiring him as I looked at his fine figure and handsome face—"Mrs. Bellamy has told me you know the whole circumstances of the case as it stands between Miss Bellamy and myself. I wish to ask you if you can do anything to help me to win her. I love her as dearly as it is possible for a man to love any one in this world. I would do anything for her sake."

I looked at him keenly, and then spoke out. In such a case absolute candour is surely the best course to pursue. "I do not think there is any hope, Mr. Darrell. I had a conversation with Margaret last night. She will never marry you. It is the best kindness I can do to tell you so quite frankly."

"Why will she not? I can give her much that women prize," he said, with a touch of impatience, which indicated that he was not accustomed to be thwarted. "What is the objection? Is it my age? I am forty-six, but there has been greater disparity in marriages that have turned out well. You have her confidence, her mother says; tell me what it is."

"You said a moment ago that you could offer her



much that women prize, but there is one thing which women such as Margaret Bellamy estimate above everything, and which you cannot offer her."

"What is that?" he asked, and a faint flush rose on his cheek.

"A clean record. I know Margaret Bellamy well, Mr. Darrell. She will require in the man she marries a record as clean as her own, and I honour her for it."

He bit his lip, and the flush deepened on his cheek. He took a rapid stride across the room.

"That is surely carrying Puritanism to excess. Is a man to be kept down for ever because he makes one or two slips?"

Somehow the tone of his voice angered me, and I suppose I showed it in my face.

"Look here, Miss Grainger, I have never had a chance. I belong to a wild lot, and have had no good influences about me. I feel that if I had a good wife like Margaret Bellamy I should be a different man. I thought a woman would do as much for a man's salvation."

"She would if she loved him," I replied. "Margaret does not care for you."

"And you think she never will?"

"I am sure of it."

"Then no more need be said, and I may as well go to the bad at once," he said, and would have flung himself out of the room, but I laid a hand on his arm.

"Mr. Darrell, I have been very frank with you because you desired it, and it is far better. I am a woman who has no right to advise or preach to you, but one thing I want to say. There is such a thing as joy in goodness for its own sake, without looking for reward; try it, and win the respect of Margaret Bellamy, if not her love."

I saw a curious spasm cross his face. He wrung my hand, and hurriedly left the house. I have heard no more of Godfrey Darrell, but he has very often been in my thoughts and in my prayers. He was a sad example of fine powers laid waste by riotous living, great opportunities for useful work in the world wilfully passed by, or turned to baser uses. I had a strange yearning over him, but at the same time I thanked God for the courage Margaret had shown in this crisis in her life. It is impossible that she could ever have been happy with Godfrey Darrell. A man who had spent his prime among godless and vicious people could be no companion for a pure-

hearted girl like Margaret. But her decision cost her dear. As I, somewhat disturbed by what had passed, slowly went upstairs, I heard the voice of Mrs. Bellamy raised in bitter anger. The drawing-room door was open, and as I stepped on the landing, Margaret, pale and anguished-looking, ran out, her mother's bitter words pursuing her.

"You can go, then, you wicked, ungrateful girl. I will have nothing more to do with you, and you can get your living as you think best. As for you, Miss Grainger," she said, turning furiously to me, "you have betrayed my trust, and it can be your privilege now to look after the admirable specimen you have turned out. You set up as a proper teacher and trainer of youth, pretending to fit them for any station! I shall expose your system, which incites children to wickedly disobey their parents, and to set aside all the laws which Providence has set to govern society. You are a fraud, and as such I shall expose you to the parents of the pupils unhappily committed to your care."

And much more to the same effect. I went hurriedly to my own room, and put my few things together. I had not again seen Margaret. When I was quite ready to depart I went in search of

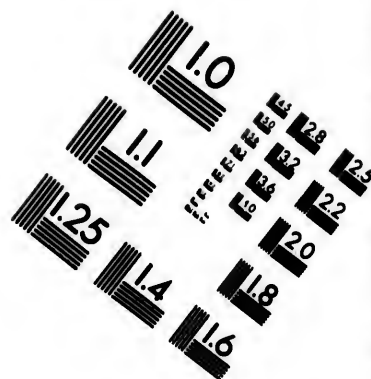
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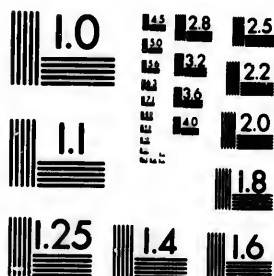
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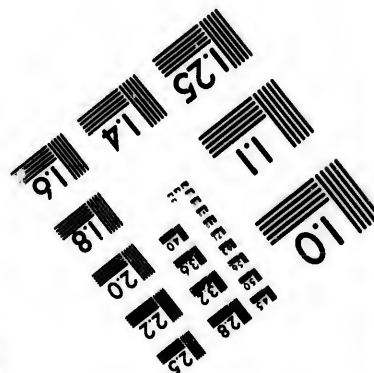
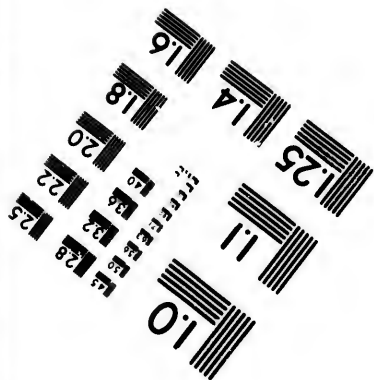




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Mrs. Bellamy. I found her calmer certainly, but still bitter and disdainful. I had my bonnet on, and my gloves in my hand.

"So you are going? I hope you are taking your precious pupil with you. I have no further use for her here."

"That is all I came to ask. I may tell Margaret she has your permission to return to Fleetwood?"

"There is no question of permission. She has to leave here; where she goes I care nothing. I have warned her well. She has thrown away her last chance, the best any girl ever had. I am penniless. I cannot keep her. It is quite fitting that you who have made her what she is should take the responsibility of her livelihood. I daresay you will find her useful as a shining example of the pernicious principles you teach."

On occasion Mrs. Bellamy could forget her breeding, and descend to the vulgarity of the market-woman. I thought it best to go quietly away, taking Margaret with me. Her story is not ended yet. The rest I may tell you another day.

#### IV.

##### THIS SIDE--AND THAT.

I HAVE not hitherto said anything about my own relatives, of whom I had a goodly number occupying high positions in society. Many of those, however, elected to forget their kinswoman, Margaret Grainger, when she was obliged to earn her bread. Of them I do not wish to write bitterly, nor indeed at all. They belong to the great army of fair-weather friends who cannot stand the test of adversity. In my younger days their behaviour sometimes gave a bitter sting, which, however, has long since passed. The few who stood by me in my struggling years have amply atoned for the indifference of the rest; and to them I feel grateful for much true sympathy and loving attention through a long and busy life.

Among the family connections who came to the old Norfolk Rectory when I abode under its roof was my

consin Harry Seacombe, the son of my mother's only brother. Harry was an only child, and must have been spoiled had he not been blessed with a singularly sweet and wholesome nature in which there was scarcely an alloy of self. He was seven years younger than I, but he adored me, and I him. Dear old Harry—I have often said that the woman who married him would be a lucky and enviable woman, and I say so still. He was heir to a baronetcy and a great estate, but he loved an active life, and chose a soldier's lot, greatly to the regret of his father and mother. They tolerated his frequent visitations to the Rectory, but I was never asked to Seacombe Towers. They belonged to the branch of the family who disapproved of poor relations. I had not seen him for some years, he being on foreign service, but I thought very much of him and of my own early experiences when I took Margaret Bellamy back to Fleetwood.

I thought it probable that when Mrs. Bellamy came to her senses and realised the inevitable, she would probably relent towards Margaret, and with this in view, I persuaded her to live at Fleetwood as my guest. She was useful to me in many ways, and I accepted her little offer of service, but

after a few weeks I perceived that she was dull and depressed. I wondered, indeed, whether she was not fretting after her home, and regretting her haste in leaving it. At last one day I broached the subject, which had not been mentioned between us for some weeks.

"I have observed that you are very depressed, my dear. Tell me frankly of what you are thinking."

She looked instantly relieved.

"I am so glad you have spoken, Miss Grainger, for I am positively unhappy. You must see for yourself it is impossible I can remain here."

"Why, you are my dear companion and friend. You have not taken long to tire of me."

Her dark eyes filled with tears.

"It is not that. How could you think I should be so ungrateful? It is because I am idle and useless. I cannot remain here a burden on you. Give me something to do. Do you not think I might teach the little ones something?"

I thought a moment, regarding her steadfastly. She was very clever, but she lacked the power, essential to the true teacher, of being able to impart the knowledge she possessed. She was too reserved and self-contained; her rare qualities had to be

discovered by patience and faith on the part of those who loved her. I have seen her in a company of people remain absolutely silent for some hours, and create a most disagreeable impression.

"I am afraid you would not like that, Margaret ; but if you like to take over my housekeeping I shall be very glad to resign."

She stared at me with wide-open eyes.

"Your housekeeping ! Why, I am as ignorant as a baby. I know I should love it, but I should die of terror over the responsibility."

"People do not die of terror so easily," I said, rather drily, for exaggerated speech always displeased me. "And though you may not know much, it is possible to learn. We shall begin the new régime on Monday."

And we did. I helped her, of course, as much as I thought wise, but believing that to be left to her own resources and made to feel that something depended on her would be the making of Margaret, I did not interfere too much, and I must say I was surprised at the result. Of course she made many mistakes, and even at times became quite discouraged ; but after some little experience she justified my highest hopes. Of the relief her careful, competent management

gave me, it is impossible to speak. I had had my own share of trying and unskilled labour; and found that a woman who brought conscience and brain to bear upon her work, achieved results the most satisfactory.

Margaret herself was contented and happy, we were the best of good friends, and in such happy union of interests time sped with us. For two years we heard absolutely nothing of Mrs. Bellamy or Audrey. We lived far from the great gay world, and knew little of what transpired there. Great was our astonishment, therefore, when one day a lady came to see me, Mrs. Van der Voome, according to the card, and I went down to find Audrey Bellamy.

"Yes, I am married," she said flippantly; "three months ago. Mamma would not let me even write to Margaret. She will never forgive her, Miss Grainger, as long as she lives. But now I am beyond mamma's jurisdiction; in fact, to be quite frank, Van der Voome and I have quarrelled with mamma, and really I don't wonder at it, she was so abominably rude to him. She is sorry for it now, you may be sure, but my husband keeps up spite, and she has cut herself out with him for ever."

The whole tone of Audrey's remarks jarred upon

me. She was greatly changed. All her girlishness was gone; she looked old and weary, and the elegance of her attire could not hide the fact that she had gone off in looks.

"Your husband is a foreigner?"

"Oh yes, Dutch, one of the Amsterdam Voomes, diamond merchants; rich, oh yes. I have sold myself, or rather mamma sold me, for diamonds. But we are very fine people. We live in Belgravia, and we get Royalty to our balls. How is Margaret?"

"Margaret is very well, and very happy," I said rather constrainedly, my heart sore for the unhappy woman before me. I thought of my pure, honest-hearted girl upstairs, of the peace which dwelt in her soul and on her face, and I thanked God for the courage He had given her to choose the better part.

"It is very good of you to have kept her so long," she said quickly, but avoided my earnest gaze. "I suppose she helps you in some way? Do you think she would come and stay a little with me? There are six weeks of the season to live through yet. Dear Miss Grainger, do let her come."

"My poor Audrey!" I said, and she got up rather hurriedly from her chair.

"Don't speak to me like that. I *won't* be pitied. I am very well off. I can wear thousands of pounds on my neck at every party I go to. Everybody envies me, and when I drive in the park I hear them say, 'That is Mrs. Van der Voome, the richest woman in London.' I have done very well for myself."

"You have broken your heart," I replied.

"No, I haven't. I haven't a heart to break. It is vulgar to have a heart; mamma says so. Van der Voome has no heart; it is encrusted with diamonds. When one has to live in the world, feelings are an awkward commodity. I have dispensed with mine."

I got up to leave the room; nothing was to be got from such talk. I saw that Audrey was worked up to a pitch of nervous excitement. At any cost, I must spare Margaret to her. The time had come for Margaret to do something for those who had treated her but ill.

"I shall send Margaret. I am sure she will go with you to-day, if you wish it, dear Audrey. I shall miss her here, but I know she will come home when she can."

"Home! She has a home, I have none. I have a house—a palace they call it—but I hate it. Some



day, unless Margaret saves me, I shall burst my prison bars," she cried, with an awful bitterness.

I hurried away, and sent Margaret down ; and as I sat alone in my own room, praying that God might bless the words Margaret spoke, my heart burned hotly against the woman who had so poorly fulfilled the obligations of her motherhood.

Margaret was a long time downstairs, and when she came to me she was very pale.

"Dear Miss Grainger, you can spare me to go to Audrey. It seems selfish and ungrateful, but her need is very great."

"I told Audrey, dear, that you could go to her at once."

"Oh, thank you ; you are always good. Oh, Miss Grainger, sometimes I have not been thankful enough for my mercies. When I see Audrey, and hear her speak, I know what I have been saved from. Oh, surely there ought to be a punishment for those who make such shipwreck of human hearts and lives."

She was trembling violently, and I was glad to direct her attention to preparations for her journey. I went with her upstairs, and helped her to get her things together.

"There is only a month of the term left, dear. I shall hear from you, and if you think it better for your sister that you remain with her, our little holiday must be set aside. I can always go to the Sales at South Wold."

"Yes, but I hope I shall be back by then. Audrey's life is not mine. But it is just possible I may be able to show her the extenuating circumstances of her lot, though, Heaven help her, she says there are none."

I said nothing, but in my heart of hearts committed them to the guiding care and consolation of God. In less than half an hour she was ready, and as we returned to the drawing-room I heard some one else asking for me at the hall door.

"Sir Henry Seacombe."

I flew past Margaret, for it was my own boy Harry, back safe and sound from the Afghan campaign, a bronzed and decorated soldier, of whom anybody might be proud.

"Hulloa, cousin ! you don't look a bit like a school-marm ; that I should live to see the day !"

His banter was assumed, to hide the very real emotion he felt at meeting again the chum of his boyhood. I felt my heart glow with pride in him as



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I stood before him, looking into his dear open face, his fine, true, honest eyes, and saw the medals on his breast.

"You foolish boy, you make me forget the dignity of my position. I could positively shout for joy," I said. "To think I see you again, after all these years! Why, how they roll back to the old Rectory days! But you are a man and a hero now, and it does my heart good to see you have not forgotten your old cousin."

"Old cousin, indeed! Let me tell you, ma'am, you look younger than ever. Why, who are these?"

It was Mrs. Van der Voome and Margaret on the stairs. Audrey looked lovely, and I saw the innate coquetry of her nature flash in her eyes at sight of my handsome cousin.

I introduced them, of course, and I felt a little vexed that Margaret showed to such little advantage. I loved her more dearly than anybody on earth except Harry, and it was natural I should wish them to like each other. Margaret gave him greeting most slight and cold. She was well dressed, and her fine figure had developed to its full beauty, but her face, always requiring a touch of life and colour, was cold and

expressionless—at least, so I thought. I saw that her mind was occupied by one idea—the case of the pretty, frivolous, unhappy woman by her side. They did not linger, and when I returned to the house after bidding them good-bye at the carriage door, Harry repeated the question :

“Cousin Margaret, who are they?”

I gave him in as few words as possible a brief outline of their history.

“The tall one is a beautiful woman,” was his verdict.

“Margaret, do you mean? Mrs. Van der Voome is considered beautiful. Margaret is the plain one; she has been a thorn in the flesh of her mother always.”

“Nevertheless, in my eyes there is no comparison. I hope I shall see Miss Bellamy again. Van der Voome! What a name! There would need to be something to make it smell more sweet. Well, and so the dear old dad has gone over to the majority since I went on active service. The Towers will be a queer place without him. I suppose you have heard nothing of my mother lately?”

I smiled a little scornfully, I could not help it.

“Lady Seacombe never liked Margaret Grainger,

Harry ; she likes my present title and designation even less. Did she meet you in London ? ”

“ No ; we only arrived at Portsmouth this morning, and I said to myself, before I go another step I’ll look up Margaret.”

“ Then you haven’t seen your mother ? ”

“ No, I’m going down this evening.”

The little attention, the genuine outcome of a friendly affection, pleased me. I was a lonely woman, who received such attention and consideration from few.

“ I think you’re a brick, Margaret, and I’ve always told the mater so. Perhaps she’ll see it one of these days herself. I’ll do my best to convert her. Now, don’t you think I am very magnanimous for a rejected suitor ? ”

He looked at me mischievously, and I may as well say here that Harry had asked me to marry him more than once, being one of those who fall in love at first with a woman older than themselves, an experience which generally does them more good than harm. Anyhow, it had left both Harry and me perfectly heart-whole.

“ We must forget the follies of our youth, Harry,” I said severely ; and then we fell into a cosy, happy

talk, in which I told him all that had befallen me since that sad day we parted when his regiment was ordered to the East. And then I in turn listened to the recital, modestly given, of his exciting experiences, and felt the glow which all women feel over the heroism of son, brother, or husband who fights and wins for the land that bore him.

During the next few weeks I heard regularly from Margaret, but her letters were meagre and unsatisfactory. That she was far from happy I could gather, and her anxiety about her sister was not concealed. She repeatedly said she would tell me everything when she returned to Fleetwood, but she could give no promise about her coming. When school broke up I went into Surrey to Judith Sale, feeling a little disappointed that the trip to Switzerland Margaret and I had planned was thus deferred. In August she wrote that she was going with the Van der Voomes to Scotland on a visit to a shooting lodge, and then for some weeks I heard no more.

On the twenty-third of the same month she wrote abruptly that she was returning to Fleetwood next day, but that I was on no account to hurry my return. She would occupy her time in setting everything to



rights for the new term, and would give cook a holiday. She did not mention Audrey's name, but simply said she had done what she could to avert the catastrophe that had taken place, and which I would probably learn from the newspapers before we should meet. This letter puzzled and concerned me so much that I went up to town that very morning after breakfast, and out to Fleetwood. I found, as I expected, the house in a turn-up, and Margaret as busy as she could be. I gently hinted as I greeted her that there was no need for such an earthquake in the house.

"I had to do something, Miss Grainger, I am in that state of mind that inaction renders desperate. Somehow I thought you would come. What a relief to tell you everything!"

We sat down together, just as we were, in the little morning-room, and I think I see Margaret yet, with a gay-coloured kerchief bound not unbecomingly on her head, and her big housewifely apron tied decently above her neat morning gown. That picture remains with me now that she is a great lady, guiding a large establishment of her own, and I see yet her pale, earnest face, and her deep eyes lit up by the intensity of her feeling. She leaned her arms on her knees,

and looking me straightly in the face, said, "Aunt Margaret, Audrey is lost."

I did not at first comprehend her, and sat waiting inquiringly for her to go on, which she did presently with a little sobbing breath.

"I knew there was something behind it all that day Audrey was here ; something more than the mere uncongenial yoke which bound her to Van der Voome ; and in a day or two I found it out."

"Another man?" I said at once ; and Margaret nodded. I saw she felt it keenly, that the confidence she longed to give was yet a bitter pain. But I knew she wished to tell me, and that she would be better when she had shared it with another.

"I would not admit it to myself at first," she said. "I was prepared to find them unhappy, but I did not know till I entered that great house how awful is the degradation, the misery of a marriage bond where love is not."

"What kind of a man," I asked, "is Mr. Van der Voome?"

Margaret shook her head.

"He might have been better had he married a suitable wife. He is not a gentleman, and Audrey never allowed him to forget it."

"Yet she did not scruple to spend his money," I said rather hotly, my sympathies entirely for the moment with the diamond merchant, who had given his ungrateful wife freely such things as he had.

"No, she spent it royally, but we must not be too hard on her. She only followed out in spirit and in letter every principle of her training. I hope my mother is proud of her to-day."

"You did not yourself dislike Mr. Van der Voome?" I said, to divert her mind from such a bitter channel.

"No, he was very kind to me. He was not an attractive person, even to look at, and in some ways he was quite objectionable; but I pitied him, married to Audrey, and openly treated with such scandalous contempt. I often wondered, indeed, at the man's patience with her. But after his jealousy was once fully roused, he did not spare her. He saw it first—though everybody had been talking of it for weeks—one night near the end of July, when they had a ball, which was spoken of next morning as one of the most brilliant successes of the season."

"Who was the man?"

"Captain Wynford. They only met soon after her marriage, and it appeared to be a case of love at first

sight. Yes, I know what you would say—that it ought not to have been so, especially with her. But you know what Audrey has always been; how she has taken everything that life could offer without consideration for anybody but herself. Yet she is not entirely to blame. Well, the thing quite visible to everybody but Van der Voome culminated on the night of the ball.”

“Did you never remonstrate with her?”

“Yes, and sometimes I thought I had made an impression on her, but Wynford’s influence was stronger than mine.”

“Was he a man totally without principle?”

“I do not know. He loved Audrey, and perhaps he had been trained in the same school. On the night of the ball she seemed to forget everything but that he was present, even neglecting her duties as hostess. Van der Voome was furious, and after it broke up there was a scene.

“He took us off to Scotland next day, and I hoped the trouble might be at an end. It had only begun. She disappeared the other day. Wynford met her in Edinburgh, and they are now on their way to New York.”

Here Margaret burst into tears, and my own eyes

were not dry. The same thought dwelt with us both, that poor Audrey had but taken the first downward step, that something even more bitter might yet ensue. I pondered on her bright beauty, her winning ways, her many gifts which, rightly used, would have blessed herself and others. I thought how poor they were in comparison with honesty of heart and life, with purity of soul. Many more details of that unblessed and fatal marriage did Margaret give me, and when we laid the subject aside, I shared her pity and respect for Mr. Van der Voome. Unattractive, plebeian, purse-prond he might be, but he had proved himself not unworthy of respect, and Margaret never failed to speak well of him, though she never met him again. There was the usual buzz of excitement over an event so interesting to the special circle of society in which the Van der Voomes moved ; though it was a little milder on account of the season of the year, all the butterflies of fashion being scattered to the four winds of heaven. Thus the unhappy affair was not exaggerated and distorted, as it would certainly have been had it happened a month or two earlier. Mr. Van der Voome sought no divorce, and we heard nothing about his poor, unhappy wife for a long time.

Before the term began Harry Seacombe came again to Fleetwood, bearing a message from his mother—a gracious invitation to pay a short visit to the Towers. Had the boy not pleaded so earnestly, I should at once have refused, but his heart was set upon it. I was surprised that the invitation included Margaret, and said so. He looked at me comically.

“Scenting trouble afar, Cousin Margaret? Well, and what if I did?”

“Did what!” I asked, though I knew too well what his mischievous eyes implied.

“Well, walked off with your paragon. You told me yourself she was a paragon, and you can’t go back on your word; no school marm ever does.”

“Harry, it would never, never do! You ought not to require me to tell you that. It would break your mother’s heart.”

“Why, pray?”

“Well, she is nobody, and then this dreadful trouble about her sister. I really am amazed at Lady Seacombe extending her invitation to Margaret. I must not encourage it. It would never, never do.”

I saw Harry’s lips, usually so gay and gentle and smiling, grow ominously grave and stern, and I

thought that if he went for the wild Afghans with such a face it was no wonder they fled before him.

"I am the best judge of that. My mother knows I mean to choose my own wife, Margaret or another. Come now, consin, don't be cross-grained. You are not built that way, and it doesn't suit you."

He talked on, but I did not take Margaret to Seacombe Towers. I did not wish to take a single step towards bringing about any marriage between these two, though I loved them both dearly, and believed that they were made for each other.

I found my Aunt Seacombe very pleasant. Since her husband's death she had become more gentle and tolerant; but I saw that her heart was bound up in her boy. She talked of him incessantly—of his goodness, his valour, his devotion to her. She was keenly concerned about his matrimonial future, but was too wise to dictate to him. He had a very sweet disposition, and was amenable to control within certain limits, but she seemed to have divined that in his choice of a wife her boy would brook no interference.

It was no use my trying to keep back the tide of affairs. Harry came to Fleetwood in spite of me, but

watch as I might, I could detect in Margaret no sign that she divined the object of his coming. She was at her best with him ; the touch of sunshine in his nature was just what hers needed. I saw her grow more noble, more womanly, more lovable day by day, and knew that love, omnipotent and divine, was adding the crowning touch to her fine character. And I said to myself, that though Harry Seacombe should take her a penniless bride from her menial position at Fleetwood, Seacombe would bless the day her foot crossed its threshold.

I wrote to my Aunt Seecombe about it at last, and her reply was to ask me to go down to talk the matter over. I found her disappointed, even a little angry, but when she heard what I had to say about Margaret, she became mollified.

“Of course it is a frightful *mésalliance*, especially after that Van der Voome affair, but though Harry is so good-natured, he is as obstinate as—well, as his father was before him.”

“Then you will be kind to her, Aunt Selina, if anything should come of it?”

“I’ll do my best,” she said sincerely, if with but a doubtful grace ; but I knew I could rely upon her.

“You are greatly changed, Aunt Selina,” I could



not help saying. "Time was when you would not have accepted such a daughter-in-law so meekly."

"Maybe, but I have learned something since then, and she is fairly well connected. I respect her, Margaret, for having had the courage to stand out against that wicked mother of hers," she said, with great good humour. "Bring her down next time you come, if it is not necessary for me to come to her before then."

I spoke to Margaret on my return. It was rather a difficult task, for she was not one whose mind dwelt upon such matters; and she was totally unconscious how matters stood, not only with Harry, but with herself. I think I see her yet, looking up from her pile of housewifely darning, her eyes meeting mine with a slow wonder in them.

"It is very kind of Lady Seacombe to ask me so often, but I am sure it is better for me not to go."

"Why?"

"Oh, because those who work ought not to go out of their sphere. It often ends in disaster."

I turned round to her, smoothing out my bonnet strings, and eyed her very keenly.

"Margaret, I don't know what to make of you. Do you mean to say you don't know what it all

means, that it has never dawned upon you what brings Harry Seacombe here two or three times a week?"

"Why, he comes to see you, I suppose," she said; but her voice was a little unsteady, and I observed her tremble.

"That is quite likely. Oh, my girl, my dear, dear girl, you will make a queenly Lady Seacombe. You are getting the best and dearest fellow in the world besides, and you deserve it all."

I saw the colour flood neck and cheek and brow, and knew her heart was revealed to herself.

I went away just then, for I heard him at the door, and knew he had followed me, impatient to know his fate. I met him on the stairs and told him where to find her, and I bade God bless him, and kissed him as I said it; and as I stole away I thanked God for the many sweet as well as bitter things in the world.

They were a long time there alone, so long that at last I had to go to them. And when I opened the door, I saw that it was well with them, and that my Margaret was won. And when I looked upon her face and saw what love had done for her, and saw her eyes as they rested shyly yet with all a woman's

happy pride on her soldier lover, my tears fell again for very joy. For in these two I saw the possibility of perfect marriage, which is the choicest earthly estate.

Margaret was marked by a great humility, her constant cry that she was not worthy. And she fell asleep that night sobbing for her lost sister, who, had she but waited and remained true to her best instincts, might have tasted of happiness as sweet and lasting.

So Margaret came into her kingdom, and I have not time to tell you all the ins and outs of it here; but I must not forget to say that Mrs. Bellamy turned up overjoyed at this desirable alliance, and with one grand sweep sought to make her past treatment as if it had never been. But Margaret could not meet her half-way. Memory was too bitter, and the awfulness of Audrey's fate too recent.

Mrs. Bellamy has not as yet stormed the gates of Seacombe Towers, though she is still trying the assault. Margaret is kind and civil to her, but distant. It is a painful thing to look upon such strained relations between mother and daughter, but I cannot find it in my heart to lay the blame on Margaret. Ties of blood are strong, but they can be loosened

and even snapped by such treatment. We have only once heard of Audrey, that she is living in Paris. Margaret has seen her there many times, but in the meantime nothing can be done for her.

As for Margaret, I have always said that the woman who became Harry Seacombe's wife would be beyond reach of the question, "Is marriage a failure?" and I say so still.

V.

KATHLEEN.

THE stress of life sometimes brings to the surface qualities hitherto undreamed of, and extreme circumstances can awaken many a dormant capability. In a word, necessity is a more powerful agent than we are inclined to think.

As I write down these trite but true statements, my mind is full of the experiences of one of my old pupils, with whom I am still on terms of intimacy and friendship. She was an Irish girl, and came to me quite in the ordinary way, and was so ordinary in every respect that her achievements as a thoroughly capable and even brilliant manager in circumstances exacting the exercise of no mean talents, surprised me not a little. Her name was Kathleen Moran, and she was the daughter of a country gentleman in the south of Ireland. The family was old and

proud, the estate large and burdensome. I use the word advisedly, because the land was not only of meagre quality, but so mortgaged that it had hung like a millstone about the Morans for at least three generations. An English lady, the sister of Mrs. Moran, came to me about Kathleen, and told me a good deal about her. Mrs. Tresidder was the wife of a wealthy London magnate, one whose money and influential position in the mercantile world won him entrance into very good society. His wife was ambitious, and they had done well socially, but it was a great sorrow to them that they were childless. I was not drawn to Mrs. Tresidder. Her long struggle to reach the upper platform of society had given to her character a certain unpleasant touch. She was intolerant, too, of all who did not get on.

"I have come to you, Miss Grainger, about a young niece of mine in Ireland," she said that day I saw her. "I have just come from Ireland, from spending a month in that impossible place, where my sister has elected to bury herself alive. I said to Mr. Tresidder, it will take me quite twelve months to recover from the experience."

I looked interested. I certainly felt so.

"My sister, fresh from a boarding-school, married Mr. Moran at nineteen, and they have nine children. Kathleen is the eldest. She is seventeen. My sister has taught the children all they know; the boys get a little assistance from the parish priest. Imagine, if you can, the result."

"They live far from a town or from schools?"

"I should think they do. Why, they are twenty-three miles from a railway station, though there is a new line making which will bring them twenty miles nearer. What a life! It would kill me in a week; but the astonishing thing is that Sybil—Mrs. Moran—appears to be entirely happy."

"Perhaps she has much to make her so. Country life is delightful to those who are accustomed to it," I suggested.

Mrs. Tresidder shrugged her shoulders. "Country life—it isn't country life, it's live burial, nothing short; and they are so frightfully poor. Kilroe is a large estate, but nearly all bogland; a kind of feudal system pertains on it, and the poverty is appalling. Mr. Moran literally divides his substance with his tenants. It's like a big co-operative society, with this exception—the largest shareholder gets the

least ; and nine children, five of them boys—what *is* to become of them ? ”

I said I did not know, but that probably there would be a way out of the difficulty. Mrs. Tresidder, if a trifle over-frank, was at least interesting ; but my time was precious. I suppose something in my manner suggested to her that I wanted the interview over.

“ I brought Kathleen back with me, after a kind of scene. I pointed out to Mrs. Moran the iniquity of rearing a girl like that, and of refusing any advantage that came in her way. She is a lovely creature, but as undisciplined as a bogland colt. Mr. Tresidder and I are childless—we wish to adopt her ; but she will require a lot of breaking in. Will you undertake the process ? ”

I laughed a little, perfectly understanding her. Mrs. Tresidder was known to me through other friends, and I knew exactly what she wanted done with Kathleen Moran.

“ I shall do what I can for her while she is here, Mrs. Tresidder. I wish she had come with you.”

“ Oh, she can come another day before the term begins. We are at Mortlake just now. Mr. Tresidder



is amusing himself with his house-boat and a new steam launch. Later on we go abroad, probably in September, after Kathleen is placed here."

She paused a moment and then went on :

"She is a very impulsive creature, and quite undisciplined. She thinks Killoe is the only earthly paradise, and only consented to return with me in order to qualify herself for usefulness at home. She must not be told her parents have given her up to me. She would certainly run away. After she has been here some time her views of things in general, and Killoe in particular, will probably become modified."

I could not help shaking my head.

"It is not so easy to root out a passionate attachment, Mrs. Tresidder, especially from an Irish heart."

"But you will do what you can, Miss Grainger. I have heard so much of your wise guiding and judicious training. You have the reputation of turning out splendid girls."

"A high standard of duty will be set before your niece, Mrs. Tresidder, but I cannot promise to curb her natural affections."

"Oh, I don't want you to do that ; I have no

doubt that after two years here, mingling with English girls, and her holidays spent with me, Kathleen will be quite amenable. I don't want her shorn of her bright originality ; it is only tone she wants to make her the rage of the season that witnesses her *début*. She will be so absolutely fresh, she may achieve anything. I assure you I have great hopes for her. I am only sorry that I did not know sooner that my sister possessed such a promising daughter. It is three years since I was at Killoe, and then Kathleen was quite uninteresting and objectionable. But there is material to work upon now."

Mrs. Tresidder went away, leaving me a trifle uncomfortable, and somehow I rather dreaded the advent of Kathleen Moran. My fears were quite groundless. Shall I ever forget the day I saw her first, my bright, high-spirited, precious girl, with her red cheeks and her bonnie eyes, clear as the blue waters of Killoe, where it shimmers under the fitful Irish sun? She was high-spirited, and full of fun and frolic, I could see, but she had the gentlest spirit, the truest heart, quick to respond to the slightest touch of love or kindness. In a week she became the sunshine of Fleetwood.

She had been brought up in an atmosphere so full of love and sunshine that she expected it everywhere, and indeed created it for herself. Her frankness, her bright originality, her fund of fun were bewitching ; all so truly Irish that it sometimes made me smile. But her nature had its serious side, which showed itself in her anxious, pathetic desire to make the most of every advantage in her way. In this I thought her old beyond her years.

"It is so good of auntie," she would say sometimes when I remonstrated with her for over-diligence, "and I must learn everything I can, so that I may be of more use to mother and the children when I go back to Killoe."

Her voice always took a tender, tremulous note, and her blue eyes grew dim at that dear name, and often on her face I saw a far-off, yearning look, which told me that the child's heart was home-sick for Killoe. Then I felt like a hypocrite, yet I had to keep faith with Mrs. Tresidder and hold my tongue. But I knew very well that there might arise circumstances which would lift this matter clean out of her hands or of mine. While Kathleen was with me I made a new departure at Flectwood,

organised a hitherto untried branch of boarding-school life—the teaching of household management, down to the smallest detail. And I may say here that not only has this experiment earned for me the gratitude of many women, but it has given me more solid satisfaction in results than the educational department of my school. It was an effort long thought of and carefully planned, and when it did come into force was very efficient. I aimed at teaching everything, from the washing of a duster to its use among priceless china, cooking, dairy work, household management—everything was included.

From the first Kathleen, though diligent at her music and lessons, threw herself into the new movement, and seemed insatiable of knowledge. She took the prizes in every department; and when I heard her commendation on every hand I only sighed, for I knew that one incentive had moved her—the little word Killoe. And I knew that a strong struggle was at hand, and that if Mrs. Tresidder did keep Kathleen, it would be Kathleen with a crushed and broken heart.

She remained at Fleetwood nearly two years, during which period she never saw Killoe or any of her own folk. This was part of Mrs. Tresidder's

plan, by which she thought to wean the child's heart from her early home ; but absence in her case only served to bind her more closely to all she had left behind, and gave to her love that passionate touch which only the exile knows in its fullest intensity.

I well remember the day I parted from Kathleen. It was the month of May, and summer, early wooed, had burst upon us in all its loveliness. The girls were out for their afternoon walk, and the house was very quiet, when Mrs. Tresidder was announced. I went down to find her attired in mourning, and looking just a little disturbed.

"I have come to see you, Miss Grainger, because I have bad news for poor Kathleen. My brother-in-law, Mr. Moran, is dead."

I looked as I felt, inexpressibly shocked.

"It must have been very sudden."

"Not so very sudden. He has been ailing for several months. Of course death is always more or less sudden. Mr. Tresidder returned only last night from Killoe."

"Mrs. Tresidder, I don't know what Kathleen will say. She was passionately attached to her father. I think it was cruel not to send for her."

"My dear Miss Grainger, what was the use of harrowing up the child's soul? She can be told he died suddenly. We did it for the best. She belongs to us now, and more than ever requires our care. I confess I do not know what on earth poor Sybil will do. Where is Kathleen? Shall I leave you to tell her, or would you like me to do it?"

"Whoever tells her will have a difficult task. She will be in presently. If you can remain it will certainly be better."

In about half an hour Kathleen came in. Her demeanour towards her aunt was always respectful and gentle, but not affectionate. Love was not to be expected. Between a woman of the world like Mrs. Tresidder and such a child of nature as Kathleen Moran there could be little in common. She did not appear to observe the change in her aunt's attire, but immediately asked her a question. "Aunt Gertrude, why have they not written to me for so long? Have you heard from mother?"

"Come here, my dear. There has been great trouble at Killoe. Everybody has been too sad and too busy to write, though you have not been forgotten. Will you promise to be brave?"

I saw the child's lips pale.

"Tell me what has happened, Aunt Gertrude, please, quickly."

"Your poor father, my love. God has seen fit to take him. We cannot understand; we must only be resigned."

"Is father dead?"

I turned my face away; the change in the girl's bright face and voice was so woful.

"Yes, my dear; a great sorrow to us all, but it is better for him."

Kathleen withdrew herself from her aunt's clasp, and I saw her eyes grow rather suspiciously brilliant.

"Why was I not sent for, Aunt Gertrude? How dared you or anybody keep me here when papa was dying? It was cruel, wicked. I shall never forgive you."

She stamped her foot, her eyes flashed; she looked magnificent in her anger. I could not find a word to say.

"My dear, do not get so excited," said Mrs. Tresidder soothingly. "It was very sudden, and the long, expensive journey had to be considered."

"I could have begged my way. Mother would

miss me ; she will think I have grown cold ; but I will go to-day."

"My dear, be reasonable. It isn't possible. You can do no good at Killoe."

"I can—I can comfort mother. I can do things for her like nobody else. She always said so. If you will not give me money to go home, Miss Grainger will, and I will work with my hands to pay her back."

I saw Mrs. Tresidder becoming nettled, yet I could not interfere. The question at issue had to be settled between aunt and niece, and I saw that it would be speedily done.

"I am willing to make any allowance for you, dear Kathleen, but you must try and control yourself. It is not advisable for you to go to Killoe. It is probable they may have to leave it."

"Leave Killoe! Have they even spoken of that without me?" she cried in a great burst of passion. "Oh, it is time, time I was there. I will go to-day. Dear Miss Grainger, pray, pray lend me the money. I will work to pay it back. Oh, if I do not go I shall die!"

She had now quite lost her self-control, and for a moment we allowed her to sob in silence.



"Mrs. Tresidder," I said at length, "I fear it will be necessary for Kathleen to go. She will come back. It would be neither kind nor desirable for us to keep her now."

Mrs. Tresidder cast upon me a warning glance, and then turned to Kathleen.

"Listen to me, Kathleen. I must talk very plainly to you. You are very young and headstrong, and ignorant as well. There are some things you must try to understand. You must know, of course, that your father has always been very poor. Things are a great deal worse now. There is not only nothing left, but there is a great deal of debt. Your mother will be obliged to sell Killoe, and move into Cork or Dublin to try and find openings for your brothers. You are to remain with your Uncle Tresidder and me. It was all arranged before you came here. You are to be my daughter now, and you will be able to help them at home."

I saw all the light fade out of the girl's face as these things were made plain to her. She remained silent for some time, and at last turned quietly to her aunt.

"Aunt Gertrude, I quite understand. I beg you to forgive me for being so rude. I am much obliged

for your kindness, but I cannot stay. I must go home."

"But you can't, Kathleen. There is no room for you. You may not even get bread to eat."

"Mother will not say there is no room for me—at least, I must go and see. I can't stay, Aunt Gertrude. I should be miserable and ungrateful and horrid. Perhaps Nora will come. She wanted to come when I did; she wanted to go away from Killoe. Please, please, Aunt Gertrude, give me money to go home."

Mrs. Tresidder was very angry, but it availed nothing. Kathleen had her way. Next day, unprotected and fearless, she set out for Killoe.

I heard at rare intervals from Kathleen, and her letters, though sad and full of anxious care for the future, breathed a spirit of contentment, because she was at home. She told me that they were in the midst of many serious anxieties and pecuniary embarrassment, but that she had not quite lost hope. In her last letter she incidentally mentioned that her sister Nora had gone to Mrs. Tresidder, and was being educated at Clifton. I therefore concluded that she had not been satisfied with the effect of my training upon Kathleen.

For nearly twelve months I heard no more about the Morans, when one day in June, about five weeks before closing for the summer vacation, I received a long letter from Kathleen, written from Killoe. It was a happy letter, breathing buoyant hope and gladness through every line. It did not, however, enter into many particulars; the burden of it was a petition that I should come and spend all or part of my holiday at Killoe.

"I have made an experiment, dear Miss Grainger," she wrote, "and I want you to come and see how it is working. Come and see how you have saved Killoe."

Now these last words were so tantalising and so tempting that, though I had made many other plans, I set them aside and accepted the invitation, which promised enough of interest to repay the journey. It was rather a long and tiresome pilgrimage before I reached that part of the green isle where the Morans had their home. But everything was fresh and delightful, and when I alighted at the little roadside station which had brought Killoe within three miles of civilisation, and saw my dear, bright, happy girl waiting for me, my heart gave a sudden bound. She was greatly changed, grown more

womanly and certainly more beautiful, with a strong, healthy, ruddy beauty, which we do not see in England.

She was attired in a skirt and coat of heather home-spun, and a blue cambric shirt, a little felt hat with a pheasant's wing, and she had no gloves on her sun-burned hands. Her eyes filled with tears when she saw me, and for a moment I, too, was moved and could not speak.

"Oh, I'm glad you haven't much luggage, for I've only Mike and the cart. Mike is my pony. I broke him in myself. Here he is."

We stepped out to the little station yard, and I beheld Mike, a shaggy Irish colt, with rather a wicked eye, standing demurely in a very primitive-looking cart. But it was no bad seat when one got to it, and Mike trotted with exemplary steadiness, and without much attention from his mistress.

It was about sunset, and the day was one of summer's own gems. Shall I ever forget that wild ride over rough roads by the edge of dark bogland and over purple heather braes, with the amber clear sky above us, and all the wide wild loneliness of what appeared to me a great lone land shutting us in? I sat spellbound by the uniqueness of the experience,

and listened to Kathleen while she talked, scarcely following her.

Suddenly I pulled myself together.

"It was a pleasant surprise to get your letter from Killoe. Things did not turn out so badly there, as you were able to remain."

"They turned out badly enough, Miss Grainger, but I had my mind made up, if God would let me, to keep Killoe, and He showed me how to do it."

"My dear," said I, inexpressibly touched, "how did you do it?"

"I put into practice every single solitary thing you taught me at dear Fleetwood."

"Well, but, my dear, I don't see how that could save Killoe. A big undertaking, was it not?"

"Very big—oh, just tremendous," she said, with a great deep sigh. "But it's done—or nearly—and it's the happiest family on earth we be, ashore—but I'm not going to tell you anything more till we get to Killoe. It's an object lesson, dear Miss Grainger, and Killoe is the object."

"I see; well, then, may I ask about your sister Nora, who went to your Aunt Tresidder?"

"Oh yes, Nora's all right; she was here this summer—a transformation scene. Aunt Gertrude

has made her what I should never have been—a fine lady. The boys”—here Kathleen’s eyes twinkled most wickedly—“the boys didn’t think it an improvement, and said so.”

“She is quite happy, is she not?”

“Oh, entirely so. She has got what she wanted all along, and—and so have I.”

“Room to breathe,” I said, as Kathleen let the reins drop, and stretched her strong young arms above her head.

She nodded rather soberly, but presently smiled again.

“Tell me, dear Miss Grainger, do I look, as Aunt Tresidder and Nora said, exactly like a dairymaid? Aunt Tresidder talked very seriously to me. She said Providence had given me beauty, and that I was wilfully abusing His gift. Nora is not so good looking, they say, and I believe that is the thorn in auntie’s side. Oh, isn’t it too funny? as if that sort of thing mattered at all.”

I turned and looked at her. She spoke in an entirely undisturbed and matter-of-fact way about her beauty, as if it were a mere episode in her career, and the healthy contempt in her last words entirely reassured me. It was evident that something

of the wideness of her heritage had touched the girl's soul, and lifted her above personal vanity of every kind.

"Look, Miss Grainger ; there is Killoe !"

I started, and looked in the direction indicated.

First I saw a lonely sheet of water, growing dark with twilight shadow, set like a gem among flat fields, which slightly undulated as they rolled back to meet the horizon. Trees there were none, save a few stragglers surrounding the old mansion house and its out-buildings, which covered no inconsiderable space. It looked so like a little town that I could not forbear an expression of surprise.

"Oh, that is Killoe village ; it is quite near—horribly near, Annt Gertrude says—and for some things it would be better to have the cottages at the other side of the lake, but it has its advantages too. You will learn what they are after you have been a few days here."

"The land seems of poor quality," I said, eyeing dubiously the spare patches of corn growing between the dark stretches of the bog and the living green of the pasture land.

"Oh yes, it is poor, and we have no money to feed

it. We have nothing good but the pasture, and I think I am making the very best of that. Just look at that lovely light on Killoe; it is just striking mother's window. We do have sunsets at Killoe, if nothing else."

We came presently to the place, and as we drove past the cottages I saw that Kathleen was the idol of all who looked upon her face. The house itself was approached by a carriage drive through a somewhat tumble-down gateway. Before we reached the house the members of the family had gathered on the steps to give me a royal welcome.

It would take too long to describe the Moran family—suffice to say it consisted of healthy, happy boys and girls, who looked as if they enjoyed life to the full.

Terence, the eldest, a handsome lad of sixteen, came forward rather shyly, and took Mike by the head.

"We're all here, Miss Grainger, except Nora: aren't we a nice family?" cried Kathleen gaily. "Now let's go and see mother. She's not able to come downstairs very much, and she is so anxious to see you."

I followed Kathleen into the house. It was barely



furnished, but with a certain fitness which suggested comfort and taste. Everything was plain, but scrupulously clean. I found Mrs. Moran on a sofa in the drawing-room, which, from its three long windows, commanded an uninterrupted view for many miles. She was a sweet, fragile, gentle creature, as great a contrast to her sister, Mrs. Tresidder, as could well be imagined. It was most beautiful to see the perfect understanding between her and Kathleen, who hovered over her in a protecting way, as if afraid the wind should blow too rudely upon her. It happened later in the evening that I had an opportunity of talking alone with her, and, as was to be expected, Kathleen was the burden of our thoughts.

"I thought when my husband died, Miss Grainger, that despair and darkness had overtaken my life. You sent Kathleen home to me a capable woman, able for any emergency. I cannot thank you—I will not even try."

"But, Mrs. Moran, what has she done? I want to hear that."

"When she came home, as you know, Mr. Tresidder had strongly advocated selling Killoe, and had even begun negotiations with a possible

purchaser. Kathleen quietly stepped in, and said no.

“‘Give me twelve months, Uncle John, and lend me two hundred pounds, and if my experiment fails I’ll give in.’

“I think it was the audacity of her request that staggered him. Anyhow, he gave in without a demur. He is a very generous-hearted man, though he and my husband did not get on very well together. I was too weak, too glad to be allowed to remain in my home. I scarcely asked a single question, and Kathleen, with only the boys to help her, began her experiment.”

“What was it?”

“Well, it was manifold. The first thing she did was to buy twelve cows—we had six already; and she got a lot of new butter-making appliances from Dublin and started a dairy. We needed no outside help, for all the women were glad to work under her supervision. She went herself—would you believe it?—to Cork with a sample of her butter, and obtained large orders. By keeping up the quality she kept up her prices, and now the supply of Killoe butter does not equal the demand. Then with the ready money her sales gave her she bought some of the finest

breeds of poultry. Terry looks after that, and he says we'll soon have a poultry farm. It is all done economically, and the children are so interested; you have no idea how much. Each has his and her department; even little Eileen hunts for eggs that are laid away."

"Dear Mrs. Moran, this is delightful to hear; and what about the mortgages?"

Mrs. Moran slightly shook her head.

"They are heavy, but Kathie aims even as high as that. Very soon the boys will be able to earn something, and our expenses will be lighter. Terry will turn his attention to the betterment of the land; the place is his, of course, and I believe that brighter days are in store for us."

"Assuredly they are; meanwhile you are all happy at home, and in this bracing spot the children are laying the foundation of lifelong health. I would not have missed seeing and hearing all this for worlds, Mrs. Moran."

"Ah! Kathleen says she owes everything to you, because you taught her that idleness is sinful, and that it is possible to make the best even of circumstances that appear hopeless. Then the practical lessons in housekeeping and dressmaking. There is

nothing Kathleen does not try, in order to keep down expenses. She is teaching her sister Mary, and buys tweeds by the bale ; so our clothing costs us very little. She is a marvel, a perfect marvel, and so sweet and gentle and loving. I often ask God what I have done that He has blessed me with such a daughter. She is giving the children their lessons now. Often she is tired at night, but she says the lessons do her good, and keep her from rusting. Is she not a blessing to Killoe?"

She came in at the moment, and my heart warmed as I looked upon her sweet face. Lithe, strong, sound of body and of heart, she made me thank God as I looked at her for the destiny she had sought. I thought of the bondage from which she had freed herself—pictured that large, passionate soul bound by the fetters of conventionality—and I said to myself she had chosen the better part. We had a long talk that night, and though I sometimes withheld praise lest it should uplift too much, I gave it to my dear, bright, noble girl without stint.

"Miss Grainger," she said hesitatingly, and with a faint colour in her face, "you don't think what I am doing is unwomanly. Aunt Tresidder says so, and that no man will look at me. Not that I want any

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man to look at me," she added whimsically, "though two keep on asking me to marry them ; but I do not want to be unwomanly."

"Banish that fear for ever from your mind, my darling ; you are fulfilling the true mission of womanhood, which is to help, to comfort, to sustain. You have not only saved Killoe, and given rest and happiness to your dear mother, but you have found scope for the development of your best gifts. I have never been so proud of Fleetwood as I am to-day, because you are such a credit to it."

She was so happy, she told me, that she could not sleep. Next day it was her pride and joy to take me over the whole domain, to show me everything ; and her absolute capability impressed me marvelously. She was mistress of every detail, and her organising power was not less marked than her inventiveness.

I spent my whole summer at Killoe, never more happily, more healthfully, more beneficially. Ay, and many a happy summer since then, though my dear girl has now gone from it to a home of her own.

Her love story I have always thought one of the sweetest in the world, and one day, if she gives me

leave, I may tell it here, though it is out of the province of my experiences. Before I write again in this magazine it will be my privilege to see her, so it may be that when next we meet, Kathleen will still be the burden of my pen.

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## VI.

### THE PRIDE OF KILLOE.

I AM sure you would like to hear Kathleen Moran's love story, and I am equally sure I like to tell it. As I said before, I have always thought it one of the sweetest in the world. Within driving distance of Killoe there is a little garrison town which is quite gay in its own way, and provides amusement for the young people of the country houses for miles around. Some of the produce of Killoe found its way to Burnevin, and speedily, on account of its prime quality, became much in demand. Kathleen had often to make little excursions into the town on such business matters, and several times I went with her. It was a quaint little place, not particularly beautiful, since the surrounding country was flatly monotonous, though green as grass in spring always ; the town itself was uninteresting and dirty, and the great barracks, the centre of its very existence, looked like

a convict prison. It had a dilapidated, weather-beaten town hall in the middle of the market-place, from the roof of which waved a rather bedraggled Union Jack.

"Don't look so scornfully at that imposing structure," said Kathleen one day, as we drove past it. "I assure you it is a place of great importance. The county balls are held there, and many private ones too, when people have no room or don't want to disarrange their houses."

"Balls in Burnevin?" I said dubiously, for the place looked dead that bright summer morning, the very curs too idle to do anything but snore on the sunny stones of the pavements.

"Yes, balls!" answered Kathleen severely; "and very good balls too; grand people come to them. I only wish I had a chance."

"Have you never been asked?" I inquired.

"Oh, often, but there's a very good reason why I shouldn't accept."

"What is it?" I inquired with interest. "You look as if you could enjoy a dance."

"Shouldn't I? I haven't had a dance, except in the barn at Killoe, since the last Christmas at dear Fleetwood," replied the girl; and I saw from her

face that, though she was doing more than a woman's work in the world, her heart had not grown cold to the fun and frolics of girlhood. And I was glad of it. Youth is too priceless a possession to let slip from us lightly or too soon. Middle life and age come quickly enough. Let our children be children while they may.

"But what is the reason that you cannot accept the invitations?" I asked curiously.

"No clothes," she replied lightly enough, but immediately turned her head away, though not quickly enough to hide the big tear which dropped from her bright eye. That tear stabbed me to the heart, if I can so speak of a tear. It was quite a minute before I could speak, and then it was of something far remote from balls.

We arrived at the chief shop in the place just then, and it was my business to mind the frisky and knowing Mike while Kathleen went in to bargain for her butter and eggs, obtaining for them the best possible exchange. I could just see her from where I sat, and I noted two little wrinkles between her brows as she talked to the shopkeeper, and my heart rebelled for her. There was something incongruous in the idea of that bright creature being

compelled by the hardness of destiny to sell her wares like any market-woman, though I have always said that that experience was the very making of the brilliant woman who is now one of the leaders of society in —— but I am anticipating. Well, her marketing done, Kathleen came out, followed by the shopman with the box of groceries, which was safely stowed under the seat of the cart.

“He’s an old skinflint, that Brannigan,” she said soberly, as she took Mike’s reins from my hands; “and I should just like for once to box his ears. He thinks because I am a girl he can bully me, but I’m his match.”

“You amuse me very much, Kathleen,” I said with a laugh.

“Do I? I am very glad, I am sure, for I don’t feel much amused myself sometimes. I bear Brannigan a grudge, because when I first began to come to Burnevin he tried to rob me in two ways—by under-rating my goods and over-rating his own. I didn’t know the value of things, and just paid twice what I ought.”

“But why do you keep on dealing with him?”

“Why, because he is the chief merchant, and supplies the garrison. Now they won’t have any-

thing but Killoe butter, and I make him pay for it. But let's forget Mr. Brannigan. I have had enough of him for one week."

"Tell me more about the balls held here, Kathleen," I said then.

Kathleen turned and looked at me with a kind of whimsical affection.

"You are so different here, Miss Grainger. One can say just anything to you. And deep down you are just a girl, and that is why we all feel so much at home with you, and love you so much."

"Was I such a bugbear at Fleetwood?" I asked, more for the pleasure of hearing her contradiction than anything.

"You were perfect there too, keeping us in our places and making us stand in awe of you, though we were never afraid."

"I suppose they don't have balls in summer?" I said, and Kathleen laughed at my persistence.

"Don't they? You have never lived near a garrison town. It's my belief the boys would dance all night and every night if they got the chance. They have too little to do. Why, there's one next week, on Friday. Lady Fitzwilliam wrote to mother and offered to take me; but of course we couldn't

tell her I had no clothes, the pride of the Morans not being quite extinguished. Mother was much pleased at my being asked, and we tried to plan a new gown. But it was no good, for there are thousands of other things we need, and I wasn't going to be selfish. We did try to fake up mother's wedding-gown, but I grew dismal over it and gave up. You see, one isn't going to one's first ball a guy, is one?"

"No, certainly not; next Friday, is it?"

"Yes; now are you quite satisfied that the Burnevin balls really do take place?"

"Quite," I said, rather absently, my mind full of something else, not very remote, however, from the Burnevin ball.

Kathleen was very busy after we returned to Killoe, and I saw her no more till tea-time. During the interval I had a little talk with Mrs. Moran.

"Kathleen has been telling me about the Burnevin ball next week. Don't you think she would rather like to go?"

"I don't think it, I know it, Miss Grainger," she replied with a sigh. "It is very hard for the child, but not harder than all the rest; only I don't

know when I felt so rebellious over our poverty as that day we decided it was impossible she could go."

"For want of a gown; and yet I suppose Nora has more gowns in London than she knows what to do with."

"She has, but she will never wear them with Kathleen's grace; and my sister could give Kathleen a new frock just as easily as she gives her goldfinch a bit of sugar in the morning, only she has not quite forgiven her yet."

"Do you know Lady Fitzwilliam well, Mrs. Moran?" I asked then.

"Oh, very well; she is my husband's cousin, and a very nice woman. She does not live much in Ireland, however; it is too moist for her. She only comes for a few weeks now. Next month she will be off again. They have a lovely place at Culbragh."

"Then if Kathleen had a gown there would be no difficulty about her being chaperoned?"

"Oh, none. Emily would never ask a question. All I have to do is to write and say we have changed our minds, and that Kathleen would like to go."

"Very well, Kathleen shall have her gown. Have you an old bodice that fits her well?"

"Yes; but, Miss Grainger, you must not."

"I will. Kathleen shall have this little pleasure, but a feeble return, after all, for your sweet kindness to me. It will be doing me a kindness and giving me unspeakable pleasure if you will let me send to Dublin for what Kathleen requires, and her clever fingers will soon make any little alteration necessary."

Mrs. Moran's face beamed, but her soft eyes filled with tears.

"Since you put it so, dear Miss Grainger, I can only accept. You will have your reward in the happiness of the child."

I sat down and wrote my order to the Dublin firm, and it was despatched at once. I had no hesitation in deciding upon what Kathleen should wear, and I was as impatient for the arrival of that box as if I had been young and beautiful, and going to my first ball myself. But never a word to Kathleen. Lady Fitzwilliam called another day, and I had the pleasure of meeting her, a sunny-faced, pleasant woman, uniting all the grace and style of a leader of society with the sweeter attributes



of a devoted wife and mother. She was rather amused at the idea of all Kathleen had done for Killoe, but knew too little about the value of money, or the lack of it, to appreciate the girl's good work. She looked upon it rather as a hobby Kathleen had taken to ride, as another girl might take to tennis or boating.

"Take Kathleen to the ball? Delighted, I'm sure; Florrie and Ted will be charmed to hear it," she said gaily, when Mrs. Moran somewhat nervously asked her. "I'm glad she's been sensible over it. She's a lovely girl, Anna, and ought really to be seen. She had better come to Culbragh. I'll send for her on Thursday. Then she can stay over Sunday with us. We give a little dance ourselves on Saturday night, and though I say it, you will not find a more desirable house party in Ireland than we have at Culbragh at present."

"It will be a great treat for Kathleen, Lady Fitzwilliam," said Mrs. Moran, quite gratefully. It did not occur to her, as it immediately occurred to me, that with the exception of the cream silk gown now being made in Sackville Street, Kathleen would possess nothing fit for a house party at Culbragh. Money, however, can do something even in a limited

time, and without saying a word even to Mrs. Moran. I wrote to Dublin again. On Wednesday the box arrived. Kathleen and I were sitting on the lawn when the station cart came up the avenue.

"Now what can this be? I don't expect anything: a huge box from Dublin. Not for Killoe, Terry, me boy, so you can trot it back."

"It is; it's all right; it's mine, dear," I said confusedly. "Let him take it in, and I'll tell you all about it."

Kathleen looked much mystified, but the box was carried into the house and up to Mrs. Moran's little sitting-room.

"I want you to stay and see this box opened, Kathleen dear; the things are for you," I said rather desperately.

"For me!" she repeated helplessly.

"Yes, dear; and if you please, not a single word," I said, and with great haste began to unpack the things. There was nothing very fine or extravagant, but it was a pretty outfit, and I have often spent fifty pounds with less return. Kathleen had all a girl's natural and proper love for pretty things, and her eyes shone as she lovingly fingered the soft, spotless folds of her dainty ball gown, while her

mother waxed rapturous over the plainer garments, which might in the end prove more useful.

"All these for me?" said Kathleen, in an awe-stricken voice. "Talk of fairy godmothers; there never was one like mine."

She turned to me with a look of sober and quiet gladness on her face, which repaid me a thousand times more richly than words could have done.

"From Thursday till Monday at Culbragh, and all those pretty clothes. Mother, I wouldn't change places with a queen."

It was right that she should rejoice over these simple pleasures, the heritage of her youth. The time comes when it takes more than pretty clothes or a dance to satisfy a woman's heart.

For the delectation of the younger members of the family, Kathleen arrayed herself that night in her new gown, and came down to the shabby old drawing-room, which even in its palmy days had never beheld a more radiant vision. I saw her mother give a little start when she entered, and all of us were surprised at the change. The children pranced round her at a respectful distance, and little Eileen said she looked like an angel. When I went up with her to take it off again, she turned to me with a sudden wistfulness.

"It makes a great difference, doesn't it? I feel a little afraid."

"Of your own fairness?" I said jokingly. "You are very beautiful, Kathleen, and it is quite right that you should rejoice in it; only when you are among those who will constantly tell you what I have just told you, you will remember, dearest, that there is no ornament more becoming to a woman than a meek and quiet spirit. I should regret even this little pleasure if it spoiled my bright, brave, unselfish girl."

"It will be a very different life at Culbragh," she said in a low voice, as she laid off the dainty skirt on the bed. "If it made me dissatisfied with my hard work, I should not go, though I want to go so dreadfully. Do you think it will?"

"No, if you do not dwell on that side of the question, dear. Just think of the comfort you have been to others, how you have kept the family together, and saved Killoe."

"I shall never love any place like Killoe," she said, with a little tender smile. "And I don't think you need be afraid that this is going to change me."

Next day we all assembled to see Kathleen ride

away in the Culbragh carriage which had been sent to fetch her. We were all in tears as she bade us good-bye, except Terry, whose face wore a look of settled gloom.

"Cheer up, Terry; it is only four days. Kathleen will be back on Monday," I said cheerily.

"She may come back, but she'll be different. I like her best in her old frock. You take my word for it, she'll never be the same again."

Time proved poor sore-hearted Terry to be right.

On Saturday afternoon Lady Fitzwilliam called.

"I thought you'd like to know how the ball went off, Anna," she said to Mrs. Moran as she kissed her, "and possibly to hear that Kathleen has set a whole county on fire."

"How, Emily?" inquired Mrs. Moran, with a faint flush of pride and pleasure on her faded cheek.

"Don't pretend to misunderstand me, Anna," she said gaily. "She is lovely, positively lovely, and whoever chose her gown knew how to make the best of every point. Florrie used to be rather admired. She was totally eclipsed last night, and I consider that it is very civil and magnanimous of me to tell you so."

"It is very kind of you, I am sure," murmured Mrs. Moran, not sure whether her cousin were in jest or earnest.

"Everybody was asking who she was, and I shone with quite a reflected glory. As for the garrison——"

Lady Fitzwilliam's eyes twinkled, and she gave her hand a comprehensive wave. Then she turned to me.

"Miss Grainger, Kathleen has told me of your goodness to her. You would be repaid if you had seen the child's delicious enjoyment of everything. It infected us all; she is charming, lovely, distinguished, and we owe it to you that she has been discovered. Now, Anna, what I really came about was to ask if we might keep her another week."

"If she wants to stay—it is very kind of you—I daresay we can manage, though Killoe is rather dull without Kathleen."

"It will be duller by-and-by, when she leaves it altogether. You may face it, Anna; you can't keep Kathleen, nor is it desirable that you should. She is made to shine, and she will have a brilliant future."

"Who is staying at Culbragh?" Mrs. Moran asked.

"We are about twenty, chiefly young people ; that is why I want Kathleen to stay. They are irreproachable, I assure you, and we only send judicious invitations to Burnevin. You may trust her with me."

"Oh, I do, Emily. I hope you did not think I meant that."

"Come over to lunch on Monday at two o'clock with Miss Grainger, and you will see for yourself. I'll send a carriage for you ; so good-bye."

We were afraid to tell the children, and especially Terry, that Kathleen's absence was to be so much prolonged. On Monday, however, as we were preparing to go to Culbragh, the carriage arrived an hour earlier than we expected it, and it brought Kathleen. She came bounding up the stairs beaming, though there was a curious dimness in her eyes.

"Why, my dear," I heard Mrs. Moran say, "what does this mean?"

"Why, that I've kept my promise. I said I would come back on Monday, and here I am."

"But Lady Fitzwilliam came specially to ask that you might stay another week."

"But she never consulted me," said Kathleen

calmly. "No, mother darling. I've enjoyed it awfully—I shall never forget it as long as I live—but I've had as much as is good for me, and here I am. Now where's my Terry? I must see if he has been conducting things properly in my absence. If not, woe betide him."

Before I had begun to undress that night Kathleen came into my room. She was very tired, I could see, having been all over the place with Terry as particularly as if she had been away four years instead of four days.

"It is nice to be home again," she said, with a big sigh. "Are you very sleepy, dear Miss Grainger, or can you let me sit a little beside you? I am too excited to sleep."

"I want you to sit; I expected you," I replied, as I threw on my dressing-gown and sat down in the low rocker at the fire. I always had a little fire in the evening, for we had a good deal of rain, and Killoe was not exempt from the usual country-house chills and draughts.

"Are you glad to get home again, dear; as glad as we all are to see you?"

"Yes, I'm glad; and I don't know whether I am glad or sorry that I went away."



She laid her head down on my knee, and I saw that her cheek was rather pale.

"It gave me a glimpse of life I have read of. I shouldn't care for it ; it is better here."

"Why?"

"It is so aimless—well, they have an aim certainly, and that is to enjoy themselves as much as they can. Lady Fitzwilliam is very nice and good too. I think her life is not quite so empty ; but the girls, they talk of nothing but clothes and lovers. Even Florrie, though she is so sweet and amiable, thinks only of making a good marriage."

"And the young men?" I inquired with interest, anxious to hear these fresh impressions of her new experiences.

"Oh, they are insufferable—at least, some of them," she said hotly. Then suddenly she raised her head and looked at me, and her colour had come back to her face. "Miss Grainger, do you think it right or necessary that if a man happens to admire you he should be always trying to impress you with the fact? I think it hateful myself. I cannot suffer :—"

"I am sure I cannot say," I replied vaguely, though inwardly much amused.

"It seems to me that girls have themselves to blame for all the silly stuff that is talked to them. They like it ; they even seek it. I am afraid they—the young men, I mean—thought me dreadfully rude, but I had to shut them up somehow."

"At the ball?"

"Yes ; but for that it would have been perfect."

There was something, to me, inexpressibly touching in this ingenuous confession ; it showed an absolute purity of heart and a singular freedom from coquetry or vanity, which impressed me deeply.

"Were they all so objectionable?" I asked at random, for the sake of something to say.

"I did not mean objectionable," she said quickly. "Only I thought them very silly. There was only one man there I enjoyed talking to, and that was why I came away."

I gave a little start. This was more serious than I expected.

"Who was he?"

"Mr. Dennis Mountjoy ; he was staying at Culbragh," she replied quite soberly. "He was very kind to me, and we talked a good deal to each other. It was because of something Florrie said this morning I came away."

I did not ask what it was, knowing she would tell me if she wished.

"Don't you think it horrid that a man and woman can't be in the least friendly without having such horrid things said to them?"

"What did she say?"

"Why, that he was making love to me, and that I ought to encourage him, as he is a great match. His uncle is an earl and a lord lieutenant or something, and they are very rich; so I came away."

"Out of the way of temptation?" I suggested, with a little smile.

"No; but because I felt so horrid. It just spoilt everything, and of course he is too great and grand for a beggar-maid like me; so here I am."

I saw tears on her cheek, and my heart was sore for her, because I knew just as well as if she had told me that what is either the greatest joy or the heaviest sorrow of a woman's life had come very near to her, and that it had left its mark. For the moment I, regretting the awakening, wished I had been less generous. Before I could speak she jumped up.

"Now I have confessed I feel better, and I'm going to bed. Good-night, dear, dear Miss Grainger. I

shall thank God in my prayers to-night that I am back in dear Killoe."

Two days went by uneventfully, and we appeared to have returned to our usual happy routine. It was natural, of course, that I should watch Kathleen closely, and I did not fail to detect in her a certain restlessness at times, an abstraction of manner, which convinced me that Killoe no longer occupied a foremost place in her heart. On the third day I was convinced of it. I was on the lawn with my book after lunch, when, far down the flat, dusty road, I could discern the figure of a horseman approaching Killoe. Mrs. Moran had gone for her afternoon nap. Kathleen and Terry had driven in the cart to a neighbouring farm about some calves. I had therefore to receive the visitor myself.

I had a very good opportunity of criticising his personal appearance as he rode up the avenue, and I admired him very much. He was not a lad, but a man of eight-and-twenty or thirty; and he had a grave, handsome, high-bred face, with a sincere frankness of expression which won my regard even before he spoke. He rode a superb horse, which he perfectly controlled by the lightest touch.

"You are Miss Grainger," he said, raising his hat

as I advanced to meet him. "My name is Dennis Mountjoy. I am staying at Culbragh at present. Can I see Mrs. or Miss Moran?"

"Both, I hope, presently. Mrs. Moran takes a nap after luncheon, but I will send some one to tell her you are here. Miss Moran has gone out driving, but will be back within an hour."

"Well, with your kind permission, I shall take my horse to the stables and come back to you here."

"Very well," I said, and went indoors myself to rouse Mrs. Moran, who appeared so much mystified by the arrival of such a visitor that I guessed Kathleen had not mentioned his name to her.

I had about fifteen minutes' talk with Dennis Mountjoy on the lawn, and I felt more and more drawn to him. I quite understood the attraction he would have for a girl of Kathleen's temperament, who beneath all her gaiety and fun had a passionate regard for what was earnest and sincere—in a word, for all that was good.

Mrs. Moran appeared a little fluttered when she came out, looking very sweet and fragile, with a white shawl round her, but Dennis Mountjoy's manner speedily put her at her ease. We were talking as happily together as old friends when the little cart

came rumbling up the avenue with Terry and Kathleen in it, and the soft, innocent face of a little brown calf looking out between them. That calf relieved the awkwardness of the moment, but I felt sorry to see the colour flush so redly in my dear girl's face ; she had not yet learned the art of concealing her feelings, and I fear now she never will.

Tea was brought out to the lawn, and after it Terry and Mr. Mountjoy, who seemed to find some affinity one with the other, went off on a tour of inspection of the out-buildings and dairies.

"He'll tell everything," cried Kathleen in comical dismay. "Terry's as guileless as a baby ; he'll think nothing of telling him that I scald the milk-cans myself, with an old dressing jacket and the sleeves rolled up to the elbow."

"You are not ashamed of it, dear ?" I said quickly.

"Not a bit ; but think of the earl and the lord lieutenant ; what a shock it would be to him !" she said in a stage whisper, and I breathed freely ; it would have hurt and disappointed me, I think, had Kathleen been ashamed of the good womanly work she had so successfully carried on. We went into the house before they returned from the farm, and somehow, after we were all in the old drawing-room,

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the talk became less animated. I felt, though I could not have told why, that Dennis Mountjoy had come on a serious and special errand, and I asked Terry as naturally as possible to come downstairs with me.

"He'll think it queer us going off like that, won't he?" asked the lad. "Isn't he an awfully nice chap, Miss Grainger? No airs or stuck-up-ness, and he's an awful swell too. Fancy, more than forty horses in the stables at Mountjoy now, and a stud farm in Norfolk, in England, and isn't that a beauty he's riding to-day?"

"It is," I said rather absently, my thoughts being upstairs.

"He asked an awful lot of questions, more about what Kathleen has done than anything. He didn't seem able to get over it all, and he always looked rather odd. What can make him so interested in us all of a sudden?"

"Why, Terry, don't you know?" I said impulsively. "He has come to take Kathleen away."

The boy looked at me incredulously; then, without a moment's warning, burst into tears, and ran away so fast that I could not follow him. I let him go, knowing he was best alone to fight out his first heart-

break. Strange, is it not, how the web is evenly woven, joy and sorrow, smile and tear, in due course, and never far apart ?

I was wandering about aimlessly on the lawn, when I heard voices, and looking round, I saw Dennis Mountjoy and Kathleen come out of the door together; and I knew from their faces, his so grave and manly, and yet passing tender, hers so shy and sweet, that it was well with them, and that, please God, they would so walk side by side to life's end.

They came to me, and said a great many things which it is sweet for me to remember still, but which I shall not here set down; and when they left me again, I looked up to the soft blue sky, and I thanked God because though there is sorrow and tears, disappointment and disaster in the world always, yet love is left, and will be till the world is done. I becomought me at last of the lonely mother thus blessed in one sense, in another bereft; and I stole up to find her on her knees in prayer, in the shabby old room where her children had so often played, and where joy and care had been so strangely intermingled.

"I cannot realise it, Miss Grainger. It seems but yesterday she was a child, and now she is to be a

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great lady, an earl's wife one day, my little Kathleen, the pride of Killoe," was all she said ; but we sat and talked of it as if it had been a wonderful fairy tale till darkness fell.

I did not see Kathleen alone that night, nor did she come to my room. I understood her reticence, how she felt that it was a thing apart, of which she could not yet trust herself to speak. That she was happy was written on her face, but it was a trembling, uncertain kind of happiness, which could scarcely yet trust itself.

Next day Lady Fitzwilliam came, full of excitement, and for such a sweet woman a trifle uncharitable, I thought, and hard.

"My dear Anna, of course it is an undreamed-of match for Kathleen, but pray don't build yourself on it too much. I know Lord Mountjoy very well, and his pride has passed into a proverb. It has always been said that Dennis has remained a bachelor so long because it was impossible to please his uncle. Ah, here comes Kathleen."

Kathleen, not knowing Lady Fitzwilliam had arrived, would have run off, but there was no escape.

"Come here, you naughty schemer. What do you deserve, do you think, for coming into my covert and

putting every nose out of joint? Kathleen Lady Mountjoy, I forgive you, and congratulate with all my heart."

The banter was kindly meant, but it hurt Kathleen, I could see. Before any one could say another word, there came a tremendous peal at the front-door bell, and presently there was ushered into the room "Lord Mountjoy." Lady Fitzwilliam did not know where to look. Mrs. Moran, however, rose to the occasion, and I admired the ease and grace with which she moved forward to meet the haughty and rather gruff old man who had come to see with his own eyes what manner of girl his nephew had chosen to bear the name he held in such esteem.

"Mrs. Moran?" he said interrogatively, and entirely ignoring the rest of us. "Is this your daughter?"

Mrs. Moran merely bowed, and took Kathleen by the hand. The little scene had its pathetic side. Hitherto Kathleen had cared for and shielded her mother. The positions were now reversed. Mrs. Moran took her proper place, as the protector of her child. And truly the old earl looked fierce and forbidding enough, with his shock of white hair and shaggy brows, to strike awe anywhere. It was a

scene for a picture, and for a moment there was a strained silence. Then, as the old man's eyes dwelt on the sweet face of our dear girl, who stood by her mother's side, modest and unassuming, yet bearing herself with a certain queenly pride, I saw them soften.

"He has chosen well. Madam, so good a daughter should make a good wife. I hope she will never regret what she will give up when my boy brings her to Mountjoy."

It was a courtly speech, gracefully made, and he kissed Kathleen when he had finished. Then he turned to Lady Fitzwilliam with a rather ironical smile.

"How do you do? They have long been anxious to provide a wife for the boy. I hope everybody will be pleased."

For a wonder Lady Fitzwilliam had no retort ready. After a little the earl unbent in quite a wonderful manner, and when he pointedly asked Kathleen to show him the wonderful dairies which she had managed so successfully, I could have laughed outright at the expression on Lady Fitzwilliam's face. The very thing she had volubly hinted at being an insuperable barrier seemed to have won the old gentleman's

special approval. Truly it is the unexpected that always happens.

The old earl has been dead these many years, and his nephew reigns in his stead. And our little Kathleen is a great lady now, moving among the highest in the land, familiar with courts and palaces, and beloved equally in all. For through it all she has kept that sweet purity, that fresh, bright, happy spirit which creates sunshine everywhere. And she often reminds me on the happy occasions when we still meet that she strives to carry with her through life certain words I spoke to her long ago in my bedroom at Killoe. Not many days since, as I saw her fit a tiara of diamonds on her dark hair, she turned to me and spoke them with a smile :

“There is no ornament more becoming to a woman than a meek and quiet spirit.”

To think that in her brilliant life Kathleen should remember and ponder on these words is to me a more rich and precious reward than I can here set down.



## VII.

### AUNT CAROLINE.

I HAVE had several Scotch pupils at Fleetwood, most of them interesting and attractive girls. But the flower of my Scotch flock was undoubtedly Flora Macgregor, the one daughter of a Scotch laird who had his castle among the wilds of Inverness-shire. I well remember that the communications regarding the coming of Flora were all addressed to me by a lady who signed herself Caroline Macgregor, and whom I at first naturally thought to be her mother. She wrote in an old-fashioned and formal style, and I gathered from her letters that she had old-fashioned and formal ideas about the up-bringing of children.

She informed me that I had been recommended to her by Lady Garthland, whose daughters were at Fleetwood, and that from all she had heard she

believed I was a suitable person to have the care of young gentlewomen such as her niece Flora Macgregor.

"I do not much approve of boarding schools," she wrote in one of her lengthy epistles. "My observation has convinced me that the young women educated at them acquire but little knowledge and a great deal of superficial nonsense. But as it has become advisable that my niece should leave home for a time, her father—my brother—has agreed that she should be sent to Fleetwood for a year."

I took an unaccountable aversion to Miss Caroline Macgregor through the perusal of her epistles, which was certainly unreasonable and absurd, as I had never seen her. Afterwards, however, when I did see her, I had no reason to change my mind. My new pupil came South with the Garthland girls, in charge of Sir Malcolm Garthland himself, who was going to Constantinople on diplomatic business. I met the party at King's Cross, and took them down to Fleetwood.

I found my new pupil rather older than I expected. She was sixteen, but beside the very youthful Garthlands looked quite grown up. I could not at

first make up my mind whether to call her pretty or not. She was tall, slender, and rather dark, with a lovely clear, ruddy tint on her cheek, and her eyes were as blue as the forget-me-not. They were very large and questioning and serious, though when her face lit up they shone like wells of water in the sun. Her expression was rather sad, even hard in repose. She did not look like the Garthlands, who came from an exceptionally happy home, and who clung about their handsome father as if they would never let him go. She was not well dressed, though her clothes were made of expensive material. The hand of Miss Caroline Macgregor, spinster, was visible in everything pertaining to Flora, her niece. I do not set this down in malice, or with any intent to impugn the good taste of spinsters in general. I am one myself, and it has been my good fortune to know many elegant and charming women who have remained unmarried from choice, but among these I do not number Caroline Macgregor.

I was very busy, of course, at the beginning of the term, and thinking my new pupil was all right with the Garthlands, I paid but little heed to her. It was only after I had got everything into full working order again that I had time to turn myself, if I may

use that expression, and begin to think about my new pupils. There is generally a good deal of homesickness among them at first, to which I am so accustomed that, beyond speaking a cheering and sympathetic word as opportunity offers, I do not much concern myself with them.

I was sitting in my sanctum one afternoon, looking complacently over my books, which had never been in a more satisfactory state, when, suddenly glancing out of the window, I beheld Flora Macgregor sitting on a little rustic seat under a beech tree. I was astonished to see her there, for that little space cleared just beneath my windows, and that particular seat, were supposed to be sacred to me, and nobody went there without my express sanction or invitation. She was sitting quite still, with her hands on her lap and her hat lying on the sward at her feet. She was looking straight before her, and though the view was considered very fine in its way, exhibiting all the picturesque features of a truly English landscape, I saw that she was totally unconscious of it. I have never seen in a human face a look of such intense and sorrowful yearning, and it smote me to the heart. I rose up hastily, opened the French window, and stepped

out, startling her with my foot on the gravel below the window. I was at her side before she could rise.

"Sit down, dear child," I said, as kindly as I knew how; for I felt that I had not done all my duty by her. "I have been watching you from the window. Now tell me what makes you look so sorrowful. I do not like anybody to look so at Fleetwood. I hope you are not unhappy here."

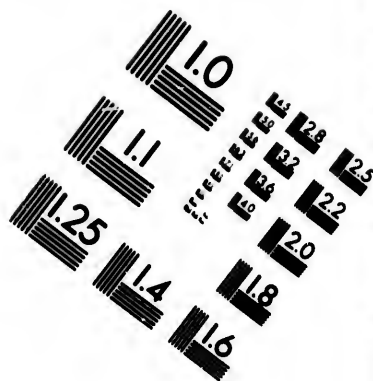
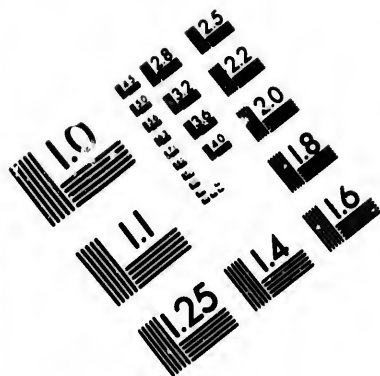
"Oh no," she said faintly. "Everybody is very kind. I like it much better than I expected."

"Why come here by yourself, and sit so broodingly? It is not like a young girl. Will you not tell me, my dear, of what you are thinking?"

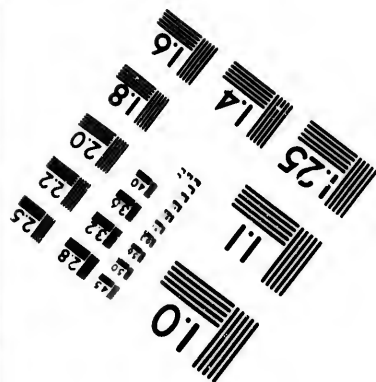
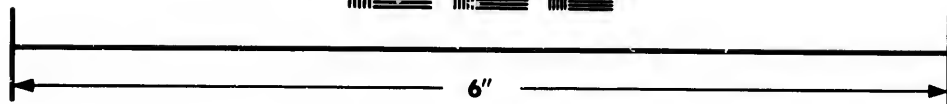
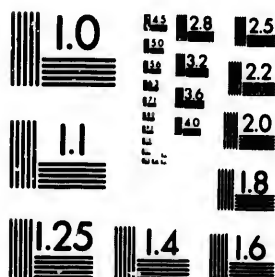
I laid my hand on hers, and she turned to me, looking intently into my face. What she read there I know not, but suddenly a sob, which seemed to come from the deep recesses of her heart, parted her lips, and she began to tremble from head to foot. I saw that she was trying to control herself, which she presently did, and looked at me rather timidly.

"You are home-sick, my dear," I said cheerfully. "I understand it all very well, but in a few weeks you will feel better. I have even had





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pupils who were home-sick for Fleetwood after they left it."

She smiled, and the change that passing smile made on her face reminded me of the sun gleaming suddenly on some dark mountain lake.

"The Garthlands are like that. They were always talking about Fleetwood. It isn't that," she said frankly, evidently feeling at home with me. "It is that I have had no letter from papa since I came."

"But your aunt has written, has she not?"

The lip curled a little, and the smile died out of her face.

"Yes, Aunt Caroline writes every week, but I cannot read her letters; they are so like her. I would give them all for a line from papa, and I know she is keeping him from writing. I felt that she would."

I looked at her in astonishment.

"My dear, that is a very strange thing to say. Why should your aunt keep him from writing? Probably he is too busy. Gentlemen generally are too busy to write any but business letters.

She smiled a little incredulously.

"Papa is not very busy; he is only partridge

shooting just now. I was thinking of it before you came. I used to go with him on the moors before Aunt Caroline came. She said it was not ladylike, and made papa bid me stop at home. Mamma did not think it unladylike, and she knew a great deal better."

I sat silent a moment, feeling rather perplexed. I knew nothing at all of the history of the Macgregors, but I saw that I was face to face with one of those painful family matters which are so difficult to deal with.

"How long is it since your mother left you?"

"Two years—it is like two hundred; and I am quite sure she would be living now but for Aunt Caroline. I have told her so, and papa too; it was for saying that that I was sent to school."

I did not know whether to ask any more questions, but thought it better not. I could only hear one side from Flora, and the young do not always see clearly; at least, they are inclined to judge hastily and harshly through lack of experience. I tried to interest her in other things, but always her talk drifted back to her home, and I saw that the child's heart was fain

for her own country. I tried not to think harshly of Caroline Macgregor, who no doubt acted according to her light, and had the child's interests at heart ; but somehow my sympathies refused to keep company with my better judgment. They were entirely on Flora's side.

I watched her pretty closely during the next few days, and though to please me she tried to apply herself cheerfully to her tasks, the questioning wistful look did not leave her eyes. I then took it upon myself to write a few lines to her father. Some days afterwards I received a letter from Miss Macgregor, which rather astonished me. She began it quite abruptly :

“The letter you addressed to my brother came all right to Drum, but I have not given it to him. I am sorry to hear that Flora is so stupidly fretting, though it does not greatly surprise me. As to her father writing, it was agreed before she left home that he should not write. The effect of his letters would simply be to unsettle the child still more. You may consider this rather hard, but I would beg to remind you that you are not competent to judge, and that whatever Flora may have told you, the story has another side. She is at that age when strict dis-

cipline is generally necessary, in her case absolutely so, her disposition and character being more trying than is common. I trust my friend Lady Garthland has not been mistaken in her recommendation, and I must beg of you to attend to my wishes in this matter, and not encourage Flora in her headstrong and rebellious disposition. She has the misfortune to be an only child, and her mother was sinfully indulgent to her. I have written thus frankly to you, a stranger, because I would wish to guide you somewhat in your dealing with my niece, of whom I hope to hear better accounts at no distant date."

I have seldom received what the Scotch call such a good "down-setting," and I will not deny that I did not much like it. I said nothing, however, to Flora, and some little time afterwards I received some further light on the matter from dear Lady Garthland, who, passing through London to join her husband in Turkey, came down to see her girls. She was a very sweet and gracious person, who created an atmosphere of cheerfulness and grace wherever her lot was cast. I did not feel that she would misunderstand or resent my asking cautiously, what sort of a person was Miss Caroline Macgregor,

of Drum. She shook her head as she listened to my question.

"Caroline Macgregor is a very strange woman, Miss Grainger, and she ought never to have been taken back to Drum."

"Did she live there before, then? Has it not always been her home?"

"No; she kept house for Malcolm Macgregor before his marriage, which she bitterly resented. It was quite a romantic story. Macgregor met his wife abroad, at Nice, I believe, where she was acting as companion to an English lady. She was the daughter of a clergyman, a native of the Channel Islands, and there was a good deal of French blood in her veins. A sweet creature, she was lacking perhaps in any very strong quality, but there is no doubt that she made Macgregor happy, and that he has been a changed man since her death."

"His sister did not much approve of his wife, then?" I suggested.

"No, she took the most unaccountable dislike to her from the first, and was at no pains to conceal it. She resented the marriage, to begin with, because it dethroned her from her position as mistress of Drum. Macgregor made the mistake

of thinking it possible they might all live together and be happy—a risky experiment at all times, but in this case simple lunacy, nothing less.”

“Was it tried?”

“It was; and for two years poor Mrs. Macgregor suffered it. Before Flora was born she got into such a poor state of health that the doctors feared she would never recover. They could not understand her listlessness and apathy. She seemed to have no desire to live. It was I—and a bold woman I was to do it—who suggested to them that the cause was to be found in the person of Caroline Macgregor.”

“And what came of it?” I asked, with intense interest.

“Oh, it took a good while to convince Macgregor, for he is rather fond of his sister, and proud of her too. She is considered one of the handsomest women in the North, and men do not see things so quickly as we do. He is a great sportsman, and spends little of his time in the house. Naturally he wants that time to be peaceful and happy, and I must say he deserves it, for he is as good-hearted a man as ever breathed.”

“And did he send her away?”

"Well, yes; but not far enough. There is a little dower-house in the grounds, not a mile from Drum, and to it, after several stormy scenes, she retired. But it was a mere farce, for she was never out of Drum. She told me herself that her presence was absolutely necessary there, for Mrs. Macgregor knew nothing of the conduct of a large establishment, and was totally at the mercy of her servants.

"I told her that was Macgregor's own outlook now, but she did not see it; and it's my belief that she worried the poor thing into her grave. Of course, when she died, Miss Macgregor shut up the dower-house and took up her old place in Drum, and now the warfare is about to begin, only it will be active hostility this time, for Flora has a good bit of her father's nature in her, and will stand up for her own. I must say I foresee nothing but troublous times for Drum."

"Has Miss Macgregor no means of her own?"

"Means, my dear—more than she will ever spend in this world. But she wants to live at Drum, and at Drum she will live in peace or war."

"Um! I think Mr. Macgregor owes a duty to his daughter first, don't you, Lady Garthland?"

"Indeed I do. My husband is furious over it. Caroline Macgregor is a woman he cannot stand. But we must allow them to fight their own battles, having enough to do with our own. How do you find Flora? Not the rebel her aunt paints her."

"She has been most exemplary so far, and her disposition is very lovable."

"So we think," said Lady Garthland with a sigh. "Come up to Garth next July, and then you can see for yourself. If Sir Malcolm and I are not at home, Sybil will be delighted to do the honours."

I had not heard a story so interesting to me for a long time, and I pondered much and often on what was likely to be the outcome of it all.

\* \* \* \* \*

I had Flora Macgregor at Fleetwood the whole year. At Easter she and I had a little trip together to the Channel Islands, which were hallowed to the child as the birthplace of her mother. During that brief holiday I had the fullest opportunity of studying her character, and I grew to love her very dearly. She had a fine, sensitive, highly strung nature, generous to a fault; her temper was quick and



passionate, but not sullen or resentful ; for hasty word or action she was quick to apologise and anxious to atone. With careful guidance and loving sympathy she would develop into a splendid woman, but I trembled to think what might be the consequences were she left to the tender mercies of her Aunt Caroline. I dreaded her return to Drum, though there was a visible brightening of her whole appearance as breaking-up day approached. She travelled as she had come, with the Garthlands, and I was to follow later on, when I had paid my usual midsummer visit to Judith Sale. I arrived at Garth on the ninth of August, in the full tide of preparation for the twelfth. Sir Malcolm and Lady Garthland had arrived, and the house was full. I was exceedingly anxious, of course, to see Flora ; they told me Drum was within driving distance of Garth, and that we should go one day ; but there never seemed time to make the excursion. Shall I ever forget those golden days among the heather, revelation of a life of which I had never dreamed ? It was a happy home, full of mirth and jollity from morn till night, yet not wholly given up, like some, to selfish enjoyment. There was still some sympathy, some practical and kindly thought for the suffering and

the needy, and many hearts blessed the name of Garthland.

One wet day there came driving up to Garth, about lunch-time, a smart dogcart, in which sat two figures encased in waterproofs, with high-peaked hoods drawn over their head-gear, and the rain dripping off them everywhere. A few venturesome spirits were on the moors, but the house was more than usually lively, and the arrival of the new-comers was hailed with delight. It was Macgregor of Drum and his daughter Flora, looking rosy and lovely after a sixteen-mile drive through the hills in blinding rain.

She ran to me before any of the others, clinging to me with an affection not simulated or affected, but real and very precious to me. I saw Mr. Macgregor regarding her with evident surprise on his dark, handsome face. He was a great giant of a man, well and powerfully built, and the kilt he wore seemed to make him look even taller and more striking. He appeared to me at first sight a rather awe-inspiring figure, but there was a softness in his eye, a mobile curve about the mouth which indicated the gentler side of the rugged northern character.

"She would give me no peace till I brought her, Miss Grainger," he said, as he gave me a great grasp of the hand. "How do you do, ma'am? I am delighted to make your acquaintance, and our errand to-day is to see when we can bid you welcome to Drum."

"We have been talking of it every day," I replied. "I can come, I suppose, whenever it is convenient for you."

"Well, suppose we stay till it fairs, if Lady Garthland has no objection, and you can get your gear together and go back with us; would that do?"

"I thought only of coming to spend the day."

"Oh, nonsense; we don't have folk spending the day at Drum. We must have a week of you at least, though I question if even that will satisfy the bairn." So the matter was settled, and after tea that very day we departed, I being very reluctantly spared from Garth.

The rain had cleared, and a royal sunset blazed all down the sky as we drove into the Drummairn valley, at the head of which stood the mansion-house of Drum. I had thought the rounded heather-clad hills, and the thick birch woods surrounding Garth

scenery beyond compare, but now I was introduced to something grander and more awe-inspiring. Indeed, it so moved me that I could not speak. The valley was long and narrow, and watered by a wide brawling stream, from whose banks the mountains rose sheer up bare at their crests, but glowing purple where the heather grew. The solemn peaks seemed to touch the sky, washed clean by the rain, and now shining upon us radiantly. As we neared the head of the glen it widened considerably, and became densely wooded—the beginning, I was told, of the famous deer forest of Drum.

The house itself, not unlike a royal residence, came upon us quite suddenly through a gap in the trees. I thought it then, and I think it still, one of the loveliest and most sublime spots I have ever seen. Its loneliness, standing there in the unutterable solitude of these grand mountains, these solemn woods, appealed so strongly to me that I felt my pulses thrilling with a kind of subdued excitement.

As was natural, I thought much of Miss Caroline Macgregor as we drove, anticipating my meeting with her with the liveliest curiosity, not unmixed

with a certain amount of trepidation. I had no fault, however, to find with her greeting. Her manners were those of a gentlewoman of the old school, stiff, polished, but scrupulously courteous. She was one of the handsomest women I have ever seen ; but her flashing eye was cold and critical in its glance, and her very smile seemed to have a chilling effect. That first evening I saw that there was only between aunt and niece a kind of armed neutrality. Miss Macgregor caught at everything Flora said, reproving her sharply more than once when there was no occasion for it. In Flora's demeanour to her aunt defiance and dislike were distinctly observable. Altogether the domestic atmosphere was far from being serene.

Flora was summarily dismissed to bed at nine o'clock, and I saw that she went in a very rebellious mood. When we were left alone, Miss Macgregor turned to me with her faint, chilling smile, which always struck me as being more disagreeable than a frown.

"You see how perverse the child is, how very rude to me, Miss Grainger," she said pointedly. "I regret very much that her year at Fleetwood has wrought but little improvement."

There was no sort of ambiguity about Miss Macgregor's remarks, and I felt justified in answering with equal candour.

"I can only say that I found her docile, obedient, most exemplary in every way, and she was a universal favourite."

Miss Macgregor made her mouth very long and thin, and she knit her brows over a piece of fine knitting with which her industrious fingers were occupied.

"That is very extraordinary," she replied coolly. "But there are people, I believe, who keep their best manners for strangers."

I made no reply. The injustice of her attitude towards the child, her stolid complacency and belief in her own perfection, raised within my usually mild bosom quite a little storm of indignation. I have never felt such an antipathy towards any human being as I did at that moment towards Miss Caroline Macgregor.

"I am willing to make every allowance for her," she began, after a moment, but the metallic tones of her voice belied her more gracious words. "The taint was in the blood to begin with, and it is impossible to quite overcome that."

"What taint?" I asked flatly.

She suspended her knitting a moment, and regarded me in surprise.

"Did you not know that her mother was partly French?"

It would be impossible for me to convey to you the immeasurable contempt and condemnation expressed in those words.

"Yes, and I have heard that she was a very sweet and charming woman."

"Who was your authority?"

"Lady Garthland."

"Oh, Grace Garthland!—a sweet smile and a gracious word are enough for her. She has no discrimination of character."

I felt that it was time to change the subject, which I did with speed; but I could not sleep that night, and the future of Drum lay heavy on my soul. Next morning Mr. Macgregor asked me to drive with him to the little town, and though Flora begged to come, he left her at home. I was not surprised when he began to speak of her before we were well away from the house.

"Things are not well in Drum, Miss Grainger," he said, in his honest, blunt way. "I hear from Lady

Garthland and other folk that your judgment is very sound—and I like your face. What am I to do between the lassie and her aunt ? ”

As I looked at him my heart warmed to him. He was so big, and honest, and sincere, but as unfit as a baby to cope with the strong wills of the women of his house. He threw a very grave responsibility on me, and I did not so readily respond to it, I suppose, as he expected, for after a few minutes’ silence he turned to me with a disappointed, anxious air.

“ Can’t you say something, Miss Grainger ? Do you not see there is not likely to be peace in Drum between the two ? ”

“ I see that quite plainly. Before I say what I think, Mr. Macgregor, will you tell me quite frankly : can your sister afford to live away from Drum ? Has she any means ? ”

Macgregor gave a little laugh.

“ Yes, indeed she can. Her tocher was fifteen thousand pounds, and she has never taken a husband to spend it for her. It’s twenty by now or more, and she has some houses as well.”

“ Then there is only one course open to you, and you must take it. Tell her that as there is no



prospect of them getting on together, Flora must now take her place as mistress of Drum."

He turned to me with a great light on his honest face.

"That's the matter in a nutshell. You would really advise me to do that? God bless you, Miss Grainger. I'll do it. Yes, I'll do it this very day." And he did.

At dinner that evening there was some talk of our driving to the moors to join the gentlemen's lunch—a harmless little diversion, of which the ladies availed themselves every day at Garth. And very jolly parties these moor luncheons were. But Miss Macgregor said no.

"You have more need to stop at home, Flora, and learn to mend your manners; you are too young to be lunching with the gentlemen; you are pert enough, in all conscience, without that."

I do not know what came over the woman to speak out so boldly before Macgregor about his own bairn. Flora burst into tears. Fortunately we were at dessert, and could therefore leave the room. I saw that Macgregor's face was very dark as he rose from the table.

"Stay here a minute, Caroline," he said. "I have

something to say to you. And you, Miss Grainger. I wish you to hear what I have to say. I see, Caroline, that Flora and you will never get on, and that there never will be any peace in this house. Peace I must have ; Flora is seventeen, and ought to be able to see to things. It will be better for you to go either to Portmaree or Fort Augustus to live, and that speedily. I'm sick of this, and it cannot be the bairn's fault always."

She looked at him incredulously a moment, with her faint, cold smile.

"Ye are doited, Macgregor. How could a bairn like Flora see after Drum? Ye may be grateful to me that I do not take you at your word."

"You must take me at my word. I mean it. It may be not your fault that you have not a kindly way with bairns. You are cowing all the spirit out of Flora, and I'm not fit to see it. So let there be no more of it. It can be no hardship to you to go to your own house. You have often cast up to me that you stop here as a sacrifice to oblige me, an obligation I have never wanted."

I saw Miss Caroline's anger gradually rising, and when she spoke it was to cast a slight on Flora's mother, which was more than Macgregor could stand.

So the storm rose and raged, the fierce Highland temper of each leaping beyond bounds, and almost terrifying me. I have never seen two persons calling themselves Christians or gentlefolks conducting themselves in such an extraordinary manner ; much less brother and sister, who ought to have been forbearing with each other.

In the middle of it I escaped, for Caroline Macgregor did not spare me, calling me a spy and an instigator of evil, a destroyer of family peace. But words spoken in such fearful passion are not to be considered, and need not much vex anybody's soul, except that of the unfortunate person who utters them.

Next day, in high dudgeon, Miss Macgregor departed with all her gear to her own house of Portmaree, which I was happy to hear was five-and-thirty miles distant from Drum. And from that day to this she has never crossed the threshold of her brother's door. I will not say that the new reign under the untried sceptre of Flora was a success just at first. She made many mistakes, and Miss Caroline's competent management was missed. But all these minor trials were amply atoned for by the peace which from that day took up its abode

in Drum, never more to leave it. It seemed to me that Macgregor became a younger man every day, and his bairn was all in all to him. She was always with him in sport and at work, and I must say that although she was so much in company with gentlemen, I never could see that the girl's sweet, wholesome nature suffered by it. Everybody loved her, and spoke her name with respect and esteem. Macgregor has always said he owed the happiness of his later life entirely to me.

## VIII.

### THE MITE.

I FIRST saw the Mite when she was thirteen. Her name was Agatha Westcott. She was brought to Fleetwood one day, shortly after a term opened, by a middle-aged gentleman, on whose card was written the name, John Westcott, Westcott Manor, near Birmingham. When I saw the two in my little reception-room, I came to the conclusion that they were father and daughter ; but I at once learned that they were only uncle and niece.

“Good afternoon, Miss Grainger,” said Mr. Westcott, bluntly yet pleasantly ; “this is my niece, Agatha. Can you take her in ?”

“Yes,” I replied, “I can. How are you, Agatha ? Am I such an ogre that you won’t look at me ?”

The child smiled a kind of elfish smile, knit her brows, and shrugged her shoulders, but she took no

other notice of my outstretched hand. She was an undersized girl, stunted in growth ; but the thin brown face was full of power, her fine dark eyes glowed with spirit and intelligence. She was not attractive, yet interesting in the extreme.

"Agatha is rather odd," observed Mr. Westcott—indulgently, I thought, for a man who had such a stern cast of face. "Perhaps she could go out into the garden for a little."

"While you talk about me, Uncle John," observed the Mite calmly. "No, I thank you ; I prefer to remain here."

Mr. Westcott smiled again, this time rather apologetically, and looked at me. I opened the French window, and pointed to the group of girls swinging under the trees.

"Wouldn't you like to join them ?" I suggested.

"Not I. I hate girls ; they're so fearfully slow," she replied promptly. "I wanted Uncle John to send me to a mixed school, where there are boys. He says he never heard of such a thing, and I want to know why somebody doesn't catch on to the idea. You do ! you'd get a lot more girls to your place. Say, won't you ?"

I was very much amused, and surprised as well.

"Agatha is a little odd," repeated Mr. Westcott, a trifle helplessly. "Ah, yes, that is better."

I beckoned one of my girls, and, as it happened, it was Kathleen Moran who came.

"Take Agatha with you for a little, Kathleen. She may be a new companion. Come back to us in about half an hour."

I saw that Kathleen was amused by the child's appearance, and she it was, indeed, who christened her "the Mite," a name which remained with her in certain quarters for many a day.

Agatha did not demur, though she looked rather defiantly at Kathleen. But something in my dear girl's bright, sweet face seemed to attract her, and they trotted away together.

"Yes, Miss Grainger, Agatha is a very queer child," observed Mr. Westcott.

"Your niece, Mr. Westcott—your brother's child?"

"Yes, my only brother. There are two children—a boy and a girl. I don't know which is the queerer, nor do I know what I am going to do with them."

"You are not married yourself?"

"No, or the difficulty might have been disposed of. I am a bachelor; but I must do my duty by these

children. The boy Herman is at Clifton, and you will take care of Agatha for a year or two. I shall have time to think what is to be done."

"Are they orphans?"

"Yes; my brother was a musician—a professional musician, I mean. He left a comfortable and luxurious home at an early age to pursue that precarious calling. He had a hankering after a Bohemian life. Our father was an ironmaster, and he never forgave Charlie, though he allowed him a yearly income till his death. Our home was in the Midlands, near Birmingham. Charlie never came back to it after he left. He married a lady who had been on the stage, I believe—a very clever, and, I hear, a good woman. I never saw her. It is hardly to be expected, perhaps, that the children should be—well, like other children."

"There is a great deal in Agatha's face. She is a clever child."

"I should think she is; she is too smart and clever by half. I assure you, her tongue is like a razor. If you can do anything to make her—well, more like other girls, I shall be very grateful. I am, comparatively speaking, a rich man, and I don't mind what I pay."



"Who recommended me to you?" I asked.

"Viscountess Rayne. She has a place not far from us," said Mr. Westcott; and I observed a very curious change in his expression, which I only understood a considerable time after, though I often thought of it. I liked the man exceedingly. He was frank, honest, and true hearted, a little blunt of manner and of speech, and perhaps of disposition a little stern, but a good man, I thought then, and I never had any reason to change my mind. He took the Mite away that day, and she returned a week later, in a slightly rebellious mood, to Fleetwood.

"How prim you look!" she said to me quite flatly, as I met her at the door. "Are you going to cut and carve me into that? Is that what Uncle Westcott wants? It can't be done."

"Would you wish to grow up into a rude-spoken young woman, whose acquaintance no one would seek, Agatha?" I asked pleasantly.

"Oh, I shouldn't mind. There are plenty of jolly people in the world who don't care anything about prunes and prisms. Did Uncle Westcott say how long I was to stop here?"

"No."

"Well, if I don't like it or if you jam me up too much I'll cut and run," observed this precocious creature calmly. "Uncle Westcott's a jolly rich man, but he's never seen life. You should have seen the fun I used to have in our flat when poor mummy was alive. We stopped up to supper every night, and it was twelve mostly ; then mummy's friends came from the theatre, and papa used to play the violin to them. That's the sort of thing Herman and me like, and it's pretty rough on us being shut up like this now."

"I am not going to shut you up, child," I said gently, for really my heart was sore for the world-wise and world-weary atom of humanity looking up at me with her uncanny eyes. Her stunted growth and old-world look were accounted for now, and I felt inwardly perplexed, and even sent a mute message of sympathy to my brother in the profession at Clifton who had undertaken the other one. "There is plenty of room in the house, and plenty of room outside. You can do just as you like after you have conformed to certain rules. My first care must be to get you strong, and try to put some flesh on those poor little bones of yours."

"You needn't talk to me as if I were a mere

child. I am thirteen, and old for my age. Everybody used to tell me so, and Madame Sainton said I should soon make my *début* with her, and here Uncle Westcott has knocked all that on the head."

"Well, we must find out what you know, Agatha," I said. "You wouldn't want to grow up into an ignorant young woman, would you, to whom nobody would care to talk?"

"I don't mind, I am sure. I can play the violin—anyhow, papa always said so; and Signor Frangini, who taught him, said my touch was divine. Shall I be allowed to play on the violin here?"

"Certainly, as much as you like when you have prepared your other lessons. Suppose we see now what you can do with books."

Not very much, I found; she had a smattering of most things, but knew nothing fluently except the violin and the use of her own tongue. Her knowledge of the latter was marvellous. She never held her peace a moment, except under extreme compulsion, and would make remarks aloud in her classes which upset the gravity of every one in the room. No sort of punishment seemed to have any effect on her; she sprang up after it like an elastic ball, and

straightway repeated the offence. Certainly the punishments were of the mildest order, for Fleetwood discipline was never harsh, even to the most refractory, but the Mite seemed really devoid of any moral sense. She was very untruthful, and would not be made to understand the virtue or necessity of truth.

Sometimes I was in despair, and more than once I was on the point of writing to Mr. Westcott, saying I could not continue the charge of his niece. But I never did it. The child interested me. You never knew what she would do or say next. The element of uncertainty in her character exercised a singular fascination over me. I grew really fond of her. She was pretty docile, on the whole. She never refused to do a thing, but simply neglected it, unless it exactly suited her; that anybody should "mind" about anything was a perpetual source of mild wonder to her. She appeared to be fairly happy, and made friends with several of the girls, though she was not by any means a favourite.

Kathleen Moran was her especial chum, and I was glad of it. Kathleen was bright and lovable, but hers was a purposeful, earnest nature, and

having been trained by a good mother her ideas of right and wrong were clearly defined. It was inevitable that her companionship should, through course of time, exert its wholesome influence on the wayward Mite. By degrees she began to drop her slangy manner of speech, though I only reproved her when the words were really objectionable ; I do not believe in nagging, nor in laying down rules too rigidly. But having no one to talk to in the same strain, and hearing little except simple English purely spoken, the Mite gradually laid aside the speech which had been a part of that strange, Bohemian, unwholesome life she had led in a London flat.

She did not go home to her uncle's house at Christmas. but he came to see her, bringing the boy with him. I was extremely interested to behold the brother of whom Agatha talked so incessantly. He was a complete contrast to his sister, being large, and fair, and ruddy, with a good-tempered boyish face and honest blue eyes, just such a boy as you see any day in the playing-fields or on the ice. I saw that the Mite had invested him with a great many attributes he did not possess, and that he was a very ordinary boy, easier to deal with than

most. He was entirely happy at his school, enthusiastic over its pastimes and sports, and bored to death, I could see, by the intense talk of his sister.

They went away out together, and Mr. Westcott turned to me with some concern in his face.

"Well, Miss Grainger, what are you going to make of her? Anything?"

"I hope so," I said bravely, though really at that time I had but little hope. "She is the most extraordinary child I have ever seen."

"A bit uncanny. I confess she completely bewildered me. She doesn't grow much, does she?"

"Not much. Her health makes me rather anxious at times. Her mind is so active, her head filled with so many day-dreams. What a terrible misfortune it has been for a child of such susceptibilities to have had such a training! Imagine these two sitting up to midnight suppers after the theatres closed! It will be difficult to eradicate the effects of that environment, Mr. Westcott."

"The boy's all right. They've vastly improved him at Clifton, and I think he'll turn out well. I had him over the ironworks yesterday, and he displayed quite an intelligent interest in everything,

which practically disposes of his future. It is a great concern, and there is room enough and to spare in it for half a dozen like him. But the girl—it's mothering she wants, Lady Rayne said."

Again I noted that curious look in his face, and an inflection in his voice which puzzled me. I wondered if by any possibility there could have been any love passages between the Midland ironmaster and the Viscountess Rayne.

"I do the best I can for her, Mr. Westcott, and she is not unhappy here. The companionship of her schoolfellows may be her very salvation."

"I am sure it will, and I am sincerely obliged to you, Miss Grainger. I may as well talk about the Easter holidays now I am here. If you have any girls who do not go home at that time, if you could arrange for them to come with Agatha to Westcott Manor, I shall do the best I can for them. Herman will be there with some of his companions, and they might all have a very happy time."

"It is an excellent arrangement. I shall carry out my part of it, Mr. Westcott. Pray look at those two."

He followed my glance across the lawn, where the brother and sister were walking, Agatha with her arm

through her brother's, and looking up earnestly into his face. I had learned to read most expressions of that weary little face, and I saw there at that moment disappointment of the deepest kind. Herman was looking bored, and once while she was speaking he burst into a loud laugh. They came towards the house, and as they passed beneath the window where we were we heard Herman say,—

“Agatha, you do talk a lot of rubbish.”

They came into the room together, and I saw the shadow lying very dark on the child's brow.

“Haven't you anything to say to me, little woman?” said Mr. Westcott, laying his large, kind hand on the Mite's shoulder.

“Nothing, thank you, uncle,” she replied, and I did not like her meek tone. The Mite's boisterous and talkative moods were the most wholesome for her. There was not room in that small body for pent-up feelings of any kind.

“You are quite happy here, I think?” he said, with a certain anxiety which struck me as rather pathetic. He was so anxious to do his duty by the two orphans committed to his care, and so perplexed as to the best way.

“Oh yes, thank you ; it's not a bit like school.



It's as good as any other place," observed the Mite, with characteristic caution. She was very quiet, sitting demurely while we talked. Once I caught her looking intently at her brother, and there was a large, fine sorrow in her eyes, such as might have been directed by a mother towards an erring child.

She bade them both good-bye coolly, and there was an air of resignation in her demeanour towards Herman which rather interested me. After I had seen them off, some other business waited for me, and it was quite an hour before I was at liberty to think of the Mite. She had not been seen for some time, and I found her sitting on her bed in the room she shared with Kathleen. She had her violin in her arms, and was leaning her little face close to it, as if seeking some comfort from it.

"My dear Agatha," I said, "what is the meaning of this?"

"I was only telling my violin that I have nobody else now to comfort me. Herman has deserted me; he has become a horrid ordinary boy."

The extreme emphasis with which the last phrase fell from her lips gave the words new meaning.

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mind at once, and really the pathos of it struck me to the heart. Perhaps she saw my inward feeling in my face, for she looked up at me quite confidently.

"We meant to have a career, Herrnan and I, though we had not quite decided what he was to do. Something on the stage, of course. I should never be anything but a violinist. And now it's all up with the poor violin and me, so far as Herman is concerned. He's horrid : talks of nothing but cricket and football, and about other boys as horrid as himself. He even says he'll go into the ironworks, and be glad to get there, and that Uncle Westcott is a splendid great man. Hard lines on me—don't you think so?"

I saw her firm little mouth quiver, and presently a great sobbing shook her and she could not calm herself. I stayed with her a long time, doing my utmost to soothe her ; but it was no easy task, and from that day a shadow seemed to lie upon the Mite's heart and life.

She remained at Fleetwood two years, and during that time she acquired a great deal of knowledge. She was so quick, I would have kept her back if I could, especially as her health continued to give me

considerable anxiety. During the second year of her stay with us she began to shoot up into tall girlhood, which quite changed her appearance, though her name, "the Mite," still clung to her. In music, of course, she excelled. It was not mere talent, but genius of a very high and rare order; and often I trembled for her future. Her health broke down during the last term, and she had to go home before we broke up. I promised to go and see her during the recess, and I wrote to her in the interval. She seemed to be quite happy in her uncle's home, and spoke of him in a way altogether new in her letters. It seemed as if she were learning to love him. Certainly she was grateful to him with no common gratitude.

"I see things so differently now, dear Miss Grainger," she wrote in one letter. "There are other things in life besides having a career, but I shall tell you when you come. I am counting the days till I see you."

I had not arranged to go to Westcott till late in August; but on account of a letter I received from Mr. Westcott I altered my plans, and went immediately the school was closed. He met me at Birmingham Station with a carriage and pair, which

he explained would take us out to Westcott quicker than the little local train. It was a lovely summer evening, and after driving several miles through depressing wastes of chimney-stacks and great works, we entered an opener country where some green things bloomed. Mr. Westcott spoke very tenderly of the Mite.

"She's an odd little girl, but we've got very fond of her," he said, his stern face softened into a rare gentleness. "I only wish we could keep her with us."

"Is it so bad as that?" I asked, much startled. I had thought her weakness would be easily outgrown, and that strength would only be a matter of time.

"They don't give us much hope," he said soberly. "I have had the best possible skill, a physician from London only on Monday. They can do nothing for her, and say she will slip away before the frosts come."

I could not speak for a moment.

"She has a happy home, Mr. Westcott, and her passing days will be sweetened by love and care," I said at length. "And perhaps it may be better so. I have often pondered on her future. A nature so

highly organised would of necessity suffer acutely. Is her brother at home?"

"Yes, he came only on Saturday. She seems to enjoy his company, but in a curious way—as one would enjoy the companionship of a child. I think Herman greatly improved. I like a boy to be boyish, and it pleases me to see his healthy interest in every boyish pursuit; but I see quite well that he has fallen from the pinnacle on which Agatha had set him."

"And become a horrid ordinary boy who does not desire a career," I said with a slight smile. "That is how Agatha described him to me. Ordinary people, Mr. Westcott, have the best of it in this life. One has to pay a heavy price for the higher gifts."

"I suppose so. The children have done me good. I wish I had had them before. A solitary existence is bad for any one, Miss Grainger, but especially for a man."

"You may yet marry," I suggested, growing more and more interested in the ironmaster.

"It is not likely," he said rather quickly. "I have had the misfortune to care all my life for one woman whom I cannot marry."

I said nothing, but I thought of the curious change

which I had observed on his face on two occasions when he spoke of the Viscountess Rayne. We came shortly to the gates of Westcott Manor, a fine quaint red-brick mansion standing in a noble park, and approached by a magnificent avenue of chestnut trees. Within, the house bore every evidence of wealth and taste. My rooms were spacious and elegantly furnished, and everything had been done for my comfort. After I had refreshed myself a little, I was taken by the maid who waited on me to Agatha's room. It was a large and pleasant chamber, whose windows overlooked the park and the ornamental lake, where two magnificent white swans disported themselves majestically. The sight of the Mite's face gave me a great shock, but I tried to hide it, and to greet her as if nothing had happened and we had parted only yesterday. She was not in bed, but on an invalid couch drawn up to the window, and she extended her hand to me with a sweet smile.

"How nice it is to see you again! Do call me 'the Mite.' Nobody has ever said it since I left Fleetwood."

"My poor little Mite," I said, as I stooped to kiss her forehead, in which every blue vein could be traced distinctly.



"How are Kathleen, and Florrie, and little Sybil, and all the rest?"

"All well, dear; all gone home."

"It is so good of you to come. Has Uncle John told you I am not to get well?"

"He has said something, but life always holds hope, my dear," I said, struggling with my tears; for somehow the sight of the young, frail creature lying there, so calmly talking of death moved me. She was the first pupil I was to lose, and I felt it most keenly.

"I shall not get better, and I don't mind. I think on the whole it is better than having a career, don't you?"

"We are told so, dear one, but the human part of us clings to life."

"Not after it has got weary lying still. I don't in the least mind going, and, as you know, dear Miss Grainger, I have got to believe that my career is only beginning—perhaps."

"It is the mercy and love of God which gives you such blessed hope, my Mite," I said tenderly, so filled with wonder and thankfulness that I could not express myself in adequate words.

Agatha nodded, and her great eyes followed the

movements of the chestnut trees as their branches swayed to and fro in the gentle wind.

"Herman is here, did you know?" she said suddenly.

"Your uncle told me."

"He is quite a nice boy, and I think he will be a comfort to Uncle John. I don't think, if I were a man, I should choose to be an iron-master, and to go every day to those terrible works where the black smoke pours out of the chimneys as out of a burning pit. Don't you wonder to hear me say I am glad Herman will be a comfort to Uncle John?"

"Indeed I do."

"I didn't use to like Uncle John—that is, I never thought about him. He was beneath me," said the Mite, with a queer, silent laugh. "Now I know it is possible to be an ironmaster and a king. Uncle John is both."

She spoke with an enthusiasm and a passionate tenderness it is not possible for me to depict in words. I saw that Mr. Westcott, whatever he might be to others, had won the whole heart of this poor orphan child. She simply worshipped him; she could talk of nothing else.

"Do you think Uncle John is quite happy, Miss Grainger?" she said next.

"I have seen a shadow on his face, dear, but I am sure he never suffers it to darken the hearts of others."

"Oh no! but it is there. I have seen it many times. There are two things I want you to do for me which nobody else can do, Miss Grainger, and that is why I hurried Uncle John to write to you, though I did want to see you badly too."

"What are they?"

"One is to bury my violin with me."

"Oh, Agatha!" I cried, inexpressibly shocked—not at the request, but at the child's familiarity with everything pertaining to the end. She had, beyond a doubt, thought out every detail.

"I do. I love the old thing. Uncle John says if only I'll get well he'll hunt the length and breadth of the Continent to get me a real Strad, but it would never be half so dear to me as the old one, and I want to take it with me."

"If it is necessary it shall be done," I promised mournfully. "And what is the other thing?"

"I want to see Lady Rayne most particularly, all by myself. She has been here twice to ask for

me, but I have never seen her by herself. I have something very particular to say to her ; and please I want her to come while Uncle John is at the works—in the morning, before lunch, if she can.”

“Do you wish me to write to her?”

“No, please ; you could go to-morrow, after Uncle John goes to town. It is not far, and you can take my carriage. Will you?”

“I certainly will, dearest, and anything else you wish me to do.”

She was tired then, I could see, and her attendant came in to see that she had some stimulant. I left her by-and-by, hoping she would get a little sleep, and my heart was very sore as I sat in my own room pondering anew the great mystery of life and death. Dinner was a pleasant, sociable meal, Herman enlivening us with his happy talk. I liked the boy exceedingly, and I saw that he, too, adored his uncle, and that the relations between them were of the happiest kind. I felt at home in the house, and every hour increased my respect and honour for its head. He did not say very much about the Mite, though I saw his heart was full of her. I prayed that night that if it were God's will He would spare the dear young life which was so

precious to the house—spare it to be a comfort and a blessing to the heart and home of a lonely man. Next morning, after Mr. Westcott had driven off in his brougham to the works, I was taken in Agatha's pony-carriage to Rayner Place, the house of the Viscountess Rayne.

She received me at once, a gracious and lovely woman nearing middle life, yet wearing her years so lightly that she might have passed for thirty.

"I have heard of you often and often, Miss Grainger," she said cordially, "from my old friends the Mallories, and also from Lady Garthland, who is my cousin, so we ought to be friendly. And how is that poor little girl at Westcott? How pleased she will be to have you!"

"I think she is. I have a message from her, Lady Rayne. She wishes particularly to see you. She says she has something important to say to you."

"Poor little lamb! Could you take me now? It would save time, and I could walk back, or tell them to send a carriage after me to fetch me," she said at once.

We were back at Westcott Manor before noon, and I saw a look of deep satisfaction on the Mite's

face when Lady Rayne entered the room. She cast a look of quick gratitude on me, and I stroked back the hair from her brow.

"Lady Rayne will not let you tire yourself too much with talking," I said, and left them together, wondering a little what could be the important matter the child had to speak of to a great lady whom she knew so slightly. It was nearly an hour afterwards when I heard the door open, and I ran out of the drawing-room to meet her coming down. I saw that she had been weeping, and there was on her face a steadfast radiance beautiful to behold.

"I have remained a long time, Miss Grainger, but not too long," she said, and she laid her hand in mine, and I felt it tremble. "Agatha is all right. I do not think she is unduly tired."

"You will remain to luncheon, Lady Rayne. It will be served almost immediately. Besides, your carriage has not come."

I saw a delicate flush rise to the sweet, high-bred face, and she seemed to hesitate. As we reached the drawing-room some one came in the hall door, and we heard Mr. Westcott's voice. The flush deepened in Lady Rayne's face, and she looked at me with a strange imploring look.

"I did not know Mr. Westcott would be home now. I wish I had not stayed so long," she said, as shyly as any schoolgirl; but almost directly, as his firm foot sounded on the stairs, her composure returned, and she was able to meet him with the sweet, gracious repose of manner which was one of the most beautiful things about her. As for him, in her presence he was conscious of nothing else.

I slipped away up to the Mite, leaving them together, and before I entered Agatha's room I heard the closing of the drawing-room door. The Mite was lying upon her couch smiling, and the colour was high in her cheeks.

"My ears are sharpened, Miss Grainger. That is Uncle John come home to lunch, and now he is talking to Lady Rayne, and everything will come right. I have asked God that it may, and now it is coming just at once. Oh, I do love to see people happy. It is better than having a career."

I laid my head down on the cushion beside her, and made no attempt to speak. They had told me nothing, but it was all as plain as day before me. John Westcott had loved the lady of Rayner Place all his life, and she him, maybe, and the Mite was doing her utmost ere her passing to join these

divided lives. A mute prayer went out from my heart, as I lay beside her silently, that the child might have her heart's desire that very day. And she had.

The luncheon bell rang, but no one heeded it. I stayed by Agatha, waiting upon her while she ate her light refreshment, and at last we heard them come. Mr. Westcott opened the door and brought her in, the woman he had loved so faithfully and long, and whose heart was now his, absolutely his. It was written on his face and on hers, which absolutely shone.

I rose to go, but they would not let me. Lady Rayne knelt down by the Mite's couch and hid her face, and Agatha looked up at her uncle agitatedly with an imploring eagerness almost painful to behold.

"It is all right, isn't it, Uncle John?"

"All right, my darling, thank God," he said huskily, and the tears were in his eyes. I felt that I ought to go, and they let me slip away. For with that little scene, sympathetic and interested though she might be, no stranger ought to intermeddle.

I heard the whole story long after—how John Westcott had loved her before her marriage to the



Viscount Rayne. It was the old story of high lineage and family pride barring the way ; and though she had been a widow and her own mistress for many years, somehow the old barrier had never been swept away. It was left for the frail hands of the Mite to break it down ; it was her last work on earth, and, as she said, it was better than having a career. They had waited long, and happiness had been so nearly lost to them for ever that they yielded to the Mite's most earnest desire and were married before she died. It was the talk of a whole county, but they cared nothing, and it was the white, gentle hands of Uncle John's wife that smoothed the Mite's dying pillow, her voice that whispered the last words of hope and peace. And though that happened many years ago, the Mite is not forgotten. Her monument is the deep peace and happiness of that truly perfect home to which I am privileged to come from time to time, because I am the only one who knows that they owe it entirely to the wise, womanly, far-seeing child whom we called "The Mite."

## IX.

### A HARD CASE.

I REMEMBER when I read "Dombey and Son" I thought the character of Mr. Dombey impossible, and his cruel and selfish treatment of his daughter so exaggerated and unreal as to be very painful reading. But there came under my observation, soon after I became principal of Fleetwood, a case so similar in many points, that it made me very careful in my criticisms afterwards. For it proved to me that the great novelist knew human nature and the facts of human life a great deal more accurately than I did then, though experience has taught me as the years rolled on, and now I could draw from the storehouse of my memory many facts stranger than any fiction I have ever read.

My first introduction to Lucy Cray and those belonging to her was made by a somewhat lengthy

correspondence which took place between her father and myself before I saw him. The letters were written from an address in that busy part of London adjacent to the Mansion House and the Bank—the business address of a house well known and very influential in the commercial world. They were written to dictation, but signed in a somewhat cramped, peculiar hand by Waldon Cray. The name was not common, and there was something in the letters which rather interested me.

To begin with, Mr. Waldon Cray objected to my terms, and asked me to reduce them. I wrote back politely saying that was impossible, and hinting as delicately as I could that, as my fees were stated plainly in my prospectus (which he said he had seen before he wrote), he need not have written unless prepared to give the terms, which were certainly no higher than those of any first-class establishment. And I claimed Fleetwood to be first class if anything at all. Then he wrote and asked me to come to his office and discuss the matter, which I declined to do. Then there was a lull in the correspondence, which ended in my having a visit from Mr. Waldon Cray.

When I saw him I thought of Mr. Dombey, and

I have often said that surely Dickens must have known my Waldon Cray before he gave that admirable picture of the purse-prond magnate to the world. He was tall and spare, certainly the most meagre-looking person I had ever seen, and yet he had a certain dignity of mien which strangely impressed me; and his eyes had a lightning glance which I could well imagine would strike terror into the souls of any who had earned his displeasure.

He bade me good-morning gruffly, and I felt that he was taking me in, if I may use the expression, from top to toe.

"I have come here at great personal inconvenience, very great indeed," he said with emphasis, "to try whether we cannot come to terms about my daughter. I have said that I consider your terms exorbitant, Miss Grainger."

"If you think them so, you are under no obligation to consider them, Mr. Cray; there are less expensive schools than Fleetwood," I replied, showing that I was nettled at the question being re-opened after I had declined it by letter.

"But I am anxious to have my daughter here. My partner's wife, Lady Vine, has highly recommended you to me. She says your discipline is

excellent; and I regret to say that it is discipline I require for my daughter Lucy."

I bowed, not saying what I thought, that Mr. Cray's idea of discipline and mine were likely to be as opposite as the poles.

"She is a very headstrong and unmanageable girl. It is a great misfortune at any time to have a daughter, but to have one like mine is a positive trial," said Mr. Cray grimly. "Without entering into any domestic particulars, I think it wise to mention that she has hitherto been the sole companion of her mother, who, admirable in some respects, and prudent, as women go, is totally unfitted to rear a child like ours. Fortunately, we have only one. Had that one been a boy, I should have been a happier man than I am. As it is, I suppose it is my duty to be resigned."

"Few fathers take that view of an only daughter, sir," I said, wondering what kind of terrible child this must be who had inspired such feelings in the mind of her father.

"I look to you, when I pay you this very high fee—I must repeat that I consider it exorbitant—I look to you to change and mould her into a different creature, into all a woman should be."

I heard this large order with alarm, and I thought I had better safeguard myself.

"Perhaps you will give me some more explicit directions, Mr. Cray; what is your idea of all a woman should be?"

"It should be unnecessary to instruct you, madam; but I shall expect her to return home docile and obedient, grateful for the blessings of a good home and an independence she has never earned. At present, I regret to say, she exhibits none of these qualities."

"How old is she?"

"Fourteen; and hitherto she has been taught at home by a daily governess, supposed to be superintended by her mother. At first, at least, I should consider it better that she should not come too often home. Do you ever keep pupils here during the Christmas holidays?"

"Sometimes; but only those whose homes are too far distant to make it worth while for them to leave. In your daughter's case it would be quite unusual."

"Well, that can be arranged afterwards. One condition I must make, that she shall not carry on a perpetual correspondence with her mother; it would

be injurious and unwise for both ; and if discipline is to be maintained, and the change wrought in her character which I desire, she must be cut off from the associations which have hitherto influenced her."

"Would not that be hard upon her mother?" I ventured to suggest.

Mr. Cray replied by a frown, but took no further notice of that bold remark. After some further talk he took his leave, having arranged that his daughter should come to Fleetwood on the first day of the new term. During the next few days I had a great deal to occupy my time and attention, and did not think of Lucy Cray apart from the other new pupils I expected. She arrived in company with her father about eleven o'clock in the morning, and was, in fact, the first of the new arrivals.

I felt much interested when I went down to receive them, all the particulars of my interview with Mr. Cray returning to my mind with much vividness. Mr. Cray was standing at one end of the room when I entered, his daughter at the other, gazing out of the window. She did not move at all when I entered. I observed that she was tall for her age, and very well dressed. "Lucy, turn

round at once and talk to Miss Grainger," Mr. Cray said harshly, and she turned round with an air of nonchalant defiance which I might have resented in another, but I felt nothing but pity for the unwelcomed and unloved daughter of Mr. Waldon Cray.

"How do you do, my dear? I am glad to see you. I hope you will be happy here," I said; and the speech I made to every new pupil was invested with more than usual warmth of feeling. She did not speak, but she looked me all over with large, serious, penetrating eyes, and I saw the hardness fade out of her face. It was a singularly handsome and striking face; in five years Lucy Cray would be a fine and distinguished-looking woman. We are accustomed to invest the name of Lucy with the meeker attributes of the feminine character, but there was nothing very meek in the appearance of this Lucy. I decided as I looked at her that she possessed a good deal of her father's nature. The interview was short, strained, and unsatisfactory. Lucy, in the presence of her father, altogether declined to speak, and took no notice of his repeated commands. I saw that there was so much antagonism between them that it was better that they



should be apart for a time. I hoped in the months she would be under my care to set before her a high ideal of a daughter's duty, though I confess that Mr. Cray did not look a very promising subject to help any one to live up to it. I left Lucy in the room while I went downstairs with her father. In the hall he turned to me significantly.

"You see how obstinate she is, that I have not exaggerated her. Something must be done to tame her. Do you think the task will be beyond you?"

"I shall be able to tell you in six months, Mr. Cray. I cannot say anything now."

"Well, I'm glad to get her off my hands. Her mother made a fine scene this morning, and I had to be very decided."

"I hope you have not finally decided to allow no letters to pass between Lucy and her mother, Mr. Cray. I could not approve of that."

"You know nothing about it, madam. In the meantime I absolutely forbid it. Lucy has defied my authority, and she must be punished for it."

"But it is not Lucy alone who is to be considered," I pleaded; but he only shrugged his shoulders and went out. I thought him positively the most disagreeable and unlovable person it had ever been

my lot to meet. I went back to Lucy, and found her watching her father walking down the avenue.

"Did he say how long I was to stop here?" she asked abruptly.

Certainly her manners were bad, and she would need a considerable amount of training. I could see that.

"No ; nothing has been said ; but I trust you are not going to look upon this as a gaol, Lucy, or me as a taskmistress."

"Oh no," she replied carelessly. "I think you are very nice. I was quite surprised, I must say, when I saw you. I can't think what papa meant by sending me here. I don't believe you'll break me in, as you are expected to do."

I was not accustomed to this style of address from pupils, new or old, and I felt inclined to rebuke her rather sharply ; but recollecting the whole circumstances of the case I forbore.

"Are there any girls here with no fathers?" she asked presently.

"One or two. Why do you ask?"

"Oh, because I don't want to know them. I shall envy them so horribly. I hate mine. I sometimes pray that he may die," she said in the

most matter-of-fact voice. "But of course mamma will die first. In life it is always so. Nice people die; horrid ones live on for ever. I can't think, really, why any of us are born."

This sort of philosophising was not to my mind, so I suggested that we should go up and see the room she was to share with a fellow-pupil. I was already casting about in my mind which of my girls I should inflict her upon, and which would be most likely to exert a beneficial influence upon her. I did not dislike her. There was something in the straight glance of her eye which appealed to my heart. I felt sure she was honest, straightforward, and that she would be amenable to the rule of love. I was quite right in my surmise. During the three years Lucy Cray remained with me I never had the smallest trouble with her, nor had I occasion to find any grave fault with her. She was not particularly intellectual or fond of study, but she did her school-work with a fair amount of intelligence and success, and excelled rather in the branches of tuition which are supposed to be more successfully studied by boys. Had she been a boy, she would have been suited to commercial life. About a week later she came to my room one

day in the lunch hour, and she had a letter in her hand. I thought she looked a little nervous and ashamed, but she came straight to the point at once.

"Miss Grainger, did papa say anything about pocket-money? I want to post this letter to mamma, and I have not a penny even to pay for a stamp."

"Come in, dear, and shut the door," I said quite gently, glad to have this opportunity of a little talk with her. She did so, and stood before me with that air of independence and self-reliance which always struck me when I looked at her. "Your papa said that he preferred you should not write to your mother, Lucy. I am afraid we must obey him, and try to believe that he acts from the best motive."

"He doesn't," she replied quickly, and her colour rose. "It is only because he thinks it will make us more miserable. I will write to her, Miss Grainger, and send it without a stamp, if you won't give me one."

I turned to my desk and took up a letter which had come to me only that morning.

"He did not forbid me to write, dear Lucy, and

I have written twice to your mother since you came. This is the answer I have had from her to-day. There is a message for you in it. Yes, you may read it."

She drew a quick breath, almost like a sob; and her hand trembled as she took the letter from me. She read it through to the end, and returned it to me without a word, but I did not misunderstand her silence.

"You see that your dear mother is well, Lucy," I said, "and that she thinks with me that in the meantime you had better not write. I can send her a few lines every week, and no doubt she will reply. Perhaps for a little while that will do."

I saw that she was struggling hard with repressed feeling, and I felt very sorry for her.

"Miss Grainger, can you tell me why papa is so unreasonable and hard? He seems to hate us. He is never happy except when we are miserable."

"Hush, dear; don't exaggerate. Your father thinks you have been undutiful and rebellious. Perhaps if you try to show him you respect his wishes, he will change towards you."

"If to resent his unkindness to my mother is to be undutiful, then I am, and I shall never be any

better. She has told me he never loved her, nor she him ; that she married him for a home. He wished for a son to succeed to the business, and when I was born, he was so angry, he never spoke for days."

I did not know what to say. Mrs. Cray had been unwise enough, evidently, to make a confidante of her young daughter, talking to her of things which she could scarcely comprehend or discern. And yet Lucy was very womanly for her years. She looked more like seventeen than fourteen at that moment, as she stood before me.

"He thinks we are in league against him, and we are," she said bitterly. "When I am a woman, and can earn bread for my mother to eat, I shall take her away from that prison. We look forward to that."

It was a very painful case, and though I talked as hopefully as I could to her, I was really much perplexed as to how to deal with her. She listened respectfully to what I had to say, and there was no doubt that she was grateful for my sympathy ; but I felt that I was very powerless to cope with all the pent-up feelings of that undisciplined young heart.

For the next few weeks she was outwardly content. I wrote regularly to Mrs. Cray, and received her replies in due course. I could not gather from her letters what kind of a woman she was. They were absolutely commonplace. Her father only wrote as the Christmas holidays drew near, enclosing his cheque and repeating his desire that she should remain at Fleetwood till the school reopened. In this also she acquiesced silently. Often I thought about her, and wondered what was in her mind. She was a general favourite with her companions, being helpful and unselfish. But I noticed that she preferred the society of her juniors, and would play for hours with the children in the school. So matters went on until March, when I received a letter from Mrs. Cray begging me to come up and see her, as she was very ill, and had a good deal to say to me. I was much surprised and interested; and I went that very day. The Crays lived in Wimpole Street, in one of the smaller houses, which was certainly very dull inside. I arrived there about lunch-time, and found that I was expected, and that a meal had been laid for me in the dining-room. Everything was well arranged and handsome; the room looked as if

it had been a family room for generations ; there was fine plate on the table, and I was waited on by a man-servant of unimpeachable appearance. Evidently wealth was not lacking in the home of the Crays. When I had finished my lunch Mrs. Cray's maid came to me. She was an elderly woman, rather hard-featured and brusque-mannered, but I did not dislike her.

"My mistress will see you presently, ma'am. I hope Miss Lucy is well?"

"She is quite well. Is Mrs. Cray so seriously ill as her letter led me to believe?"

"Yes, she's ill, very ill indeed, poor thing."

"Perhaps I ought to have brought Lucy with me?"

"I hoped you would. Oh, ma'am, will you say a word to my master before you go? You look like a good woman, and he'd take it from you, when the like of us dare not speak. My mistress is fretting herself into the grave for Miss Lucy, and she ought to come home."

"What does the doctor say?"

"Oh, he's in league with master. I've served the Crays for forty year an' more, an' I was housekeeper here when master married. She



was but a poor girl, a daily governess, and he married her for her looks, an' to have a son to come after him. There never was any love, an' after Miss Lucy was born, master he quite changed, as if his disappointment had eat into him, an' he's often said to me he'd have stopped a bachelor had he known. Of course it's not for the likes of me to speak up to him, but I have spoke out sometimes as to what I thought his duty, an' got threatened wi' my notice for my pains. Not that I'd take it unless drove to it, havin' been in the family, as I said, over forty years."

"Does Mr. Cray know I am here to-day?"

"Yes, I told him myself, and I think he'll come 'ome on purpose to see you."

"Well, then, can I see Mrs. Cray first?"

"Yes, ma'am, now, if you please."

I felt that I was placed in a very odd position, but it had been my lot to take part in some strange family histories, and I asked God as I walked upstairs that if He had anything for me to do in this house He would set the way plainly before my eyes. Mrs. Cray was lying in a comfortable and luxurious room, and her eyes turned eagerly to the door as we entered. I was astonished at her youthful

appearance. She was very fair, and looked more like Lucy's sister than her mother. Her face was pretty still, but it was weak and characterless. I could easily understand how a man of Mr. Cray's temperament had completely cowed her.

"It is very good of you to come," she said with a gentle, feeble smile. "Is Lucy well?"

"Yes; I think I ought to have brought her with me."

"Not to-day. I wanted to see you alone. Perhaps, if you see Mr. Cray, you will ask him to let her come to-morrow. I don't think I shall see the week out, and I don't want to live."

"Not even for Lucy's sake?" I said softly.

She shook her fair head sadly.

"No; Lucy must fight her own battle now. Perhaps you will help her; she will need a friend after I am gone—some one to stand between her and her father."

I looked round uneasily, to see the maid standing in the window.

"Oh, it's only Holford. She knows everything. She's on our side," she said quietly. "Now tell me about Lucy. How do you find her?"

"Most exemplary," I said warmly.

"I knew you would. She is a dear, good girl; it is only to her father she shows temper. There will be a great battle some day, Miss Grainger, and Lucy will come off victor, but I shall not be there to see."

"Does Mr. Cray know you are so ill?"

"He doesn't believe it. The doctor says I am getting well. I shall die this week. One knows one's own strength. I began to fail after Lucy left. I had no one; and when he would not let her come home at Christmas I lost heart."

My eyes filled with tears, and I laid my hand on hers. She had paid dearly for the good things of life she had sought to obtain by giving her hand without her heart. Yet she looked a sweet, amiable person, who would make home happy for those she loved. Destiny had been hard indeed upon poor Annabel Cray. We talked a little longer, she without restraint telling me the whole story of Lucy's birth and her father's keen and bitter disappointment, which he had visited on them. I felt hard against him as I listened, and my tongue was sharpened with plain speech when the man-servant came up and told me Mr. Cray was below waiting for me.

He received me in the drawing-room, and bowed to me formally.

"You have seen Mrs. Cray. She imagines herself seriously ill. What do you think?"

"Sir, she is dying," I replied. "I have seen death on many faces. His seal is on hers."

He started.

"Oh, nonsense; it's put on to frighten me. She has had the best advice in London; my friend Clarkson, of Wigmore Street, one of the first men of the day, says he can find no trace of disease in her whole system. He saw her only a few days ago."

"Doctor Clarkson knows as well as I do that there are things that kill other than disease. Mrs. Cray's heart is breaking for her daughter. She ought to have come home at Christmas, in fact, she ought never to have gone away."

He frowned heavily.

"It was impossible that she could remain. Something had to be done. She defied me in my own house. No man could stand that from a chit of a girl."

I did not speak, and he looked at me keenly.

"I do not know why I should suffer this inter-

ference from a stranger ; but will you tell me what is the meaning of that look on your face ? It implies heavy blame of me."

I asked God for courage, and opened my lips.

"Mr. Cray, you brought your daughter to me with many complaints. You told me she was rude, defiant, unmanageable. I have had her six months, and I have never had a better pupil. She is diligent, obedient, lovable. If she is a trifle headstrong, an appeal to her better self never fails. Her mother bears the same testimony. She is a child of whose beauty and ability any man might be proud. She could make this home the bright and happy place it ought to be. Give her a chance. Let the child's heart turn to you, as it would if you would let it. Harsh rule has failed, let love prevail."

I had seldom made such a long speech, and I marvelled at my own temerity. He received it very well, though without much comment.

"You are not afraid to speak. I will think of what you say. Could I trouble you to bring Lucy here to-morrow ?"

I hesitated, for the claims upon me were very many. But the case so interested me that I could not refuse.

"Do you particularly wish me to come? I could send her with a proper escort."

"I wish you to come," he said, with the air of a man who was accustomed to instant obedience. I felt myself dismissed, and left the house pondering upon its inmates all the way home. I prepared Lucy as well as I could for the sad change in her mother, and I also begged her to be gentle with her father, who I thought had more feeling than we gave him credit for. The man's eyes had been opened for the first time in his life.

Travelling by the same train, we arrived at Wimpole Street about one o'clock; and Lucy sprang out of the hansom almost before it stopped, through the open door of the house, and up the stairs to her mother's room, passing her father as he came from the dining-room without so much as a look. Mr. Cray looked haggard and worn, as if he had not slept. I thought he seemed relieved to see me, and he gripped my hand in quite a friendly way.

"You were quite right about my poor wife. Clarkson came yesterday after you left, and was appalled by the change for the worse; he says nothing can save her. I want to know what women

mean, what they are made of, that they die off like that, of no disease, and with no reason."

He spoke savagely. I saw that remorse, cruel and relentless, held him in thrall, and I felt glad of it.

"I can't explain it, only I know that it is so. When you are tempted to be harsh to your little daughter, Mr. Cray, you will remember that she is a woman, with the same quick feelings as her mother," I said; and somehow I felt sorry for the man who had allowed his selfish disappointment so to sour him that he cut the sunshine away from all who came within his reach.

"My marriage was a mistake, Miss Grainger, and I have sometimes regretted it," he said, with astonishing frankness. "But I did my duty as I knew how by Mrs. Cray. She was not my equal; I took her from a poor home, and she never rose to her position. She kept me down when I wanted to rise, and when this child was a daughter my disappointment was complete. I daresay I was soured, that I might have bettered the matter, but there it is. I gave her everything that money could buy; but perhaps I ought to have done more."

He was trying to justify himself, but it was a miserable attempt. I listened to it in silence.

"Money cannot confer happiness," I said at length. "It is one of the blessings free to rich and poor alike."

Mrs. Cray died that afternoon, and at eight o'clock, as I was preparing to go, Lucy came down to the dining-room dressed in her out-door things. Her father was in the room; he looked at her strangely, and I saw his mouth tremble. She never suffered her eyes to alight upon him.

"Holford told me you were ready to go. I hope I have not kept you waiting," she said.

"But, my dear, it is impossible that you can go with me. Your place is here."

"It is impossible I can stay here. Mamma does not need me," she replied quite quietly. "You have often said I had a pleasant way with the little ones. I will teach them, or work for you in any way, do anything you wish, only take me with you."

I rose up, looking at Mr. Cray. The crisis had come. An unspoken prayer filled my heart.

"You must stay here, Lucy," he said. "For a time at least."



She lifted her sad eyes to his face calmly, as one might have looked on a stranger's face.

"I will not stay here," she replied. "Will you take me back, Miss Grainger? I have no home but only with you."

A deep groan came from Mr. Cray's lips; he turned away his head, drooped it on his folded arms; and so we stood.

"Lucy," I said falteringly, "your place is with him, with your father. Go to him," I whispered eagerly. "It will be different. He is a crushed and miserable man. Your place is by his side."

She did not look at him, only shook her head. Then he turned to us, and the look upon his face remains in my memory still.

"She is right, madam," he said with difficulty. "Take her away. Perhaps later on she may come. The hand of God is heavy on me this day. Take her away."

She looked at him then, and I saw her wince.

"Come, then, Lucy, if you will," I said, and went towards the door, she following me to the outer hall; the attentive man-servant waiting, as he thought, to show me to the carriage, which had waited some time. In our haste we left the dining-

room door open, and looking back, we saw Mr. Cray sitting at the table with his head buried in his hands. I glanced at Lucy, and saw that she had seen him too. She hesitated a moment on the threshold, looking back. Then she spoke.

"Perhaps I had better stay," she said ; and then as if she had lost control of herself, she ran back to the dining-room and shut the door.

I went out to the carriage, and my tears fell as I took my seat. And my thoughts were in that sombre family room where father and daughter were together, and I prayed that all might be well. And it was ; but the road these two had to travel together was new and untried, and another day I must give you a short account of their pilgrimage upon it, and of the difficulties and trials and doubts which beset them on the way.

## X.

### HOW IT ENDED.

FROM time to time I heard from Lucy Cray, and the second Christmas after she left Fleetwood I was asked to spend with them in town. I accepted the invitation with interest and pleasure, because I was truly anxious to see how father and daughter got on together. Their story, so far as I knew it, had interested me beyond measure. I arrived at King's Cross in the afternoon of the day before Christmas, and Lucy met me on the platform. She had grown, and was very womanly and staid, looking older than her years. She greeted me affectionately, and led me out to a very well-appointed brougham, at the door of which stood a footman in chocolate livery, and wearing one of those immense fur capes which always appear to me to give men-

servants a top-heavy appearance, though no doubt they have need of them.

"Tell me how dear Fleetwood is, and Kathleen, and little Sybil, and all the rest," she said, her face lighting up as she asked these questions.

"I have lost Kathleen, dear. Didn't I tell you I had been to Ireland this year to see her at Killoe?"

"No; have you? How delightful! Tell me how she is."

"She is very well, the dear girl, and doing a splendid work in the world." I said warmly.

"Is she? How? Tell me about it."

I told her in a few words the story you already know, and she listened with a most breathless interest.

"Fancy Kathleen doing so nobly! How happy she must be to think she has been of so much use in the world."

"She is very happy, dear, but others have done as well," I said, looking at her keenly. "You, for instance. I think you are making a happy home for yourself and your father."

A kind of wistful and troubled look came on her face—a look I did not like; it made her seem so old and sad.

"Do you think so? I am not at all sure; but I will not speak of it now. You will see for yourself. We have a few friends coming to dinner to-night, only papa's partner and his wife, and Alderman Wynne with his wife, who is the sister of an earl. Are we not very grand?"

"Rather; and does this not worry or fret you, Lucy, lest everything should not go right?"

"Oh no; that sort of thing doesn't trouble me at all. You see, we have had our servants a long time, and they know everything that is required. I have simply to order. I do the flowers myself, but that is nothing but a delight, and papa does not care what I spend; so of course it is very easy."

"How is he?"

"Papa, do you mean? Oh, quite well; but he is not quite pleased with me just now. I will tell you why afterwards, if you do not find it out for yourself to-night."

"But you have been getting on nicely hitherto?"

"Oh yes; I do my best, and so does papa; but, you see, we began as strangers, and it takes a long time."

I thought these words most pathetic; they touched me to the heart.

"He is very, very good to me—good and kind. If money would make me happy, I should be the happiest girl in London," she said quickly. "And he is very proud of me, too, though I don't know why."

I knew, though I said nothing. She was fast fulfilling the promise of her girlhood, and developing into a beautiful and queenly woman. Her manner, however, was listless, and her expression lacked vivacity, but her features and carriage were perfect.

"It seems queer to speak of papa being proud of me, doesn't it? but he is. He has quite forgiven me, I assure you, for not being a boy."

She smiled brightly as she said these words, and the momentary light made a wonderful change in her face.

"We look at things from a different standpoint, and I think always will. Papa is very ambitious. If I had been a boy he would have made me a politician, and expected me to marry into the peerage at least. As it is, he has his views."

I detected in her last words a certain bitterness,

which suggested a good deal to my mind. But presently we arrived at the house in Wimpole Street, and Lucy took me at once to my room. It happened to be the same room in which I had last seen Mrs. Cray, and though it had been newly furnished and looked entirely different, that scene rose up vividly before my mind. I saw that Lucy thought of it too, and that she was a good deal agitated, but neither of us made any allusion to the past.

“Holford will bring you tea. Yes, she is here still, and she adores you. She begged to be allowed to wait upon you while you are here ; and then you shall not be disturbed till the dressing-bell rings. We dine at half-past seven. It is so nice to have you here. You make me feel ever so strong and brave.”

I did not like these words, and I saw that something was troubling the child.

Holford came to me presently, and was inclined to be talkative, but I did not encourage her very much. I had a little sleep before the dressing-bell rang, and felt very fresh and well, and ready to enjoy my evening. Lucy came back before I was quite ready. I could have cried out when I saw her, she looked so beautiful and so striking. Her dress was

plain white satin of the richest make, and she had a great bunch of vivid scarlet berries in the bodice, which was cut low and showed a neck which shamed the satin in its whiteness. Dress makes a wonderful difference, and I have often observed that quite plain women assume a distinguished and elegant appearance in their evening dress. Certainly in hers Lucy Cray looked like a young queen, though my first glimpse of her at King's Cross had made me think her a trifle disappointing and uninteresting.

"I don't think I mentioned all our guests, after all, Miss Grainger," she said as she entered. "We are ten in all. My aunt, Mrs. Danford, and Mr. Jervis Wynne, the son of Alderman Wynne, and Mr. Cardrew."

I was fastening my laces with the diamond star which was one of my pupils' gifts, and through the long mirror I could see Lucy's face; and though I said nothing, I made a mental note regarding Mr. Cardrew.

"Quite a large party, Lucy dear," I said cheerfully. "And I shall much enjoy seeing you play the rôle of hostess."

"Oh, I don't do anything. Papa entertains. He really talks splendidly. Well, if you are ready



we might go down. I know papa is in the drawing-room now, and he would like to see you before the people come."

I took my gloves in my hand, and we went downstairs. I had not been in the drawing-room before, and was astonished to find it such a spacious and elegant room. Mr. Cray, looking very handsome in his evening clothes, came forward to receive me with great cordiality, and made me feel at once that I was welcome to his house. Our talk was commonplace, and the few minutes before the arrival of the guests passed quickly. They came punctually upon the heels of each other, and dinner was announced five minutes after the half-hour.

Lucy had explained to me, with a word of apology, that her father would take in Lady Laura Wynne; but as I sat on his other side and had for my partner Mr. Cardrew, I had no reason to complain. Mr. Cardrew was a man about eight-and-twenty, and his appearance impressed me favourably, though he could not be called handsome. His face was strong rather than fine, and there was a great deal of very decided character in the square jaw and expressive mouth. His eyes were very fine, however, and his smile pleasant to behold. He talked

remarkably well, and our end of the table was very lively, though Lady Laura was certainly the most uninteresting earl's daughter it had ever been my lot to meet. Mr. Cray was scrupulously attentive to her, but he was interested in our conversation, and joined in it a good deal. Using my powers of observation still further, I detected a kind of unexpressed antagonism between my host and Mr. Cardrew, and I also observed that Mr. Cardrew's quiet eyes very often wandered to the other end of the table, where Lucy sat between the Alderman and her father's partner like a young queen. The dinner was absolutely perfect in every detail, and not being unduly prolonged, was much enjoyed, by me at least. I must not forget to say here that Mr. Jervis Wynne struck me as being almost as uninteresting as his mother. He was not bad-looking, but dressed in the extreme of fashion, and wore a single eye-glass, which always, to my thinking, gives a young man a vain look. He also had many looks towards Lucy, while doing his best to entertain her aunt, Mrs. Danford.

Upstairs, before the gentlemen joined us, I had an extremely pleasant chat with Mrs. Danford, who struck me as being a very amiable woman. She

quite won my heart by the way she talked of her sister-in-law, Lucy's mother, and also of Lucy herself. When the gentlemen came we had some music. Lucy sang with some sweetness of expression, and Mr. Cardrew possessed a fine baritone voice, but I saw that it was not agreeable to Mr. Cray that Lucy and he should be much at the piano together. Mr. Jervis Wynne also sang to his mother's accompaniment, and I played a little myself. By this time I had studied the little party, and had come to a pretty correct conclusion. Both the unmarried gentlemen were in love with Lucy; and her father had made up his mind that she should marry the Alderman's son. Lucy favoured Mr. Cardrew, and I had yet to learn his position and claim to be regarded as an eligible suitor.

After the guests had departed and Lucy had gone to give some charge to the servants, I was astonished by Mr. Cray plunging into the subject at once.

"How did you like our guests, Miss Grainger? Pleasant people, are they not?"

"Very. I have enjoyed my evening very much; and I am very proud indeed of Lucy. She is certainly one of the most beautiful girls I have ever seen."

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"Yes, she is handsome. She has developed amazingly, and I am proud of her, I don't deny it. You have seen for yourself to-night that she can make a great future for herself."

"What do you mean by a great future, Mr. Cray?" I inquired. I saw that he felt towards me as to a friend; and I therefore wished to discuss the matter from a fair and friendly point of view.

"I suppose you saw that Mr. Jervis Wynne is—well, in vulgar parlance, in love with her? He has, in fact, already asked my permission to pay his addresses to her."

"And Mr. Cardrew," I said, lifting my brows. "Who is Mr. Cardrew?"

"Nobody—our confidential clerk, a man of exceptional ability, I admit, but a mere nobody. His father has been a bank cashier all his days. I asked him to-night to show him he is nobody, that my daughter is not for such as he. It is preposterous that he should have needed the lesson."

"He didn't look as if he took it to heart," I observed frankly. "I never saw a man more at his ease than Mr. Cardrew; nor have I ever had a more delightful companion at a dinner-table."

"That's his impudence," said Mr. Cray angrily. "He has the airs of a duke. I shall be obliged to show him more plainly still. It was a mistake inviting him to the house. I can't think what made me do it, though my sister, Mrs. Danford, had something to do with it. He is a *protégé* of hers, but Cecilia never had any proper sense of what is fitting and becoming. She'd as lief sit down to dinner with a clerk as a lord. I've heard her say so."

I saw that the ambition of Mr. Cray, far from being destroyed, had taken a new and more dangerous channel, more dangerous because it involved the serious welfare of his daughter.

"What about Lucy?" I inquired. "She, after all, is the one to be considered."

"She has all the arrogance of youth in such matters. I have never exactly brought her to my view, but she says Mr. Jervis Wynne amuses her, and that he would never inspire a serious thought. I believe that she entertains some romantic ideas about Cardew. These must be crushed, and I look to you, Miss Grainger, to show her what will be for her best welfare. If she marries into the Wynne family, through Lady Laura she will have entrance

to the very highest society. This alliance must go on, Miss Grainger. It would be a positive sin to set it aside."

I bit my lip, and for the moment felt a quick resentment against the man standing there, so calmly and arbitrarily deciding the destiny of others. For this, then, I had been brought; but I would be true to myself, and to the dear girl whose best interests I had at heart.

"After all, Mr. Cray," I said quietly, "is it not Lucy's happiness we most desire?"

"Certainly; but there is everything in such a marriage to make her happy. He is a very fine young fellow, plenty of brains behind that eye-glass, and will get past the clothes-wearing stage by-and-by. His father tells me he has a very good business head, and he is an only son. Everybody knows that Alderman Wynne is one of the wealthiest merchants in the City."

"Wealth cannot buy happiness, Mr. Cray," I said, uttering that platitude with a sigh. "If Lucy does not care for Mr. Wynne, you will not insist upon the marriage?"

"But there is no reason why she should not care for him. Will you try and find out what her



views are? She is rather stiff and reserved with me. If anybody can influence her, it is you."

"I can find out what she thinks, certainly; but Lucy strikes me as a person who will not be very easily influenced. She has her own opinions of persons and things, Mr. Cray."

She entered at the moment, and I saw his eye soften as it rested on her radiant beauty, and hope revived in my heart. It might be a stiff fight, but I believed that love and Lucy would win in the end.

"Well, were you pleased, papa?" she asked, going to him and folding her two hands on his arm.

"Yes, my dear. Everything was perfect, and I was proud of my daughter. She is fit to sit on a throne," he said fondly.

"Nonsense; but if you are pleased, that is all I want. Now, dear Miss Grainger, you are tired, and it is half-past eleven. Good-night, father."

She came to my room as I was undressing. She had laid off her gown, and wore a white dressing-gown falling loosely to her feet.

"May I come in just a little while? It is so nice to have somebody to come to talk to, and my

fire is out, though Holford has not forgotten yours.

Did you have a nice evening, Miss Grainger?"

"Very. You astonished me, Lucy."

"Did I? But tell me first how you liked the people. Isn't Aunt Cecilia sweet?"

"Very."

"And how did you get on with Mr. Cardrew?"

She asked the question rather shyly, and the colour was pink in her cheeks. I turned round to her, and laid my hand on her shoulder.

"Lucy dear, which is it to be, Jervis Wynne or Mr. Cardrew?"

"Which do you think?"

"I know which your father would wish."

"I shall never marry Jervis Wynne, Miss Grainger, and I have told papa so."

"But you might Mr. Cardrew?"

"Do you like him?" she asked shyly.

"Very much. He is a man of character and of principle, I should say," I replied truthfully. "Do you like him, Lucy?"

Her face flushed deeply.

"I—I am afraid I do, Miss Grainger, and though he has not said anything, I—I know he likes me too."

"Your father is against it, dear."

"Oh, I know."

"And he has asked me to point out the advantages of a marriage with the Wynne family," I said.

"What are they?" she asked rather scornfully. "Only money, and on Lady Laura's side, I suppose, family; but there is the man, and it is I who have to live with him."

"If you feel like that, Lucy, there is no more to be said. You must win your father to your side by degrees."

"It will be a long fight, but I will never enter upon matrimony without love, Miss Grainger. I have seen the misery of it, and I confess I wonder at papa; but he is ambitious."

"Very; and proud of you too. He wishes you to take the high station you would so adorn."

"What is it all? Nothing; especially when weighed down with a breaking heart. Whatever becomes of me, Miss Grainger, I shall never marry Jervis Wynne," she said firmly, and she kept her word.

\* \* \* \* \*

I heard only once or twice from Lucy during

the early part of the season, and though she gave me no particulars, I saw that things were not running smoothly with her. In June she wrote me a longer letter, in which she said matters were very strained between her and her father, on account of Mr. Cardrew, who had been dismissed from the firm. I saw that the child was very unhappy, and I resolved to go and see her without delay; but it was a very busy time with me, and a fortnight passed before I could even find time to write. Then I received a letter from Mr. Cray saying they were going abroad in July, and that it would be a great pleasure to Lucy, and a personal favour to him, if I would accompany them. They proposed to go to Switzerland first, then south to Munich, going from thence to Oberammergau to witness the Passion Play. It was a very nice, courteous letter, and conveyed to me delicately that the trip would cost me nothing, and that they would do their utmost to make me happy. Lucy added a postscript, which decided me to accept.

I was a little puzzled to understand it, because Mr. Cray knew quite well that I was not favourable to the idea of Lucy being coerced into marriage with a man for whom she did not care, and further

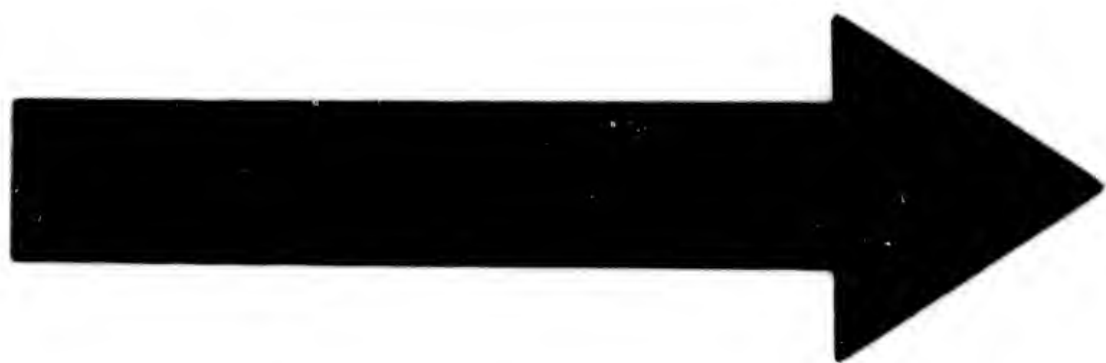
that I highly approved of Mr. Cardrew. As I was thus going under no false pretences, I prepared to enjoy myself to the full, and I did. There seemed to be no feud between Lucy and her father so far as the outward eye could discern—nay, I observed in him a watchful tenderness which was quite a new trait in his character. All the same, he was quite determined, as he took care to inform me, that Lucy should enter the Wynne family, and Lucy was as determined she should not. So with these two strong wills pitted against each other, the battle was likely to be a long one. I confess I was not greatly surprised when we arrived at the Swiss frontier to meet the Wynnes. It had flashed upon me that such an arrangement might have been made. Lucy evinced no emotion of any kind at sight of them; she was simply tranquil, indifferent, undisturbed.

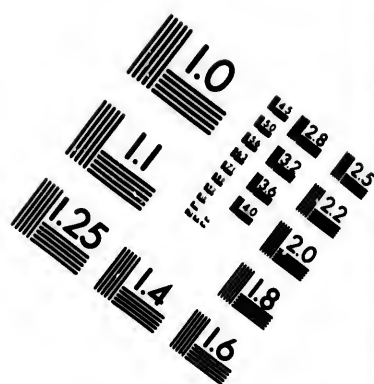
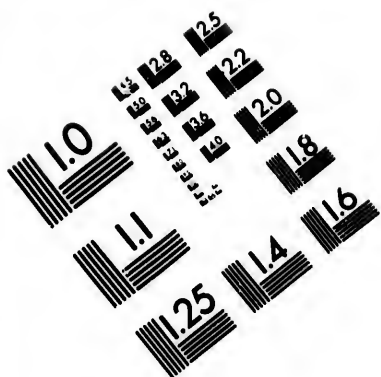
“I am very much amused at papa,” she said to me quietly. “He is taking so much trouble, and putting himself so much out of his usual way, to accomplish the impossible.”

The Wynnes made very agreeable travelling companions on the whole. Lady Laura, if a trifle pompous, was kind and cheerful, and her son was

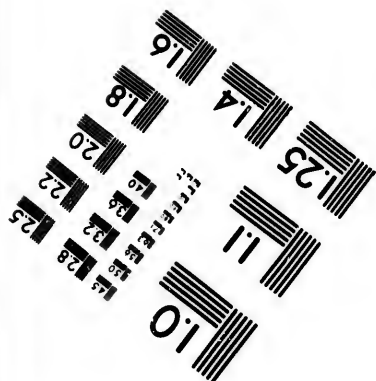
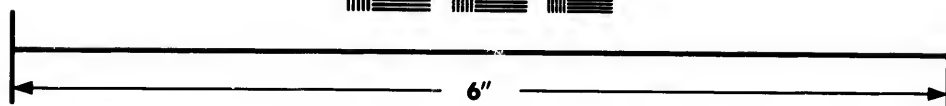
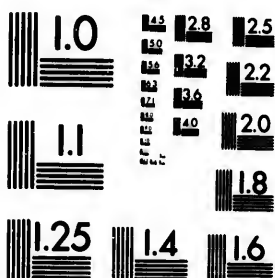
so invariably amiable that I felt sorry for him. Lucy did nothing but poke fun at him. Altogether it was a very pretty comedy, which I watched with a good deal of amused interest. Lucy attracted a great deal of attention on account of her beauty and her distinguished bearing, but she appeared quite unconscious of it all. We travelled in the most leisurely and luxurious manner, seeing and enjoying everything without fatigue, and so came by slow and easy stages to the picturesque village in the Bavarian highlands where the Passion Play was being performed. The ground was new to us all, and it charmed us beyond measure. The influx of sightseers being very great, we had to wait nearly a week for our seats in the theatre, and spent these days in a delightful old-world Tyrolese village called Garmisch, lying in the valley of the swift-flowing Loisach, and under mighty snow-crowned crests of the Zugspitz and the Waxenstein. We agreed that the scenery of the Bavarian Switzerland pleased us more than Switzerland proper—it was so exquisitely varied, so surpassingly lovely, as well as majestic and awe-inspiring.

We lived in one of the inns where no English was





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spoken, and the German a queer patois, somewhat difficult to follow ; but we enjoyed it all. A little distance from Garmisch there was another village, if possible more quaint and picturesque, and rejoicing in the odd name of Partenkirchen. It was built on a steep slope, and so irregularly that the houses seemed all tumbling on top of each other. There was a treasure-house there in the shape of an old silver shop, where the quaint silver buttons and ornaments pertaining to the national dress could be bought, as well as many other old curios dear to the heart of the collector. I found this shop by accident, and took a walk to it alone one evening to buy a silver chatelaine I coveted for Lucy. Next day we were to drive to Oberammergau, and from thence over the mountains to Innsbrück. I had made my purchase, and was walking leisurely down the middle of the roughly paved street, when I saw two gentlemen emerge from the door of one of the inns. One was Mr. Cardrew. He recognised me instantly, and with a word of apology to his companion, crossed the road to my side.

“Miss Grainger. What a surprise to see you here !”

“Is it so much of a surprise ?” I asked, with a

keen look, and then reproached myself for the thought that it might have been a concerted plan between Lucy and him that they should meet.

"Indeed it is, and yet it need not. One meets all sorts of unlooked for acquaintances in a place like this. Are you alone?"

"No; I am travelling with Mr. Cray and Lucy, and the Wynnes."

"Heavens! are they here?" he asked, and his ruddy face slightly paled.

"Yes; we are in Garmisch, at the Hotel Drei Mohren," I answered mechanically. "And we go on to Oberammergau to-morrow."

"So do we; that is my uncle from whom I have just parted."

I glanced down the road at the tall, distinguished-looking, military figure of an elderly gentleman.

"And you did not know we were coming?"

"No. Surely you have heard that I have left Mr. Cray's firm?"

"Oh yes; but lovers sometimes delight in overcoming obstacles," I said sily.

He smiled, and my heart warmed to him, his face was so good and true, and he looked every inch a gentleman.

"I have asked for Lucy, Miss Grainger, and I mean to ask for her again; but I shall never do what is not absolutely open and above board, nor will Lucy. Thank God, we don't need. Tell me how she is."

"She is very well, and Mr. Jervis Wynne keeps her in amusement," I said, with a little laugh of pure enjoyment, for I thought how blind Mr. Cray was to think an empty, good-natured, over-grown boy like Jervis Wynne could stand the smallest chance beside a noble English gentleman like John Cardrew.

"Does she ever say anything about me?" he asked; and I liked the boyish and eager look with which he asked the question.

"Not often, but her heart is true, Mr. Cardrew," I said quickly. "Don't be downcast; it is only a question of patience, and everything comes to those who wait."

"Yes, but sometimes the waiting is dreary," said John Cardrew. "I may be encouraged to-morrow by a look at her dear face. Mr. Cray cannot forbid that, any more than he can forbid the sun to shine upon her."

I said nothing, but I thought many things, and wondered more.

"I believe I can guess your thoughts, Miss Grainger. You are wondering how the discharged clerk has means and leisure to be sight-seeing so far from home," he said whimsically.

"You are a wizard," I made answer, with a laugh.

"Not at all; it is perfectly natural that you should wonder, and it shall be explained to you by-and-by. May I be permitted to introduce my uncle? I see he is waiting for me."

"Certainly," I said, not being without a natural curiosity to behold any relative of Lucy's lover, since it was his family connection that stood in his way. The old gentleman came towards us, and then I saw that he had only one arm, and that the empty sleeve was pinned across a breast ablaze with medals.

"Miss Grainger, may I introduce my uncle, Colonel Cardrew?" John said simply; and I forgot my manners so shockingly as to gaze upon the hero of a hundred fights with eyes that saw nothing, and lips that were absolutely dumb.

\* \* \* \* \*

I was preoccupied and silent at dinner that night, but still I observed an unusual sadness on Lucy'

face. Lady Laura was lying down with a headache through the heat, and we were a very dull party. While the gentlemen remained to smoke and rail at the vile foreign tobacco, as they perpetually did, Lucy and I went up to my room. It was very pleasant, with a little balcony just big enough to hold our two chairs, and a red awning to shade us from the sun.

"Papa was very angry with me to-day, Miss Grainger," she said slowly, and the colour was hot in her cheek. "He says it is impossible that I can go home without announcing my engagement to Jervis Wynne; that by travelling together as we have done, we have made it necessary. The Wynnes leave us at Oberammergau, and papa says it must be settled. Do you not think it cruel to have placed me in such a position? But I will not give in."

I thought of John Cardrew as I had left him on the white road between the villages, standing with his arm through his uncle's arm, and an air of proud assurance on his face, and my heart was at peace; but I was pledged to silence.

"It is the darkest hour before the dawn, Lucy. There will be light to-morrow."

She looked at me intently.

"What makes you think so?"

"I don't think, I know. You will never forget Oberammergau, dearest; it will be the birthplace of the greatest happiness of your life."

Lucy was reticent by nature, not given at any time to much questioning or abundance of speech.

"There is something in your look and tone I don't understand; but I can trust and wait cheerfully even yet, as you have so often bid me do."

My eyes filled with tears, and I was hard put to it to hold my tongue; but having passed my word to John Cardrew, I was in honour bound. But the morrow—longed for ever by so many, year in, year out—seemed long in coming. Yet come it did, and we drove through the glory of the mountains down into the sweet little village, awakened and startled out of its natural stillness by the babel of many voices, the tread of thousands of feet. It struck me, as many others, that the crowds of hurrying sightseers, among whom were only a few reverent and devout souls, seemed to desecrate that simple and holy place, turning their rude gaze, which respected nothing, upon the inner life of these primitive peasant folk, and filling them with a vague

wonder and discomfort to which they were wholly unaccustomed.

Of the play itself it is not my province here to speak; suffice to say it left upon my mind a strange and sad impression. It seemed to me like a sacrament desecrated by the public gaze, the tribute of a devout and religious community laid bare for gain. But the people impressed me by their simple unconsciousness, their disregard of praise or blame, their absolute indifference to the avalanche of humanity which had suddenly swooped upon them as if swept thither by the four winds of heaven. They looked upon it all with a lofty serenity, which maybe came to them from the cool sublime crests of their own mountains.

That evening, after having settled upon our limited quarters, we sallied forth for a walk through the village. I confess to a little inward excitement, momentarily expecting that we should meet John Cardrew face to face. And meet him we did, just outside the emporium of a wood-carver, where Lady Laura wished to make some purchases. He came round a corner suddenly, alone, and Mr. Cray was the first to see him. I saw him go white with anger, and I knew what he thought, that Lucy



and he had concerted to meet. Cardrew lifted his hat. Mr. Cray looked him straight in the face and cut him dead. John did not flinch, but turned on his heel and walked back the way he had come. Lucy was within the show with Lady Laura, and saw none of this. Mr. Cray turned savagely to me.

"You saw that scoundrel. Lucy must have told him we were to be here. We must leave this very night."

"Hush!" I said peremptorily. "There has been no arrangement. Wait; everything will be satisfactorily explained—perhaps this very night."

He was still frowning heavily when the ladies came out, but Lucy appeared not to notice it. Only a few steps further (there being but small room for escape in that little place, with its handful of narrow streets) we encountered John Cardrew in company with his uncle. They stood straight in the road-way in front of us, and Lucy became deadly pale. I put my hand through her arm. Mr. Cray positively glared; there is no other word for it. The Colonel had his eye fixed on Lucy, and I read approval therein. He took the bull by the horns. Slipping a card out of his vest pocket, he handed it to Mr. Cray.

"Sir, I have a little business matter of my nephew's to discuss with you. If you will kindly tell me where you are quartered, I shall wait upon you within the hour."

Mr. Cray took the card and looked at it in a kind of dazed way. The Wynnes walked on. Mr. Cardrew made some trifling, commonplace remark to Lucy and me about the mountaineers in their picturesque Tyrolese dress. The colour stole back, pink and soft and sweet, to Lucy's white cheeks. The Colonel held himself as if he were giving orders to his men. Mr. Cray looked as if some one had suddenly punched his head, and I saw a twinkle in John's eye. Mr. Cray gave the somewhat complicated direction mechanically, the Colonel thanked him, and we parted ; but after the incident our conversation, perhaps naturally, flagged.

Lucy and I did not return to our lodgings when Mr. Cray went back to keep his appointment with the Colonel. Poor, dear girl, she was very nervous, and clung to me as if afraid something terrible was about to happen. We lingered about the village for a little time, watching the medley of people with but a languid interest, and as the dusk was beginning to fall I suggested a short stroll

along the white road we had come. I felt that we wanted a little quiet. Lucy looked as if she needed it. The strain on her was very great, all the greater, I could see, that she did not seek relief in speech. We had not gone very far when we heard a quick tread behind us, and I was not surprised on looking round to behold John Cardrew. His strong, true face was radiant; if he saw me he did not appear to think me of any account, and as there was no one else in sight, it did not greatly matter.

"Lucy, Lucy, darling; mine now, and for ever."

He took her in his arms, and she clung to him in affright.

"Papa—John, what has he said?"

"They are settling it between them, Uncle Laurence and he. I have his gracious permission to seek you."

I turned away then and left them, feeling in my heart, not for the first, no, nor the second time, that singular and oppressive sense of loneliness which a solitary woman must necessarily feel when she beholds the inner and dual life which she does not share. But I never suffered it to make me unhappy, and I was happy that night as I pursued

my way back to the busy village, for Lucy Cray was dear to me indeed. I glanced back once ere a bend in the road hid them, and I saw them walk together as lovers walk, she with her head near to his shoulder, and the tender moonlight falling on them in softest benediction. And I wondered if these solemn mountains had ever listened to the whisper of a sweeter love tale than theirs.

Mr. Cray was standing in the doorway of the house in which we lodged, and his face wore a most curious expression. He was vanquished, but did not look as if he enjoyed the experience. He appeared relieved to see me, and drew me indoors at once.

"Let's talk over this thing; it's the queerest story I ever heard. What does a man mean going about under false pretences, as Cardrew did? How was I to know he had an uncle like that, a grand old chap, wearing the V.C. and all?"

"Reticence in such matters is as rare as it is commendable," I said. "Too many people in this world are occupied in hanging on to the coat-tails of their fine relations. It says a good deal for John Cardrew's manliness that he preferred to stand on his own legs, and I honour him for it."

"Oh, that's all right, but I feel very small about it," said Mr. Cray, and I saw his pride was smarting yet.

"Old Cardrew, our Cardrew's father, was the failure of the family, it seems; all the rest are well-doing and well-connected. The Colonel is a bachelor, been in India all his days, as rich as Croesus, and wants to make his nephew his heir; but he gave it me very hot, I can tell you."

"Is the marriage to take place?"

"Why, of course. I can't prevent it. I was beginning to think I should have to give in in any case; and I was seriously considering a partnership for Cardrew."

"No one would have thought it."

"No, I didn't want to do it. I've left no stone unturned to bring about the Wynne alliance, but Lucy's so obstinate. She's one of the quiet sort, who says nothing and goes her own way."

"But Mr. Cardrew is far worthier of her than Jervis Wynne. You'll admit that?"

"Yes, I will; he's a good fellow, and I've been too hard on him. I'll admit that things have turned out a deal better than I deserve."

What can you say to a man who admits himself in

the wrong, and talks so reasonably? I said nothing, only rejoiced. Next day the Wynnes departed alone, and with evident signs of disappointment, to Innsbrück. The rest of our travels were taken in company with John Cardrew and his uncle.

I have heard of transformations. I saw one take place in the person of Lucy Cray. She became brilliant, lovely, fascinating; that was what happiness did for her, and the old Colonel told me dismally he had fallen in love with her himself. And I thank God that it was a happiness which has stood the wear and tear of fourteen years of married life.

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## XI.

### ▲ BITTER MISTAKE.

I HAD many trying and backward pupils at Fleetwood, and some upon whom all care, attention, and kindness seemed absolutely thrown away. There are natures, it appears to me, born with a warp in them somewhere, and which are difficult, nay, almost impossible, to deal with. To this category undoubtedly belonged Adelaide Brand. She was brought to me in despair by her mother, the widow of a country gentleman in Sussex. They were very well off, but Mrs. Brand preferred to let their estate and live at Brighton, where they had a handsome house at Hove. She also possessed a town house in Portland Place, and had all that wealth could give to make life worth living. She came to Fleetwood alone the first time to consult me about her only child. She was still

young, six-and-thirty, she told me, though she might have passed for ten years younger; a very sweet and noble-looking woman, with that exquisite air of gentleness, never acquired, which carries such an influence with it. Her speech impressed me as much as her appearance and manner, and the whole woman interested me very much.

"I have had a great deal of trouble with my daughter, Miss Grainger," she began, after having told me who had referred her to me.

"Even as a child she was refractory and wayward, and now she is very troublesome indeed."

"How old is she?" I inquired.

"Fourteen—yes, rather old. I know she ought to have been to school before now, but her father had a great dislike to boarding-schools, and insisted upon her being educated at home. It was no use to tell him I was very happy myself at school for nearly five years. I never could overcome his prejudice, and we have never been able to get a governess who could control Addie in the least."

"Is she backward in her lessons?"

"Oh, very; but that does not trouble me so



much as her absolute disregard of authority. She will simply do nothing but exactly what she likes, and it is in the hope that you will be able to do something with her that I have brought her to you. Every one tells me what a splendid disciplinarian you are."

"If she comes here, she will certainly have to obey rules, Mrs. Brand," I said. "I have had several troublesome pupils who through course of time have become quite amenable to discipline."

"Do you punish severely?" inquired Mrs. Brand. "My husband had the curious idea that girls suffered physically at boarding-schools, and that their moral nature did not improve under such treatment."

"We have no corporal punishment here, if you mean that," I replied. "I try to make my refractory girls feel my displeasure, to reach them through their higher nature; sometimes the process is tedious, but it is generally successful in the end, and lasting, which is more important."

"Certainly it is," said Mrs. Brand, with a sigh. "Well, I do trust you will be able to make some impression on Addie, for really she appears to be quite deficient in that higher sense of which you

speak. And I cannot understand it, for her father was the best of men, the truest gentleman in every sense of the word."

"Is she quite pleased at the prospect of coming here?" I asked.

"She doesn't care. She laughed when I told her, and said she'd lead you a dance."

"Well, we'll see," I said. "Don't worry about her, and I should advise that she is not allowed to run home when she likes between times. I mean, especially when you are in town. I find it generally most unsettling, this Friday to Monday visiting which many parents insist on. The terms are not so long as to be unendurable."

"Oh, I shouldn't think of such a thing," she replied warmly. "Whatever conditions you make will be kept. I am going abroad for the winter, anyhow, with my sister-in-law, and the house in Portland Place will be shut up. She will spend Christmas with her consins in Herefordshire, but I shall write about that later on."

So we parted, and the refractory daughter arrived in due course. She was rather a pretty girl, of the pink and white order, with a profusion of fluffy fair hair, and large blue eyes which had a certain

baby innocence in them, though untouched by the light of any real feeling. She looked quite sixteen, and was matured in her manner and ways, though I found her extremely backward in her knowledge.

While not appearing to pay any special attention to her, I kept my eye upon her for a whole week. Her mother had interested me, and I wanted to work some improvement in her daughter if I could. I found it, I may say, a pretty hard task, and I fear I may write down frankly here that Adelaide Brand was one of my failures. She was incorrigibly idle, and the truth was not in her. She could stand before you and tell a falsehood with the most utter nonchalance; it indeed appeared to me that she was deficient in moral sense. She was not a favourite in school, being selfish and domineering in her ways; she was indeed the only one against whom I have heard my dear Kathleen Moran utter a harsh word.

There was a kind of cunning about her, too, which made it most difficult to detect her in any serious fault. She was outwardly fairly amenable to rule; it was in small ways that she was found disobedient, ungrateful, and rebellious. She

occasioned me much inward annoyance, owing to the fact that I felt myself completely baffled in thoroughly understanding her character or getting any real grip of her nature. I no longer wondered at her mother's despair about her, and I felt that it would be interesting and worth while to trace back the pedigree of the Brands, in order to see what bad blood was showing itself in this generation.

One little incident, before I pass on to later events in the life of Adelaide Brand, may serve to show what were her views regarding conduct in life. I had occasion to reprimand her very severely for having been engaged with some of the younger girls in a midnight supper in the dormitories. Such a thing had never before been heard of in Fleetwood, and the very fact that we had never had any trouble with such frolics, more common in boys' schools, had made us quite lax in supervision, otherwise it could not possibly have taken place. Adelaide had told me a distinct and deliberate falsehood about the purchase of the provisions, which I had proved by inquiry at the nearest confectioner's shop. Of course I was very angry, and I spoke to her quite peremptorily, threatening her

with expulsion if she did not at once express her contrition.

"But I'm not sorry, Miss Grainger," she said, with that calm, stony glance of her round blue eyes. "It was a jolly lark, and I don't see any harm in it."

"If that is the view you take of it, Adelaide, I fear there is nothing to be done except to send you home. The sin was the more serious that it led some of the younger girls into a breach of the rules, which they would never have dreamed of but for you."

"No, they won't," she assented. "They were frightened to death all the time."

She stood on one leg as she uttered these audacious words, and I felt my temper rising. She was without exception the most aggravating piece of humanity it had ever been my lot to encounter, and the least lovable. I have had mischief-loving and mischief-making girls, who were often in disgrace, but they could generally be touched with some penitence for their faults. This one was totally unimpressionable. As I said before, I came to the conclusion that she lacked in moral sense.

"If you are likely to remain in that frame of

mind, I shall be obliged to write and ask your mother to remove you from Fleetwood—a disgrace she will feel keenly enough, if you do not.”

“I’m sure I don’t mind ; I’m nearly sixteen, anyhow, and ought to come out soon. I think it’s a shame that mother should be having such a jolly good time at Monte Carlo and everywhere, while I’m mewed up here. Of course it’s to her advantage. I’m getting grown up, and she wants to be a young widow as long as she can.”

The shocking vulgarity and bad taste of this speech, to say nothing of its absolute want of feeling, nearly paralysed me.

“I think you had better go upstairs to your room, Adelaide, and remain there until I consider what is to be done with you. You will have your meals there and walk in the Spanish garden with Miss Payne until I give further orders.”

She nodded carelessly and went out, and I sat down to write to Mrs. Brand. I felt it due to myself and my establishment to remove this bad influence from our midst ; and yet I hesitated, feeling sorry for the mother, who was happier about her troublesome daughter than she had been for some time. She was then in Rome, and did

not intend to return to London till June, if indeed then.

So I hesitated, and finally decided not to worry her meanwhile, but do my best with Adelaide until Mrs. Brand should return to town. She came to her town house in the second week of June, and immediately paid a visit to Fleetwood. I saw her, of course, before Adelaide came down. I could not help admiring her as I entered the room; she looked simply beautiful, and seemed to have grown younger instead of older. Nobody could have believed her to be the mother of a great, tall, womanly girl like Adelaide.

"How are you, Miss Grainger, and how is Addie? I can't tell you how happy I have been about her all the time I have been abroad."

"Addie is quite well, but I have to confess myself beaten, Mrs. Brand. I don't believe I have done her a bit of good."

It was a certain relief to me to say this, for I had hardly admitted it even to myself. Mrs. Brand's face clouded over painfully, and she leaned forward in her chair, looking at me eagerly.

"Tell me quite frankly and honestly, Miss Grainger, what you think of her."

"You really wish me to say?"

"I do. I have faced all her faults myself, and I am quite prepared to hear it."

"Well, I think she lacks in those finer qualities which keep the balance between the higher nature and the lower. Nothing will teach her but hard experience."

Mrs. Brand sighed, and her troubled look vexed me very much.

"How does she get on with her lessons?"

"She is idle, but she has a certain aptitude, and has advanced a good deal. She has a talent for languages, and is quite proficient in French and Italian. Music she abhors, and has made very little progress in it."

"Well, what do you think I should do with her? She is almost sixteen. I should like to leave her another year with you if you don't mind."

I did mind very much, but I did not like to say to the mother that I wished her to leave.

"I don't think she would benefit by it," I said, a little evasively. "Perhaps a little foreign travel soon might be good for her."

Mrs. Brand rose, and her colour had heightened a little.



"I ought to tell you that I am thinking of marrying again, in fact it is quite settled ; and the wedding will take place next month."

I was not much surprised, and no one could blame her. Her life was lonely, and she was still attractive enough to win both admiration and regard. I said I was pleased to hear it, as indeed I was.

"I am marrying a very old friend of mine ; we knew each other as boy and girl, though Colonel Nugent and I have not met for a good many years. He has been on foreign service for the last ten years ; and we met quite by accident at Naples this spring, as he was on his way home from India."

"What does he think about Adelaide ?"

"He thinks we ought to take her home with us at once. His place is in Huntingdon, and we shall live there a good deal. I intend to sell the Brighton house, and keep the one in town, because it is larger than Colonel Nugent's ; besides, his is let on lease. Perhaps, after what you say, his plan would be better, and it is just possible he may have more influence over her than you or I. She has missed her father's authority very much. Yes, I want to see her now, but I should like you to tell Addie

about my marriage after I am gone. It is a delicate matter a mother does not care to talk of to her young daughter, and I don't know quite how she will take it."

It did not seem to affect her very much. She came to me after her mother was gone, looking serene and undisturbed.

"Didn't you think mother looking well, Miss Grainger?—quite fetching, I think, now she has put off that hideous bonnet. She said you'd something to tell me ; what is it ?"

There was no use beating about the bush with this young person, so I merely stated the fact as briefly as possible.

"Married again, is she? Well, I suppose it's nobody's business but hers, and perhaps mine. I hope it's somebody who will do his duty by me. Do you happen to know who it is ?"

"Yes, Colonel Nugent, a very old friend of your mother's."

"Never heard of him. I suppose he didn't visit us in poor papa's time. Well, when is it going to take place, and what's to become of me?—that's what I want to know."

"About the end of the season, I believe, and you

are to go to your mother's new home with them soon, if not immediately afterwards."

"That doesn't sound bad. I hope it's a hunting county, and that there'll be some life. Then this is my last term?"

"Yes."

"Well, I'm not sorry, and I don't think you are. I haven't been a model pupil, have I, Miss Grainger?"

"You have occasioned me a good deal of anxiety and worry, and it is nothing to be proud of, Adelaide," I said stiffly, for she had the most subtle power of irritating me, and I was always afraid of losing my temper with her.

"No; I was never cut out for a model pupil. All the same I've been tolerably comfortable here, and I don't bear you any grudge," she replied magnanimously. And in that spirit, two months later, we parted from each other.

\* \* \* \* \*

I did not hear anything about the Brands for a long time, and they had indeed passed entirely out of my mind till two years later, when I happened to be paying an Easter visit to the house of a relative

of mine in Huntingdon, where to my surprise I found among the guests Colonel and Mrs. Nugent. I was extremely pleased to meet the lady I had known as Mrs. Brand, and also to see her husband, who was a soldierly and pleasant man, devotedly attached to his wife.

"I was very pleased when I heard from Mrs. Northcroft that you were to be here, Miss Grainger," she said, after dinner. "I have often intended writing and asking you to pay us a visit, but somehow my life has been very full in the last two years. Have you heard that I have a little baby—a son?"

"No; I have not heard. Your life has indeed been full, Mrs. Nugent," I said, thinking how young and pretty she looked. "And how is Adelaide?"

"Adelaide is perfectly well. I am sorry to say, Miss Grainger, she is not less troublesome than of yore."

"I should have thought that she would have gained some common sense by now."

"She hasn't; she is very headstrong, and inclined to be fast. There is nothing Colonel Nugent dislikes so much as a woman of the pronounced type, which Adelaide is fast becoming;

and I am often very unhappy about her, and full of the most dismal forebodings about her future."

"Is she not interested in her little brother?" I ventured to ask, and was glad to observe a smile on Mrs. Nugent's face.

"Oh yes, after a fashion. She was very much disgusted at first, but I think she likes the child now."

"And what pursuits has she, or companions?"

"None we particularly approve of. Her hobby is riding and everything pertaining to it. Colonel Nugent does not particularly admire hunting women, and he thinks to be constantly in the field quite objectionable for so young a girl. But Addie simply doesn't care, and we have had one or two rather trying scenes."

I could well imagine it, remembering the aggravating manner and disposition of Adelaide Bland.

"She will grow out of it," I said hopefully; for I saw the old worried look creeping back to her mother's face.

"I am hoping so; meanwhile she is just as unmanageable as she can well be. Colonel Nugent is one of the best of men, kind, indulgent, generous to

a fault, but he is hot-tempered, and has been accustomed to have some attention paid to his expressed wishes. Addie is openly indifferent to anything he says, and of course it is quite painful to me. I beg you to excuse me for talking to you so freely about such purely personal and private matters, but I do assure you it is a great relief."

"I am truly interested, Mrs. Nugent. If Adelaide could make a suitable marriage, it would relieve you very much."

"It would, but I confess that very thing costs me more anxiety than anything. She doesn't at all mind whom she talks to or consorts familiarly with; in fact, when we are both away for a day or two, as now, I have very little peace of mind, not knowing what she may be doing in our absence. She prides herself upon setting every conventional law at defiance."

"It is a hard case," I said sympathetically, "and one difficult to understand."

"Indeed it is; when I remember her father, and think of my own nature and disposition, I am completely at sea. How long are you going to stay here, Miss Grainger? Couldn't you come to Baugrave Towers for a day or two before you ret. to

Fleetwood, if only for a Saturday to Monday? It is not at all out of your way."

"Thank you. I shall think of it, Mrs. Nugent, and see what my cousin says," I replied; and so the matter dropped.

I was able to accept the invitation before going home, and was very kindly welcomed to Bargrave Towers. It was a fine old place, well timbered and beautifully kept; and Colonel Nugent was a model country gentleman. It would have been a very happy home but for Adelaide, who took but little trouble to make herself agreeable. She came to meet me at the station, driving her own cart. She had grown and changed a good deal, and was good-looking after a fashion, but it was an empty, unattractive face, a fitting index to the mind, given up entirely to frivolous and unwomanly pursuits. She was dressed in the extreme of fashion, in that style affected by horsey young women; and her talk I did not find particularly edifying.

"How do you do, Miss Grainger? I hope you don't mind only me coming to meet you. Rather wanted to come just to give myself a chance. Of course mamma has been going for me properly to you. I see it in your face."

"The same old Adelaide," I said, with a slight smile. "Suppose you keep your pony still and give me a chance to get in."

"Steady, Joey, steady," she said, looking at her steed with a very real affection. "There, are you all right? No, we won't take the luggage; they'll fetch it for you in good time. You are not a bit changed. I guess you'd be just the same fifty years after this. But there, it's about myself I'm going to talk. It's slow at the Towers for a go-ahead young woman like me. I'm only endaring things till I'm of age; then I get a tidy bit of property. I'll show them then what life is, and that A. B. can enjoy it. The domestic felicity up here is rather stale."

"Your mother is very happy," I said severely.

"Oh, I suppose she is. I'm not calling that in question, though I want to box the Colonel's ears fifty times a day. He's a perfect antediluvian about women. He'd like to shut me up as he does mamma, but I won't stand his interference."

"And what will you do when you do come into your property, Adelaide?" I asked, out of curiosity.

"I—oh, lots of things. I'll slide from the Towers first of all, and take up house-keeping with a chaperon.



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who is half blind. My chief interest will be in the turf; it's the only thing worth living for."

"Perhaps you won't always think that."

"Well, perhaps not, but meanwhile these are my sentiments. Well, how's the old place? any of the girls I knew still with you? How do, Teddy?"

Her last remark was made to a man on horseback who passed us on the road, a very ill-bred looking person, who, however, rode well, and had a certain kind of good looks. He stopped his horse, slapped his gloves to his hat in salutation to me, and then spoke to Adelaide.

"It's all right for Thursday," he said. "Half-past two at Enderby sharp."

"All right," she said tranquilly, though her colour rose a little. "I'll be there."

"Rain or shine?" he said interrogatively.

"Rain or shine. Ta, ta," she said and gave Joey rein again.

"Who is that, Adelaide?" I asked.

"Oh, that's my riding master. He's got a new colt; wants me to see it before she goes in training for the Derby; a glorious creature, he says. I'll certainly go."

Afterwards looking back, I was dumfounded,

thinking of the absolute matter-of-fact way in which she uttered this outrageous falsehood.

"I thought he looked like a groom," I observed carelessly.

"Do you think so? Half his pupils were in love with him when I was there, and he rides like Dick Turpin. But of course I guessed he wouldn't commend himself to you."

"It is rather extraordinary that you should call your riding master Teddy," I said, looking at her keenly.

She reddened just a little.

"Oh, everybody calls him Teddy, even Colonel Nugent, for whom he has bought several horses," she said carelessly; and I thought no more about it, the explanation seeming natural enough.

I arrived at the Towers on Tuesday, and I did not see very much of Adelaide that night or next day. On Wednesday evening there was a dinner party, at which I was introduced to a good many of Mrs. Nugent's neighbours, and very pleasant neighbours they were.

It struck me that Adelaide was very quiet and subdued that night. She looked very well, too, in a gown of pink satin, which was most becoming to her

fair prettiness. There was at least one man there who admired her very much—Godfrey Hills, the only son of a neighbouring baronet, whose lands marched with those of the Towers. I confess I could not see anything in Adelaide Brand likely to attract a man like Godfrey Hills, who was a bookish, earnest person, interested in social problems and every phase of intellectual life. But admire her he did, and the odd thing was that Adelaide seemed entirely unconscious of it. She was at least absolutely free from the vice of personal vanity, nor did she flirt or coquet in the least.

I spoke to Mrs. Nugent that night about it, and was not surprised to learn that it was no new idea to her.

"Yes, Godfrey Hills has always admired her, and he is a very fine fellow, but Addie will never look at him. His tastes are too quiet. I confess I am astonished that she should be in the least interesting to him."

"In course of time she may learn to appreciate his good qualities," I said hopefully.

"She will never marry Godfrey Hills," said Mrs. Nugent, shaking her head. "I shall be relieved if her choice falls upon anybody even half as eligible."

I was considerably astonished when Adelaide came

to my room that night. She was not a girl for whom a chat by a cosy fire in undress had any charms ; nevertheless, I bade her come in.

" Well, how did you enjoy our highly respectable society—a bit slow, wasn't it ? "

" No, I liked them all very much. You have nice friends here, Adelaide."

" So mamma says, and I'm sure it's a great matter she is pleased, since she is compelled to endure them. What do you think of Godfrey Hills, who is the apple of their eye, possessing all the qualities they would wish to see in their—ahem—son-in-law ? "

She was laughing, but there was a little undercurrent of seriousness beneath which rather puzzled me.

" I have not thought about him much, but I should think he would make a good husband."

" Yes, to the right sort of woman. I should drive him mad in a week. I have told him so, but he keeps on. Men are dreadfully persistent, don't you think ? "

" Sometimes, in matters on which they have set their hearts," I observed, in a vague, general sort of way.

"Well, he may spare his pains, because I'm not going to marry him. If I'd been like mamma I daresay I should have fallen in nicely with their little plans. I sometimes wish I had been born like mamma. It makes some things easier."

I looked at her intently. Some inward feeling was stirring her. A strange creature of moods and impulses she undoubtedly was; and I felt more drawn to her than I had yet been.

"It is easy to try to be like her now, Adelaide. You would be happier yourself, and make others happier," I said warmly.

She shook her head.

"It's not so easy as you say. I've got a twist in me somewhere. I always want to do the wrong thing, and it is I who shall have to pay."

She stood at the door with her hand upon it, the loose folds of her blue dressing-gown falling to her feet; a certain sadness seemed to dwell upon her face. I was casting about in my mind for some words which might guide and help the girl, when she put an odd question to me.

"Miss Grainger, do you think me a perfect brute?"

It was not a word I was accustomed to hear in

that sense from a girl's lips, but it seemed to have full significance for her.

"I've got some little decent feeling in me, though it's pretty deep down, and doesn't often show," she said, before I had time to answer. "I wish you'd tell mamma that to-morrow, and that I'm not so bad as I try to make myself out."

So saying, she kissed me hastily, not giving me opportunity to say a single word, and ran off to her own room. I thought of her a great deal that night before I slept, and I resolved not to let this little awakening pass, but to try and work upon it for good. But my opportunity was gone, never to come back. Next day we had to attend a luncheon party about five miles distant. The invitation included Adelaide, but she so seldom went anywhere in company with her mother and stepfather that nobody paid any attention to her remaining at home. It was only when we were on our way home, about five o'clock in the afternoon, that I remembered her appointment with the riding master at Enderby Common. I did not mention it to her mother at the moment, and no more was said about her till we sat down to dinner and she made no appearance.

"Now where can Adelaide be to-day, I wonder?"



Mrs. Nugent said, rather irritably for her. "She pays no sort of attention to hours of any kind. Hewetson, just go and inquire if anything is known of Miss Brand."

The man departed, and returned in about five minutes.

"Rosa says, madam, that Miss Brand left immediately after you, taking luggage with her, and that the cart was sent back from Enderby Junction at five o'clock in charge of a groom from the Enderby Arms."

Mrs. Nugent grew rather white. Colonel Nugent looked distinctly annoyed.

"Another freak of Adelaide's. Don't worry yourself about it, Winifred. No doubt we'll have the explanation to-morrow."

Mrs. Nugent tried to recover herself, and no more was said about her till Hewetson left the room.

"Arthur, I don't like this at all," she said then, in tones of distress. "She does a lot of queer things, but I think she would have mentioned if she had been going away on a visit to people we know anything of. What do you think?"

"She had an appointment with a gentleman this

afternoon," I said then. "I heard her make it the day we drove from the station."

"Who was it?" asked Colonel Nugent sternly.

"I don't know his name. She told me he was her riding master."

Colonel Nugent threw down his dessert knife and fork, and sprang to his feet.

"Depend upon it, Winifred, she's run off with that scoundrel. Poor girl, poor girl. God help her."

He went out at once, ordered a trap, and drove to Enderby Junction, and was there told that the pair had gone off together in the London train. He could do nothing but come back to his stricken wife; pursuit of them being out of the question. But he put a skilled detective on their track, and in two days received notice that they had been legally married by special licence at a church near Charing Cross, and had gone off the same day to Paris.

So Adelaide Brand made the final shipwreck of her life. The man was unprincipled, and of low breeding and tastes; happiness was out of the question. All that could be done was done by Colonel Nugent, whose tenderness, forbearance, and

true kindness to them all made an impression on me I never forgot. He got Adelaide's money so far settled upon herself that her husband could not touch the principal, though he did his best to set the provisions aside.

Her home was at Newmarket for many years, her house the resort of those who made their living on the turf. She was the mother of three little children, and her husband was proud of her in his way, and never actively unkind. Once a year she paid a visit to Bargrave Towers; and her mother told me that she was a disappointed and miserable woman, who had lived to see the awful folly of the step she had taken, but had accepted the consequences with a fortitude for which few would have given her credit.

While comparatively a young woman the death of her husband set her free from an existence absolutely uncongenial, and she returned to the market town nearest to the Towers, and there set herself to rear her children. I saw her once there, and the hardness of life had set its mark on Adelaide Brand. Yet was she incomparably more lovable than of yore. All the good in her had come to the surface, and her one desire, expressed

to me passionately, was to atone to her children for the accident of their birth. In course of time she came to a brighter frame of mind, and a less bitter view of life.

With poor Adelaide Brand's mistake my memories, for the time being, must be brought to a close. Lest it may have seemed to some that I had more exceptional experiences than fall to the lot of most schoolmistresses, I would only remind my readers that these few have been culled from the long period of thirty-five years, and that during that time I had in my hands hundreds of girls, of whose family and life I knew a good deal; and that many of the most tragic and dramatic stories which came to my knowledge have never been told. Of course the great majority led placid and commonplace lives, and it is true that the happiest women have no history.

Looking back upon my long life, one thing I have seen, and that I shall here set down ere I bid you farewell. Amid the fierce strife and stress of life, which is to many one long striving after the unattainable, I have proved again and again that the love of truth and right—in a word,

a fixed and controlling religious principle—is the stronghold of the tempted and the tried, the solace of the afflicted, the crown of the prosperous ; the only guarantee of happiness in a world where sin makes suffering the daily portion of most.

THE END.

