

"Have your fine friends gone?" she said, peeping into the room in pretended alarm. "Then I may come in. How are you, Janetta, after your sojourn in the halls of dazzling light?"

"Don't be absurd, Nora," said her sister, with a sudden backward dart of remembrance to the tranquil beauty of the rooms at Helmsley Court and the silver accents of Lady Caroline. "Why didn't you come down before?"

"My dear, I thought the nobility and gentry were blocking the door," said Nora, kissing her. "But since they are gone, you might as well come upstairs with me and take off your things. Then we can have tea."

Obediently Janetta followed her sister to the little room which they always shared when Janetta was at home. It might have looked very bare and desolate to ordinary eyes, but the girl felt the thrill of pleasure that all young creatures feel to anything that bears the name of home, and became aware of a satisfaction such as she had not experienced in her luxurious bedroom at Helmsley Court. Nora helped her to take off her hat and cloak, and to unpack her box, insisting meanwhile on a detailed relation of all the events that had led to Janetta's return three weeks before the end of the term, and shrieking with laughter over what she called "Miss Poley's defeat."

"But, seriously, Nora, what shall I do with myself, if father will not let me go to Worthing?"

"Teach the children at home," said Nora, briskly; "and save me the trouble of looking after them. I should like that. Or get some pupils in the town. Surely the Adairs will recommend you!"

This constant reference to possible aid from the Adairs troubled Janetta not a little, and it was with some notion of combatting the idea that she repaired to the surgery after tea, in order to get a few words on the subject with her father. But his first remark was on quite a different matter.

"Here's a pretty kettle of fish, Janet! The Brands are back again! "

"So I heard you say to Lady Caroline."

"Mark Brand was a cousin of your mother's," said Mr. Colwyn, abruptly; "and a bad lot. As for these sons of his, I know nothing about them—absolutely nothing. But their mother——" he shook his head significantly.

"We saw them to day," said Janetta.

"Ah, an accident of that kind would be a shock to her: she does not look strong. They wrote to me from the 'Clown,' where they had stayed for the last two days; some