

Hetty Gray eBook

Hetty Gray

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CHAPTER I.

Four years old.

In all England there is not a prettier village than Wavertree. It has no streets; but the cottages stand about the roads in twos and threes, with their red-tiled roofs, and their little gardens, and hedges overrun with flowering weeds. Under a great sycamore tree at the foot of a hill stands the forge, a cave of fire glowing in the shadows, a favourite place for the children to linger on their way to school, watching the smith hammering at his burning bars, and hearing him ring his cheery chimes on the anvil. Who shall say what mystery surrounds the big smith, as he strides about among his fires, to the wide bright eyes that peer in at him from under baby brows, or what meanings come out of his clinking music to four-year-old or eight-year-old ears?

Little Hetty was only four years old when she stood for five or ten minutes of one long summer day looking in at the forge, and watching and listening with all the energy that belonged to her. She had a little round pink face with large brown eyes as soft as velvet, and wide open scarlet lips. Her tiny pink calico frock was clean and neat, and her shoes not very much broken, though covered with dust. Altogether Hetty had the look of a child who was kindly cared for, though she had neither father nor mother in the world.

Two or three great strong horses, gray and bay, with thick manes and tails, came clattering up to the door of the forge, a man astride on one of them. Hetty knew the horses, which belonged to Wavertree Hall, and were accustomed to draw the long carts which brought the felled trees out of the woods to the yard at the back of the Hall. Hetty once had thought that the trees were going to be planted again in Mrs. Enderby's drawing-room, and had asked why the pretty green leaves had all been taken off. She was four years old now, however, and she knew that the trees were to be chopped up for firewood. She clapped her hands in delight as the great creatures with their flowing manes came trotting up with their mighty hoofs close to her little toes.

"You little one, run away," cried the man in care of the horses; and Hetty stole into the forge and stood nearer to the fire than she had ever dared to do before.

"Hallo!" shouted Big Ben the smith; "if this mite hasn't got the courage of ten! Be off, you little baggage, if you don't want to have those pretty curls o' yours singed away as bare as a goose at Michaelmas! As for sparks in your eyes, you sha'n't have 'em, for you don't want 'em. Eyes are bright enough to light up a forge for themselves."

"Aye," said the carter, "my missus and I often say she's too pretty a one for the likes of us to have the bringing up of on our hands. And she's a rare one for havin' her own



way, she is. Just bring her out by the hand, will you, Ben, while I keep these horses steady till she gets away?"



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Big Ben led the little maid outside the forge, and said, "Now run away and play with the other children"; and then he went back to set about the shoeing of John Kane's mighty cart-horses, or rather the cart-horses of Mr. Enderby of Wavertree Hall.

Little Hetty, thus expelled, dared not return to the forge, but she walked backwards down the road, gazing at the horses as long as she could see them. She loved the great handsome brutes, and if she had had her will would have been sitting on one of their backs with her arms around his neck. Coming to a turn of the road from which a path led on to an open down, she blew a farewell kiss to the horses and skipped away across the grass among the gold-hearted, moonfaced daisies, and the black-eyed poppies in their scarlet hoods.

There were no other children to be seen, but Hetty made herself happy without them. A large butterfly fluttered past her, almost brushing her cheek, and Hetty threw back her curly head and gazed at its beauty in astonishment. It was splendid with scarlet and brown and gold, and Hetty, after a pause of delighted surprise, dashed forward with both her little fat arms extended to capture it. It slipped through her fingers; but just as she was pulling down her baby lips to cry, a flock of white and blue butterflies swept across her eyes, and made her laugh again as she pursued them in their turn.

At last she stumbled into a damp hollow place where a band of golden irises stood among their tall shafts of green like royal ladies surrounded by warriors. Hetty caught sight of the yellow wing-like petals of the flag-lilies and grasped them with both hands. Alas! they were not alive, but pinned to the earth by their strong stems. The butterflies were gone, the flowers were not living. The little girl plucked the lilies and tried to make them fly, but their heads fell heavily to the ground.

A big plough-boy came across the downs, and he said as he passed Hetty,

"What are you picking the heads off the flowers for, you young one?"

"Why won't they fly like the butterflies?" asked Hetty.

"Because they were made to grow."

"Why can't I fly, too?"

"Because you were made to run."

When Hetty went into the school she had a scratch from a briar all across her cheek.

"You are quite late, Hetty Gray," said the schoolmistress. "And what have you been doing to scratch your face?"



“I was trying to make the flowers fly,” said Hetty; and then she was put to stand in the corner in disgrace with her face to the wall.

CHAPTER II.

Under the horses' feet.

Mrs. Kane's cottage stood on a pretty bend of one of the village roads, and belonged to an irregular cluster of little houses with red gables and green palings. It was among the poorest dwellings in Wavertree, but was neat and clean. The garden was in good order, and a white climbing rose grew round the door, that sweet old-fashioned rose with its delicious scent which makes the air delightful wherever it blows.



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The cottage door stood open, and the afternoon sunlight fell across the old red tiles of the kitchen floor. The tiles were a little broken, and here and there they were sunk and worn; but they were as clean as hands could make them, as Mrs. Kane would have said. A little window at one side looked down the garden, and across it was a frilled curtain, and on the sill a geranium in full flower. On the other side was the fire-place, with chintz frill and curtains, and the grate filled with a great bush of green beech-leaves. A table set on the red tiles was spread for tea, and by it sat Mrs. Kane and her friend Mrs. Ford enjoying a friendly cup together.

"She *is* late this evening," Mrs. Kane was saying; "but she'll turn up all right by and by. If she's wild she's sharp, which is still something. She never gets under horses' feet, nor drops into the pond, or anything of that sort. If she did those sort of things, being such a rover, Mrs. Ford, you see I never should have an easy moment in my life."

"I must say it's very good of you to take to do with her," said Mrs. Ford, "and she nobody belonging to you. If she was your own child—"

"Well, you see, my own two dears went to heaven with the measles," said Mrs. Kane, "and I felt so lonesome without them, that when John walked in with the little bundle in his arms that night, I thought he was just an angel of light."

"It was on the Long Sands he found her, wasn't it?" asked Mrs. Ford, balancing her spoon on the edge of her cup.

"On the Long Sands after the great storm," said Mrs. Kane; "and that's just four years ago in May gone by. How a baby ever lived through the storm to be washed in by the sea alive always beats me when I think of it, it seems so downright unnatural; and yet that's the way that Providence ordered it, Mrs. Ford."

"I suppose all her folks were drowned?" said Mrs. Ford.

"Most like they were, for it was a bad wreck, as I've heard," said Mrs. Kane.

"Leastways, nobody has ever come to claim her, and no questions have been asked. Unless it was much for her good I would fain hope that nobody ever will claim her now. Wild as she is, I've grown to love that little Hetty, so I have. Ah, here she is coming along, as hungry as a little pussy for her milk, I'll be bound!"

Hetty came trudging along the garden path, her curls standing up in a bush on her head, her little fat fingers stained green with grass, and her pinafore, no longer green, filled with moon-daisies. She was singing with her baby voice lifted bravely:

"Dust as I am I come to zee—"

"Dust indeed!" cried Mrs. Kane, "I never saw such dust. Only look at her shoes that I blacked this morning!"

“Poor dear, practising her singing,” said Mrs. Ford. “Well, little lass, and what have you been seeing and doing all day long?”

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“I saw big Ben poking his fire,” answered Hetty after a moment’s reflection. “He put me out, and then I saw him hurting the horses’ feet with his hammer. I wanted the horses to come along with me, but they shook their heads and stayed where they were. Then I tried to catch the butterflies, and they flew right past my eyes. And I thought the yellow lilies could fly too, and they wouldn’t. Then I pulled their heads off—”

“And were you not at school at all?” asked Mrs. Ford. “Well, well, Hetty, you are wild. If you saw my little boys going so good to their school! What more did you do, Hetty?”

“I went into school, and schoolmistress put me in a corner. Then I drew marks with my tears on the wall; and afterwards I said my spelling. And I came home and got some daisies; and I saw Charlie Ford standing in the pond with his shoes and stockings on.”

“Oh my! oh my! well I never!” cried Mrs. Ford, snatching up her bonnet, and getting ready to go home in a hurry. “Charley in the pond with his shoes and stockings on! It seems, Mrs. Kane, that I’ve been praising him too soon!”

While Mrs. Ford was running down the road after Charley, Mrs. Enderby, up at Wavertree Hall, was directing her servants to carry the table for tea out upon the lawn under the wide-spreading beech-trees; and her two little daughters, Phyllis aged eight and Nell aged seven, were hovering about waiting to place baskets of flowers and strawberries on the embroidered cloth. Mrs. Rushton, sister-in-law of Mrs. Enderby and aunt of the children, was spending the afternoon at the Hall, having come a distance of some miles to do so.

Mrs. Enderby was a tall graceful lady, with a pale, gentle, but rather cold face; her dress was severely simple and almost colourless; her voice was sweet. Mrs. Rushton was unlike her in every respect, low in size, plump, smiling, and dressed in the most becoming and elegant fashion. Mrs. Enderby spoke slowly and with deliberation; Mrs. Rushton kept chattering incessantly.

“Well, Amy,” said the former, “I hope you will talk to William about it, and perhaps he may induce you to change your mind. Here he is,” as a gentleman was seen coming across the lawn.

Mrs. Rushton shrugged her shoulders. “My dear Isabel,” she said, “I do not see what William has to do with it. I am my own mistress, and surely old enough to judge for myself.”

The two little girls sprang to meet their father, and dragged him by the hands up to the tea-table.

“William,” said Mrs. Enderby, “I want you to remonstrate with Amy.”



“It seems to me I am always remonstrating with Amy,” said Mr. Enderby smiling; “what wickedness is she meditating now?”

Mrs. Rushton laughed gaily, dipped a fine strawberry into cream and ate it. Her laugh was pleasant, and she had a general air of good humour and self-complacency about her which some people mistook for exceeding amiability.



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“Isabel thinks I am going to destruction altogether,” said she, preparing another strawberry for its bath of cream; “only because I am thinking of going abroad with Lady Harriet Beaton. Surely I have a right to arrange my own movements and to select my own friends.”

Mr. Enderby looked very grave. “No one can deny your right to do as you please,” he said; “but I hope that on reflection you will not please to go abroad with Lady Harriet Beaton.”

“Why!”

“Surely you know she is not a desirable companion for you, Amy. I hope you have not actually promised to accompany her.”

“Well, I think I have, almost. She is very gay and charming, and I cannot think why you should object to her. If I were a young girl of sixteen, instead of a widow with long experience, you could not make more fuss about the matter.”

“As your brother I am bound to object to such a scheme,” said Mr. Enderby.

Mrs. Rushton pouted. “It is all very well for you and Isabel to talk,” she said, “you have each other and your children to interest you. If I had children—had only one child, I should not care for running about the world or making a companion of Lady Harriet.”

Mrs. Enderby looked at her sister-in-law sympathetically; but Mr. Enderby only smiled.

“My dear Amy,” he said, “you know very well that if you had children they would be the most neglected little mortals on the face of the earth. Ever since I have known you, a good many years now, I have seen you fluttering about after one whim or another, and never found you contented with anything long. If Phyllis and Nell here were your daughters instead of Isabel’s, they would be away at school somewhere, whilst their mother would be taking her turn upon all the merry-go-rounds of the world.”

“Thank you, you are very complimentary,” said Mrs. Rushton; and then she laughed carelessly:

“After all, the merry-go-rounds, as you put it, are much better fun than sitting in a nursery or a school-room. But I assure you I am not so frivolous as you think; I have been going out distributing tracts lately with Mrs. Sourby.”

“Indeed, and last winter I know you were attending lectures on cookery, and wanted to become a lecturer yourself.”



“Yes, and only for something that happened, I forget what, I might now be a useful member of society. But chance does so rule one’s affairs. At present it is Fate’s decree that I shall spend the next few months at Pontresina.”

Mr. Enderby made a gesture as if to say that he would remonstrate no more, and went off to play lawn tennis with his little girls. Mrs. Rushton rose from her seat, yawned, and declared to Mrs. Enderby that it was six o’clock and quite time for her to return towards home, as she had a drive of two hours before her.

Shortly afterwards she was rolling along the avenue in her carriage, and through the village, and out by one of the roads towards the open country.



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Now little Hetty Gray ought to have been in her bed by this time, or getting ready for it; but she was, as Mrs. Kane told Mrs. Ford, a very wild little girl, though sharp; and while Mrs. Kane was busy giving her husband his supper Hetty had escaped from the cottage once more, and had skipped away from the village to have another little ramble by herself before the pretty green woods should begin to darken, and the moon to come up behind the trees.

Hetty had filled her lap with dog-roses out of the hedges, and wishing to arrange them in a bunch which she could carry in her hand, she sat down in the middle of the road and became absorbed in her work.

Near where she sat there was a sharp turning in the road, and Hetty was so busy that she did not hear the sound of a carriage coming quite near her. Suddenly the horses turned the corner. Hetty saw them and jumped up in a fright, but too late to save herself from being hurt. She was flung down upon the road, though the coachman pulled up in time to prevent the wheels passing over her.

Poor Hetty gave one scream and then nothing more was heard from her. The footman got down and looked at her, and then he went and told the lady in the carriage that he feared the child was badly hurt.

“Oh dear!” said the lady, “what brought her under the horses’ feet? Can you not pick her up?”

The footman went back to Hetty and tried to lift her in his arms, but she uttered such pitiful screams at being touched that he was obliged to lay her down again.

Then the lady, who was Mrs. Rushton, got out and looked at her.

“You must put her in the carriage,” she said, “and drive back to the village. I suppose she belongs to some of the people there.”

“I know her, ma’am,” said the footman; “she is Mrs. Kane’s little girl,—little Hetty Gray.”

Mrs. Rushton got into the carriage again and held the child on her lap while they were being driven back to the village to Mrs. Kane’s cottage door. It was quite a new sensation to the whimsical lady of fashion to hold a suffering child in her arms, and she was surprised to find that, in spite of her first feelings of impatience at being stopped on the road, she rather liked it. As Hetty’s little fair curly head hung back helplessly over her arm, and the round soft cheek, turned so white, touched her breast, Mrs. Rushton felt a motherly sensation which she had never before known in all her frivolous life.

Mrs. Kane was out at the garden gate looking up and down the road for the missing Hetty. When she saw Hetty lifted out of the carriage she began to cry.



“Oh my! my!” she sobbed, “I never thought it would come to this with her, and she so sharp. Thank you, madam, thank you, I’m sure. She’s not my own child, but I feel it as much as if she was.”



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Mrs. Rushton then sent the carriage off for the doctor and went into the cottage with Mrs. Kane. The child was laid as gently as possible on a poor but clean bed covered with a patchwork quilt of many colours, and the lady of fashion sat by her side, bathing the baby forehead with eau de Cologne which she happened to have with her. It was all new and unexpectedly interesting to Mrs. Rushton. Never had she been received as a friend in a cottage home before, the only occasions when she had even seen the inside of one were those on which she had accompanied Mrs. Sourby on her mission of distributing tracts; and on those occasions she had felt that she was not looked on as a friend by the poor who received her, but rather as an intruder. It was evident now that good, grieved Mrs. Kane took her for an angel as she sat by the little one's bed, and it was new and delightful to Mrs. Rushton to be regarded as a benefactress by anyone.

The doctor arrived, set the child's arm, which was found to be broken, and gave her something to make her fall asleep. Then he charmed Mrs. Rushton by complimenting that lady on her goodness of heart.

"Remember, all the expense is to be mine," she said to him, "and I hope you will order the little one everything she can possibly require. I will come to see her to-morrow, Mrs. Kane, and bring her some flowers and fruit."

The pretty green woods which Hetty loved had grown dark, the butterflies had flown away to whatever dainty lodging butterflies inhabit during the summer nights, the yellow wings of the flag-lilies fluttered unseen in the shadows, and the moon had risen high above the tall beech-trees and the old church tower. Mrs. Rushton stepped into her carriage once more, and was driven rapidly through the quiet village, away towards her own luxurious home, feeling more interested and excited than she had felt for a long time.

Little Hetty Gray, her scare of fright and pain gone for the time like a bad dream, lay sound asleep upon her humble bed, and Mrs. Kane, trimming her night-light, paused to listen, with that fascination which many people feel at the sound, to the hoarse boom of the old church clock calling the hour of midnight, across the chimneys of the village and away over the silent solemn woods.

Mrs. Kane felt with a sort of awe that another day had begun, but she little knew that with it a strange new leaf had been turned in the story of her little Hetty's life.

CHAPTER III.

Adopted.

Mrs. Rushton returned the next day with a basket of ripe peaches and a large bouquet of lovely flowers such as Hetty had never seen before. The yellow lilies might stand



now in peace among their tall flag leaves without fearing to have their heads picked off, for Hetty had got something newer and more delightful to admire than they. Odorous golden roses and pearl-white gardenias scented and beautified the poor little room where Hetty lay. Where had they come from, she wondered, and who was the pretty lady who sat by her side and kept putting nice-smelling things to her nose? At first she was very shy and only looked at her with half-closed eyes, but after some time she took courage and spoke to her.



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“What kind lady are you?” asked Hetty boldly.

“I am a good fairy,” said Mrs. Rushton, “and when you are well I am going to carry you off to see my house.”

“Hetty has got a house,” said the little girl complacently. “Have you got a house too?”

“A splendid large house, Hetty,” said Mrs. Kane. “*You* never saw such a house.”

“Is it bigger than the post-office?” said Hetty doubtingly.

“Bigger far.”

“Bigger than the forge?”

“Don’t be foolish, child, and stop your biggers,” said Mrs. Kane; “Mrs. Rushton’s house is the size of the church and more.”

Hetty winked with astonishment, and she lay silent for some time, till at last she said:

“And do you sit in the pulpit?”

Mrs. Rushton laughed more than she was accustomed to laugh at Lady Harriet Beaton’s comic stories. This child’s prattle was amusing to her.

“And do you have grave-stones growing round your door?” persisted Hetty.

“There, ma’am!” cried Mrs. Kane, “she’ll worry you with questions if you give her a bit of encouragement. She’ll think of things that’ll put you wild for an answer, so she will. John and I give her up.”

Mrs. Rushton was not at all inclined to give her up, however, for she kept coming day after day to visit the little patient. Hetty became fond of her pleasant visitor, and watched eagerly for her arrival in the long afternoons when the flies buzzed so noisily in the small cottage window-panes, and the child found it hard to lie still and hear the voices of the village children shouting and laughing at their play in the distance. As soon as Mrs. Rushton’s bright eyes were seen in the doorway, and her gay dress fluttering across the threshold, Hetty would stretch out her one little hand in welcome to the delightful visitor, and laugh to see all the pretty presents that were quickly strewn around her on the bed. After spending an afternoon with the child, Mrs. Rushton often went on to Wavertree Hall and finished the evening there with her brother’s family. Mr. and Mrs. Enderby were greatly astonished to find how completely their lively sister had interested herself in the village foundling.

“Take care you do not spoil her,” said Mr. Enderby.



Mrs. Rushton shrugged her shoulders.

“I can never please you,” she said. “One would suppose I had found a harmless amusement this time at least, and yet you do not approve.”

“I do approve,” said her brother, “up to a certain point. I only warn you not to go too far and make the child unhappy by over-petting her. In a few weeks hence you will have forgotten her existence, and then the little thing will be disappointed.”

“But I have no intention of forgetting her in a few weeks,” said Mrs. Rushton indignantly.

“No; you have no intention—” said Mr. Enderby.

“You certainly are a most unsympathetic person,” said Mrs. Rushton; and she went away feeling herself much ill-used, and firmly believing herself to be the only kind-hearted member of her family.



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"After all, William," said Mrs. Enderby to her husband, "you ought not to be too hard upon Amy, for you see she has given up talking of going abroad with Lady Harriet."

"True; I have noticed that. Yet I fear she will not relinquish one folly without falling into another."

"Her present whim is at all events an amiable one," said Mrs. Enderby gently. "Let us hope no harm may come of it."

"I should think it all most natural and right if any other woman than Amy were in question," said Mr. Enderby; "but one never knows to what extravagant lengths she will go."

The warnings of her brother had the effect of making Mrs. Rushton still more eager in her attendance on the child, and a few days after she had been "lectured" by him, as she put it to herself, she astonished good Mrs. Kane by saying:

"I think she is quite fit to be moved now, Mrs. Kane, and the doctor says so. I am going to take her home with me for a week for change of air."

"Laws, ma'am, you never mean it!"

"But I do mean it. I am going to fatten her up and finish her cure."

"Well, ma'am, I'm sure you are the kindest of the kind. To think of you troubling yourself and putting yourself out, and all for our little Hetty."

"That is my affair," said Mrs. Rushton laughing; "I don't think a mite like that will disturb my household very much. Just you pack her up, and I will carry her off with me to-morrow at three."

The next day the lady carried off her prize, greatly delighted to think of how shocked her brother would be when he heard of her new "folly." As soon as she had introduced Hetty to all her dogs, and cats, and rabbits, Mrs. Rushton went to her desk and wrote a note to her sister-in-law inviting the entire Wavertree family to spend a day at Amber Hill, which was the name of her charming dwelling-place.

When, on a certain morning, therefore, the Wavertree carriage stopped at the foot of the wide flight of steps, flanked by urns of blooming flowers, which led up to Mrs. Rushton's great hall door, the mistress of Amber Hill was seen descending the stone stair leading a little child by the hand. This was Hetty, dressed in a white frock of lace and muslin, and decked with rose-coloured ribbons.



“Isn’t she a little beauty?” said Mrs. Rushton, smiling mischievously at her grave brother and sister-in-law. “Look up, my darling, and show your pretty brown velvet eyes. Did you ever see such a tint in human cheeks, Isabel, or such a crop of curling hair?”

“Do you really mean that this is the village child, Amy?” asked her brother.

“Yes, little Hetty is here!” said Amy with a gleeful laugh; “but then, William, Lady Harriet is gone. If I had asked you to meet her to-day instead of little Miss Gray from Wavertree, I wonder what you would have done to find a more disagreeable expression of countenance.”

“Do you wish us to understand that you have adopted this ‘nobody’s child,’ Amy?” said Mr. Enderby, looking more and more troubled.



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“Well, to tell you the truth, I did not mean that quite,” said Mrs. Rushton; “but now that you suggest it—”

“/ suggest it!” cried Mr. Enderby.

“How horrified you look! But all the same you have suggested it, and I think it is a capital idea.”

“Do not come to any hasty conclusion, I implore you, Amy. Think over it well. Consider the child’s interests more than your own momentary self-indulgence!”

Mrs. Rushton coloured with displeasure.

“I see you are determined to be as disagreeable as usual,” she said angrily. “As if the monkey could fail to be benefited by my patronage! Pray, will she not be better in my drawing-room than getting under horses’ feet about the Wavertree roads, or losing herself in the Wavertree woods?”

“Frankly, I think not,” said Mr. Enderby stiffly.

Mrs. Rushton’s eyes flashed, and she did her brother the injustice of thinking that he feared her adoption of little Hetty would in some way interfere with the worldly interests of his own children. She was not accustomed to seek far for other people’s meanings and motives, and generally seized on the first which presented itself to her mind. She knew that she only wanted to amuse herself, and had no intention of wronging her nieces and nephew by playing with this charming babe. Why, then, should William take such fancies in his head? In this flash of temper she instantly decided on keeping little Hetty always with her. Was there any reason in the world why she should not do just as she pleased? Hetty should certainly stay with her and be as her own child from this day forth.

“What have *you* to say about my adopting little Hetty?” she said, turning to her sister-in-law with a slightly defiant and wholly triumphant smile.

“I shall say nothing,” said Mrs. Enderby, “until I see how you treat her. I trust it may turn out for the best.”

Thus, all in a moment, and merely because Mrs. Rushton would not be contradicted, was little Hetty’s future in this world decided. Before her brother had spoken, the lady of Amber Hill had had no intention of keeping Hetty for more than a week in her house. And now she felt bound (by the laws of human perversity) to take her and bring her up as her own child.

In the meantime Mrs. Enderby’s three children and Hetty Gray were standing by, gazing at one another. The little Enderbys, Mark, Phyllis, and Nell, had taken in the whole

conversation, and understood perfectly, with the quick perception of children, the strangeness of the situation, and their own peculiar position with regard to Mrs. Kane's little girl from Wavertree.

The little Enderbys were thinking how very odd it was that the little girl whom they had often seen, as they walked with their nurse or drove past in the carriage with their mother, playing on the roads in a soiled pinafore, should be now presented to them as a new cousin. Phyllis, the eldest, was much displeased, for pride was her ruling fault. Mark and Nell were charmed with the transformation in Hetty and very much disposed to accept her as a playfellow, though they remembered all the time that she was not their equal.



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Hetty, being only four years old, was supremely unconscious of all that was being said, and meant, and thought over her curly head. She gazed at the three other children, and, repelled by Phyllis's cold gaze, turned to Mark and Nell, and stretched out a little fat hand to each of them.

"Come and see the beautiful flowers!" she said gleefully; "you never saw such lovely ones!"

CHAPTER IV.

Mrs. Kane in trouble.

"Now, tell me all about it, for as I am going to be her mother in future I must know everything that concerns my child."

Mrs. Rushton was talking to Mrs. Kane, having come to the cottage to announce her intention of adopting Hetty. Mrs. Kane was crying bitterly.

"You'll excuse me, ma'am. I would not stand in the way of my darling's good fortune, not for ever so, I'm sure. And yet it's hard to give her up."

"I should not have thought it could make much difference to you. I believe she was generally running about the roads when not at school."

"Well, you see, ma'am, that is true; but at night and in the mornings she would kneel on my lap to say her prayers, and put her little soft arms round my neck. And those are the times I'll mostly miss her."

Mrs. Rushton coughed slightly. She herself liked the sight of Hetty's pretty face, and was amused by her prattle; but she was not a woman to think much about the feel of a child's arms around her neck. Mrs. Kane, perceiving that she was not understood, sprang up from her seat and went to fetch a parcel from an inner room.

"This is the little shift she wore when I first set eyes on her. It is the only rag she brought with her; though not much of a rag, I'm bound to say; for so pretty an article of the kind I never saw," said the good woman, spreading out on the table an infant's garment of the finest cambric embroidered delicately round the neck and sleeves.

In the corner was a richly wrought monogram of the initials H.G.

"And that's why we called her Hetty Gray," said Mrs. Kane. "John and I made up the name to suit the letters. If ever her friends turn up they'll know the difference, but in the meantime we had to have something to call her by."



“Why, this is most interesting!” said Mrs. Rushton, examining the monogram; “she probably belonged to people of position. It is quite satisfactory that she should prove to be a gentlewoman by birth.”

“And that is why I feel bound to give her up, ma’am,” said Mrs. Kane, wiping her overflowing eyes. “I’ve always put it before me that some day or other her folks would come wanting her, and I’ve said to myself that it would be terrible if she had grown up in the meantime with no better education than if she was born a village lass. And yet what better could I have done for her than I could have done for a daughter of my own if I had had one?”



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“Just so,” said Mrs. Rushton; “and now you may be sure that she will be educated, trained, dressed, and everything else, just as if she had been in her mother’s house. As for her own people coming for her, I am not sure that I shall give her up if they do. Not unless I have grown tired of her in the meantime.”

“Tired of her!” echoed Mrs. Kane, looking at her visitor in great surprise; “surely, madam, you do not think you will get tired of our little Hetty!”

“I hope not, my good woman; but even if I do you cannot complain, as in that case I shall give her back to you; that is, if it happens before her friends come to fetch her. Unless you are pretending to grieve now, you cannot be sorry at the prospect of having her again.”

“That’s true,” said the poor woman in a puzzled tone, and she still looked wistfully at the handsome visitor sitting before her. She did not know how to express herself, and she was afraid of offending the lady who was going to be Hetty’s mother; yet she felt eager to make some remonstrance against the injustice of the proceeding which Mrs. Rushton spoke of as within the bounds of possibility. She believed in her heart that a great wrong would be done if the child, having been educated and accustomed to luxury for years, were to be carelessly thrown back into a life of lowly poverty. However, the trouble that was in her heart could not find its way through her lips, and she tried to think that Mrs. Rushton spoke only in jest.

“It is altogether like a romance,” that lady was saying as she folded up the baby garment and put it away in a pretty scented satchel which she wore at her side. “I have not met with anything so interesting for years, and I promise myself a great deal of pleasure in the matter.”

“May Hetty come to see me sometimes?” asked Mrs. Kane, humbly curtsying her good-bye, when her visitor was seated in her pony phaeton and gathering up the reins for flight.

“Oh, certainly, as often as you please,” answered Mrs. Rushton gaily, and touching the ponies with her whip she was soon out of sight; while poor Mrs. Kane retreated into her cottage to have a good motherly cry over the tiny broken shoes and the little washed-out faded frocks which were now all that remained to her of her foster-daughter.

CHAPTER V.

A lonely child.

Mrs. Rushton having adopted Hetty, set about extracting the utmost amount of amusement possible from the presence of the child in her home. She soon grew anxious to get away from her brother’s “unpleasantly sensible remarks,” and Isabel’s



gentle excuses for her conduct, which annoyed her even more, as they always suggested motives for her actions which were far beyond her ken, and seemed far-fetched, over-strained, and absurd. So she took the child to London, where she introduced her to her friends as her latest plaything.

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Hetty had frocks of all the colours of the rainbow, and learned to make saucy speeches which entertained Mrs. Rushton's visitors.

She sat beside her new mamma as she drove in her victoria in the park; and on Mrs. Rushton's "at home" days was noticed and petted by fashionable ladies and gentlemen, her beauty praised openly to her face, her pretty clothes remarked upon, and her childish prattle laughed at and applauded as the wittiest talk in the world.

Certainly there were many days when Hetty's presence was wearisome and intolerable to her benefactress, and then she was banished to a large gloomy room at the top of the London house, and left to the tender mercies of a maid, who did not at all forget that she was only Mrs. Kane's little girl from the village of Wavertree, and treated her accordingly. She was often left alone for hours, amusing herself as best she could, crying when she felt very lonely, or leaning far out of the window to feel nearer to the people in the street. The consequence of all this was to spoil the child's naturally sweet temper, to teach her to crave for excitement, and to suffer keenly, when, after a full feast of pleasure, she was suddenly snubbed, scolded, deserted, and forgotten. She began to hate the sight of the bare silent nursery upstairs, where there were no pretty pictures to bear her company, no pleasant little adornments, no diversions such as a mother places in the room where her darlings pass many of their baby hours. It was a motherless, blank, nursery, where the only nurse was the maid, who came and went, and looked upon Hetty as a nuisance; an extra trouble for which she had not been prepared when she engaged to live with Mrs. Rushton.

"Sit down there and behave yourself properly, if you can, till I come back," she would say, and seat Hetty roughly in a chair and go away and leave her there, shutting the door. At first Hetty used to weep dolefully, and sometimes cried herself to sleep; but after a time she became used to her lonely life, and only thought of how she could amuse herself during her imprisonment. She counted the carriages passing the window till she was tired, and watched the little children playing in the garden of the square beyond; but at last she would get bolder, sometimes, and venture out of her nursery to take a peep at the other rooms of the house. One day she made her way down to Mrs. Rushton's bed-room; that lady had gone out and the servants were all downstairs. Hetty contrived to pull out several drawers and played with ribbons and trinkets. At last she opened a case in which was her foster-mother's watch, and as this ticking bit of gold was like a living companion, Hetty pounced upon it at once.

She played all sorts of tricks with the watch, dressed it up in a towel and called it a baby; and making up her mind that baby wanted a bath, popped the watch into a basin of water and set about washing it thoroughly.

Just as she was working away with great energy the door opened and Mrs. Rushton came in. Seeing what the child was doing she flew at her, snatched the watch from her hands, and slapped her violently on the arms and neck. Hetty screamed, beat Mrs.



Rushton on the face with both her little palms, and then was whirled away shrieking into the hands of the negligent maid, who shook her roughly as she carried her off to the miscalled "nursery."

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The little girl, who had never been instructed or talked to sensibly by any one, was quite unconscious of the mischief she had done; and only felt that big people were hateful to-day, as she lay kicking and screaming on the floor upstairs.

The end of it all was, however, that, upon reflection, Mrs. Rushton found she did not care so much after all about the destruction of her watch, and that the whole occurrence would make a capital story to tell to her friends; and so she sent for Hetty, who was then making a dismal play for herself in the twilight with two chairs turned upside down and a pinafore hung from one to another for a curtain. The child was seized by Grant, the maid, dressed in one of her prettiest costumes, and taken down to the drawing-room to Mrs. Rushton, who had quite recovered her temper and forgotten both the beating she had given Hetty and the beating Hetty had given her. The culprit was overwhelmed with kisses, and praises of her pretty eyes; and soon found herself the centre of a brilliant little crowd who were listening with smiles to the story of Hetty's ill-treatment of the watch.

Each year Mrs. Rushton went abroad for amusement and Hetty was taken with her, and in foreign hotels was even more shown about, flattered and snubbed, petted and neglected, than she had been when at home in London. Everything that could be done was done to make her vain, wilful, ill-tempered; and the little creature came to know that she might have anything she pleased if only she could make Mrs. Rushton laugh.

Four or five years passed in this way, during which time Mrs. Rushton had very little intercourse with her brother's family at Wavertree. Her country house had been shut up and her time had been spent between London, Brighton, and fashionable resorts on the Continent. In the meantime the education which she had promised Mrs. Kane should be given to her nursling had not been even begun. Mrs. Rushton had had no leisure to think of it. She looked upon Hetty as still only a babe, a marmoset born to amuse her own hours of ennui. In her brother's occasional letters he sometimes devoted a line to Hetty. "I hope you are not spoiling the little girl," he would add as a postscript; or, "I hope the child is learning something besides monkey-tricks." These insinuations always annoyed Mrs. Rushton, and she never condescended to answer them. The suggestion that she had incurred a great responsibility by adopting Hetty was highly disagreeable to her.

It is hard to say how long this state of things might have gone on had not Mrs. Rushton's health become delicate. She suddenly found herself unable to enjoy the gay life which was so much to her natural taste. The doctors recommended her a quiet sojourn in her native air, and warned her that she ought to live near friends who felt a real interest in her.

Of what these hints might mean Mrs. Rushton did not choose to think, but physical weakness made her long for the rest of her own country home.



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CHAPTER VI.

Hetty and her "Cousins"

One cool fresh evening in October Mrs. Rushton, Hetty, Grant the maid, and an old man-servant who followed his mistress everywhere, arrived at the railway-station near Wavertree, and were driven along the old familiar country road with the soft purpled woods on one side, and the green plains and distant view of the sea on the other. They arrived at Amber Hill just as lights began to spring up in the long narrow windows of the comfortable old gray house, lights more near and bright than the stars burning dimly above the ancient cedar-trees in the avenue.

Hetty, dressed in a costly pelisse trimmed with fur, leaned forward, looking eagerly for the first glimpse of her new home. The child had now only faint recollections of Wavertree, and of her life with Mrs. Kane in the village, and except for Grant's ill-natured remarks from time to time she would have forgotten them altogether and imagined herself to be Mrs. Rushton's niece, as that lady called her when speaking of her to strangers. Hetty hated Grant, who always took a delight in lowering her pride, for by this time, it must be owned, pride had become Hetty's besetting sin.

Mrs. Rushton had perceived Grant's disposition to snub and annoy the child, and with her usual determination to uphold and justify her own conduct and disappoint those who disapproved of her views, she had put down the maid's impertinence with a high hand, and had grown more and more careful of late to protect Hetty's dignity before the servants.

"I hope Miss Gray's room is as nice as I desired you to make it," she said to the housekeeper who was welcoming her in the hall. "I hope you have engaged a maid from the village to attend on her. I require all Grant's attentions now myself," she added wearily, falling into a chair in a state of exhaustion. "Hetty, my love, give me a kiss, and go and have a pretty frock put on for dinner."

Polly, the new maid, had already unpacked the little girl's trunks and was waiting in her room to dress her in white muslin and lace and arrange her soft dark curls in a charming wreath round her head. Hetty's room was an exquisite little nest draped in pale blue chintz covered with roses, and with fantastic little brackets here and there bearing pretty statuettes and baskets of flowers. The housekeeper had not indeed neglected Mrs. Rushton's instructions with regard to the decoration of this apartment.

"My, miss, but you have grown a fine tall girl!" said Polly admiringly; "and won't Mrs. Kane be glad to see you again? I suppose you will be going to see her to-morrow?"

"I am not sure," said Hetty; "I don't remember Mrs. Kane."



“Don’t you, miss? Then you ought to, I am sure, for it was she that took care of you before Mrs. Rushton had you.”

“Yes, I believe so,” said Hetty frowning, for she dreaded that Polly was going to make a practice of taunting her with being a foundling, just as Grant had always done.



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“And you ought to be very thankful to her,” persisted Polly, “although you are such a grand young lady now.”

“Please to mind your own business,” said Hetty proudly; “you were engaged by Mrs. Rushton to dress me and not to give me lectures.”

Polly was astonished and aggrieved. She did not know how Hetty had been goaded on the subject of her past life by Grant, and had fancied that as she had only a child to deal with she could say anything she chose quite freely. But though Hetty was only nine, her experiences of the world had made her old beyond her years. Polly only thought her a hard-hearted, haughty little wretch, too proud to be grateful to those who had been good to her.

“Far be it from me to think of lecturing you, Miss Hetty,” she said; “but mind, I tell you, pride always gets a fall.”

“Be silent!” cried Hetty, stamping her small foot imperiously; “if Mrs. Rushton knew of your impertinence she would send you away to-night.”

It was thus that poor Hetty already began to make enemies, while much requiring friends.

Next morning Mrs. Rushton and Hetty drove over to Wavertree to spend a few days at the Hall, and on the way the lady stopped at Mrs. Kane’s door in the village, and bade Hetty alight and go in to pay a visit to her old protectress. With Grant’s taunts rankling in her memory and Polly’s reproaches fresh in her mind, Hetty got out of the carriage reluctantly and went up to the door with a slow step.

Mrs. Kane was busy over a tub in her little wash-house, and came out into the kitchen on hearing some one at the door. She wore a print short-gown and petticoat, and a poky sun-bonnet; and her bare arms were reeking with soap-suds. Hetty shrank from her a little, and could not realize that she had ever belonged to a person with such an appearance as this.

Poor Mrs. Kane looked at her young visitor with a stare of wonder, and could never have guessed it was Hetty had she not espied Mrs. Rushton’s face through the open doorway, nodding pleasantly at her from the carriage.

“Why, little miss, you’re never my little Hetty?” cried the good woman, wiping her hands in her apron.

“My name is Hetty Gray,” said the little girl, holding up her pretty head adorned with a handsome hat and feathers.



“And don’t you remember me, my darling?” said Mrs. Kane, extending her arms; “me that used to nurse you and take care of you like my own! Oh, don’t go to say you forget all about your poor old mammy!”

Hetty hung her head. “I don’t remember you at all,” she said in a low trembling voice. Her pride was stung to the quick at the thought that she had belonged to this vulgar person.

“Well, well! you were only a baby, to be sure, when you were taken away from me. But oh, my dear, I loved you like my own that went to heaven, so I did. And my John, he loved you too. Come in here till I show you the bed you used to sleep in; and always you would be happier if you had a jugful of flowers on the window-sill to look at, falling asleep and coming awake again in the morning. To think of it being full five years ago, my pretty; and you turned into an elegant young lady in the time!”



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“Did I really ever live here?” asked Hetty; “really ever sleep in that bed?”

“That you did; and slept well and were happy,” said Mrs. Kane, beginning to feel hurt at the child’s coldness. “Come now, have you never a kiss to give to the poor old mammy that nursed you?”

Hetty held up her round sweet face, as fair and fresh as a damask rose, to be kissed, and submitted to Mrs. Kane’s caresses rather from consciousness that she ought to do so, than from any warmth of gratitude in her own heart. So far from being grateful to the homely sun-burned woman who hugged her, she felt a sort of resentment towards her for finding her on the sea-shore and making a cottage child of her. It ought to have been Mrs. Rushton who found her, and perhaps she might have done so if Mrs. Kane or her husband had not been in such a hurry to take her in. Then Grant could not have taunted her with being a village foundling, and nobody could have declared she was not intended to be a lady.

After her one embrace Mrs. Kane wiped her eyes and led the child out of the cottage to the carriage door.

“Ah, Mrs. Rushton!” she said, “this is your Hetty now and not mine any more. What does a fine young lady like this want to know of a poor old mammy like me? I gave her to you, body and soul, five years ago, and may the good God grant that I did right! My little Hetty, that loved the big moon-daisies and the field-lilies like her life, is as dead as my other children who are in heaven. It lies in your hands, ma’am, to make good or bad out of this one.”

“You are a curious woman, Mrs. Kane. I thought you would have been delighted to see what a little queen I have made of her.”

“Queens require kingdoms, ma’am, and I make free to wish that your little lady may sit safe on her throne. And after that I can only hope that she has more heart for you than for me.”

“Come, come, Mrs. Kane! you must not expect memory from a baby. Hetty will soon renew her acquaintance with you, and you and she will be excellent friends.”

But Mrs. Kane was not slow to read the expression of Hetty’s large dark-fringed eyes, which, with all the frankness of childhood, betrayed their owner’s thoughts; and she knew that Hetty would find no pleasure in learning to recall the inglorious circumstances of her infancy.

Hetty had still less recollection of the Enderby family than of Mrs. Kane, but she felt very much more willing to be introduced to its members than to the cottage woman. Looking upon herself as Mrs. Rushton’s only child, she considered the Wavertree children as her



cousins and their father and mother as her uncle and aunt. Mrs. Rushton had always talked to her of them in such a way as to lead her to regard them in this light. Occasionally a strange little laugh or a few sarcastic words from Mrs. Rushton had grated on the child's ear in the midst of her foster-mother's pleasantly expressed anticipations of Hetty's

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future intercourse with her own relations; and the little girl had, on such occasions, felt a chill of vague fear, and a momentary pang of anxiety as to the reception she might possibly meet with from these people, none of whom had ever been found by a poor labouring man alone on a wild sea-shore, or had lived with a humble woman in a cottage. That the “disgrace” of such a past clung round herself, Grant’s disagreeable eyes would never allow her to forget. Such were poor Hetty’s disordered ideas with regard to herself and her little world, when Mrs. Rushton’s carriage drew up that day before the door of Wavertree Hall.

Mrs. Enderby was seated at her embroidery in the drawing-room beside her small elegant tea-table, and looked the very ideal of an English gentlewoman in her silver-gray silk and delicate lace ruffles, and with her fair, almost colourless hair twisted in neat shining braids round the back of her head. With her own faint sweet smile she welcomed her sister-in-law and inquired kindly for her health; and then she turned to Hetty, who stood gazing steadily in her face, utterly unconscious of her own look of anxious inquiry.

Mrs. Rushton had taken pains to make the most of Hetty’s uncommon beauty on this occasion, determined to take her friends by surprise and force them into an acknowledgment of the superiority of her own taste in adopting such a child. Hetty was dressed in a dark crimson velvet frock, trimmed with rich old yellow lace, which enhanced the warmth and richness of her complexion, and gave a reflected glow to her dark and deep-fringed eyes. A crop of crisp short curls of a dusky chestnut colour was discovered when her hat was removed. No ungenerous prejudice prevented Mrs. Enderby from acknowledging at the first glance that Hetty had a most charming countenance.

“And this is Hetty! how she has grown!” said Mrs. Enderby, taking the child’s little hand between her own and looking at her in a friendly manner. With a swift pain, however, Hetty remarked that she did not kiss her; but she was not aware that Mrs. Enderby, though a kind, was not a demonstrative woman, and that kisses were rarely bestowed by her on anyone. If Hetty had put up her little face for a caress, Mrs. Enderby would have been very well pleased to lay her own cool cheek against the child’s scarlet lips; but Hetty’s was one of those natures that desire tokens of love and are yet too proud to seek for them. She flushed to her hair, therefore, with mortification as Mrs. Enderby dropped her hand and turned away once more to her sister-in-law.

“How tired you are! you look quite faint. Allow me to take your bonnet; and do lie down on this couch while I make you a cup of tea. Hetty must amuse herself with a piece of cake till my little girls come in from their walk. I have got such a nice governess for them, Amy. Mark, you know, is gone to Eton.”



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The ladies continued to converse, and Hetty sat forgotten for the moment, eating her cake. She ate it very slowly, anxious to make it last as long as possible, for she felt that when it was finished she should not know what to do with herself. When even the crumbs were gone she folded her hands and counted the flowers on the wall-paper, and discovered among them a grinning face which certainly had been no acquaintance of the designer's, but had started suddenly out of the pattern merely to make cruel fun of Hetty's uneasiness.

At last, after some time which seemed to the little girl quite a year at least, Mrs. Enderby rang the bell and asked if the young ladies had come in from walking. The servant said they were just going to tea in the school-room, and Mrs Enderby turned to Hetty, saying:

"Go, my dear, with Peter, and he will show you the school-room. Tell Phyllis and Nell that I sent you to play with them."

Hetty followed the servant; but as she went across the hall and up the staircase she felt with a swelling heart that had she been the real cousin of these children, and not an "upstart" (Grant's favourite word), they would perhaps have been sent for to the drawing-room to be presented to her.

Accustomed as she was to be alternately petted and snubbed, she had acquired the habit of watching the movements of her elders with suspicion, and now concluded that because no fuss was made about her she must therefore be despised. A hard proud spirit entered into her on the moment, and she resolved that though she had been humble in her demeanour towards Mrs. Enderby she would hold her head high with girls who were not very much older than herself.

Peter was a young footman who had been brought up in the village and trained by the butler at the Hall, and who consequently knew all about Hetty's history. He did not intend to do more than just show the little girl which was the school-room door, and was amused and surprised when the child said to him with great dignity,

"Please announce Miss Gray."

Peter hid his smile, and throwing open the door very wide he pronounced her name, as she desired, in an unusually loud tone of voice.

Miss Davis, the governess, had just raised the tea-pot in her hand to fill the cups, and her two pupils had each a thick piece of bread and butter in hand, when the door was flung open as described and Hetty in all her magnificence appeared on the threshold.

"My mamma has brought me to see you," said Hetty boldly, her chin very high, "and Mrs. Enderby sent me here to you"; and she remarked as she spoke that the Enderby



girls wore plain holland dresses with little aprons and narrow tuckers, no style or elegance whatever about their attire.

Miss Davis looked in surprise at the young stranger, not knowing her story, and thinking her a very handsome, but haughty looking little girl, while Phyllis and Nell put down their bread and butter on their plates, and rose slowly from their seats.



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“How do you do?” they said, each just touching her hand, and then the three girls stood looking at one another.

The words “my mamma” had already annoyed Phyllis, who was one of those persons who even from childhood cherish an extraordinary degree of quiet pride in their good birth. She was willing that Hetty should be treated with kindness, but had often told herself that she would never be persuaded to look upon her as her own cousin. Nell only thought of how pretty their new playfellow was, and how nice it would be to have her sometimes with them.

“I am very glad you have come,” she said, looking at Hetty with welcoming eyes.

“Nell, you ought not to speak before your elder sister,” said Miss Davis, who, though an excellent lady, was rather prim in her ways and ideas.

“I hope you are quite well,” said Phyllis politely; “will you take some tea?”

“I have just had some,” said Hetty, “thank you. Do you never have tea with your mamma?”

“Oh, no,” said the girls, with a smile of surprise.

“Little girls never do,” said Miss Davis emphatically.

“I do always,” said Hetty; she might have added, “except when she forgets all about me,” but she did not think of that now.

“I did not know you had any mamma,” said Phyllis coldly, not exactly meaning to be cruel, but feeling that Hetty was pretentious, and therefore vulgar, and that she ought to be kept down.

“How odd that you should not know your own aunt,” said Hetty, a warm crimson rising in her cheeks, and her eyes kindling.

“My aunt never had a child,” said Phyllis quietly.

“Not till she got Hetty,” broke in Nell. “Phyllis, how can you be so unkind?”

“My dear Nell, I am not unkind, I only meant to correct Miss Gray’s mistake.”

“You had better go into the drawing-room and correct Mrs. Rushton’s mistakes,” said Hetty angrily. “It is by her desire that I call her my mother.”

By this time Miss Davis knew who Hetty was, as she had heard something about Mrs. Rushton’s having adopted a village child.



“My dears,” she said, “don’t let us be unkind to each other. Come, we must have our tea, and Miss Gray will be social and join us, even though she has had some before.” And she handed a cup to the little visitor.

“Now, Hetty,” continued Miss Davis, “I suppose I may call you Hetty, instead of Miss Gray, as you are only a little girl?”

“Yes,” said Hetty slowly, half liking Miss Davis, but feeling afraid she was laughing at her.

Tea was finished almost in silence, not all Miss Davis’s efforts making Hetty and Phyllis feel at ease with each other. Nell, being rather in awe of her elder sister, of whose general propriety of conduct and good sense she had a high opinion, was not very successful in her attempts at conversation. When the meal was over Miss Davis proposed a walk in the garden before study time.



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"Can you play lawn tennis?" asked Nell as they walked towards the tennis-ground.

"No, I never play at anything," said Hetty sadly, "When not with—*my mamma*," she said with a flash of the eyes at seeing Phyllis looking at her, "I have always been alone."

Miss Davis glanced at the child with pity, but Hetty, catching her eye, would not bear to be pitied.

"It is much pleasanter to be with grown people in the drawing-room," she said. "I should not like at all to live as you do."

"Do you always wear such splendid frocks?" asked Phyllis, examining her from head to foot with critical eyes.

"Yes," said Hetty. "I have much finer ones than this; I am always dressed like a lady. How can you bear to be such a sight in that ugly linen thing?"

"My dear, simple clothes are more becoming to children," said Miss Davis, while Phyllis only curled her lip. "If you lived more among those of your own age," continued the governess, "as I hope you will henceforth do, you would find that little girls are much happier and more free to amuse themselves when dressed suitably to their age. You shall see how we enjoy ourselves at tennis, as we could not do in dresses as rich as yours."

Miss Davis and her pupils began to play tennis, and Hetty tried to join; but her dress was too warm and too tight to allow of her making much exertion, and so she was obliged to stand by and watch the game. Seeing the great enjoyment of the players, Hetty began to feel the spirit of the game, and remembered how she had often longed to be one of the happy children whom she had seen at play in other scenes than this. However, her belief that Phyllis was unfriendly towards her prevented her acknowledging what she felt. Had only Nell and Miss Davis been present she would have begged the loan of a holland blouse and joined in the game with all her heart. But Phyllis had a freezing effect upon her.

When the game was over they went indoors and Hetty was shown the pretty room prepared for her. Polly had already unpacked her things, and on the bed were laid the handsome gifts which Mrs. Rushton had bought for Hetty to present to "her cousins."

Hetty was now glad to see these presents which she had for a time forgotten, and thought she had now a good opportunity for making friends with the two girls. She was really pleased to give pleasure to Nell, whom she liked, and was not sorry that Phyllis would be obliged to receive something from her hands.

The presents were both beautiful and both useful. One was a desk, the case delicately inlaid, and the interior perfectly fitted up. The other was an exquisitely carved and furnished work-box.

“Oh, give the desk to Phyllis; she is so much more clever than I am, and writes so well. And I am fond of work. Oh, you are a dear to give me such a charming present,” said Nell affectionately, examining the beautiful work-box with sparkling eyes.



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Hetty was delighted.

"I chose them myself," she said with some pride; and then she took the desk in her arms and asked Nell to show her the way to Phyllis's room.

"It is down at the end of this passage. I will show you. And you must not mind Phyllis if she does not go into raptures like me. She is always so well-behaved, and takes everything so quietly."

Phyllis looked greatly surprised, and not quite pleased, when, having heard a knock at her door and said "Come in," she saw Hetty invade her room. Her first thought was, "This foundling girl is going to be forward and troublesome"; and Hetty was not slow to read her glance.

"I have brought you a present," she said, in quite a different tone from that in which she had made her little speech to Nell.

Phyllis took the desk slowly, and looked at it as if she wished it had not been offered.

"It is very handsome," she said, "and my aunt was very good to think of it. Please give her my best thanks."

And then Phyllis deposited the present on a table, and turned away and began to change her shoes.

Nell looked at Hetty, but could not see the expression of her face; for she had turned as quickly as Phyllis and was already vanishing through the door.

CHAPTER VII.

Hetty's first lessons.

Hetty's bed-room being over the school-room, she was wakened the next morning by somebody practising on the piano, the sound from which ascended through the floor.

"How well they play, and how early they rise!" thought Hetty. "I wonder whether it is Nell or Phyllis who is at the piano? Oh, dear! I do not know even a note."

She longed to ask Polly at what hour the Miss Enderbys had got up, and which of them was practising on the piano, but as she had begun by snubbing Polly she could not now descend from her dignity so far as to ask her questions. Polly on her side was always silent when attending on Miss Gray, and never ventured upon the least freedom with the haughty little foundling.



When Hetty descended to the breakfast-room she found only Mr. and Mrs. Enderby at the table. Mrs. Rushton was still in her room, and was having her breakfast there.

“This is little Hetty,” said Mrs. Enderby, presenting her to her husband.

Mr. Enderby put down his paper and looked at Hetty gravely and critically, Hetty thought pityingly.

“How do you do, my dear?” he said, patting her shoulder. “I see you have not been accustomed to early hours.”

Hetty hung her head and sat down at the table. Mrs. Enderby supplied her wants and then went on reading her letters; and Hetty ate in silence, wondering why she was not called on to talk and amuse these people as she had been accustomed to amuse Mrs. Rushton’s fashionable friends. This quiet wise-looking lady and gentleman seemed to look on her with quite different eyes from those with which the rest of the world regarded her. They neither snubbed nor petted her, only seemed satisfied to allow her to be comfortable beside them.



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Presently she plucked up courage to ask:

“Are Phyllis and Nell not coming to breakfast?”

Mrs. Enderby smiled.

“No, my dear, they never breakfast here. They breakfasted an hour ago in the school-room. They are busy at their studies at present.”

“Are they always busy at studies?” asked Hetty.

“A great part of the day they are.”

“As all little girls ought to be who wish to be educated women some day,” said Mr. Enderby, looking over the edge of his newspaper.

“Your education has hardly begun yet I fear,” said Mrs. Enderby.

“Mrs. Rushton”—something withheld Hetty from saying “my mamma” before Mr. and Mrs. Enderby—“always says it is time enough for that,” said Hetty.

Mr. and Mrs. Enderby exchanged glances, and Mr. Enderby shifted in his seat and shook the newspaper impatiently. Mrs. Enderby said:

“What would you think of joining my girls at their lessons while you stay here? I fear that if you do not you will find yourself very lonely.”

“I am often very lonely,” said Hetty simply; and again her host and hostess looked at each other.

“Well, which do you prefer?” said the latter; “to be very lonely going about the house and gardens by yourself, or to spend your time usefully with the other children in the school-room?”

“I would rather be with the girls, if they would like to have me,” said Hetty after a few moments’ reflection. “But I think Phyllis would rather I stayed away.”

“Oh, I think not,” said Mrs. Enderby; “Phyllis never makes a fuss about anything, but I will answer for her that she will welcome you.”

“I think she does not like me,” said Hetty, looking steadily at her hostess with large serious eyes.

“Take care you do not dislike her,” said Mr. Enderby, with a slight look of displeasure. “In this house we do not indulge such fancies.”



“My dear, you must not think that because our manners here in the country may be quieter and perhaps less warm than those of some of the people you have lived with abroad, our hearts are therefore cold. Come, then, if you have finished breakfast, I will take you myself into the school-room.”

Half pleased and half unwilling Hetty suffered herself to be led away, and her heart beat fast as she crossed the school-room threshold. Miss Davis sat at the end of the table with an open exercise book before her, and a severely businesslike look upon her face. Phyllis and Nell bent over their books at either side of the same table. Maps hung on the walls and books lay about everywhere. Hetty instantly, and for the first time in her life, felt keenly that she was a dunce.

“Miss Davis, I have brought you another pupil,” said Mrs. Enderby; “I am sure you will not mind the trouble of having one more than usual for a little while. I think Hetty will be happier for having something to do.”



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"I shall be very pleased if she will join us," said Miss Davis; and then Mrs. Enderby left the room, and Hetty was asked to take a seat at the foot of the table.

"What have you been learning, my dear?" asked Miss Davis.

"Nothing," said Hetty; "I can read a little; but that is all."

Phyllis and Nell had not spoken to her, and had looked at her only with sidelong glances. This was because it was their study hour and speaking was not allowed; but Hetty thought it was because they were not glad to see her coming to join them, and she therefore felt all the more careless about trying to make the best of herself. If nobody cared about her, what did it matter whether she was a dunce or not? So she said boldly that she had been learning nothing; and then the two Enderby girls lifted up their heads and stared at her in sheer amazement.

Hetty's face grew crimson, and her pride arose within her.

"After all," she said, "it is much better fun to play and amuse yourself all day than to sit poring over books. Study does not make people prettier or pleasanter."

This last sentence was an echo from one of Mrs. Rushton's silly speeches. When people would ask her about Hetty's education, she was wont to declare that the child was prettier and pleasanter without it.

Phyllis, listening, merely curled her lip, and bent lower in silence over her book. Nell remained looking at Hetty with a wondering expression in her eyes. Miss Davis drew herself up and looked much displeased.

"I hope you are doing yourself great injustice," she said; "I cannot believe you really mean what you say. Study not make people prettier or pleasanter! I scarcely believe that my ears have not deceived me."

"It does not make you prettier or pleasanter," said Hetty persistently. "You were much nicer yesterday when you were playing and running about. Your face is not the same at all now."

Phyllis opened her eyes wide and turned them on Miss Davis, as if to ask, "Is not this too much?" Nell, on the contrary, began to smile as though she thought Hetty's impudence capital fun; and this encouraged Hetty, who had been taught to love to amuse people at any cost. Miss Davis coloured with surprise and annoyance.

"It is of no consequence, my dear, how we look when we are doing our duty," she said, controlling herself.



“Then I hope I shall never do my duty,” said Hetty coolly; “nobody loves people who do not look gay.”

Phyllis turned to Miss Davis and said, “Will you not send her away now? Mother never meant us to be interrupted like this.”

“Patience, my dear!” said Miss Davis; “Hetty is perhaps giving us the worst side of her character only to startle us. I am sure there is a better side somewhere. Come over here to me, Hetty, and let me hear you read.”

Hetty obeyed, and took the book Miss Davis placed in her hand. Holding herself very erect and looking very serious she began, after a glance over the paragraph that had been marked for her:—



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“Leonora walked on her head, a little higher than usual.”

“My dear!” interrupted Miss Davis hastily; and Nell vainly tried to smother a burst of laughter.

“That is what is printed here,” said Hetty gravely, but the corners of her mouth twitched. Miss Davis did not notice this as she took the book and prepared to examine the text so startlingly given forth; but Phyllis and Nell saw at once that Hetty was making fun.

“Ah!” said Miss Davis, “it is your punctuation that is at fault. The sentence runs: ‘Leonora walked on, her head a little higher than usual.’ You see one little comma makes all the difference in the world.”

“I wondered how she could manage to walk on her head,” said Hetty in the most serious manner; “and why, if she did manage it, it should make her higher. She would be the same length in any case, would she not, Miss Davis?”

Nell laughed again, and Phyllis looked more and more contemptuous. Miss Davis said, “Read on please!” rather severely, at the same time giving Nell a glance of warning.

Hetty read on, making deliberately the most laughable blunders, at some of which Miss Davis herself had to smile. Even Phyllis had to give way on one occasion, and in the midst of a chorus of laughter Hetty stood making a piteous face, pretending not to know what they were laughing at.

“I told you I could read only a little,” she said, but at the same time she gave Nell a knowing glance which Phyllis caught.

“She could read better if she pleased. She is only amusing herself,” said Phyllis to Miss Davis.

“I hope not, my dear,” said the governess; “do not be uncharitable. Well, Hetty, you may put aside your book for to-day. I hope to improve you before your visit is over. Do you know anything of geography? Come, I will give you an easy question. Where is England situated on the map?”

“In the middle of the Red Sea,” said Hetty briskly.

“My dear! why do you suppose so?”

“I see it up there on the map,” said Hetty; “the sea is marked in red all round it.”

Nell tittered again. Phyllis put her fingers in her ears, determined to hear no more of Hetty’s absurdities.



“You make a great mistake,” said Miss Davis, and spreading a map before Hetty, the governess gave her a lesson on the position of the Red Sea and the relative position of England.

“Have you learned anything at all of numbers?”

“I can count on my fingers,” said Hetty; “I add up the fives and I can reckon up to a hundred that way.”

“You must learn a better way of counting than that. Have you never learned the multiplication table?”

“My mamma’s tables are all ebony or marble,” said Hetty, putting on a bewildered air, “but I will count them up if you like. There are six in the drawing-room,” she continued, holding up all the fingers of her left hand, and the thumb of the right.



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“You ridiculous child! you misunderstand me quite. The multiplication table is an arrangement of numbers. I will give it to you to study. In the meantime, come, how many do three threes make when they are added together?”

“I don’t know anything about threes,” said Hetty; “I only know about fives.”

“I think I must give you up for to-day,” said Miss Davis in despair. “Phyllis is waiting with her French exercise. Can you read French at all, Hetty?”

“I can talk French,” said Hetty; “but I don’t want to read it; ’tis quite bad enough to have to read English, I think. Talking is so much pleasanter than reading.”

“You can talk it, can you? Let me hear,” and Miss Davis addressed a question to her in French.

In answer to it Hetty poured forth a perfect flood of French, spoken with a pretty accent and grammatically correct. In truth she spoke like a little Frenchwoman, and completely surprised her listeners. She had been asked some question about walking in the Champs Elysees and now gave a vivid description of the scene there on a fine morning, the people who frequented it, their dress, their manners, their conversation.

Miss Davis put down the multiplication table which she had been turning over and stared at the little Frenchwoman chattering and gesticulating before her.

“There, my dear,” she said presently, “that will do; I see you can make use of your tongue. Take this book now and study quietly for half an hour.”

Hetty felt that she had had her little triumph at last. Neither Phyllis nor Nell could speak French like that. She took the table-book obediently and sat down with it, while Phyllis made an effort to get over the shock of surprise given her by Hetty’s clever exhibition, and proceeded to attend to Miss Davis’s correction of her French exercise.

That afternoon Hetty was dressed in a holland frock of Nell’s, which, though Nell was a year older, was not too large for her, and joined heartily in a game of lawn tennis. Her little success of the morning, when she had surprised her companions and their governess by her cleverness at French, had raised her spirits, and she enjoyed herself as she had never done in her life before, feeling that she could afford to do without Phyllis’ good opinion, and taking more and more pleasure in showing how little she cared to have it.

After this the days that remained of her visit passed pleasantly enough. Hetty contrived to turn her lessons into a sort of burlesque, and to impose a good deal on Miss Davis, who was not a humorous, but indeed a most matter-of-fact person. Every day Phyllis grew more and more disgusted with their visitor, who interrupted the even course of their studies and “made fools,” as she considered, of Miss Davis and Nell. She thought



Hetty's pretentiousness became greater and greater as her first slight shyness wore away and she grew perfectly familiar with every one in the house. Phyllis was sufficiently generous to refrain from complaining of Hetty to her mother or father, but she privately found fault with Nell for encouraging her too much.



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“You laugh at her so absurdly that she grows more impudent every day,” she said; “she could not dare to give herself such airs only for you.”

“But, Phyllis dear, I can’t help laughing at her, and indeed I think you make her proud by being so hard upon her; she is not so proud with me.”

“She is ridiculous,” said Phyllis; “such pretension in a girl of her age is utterly absurd. Besides, it is so vulgar. Well-born people are not always trying to force their importance on you as she does; if I did not try to keep her down a little she would be quite unbearable.”

“Perhaps if you did not try to keep her down so much she would not set herself up so much,” persisted Nell.

“I am older and wiser than you,” said Phyllis coldly.

“Yes, I know you are,” said Nell regretfully.

“And I ought to be a better judge of people’s conduct. I am not going to complain of her to father or mother; but as she will be coming here again, I suppose, we ought to try to manage her a little ourselves.”

Nell did not dare to say any more to Phyllis, but ran away as soon as she could get an opportunity, to play with Hetty and laugh admiringly at all her droll remarks.

One more triumph Hetty enjoyed before her visit to Wavertree came to an end. On a certain evening there was a dinner-party at the Hall, and some one who had been expected to sing and amuse the company failed to appear. After dinner Mrs. Rushton fancied that the party had grown very dull, and a brilliant idea for entertaining the guests occurred to her. She left the drawing-room and went upstairs to where the little girls were preparing for bed.

“Come, Hetty,” she said, “I want you to make yourself agreeable. Every one is going to sleep down-stairs and carriages will not arrive till eleven. I have rung for Polly to dress you. Phyllis and Nell can come down also if they please.”

The Enderby girls concluded from this speech that their mother had sent for them, and in a short time Mrs. Rushton returned to the drawing-room, accompanied by the three children.

Mrs. Enderby looked exceedingly surprised and not quite pleased, but Mrs. Rushton said,

“I have provided some amusement for your people. Hetty will make them laugh.”



Hetty was flushed and trembling with excitement, and at a signal from her adopted mother she stepped into the middle of the room and began her entertainment; Mrs. Rushton having walked about among the guests beforehand, telling them that the child was going to give them some sketches of character, the result of her own observations.

Hetty began with a conversation between a mincing and lackadaisical young lady and a bouncing one who talked noisily; and she changed her attitudes, her accent, the expressions of her face in such droll ways, and altogether contrasted the two characters so well, that a round of applause and laughter greeted and encouraged her. Then followed a ridiculous scene between a cross old lady and an amiable old gentleman in a hotel; and so on. Every odd character Hetty had ever met was reproduced for the amusement of the company.



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Most of the guests laughed heartily and lavished praises on Hetty's talent and beauty. Only a few looked shocked, and shook their heads, saying it was sad to see a child so precocious and cynical.

Mr. and Mrs. Enderby, though disliking the exhibition and thinking it very bad for the little girl, were obliged to laugh with the rest, and Mrs. Rushton was delighted and triumphant. Nell laughed more than any one and clapped her hands wildly, but Phyllis looked on all the time with a disdainful smile.

"My girls are up too late," said Mrs. Enderby, as she bade them good night.

"Why did you send for us, then, mother?" said Phyllis.

"I did not, my dear, it was quite your aunt's doing. She wished to amuse you, I believe."

"Then I wish I had known," said Phyllis, "I would rather have gone to bed. I did not want to see that ridiculous performance."

"Hetty took some trouble to make us laugh. And if she has not been very wisely brought up we must not blame her too much for that."

"I do not like her; I wish she would go away," said Phyllis with quiet determination.

"She is going to-morrow," said Mrs. Enderby.

"She is not a lady, mother, and I am quite tired of her restless ways," persisted Phyllis. "I hope she will never come back here."

Mrs. Enderby in her heart echoed this hope, but she controlled her feeling against Hetty and said:

"I fear your aunt is not the sort of person to understand the bringing up of a girl; but remember, Phyllis, that I rely on you to help me to be of service to this poor child. Go to bed now, my daughter, and be wise, as you usually are."

Phyllis looked troubled, and thought over her mother's words as she lay in bed. But hers was not one of those natures that relent easily. She tried to satisfy her conscience by assuring herself that she wished no ill to Hetty, but quite the reverse. "Only she is different from us," she reflected, "and she ought to keep away with the people who suit her. I hope aunt Amy will not bring her here again."

CHAPTER VIII.

Hetty desolate.



Mrs. Rushton and Hetty departed. Phyllis was satisfied, and everything went on as usual at Wavertree Hall. No one was sorry to lose the visitors, except Nell, who was secretly rather fond of Hetty. She was not a very brave child, and was much influenced by the opinion of others, especially of those whom she loved and admired; so, though there was a soft corner in her heart for Hetty, she was a little ashamed of the fact, seeing that none of the rest of the family shared her feeling. With Phyllis especially she was careful to be silent about Hetty, having a high opinion of her sister's good sense, and being greatly afraid of her contempt. And so it came that after a few days had passed Hetty's name was mentioned no more in the house.

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Meantime Hetty at Amber Hill was enjoying her life more than she had ever enjoyed it before. She had her own pony, and went out to ride as often as, and at any hour she pleased. Half-a-dozen dogs and as many cats belonged to her, and they all loved her. Almost her entire time was spent out of doors, for Mrs. Rushton was too great an invalid now to care for much of her company. Grant was almost always in attendance on her mistress, and so had very little opportunity for interference with Hetty. Polly was easily kept in order, and the housekeeper always took the child's part if any of the other servants annoyed or neglected her.

This wild uncontrolled life, spent chiefly in the open air, wandering through the woods, running races with the dogs, or galloping up hill and down hill with them all flying after the pony's heels, suited Hetty exactly. She thought the world delightful because she was allowed to live a healthy active life, and nobody thwarted her. When Mrs. Rushton sent for her to the drawing-room or to her bed-room Hetty would steal in quietly, and, bringing a story-book with her, would sit down at her adopted mother's feet, and remain buried in her book till notice was given her that it was time for her to depart. In this way she gave very little trouble, and Mrs. Rushton was more than ever convinced that she had made an excellent choice in adopting Hetty, and that she was the most satisfactory child in the world.

One day Hetty had come in from her ride, and was sitting in her own room with her story-book waiting for the usual evening summons from Mrs. Rushton. The days were now very short, and the little girl's head was close to the window-pane as she tried to read. The door opened and she started up, shutting the book and preparing to go down-stairs; but there was something unusual about Polly's look and manner as she came into the room.

"Mrs. Rushton is taken very ill," she said, "and the doctor is sent for. So you will please come down and have your tea in the drawing-room by yourself, Miss Hetty."

"Is she more ill than usual? Much more?" asked Hetty. "The doctor was here this morning."

"She's as ill as can be," said Polly, "and all of a sudden. But you can't do her any good. And you'd better come down to your tea."

Hetty followed Polly without saying more, though she felt too anxious to care about her tea. She was greatly frightened, yet hardly knew why, as Mrs. Rushton was often ill, and the doctor was often sent for. There was a general impression in the household that the mistress sometimes made a great fuss about nothing, fainted, and thought she was going to die, and in a few hours was as well as usual. But no one in the house felt as anxious about her as Hetty. During the pleasant weeks that had lately passed over her head Hetty had been more drawn to her benefactress than she had ever been before. No longer snubbed and neglected in strange uncomfortable places, she



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had, in becoming more happy, also become more loving. She knew that she owed all the enjoyments of her present life to Mrs. Rushton, and if she was not allowed to be much in the company of her adopted mother she thought it was not because she was forgotten, but because Mrs. Rushton was too ill to see her. She believed herself really very greatly beloved by her benefactress, and had begun to love her very much in return. Seeing her lying on her couch, quiet and gentle, making no cruel remarks and laughing no cynical laughs, Hetty had constructed a sort of ideal mother out of the invalid, and endowed her with every lovable and admirable quality. This comfortable little dream had added much to the child's happiness in her life of late; and now she felt a wild alarm at the thought of the increased illness of her protectress.

The doctor came and was shut up in the sick-room, and after some time Grant came out and spoke to the housekeeper, and a messenger was sent off on horseback to Wavertree Hall.

When Grant came back to Mrs. Rushton's door Hetty was there with her face against the panel.

"Oh, Grant, do tell me what is the matter!" she whispered.

"Illness is the matter," said Grant. "There! we don't want children in the way at such times. Go up to your bed, miss. You'll be better there than here."

"I can't go to bed till I know if she is better," said Hetty. "Why have you sent a message to Wavertree?"

But Grant pursed up her lips and would say no more, and Hetty saw her pass into Mrs. Rushton's room and close the door.

The child crept back to the drawing-room, where no lamps had been lighted and there was only a little firelight to make the darkness and emptiness of the large room more noticeable. She knelt down on the hearth-rug and buried her face in the seat of Mrs. Rushton's favourite arm-chair. The dearest of all her dear dogs, Scamp, came and laid his black muzzle beside her ear, as if he knew the whole case and wanted to mourn with her. Two hours passed; Hetty listened intently for every sound, and wondered impatiently why Mr. and Mrs. Enderby did not arrive. She got up and carefully placed some lumps of coal on the fire, making no noise lest some one should come and order her off to bed. She was resolved to stay there all night rather than go to bed without learning something more.

At last a sound of wheels was heard, and Hetty went and peeped out of the drawing-room door and saw Mr. and Mrs. Enderby taking off their wraps in the hall. Their faces



were very solemn and they spoke in whispers. She saw them go upstairs, and though longing to follow them, did not dare. Then she retreated back into the drawing-room and buried her face once more in the depths of the chair.

In this position, with Scamp's rough head close to hers, she cried herself to sleep. The wintry dawn was just beginning to show faintly in the room when she was awakened by the sound of voices near her. Chilled and stiff she gathered herself up and rose to her feet; and Scamp also got up and shook himself. Then Hetty saw Mr. and Mrs. Enderby standing in earnest conversation at the window.



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They started when they saw her as if she had been a ghost, and Mrs. Enderby exclaimed in a low voice:

“The child! I had quite forgotten her!”

“Yes, there will be trouble here,” muttered Mr. Enderby; while Hetty came forward, her face pale and stained with crying, her dress disordered, and her curly hair wild and disarranged. She looked so altered that they scarcely knew her.

“How is she? Oh, Mrs. Enderby, say she is better,” cried Hetty, swallowing a sob.

“My dear child,” said Mrs. Enderby, “how have you come to be forgotten here, have you not been in bed all night?”

“I stayed here,” said Hetty, “I wanted to know; will you not tell me how she is?”

“My child, she is well, I hope, though not as you would wish to see her. It has pleased God to take her away from you.”

“Do you mean that she is dead?”

“Yes, my poor Hetty, I am grieved to tell you it is so.”

Hetty uttered a sharp cry and turned her back on her friends standing in the window. The gesture was an unmistakable one, and touched the husband and wife. It seemed to say so plainly that she expected nothing from them.

She retreated into the furthest corner of the room and flung herself on the floor, and Scamp, hanging his head and wagging his tail, followed her mournfully, and lay down as close to her as he could.

“Leave her alone awhile,” said Mr. Enderby, for his wife had made a movement as if she would follow her; “she is a strange child, and we will give her time to take in the fact of her loss. You must not be hurried into making rash promises through pity; all this brings a great change to the girl, and it is better she should feel it from the first.”

The truth was Mrs. Rushton had been dead when her brother and sister-in-law arrived. A sudden attack of fainting had resulted in death. This abrupt termination of her illness was not quite unexpected by herself or her friends, as it was known she had disease of the heart, and the doctors had given warning that such might be her end. However, she herself had not liked to look this probability in the face, and had preferred to dwell on the faint hope held out to her that she might linger on as an invalid for many a year.



CHAPTER IX.

What to do with her?

After Mrs. Rushton had been laid to rest in her grave her worldly affairs had to be looked into. She had died possessed of a great deal of property, and her relations were well aware that she had never made a will. Her brother had lately urged her to make a will, but she had always put off the unpleasant task. Now there was nothing to be done but to divide the property among the relatives to whom it reverted by law.

After the funeral her late husband's relations and Mr. Enderby met at Amber Hill and discussed these matters of business.

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In the meantime Hetty had been left at Amber Hill in the care of the housekeeper, for Mr. Enderby would not allow his wife to carry her off to Wavertree.

“It would be a mistake,” he said, “to begin what we may not think proper to go on with afterwards. If the child comes home with us now she may feel herself aggrieved, later, at being sent away. To act with prudence is our first duty towards her.”

So Hetty had been left with the housekeeper, who, being a kind woman in her way, tried to comfort her with cakes and jam. Her only real comfort was her darling Scamp, and with her arms round his shaggy neck she shed many a tear of loneliness and terror. Her heart was full of anxious fears as to what was going to become of her.

She had stolen into the room where the dead woman lay to take her last farewell of her benefactress. Nobody watched there, and Hetty easily found an opportunity for paying her tearful visit. Scamp, who never left her side, accompanied her with a sad solemnity in his countenance, and these were perhaps the two most real mourners whom the wealthy lady had left behind her.

Now all was over, and Mrs. Rushton’s room looked vacant and with as little sign of her presence as if she had never inhabited it. The wintry sunshine smiled in at all the windows of her handsome house, and made it cheerful even though the blinds were drawn down. The robins twittered in the evergreens outside, and the maids had their little jokes as usual over their sewing, though they spoke in lowered tones. No great and terrible change seemed to have happened to any one but Hetty, except indeed to Scamp, and it was plain that he suffered only for Hetty’s sake.

On the day when Mrs. Rushton’s relations met at Amber Hill Hetty sat in the housekeeper’s room in a little straw chair at the fire, with Scamp clasped in her arms and her head resting against his. She felt instinctively that her fate was being sealed upstairs. Indeed a few words which had passed between Grant and the housekeeper, and which she had accidentally overheard, assured her that such would be the case.

“If Mrs. Rushton has left her nothing,” said Grant, “she’ll be out on the world again, as she was before. Mrs. Kane may take her, unless the gentlemen do something for her.”

“Mr. Enderby will never allow her to go back to poor Anne Kane,” said the housekeeper. “There’s many a cheap way of providing for a friendless child, and it wouldn’t be fair to put her on a woman that can hardly keep her own little home together.”

Hetty’s anguish was unspeakable as these words sank into her heart, each one making a wound. She shuddered at the thought of going back to Mrs. Kane, but felt even more horror of those unknown “cheap ways of providing for a friendless child,” alluded to by the housekeeper. A perfect sea of tribulation rolled over her head as she bent it in despair, and wept forlornly on Scamp’s comfortable neck.



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In the meantime, as Hetty surmised, her fate was being decided upstairs. No provision had been made by Mrs. Rushton for the child whom she had taken into her home, petted and indulged, and accustomed to every luxury. The relations of Mrs. Rushton's late husband, who lived at a great distance and had not been on intimate terms with her, were not much impressed by the lady's carelessness of Hetty. But Mr. Enderby, who knew all the circumstances, felt that a wrong had been done.

"Some provision ought to be made for the child," he said; "that is a matter about which there can be no doubt."

"Certainly," said Mr. Rushton, who had inherited most of his sister-in-law's property. "There are cheap schools where girls in her position can be educated according to their station. Afterwards we can see about giving her a trade, millinery and dressmaking, I suppose, or something of that kind."

Mr. Enderby looked troubled. "I do not think that would be quite fair," he said, "I would urge that she should receive a good education. She ought to be brought up a lady, having been so long accustomed to expect it."

"I quite disagree with you," said Mr. Rushton; "there are too many idle ladies in the world. And who is to support her when she is grown up?"

"I do not wish to make her an idle lady," said Mr. Enderby, "but I would fit her to be a governess."

"There are too many governesses; better keep her down to a lower level and teach her to be content to be a tradeswoman. As far as I am concerned, I will consent to nothing better than this for the girl."

"Then we need not speak of it any more," returned Mr. Enderby. "I will take the responsibility of the child upon myself."

Mr. Rushton shrugged his shoulders. "Do as you please," he said, "but remember it is your own choice. If you change your mind, call upon me."

So the matter ended. When the library door opened, and the gentlemen were heard preparing to depart, Hetty flew upstairs and stole into the hall, where Mr. Enderby, who was the last to go, suddenly saw her little white face gazing at him with a dumb anxiety.

"Well, my dear," he said kindly, "how are you getting on?"

"Oh sir, will you please tell me where I am to go to?" implored Hetty.



“Don’t fret yourself about that,” said Mr. Enderby, buttoning up his coat. “We are not going to let you be lost. You just stay patiently with Mrs. Benson till you hear again from me.”

And then he nodded to her and took his departure.

That evening he had a serious conversation with his wife about Hetty Gray.

“I have made up my mind it will be better to bring her here,” he said abruptly.

“My dear! is that wise?” exclaimed his wife, thinking with sudden anxiety of Phyllis’s great dislike to Hetty, and Hetty’s uncompromising pride.

“It is the best plan I can think of, but do not mistake me. If Hetty comes here it will be expressly understood by her and others that she is not to be brought up as my own daughter. She will merely enjoy the security of the shelter of our roof, and will receive a good education such as will fit her to provide, later, for herself.”



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“Will it be easy to carry out this plan?” asked Mrs. Enderby.

“That I must leave to you, my dear. You are firm enough and wise enough to succeed where others would probably fail. The only alternative that I can think of is to send her to an expensive school where she will certainly not be prepared for the battle of life. As for sending her to a lower style of place, and making a charity girl of her after all that has been done to accustom her to the society of well-bred people, the bare thought of such injustice makes me angry.”

Mrs. Enderby looked admiringly at her husband.

“You are right,” she said; “and I will try to carry out your plan. It will add greatly to my cares, for I fear Hetty’s will be a difficult nature to deal with, especially when she finds herself in so uncertain a position in our house.”

The next day Mrs. Enderby drove over to Amber Hill and desired Mrs. Benson to send Hetty to her in the morning-room. When the child appeared she was greatly struck by the traces of suffering on her countenance, and felt renewed anxiety as to the difficulty of carrying out her husband’s wishes.

“My child,” she said kindly, taking the little girl’s hand and drawing her to her knees, “I have a good deal to say to you, and I hope you will try to understand me perfectly.”

Hetty gave her one swift upward glance in which there was keen expectation, mingled with more of fear than hope.

“I will try,” she whispered.

“You know, my dear, that Mrs. Rushton was very good to you while she lived, yet you had no real claim on her, and now that she is gone you are as much alone as if you had never seen her.”

Mrs. Enderby was surprised by Hetty’s swift answer.

“More alone,” she said, with a stern look in her young face; “for if she had not taken me I could have stayed with Mrs. Kane. I should have loved Mrs. Kane, and now I do not love her.”

“There is some truth in all that,” said Mrs. Enderby; “but at all events, my dear, you have enjoyed many advantages during the last five or six years. There is no question now of your going back to Mrs. Kane. Mr. Enderby will not allow it.”

“Grant says there are cheap ways of providing for friendless children,” said Hetty, whose tongue had become dry in her mouth with fear of what might come next.



“Never mind what Grant says,” said Mrs. Enderby; “attend only to what I tell you. Mr. Enderby and I have thought deeply over your future, Hetty, and we are really anxious to do what is best for you.”

Hetty said nothing. All the powers of her mind were strained in wondering expectation of what she was now going to hear.



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“We have been advised to send you to a school where you would be made fit to provide for yourself when you become a woman,” continued the lady, “but we have decided to take you into our own house instead; on condition, however, that you try to be industrious and studious. By the time you have grown up, I hope you will be able to make use of the good education we shall give you, and will have learned the value of independence. Do you understand me completely, Hetty? We are going to educate you to be a governess. You shall live in our house and join in the studies of our children, and enjoy the comfort and protection of our home. But of course you cannot look forward to sharing the future of our daughters.”

“I understand,” said Hetty slowly; and the whole state of the case, in all its bearings, appeared in true colours before her intelligent mind.

“I hope you are satisfied also,” said Mrs. Enderby, who was determined, even at the risk of being a little hard, that the child should thoroughly know her place, and learn to be grateful for the protection afforded her. “When you are older, my child, you will comprehend what your elders now know, that my poor sister, Mrs. Rushton, made a great mistake in raising you from the station in which she found you, and showering luxuries upon you as she did. We also see, however, that an injustice was done to you, and that we whom she has left behind her are bound to make amends to you for that. Therefore it is that we are keeping you with ourselves, instead of allowing you to run the risk of being made unhappy by strangers.”

For all answer to this Hetty burst into a fit of wild weeping. Her proud little heart was broken at the prospect of returning to Wavertree to be snubbed and humbled by Phyllis, and possibly by servants of the same disposition as Grant. For the moment she could not remember all those worse horrors which her imagination had been conjuring up, and from which she was actually saved. She stood trembling and shaking in the storm of her grief, trying to stem her floods of tears with her quivering little hands, and unable to keep them from raining through her fingers on to the floor.

Mrs. Enderby sighed. Though she could not know all Hetty’s thoughts, she guessed some of them, and her heart sank lower than ever at the thought of the trouble which might come of the introduction of so stormy an element into her hitherto peaceful household. However, she was not a woman to flinch from a duty, when once she had made up her mind to recognize it.

“Come, come, my child!” she said, “you have been passing through a great trial, but you must try to be brave and make yourself happy with us.”

Had Mrs. Enderby taken poor Hetty in her arms and given her a motherly kiss, much would have been done to heal the wounds made in the child’s sensitive heart. But it was part of her plan, conscientiously made, that she must not accustom Hetty to caresses, such as she could not expect to receive later in life. So she only patted her

on the shoulder, and, when her passion of crying had a little subsided, bade her run away and get on her things, and be ready as soon as possible to come with her to Wavertree Hall.



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CHAPTER X.

The new home.

Before going to Amber Hill that day, Mrs. Enderby had sent for her two girls to come to her in her room, where she informed them of the fact that Hetty was coming to the Hall.

"I am going to tell you some news, my children, and I hope you will feel it to be good news. I know my little daughters have kind hearts, and I am sure they will pity one even younger than themselves who has been left without home or protection."

"I suppose you are speaking of Hetty, mother?" said Phyllis.

"Yes, dear. Your father and I have arranged to bring her here."

A faint colour passed over Phyllis's fair pale face, and she said:

"Did Aunt Amy not leave her any money, mother?"

"No; I am sorry to say she did not leave her anything."

"She ought to have done so," said Phyllis.

"Your Aunt Amy was a very peculiar person, Phyllis, and nothing would induce her to make a will. She put off the task too long, and died without fulfilling it."

"Could those who have got her money now not make it all right?" said Phyllis. "Could they not settle some money on her?"

"That would be a difficult matter to arrange, dear. Almost all Mrs. Rushton's property has gone to her husband's brother, who is not a very generous man, I fear, and the rest, which returns to your father, is in trust for his children. He does not feel himself called upon to deprive you of what is lawfully yours in order to give a fortune to a foundling child."

"I would rather give her some of my money than have her here," said Phyllis bluntly.

"You must get over that feeling, Phyllis. It is perhaps a little trial to us all to have a stranger among us, but we will endeavour to be kind, and all will be for the best."

"And is Hetty to be our own, own sister?" said Nell, fixing her blue eyes on her mother's face and speaking for the first time.

"No, my love, not quite. That would not be fair to Hetty, as we cannot make her one of our own children. She will be a companion for you and join in all your studies. But it is



to be understood that such advantages are to be given to her only to fit her to be a governess. I am anxious that every one should be good to her, but I do not intend her to have such luxuries as would but prepare her for great unhappiness later on in her life.”

“Hetty will never get on with that sort of thing,” said Phyllis. “She is too proud and too impertinent.”

“My dear Phyllis, I believe she has a good heart; and she has been, and will be, severely tried. Any failure of generosity on the part of my good little girl will disappoint me sadly.”

Phyllis closed her lips with an expression which meant that for reasons of propriety she would say no more, but that nothing could prevent her from feeling that justice and right were on her side; that she had a better apprehension of the matter in question than mother or father, or any one in the world.



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When Hetty arrived that afternoon she was led straight into the school-room, where tea was just ready, Mrs. Enderby judging that it would be well to set her to work at once, giving her no time for moping. When she appeared, looking pale and sad in her black frock, her eyes heavy and red with weeping, even Phyllis was touched, and the school-room tea was partaken of in peace and almost in silence. Hetty was so full of the recollection of the last time she had been brought in here by Mrs. Enderby, and so conscious of the change that had come upon her since then, that she could scarcely raise her eyes for fear of crying. Nell kept pushing cakes and bread and butter before her, Phyllis made general remarks in a softer tone than usual, and Miss Davis, who perhaps understood Hetty's position better, and sympathized more with her, than any of the rest, could think of nothing better to say to the forlorn child than to ask her occasionally if she would like some more sugar in her tea.

After tea Phyllis and Nell set to work to prepare their lessons for the next day, and Hetty was thankful to have a book placed before her, and a lesson appointed for her to learn. It was a page in the very beginning of a child's English history, and Hetty read it over and over again till she had the words almost by heart without in the least having taken in their sense. Her thoughts were busy all the time with the looks and words of her companions, and with going back over all that had occurred that day. Phyllis had been gentler than she expected. Perhaps she was not going to be unkind any more. It was a good thing after all to be obliged to sit over books, as it would prevent her being talked to more than she could bear. Nell was very kind. Would Phyllis allow her to be always kind? She had remarked at the first moment that the frocks of the two other girls were made of finer stuff than hers, and were trimmed with crape. Mrs. Benson had got her her mourning-frock, and had got it, of course, as inexpensive as she thought fit under the circumstances.

"Of course they wear crape," thought Hetty, "because Mrs. Rushton was their aunt. She was nothing to me, after all, except my mistress. Grant used to say things like that and I would not believe her. She was right when she said I was only a charity child."

Phyllis and Nell were accustomed to go to the drawing-room for an hour or two in the evening after their father and mother had dined, and on this occasion Hetty was invited to accompany them. It was not Mrs. Enderby's intention that she should always do so, but she considered that it would be well to include her to-night.

The last evening spent by Hetty in the drawing-room at the Hall was that one on which she had entertained the company with her mimicries. Then, full of pride and delight in her own powers of giving amusement, she had felt herself in a position to despise all disapproval and dislike. Now, how was she fallen! Yet Mr. and Mrs. Enderby received her kindly, and paid her as much attention as if she had been an ordinary visitor.

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When bed-time came she was taken, not to the pretty room she had occupied when last in the house, but to a neat little plain chamber which was to be henceforth her own. It was not on the same landing with the bed-rooms of Phyllis and Nell, as she was quick to remark, but at the end of a long passage off which were the upper maids' bed-rooms, a fact which stabbed her pride.

It was, however, a nice little room, placed above the passage and ascended to by a few steps, and it had a picturesque lattice window, embowered in ivy and passion-flowers. She had hardly comforted herself by observing this when she was overcast again by a fresh and unpleasant discovery. Her trunk, which had been sent after her by Mrs. Benson, had already been unpacked and her things disposed of in a wardrobe. But, alas! all her handsome clothing had disappeared. Her velvet and silk frocks trimmed with lace and fur, her sashes and necklaces, silk stockings and shoes with fantastic rosettes, these and numbers of other treasures were no longer to be seen in her room. A sufficient quantity of plain underclothing, a black frock to change the one she wore, a black hat and jacket, and one or two of her plainest white frocks, these were all that remained of the possessions which had but yesterday been hers.

When she had recovered herself sufficiently after this disappointment to be able to look around the chamber, she saw that her desk and work-box, and some of her favourite story-books, had been placed on a table at the window. These she was glad to see, and recovering her spirits began to remember that after all she had now no right to any of those costly articles which she had been allowed to use during Mrs. Rushton's lifetime. As she was to live henceforth a humble dependent in this house she could have no further need of such luxuries. She had remarked that Phyllis and Nell were always simply dressed, and yet they had more right to finery than she had.

Hetty had sufficient good sense to know all this without being told. Her peculiar experiences had sharpened her reasoning faculties and made her keenly observant of what passed before her, and had also given her an unusually acute perception of the meanings and influences floating in the atmosphere about her from other people's thoughts and words. Child as she was, she was able to take, for a moment, Mrs. Enderby's view of her own position, and admitted that the kind yet cold lady had acted justly in depriving her of useless things. Yet her wilful heart longed for the prettinesses that she loved, and she wept herself to sleep grieving for their loss, and for the greater loss which it typified.

The next morning her head was aching and her eyes redder than ever when she appeared in the school-room, and she seemed more sullen and less meek than she had been yesterday. She could not fix her mind on the lesson Miss Davis gave her to learn, and made a great display of her ignorance when questioned on general subjects. All this was not improving to her spirits, and in becoming more unhappy she grew more irritable. Miss Davis felt her patience tried by the troublesome new pupil, and Phyllis eyed her with strong disapproval over the edges of her book. Phyllis loved order,

regularity, good conduct, and in her opinion Hetty was an intolerably disagreeable interruption of the routine of their school-room life.



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That was a bad day altogether. Some friends of Mr. and Mrs. Enderby were dining with them, and when the school-room tea was over Phyllis and Nell told Miss Davis that their mother wished them to come to the drawing-room for a short time. Hetty looked up, as she thought herself included in the invitation; but Miss Davis, who had received general instructions from Mrs. Enderby, said to her quietly:

“You will stay here with me, Hetty, for this evening.”

Hetty flushed crimson and her pride was kindled in an instant. She was not to go to the drawing-room any more, because she was only a charity child. Tears rushed into her eyes, but she forced them back and pretended to be very busy with a book. After the other girls had been gone some time Miss Davis said:

“I am going to my own room for half an hour, Hetty, and I suppose you can amuse yourself with your book till I come back.”

When left alone Hetty flung away her book, went down on her face on the hearth-rug, and cried with all her might. She thought of evenings when she had tripped about gaily in Mrs. Rushton’s drawing-room and every one was glad to see her. Now, it seemed, she must live all alone in a school-room. She forgot that she had ever been unhappy with Mrs. Rushton, ever been left alone, or snubbed or neglected in her house; for Hetty, like many other people, old and young, lost all her excellent power of reasoning when overmastered by passion. In the old time she had been happy, she thought, cared for, loved, made much of. Now she was beloved by nobody, not even for an hour.

In her desolation she could not think of any creature that loved her except Scamp, the dog who had been her only comfort since this trouble had befallen her; and he was left behind at Amber Hill. She had begged to be allowed to bring him with her to Wavertree, but Mr. Enderby objected, saying that there were already too many dogs about the place.

As soon as Miss Davis returned to the school-room Hetty asked to be allowed to go to bed.

“I have just been looking out some materials for needlework for you,” said Miss Davis. “It is quite time you learned to sew; I hope you will find amusement in the occupation. However, if you are tired you may go to bed. As a rule the girls do not go to bed till nine o’clock.”

Hetty shuddered as she looked at the needle-work which was prepared for her. In her eyes it was only a new instrument of torture. She did not even know how to hold a needle; she did not want to know. Mrs. Rushton had never been seen sewing; it was only the maids who had any occasion to sew.



“I hate sewing,” said Hetty despairingly.

“Then you must learn to like it,” said Miss Davis briskly; “little girls are not allowed to hate anything that is useful, especially little girls who must look forward to providing for themselves in the world by their own exertions. But go to bed now. Tomorrow I hope you will be in a better humour.”



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And Hetty vanished.

CHAPTER XI.

Hetty turns Rebel.

Hetty cried herself to sleep as she had done the night before, and her last thought was of Scamp. About the middle of the night she had a dream in which she fancied that Scamp's paws were round her neck, and that he was barking in her ear his delight at seeing her. The barking went on so long that it wakened her, for it was real barking that had caused the dream.

Hetty sat up in her bed and listened. Surely that was Scamp's bark, loud, sharp, and impatient, as if he was saying, "Where's Hetty? I want Hetty. I will not go away till I have found Hetty." In the stillness of the night it sounded to the lonely child like the voice of a dear friend longing to comfort her. She jumped out of bed, threw open the window, and listened again. Could it be that he had found the way from Amber Hill, and come so many miles to look for her? Darling old Scamp, was it possible he loved her so much? Yes, it was indeed his voice; he was outside the house, almost under her window, and she must and would go down and take him in.

She opened the door cautiously and went out into the passage. The barking was not heard so distinctly here, and she hoped that no one would hear it but herself. How dreadful if somebody should go and beat him away before she could reach him! She pattered down-stairs with her little bare feet and made her way through the darkness to the great hall door. But she had forgotten how great and heavy that door was, and had not thought of the chain that hung across it at night, and the big lock in which she could not turn the key. Scamp heard her trying to open the door, and barked more joyfully. Unable to unfasten this door she made her way to another at the back of the house, and, withdrawing a bolt, she stood in the doorway, her little white night-dress blowing in the winter's night air, and her bare feet on the stones of the threshold.

"Scamp, Scamp!" she called in a soft voice, and, wonderful to tell, he heard her and came flying round the house.

"Oh, Scampie, dear, *have* you come, and do you really love me still?" whispered Hetty as the dog leaped into her arms, and she clasped his paws round her neck and kissed his shaggy head.

Scamp uttered a few short rapturous exclamations and licked her face and hands all over.

"But you must be very quiet," she said, "or you will wake the house and we shall be caught. Come now, lovie, and I'll hide you in my own room."



She closed the door as quietly as possible and crept upstairs again, carrying the dog hugged in her arms.

As she stole along the passage to her room, one of the maids whispered to another who was sleeping in the room with her:

“Oh, I have heard a great noise down-stairs, and one of the dogs was barking. And just now I am sure I heard feet in the passage.”

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“Some one has got into the house then,” said the other maid listening.

“Oh, lie still, don’t get up!” said the first maid. “It must be burglars.”

“I will go and waken the men,” said the other courageously. And down-stairs she went and wakened the butler and footman. Soon they were all searching the house, the butler armed with a gun, the others with large pokers. No burglars were to be found, and the butler was very cross at having been called out of his bed for nothing at all.

The maids persisted that some one had been in the house, some one who must have escaped while they were giving the alarm. Mr. Enderby heard the noise and came out of his room and learned the whole story. After an hour of searching and questioning and discussion all went to bed again, everybody blaming everybody else for the silly mistake that had been made.

Next morning Hetty slept long and soundly after her midnight adventure, and when the maid who called her went into her room she was astonished to see a dog’s head on the pillow by the sleeping child. Scamp put up his nose and barked at the intruder, and Hetty wakened.

“Laws, Miss Hetty, you are a strange little girl,” said the maid, who was the very girl who had alarmed the house during the night. “How ever did you get a dog into your room?”

“It’s only Scamp, my own Scamp, and he wouldn’t hurt anybody,” said Hetty; “please don’t beat him away, Lucy. He came in the middle of the night trying to find me, and I took him in. Perhaps Mrs. Enderby will let me keep him now.”

“That I am sure she will not,” said Lucy. “You naughty little girl. And so it was you who disturbed the house last night, frightening us all out of our senses, and getting me scolded for giving an alarm. Wait till Mr. Enderby hears about it.”

“You are *very* unkind,” said Hetty; “as if I could help his coming in the night-time!”

“And I suppose you could not help letting him into the house and taking him into your bed?” said Lucy scornfully.

“No, I couldn’t,” said Hetty. “And you can go and tell Mr. Enderby as soon as you please.”

At this Lucy flounced out of the room quite determined to complain of the enormity of Hetty’s conduct.

When the little girl appeared in the school-room with Scamp following at her heels she was not in the best of tempers, and held her chin very high in the air. Miss Davis met her with a stern face.



“Hetty, what is this I hear of you? How could you dare to bring a strange dog into the house in the middle of the night?”

“It wasn’t a strange dog; it was Scamp,” said Hetty, putting on her most defiant air. “I don’t think it was any harm to let him in.”

“Not, though I tell you it was?” said Miss Davis.

“No,” said Hetty.

“Then I must ask Mrs. Enderby to talk to you,” said Miss Davis. “Meantime the dog cannot stay here while we are at breakfast.”



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And she rang the bell.

“Tell Thomas to come and fetch this dog away to the stable-yard,” she said to the maid who answered the bell.

“Scamp always stayed in the room with me at Amber Hill,” said Hetty, two red spots burning in her cheeks.

“You must learn to remember that you are no longer at Amber Hill,” said Miss Davis.

Phyllis and Nell now came into the school-room and looked greatly surprised at sight of the dog, Hetty’s angry face, and Miss Davis’s looks of high displeasure. They took their places in silence at the breakfast table.

“I am not likely to forget it,” retorted Hetty bitterly. “At Amber Hill everybody was kind to me. Nobody is kind here.”

“You are a most ungrateful girl,” said Miss Davis. “What would have become of you if Mr. and Mrs. Enderby had not been kind?”

At this moment Thomas entered.

“Take away that dog to the stable-yard,” said Miss Davis.

Hetty threw her arms round Scamp’s neck and clung to him.

“You shall not turn him out,” she cried. “He came and found me, and I will not give him up.”

“Do as I have told you, Thomas,” said Miss Davis; and Thomas seized Scamp in spite of Hetty’s struggles, and carried him off, howling dismally.

“Now, you naughty girl, you may go back to your own room, and stay there till you are ready to apologize to me for your conduct,” said Miss Davis.

“Oh, please don’t send Hetty away without her breakfast,” pleaded Nell.

“I will go. I will not stay here. I will run away!” cried Hetty wildly.

“Let her go, Nell,” said Phyllis, giving her sister a warning look; and Miss Davis said:

“When she is hungry she can apologize for her conduct. In the meantime she had better go away and be left alone till she recovers her senses.”

Hetty fled out of the room and away to her own little chamber, where she locked herself in and flung herself in a passion of rage and grief on the floor.



"I *will* go away," she sobbed. "I will run away with Scamp and seek my fortune. Miss Davis is going to be as bad as Grant, reminding me that I am a charity child. Oh, why was I not born like Phyllis and Nell, with people to love me and a home to belong to? It is easy for them to be good. But I shall never be good. I know, I know I never shall!"

After half an hour had passed a knock came to the door, and Lucy demanded to be admitted.

"Go away, you cruel creature!" cried Hetty. "I will not have you here."

Lucy went away, and after some time Hetty heard Mrs. Enderby's voice at the door.

"I hope you will not refuse to let me in," she said. "I request that you will open the door."

Hetty rose from the floor very unwillingly and opened the door, and Mrs. Enderby came in.

"Hetty, what is the meaning of this strange conduct?" she said, looking at the marks of wild weeping on the child's swollen face.



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"Everybody's conduct has been bad to me," wailed Hetty.

"What has been done to you?" asked Mrs. Enderby.

"Everyone hates Scamp, and they have taken him away. And I have no one to love me but him."

"Perhaps people would love you if you were not so fierce and wild, Hetty," said Mrs. Enderby. "Now, try and listen to me while I talk to you. It was very wrong of you to get up in the night and open the door, so as to alarm the house by the noise. And it was very wrong of you to take a dog into your room and into your bed."

"It was Scamp," mourned Hetty. "Scamp loves me. And how could I leave him outside when he wanted to be with me?"

"You could have done so because it would have been right," said Mrs. Enderby. "You knew that Mr. Enderby had refused to allow the dog to come here. You ought to have remembered his wishes. He has been very good to you, and you must learn to obey him."

"It is cruel of him not to let me have Scamp," persisted Hetty; "he never bites anyone, and he is better than the other dogs. Why can I not have him for my own?"

"I will not answer that question, Hetty; it must be enough for you that you are to obey. You must stay here by yourself till you are in a better state of mind."

Then Mrs. Enderby went away, and Hetty fell into another agony of grief, thinking about Scamp.

She forgot the breakfast which she had not yet tasted, and felt every moment a greater longing to see her dog again. Where had they taken him? she wondered. Was he still in the stable-yard? Perhaps they would drown him to get rid of him. Possessed by this fear she seized her hat and flew out of the room, quite reckless of consequences, and as it chanced, she met no one on her way down-stairs and along all the back passages leading towards the stable-yard.

Arrived there she was guided by his barking to the spot where Scamp was. He was chained in a kennel in a corner of the yard, where it was intended he should remain till a new master or mistress could be found for him. Hetty watched her opportunity, and when there was no one about flew into the yard, slipped the chain off his neck, and sped out of the place again, with the dog following joyfully at her heels.

In acting thus the little girl had merely followed a wild impulse, and had formed no plan for her future conduct with regard to Scamp. Finding herself in his company now, she thought only of prolonging the pleasure and escaping with him somewhere out of the



reach of unfriendly eyes. She darted through the outer gate of the stable-yard just as the great clock above the archway was striking ten; and was soon plunging through a copse on the outskirts of the village, and making for the open country.

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Scamp snuffed the breeze and barked for joy, and Hetty danced along over the grass and through trees, forgetting everything but her own intense enjoyment of freedom in the open air that she loved. Over yonder lay the forge, where, as a baby of four, she had watched the great horses being shod, and the sparks flying from their feet; and further on were the fields and the bit of wood where she had roamed alone, up to her eyes in the tall flag leaves and mistaking the yellow lilies for butterflies of a larger growth. She did not remember all that now, but some pleasant consciousness of a former free happy existence in the midst of this fresh peaceful landscape came across her mind at moments, like gales of hawthorn-scented air. Mrs. Enderby's mild lectures, Phyllis's contempt, Miss Davis's shocked propriety, even Nell's easily snubbed efforts to stand her friend, all vanished out of her memory as she went skimming along the grass like a swallow, thrilling in all her young nerves with the freshness and wildness of the breeze of heaven, and the vigour and buoyancy of the life within her veins.

Five miles into the open country went Hetty, by a road she had never seen before. She knew not, nor did she think at all of where she was going; she only had a delightful sense of exploring new worlds. However, about the middle of the day she felt very hungry. She began to remember then that she could not keep on roving for ever, and that there was probably trouble before her at Wavertree, waiting for her return.

She sat down on a bank to rest, and Scamp nestled beside her, alternately looking in her face and licking her hands. It occurred to Hetty that perhaps he was hungry too, and that if she had left him in the stable-yard he would at least have got his dinner. Remorse troubled her, and she cast about to try and discover something they two could eat. A tempting-looking bunch of berries hung from a tree near her, and she thought that if she could reach them they might be of some slight use in allaying the pangs of hunger felt by both her and her dog. She was at once on her feet, and straining all her limbs to reach the berries.

They were caught, the branch broke, and Hetty fell down the bank, twisting her foot and spraining her ankle badly.

After the first cry wrung from her by the shock she was very silent; and having gathered herself up as well as she could, she sat on the ground, unable to attempt to stand. The pain was excessive, and great tears rolled down her cheeks as she endured it. Scamp gazed at her piteously, snuffed all round her, and looked as if he would like to take her on his back and carry her home. She threw her arms round his neck and hugged him.

"No, you can't help me, Scampie, dear, and I don't know what is to become of us. I can't move, and nobody knows where I have gone to. Of course it is all my fault, for I know I have been very disobedient. But I didn't feel wicked, not a bit."



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Scamp licked her face and huffed and snuffed all round her. Then he made several discontented remarks which Hetty understood quite well, though it is not easy to translate them here. Then he hustled round her, and scurried up and down the road looking for help; and finally sat on his tail on the top of the bank, and pointing his nose up at the unlucky tree on which the berries had hung, howled out dismally to the world in general that Hetty was in real trouble now, and somebody had better come and look to it.

After a long time some one did come at last. The wintry evening was just beginning to close in and the short twilight to fall on the lonely road, blotting out the red berries on the trees, when a sound of wheels and the cracking of a carter's whip struck upon Hetty's ears. Scamp had heard them first and rushed away barking joyfully in the direction of the sound, to meet the carter, whoever he might be, and to tell him to come on fast and take up Hetty in his cart and bring her safely home.

Presently Scamp came frolicking back, and soon after came a great team of powerful horses, drawing a long cart laden with trunks of trees, which John Kane, the carter, was bringing from the woods to be chopped up for firewood for the use of the Hall. At this sight a dim recollection of the past arose in Hetty's brain. Had she not seen this great cart and horses long ago, and was not the face of the man like a face she had seen in a dream? She had not had time to think of all this when John Kane pulled up his team before her and spoke to her.

"Be you hurt, little miss?" he said good-naturedly; "I thought something was wrong by the bark of your dog. He told me as plain as print that I was wanted. 'Look sharp, John Kane!' he said; and how he knows my name I can't tell. There, let me sit you in the cart, and I'll jolt you as little as may be."

Hetty was thankful to be put in the cart, and it seemed to her a very strange chance that had brought John Kane a second time in her life to rescue her. He did not know her at all, and she did not like to tell him who she was.

"Now, where can I take you to?" he said, as they neared the village.

"I came from Wavertree Hall," said Hetty, hanging her head, "and," she added with a great throb of her heart, "my name is Hetty Gray."

"Law, you don't say so!" said honest John; "our little Hetty that is turned into a lady! Well, child, it's not the first time you have got a ride in John Kane's cart. You cannot remember, but you used to be main fond of these very horses, watching them getting shod and running among their feet. However, bygones is bygones, and you won't want to hear anything of all that. Now, I can't drive you up to the door of the Hall in this lumbering big vehicle; but if you'll condescend to come to our cottage for an hour, I'll

take a message to say where you are, and Mrs. Enderby will send for you properly, no doubt.”



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Hetty's heart was full as she thanked John Kane for his kindness. She had almost been afraid that he would break out into raptures and want to hug her as Mrs. Kane had done; but when she found him so cold and respectful a lump rose in her throat, and something seemed to tell her that as she had pushed away from her the love of these good honest people, she deserved to be as lonely and unloved as she was.

Fortunately it was quite dark when the cart passed through the village, so that no one noticed whom John Kane had got cowering down in his cart behind the logs of timber. When he stopped at his own door his wife came out, and he said to her in a low voice:

"Look you here, Anne, if I haven't brought you home little Hetty a second time out of trouble. Found her on the road I did, with her ankle sprained. We'll take her in for the present, and I'll go to the Hall and tell the gentlefolks."

Mrs. Kane had just been making ready her husband's tea, and the fire was burning brightly in her tidy kitchen, making it look pretty and homelike. She was greatly astonished at her husband's news, and came to the cart at once, though with a soreness at heart, remembering her last meeting with Hetty, and thinking how little pleasure the child would find in this enforced visit to her early home.

"Now hurry away to the Hall and give the message," said Mrs. Kane; "your tea will keep till you come back. Little Miss Gray will be anxious to get home to those who are expecting her."

"Oh, please let him take his tea first," cried Hetty; "there will be no hurry to get me back. I have been very naughty and everyone will be angry with me. Please, Mr. Kane, take your tea before you go."

John Kane smiled. "Thank you, little maid; but you see the horses are wanting to go home to their stable. And I'd rather finish all my work before I sit down."

He went away and Hetty was left alone in the firelight with her first foster-mother.

"Perhaps you are hungry, little miss," said Anne. "You have had a long walk, maybe, with your dog."

Scamp had curled himself up on the "settle" at Hetty's feet.

Hetty felt a pang at the words "little miss," but she knew it was her own pride that had brought this treatment upon her. Perhaps Mrs. Kane had once loved her as Scamp did now; but of course she would never love her again. At all events she was dear and good for taking Scamp in without a word of objection, and allowing him to rest himself comfortably at her fireside.



“I am *dreadfully* hungry,” said Hetty, in a low ashamed voice, and looking up at Mrs. Kane with serious eyes. “I have not eaten anything to-day. I sprained my ankle getting the berries, and they fell so far away I could not pick them up.”

“Not eaten to-day? What,—no breakfast even?”

“No,” said Hetty. “I was bad in the morning, or I should have got some. At least they said I was bad, but I did not feel it.”



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“What did you do?”

“I took in Scamp in the night when he barked at the window, and I wanted to keep him, though Mr. Enderby would not have him about the place; and I fought to get him. And I told Mrs. Enderby that I ought to have him. And then I took him out of the stable-yard and ran away with him.”

“I’m afraid that was badness in the end,” said Mrs. Kane. “It began with goodness, but it ran to badness. Deary me, it’s often the same with myself. I think I’m so right that I can’t go wrong. But all comes straight again when we’re sorry for a fault.”

“But I can’t be sorry for keeping Scamp when he loves me so. Nobody else loves me,” cried Hetty, with a burst of tears.

Mrs. Kane was by her side in a minute. “Not love you! don’t they, my dear? Well, there’s somebody that loves you more than Scamp, *that* I know. Come, now, dry your eyes and eat a bit. There’s a nicer cup of tea than they’d give you at the Hall; for the little brown pot on the hearth makes better tea than ever comes out of silver. I was a maid in a big house once myself, and I know the difference.”

In answer to this Hetty sat up as well as the pain of her foot would allow, and flung her arms round Mrs. Kane’s neck.

“Oh, keep me here with you!” she cried. “I am tired of being grand. I will stay with you and learn to be a useful girl, if only you will love me.”

Mrs. Kane heaved a long sigh as Hetty’s arms fastened round her neck. Now she felt rewarded for all the love and care she had poured out on the child during the three years she had had her for her own. A little bit of hard ice that had always been lying at the bottom of her heart ever since Hetty had left her, now melted away, and she said, half laughing and half crying:

“Come now, deary, don’t be talking nonsense. Nice and fit you’d be to bear with a cottage life after all you’ve been seeing. Don’t you think the gentlefolks would give you up so easily as that. But whenever you want a word of love and a heart to rest your bit of a head upon like this, mind you remember where they’re always waiting for you, Hetty.”

Hetty sobbed and clung to her more closely, and it was some time before she could be induced to eat and drink. When she did so the homely meal set before her seemed to her the most delicious she had ever tasted.

“Oh I am so glad I have found my way back to you,” she said; “I never should have done it if I hadn’t got into such trouble. Oh, you don’t know how proud and bad I have been! I know I’ve been bad, now that you are so good to me.”



After about an hour John Kane came back. He had been obliged to wait to put up his horses and see to their wants for the night before he could come home. The message he brought from the Hall was that Hetty must stay where she was till her foot was better, as moving about was so bad for a sprain. Mrs. Enderby would see Mrs. Kane about her to-morrow.



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The tiny whitewashed room where she slept that night was the one in which she had slept when a toddling baby, and Hetty wondered at herself as she looked round it thankfully. A patchwork quilt covered the bed, and a flower-pot in the one small window, and some coloured prints on the wall, were its only adornments. But it was extremely clean and neat, and, in spite of the pain in her foot, Hetty felt more content as she laid her head on the coarse pillow than she had felt for a great many weeks past.

CHAPTER XII.

A cottage child again.

Some time passed before Hetty saw any of the family at the Hall again. Mr. Enderby was much displeased at her escapade, and resolved she should be punished. He thought the best way to punish her was to leave her in the care of Mrs. Kane. The hard and lowly living she would have to endure there would, he thought, subdue her pride and teach her to be meek and grateful on her return to a more comfortable home. By his desire Mrs. Enderby refrained from going to see the child. Mrs. Kane was sent for to the Hall and directed to take every care of her charge; but on no account whatever to pamper her.

At first Hetty was startled to find how very ready they were at the Hall to let her completely drop out of their lives, and at times she repined, but on the whole she was happier, and every day seemed to arouse her more and more to a better sense of the duties that lay round her in life. While seated on her old settle she watched Mrs. Kane sweeping and washing the floor, polishing up the windows and bits of furniture, and making the humble home shine. Hetty longed to be able to take broom and scrubbing-brush from her hands and help her with the troublesome work. When she found that by learning to hold her needle she could help to darn and mend for her dear friend, she eagerly gave her mind to acquiring the necessary knowledge. Books were scarce in John Kane's house, but Hetty did not miss them. At this time of her life all books, except stories, were hateful to her, and she thought she had read enough stories. It became a perfect delight to her to see Mrs. Kane shake out an old flannel jacket and hold it up to the light and declare that Hetty had mended it as well as she could have done it herself. "And that will save my eyes to-night," she would say, to Hetty's intense pleasure, who, now for the first time in her young life, tasted the joy of being useful to others.

When her foot was sufficiently better to allow her to limp about, John Kane made her a crutch, and Hetty felt more gladness at receiving this present than Mrs. Rushton's expensive gifts had ever given her. After this she used to hop about the cottage, dusting and polishing, and doing many little "turns" which were a great help to Mrs. Kane. She soon knew how to cook the dinner and make the tea, and when Mrs. Kane was busy or had to go out, it was Hetty's delight to have everything ready for her return.



To save her black frock from being spoiled by work she had learned to make herself a large gingham blouse, in which she felt free to do anything she pleased without harming her clothes.



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In this simple active life Hetty developed a new spirit which surprised herself as much as it astonished her humble friends. She worked in the garden and tended the poultry, besides performing various tasks which she took upon herself indoors. And in this sort of happy industry several weeks flew, almost uncounted, away.

One evening Mrs. Kane and Hetty were sitting at the fire waiting for John to come in. They were both tired after their day's work. Mrs. Kane was sitting in a straw arm-chair and Hetty rested with her feet up on the settle. The little brown tea-pot was on the red tiles by the hearth, and the firelight blinked on the tea-cups.

"Mrs. Kane," said Hetty, "will you let me call you mammy?"

"Will I?" said Mrs. Kane. "To be sure I will, darling, and glad to hear you. But wouldn't mother be a prettier word in your mouth?"

"Phyllis calls Mrs. Enderby mother," said Hetty, "and it sounds cold. Mammy will be a little word of our own."

"And when you go back to the Hall you will sometimes come to see your old mammy?"

"I think I am going to ask you to let me stay here always," said Hetty.

"Nay, dear, that wouldn't be right. You've got to get educated and grow up a lady."

"I could go to the village school," said Hetty; "I'm not clever at books, and they could teach me there all I want to learn. When I grow up I might be the village teacher. And you and Mr. Kane could live with me in the school-house when you are old."

"Bless the child's heart! How she has planned it all out. But don't be thinking of such foolishness, my Hetty. Providence has other doings in store for you."

One of the happiest things about this time was that Scamp was as welcome in the cottage as Hetty was herself. He slept by the kitchen fire every night, and shared all Hetty's work and play during the daytime. Indeed, nothing could be more satisfactory than the child's life in these days with Mrs. Kane. What in the meantime had become of her extraordinary pride? Love and service seemed to have completely destroyed it.

One day, however, there came an interruption to her peace. Lucy, the maid, arrived with a message to know when Hetty would be able and willing to return to the Hall.

Mrs. Kane was out and Hetty was sitting in the sun at the back-garden door with one of John Kane's huge worsted stockings pulled over one little hand, while she darned away at it with the other. At sight of Lucy her pride instantly waked up within her and rose in arms. Hetty stared in dismay at smart flippant Lucy, and felt the old bad feelings rush



back on her. Tears started to her eyes as she saw all her lately acquired goodness flying away down the garden path, as it seemed to her, and out at the little garden gate.

“I don’t think I am ready to go yet,” said she; “but I will write to Mrs. Enderby myself. Would you like to see Scamp, Lucy? He has grown so fat and looks so well.”



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Hetty could not resist saying this little triumphant word about the dog. However, Lucy was ready with a retort.

“I suppose he was used to cottages,” she said. “People generally do best with what they have been accustomed to.”

Hetty’s ears burned with the implied taunt to herself, but she said with great dignity:

“You can go now, Lucy. I don’t think I have anything more to say to you.”

And Lucy found herself willing to go, though she had intended saying a great many more sharp things to the child, whom she, like Grant, regarded as an impertinent little upstart.

That evening Hetty made a tremendous effort and wrote a letter to Mrs. Enderby.

“Deer Madam,—My foot is well, but Mrs. Kane is making me good and I would like to stay with her. I am sorry for Badness and giving trubbel. I could lern to work and be Mrs. Kane’s child.

Yours obeedyentley, *Hetty.*”

Mr. and Mrs. Enderby smiled over this letter together that evening.

“Poor little monkey,” said the former, “there is more in her than I imagined. But what spelling for a girl of her age!”

“Might it not do to allow her to stay where she is, coming up here for lessons, and to walk occasionally with the girls?”

“I do not like the idea of it,” said Mr. Enderby. “I would rather she stayed here and went as often as she pleased to see her early friends. It is evident they have a good influence upon her. Yet it would not be fair to let her grow up with their manners if she is to earn her bread among people of a higher class.”

So when Mrs. Enderby went next day to visit Hetty she was firm in her decision that the little girl should return to the Hall. She discovered Hetty busy sweeping up the cottage hearth in her gingham blouse. Hetty dropped her broom and hung her head.

“I was pleased to get your letter, Hetty. I am glad you are sorry for what occurred.”

“I am sorry,” said the little girl looking up frankly. “I am very sorry while I am here. But I might not be so sorry up at the Hall. The sorryness went away when I saw Lucy. Afterwards it came back when Mrs. Kane came in.”



“And that is why you want to stay here? Because Mrs. Kane makes you feel good? It is an excellent reason; but why can you not learn to be good at the Hall too? What has Mrs. Kane done to make you good?”

“Oh! she loves me, for one thing,” said Hetty; “and then she makes me pray to God. I never heard about God at Mrs. Rushton’s; and Miss Davis always told me I made him angry. Mrs. Kane’s God is so kind. I would like to make him fond of me.”

“You have a strange startling way of saying things, Hetty. You must try and be more like other children. Mrs. Kane’s God is mine, and yours, and every one’s, and we must all try to please him. But if you like her way of speaking of him you can come here as often as you please and talk to Mrs. Kane.”



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“Then I must go back to the Hall?” said Hetty.

“I am sorry you look on it as a hardship, Hetty. Mr. Enderby and I think it will be more for your good than staying here.”

“I am only afraid of being bad,” said Hetty simply.

“Oh! come, you will say your prayers and learn to be a good child,” said Mrs. Enderby cheerfully; and then she went away, having settled the matter. She was more than ever convinced that Hetty’s was a curious and troublesome nature; but she had not sounded the depths of feeling in the child, nor did she guess how ardently she desired to be good and worthy of love, how painfully she dreaded a relapse into the old state of pride and wilfulness which seemed to shut her out from the sympathies of others.

After Mrs. Enderby was gone, Hetty sat for a long time with her chin in her little hand looking out of the cottage door, and seeing nothing but her own trouble. How was she to try and be like other children? Could she ever learn to be like Phyllis, always cold and well-behaved, and never the least hot about anything; or could she grow quiet and sweet and so easily silenced as Nell? How was she to hinder her tongue from saying out things just in the words that came to her? She wished she could say things differently, for people so seldom seemed to understand what she meant. Tears began to drip down her cheeks as she thought of returning to her corner in the stately Hall, where she felt so chilled and lonely, of sitting no more at the snug homely hearth where there was always a spark of love burning for her.

As she wiped her eyes a gleam of early spring sunshine struck upon an old beech-tree at the lower end of the garden, and turned all its young green into gold. The glorified bough waved like a banner in the breeze, and seemed to bring some beautiful message to Hetty which she could not quite catch. The charm of colour fascinated her eye, the graceful movement had a meaning for her. Springing up from her despondent attitude she leaned from the doorway, and felt a flush of joy glow in her heavy little heart. The same thrill of delight that had enraptured her when, as a babe not higher than the flag leaves, she stretched her hands towards the yellow lilies, pierced her now, but with a stronger, more conscious joy.

When Mrs. Kane returned she found her ready to take a more hopeful view of the future that was at hand.

“I have got to go,” she said; “and I am going. But I may come to you when I like. And when the pride gets bad I will always come.”

Mrs. Kane promised to keep Scamp for her own, and so Hetty could see all her friends at once when she visited the cottage.

CHAPTER XIII.

A trick on the governess.



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Two years passed over Hetty's head, during which she had plenty of storms and struggles, with times of peace coming in between. There were days when, but for Mrs. Kane's good advice, she would have run away to escape from her trials; and yet she had known some happy hours too, and had gained many a little victory over her temper and her pride. The pleasantest days had been those when Mark Enderby, brother of Phyllis and Nell, was at home for his holidays, for he always took Hetty's part, not in an uncertain way like Nell's, but boldly and openly, and often with the most successful results. He was the only boy Hetty had ever known, and she thought him delightful; though like most boys he would be a little rough sometimes, and would expect her to be able to do all that he could do, and to understand all that he talked about. He sometimes, indeed, got her into trouble; but Hetty did not grudge any little pain he cost her in return for the protection which he often so frankly afforded her.

Not that anyone meant to be unkind to her. Mr. and Mrs. Enderby continued to take a friendly interest in everything that concerned her, though strictly following their well-meant plan of not showing her any particular personal affection. "We must not bring her up in a hothouse," they said, "only to put her out in the cold afterwards." In this they thought themselves exceptionally wise people; and who shall say whether they were or not? It suited Phyllis admirably to follow in the footsteps of her father and mother; but what was merely prudence on the part of her elder benefactors often appeared something much more unamiable when practised towards Hetty by a girl not many years her senior. Miss Davis, who was a rigid disciplinarian and trusted as such by her employers, thought chiefly of breaking down the pride and temper of the child, and of bending her character so as to fit her for the hard life that was before her; a life whose difficulties and trials had been bitterly experienced, and not yet all conquered or outlived by the conscientious governess herself. Nellie, who was Hetty's only comfort in the great and, as it seemed to her, unfriendly house, too often showed her sympathy in a covert way which made Hetty feel she was half ashamed of her affection; and this deprived such tenderness of the value it would otherwise have had.

Hetty, now above eleven years old, was very much grown and altered. Her once short curly hair was long, and tied back from her face with a plain black ribbon. Her face was singularly intelligent, her voice clear and quick, her eyes often much too mournful for the eyes of a child, but sometimes flashing with fun, as, for instance, when Mark engaged her in some piece of drollery. Then the old spirit that she used to display when she performed her little mimicries for Mrs. Rushton's amusement would spring up in her again, and she would take great delight in seeing Mark roll about with laughing, and hearing him declare that she was the jolliest girl in the world.



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One Easter time, just two years after Hetty's return to the Hall, when Mark was at home for his holidays, he proposed to Hetty to play a trick on Miss Davis. Hetty's eyes danced at the thought of a trick of any kind. She did not have much fun as a rule, and Mark's tricks were always so funny.

"It isn't to be a bad trick, I hope," she said, however.

"Oh! no, not at all. Only to dress up and pretend to be people from her own part of the world coming to see her and to bring her news. We will be an old couple who know her friends, and are passing this way."

"She will find us out."

"No; we must come in the twilight and go away very soon. She will be so astounded by what I shall tell her that she won't think about us at all."

"What will you tell her?"

"Oh! news about her old uncle. She has a rich uncle and she expects to be his heiress. Somebody told me of it. I will tell her he is married, and you will see what a state she will be in."

"I don't believe Miss Davis wants anybody's money," said Hetty; "she works hard for herself, and I think she supports her mother. I shall have to work some day as she does, and I mean to copy her. Only I shall have no mother to support," said Hetty, swallowing a little sigh because Mark could not bear her to be sentimental.

"Oh! well, we shall have some fun at all events," said Mark; "and don't you go spoiling it, proving that Miss Davis is a saint."

"Where can we get clothes to dress up in?" asked Hetty.

"Farmer Dawson's son is going to bring them to me, and you will find yours in your room just at dusk. Hurry them on fast and I shall be waiting in the passage."

That evening two rather puny figures of an old man and woman were shown up into the school-room where Miss Davis was sitting alone, looking into the fire and thinking of her distant home. Hetty was supposed to be arranging her wardrobe in her own room, and the other girls were with their mother. The governess was enjoying the treat of an hour of leisure alone, when she was informed that Mr. and Mrs. Crawford from Oldtown, Sheepshire, wished to see her.

"Show them up," said Miss Davis, and waited in surprised expectation. "Who are they?" she thought; "I do not know the name. But any one from dear Sheepshire—ah, what a strange-looking pair!"



They were odd-looking indeed. Mark was tall enough to dress up as a man, and he wore a rough greatcoat, and a white wig, and spectacles. Hetty had little gray curls, and gray eyebrows under a deep bonnet, and was wrapped in a cloak with many capes. In the uncertain light their disguise was complete.

“I have not the pleasure—” began Miss Davis.

“No, you don’t know us,” said Mark, “but your friends do, and we know all about you. We were passing this way and have brought you a message from your mother.”

“Indeed!” said Miss Davis, and her heart sank. A letter she had been expecting all the week had not arrived. Her mother was sick and poor. What dreadful thing had happened at home?



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“Oh, she is not worse than usual,” put in Hetty, in the shrill piping tone which she chose to give to Mrs. Crawford. “Don’t be alarmed.”

Miss Davis did not easily recover from her first shock of alarm. She remained quite pale, and Hetty wondered to see so much feeling in a person whom she had often thought to be almost a mere teaching-machine.

“The news is about your uncle,” went on Mark. “Perhaps you have not heard that he is married.”

“No, I had not heard,” murmured Miss Davis; and she looked as if this indeed was a terrible blow to her. Hetty was immediately annoyed at her and disappointed in her. Was Mark right in his estimate of her character? Hetty had thought her a wonder of high-mindedness and independence of spirit, if very formal and cold. Was she now going to be proved mercenary and mean?

“Your mother did not write to you about it, fearing it would be a disappointment to you.”

“My uncle has a right to do as he pleases,” said Miss Davis, “and I hope he will be happy”; but her lips were trembling and she looked pained and anxious. “I thank you very much for your trouble in coming to tell me. I daresay my mother will write immediately.”

Now Mark was not satisfied with the result of his trick. He had hoped that Miss Davis would have got very angry, and have said some amusing things. Her quiet dignity disappointed him, and with an impulse of wild boyish mischief he resolved to try if he could not startle her.

“I am sorry to say I have not told you everything,” he blurted out suddenly. “I ought to prepare you for the worst, but I don’t know how.”

“Speak, I beg of you,” faltered Miss Davis.

“Your uncle is dead, and has left all his fortune, every penny, to his wife.”

A look came over Miss Davis’s face which the children could not understand.

“My brother!” she said, “can you tell me what has become of my little brother?”

“Run away,” said Mark, who had not known till this moment that she had a brother.

Miss Davis gasped and leaned her face forward on the table. The next moment they saw her slip away off her chair to the floor. She had fainted.



Mark was greatly alarmed, and struck with sudden remorse. Hetty sprang up crying, "Oh, Mark, how could you?"

"What are we to do?" said Mark in despair.

"Here," said Hetty, "take away all this rubbish of clothes, and hide them." And she pulled off her disguise and flew to raise Miss Davis from the floor.

"No, lay her flat," said Mark; "and here is some water, dash it on her well. I will come back in a few moments."

He cast off his own disguise and vanished with his arms full of the articles he and Hetty had worn. When he returned he found Miss Davis beginning to breathe again, and Hetty crying over her.

"Oh! Mark, I will never play a trick again as long as I live," whispered Hetty; "we were near killing her. How could we dare to meddle with her affairs?"



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“How was I to know she had a brother?” grumbled Mark under his breath. “And what has he to do with the joke of her uncle’s marrying?”

“And dying?” said Hetty. “But that’s just it, you see, we don’t know anything about it.”

“Children,” murmured Miss Davis, “what has happened to me? Give me your hands, Mark, and help me to rise.”

They raised her up and laid her on the sofa.

“What was the matter?” repeated Miss Davis, seeing the tears flowing down Hetty’s cheeks.

“Oh! two nasty old people came to see you and frightened you,” said Mark, “and then they walked off, and Hetty and I found you on the floor.”

Hetty gave Mark a reproachful look, coloured deeply, and hung her head. Mark cast a warning glance at her over Miss Davis’s shoulder. He did not want to be discovered.

“Oh! I remember,” moaned Miss Davis. “My poor mother!”

Mark could not bear the unhappy tone of her voice, and turned and fled out of the room.

“Don’t believe any news those people brought you, Miss Davis,” said Hetty. “I am sure they were impostors.”

She was longing to say, “Mark and I played a trick for fun,” but did not dare until she had first spoken to Mark.

“Why do you think so? Hetty, is it possible you are crying for me? I did not think you cared so much about me, my dear.”

“I am sorry, I am sorry,” cried Hetty, bursting into a fresh fit of crying; “I did not know you had a little brother, Miss Davis.”

“I have, Hetty; next to my mother he is the dearest care of my life. I could not have told you this but for your tears. My mother and I are very poor, Hetty, and my uncle had lately taken my boy and promised to put him forward in the world. He is rather a wilful lad, my poor darling, and is very delicate besides. Now, it seems, by my uncle’s marriage and death he has lost all the prospect he had in life. And worst of all he has run away. And my mother is so ill. It will kill her.”

Miss Davis bowed her pale worn face on her hands, and Hetty, young as she was, seemed to feel the whole meaning of this poor woman’s life, her struggles to help others, her unselfish anxieties, her love of her mother and brother hidden away under a



quiet, grave exterior. What a brave part she was playing in life, in spite of her prim looks and methodical ways. Hetty was completely carried away by the sight of her suffering, and could no longer contain her secret. She forgot Mark's warning looks, and his sovereign contempt, always freely expressed, for those who would blab; and she said in a low eager voice:

"Oh, Miss Davis, I *must* tell the truth. It was all a trick of me and Mark. He made it up out of his head, without really knowing anything about your people. Only for fun, you know."

"What do you mean, Hetty?"

"We were the old man and woman, Mr. and Mrs. Crawford. Indeed we were, and there are no such people. And your uncle is neither married nor dead. And your brother has not run away. And your mother will be all right; and do not grieve any more, dear Miss Davis."



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Hetty put her arms round the governess's neck as she spoke, and laughed and sobbed together. Miss Davis seemed quite stunned with the revelation.

"Are you sure you are not dreaming, Hetty? I want a few moments to think it all over. None of these dreadful things have really happened! Well, my dear, I must first thank God."

"Oh, Miss Davis, I wish you would beat me."

"No, dear, I won't beat you. Only don't another time think it good fun to cut a poor governess to the heart. Perhaps you thought I had not much feeling in me."

"Not very much," said Hetty. "I knew you were very good, and strong, and wise, and learned; but I did not know you could love people."

"You know it now. For the future do not think that because people are colder in their manner than you are they are therefore heartless. Persons who lead the life that I lead, have to keep many feelings shut up within themselves, and to accustom themselves to do without sympathy."

Hetty pondered over these words. She wanted to say that she thought it would do quite as well to show more feeling, and look for a little more sympathy. She was now sure that she could always have loved Miss Davis, had she only known her from the first to be so warm-hearted and so truly affectionate. But she did not know how to express herself and remained silent.

"Miss Davis," she said presently; "must governesses always keep their hearts shut up, and try to look as if they loved nobody? You know I am going to be a governess some day, and that is why I ask."

Miss Davis was startled. "Do I look as if I loved nobody?" she asked.

"A little," said Hetty.

"Then I must be wrong. It cannot be good to look as if one loved nobody. At the same time it is very necessary to curb all one's feelings. Phyllis, for instance, would not respect me if she thought me what she would call sentimental. And even Nell would perhaps smile at me as a simpleton if she saw me looking for particular affection. Even you, Hetty—you who think so much about love!—could I manage you at all if I did not know how to look stern?"

"You could," said Hetty; "you could manage me better by smiling at me; just try, Miss Davis. But oh, I forgot; I have got to be a governess too, and perhaps I had better be hardened up."



Miss Davis was silent, thinking over Hetty's words. That this ardent child found her "hardened up" was an unpleasant surprise to her; but she was not above taking a hint even from one so young and faulty as Hetty. She would try to be warmer, brighter with this girl. And then she reflected sadly on the prospect before Hetty. With a nature like hers, how would she ever become sufficiently disciplined to be fit for the life of toil and self-repression that lay before her?

The next day Hetty looked out anxiously for an opportunity of speaking privately to Mark.



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"I have something to say to you, Mark," she said; "I had to tell Miss Davis that we played the trick."

"You had to tell her!" said Mark scornfully; "well, if ever I trust a tell-tale of a girl again. You are just as sneaky as Nell after all."

"Nell is not sneaky; and you ought not to call me a tell-tale. You ran away and left me with all Miss Davis's trouble on my shoulders. I didn't want to tell; but it was better than having her suffer so dreadfully."

"Oh, very well. You can make a friend of her. Go away and sit up prim like Phyllis. You shall have no more fun with me, I can tell you."

A lump came in Hetty's throat. She knew Mark was in the wrong, and was very unkind besides; but still he had so often been good to her that she could not bear to quarrel with him.

"I am very sorry," she said; "but I don't think you need be afraid that Miss Davis will complain to anyone about us."

This made Mark more angry; for he did not like to hear the word "afraid" applied to himself; and yet his chief uneasiness had been lest the occurrence of last evening should come to the ears of his father, who had a great dislike for practical jokes.

"Afraid? I am not afraid of anything, you little duffer. She can tell all about it to the whole house if she likes," he said, and turning on his heel went off whistling.

Hetty was right in the guess she had made regarding Miss Davis, who did not say a word to anyone about the trick that had been played on her. She was too thankful to know that she had suffered from a false alarm, that her beloved brother was safe under the protection of the uncle who had promised to befriend him, and that her dear mother was spared the terrible anxiety that had seemed to have overtaken her; she was much too glad thinking of all this to feel disposed to be angry with anyone. Besides, this accident had brought to light a side of Hetty's character which she had hardly got a glimpse of before. The child had evinced a warmth of feeling towards herself which neither of her other two pupils had ever shown her, and this in forgetfulness of the somewhat hard demeanour with which she had been hitherto treated. The little girl was, it appeared, capable of knowing that certain things she did not like were yet for her good, and of respecting the persons who were to her rather a stern providence. Her extreme sorrow for giving pain was also to be noted, and the fact that she had realized the work that was before her in life. All these things sank deeply into Miss Davis's mind, and made her feel far more interested in Hetty than she had ever felt before.



But Hetty did not know anything of all this. She saw Miss Davis precise and cold-looking as ever, going through the day's routine as if the events of that memorable evening had never happened; and she thought that everything was just as it had been before, except that Mark had quarrelled with her and would scarcely speak to her. She felt this a heavy trial, and but for occasional visits to Mrs. Kane and Scamp would have found it harder than she could bear.



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CHAPTER XIV.

HETTY'S CONSTANCY.

"I hope Hetty is getting on better in the school-room now," said Mrs. Enderby to Phyllis one day; "I have not heard any complaints for some time."

"I think she is doing pretty well, mother; at least she behaves better to Miss Davis. As for me, I have very little to do with her. I notice, however, that she has quarrelled with Mark. He and she used to be great friends, because she is such a romp and ready for any rough play. But now he does not speak to her."

"That does not matter much," said Mrs. Enderby smiling; "she will be better with Miss Davis and you. You must continue to take an interest in the poor child, dear Phyllis. I wish she gave as little trouble as you do."

Phyllis was one of those girls for whom mothers ought to be more uneasy than for the wilder and naughtier children who cause them perpetual annoyance. She was so proper in all her ways, and so well-behaved as never to seem in fault. Her reasons for everything she said and did were so ready and so plausible, that it required a rather clever and far-seeing person to detect the deep-rooted pride and self-complacency that lay beneath them. To manage all things quietly her own way, to be accounted wise and good, and greatly superior to ordinary girls of her age, was as the breath of life to Phyllis. To have to stand morally or actually in the corner with other naughty children was a humiliation she had unfortunately never experienced, but was one which would have done her a world of good. All those early storms of remorse, repentance, compunction, which do so much to prepare the ground for a growth of virtue in children's hearts, were an unknown experience to her. She believed in herself, and she expected others, young and old, to believe in her. Such characters, if not discovered and humbled in time, are likely to have a terrible future, and to grow up the unconscious enemies of their own happiness and that of the people who live around them.

Mark kept up his indignation towards Hetty for a week. He did not grieve over the quarrel as she did, but he missed her sadly in his games. However, an accident soon occurred which made them friends again.

Mark had had a piece of land given to him in a retired part of the grounds, and he was full of the project of making a garden of his own, according to his own particular fancy. His father was pleased to allow him to do this, being glad of anything that would occupy the restless lad while at home for his holidays.

"I will draw all the beds geometrically myself," said Mark, "and make it quite different from anything you have ever seen. And then I will build a tea-house all of fir, and line it with cones, and it will have a delightful perfume."



Then he said to himself that if Hetty had not turned out so badly he would have asked her to make tea very often in his nice house among his flowers. But, of course, he could not ask a tell-tale duffer of a girl to do anything for him.

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He set to work to plan his beds, and one afternoon was busy marking off spaces with wooden pegs and a long line of cord. After working some time he came to the end of his pegs, and was annoyed to find that he had not enough to finish the particular figure he was planning. He did not like to drop his line to go for more pegs, as he feared his work was not secure enough, and would fall astray if the string was not held taut till the end should be properly secured.

Just as he looked around impatiently, not knowing what to do, he saw Hetty coming along the path above him, walking slowly and reading. She was very often reduced to the necessity of taking a story-book as companion of her leisure hours, now that Mark would have nothing to do with her. This afternoon Phyllis and Nell were out driving with their mother, and Miss Davis had seized the opportunity to write letters. Hetty was therefore thrown on her own resources and was roaming about with a book. She would have rushed away to Mrs. Kane's at once, but she knew that this was John Kane's dinner hour. But half an hour hence she would set off for the village, and have a nice long chat with her foster-mother.

Hetty descended the winding path with her eyes on her book, and before she saw him, nearly stumbled against Mark.

"Do you mean to walk over a fellow?" said Mark in an aggrieved tone.

"Oh, Mark, I beg your pardon. I did not know you were here. Now," she added, looking round wistfully, "if you wouldn't be cross with me what a nice time we could have working at your garden together."

"If you weren't disagreeable, I suppose you mean. Well, yes, we could. But you see we're not friends."

"And you won't, won't be?" said Hetty anxiously.

"Well, look here, if you hold this string for me a bit I'll think about it. My pegs are shaky until the string is fastened up tight, and I can't drop it, and I must go to the stable-yard for some more pegs. If you hold this string till I come back, perhaps I will forgive you."

"Oh yes, I will hold it," said Hetty; and down went her book on the grass, and she took the cord and held it as Mark directed.

"Be sure to keep steady till I come back," he said; "and you mustn't mind if I am kept a little while. I may have to look for Jack, who has the key of the storehouse where the pegs are kept."

And off he went.



When he got to the stable-yard he met a groom who was coming to look for him, saying that his father wanted him to go out riding. Mr. Enderby was already in the saddle, and Mark's pony was waiting beside him at the door. Mark, who loved a ride, especially in company with his father, at once vaulted on the pony's back and was soon trotting out of the gates, laughing and chatting with his papa. He had completely forgotten Hetty, and the pegs, and the cord that had to be held taut till he should come back.

In the meantime Hetty was standing just where he had left her, looking in the direction from which he was to return. A quarter of an hour passed, and her finger and thumb, which held the string exactly as Mark had directed, were a little stiff. Another quarter passed, and lest the cord should relax she changed it from one hand to the other.



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“Jack must have gone out,” she thought, “and Mark is waiting for him. I wish he would come back, for I do want to see Mrs. Kane.”

However, another quarter passed and Mark did not appear. Hetty was very cold, for it was damp wintry weather with a sharp wind, and one gets chilly standing perfectly still so long in the open air. She felt tempted to put down the string and go to look for Mark, but on reflection thought it would be disloyal to do so. He should not be disappointed in her again. Something extraordinary had happened to keep him away, but he should find her at her post when he came back. Then he would be sure to forgive her, and she would be happy again.

Another half-hour passed and her toes were half-frozen, and her fingers and her little nose pinched and red. She wished she had put on her gloves before she took the cord in her hands. Now she could not drop it to put them on. The jacket she wore was not a very warm one. Oh, why did not Mark come back? It occurred to her that perhaps he might be playing a trick to punish her; but she could not believe he would be so cruel. Should she drop the string at last, and tell him afterwards that she had held it as long as she could endure the cold? No, she would go on holding it. He should see that she could bear something for his sake.

Hetty had been about an hour shivering at her post when Mark, riding gaily along the road many miles from home, suddenly remembered Hetty and the cord. He felt greatly startled and shocked at his carelessness. “I ought to have sent Jack with the pegs to finish the work, and to tell her I was going to ride,” he reflected; “but it can’t be helped now. She will never be such a goose as to stay there long.” And he felt more sorry thinking of how the string would be lying slack until his return than for treating Hetty so inconsiderately. Trying to put the whole thing out of his head he began to chatter to his father about something that had happened at school, and thought no more about the matter till he had returned home an hour later.

Then he sprang from his pony and ran off to his garden to see if he could tighten up the string before it became quite dark night. Could he believe his eyes? There was Hetty holding the string as he had left her.

“Do you mean to say you have been there ever since?” he said in utter amazement.

“Yes,” said Hetty, trying to keep her teeth from chattering. “You told me not to mind if you were kept a while. And I did not mind.”

“But do you know that I have been two hours away, and have had a long ride with father?” said Mark.

“It seemed a long time,” said Hetty; “but I did not know what you were doing. I promised to stay and I stayed.”



“Well, you were a precious goose,” he said, taking the string out of her hand. “Nobody but a stupid of a girl would do such a thing.”

Hetty said nothing, but slapped her hands together, and tried to keep the tears of disappointment from coming into her eyes.



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“Here, hold the string a moment longer while I put this peg properly into the ground. Can’t you catch it tight? Oh, your fingers are stiff. There, that will do for to-night Now, come home and get warm again.”

They walked up to the house together. Hetty was too cold, and tired, and hurt to speak again, and Mark was too much annoyed at his own carelessness, and what he called Hetty’s stupidity, to be able to thank her, and offer to make friends with her. Hetty went up to her own room to take off her things, and when she came down to the school-room she found that the tea was over and she was in disgrace for staying out so long. Phyllis cast a disapproving glance at her as she entered. Punctuality was one of Phyllis’s virtues. Miss Davis rebuked Hetty for staying out alone so late.

“I must tell Mrs. Kane,” she said, “not to keep you so late when you go to see her.”

Then Hetty was obliged to say that she had not been to see Mrs. Kane.

“Where, then, can you have been for two hours all alone?”

“I was all the time in the grounds,” said Hetty.

She had made up her mind that she would not “tell” this time of Mark, and the consciousness that she was in an awkward position made her colour up and look as if guilty of some fault she did not wish to own. Phyllis looked at her narrowly and glanced at Miss Davis, who had a pained expression on her face, but who said nothing more at the time, being willing to screen Hetty if she could.

“Hetty, I am sure you have got cold,” said Nell after some time; “you are all shivery-shuddery.”

“My head is aching,” said Hetty; “I don’t feel well.”

“I suppose you were sitting all the time reading a story-book,” said Phyllis, “that would give you cold in weather like this.”

“No, I was not reading, at least not long,” said Hetty.

“But were you sitting?”

“No.”

“Walking?”

“No, not much.”



“My dear, you must not cross-question like that,” said Miss Davis. “Perhaps Hetty will tell me by and by what she was doing.”

A frown gathered on Phyllis’s fair brows and she turned coldly to her lesson book which she was studying for the next day. She could not bear even so slight a rebuke as this, but she knew how to reserve the expression of her displeasure to a fitting time. She herself believed that she bore an undeserved reproof with dignity, but some day in the future the governess would be made to suffer some petty annoyance or disappointment in atonement for her misconduct in finding fault with her pattern pupil. Hetty raised her eyes with a thankful glance at Miss Davis, who saw that they were full of tears. A sudden warmth kindled in Miss Davis’s heart as she saw that Hetty trusted in her forbearance, and she said presently:

“I think you had better go to bed now, Hetty. You look unwell; and bed is the best place for a cold.”



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“May I go with her, and see that she is covered up warm?” said Nell.

“Yes,” said Miss Davis, “certainly.” And the two little girls left the room together, Hetty squeezing Nell’s hand in gratitude for her kindness.

When they got up to Hetty’s room Nell’s curiosity could no longer restrain itself.

“Oh, Hetty,” she said, “will you tell me what you were doing? I can see it is a great secret. And I won’t tell anybody.”

“Neither will I,” said Hetty laughing; “but I was not hurting anyone, nor breaking the laws.”

“Now, you are making fun of me,” said Nell; “it is too bad not to tell me. And Phyllis will be cool with me to-night for running after you.”

“Then why did you not stay in the school-room?” said Hetty sadly. “I don’t want to make coolness between you and Phyllis.”

“I shouldn’t mind Phyllis if you would let me have a secret with you. It is so nice to have a secret, and it is so hard to get one. Everybody knows all about everything.”

“I don’t agree with you; I hate secrets,” said Hetty. “This is not much of one, I think, but it is somebody else’s affair, and I will not tell it.”

Having wrung so much as this from Hetty, Nell grew wildly excited over the matter, and was so annoyed at not having her curiosity gratified that she went away out of the room in a hurry without having seen whether Hetty was warm enough or not. On her return to the school-room she announced that Hetty could not tell anything about how she had passed the afternoon, because it was somebody else’s secret.

“Perhaps she has been bringing some village girl or boy into the grounds,” said Phyllis quietly.

“I will talk to her myself about this,” said Miss Davis; “pray attend to your studies.”

Miss Davis on reflection thought Phyllis might be right, and that having made acquaintance with some young companion in Mrs. Kane’s cottage, Hetty might have been induced to admit her or him to the grounds so as to give pleasure. She knew how strongly the child was influenced by her likings and lovings, and feared that this might be the case of Scamp over again, with the important difference that Hetty was now a girl in her twelfth year, and that her new favourite might prove to be a human being instead of a dog.



The next day Hetty was seriously ill. She had caught a severe cold and lay tossing feverishly in her bed. Miss Davis came up to see her in the afternoon and sat at her bedside for half an hour.

“Hetty,” she said, “I fear you must have been very foolish yesterday, and that your cold is the consequence. Now that we are alone I expect you will tell me exactly all that you did.”

“I can’t indeed, Miss Davis.”

“You disappoint me exceedingly. I had been thinking so much better of you; I conclude you were not alone yesterday.”

“Not all the time, but most of it.”

“Who was with you when you were not alone?”



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Hetty hesitated, and then said, "Mark."

"But Mark was out riding with his father."

"Yes."

"And you were alone all that time."

"Yes."

"And yet there is something behind that you will not tell. Hetty, I always thought you frank till now. Why are you making a mystery?"

"I can't tell you, Miss Davis; I was not doing any harm."

"How am I to believe that?" said Miss Davis.

"Oh, my head!" moaned Hetty, as the pain seemed crushing it. She thought that if she were to die for it she would not tell that Mark had treated her badly.

Miss Davis went away hurt and displeased, and Hetty was very much alone for several days, being too ill to leave her room, and too deeply in disgrace to be petted by anyone. She was very unhappy, and lay wondering how it was that with a strong desire to do right she seemed always going wrong. If she had dropped the string, gone away to see Mrs. Kane as she had been longing to do, and returned in good time to the school-room to tea, Mark would perhaps have been better pleased with her than he actually was. He had not guessed that she had meant to please him, to make up for telling Miss Davis that they two had played her a trick. He did not ask about her now she was ill, or notice that she was keeping silence and allowing herself to be misunderstood in order that he might not be blamed. If all were told he could not be much blamed, it was true, for what was a mere piece of forgetfulness. But that carelessness of his was a fault of which his father was very impatient, and which always brought on him a severe reprimand.

"And I will not tell this time," said Hetty to herself, as her eyes feverishly danced after the spots on the wall-paper. "When I told before, it was to save Miss Davis from suffering, this time there is nobody to suffer but myself."

In the meantime Mark was spending a few days with a school-fellow at a distance of some miles, and had gone away without hearing about Hetty's illness. As soon as he returned home he missed her, and learned that she was shut up in her room.

He immediately went to inquire for her, and met Miss Davis on the stairs.

"I'm sure I don't wonder she got a cold," he said, "but I never meant her to do it."



“To do what?” asked Miss Davis.

“Why, did she not tell you?”

“I have not been able to get her to tell me what she was about that day for two hours alone in the grounds. She has not behaved well, I am sorry to say; she has been in disgrace as well as ill.”

“Then it was a jolly shame!” burst forth Mark. “I left her to hold a string for me, and I forgot all about her, and went away to ride. And she stood holding the string for two hours in the cold. And I called her a duffer for not running away and letting all my pegs go crooked in the ground. Oh, I say, Miss Davis, it makes a fellow feel awfully ashamed of himself.”



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“So it ought,” said Miss Davis, who now understood the whole thing. “She would not tell for fear of getting you blamed.”

“And I called her a tell-tale before,” said Mark, “because she told you about the trick. I’ve been punishing her for weeks about that. Miss Davis, can’t I go in and see her and beg her pardon?”

“Certainly,” said Miss Davis; “she is sitting at the fire, and her eyes are red with crying. Come in with me and we will try to make her happy again.”

“Why, Hetty, you do look miserable!” cried Mark, coming into the room and looking ruefully at her pale cheeks and the black shadows round her eyes. “And to think of you never telling after all I made you suffer!”

“I wanted to show you that I am not a tell-tale, Mark; but oh, I am so glad you have come. I thought you were never going to be friends with me again.”

“I was away four days,” said Mark; “and of course I thought you knew. But Hetty, you are a jolly queer girl I can tell you, and I can’t half understand you. Think of anyone standing two hours to be pierced through and through with cold, rather than drop a fellow’s string and run away!”

Hetty looked at him wistfully, recognizing the truth that he never could understand the sort of feeling that led her into making, as he considered, such a fool of herself. Miss Davis gazed at her kindly and pityingly, thinking of how many hard blows she would get in the future, in return for acts like that which had so puzzled Mark. And she resolved that another time she would be slow in blaming any eccentric conduct in Hetty, and would wait till she could get at the motive which inspired it.

CHAPTER XV.

THE CHILDREN’S DANCE.

One day during these Christmas holidays a lady came to visit at Wavertree Hall, bringing her two little girls. Phyllis and Nell had gone with Miss Davis to see some other young friends in the neighbourhood, and Hetty, who was spending one of her lonely afternoons in the school-room with her books and work, was sent for to take the little visitors for a walk in the grounds, while their mother had tea with Mrs. Enderby.

Hetty was pleased at being wanted, and soon felt at home with the strange little girls, who at once took a great fancy to her. Seeing she could give pleasure her spirits rose high, and she became exceedingly merry, and said some very amusing things.



“I think,” said Edith, the elder of the young visitors, “that you must be the girl who told such funny stories one evening when mamma dined here. She said it was as good as going to the theatre.”

“That was a long time ago,” said Hetty; “I am not funny now. At least, very seldom.”

“I think you are funny to-day,” said Grace, the second sister; “I wish you would come to our house and act for us, as you did then.”

“I don’t go to houses,” said Hetty, shaking her head; “I belonged to Mrs. Rushton then, and she meant me to be a lady. But now she is dead, and it is settled that I am not to be a lady when I am grown up. I am only to be a governess, and work for myself.”



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“But governesses are ladies,” said Edith; “a dear friend of ours is a governess, and there never was a nicer lady.”

“Oh, I know,” said Hetty; “Miss Davis is quite the same. But I mean, I am not to be the kind of lady that goes out to parties.”

“Well, I will try and get you leave to come to our party,” said Edith. “We are going to have one before the holidays are over.”

“I don’t think you will get leave from Mrs. Enderby,” said Hetty; “and then I have no frock.”

“They must get you a frock somewhere,” said Grace; “I could send you one of mine.”

“That would give offence, I am sure,” said Hetty smiling. “It is not for the trouble of getting the frock that Mrs. Enderby would keep me from going. She does not wish me to get accustomed to such things.”

“Then she is horrid,” cried Edith; “making you just like Cinderella.”

“No, no,” said Hetty, “you must not say that. Cinderella was a daughter of the house, and I am nobody’s child. That is what the village people say. And only think if they had sent me to a charity school!”

Edith and Grace gazed at her gravely. Hetty stood with her hands behind her back, looking them in the eyes as she stated her own case.

“And you have nobody belonging to you, really, in the whole world?” said Edith.

“Nobody,” said Hetty, “and nothing. At least nothing but a tiny linen chemise.”

“Did you drop down out of the clouds in that?” asked Grace with widening eyes.

“No,” said Hetty laughing; “but I came out of the sea in it. I was washed up as a baby on the Long Sands. There were great storms at the time and a great many shipwrecks. And nobody ever asked about me. They must have been all drowned. John Kane, one of Mr Enderby’s carters, picked me up. So you see I am not the kind of girl to be going out to parties.”

“You will have to be very learned if you are going to be a governess,” said Grace; “I suppose you are always studying.”

“I work pretty hard at my books,” said Hetty; “but I am not clever. And how I am ever to be as well informed as Miss Davis I don’t know. Some things I remember quite well, and other things I am always forgetting. I am sure if I ever get any pupils they will laugh



at me. I wish I could live in a little cottage in the fields, and work in a garden and sell my flowers.”

“I should always come and buy from you,” said Grace; “what kind of flowers would you keep?”

“Oh, roses,” said Hetty; “roses and violets. When I was in London I saw people selling them in the streets. I would send them to London and get money back.”

“I think I will come and live with you,” said Grace eagerly.

“Grace, don’t be a goose,” saith Edith; “Hetty has not got a cottage, and she is going to be a governess.”

“Yes,” sighed Hetty; “but I shall never remember my dates.”

A few days after this conversation occurred, an invitation to a children’s party came from Edith and Grace to all the children at Wavertree Hall, including Hetty Gray. Mrs. Enderby did not wish Hetty to know that she had been invited, but Nell whispered the news to her.



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“Mamma and Phyllis think you ought not to go,” said Nell; “but Mark and I intend to fight for you. Mark says he was so nasty to you lately that he wants to make up.”

Hetty’s eyes sparkled at the idea of having this pleasant variety.

“I shall never be allowed to go,” she said.

“Oh, if it is only a frock, you can have one of mine,” said Nell; “I got a new one for the last party, and my one before is not so bad.”

“It isn’t the frock, I am sure,” said Hetty; “it is because I am not to be a lady. At least,” she added, remembering Edith’s rebuke, “I am not to be a party-lady, not a dancing-and-dressing-lady. I am only to be a book-lady, a penwiper-lady, a needle-and-thread-lady, you know, Nell.”

“Oh, Hetty! a penwiper-lady!”

“Yes, haven’t you seen them at bazaars?” said Hetty, screwing up her little nose to keep from laughing.

“I never know whether you are in earnest when you begin like that,” said Nell pouting; “I suppose you don’t want to come with us.”

However, when Hetty heard that she had really got leave to go “for this once, because Edith and Grace had made such a point of it,” there was no mistake about her gladness to join in the fun.

“How will you ever keep me at home after this?” she said, as Phyllis and Nell stood surveying her dressed in one of their cast-off frocks, of a rose-coloured tint which suited her brunette complexion. “I shall be getting into your pockets the next time, and tumbling out in the ball-room with your pocket-handkerchief.”

“No one wants to keep you at home, except for your own good,” said Phyllis with an air of wisdom.

“Never mind, Phyllis, it won’t be into your pocket that I shall creep,” said Hetty gaily.

Phyllis did not feel like herself that evening, and was dissatisfied about she knew not what. She could not admit to herself that she was displeased because another was to enjoy a treat, even though she thought she had a right to her belief that it would have been better if Hetty had been made to stay at home. “Of course, as mother consents, it is all right,” she had said; but still she did not feel as much enjoyment as usual in dressing for the party. Half suspecting the cause of this, and willing to restore her good opinion of her own virtue, she brought a pretty fan to Hetty and offered to lend it to her. Hetty took it with a look and exclamation of thanks; but Phyllis thought she hardly



expressed her gratitude with sufficient humbleness. However, Phyllis had now soothed away that faint doubt in her own mind as to her own kindness and generosity, and took no further notice of her unwelcome companion.

Arrived at the ball, Hetty was warmly received by Edith and Grace, and was soon in a whirl of delightful excitement. She had "as many partners as she could use," as a tiny girl once expressed it, and she was not, like Cinderella, afraid that her frock would turn to rags, or anxious to run home before the other dancers. Everybody was very kind to her, and if anyone said, "That is the little girl whom Mr. Enderby is bringing up for charity," Hetty did not hear it, and so did not care.



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“Oh, Hetty, you do look so nice!” said Nell, dancing up to her. “A gentleman over there asked me if you were my sister. And I did not tell him you were going to be a governess.”

“You might have told him,” said Hetty. “I don’t care. I have been speaking to such a nice governess. She is here in care of some little children. I think she is the prettiest lady in the room; and she looks quite happy. I wish I could turn out something like her. Only I shall never remember the dates.”

Hetty sighed, and the next minute was whirled away into the dance again.

Now Phyllis had told herself over and over again in the course of the evening that she was very pleased poor Hetty should be enjoying the pleasure of this party, always adding a reflection, however, that she hoped she might not be spoiled by so foolish an indulgence. “If I were going to be a governess,” thought she, “I should try to fit myself for the position. Of course it is father’s and mother’s affair, but when one has a little brains one can’t help thinking, I believe if I were in mother’s position I should be wiser; but then, of course, I cannot have any things or people to manage till I am grown up. It is the duty of a girl to do what she is told; afterwards people will have to do what she tells them. When the time comes for me to be a mistress I shall take good care that everybody does what is right.”

These reflections occurred to Phyllis while she was sitting out a dance for which Hetty had got a partner.

Soon afterwards, while the breathless flock of young dancers were fanning themselves on the sofas, the lady of the house requested Hetty to recite or act something to amuse the company.

At this proposal Hetty was startled and dismayed. It was a very long time since she had done anything of the kind, except for the amusement of Mark and Nell, and she had forgotten all the old stories and characters that used to be found so entertaining by grown people. She felt a shyness amounting to terror at being obliged to come forward and perform before this company; and, besides, she was very sure that Mrs. Enderby would disapprove of her doing so. She therefore begged earnestly to be excused, and retreated into a corner. The lady of the house desisted for a time from her persuasions, but after another dance was finished she renewed her request. Hetty’s distress increased, but she felt quite unable to explain to her hostess the reasons why it was impossible she could comply with her wishes. She could only repeat:

“I forget how to do it; indeed I do. And Mrs. Enderby does not like it.”

“Mrs. Enderby would like you to please me,” said the hostess. “And I cannot think you forget. My daughters tell me you were most amusing last week when they saw you.”

“Was I?” said Hetty, dismayed. “But that was in the garden and came by accident. I could not do anything before all this crowd.”



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“Well, if you were a shy child I could understand,” said the lady; “but you know I heard you long ago when you were much younger. If you were not shy then you cannot be so now.”

Hetty could not explain that it was just because she was older now that she was shy. Long ago she had been too small to realize the position she was placed in. She felt ready to weep at being found so disobliging, yet when she thought of the performance required of her, her tongue clove to her mouth with fright.

The hostess now crossed the room to Phyllis, who had been watching what had passed between her and Hetty from a distance.

“I have been trying to persuade little Miss Gray to recite for us, or to do some of her amusing characters, but she has all sorts of reasons why she cannot oblige me. Is she always so obstinate?”

Phyllis hesitated.

“I think she has a pretty strong will of her own,” she said. “I am afraid she will not yield.”

“Well, my dear, you know her better than I do, and it is nice of you not to be too ready to blame her. But I like little girls who do as their elders bid them. And I confess I expected to find her agreeable when I invited her here this evening.”

Now if Phyllis had been as generous as she would have liked to believe herself she would have said, “I know my mother does not approve of Hetty’s performances, and Hetty knows it too. Perhaps this is why she refuses.” But Phyllis, quite unconsciously to herself, was pleased to hear Hetty blamed, and was willing to think that she ought to have put all her scruples aside in order to oblige Mrs. Enderby’s friend. While she considered about what it would be pretty to say, her hostess went on:

“I suppose she is a little conceited and spoiled. She is certainly exceedingly pretty and clever.”

It was much more difficult now for Phyllis to make her amiable speech; yet she had not the least idea that she was a jealous or an envious girl. She always felt so good, and everybody said she was so. Jealous people are always making disturbance. Therefore it was quite impossible that Phyllis could be jealous.

“I will go and speak to her,” she said to the lady of the house, and crossed the room to where Hetty sat, looking unhappy.

“Hetty,” said Phyllis, “I think you ought to do as you are asked. It was exceedingly kind of Mrs. Cartwright to invite you here. Of course she expected you to be obliging.”



“You mean that she asked me, thinking I would amuse the company?” said Hetty quickly. “Then I am very sorry you have told me so, Phyllis, for I should never have guessed it. And now I shall feel miserable till I get away.”

“Can’t you be agreeable?”

“No, I can’t. Just think of trying it yourself.”

“Of course it would not be suitable for me,” said Phyllis. “Our positions are different. However, if you choose to be ungrateful you must.”

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And she walked away, leaving Hetty sitting alone reflecting sadly on her words. So after all it was not kindness and liking for her that had made these people include her in their invitation. It was only the desire to have their party made more amusing by her performance. She wished she could do what was required of her, so that she need owe them nothing. But she could not; and how hateful she must seem.

All her pleasure was over now, and she was glad when the moment came to get away. Her silence was not noticed during the drive home, for every one else was too sleepy to talk. But Hetty was too unhappy to be sleepy.

The next morning Miss Davis asked at breakfast if the party had been enjoyable.

“It was all very nice,” said Phyllis, “until towards the end, when Hetty put on fine airs and refused to be obliging. After that we all felt uncomfortable.”

“That is not true, Miss Davis,” said Hetty bluntly.

Her temper had suddenly got the better of her.

Phyllis’s blue eyes contracted, and her lip curled.

“Please send her out of the room, Miss Davis,” she said.

“Hetty, I am sorry for this,” said Miss Davis, “I could not have believed you would speak so rudely.”

“You have not heard the story, Miss Davis.”

“I have heard you put yourself very much in the wrong. Phyllis would not tell an untruth of you, I am sure.”

“She said I put on fine airs,” said Hetty, trembling with indignation. “I did not put on airs. They wanted me to perform, and I could not do it. If I had done it Phyllis would have been the first to blame me. I remember how she scorned me for doing it long ago.”

“I hope you will make her apologize to me, Miss Davis,” said Phyllis quietly. The more excited poor Hetty became, the quieter grew the other girl.

“She is ungenerous,” continued Hetty, striving valiantly to keep back her tears; “she knew her mother would not approve of my performing; and besides, I told her I was afraid. If I had done it she would have complained to Mrs. Enderby of my doing it.”

This passionate accusation hit Phyllis home. She knew it was true—so true that though she had arraigned Hetty before Miss Davis for the pleasure of humbling her, she yet had no intention of carrying the tale to her mother, fearing that Mrs. Enderby would say that



Hetty had been right. Had Hetty made “a show of herself” by performing, Phyllis would perhaps have made a grievance of it to her parents. Stung for a moment with the consciousness that this was true, before she had had time to persuade herself of the contrary, Phyllis grew white with anger. The injury she could least forgive was a hurt to her self-complacency.

“She must apologize, Miss Davis, or I will go to papa,” said Phyllis, disdainingly to glance at Hetty, but looking at her governess.

Miss Davis was troubled.

“This is all very painful,” she said. “Hetty, you had better go to your room till you have recovered your composure. Whatever may have been your motives last night you have now put yourself in the wrong by speaking so rudely.”



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Hetty flashed out of the room, and Phyllis, quiet and triumphant, turned to her lesson-books with a most virtuous expression upon her placid face.

Hetty wept for an hour in her own room. Looking back on her conduct she could not see that she had been more to blame than Phyllis. Oh, how was it that Phyllis was always proved to be so good while she was always forced into the wrong? She remembered a prayer asking for meekness which Mrs. Kane had taught her, and she knelt by her bedside and said it aloud; and just then she heard Miss Davis calling to her to open the door.

“My dear,” said the governess, “I have come to tell you that you really must apologize to Phyllis. It was exceedingly rude of you to tell her so flatly that her words were untrue.”

Hetty flushed up to the roots of her hair and for a few moments could not speak. She had just been on her knees asking for strength from God to overcome her pride, and here was an opportunity for practising meekness. But it was dreadfully hard, thought Hetty.

“I will try and do it, Miss Davis. But may I write a letter in my own way?”

“Certainly, my dear. I am glad to find you so willing to acknowledge yourself in fault.”

Left alone to perform her task Hetty opened her desk and sat biting her pen. At last she wrote:

“Dear Phyllis,—I am very sorry I said so rudely that you did not tell the truth. But oh, why did you not tell it, and then there need not have been any trouble?”

“HETTY.”

Hetty brought this note herself into the school-room, and in presence of Miss Davis handed it to Phyllis.

“Do you call that an apology?” said Phyllis, handing the note to Miss Davis.

“I don’t think you have made things any better, Hetty,” said Miss Davis.

“I said what I could, Miss Davis. Phyllis ought to apologize to me now.”

Phyllis gave her a look of cold surprise, and took up a book.

“Pray, Miss Davis, do not mind,” said she over the edges of her book. “I expect nothing but insolence from Hetty Gray. Mother little knew what she was providing for us when she brought her here.”



Hetty turned wildly to the governess. “Miss Davis,” she cried, “can I not go away somewhere, away from here? Is there not some place in the world where they would give a girl like me work to do? How can I go on living here, to be treated as Phyllis treats me?”

Miss Davis took her by the hand and led her out of the room and upstairs to her own chamber. Having closed the door she sat down and talked to her.

“Hetty,” she said, “when you give way to your pride in passions like this you forget things. You asked me just now, is there any place where people would give work to a girl like you to do? I don’t think there is—no place such as you could go to.”

“I would go anywhere,” moaned Hetty.



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“Anywhere is nowhere,” said Miss Davis. “Just look round you and see all that is given to you in this house. There is your comfortable bed to sleep in, you have your meals when you are hungry, you have good clothing, you have a warm fireside to sit at, you have the protection of an honourable home. Yet you would fling away all these advantages because of a few wounds to your pride. Phyllis is trying, I admit—I have to suffer from her at times myself—but you and I must bear with something for the sake of what we receive.”

Hetty raised her eyes and looked at Miss Davis’s worn face and the line of pain that had come out sharply across her brow, and forgot herself for the moment, thinking of the governess’s patient life.

“But, Miss Davis, *you* need not suffer from Phyllis; you are not like me. Any people would be glad to get you, who are so clever and so good. You could complain of her to her mother, and if she did not get better you could go away.”

“Should I be any more safe from annoyance in another family? Hetty, my dear, there are always thorns in the path of those who are poor and dependent on others, and our wisest course is to make the best of things. I might say to you, *you* have no one to think of but yourself. For me, I have a mother to support, and I have to think of my dear young brother, who is not too wise for his own interests, and whose prospects are at the mercy of a rather capricious old uncle.”

“Oh that I had a mother and a brother to work for!” cried Hetty passionately.

“Perhaps that would teach you wisdom, my dear. However, profit by my experience and be cheered up. Take no notice if Phyllis is unkind. It is better to be here, even with her unkindness, than straying about the world alone, meeting with such misfortunes as you never dreamed of.”

After Miss Davis had left her, Hetty sat a long time pondering over that lady’s words. It seemed to her that the governess, good and patient as she was, had no motive for her conduct high enough to carry her through the trials of her life. It was certainly an excellent thing to be prudent for the sake of her mother and brother; to bear with present evils for fear of worse evils that might come. But yet—but yet, was there not a higher motive than all this for learning to be meek and humble of heart? Looking into her own proud and stubborn nature, the little girl assured herself that Miss Davis’s motives would never be in themselves enough for her, Hetty—never sufficiently strong to crush the rebellion of self in her stormy young soul. Instinctively her thoughts flew to Mrs. Kane, and seizing her hat and cloak she flew out of the house, and away down the road to the labourer’s cottage.

Fortunately it was a good hour for her visit. John had gone out after his dinner. The cottage kitchen was tidied up, the fire shining, the two old straw arm-chairs drawn up by

the hearth. Mrs. Kane was just screwing up her eyes, trying to thread a needle, when Hetty dashed in and flung her arms around her neck.



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“Oh, Mrs. Kane, the pride has got so bad again; and I have been quarrelling with Phyllis and wanting to run away.”

“Run away!” said Mrs. Kane; “oh, no, dearie, never run away from your post.”

“What is my post?” said Hetty weeping; “I have no post. I am only a charity girl and in everybody’s way. Phyllis hints it to me in every way she can, even when she does not say it outright. Oh, how can I have patience to grow up? Why does it take so long to get old?”

Mrs. Kane sighed. “It doesn’t take long to grow old, dear, once you are fairly in the tracks of the years. But it does take a while to grow up. And you must have patience, Hetty. There’s nothing else for it but the patience and meekness of God.”

Hetty drew a long breath. All that was spiritual within her hung now on Mrs. Kane’s words. The patience of God was such a different thing from the prudence of this world. That was the difference between Miss Davis and Mrs. Kane.

“There was something beautiful you said one day,” said Hetty in a whisper; “say it again. It was, ‘Learn of me—’”

“Learn of me; for I am meek and lowly of heart,” said Mrs. Kane. “That is the word you want, my darling, and it was said for such as you.”

Hetty’s tears fell fast, but they were no longer angry tears. She was crying now with longing to be good.

“There was something else,” she said presently, when she could find her voice; “something that was spoken for me too.”

“Blessed are the poor in spirit; for theirs is the kingdom of heaven,” said Mrs. Kane, stroking her head. And then Hetty cried more wildly, thinking with remorse of her own pride.

“If He is for you, my dear, you needn’t care who is against you,” continued Mrs. Kane; “take that into your heart and keep it there.”

After that they had a long talk about all Hetty’s difficulties, and when at last the little girl left the cottage, it was with a lighter step than had brought her there. When she walked into the school-room just in time for tea the signs of woe were gone from her countenance, and she looked even brighter than usual. Without giving herself time to think, or to observe the looks of those in the room, she went straight up to Phyllis and said cheerfully:



“Phyllis, I am sorry I gave you offence. I hope you will forget it and be friends with me”; and then she took her seat at the table as if nothing had happened.

Miss Davis, who had been rather dreading her appearance, fearing a renewal of the quarrel, looked up at her and actually coloured all over her faded face with pleasure and surprise. Hetty had really taken her lessons to heart, and was going to be a wise and prudent girl after all. She little thought that a far higher spirit actuated the girl than had at all entered into her teachings.

Phyllis glanced round with a triumphant air as if saying, “Now I am indeed proved in the right. She herself has acknowledged it!” and then she said gently:



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"I accept your apology, Hetty, and I will not say anything of the matter to my mother."

"Is not Phyllis good," whispered Nell afterwards, "not to tell mamma? Because you know, you were very naughty to her, Hetty, and she is papa's daughter and the eldest."

Nell's friendly speeches were sometimes hard to bear, as well as Phyllis's unfriendly ones. Hetty would have been glad if the whole affair could have been laid before Mrs. Enderby, and saw no reason to congratulate herself on Phyllis's silence to her mother as to the quarrel and its cause. But the others judged differently. Miss Davis was pleased that by her own tact she had been able to arrange matters without calling in the aid of Mrs. Enderby, who, she was aware, liked a governess to have judgment and decision sufficient to keep the mistress of the house out of school-room squabbles. Nell was delighted that there was to be no more "fuss." Phyllis above all was pleased, for now she felt no more necessity for questioning her own motives and conduct, no more danger of being told by her mother that Hetty had in the beginning been in the right, while she, by opposing her, had brought on the wrong which had followed.

Falling back upon her own doctrine, that she must be right because her judgment told her so, Phyllis was coldly amiable to Hetty for the rest of the evening; while Hetty, having made her act of humility, rather suffered from a reaction of feeling, and had to struggle hard to keep the moral vantage-ground she had gained.

CHAPTER XVI.

A TRIAL OF PATIENCE.

Two more years passed over Hetty's head. She had grown tall and looked old for her age, her large gray eyes were full of serious thought, her brow was grave, and the expression of her mouth touched with sadness. The haughtiness and mirth of her childhood were alike gone. Earnest desire to attain to a difficult end was the one force that moved her, and this had become visible in her every word and glance. She was painfully aware that the time was approaching when she must go forth to battle with the world for herself, and that on her own qualifications for fighting that battle her position in the world must depend. That she had not sufficient aptitude for learning out of books, or for remembering readily all that she gathered from them, she greatly feared. Her memory gave her back in pictures whatever had engaged her imagination; but much that was useful and necessary was wont to pass away out of her grasp. Thorough determination, close application, did not remove this difficulty, and she was warned by those around her that unless she could make better use for study of the three years yet before her than she had made of those that lay behind her, she could never be a teacher of a very high order. Of all that this failure meant, Hetty understood more clearly now than when she had wished to live with Mrs. Kane and be the village schoolmistress. Loving all that was beautiful and refined in life, she had learned to

dread, from another motive than pride, the fate of being thrown upon a lower social level. And yet this was a fate which seemed now to stare her in the face.



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Mr. Enderby, who had of late taken a personal interest in her studies, examining her from time to time on various subjects, said to her:

“My little girl, if you do not wake up and work harder I fear you will have to take an inferior position in life to that which I desired for you.”

Poor Hetty! Was she not wide awake? So wide awake that when he and all the household were asleep she lay staring her misfortune in the face. And how could she work harder than she did, weeping in secret over the dry facts that would not leave their mark upon her brain? Thus it was that life looked dreary to her, and her face was grave and pale. Phyllis and Nell, who were three and two years older than herself, had begun to talk of the joys which the magic age of eighteen had in store for them. They would leave off study and go forth into the enjoyment of their youth in a flattering world. Idleness, pleasure, happiness awaited them. No one could say they were not sufficiently well educated to take that graceful place in life which Providence had assigned to them; Hetty was rebuked for being less learned than she ought to be, because for her there was no graceful place prepared; only a difficult and narrow path leading away she knew not where.

Of the difference between their position and hers she could not help thinking, but she had been so long accustomed to realize it that she did not dwell upon it much. Miss Davis was the person on whom her eyes were fixed as an image of what she ought to hope to become.

To be exactly like Miss Davis. To look like her, think like her, be as well informed, as independent, as much respected; to teach as well, speak as wisely, be called an admirable woman who had fought her own way against poverty in the world, this was what Hetty had been assured by Mr. and Mrs. Enderby ought to be the object of her ambition and the end of all her hopes. And Hetty tried honestly to will as they willed for her good. But her face was not less sad on that account.

Things were in this state when one day, a day never to be forgotten by her, Hetty was feeling more than usually unhappy. Only the evening before Mr. Enderby had examined her on several subjects, and had found her wanting. He had spoken to her with a little severity, and at the same time looked at her pityingly, and the girl had felt more miserable than can be told at having disappointed him. To-day she was left to spend a long afternoon by herself, as Miss Davis had taken Phyllis and Nell to visit some friends, and, though her morning's work ought to have been over, she still sat at her lessons, labouring diligently. At last becoming thoroughly tired she closed her book and raised her eyes wearily, when they fell on a jar of wild flowers which yesterday she had arranged and placed upon a bracket against the wall. It was spring, and in the jar was a cluster of pale wood-anemones with some sprays of bramble newly leafed. Hetty's eyes brightened



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at the sight of these flowers, and noted keenly every exquisite outline and delicate hue of the group. It seemed to her at the moment that she had never seen anything so beautiful before. Mechanically she took up her pencil and began to imitate on a piece of paper the waving line of the bramble wreath, and the graceful curves of the leaves. To her own great surprise something very like the bramble soon began to appear upon the paper. A sharp touch here, a little shadow there, and her drawing looked vigorous and true. After working in great excitement for some time Hetty got up and pinned her drawing to the wall, and stood some way off looking at it. Where had it come from? she asked herself. She had never learned to draw. She had not known that she could draw. Oh, how delightful it would be if she could reproduce the flowers as they grew! Not quite able to believe in the new power she had discovered in herself, she set again to work, altering the arrangement of the flowers in the jar, and taking a larger sheet of paper. It was only ruled exercise paper, but that did not seem to matter when the flowers blossomed all over it. The second drawing was even better than the first; and Hetty stood looking at it with flushed cheeks and throbbing heart, wondering what was this new rapture that had suddenly sprung up in her life.

As her work was done, and the afternoon was all her own, she was able to give herself up to this unexpected delight, and spent many hours composing new groups of flowers, and arranging them in fanciful designs. When a maid brought up her solitary tea she lifted her flushed face and murmured, "Oh, can it be tea-time?" and then spread out all her drawings against the wall, and stared at them while she ate her bread and butter.

She felt nervous at the thought of letting anybody see them, and locked them up in her desk before Miss Davis and the other girls came home.

In earliest dawn of the next morning, however, she was out of bed and studying the drawings as she stood in her night-dress and with bare feet. Were they really good, she asked herself, or were her eyes bewitched; and would Mr. Enderby laugh at them if he saw them? Anguish seized on her at the thought, and she dressed herself with trembling hands. A new idea, striving in her mind, seemed to set all nature thrilling with a meaning it had never borne for her before. There had been great painters on the earth, as she knew full well, whose existence had been made beautiful and glorious by their genius; and there were artists living in the present day, small and great, who must surely be the happiest beings in the world. Their days were spent, not in drudgery, and lecturing, and primness, but in the study and reproduction of the beauty lying round them. Oh, if God should have intended her to be one of these!



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When the maids came to dust the school-room they found Hetty hard at work upon a new wreath of ivy which she had hastily snatched from the garden wall and hung against the curtain, and they thought she was doing some penance at Miss Davis's bidding. By eight o'clock the drawings were hid away, the flowers and wreaths disposed of in the jars, and Hetty was sitting at the table with a book in her hand. No one need know, she thought, of how she spent those early hours when everybody else was in bed. And so day after day she worked on steadily with her pencil, and there was a strange and unutterable hope in her heart, and a new light of happiness in her eyes.

After some time she became more daring and attempted to bring colour into her designs. Using her school-room box of paints, the paints intended only for the drawing of maps, she placed washes of colour on her leaves and along her stems, making the whole composition more effective and complete. Day by day she improved on her first ideas, till she had stored up a collection of really beautiful sketches.

With this new joy tingling through her young veins from morning till night, and from night till morning again, Hetty began to look so glad and bright that everyone remarked it. Miss Davis looked on approvingly, thinking that her own excellent discipline of the girl was having an effect she had scarcely dared to hope for. Nell was full of curiosity to know why Hetty had become so gay.

"May I not have the liberty to be gay as well as you?" said Hetty laughing.

"Of course; but then you are so suddenly changed. Miss Davis says it is only because you are growing good. But I think there must be something that is making you good."

"I am glad to hear I am growing good. Something is making me very happy, but I cannot tell you what it is."

Nell, always on the look-out for a secret, opened her eyes very wide, but could get no further satisfaction from Hetty, who only laughed at her appeals to be taken into confidence. That evening, however, she told Miss Davis that Hetty had admitted that there was *something* that was making her so happy.

"I knew she had a secret," said Nell mysteriously.

"Then it is the secret of doing her duty," said Miss Davis. "She has made great improvement in every respect during the last few weeks."

"I know she gets up earlier in the mornings than she used to do," said Nell, "and I don't think she is at her lessons all the time."

"I hope she has not been making any more friends in the village," said Phyllis.



“I am sorry such thoughts have come into your minds, children,” said Miss Davis; “I see nothing amiss about Hetty. If she is happier than she used to be, we ought all to feel glad.”



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Phyllis did not like the implied rebuke, and at once began to hope that she might be able to prove Miss Davis in the wrong. If Hetty could be found to have a secret, as Nell supposed, Phyllis decided that it ought to be found out. Her mother did not approve of children having secrets. Even if there was no harm in a thing in itself, there was a certain harm in making a mystery of it. So, having arranged her motive satisfactorily in her mind, Phyllis, feeling more virtuous than ever, resolved to observe what Hetty was about. The next morning she got up early and came down to the school-room an hour before her usual time. And there was Hetty working away at her drawing with a wreath of flowers pinned before her on the wall.

Phyllis came behind her and was astonished to see what she had accomplished with her pencil; and Hetty started and coloured up to her hair, as if she had been caught in a fault.

“Well, you are a strange girl,” said Phyllis; “I did not know drawing was a sin, that you should make such a mystery over it.”

“I hope it is not a sin,” said Hetty in a low voice. She felt grieved at having her efforts discovered in this way. She wished now that she had told Miss Davis all about it. Phyllis opened the piano and began to practise without having said one word of praise of Hetty’s work; and the poor little artist felt her heart sink like lead. Perhaps the beauty that she saw in her designs existed only in her own foolish eyes.

She worked on silently for about half an hour, and then put away her drawing materials and her flowers, and began to study her lessons for the day.

“Of course you do not expect me to keep your secret from Miss Davis,” said Phyllis, looking over her shoulder. “I have been always taught to hate secrets, and my conscience will not allow me to encourage you in this.”

“Do exactly as you please,” said Hetty; “I shall be quite satisfied to let Miss Davis know what I have been doing.”

“Then why did you not tell her before?” asked Phyllis.

“I am not bound to explain that to you,” said Hetty; but finding her temper was rising she added more gently, “I am willing to give an account of my conduct to any one who may be scandalized by it”; and then, fearing to trust herself further, she went out of the room.

On the stairs she met Miss Davis, and stopped her, saying:

“Phyllis has a complaint to make of me. I shall be back in the school-room presently after she has made it.”

“What is it about, my dear?”



“She can tell you better than I can,” said Hetty. “Please go down now, Miss Davis, and then we can have it over before breakfast.”

“Miss Davis, I find Nell was right in thinking that Hetty was doing something sly,” began Phyllis, as the governess entered the school-room.

“I am sorry to hear it. What can it be?”

“Nothing very dreadful in itself perhaps. It is the secrecy that is so ugly, especially as there was no reason for it in the world.”



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“What has Hetty done?” repeated Miss Davis.

“Why, she has been getting up early in the mornings to draw flowers,” said Phyllis, unwillingly perceiving that the fault seemed a very small one when plainly described.

“I did not know she could draw,” said Miss Davis; “but, if she can, I see no harm in her doing it.”

“I think she ought to spend the time at the studies father is so anxious she should improve in,” said Phyllis; “and I imagine she knows it too, or she would not have been so secret.”

“There is something in that, Phyllis; though I would rather you had not been so quick to perceive it.”

Phyllis curled her lip slightly. “Intelligence is given us that we may use it, I suppose,” she said coldly; “but I have done my duty, and I have nothing more to say in the matter.”

Breakfast passed over without anything being said on the subject of the great discovery; but after the meal was finished, Miss Davis desired Hetty to fetch her her drawings that she might see them. Hetty went to her own room immediately, and returned bringing about a dozen drawings in a very primitive portfolio made of several newspapers gummed together.

Miss Davis was no artist, but she felt that the designs were good, and remarkable as having been executed by a girl so untaught as Hetty. They increased her opinion of her pupil’s abilities, yet she looked on them chiefly from the point of view Phyllis had suggested to her, and considered them in the light of follies upon which valuable time had been expended.

“My dear,” she said, “these are really very pretty, and I am sure they have given you a great deal of pleasure. But I cannot countenance your going on with this sort of employment. Think of how usefully you might have employed at your books the hours you have spent upon these trifles. I presume you were aware of this from the first yourself, and that this is why you have been so silent as to your new accomplishment.”

“No,” said Hetty decidedly; “I did not feel that I was wasting time. On the contrary, my drawing gave me better courage to work at my lessons. The hours I spent were taken from my sleep. I was always at my books before Phyllis was at hers.”

“Phyllis is not to be made a rule for you, my dear. She has not the same necessity to exert her powers to the utmost. If you can do without part of your sleeping time, you ought to devote it to your books. And pray, if you did not think you were committing some fault, why did you say nothing to anyone of what you were about?”



“I cannot tell you that, Miss Davis,” said Hetty, her eyes filling with tears; “I mean I cannot explain it properly. I could not bring myself to show what I had done; but I had no idea of *wrongness* about the matter.”

“Well, my dear, we will say no more about it. Take the drawings away; and in future work at your lessons every moment of your time. I will put you on your word of honour, Hetty, not to do any more of this kind of thing.”



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“Do not ask me to give you such a promise, Miss Davis.”

“But Hetty, I must, and I do.”

“Then, Miss Davis, I will speak to Mr. Enderby.”

The governess and her two pupils gazed at Hetty in amazement.

“I mean,” Hetty went on, “that I hope he will think drawing a useful study for me. Will you allow me to speak to him this evening, Miss Davis?”

“Certainly, my dear,” said Miss Davis stiffly. “There is nothing to hinder you from consulting Mr. Enderby on any subject. I am sure he will be kind enough to give you his advice. Only I think I know what it will be beforehand; and I would rather you had shown more confidence in me.”

Hetty could not give her mind to her lessons that day, nor get rid of the feeling that she was in disgrace. When evening came, the hour when Mr. Enderby was usually to be found in his study, she asked Miss Davis’s permission to go to him, and with her portfolio in her hand presented herself at his door.

“Come in, Hetty,” said Mr. Enderby; “what is this you have got to show me? Maps, plans, or what? Why, drawings!”

Hetty’s mouth grew dry, and her heart beat violently. The tone of his voice betrayed that the master of Wavertree had no more sympathy for art, or anything connected with it, than had Miss Davis. He was an accurate methodical man with a taste for mathematics, who believed in the power conferred by knowledge on man and woman; but who had little respect for those who concerned themselves with only the beauties and graces of life. Art was to him a trifle, and devotion to it a folly. Therefore Hetty with her trembling hopes was not likely to find favour at his hands.

“My child, I am sure they are very pretty; but this sort of thing will not advance you in the world.”

“But, Mr. Enderby,—I have been thinking—artists get on as well as governesses. I do these more easily than I learn my dates. If I could only learn to be an artist.”

Mr. Enderby put his eye-glass to his eye, and gazed at her a little pityingly, a little severely, with a look that Hetty knew.

“You would like to become an artist? Well, my girl, I must tell you to put that foolish idea out of your head. In the first place, you are not to imagine that because you can sketch a flower prettily, you have therefore a genius for painting; and such fancies are only calculated to distract your mind from the real business of your life. Besides, remember



this, I have given, am giving, you a good education as a means of providing for you in life. Having bestowed one profession upon you already, I am not prepared to enter into the expense and inconvenience of a second. So run away like a sensible girl and stick to your books. You had better leave these drawings with me and think no more about them.”

Saying this, Mr. Enderby opened a drawer and locked up Hetty’s designs within it; and, humbled and despairing, Hetty returned to the school-room.



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Her face of grief and her empty hands told sufficiently what the result of her errand had been. No remark was made by Miss Davis or the girls, though Nell, who thought the drawings wonderfully pretty, was impatient to know what her papa had said of them. She was too much in awe of Miss Davis to seek to have her curiosity gratified just then; and the evening study went on as if nothing had happened.

CHAPTER XVII.

HETTY'S FUTURE IS PLANNED.

This was the severest trial Hetty had ever encountered. Longing for special love, and delight in reproducing the beautiful, were part of one and the same impulse in her nature, and, crushed in the one, all her heart had gone forth in the other direction. Now both had been equally condemned in her as faults, and she fell back, as before, on the mere dull effort towards submission which had already carried her surely, if joylessly, over so many difficult years of her young life. She worked patiently at her books and fulfilled her duties; and she grew thinner and paler, and the old sad look became habitual to her lips and eyes. Another year passed, and as Phyllis and Nell approached nearer and nearer to the period for "coming out" they were more frequently absent from the school-room, and Hetty's days were more solitary than they used to be.

All her mind was now fixed on the idea of fitting herself as soon as possible for some sort of post as governess. She knew she never could take such a position as that which Miss Davis filled, and had meekly admitted to herself that a humble situation must content her.

She often wondered how it would be with her when the Enderby girls should no longer need Miss Davis; and decided according to her own judgment that she ought to be ready to seek a place for herself in the world as soon as the elder girls should have completed their studies.

One evening she sat opposite to Miss Davis at the school-room fireside. Phyllis and Nell were in the drawing-room with their mother. Miss Davis was netting energetically, and Hetty, who had been studying busily, dropped her book and was gazing absently into the fire.

"Hetty," said Miss Davis presently, "put away your book, I want to talk to you."

Hetty obeyed, and looked at her governess expectantly.

"My dear, you know very well that in another year I shall no longer be needed here. Phyllis and Nell will then be eighteen and seventeen, and their mother has decided that they shall come out at the same time. When I am gone there will no longer be any



object in your staying in this house. And yet, as you will then be only sixteen, you will be young to begin your life among strangers.”

“Yes,” said Hetty with a sinking of the heart; “but it is very good of you to think about me like this. Of course I shall have to go. I suppose I can get in somewhere as a nursery governess.”



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“I have been thinking of something else. Of course it will remain for yourself to decide.”

Hetty's heart leaped. A wild idea crossed her mind that perhaps Miss Davis was going to suggest some way by which she might study to be an artist. Though she had never spoken on the subject since Mr. Enderby had pronounced sentence upon her hopes, still the dear dream of a possible beautiful future had always lain hidden somewhere in the most distant recesses of her brain. Now a sudden bright light shone into that darkened chamber. What delightful plan had Miss Davis been marking out for her?

“I have made up my mind,” said Miss Davis, “that instead of entering another family I will open a school in the town where I was born. My mother is getting old and she is lonely. If I succeed in my project I shall be able to live with her and continue to make an income at the same time.”

“How delightful!” murmured Hetty.

Miss Davis smiled sadly. “I don't know about that. The plan will have its advantages, but there are many difficulties. However, I think it is worth a trial.”

Hetty said nothing, only wondered why Miss Davis was not more wildly glad at the thought of being always with her mother. She could not realize how long years of trial and disappointment had made it impossible to the governess to feel vivid anticipations of delight.

“Now as regards you—” Hetty started. She had so completely thrown herself into Miss Davis's personality for the moment that she had entirely forgotten her own. “As regards you, I have been thinking that you might come with me and help me as an under teacher. In this way you might begin to be independent at the age of sixteen, and at the same time continue your own studies under my superintendence. Later, when you were more thoroughly fitted to be a governess, I could endeavour to place you out in the world.”

“Oh, how good of you to think of it! You are very, very kind!” said Hetty, though tears of disappointment rushed to her eyes. She crushed back the ungrateful feeling of dismay which pressed upon her at the thought of trying to teach in school. Her common-sense told her that nothing could be more advantageous for her interests than the plan Miss Davis had sketched for her. And she keenly appreciated the thoughtfulness for her welfare which had led the governess to include her in the scheme for her own future.

“You would only have little children to teach at first,” Miss Davis went on, “until you grow accustomed to the work and gain confidence in yourself. Of course this is only a suggestion which I make to you, that you may turn it over in your thoughts and be ready to make arrangements when the moment shall arrive. Perhaps by that time, however, Mr. Enderby will be able to provide you with a pleasanter home.”

“I do not think so,” said Hetty. “He could recommend me only as a nursery governess, and if I were once in that position I could never have any further opportunity to improve. With you I can continue my studies.”



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“This is precisely what I think,” said Miss Davis, “and I am glad you take such a sensible view of the matter. However, we need not speak of this for a year to come.”

And so the conversation ended. Hetty longed to put her arms round Miss Davis’s neck and thank her warmly for her kindness, but she felt instinctively that the governess would rather she abstained from all such demonstrations. It was only when she went up to bed that she allowed her thoughts to go back to the beautiful moment when she had fancied Miss Davis might have been thinking of making her an artist; and then she cried sadly as she thought of how foolish she had been in imagining even for a second that such a wild improbability had come true.

However, Hetty awakened next morning with a wholesome feeling of satisfaction in her mind which she could not at first account for. In a few moments the conversation with Miss Davis rushed back upon her memory, and she knew that her contentment was due to the prospect of independence that had been put before her as so real and so near. Once installed under Miss Davis’s roof, teaching in school and earning the bread she ate, neither servants nor companions could taunt her with being a charity girl any more, Mr. Enderby’s fears for her would then be laid to rest, and the dread of disappointing him would be lifted off her mind. In Miss Davis’s school she could live and work until she had acquired all that learning which to her was so hard to attain.

With a sweet and brave, if not a glad, look on her face, Hetty came into the school-room that morning and found Phyllis and Nell chatting more gaily than usual at the fire.

“Oh, Hetty,” cried Nell, “you must hear our news! We are going to have such a delightful visitor in the house.”

“How you rush to conclusions, Nell!” said her sister. “You have not seen her yet, and you pronounce her delightful.”

“I know from what mamma told us,” cried Nell. “She is pretty, amiable, clever—and ever so rich. Only think, Hetty—to be an heiress at twenty-one without anyone to keep you from doing just as you please! She has a country house in France, and a house in London, with a good old lady to take care of her, who does exactly what she bids her.”

“Mother did not say all that,” said Phyllis.

“Oh! but I gathered it all from what she did say.”

“Is she an orphan then?” asked Hetty.

“She has neither father, nor mother, nor brother, nor sister. Now, Hetty, don’t look as if that was a misfortune. It is natural for you to feel it, of course. But if you had houses, and horses, and carriages, and money, you would not think it so bad to be able to do what you liked.”



“Nell, I am shocked at you,” said Miss Davis. “Would you give up your parents for such selfish advantages as you describe?”

“Oh dear no!” cried Nell. “But if I never had had them, like Reine Gaythorne, and did not know anything about them, I daresay I could manage to amuse myself in the world.”



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This was the first mention of the name of Reine Gaythorne in the Wavertree school-room, and it was certainly far from the last. Mrs. Enderby had met the young lady at a neighbouring country house, and had thought she would be a desirable acquaintance for her daughters. There was something interesting about the circumstances which had placed a young, beautiful, and wealthy girl alone, and her own mistress, in the world. Mr. and Mrs. Enderby had been greatly attracted by her, and had invited her to pay a visit at their house.

In the course of a few days she arrived at the Hall, and then Phyllis and Nell were but little in the school-room.

Hetty and Miss Davis went on as usual filling their quiet hours with work in their secluded corner of the house. A week passed away during the visit of the charming stranger, and Hetty had never once seen Miss Gaythorne.

CHAPTER XVIII.

REINE GAYTHORNE.

Mrs. Enderby, her visitor, and her two daughters were sitting together one morning at needlework in the pretty morning-room looking out on an old walled garden, at Wavertree Hall. The distant ends of this old garden, draped with ivy and creepers, had been made into a tennis ground, a smooth trim green chamber lying behind the brilliant beds of flowers. Sitting near the window the figures of the girls looked charming against so picturesque a background.

Miss Gaythorne's face, upraised to the light, was full of goodness, sweetness, and intelligence. A low broad brow, soft bright dark eyes, a rich brunette complexion, and red brown hair, so curly as to be gathered with difficulty into a knot at the back of her neck, were some of this girl's beauties which the eye could take in at a glance. A longer time was necessary to discern all the fine traits of character that were so artlessly expressed in turn by her speaking countenance.

She wore a pretty dress of maroon cashmere and velvet, with delicate ruffles of rich old yellow lace. Her dainty little French shoes and fine gold ornaments were immensely admired by the two young girls beside her, who were not yet "out," and were accustomed to be clothed in the simplest attire. Not only her dress, but her accent, which was slightly foreign, her peculiarly winning smiles, her merry little laugh and graceful movements all seemed to the Enderbys more charming than could be described. Even Phyllis, usually so critical, was taken captive by their new friend, Reine.



Miss Gaythorne was just finishing a piece of embroidery. She was very skilful with her needle, and her work was pronounced perfection by Phyllis and Nell. Mrs. Enderby joined her daughters in warm praise of the delicate production to which their visitor was just now putting the last touches.

“I could so easily work one like it for you while I am here,” said Reine, “if I had only a new design. I do not like repeating the same design.”



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"I am sure Hetty could draw one for you," said Nell.

"But I mean something original."

"Oh! Hetty's drawings are original. She gathers a few flowers, and that is all she wants to begin with."

"She must be very clever. Who is Hetty, if I may ask?"

"Oh! Hetty is—Hetty Gray. She lives in this house. She is an orphan girl whom papa is educating to be a governess. She is always in the school-room with Miss Davis."

"Can she draw so cleverly?"

"Yes; it comes to her naturally. I will get a bundle of her drawings from papa to show you. He locked them up because she wanted to be an artist and he did not approve of it."

"It is well she did not want to go on the stage," said Phyllis. "She used to be an extraordinary actress. However, she gave that up and took a dislike to it. Perhaps she has now taken a dislike to drawing, and will not care to make a design for Reine."

"I am sure she will," said Nell. "Drawing is different from acting. People don't feel shy about drawing. I will go directly and ask her."

"Perhaps you would let me see her drawings first," said Miss Gaythorne.

"Certainly," said Nell; "papa is in his study, and I will go and fetch them."

Mr. Enderby willingly surrendered the drawings to amuse and oblige the cherished guest, and Hetty's work was spread out on a table before Reine.

"Why, these are beautiful," cried she; "and they are really done by a girl of fourteen who never learned to draw!"

"Really," said Nell, enjoying Miss Gaythorne's surprise. "And now, may I ask Hetty to make you a design?"

"If she would be so very good. If it would not give her too much trouble—"

"Why, Hetty will be simply enchanted at the request. She is not allowed to draw, and of course the permission to do so will be delightful."

"Not allowed to draw?" exclaimed Reine in astonishment.



“Nell, how strangely you put things!” said Phyllis. “Father warned her not to squander her time in drawing, while she has so much need to study.”

Nell shrugged her shoulders. “Put it as you like, Phyllis,” she said; “Hetty is a born artist, and she is going to be thrust into the harness of a governess.”

“It is well neither father nor mother is in the room,” said Phyllis. “They would be much grieved to hear you make such a speech. I don’t know where you get such ideas.”

“I don’t know,” said Nell; “they come to me sometimes.”

Reine listened in silence while she studied the drawings more closely. She was something of an artist herself, and had a cultivated taste; and a keen interest in the orphan girl who had a talent like this, and could not be allowed to draw, was springing up within her.

Nell soon danced off to tell Hetty what was required of her.

“Miss Gaythorne wants you to make a design for her, of the size and style of this, and you can use any flowers or foliage you please. Mother hopes Miss Davis will allow you time to do it.”



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Hetty felt a rush of delight, which made the colour mount to her forehead.

“Thank you, dear Nell,” she said; “I know it is you who have got me this piece of good fortune. I shall have some delicious hours over the work.”

“Now, mind you make it beautiful,” cried Nell; “for I have staked my reputation on you!”

Hetty thought she had never been so happy in her life before, as she went out to pick and choose among the flowers, looking for a theme for her composition. At last she satisfied herself, and came back to the school-room, and went to work.

Miss Davis, who had been much pleased with her of late, looked on with approval. She thought the girl had fairly earned a holiday and a treat.

Hetty was more nervous over this drawing than she had been over any of the others. With them she had been only working to please herself, and of her own free will; but now it seemed as if the eyes of the world were upon every line she drew. She spoiled several beginnings; and at last, flushed and feverish, had to put away the work till tomorrow.

“Drawing seems to be not all unmixed happiness any more than dates,” said Miss Davis, smiling at her anxious face. “Come now and have some tea, or you will get a headache.”

The next day Hetty went to work again, and succeeded at last in producing a striking and beautiful design. She was far from satisfied with it herself, and said to Nell, “I fear your friend will not think it good enough, but it is the best I can do.”

“I think it is lovely,” said Nell; “and what trouble you have taken with it! She will be hard to please if she does not like it.”

And then Nell fled away with it, and Hetty turned to her books again with a happy feeling at her heart. It seemed to her that she had never before had an opportunity of performing any voluntary service for those who had been so generous towards her, but now she had been able to do something which would really give pleasure to the guest in their house. And then she wished she could see that charming Miss Gaythorne, who was said to be fond of drawing, and to know a great deal about it. She dreamed that night that she was walking through a picture-gallery with the girl called Reine, who was pointing out all the beauties to her as they went.

In the meantime Reine was greatly delighted with the drawing.

“The girl is really a little genius,” she said; “will you not allow me to make her acquaintance?”



“I will ask mamma to invite her to the drawing-room some evening,” said Nell. “Mother does not like her to come often, for fear of spoiling her. Phyllis has an idea that Hetty needs a great deal of keeping down; but I think it is only because Phyllis is so good herself that she thinks so badly of Hetty.”

Reine laughed, and a look of fun remained in her eyes a few moments after this naive speech of Nell's. The peculiarities of Phyllis's style of goodness had not escaped Miss Gaythorne's quick intelligence.



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“And mother minds what Phyllis thinks a great deal more than she minds me; because Phyllis is so wise, and never gives her any trouble.”

The next morning at breakfast Reine said:

“Do you know, Mr. Enderby, little Miss Gray has made me such a beautiful drawing. She has a great talent. I can’t help wishing you would let her be an artist.”

“Has she been enlisting you against me?” said Mr. Enderby, with half a smile and half a frown.

“I have never even seen her,” said Reine; “but I am greatly struck with her work.”

“It is clever,” assented the master of Wavertree; “but pray do not arouse foolish ideas in the child’s head—ideas which have been fortunately laid to rest. I have great faith in the old warning, ‘Beware of the man of one book’; and I think Hetty will do better to stick to what she has begun with. Under Miss Davis she has excellent opportunities of becoming fitted to be a governess, which, after all, is the safest career for a friendless woman. She lives in a respectable home and is saved from many dangers. I do not hold with the new-fangled notion of letting girls run about the world picking up professions.”

And then Mr. Enderby deliberately changed the conversation.

However, Reine could not forget the little artist; and that evening, being dressed for dinner rather early, she suddenly bethought her of making her way uninvited to the school-room.

“I really must see her and thank her,” she reflected; “and I will ask pardon of Mrs. Enderby afterwards for the liberty.” And then she set out to look for the school-room.

It happened that Hetty was sitting all alone at the school-room table; her chin in her hand, her eyes fixed on the pages of a book. A window behind her, framing golden sky and deep-coloured foliage, made her the foreground figure of a striking picture. Her dark head and flowing hair, her pale but richly-tinted face with its thoughtful brow and intelligent mouth, her little warm brown hand and wrist were all softly and distinctly defined against the glories of the distance. As Reine opened the door and came in, Hetty looked up as much startled as if an angel had come to visit her.

Reine was dressed all in white shimmering silk, which enhanced the beauty of her bright brunette face. Her soft luminous eyes beamed on Hetty as she advanced to her with outstretched hands.

“I came to see you and thank you,” she began; “I am Reine Gaythorne and—”



Suddenly, as Hetty sprang to her feet and came forward smiling and facing the light, Reine's little speech died on her tongue, and a sharp cry broke from her.

"My mother!" she exclaimed in a tone of deep feeling, and stood gazing at Hetty as if a ghost had risen up before her.

Hetty retreated a step, and the two girls stood gazing at each other. Miss Gaythorne recovered herself quickly, but her hands and voice were trembling as she took Hetty's fingers in her own.



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“Have I frightened you, dear?” she said; “but oh, if you knew how strangely, how wonderfully like you are to my darling mother.”

“Your mother?” stammered Hetty.

“Such a sweet beauty of a young mother she was as I remember her—and I have a likeness of her at your age;—it seems to me that you are the living image of it.”

“How very strange!” said Hetty, with a thrill of delight at the thought that she was like anybody belonging to this charming girl, especially her mother. Hetty had fascinating fancies of her own about an ideal mother; no real mother she had known had ever reached her standard. But Reine’s mother must surely have been up to the mark. And to be told that she, Hetty, was like her! She drew nearer to Reine, who put her arms round her neck and kissed her.

“I can’t tell you how I feel,” said Reine, holding her off and looking at her. “I feel as if you belonged to me somehow.”

“Don’t turn my head,” pleaded Hetty wistfully. “Please remember I have no relations and must not expect to be loved. I have had great trouble about that; and it has been very hard for them to manage me.”

“Has it?” said Reine doubtfully.

“As I’m now nearly grown up,” said Hetty, “of course I have had to learn to behave myself; so don’t spoil me.”

“I wish I could,” said Reine. “I mean I wish I could get the chance. Oh, don’t look at me like that. But yes, do. Oh, Hetty, my mother, my mother!”

And Reine leaned her arms on the table, and laid her head on them, and wept.

Hetty stood by wondering, and stroked her head timidly for sympathy.

“Don’t think me a great goose,” said Reine, looking up. And then suddenly silent again she sat staring at Hetty. After a few moments she sprang up and folded her arms round her and held her close.

“You strange darling, where have you come from; and how am I ever to let you go again?”

A step was heard at the door, and Reine and Hetty instinctively withdrew from each other’s embrace. There was something sacred about the feeling which had so suddenly and unexpectedly overpowered them both.



Nell came in.

“Reine, I have been looking for you everywhere.”

“I came here to thank Miss Gray for her design,” said Reine, “and I don’t think I have even mentioned it yet.”

“You are as pale as death,” said Nell. “What has Hetty been saying to you?”

“Nothing,” said Reine absently, her eyes going back to Hetty’s face and fixing themselves there.

“How you stare at each other!” said Nell, “and I declare your two faces are almost the same this moment.”

“Nell!”

“I always said you were like each other, though Phyllis could not see it. Now I am sure of it.”

A wild look came into Reine’s face.

“That would be too strange,” she said; “for she is so like—so like—some one—Oh, Nell, she is the very image of my mother!”



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"Your mother!" echoed Nell, gazing at Hetty and thinking she did not look like anybody's mother, with her short frock and flowing hair.

"But there is the dinner-bell!" she cried, glad of the interruption; for Nell had a great dislike of anything like a sentimental scene. "You must talk about all this afterwards, for we must not be late."

"I will come," said Reine, passing her handkerchief over her face. "Do I look as if I had been crying."

"Your nose is a little red," said Nell; "but they will think it is the cold."

"Then don't say anything about this," said Reine; "but I must come and see Hetty again. Goodnight, darling little mother!"

"Reine, all my respect for you is gone," said Nell as they hastened toward the dining-room. "I thought you were as wise as Phyllis. And to think of you crying and kissing like that because Hetty reminds you of—"

"Don't, Nell," said Reine. "I can't bear any more just now."

CHAPTER XIX.

IF SHE WAS DROWNED, HOW CAN SHE BE HETTY?

A few friends had joined the Wavertree family circle that evening, and Reine had no further opportunity of speaking about Hetty. She was absent and thoughtful; but wakened up when asked to sing, and sang a thrilling little love song with such power and sweetness as went to everybody's heart. She was thinking as she sang of Hetty's face, and it was her strange yearning for Hetty's love that inspired her to sing as she did.

That night she could not sleep. Her mother's eyes, with the loving look she remembered so well, were gazing at her from all the corners of the room. Her mind went back over the recollections of her childhood; and her father's voice and her mother's smiles were with her as though she had only said good-night to both parents an hour ago. The lonely girl, who had everything that the world could offer her, except that which she longed for most, the affection of family and kindred, felt the very depths of her heart shaken by the experience of the past evening. That a girl who seemed so much a part of herself should have risen up beside her, and yet be nothing to her, seemed something too curious to be understood. Her imagination went to work upon the possibilities of Mr. Enderby's being induced to give Hetty up to her altogether, to be her adopted sister and to live with her for evermore. She was aware that people would distrust this sudden fancy for a stranger, and that opposition would probably be offered



to her plan; but then she was not her own mistress; and by perseverance she must surely succeed in the end.

Oh, the delight of having a sister! Reine had had a sister, a baby sister lost in infancy, and had often taken a sad pleasure in fancying what that sister might have been like if she had lived. She had been six years younger than Reine. Hetty was fifteen, about the age that the little sister might now have been. Reine sat up in her bed and counted the years between fifteen and twenty-one twice over on her fingers to make perfectly sure. Hetty was the very age of the little sister. And so like her mother! If the baby sister of whom she had been bereft could be still alive, then Reine would have declared she must be Hetty.



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She was now in a fever of excitement. Her curly brown hair had risen in a mop of rings and ringlets around her head with tossing on her pillow, her eyes were round and bright, and a burning spot was on each of her cheeks. At last she sprang out of bed and in a minute was at Nell's bed-room door.

Nell was awakened out of a sound sleep by the opening of her door.

"Don't be frightened, Nell; I'm not a burglar—only Reine."

"What's the matter?" said Nell, rubbing her eyes. "Have you got the toothache?"

"I never had toothache. I want to know something."

"I often want to know things," said Nell, now sitting bolt upright in her little bed; "I'm sometimes *dying* of curiosity. But it never routed me out of my sleep in the middle of the night."

"It's about Hetty," said Reine, sitting on the floor in a faint streak of moonlight, and looking like a spirit—if spirits have curly hair.

"You've gone Hetty-mad!" said Nell; "wouldn't Hetty keep till morning? We're not going to transport her or lock her up. You will have all next week to sit looking at her."

"Where did you get her?" asked Reine. "I know she is a foundling; but she must have had a beginning somewhere."

"Of course she had; and a most peculiar one. She was found on the Long Sands. That is a place three miles from Wavertree on the sea-shore, where wrecks often come in. John Kane, one of the carters, found her, and Mrs. Kane took her home. Then Aunt Amy, who is dead, fancied her and adopted her. When Aunt Amy died she was left unprovided for, and papa brought her here; and here she is."

"Found on the shore where wrecks come in! And she is just fifteen. Oh, Nell, are you sure you are telling the truth?"

There was a sound in Reine's voice that startled Nell.

"The plain truth. Every village child knows it. What has it got to do with you?"

"I don't know. I don't know. I am afraid to think. Why, Nell, listen to me. When I was a child of seven years old, my mother and father took me to France. They had inherited a property there and were going to take possession of it. They were fond of the sea, and they long travelled by sea. While still near this coast the vessel was overtaken by storm and wrecked. My father, mother, and myself were saved. But my little baby sister was washed out of my mother's arms and drowned."



“Well?”

“Well!”

“If she was drowned how can she be Hetty, if that is what you mean?”

“They thought she was drowned. We were taken into another vessel and carried on to France.”

“And never asked any more questions about the baby?”

“I don’t know. My father and mother are both dead,” said Reine pathetically; “I am sure they did all they could. But I know they thought they saw her drowned before their eyes.”

“And I suppose they did. Reine, stop walking about the floor like Crazy Jane, in your bare feet, and either come into my bed or go back to your own.”



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"I am going," said Reine; "please forgive me, Nell, for spoiling your sleep."

"Don't mention it. We can talk all the rest in the morning. If you are allowed to go on any more now, you will be mad to-morrow, and, what is worse, you will have a cold in your head."

Nell curled herself up in her pillows again, and was soon fast asleep. But Reine could not sleep; and came down to breakfast next morning looking as pale as a ghost.

After Mr. Enderby had gone to his study Nell began:

"Mamma, do you know Reine has got a bee in her bonnet!"

"My dear, where did you get such an expression?"

"Never mind. It is quite accurate. She believes that Hetty is her sister who was drowned when she was a baby."

Mrs. Enderby looked at Reine with a face of extreme surprise.

"Nell talks so much nonsense," she said, "that I scarcely know what to think of her speeches sometimes." And then seeing Reine's eyes full of tears, she added kindly:

"Dear child, is there any grain of truth in what this wild little scatter-brain has said?"

Reine burst into tears.

"Don't mind me, Mrs. Enderby, please; I have been awake all night, and I don't feel like myself. It is only that Hetty Gray is so—so *distressingly* like my mother. And Nell says she was found on the sea-shore after a storm and wrecks. And it is fourteen years ago. And that is the very time when our vessel was wrecked, and my father and mother believed that our baby was drowned. Oh, Mrs. Enderby, only think! Is it not enough to turn my head?"

"It is a very remarkable coincidence at least," said Mrs. Enderby; "but, dear Reine, try to compose your thoughts. You must not jump too hastily at conclusions. At the end of fourteen years it will be very difficult to find evidence to prove or disprove what you imagine may be true."

Reine shook her head. "I have thought of that; I have thought of it all night."

"In the first place, are you quite sure about the dates?"

"Quite, on my own side. I have a little New Testament in which my father wrote down, the day after our rescue, the date of the wreck and a record of the baby's death."



“We must send for Mrs. Kane,” said Mrs. Enderby; “and hear what she has to say before we allow our imaginations to run away with us.”

“And oh, Mrs. Enderby,—if you saw the likeness of my mother at just Hetty’s age! May I telegraph for it at once—to let you see it?”

“Certainly, my dear; for it and that copy of the Testament. But not a word to Hetty. It would be cruel to run the risk of subjecting her to a heavy disappointment”

The telegram was sent; and Mrs. Kane appeared, wondering greatly why she was wanted at the Hall in such a hurry.

“Now, Mrs. Kane,” said Mrs. Enderby, “here is a young lady who is greatly interested in the story of the finding of Hetty Gray on the Long Sands by your husband, and I have promised she shall hear of it from your own lips.”



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They were all gathered round a sunny window in the great brown hall, lined with carved oak and decorated with armour and antlers. Mrs. Enderby herself pushed a stately old oaken chair towards the rose-framed sash and said encouragingly:

“Sit down, Mrs. Kane, and make yourself comfortable. There is nothing to be nervous about. You know we are all friends of your favourite, Hetty.”

Mrs. Kane was trembling with some curious excitement, and could not remove her eyes from Reine Gaythorne’s face.

“I do not know who the young lady may be, ma’am,” she said, “but this I will say, that she is as like my Hetty as if she was her own born sister.”

A flood of colour rushed over Reine’s pale face, and she clasped her hands and fixed her eyes on Mrs. Enderby.

“Never mind that,” said Mrs. Enderby, “tell the young lady what you remember.”

“There’s but little to tell,” said Mrs. Kane, “beyond what everybody knows. John happened to be down upon the sands that night, and he got the baby lying at his feet. He brought her to me wrapped in his coat, and says he, ‘Anne, here’s God has sent us a little one.’ And we kept it for our own, seeing that nobody asked for it. I have the day and the year written in my prayer-book; for I said to myself, some day, may-be, her friends will come looking for her—out of the sea, or over the land, or whatever way providence will send them. And for one whole week we called her nothing but ‘H.G.’”

“H.G.!” echoed Reine.

“Those were the letters wrought upon the shoulder of her beautiful little shift,” said Mrs. Kane. “And afterwards we made out that they stood for Hetty Gray.”

“She had on a little shift?”

“Mrs. Rushton got it,” said Mrs. Kane. “The finest bit of baby clothes I ever set my eyes on.”

Reine had come close to Mrs. Kane, and her lips were trembling as she went on questioning her:

“Were the letters in white embroidery—satin stitch they call it? Were they all formed of little flowers curling in and out about the letters; and was the chemise of fine cambric with a narrow hem?”

“That’s the description as plain as if you were looking at it,” said Mrs. Kane.



“I have half a dozen like it at home in one of my mother’s drawers,” said Reine turning red and pale. “Where is this little garment? is it not to be found?”

“I have it, dear,” said Mrs. Enderby quietly. “After Mrs. Rushton’s death I took possession of it. I hardly anticipated so happy a day as this for poor Hetty, but I thought it my duty to take care of it.”

The little chemise was produced, and Reine identified it as one of the set belonging to her baby sister supposed to have been drowned, and marked with her initials standing for Helen Gaythorne.

“My mother marked them herself,” said Reine, examining the embroidery as well as she could through eyes blinded by tears. “She was wonderfully skilful with her needle, and took a pride in marking all our things with initials designed by herself. Oh, Mrs. Enderby, is not this evidence enough?”



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“It seems to me so,” said Mrs. Enderby, “especially taken with the dates and the likeness to your family. When your mother’s portrait comes——”

“I must send for the little baby-garments too,” said Reine; “but oh, why need we wait for anything more? May I not run to my sister, Mrs. Enderby?”

“Calm yourself, my dear Reine, and be persuaded to take my advice. We must consult a lawyer and get information as to the wrecking of the vessel, and the place where the shipwreck occurred. It will then be seen whether it was possible for a child lost on the occasion to have lived to be washed in upon this shore.”

“Possible or not, it happened!” cried Reine. “Oh, Mrs. Enderby, unless you can make me sleep through the interval I shall never have patience to wait.”

The portrait of Reine’s mother taken at fifteen years of age and the packet of tiny embroidered chemises arrived the next morning from London. The former looked exactly like a picture of Hetty; the latter was the counterpart of the baby-garment produced by Mrs. Enderby from a drawer of her own. Mr. Enderby was then consulted, and admitted that the case seemed established in Hetty’s favour. However, prudent like his wife, he insisted that nothing should be said to Hetty till lawyers had been consulted, and information about the wreck of the vessel obtained.

In the meantime Reine was abruptly sent home to London.

“She will make herself ill if she is allowed to stay in the house with Hetty, and obliged to be silent towards her as to her discovery,” said Mr. Enderby. “When the chain of evidence is complete, we can think of what to do.”

So Mr. Enderby himself carried off Reine to London that very night.

“It will be necessary to come, my dear,” he said, “and make inquiries at once. You will thus arrive more quickly at your end. Now just run into the school-room for a minute and say good-bye to Hetty. But if you love her, say nothing to disturb the child’s peace.”

It cost Reine a great struggle to obey these sudden orders; but she saw their drift, and was wise enough not to oppose them. In her travelling dress she appeared in the school-room, where Hetty, all unconscious of the wonderful change for her that was hanging in the balance of Fate, sat at work as usual with Miss Davis.

“I have come to say good-bye,” said Reine; “I am called off to London in a hurry. But you must not forget me. We shall surely meet again.”

Hetty’s heart sank with bitter disappointment. She had been living in a sort of dream since yesterday, a dream of happiness at being so suddenly and unexpectedly loved by this sweet girl who had risen up like an angel in her path. The hope of seeing her again



and enjoying her friendship had kept a glow of joy within her, which now went out and left darkness in its place. She strove to keep her face from showing how deeply she felt what seemed like caprice in Reine.



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Reine looked in her face with that long strange gaze which had so impressed Hetty's heart and imagination, smothered a sob, snatched a kiss from her sister's quivering lips, held her a moment in a close embrace, and then turned abruptly and was gone.

"Miss Gaythorne seems a rather impulsive young lady," said Miss Davis disapprovingly. "I wish she had taken a fancy to some one else than my pupil. You must try to forget her, Hetty. Girls like her, with wealth and power and nobody to control them, are apt to become capricious, and work mischief with people who have business to attend to. I hope you understand me, Hetty."

"Yes," said Hetty with a long sigh.

"You must not expect to see Miss Gaythorne again. She will probably have forgotten you to-morrow."

Miss Davis was not in the secret which was occupying the minds of several of the inmates of Wavertree Hall.

CHAPTER XX.

HAPPY HETTY.

About three weeks had passed away. Hetty had endured the worst throes of her disappointment, and had almost succeeded in banishing Reine out of her thoughts. She had steadily turned away her eyes from looking back at that beautiful evening, when, as if by enchantment, a girl who looked and spoke like a sister had held her in a loving embrace, lavishing kisses and loving words upon her, Hetty, who was known to be nobody's child. The quiet studious days went on as if no brilliant interruption had ever flashed in upon them. Miss Davis, at Mrs. Enderby's desire, kept Hetty more than ordinarily busy, and hindered her from paying her customary visits to Mrs. Kane. Mrs. Enderby distrusted the good woman's ability to keep a secret, and, with that prudence which had always distinguished her in her dealings with Hetty, she was resolved that the girl should hear no whisper to disturb her tranquillity till such time as her identity should be considered satisfactorily proved.

At the end of three weeks' time, however, news came from London to Mr. Enderby which placed it beyond a doubt that Hetty was Helen Gaythorne, the baby who had been supposed to be drowned. Although Mrs. Enderby and her daughters had been prepared for this result of the inquiries that had been on foot, yet the established fact, with its tremendous importance for Hetty, seemed to come on them with a shock. The child who had been protected in their house, no longer needed their protection. The girl who was to have been sent out soon as a governess to earn her bread, would henceforth have pleasant bread to eat in a sister's luxurious home. The dependant,



whom it had been thought judicious to snub, was now the equal of those who had so prudently dealt with her according to their lights.

Mr. and Mrs. Enderby were extremely pleased at the child's good fortune, and thankful that they had not been induced to send her to a charity school.

"You are always right, dear," said Mrs. Enderby, looking at her husband with pride. "When I was a coward in the matter you insisted on having her here. And if she had gone elsewhere she would never have met Reine, and her identity could hardly have been discovered."



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“And her sister may thank you that she does not receive her a spoiled, passionate, unmanageable monkey. Your prudent treatment of the girl has had admirable results. Her demeanour has pleased me very much of late. Meekness and obedience have taken the place of her wilfulness and pride.”

Nell was perfectly wild with excitement and delight, clapped her hands over her head and danced about the room.

“I was always the one who liked Hetty the best,” she said triumphantly, “and now she will remember it. She will ask me to France to stay with her. And nobody can warn me any more not to give her too much encouragement. I can be allowed to make a companion of Miss Helen Gaythorne.”

“What a very unpleasant way you always have of twisting things!” said Phyllis, who had been remarkably silent all along as to the change in Hetty’s circumstances. “I am as glad as anyone of Hetty’s discovery; but I do not see why it should make any difference to us.”

“Phyllis takes a more disinterested view of the matter than you do, Nell,” said Mrs. Enderby smiling; “but then my Phyllis was always a wise little girl.”

Nell pouted, and Phyllis held her head high. Mrs. Enderby thought she knew the hearts of both. But the woman who could be so exceedingly prudent in the management of “nobody’s child” was blind to a great deal that required skilful treatment in the characters and dispositions of her own daughters.

Miss Davis was more affected than anyone in the house by the news of Hetty’s extraordinary good fortune. Unconsciously to herself she had learned to love the girl, whom she had counted upon having by her side for many years to come, and it was not without a pang that she saw the young figure disappear suddenly out of her future. Hetty alone knew nothing of the change that had befallen her.

“No, my dear,” said Mrs. Enderby to Nell, “I will not allow you to tell her. Indeed, I am a little nervous about the matter, for Hetty is such a strangely impressionable girl one never knows what way she will take things. I must break the truth to her myself.”

So Hetty was sent for to Mrs. Enderby’s dressing-room, and went with rather a heavy heart, thinking some complaint had been made of her. She had never been so sent for except when trouble was impending.

“I must try to be patient,” she was thinking as she went up the stairs. “I do not know what I can have done so very wrong, but I suppose there must be something.”

But her sadness was soon turned into amazement and joy.



“Hetty,” said Mrs. Enderby, “Miss Gaythorne wishes to have you with her in London, on a visit. Mr. Enderby and I have consented to allow you to go; and I suppose you will not object to give her pleasure.”

“Miss Gaythorne!” exclaimed Hetty, scarcely believing she had heard rightly.

“She has taken a fancy to you, and wishes to have you with her. She is a charming girl, and I am sure she will make you happy.”



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Hetty's face, glowing with delight, sufficiently answered this last speech; but her tongue could find no words.

"In fact, I may as well tell you," continued Mrs. Enderby, "that Reine has discovered you are some kind of relation of hers; and, as she is her own mistress and very independent, she will be disposed to make the most of the relationship."

Hetty was turning slowly pale. "Relationship!" she murmured. "Am I really related to Miss Gaythorne?" and Reine's cry, "My mother, oh, my mother!" seemed to ring again in her ears.

"I believe so, my dear. There, do not think too much of it. At all events, you are to go to her now, and she will tell you all about it. But mind, you and she are to come back and spend Christmas with us. Mark will be at home then, and he will be anxious to see his old playfellow."

"Christmas!" echoed Hetty, in new astonishment. This was only the end of September.

"You see, I fancy Reine will not let you go in a hurry once she has got you," said Mrs. Enderby; "and now, my dear, don't stand there in a dream any longer, but run away and get ready for the mid-day train. Mr. Enderby has to do some business in London, and he will leave you in Portland Place. No, you will not have time to go to see Mrs. Kane. I will give her your love, and tell her you will see her when you come back."

"I am not going to have her told till she is in her sister's house," reflected Mrs. Enderby; "and Mrs. Kane would be sure to pour out everything suddenly. The child is of so excitable a nature, I do not know what might be the consequences to her."

That she could not say good-bye to Mrs. Kane made the only flaw in Hetty's happiness; but she left a little note for her with Miss Davis, who promised to have it safely delivered. And then, with smiles and good wishes from everyone, and pondering over a few mysterious glances which she caught passing from one person to another over her head, Hetty took her place by Mr. Enderby in his trap, and was whirled away to the railway-station.

Mr. Enderby talked to her kindly as they went along, about the pleasures in store for her in London, especially in the picture-galleries, as she had a taste for art.

"And always remember, my dear," he said, "that in the rules I laid down for your education with a view to your future, I acted as I thought best for your good."

Hetty said warmly, "I know—I am sure of that"; and then she began to wonder at his curious manner of speaking, as if all his dealings with her were in the past, and he had no longer any control over her. Could it be, she asked herself, that Reine was going to take her and have her taught to be an artist?



The thought was too delightful to be borne with, considering the likelihood of disappointment. She tried to put it out of her head, and listened to Mr. Enderby as he talked to her of Westminster Abbey and the Tower.



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That afternoon about five o'clock, in a certain handsome drawing-room in Portland Place, Reine was flitting about restlessly with flushed cheeks, now re-arranging the roses in some jar, now picking up her embroidery and putting a few stitches in it, then going to the window and looking out. The afternoon tea equipage was on a little table beside her, but she did not help herself to a cup. She was evidently waiting for some one.

At last there was a sound of wheels stopping, and Reine's trembling hands dropped her work into her basket. A ring came to the door, and Reine was in the middle of the room, pressing her hands together, and listening to the closing of the door with impatient delight.

"Miss Helen Gaythorne!" announced the servant, who knew that his mistress's young sister was expected, and who had not asked Hetty for her name. In the excitement of the moment Hetty heard, but hardly understood the announcement. She thought the servant had made a curious blunder.

"Mr. Enderby will come in the evening," began Hetty advancing shyly, and then, as the servant disappeared, she raised her eyes and saw Reine.

"Hetty—Helen! my darling! my sister!" cried Reine, snatching her into her arms and laughing and crying on her shoulder.

"Sister?" murmured Hetty breathlessly, feeling quite stunned. "Oh, Miss Gaythorne, what are you saying?"

"Do you mean that they have not told you?" cried Reine, covering her face with kisses.

"Some kind of a relation," murmured Hetty, "that was what they told me. Oh, Miss Gaythorne, think of what you have said! Do not make fun of me, I cannot bear it."

"Fun of you! Why, Hetty, Helen! I tell you, you are my sister. My ownest, dearest, darlingest daughter of my mother—the mother you are so like!"

"But how—how can it be?" asked Hetty with a look almost of terror on her face.

"You are our baby who was supposed to have been drowned," said Reine. "That's how it comes to be. We were wrecked going to France, and you were washed out of my mother's arms. And we thought you were drowned. But God was keeping you safe for me at Wavertree."

"How have you found it all out?" said Hetty, still holding fast by her doubt, which seemed the only plank that could save her from destruction in case this enchanting story should prove to be all a dream.



“It is completely proved, you little sceptic!” cried Reine. “Mr. Enderby would not have you told till the lawyers had pronounced you to be Helen Gaythorne. So ask me no more questions at present, but give me back some of my kisses. You and I are never going to part any more; are we?”

Hetty gave her a long, strange, troubled look, and then suddenly broke out into wild weeping.

“Oh, is it true? Is it really true? Oh, Reine, my sister; if, after this, it comes to be false—I shall die!”



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“It cannot come to be false, because it is reality,” insisted Reine, as she rocked her weeping sister in her arms. “I shall be mother and sister and all to you, Helen—my poor little motherless darling! Cry away, my dearest, for this once, and then you shall have some tea. And after that you are never to cry any more. You and I will have a great deal too much to say and do together to spend our time over crying. But oh, Hetty—Helen—if mother and father were only here this day!”

And then Reine cried again herself, and Hetty was the comforter. They sat with their young heads together and their warm cheeks touching, and told as much of their life’s stories to each other as they could think of at the moment. To Reine the great discovery had come gradually, and so the present hour was not so strange as it was to Hetty. For Hetty the world seemed to have got suddenly under a spell of enchantment. She could not believe in herself as Helen Gaythorne—could not get accustomed to her new vision of life.

“And I shall not need to be a governess. And perhaps I may be an artist if I like.”

“You will not need to be either. There is enough of wealth for both of us,” said Reine. “But you can study art to your heart’s content. And we will go to Italy. And you shall be as happy as a queen.”

* * * * *

And here I think we may take leave of Hetty Gray, in the fulness of her happiness, and in Reine’s loving arms. When I last heard of the sisters they were leading a busy, active, and joyous life. John Kane having died, Mrs. Kane has found a home with them; and Scamp, who is now quite an old dog, spends his days in tranquil ease at Hetty’s feet.