

"I'll tell you all about it when I get in," said Janetta, trying to speak cheerily, with an instinctive remembrance of the demands usually made upon her fortitude in her own home. "Is mamma in?" She always spoke of the present Mrs. Colwyn, as "mamma," to distinguish her from her own mother. "I don't see any of the children. "

"Frightened away by the grand carriage, I expect," said Mr. Colwyn, with a grim smile. "I see a head or two at the window. Here, Joey, Georgie, Tiny—where are you all? Come and help to carry your sister's things upstairs." He went to the front door and called again; whereupon a side door opened, and from it issued a slipshod, untidy-looking woman in a shawl, while over her shoulder and under her arm appeared a little troop of children in various stages of growth and untidiness. Mrs. Colwyn had the peculiarity of never being ready for any engagement, much less for any emergency: she had been expecting Janetta all day, and with Janetta some of the Court party; but she was nevertheless in a state of semi-undress, which she tried to conceal underneath her shawl; and on the first intimation of the approach of Lady Caroline's carriage she had shut herself and the children into a back room, and declared her intention of fainting on the spot if Lady Caroline entered the front door.

"Well, Janetta," she said, as she advanced towards her stepdaughter and presented one faded cheek to be kissed, "so your grand friends have brought you home! Of course they wouldn't come in; I did not expect them, I am sure. Come into the front room— and children, don't crowd so; your sister will speak to you by-and-bye."

"Oh, no, let me kiss them now," said Janetta, who was receiving a series of affectionate hugs that went far to blind her eyes to the general deficiency of orderliness and beauty in the house to which she had come. "Oh, darlings, I am so glad to see you again! Jocy, how you have grown! And Tiny isn't Tiny any longer! Georgie, you have been plaiting your hair! And here are Curly and Jinks! But where is Nora? "

"Upstairs, curling her hair," shouted the child who was known by the name of Jinks. While Georgie, a well-grown girl of thirteen, added in a lower tone,

"She would not come down until the Court people had gone. She said *she* didn't want to be patronized."

Janetta colored, and turned away. Meanwhile Mrs. Colwyn had dropped into the nearest arm-chair, and Mr. Colwyn strayed in and out of the room with the expression of a dog that has lost its master. Georgie hung upon Janetta's arm, and the younger children either clung to their elder sister, or stared at her with round eyes and their fingers in their mouths. Janetta felt uncomfortably conscious of being more than usually interesting to them all. Joe, the eldest boy, a dusty lad of fourteen, all legs and arms, favored her with a broad grin expressive of delight, which his sister did not understand. It was Tiny, the most gentle and delicate of the tribe, who let in a little light on the subject.