

on her white hands, so calmly crossed upon the handle of her ivory fan, did not feel quite so tranquil as she looked. It crossed her mind that Margaret was acting inconsiderately. This little Miss Colwyn had her living to earn; it would be no kindness to unfit her for her profession. So, when she spoke it was with a shade more decision than usual in her tones.

"We will drive you over to Beaminster to-morrow, my dear Miss Colwyn, and you can then see your family, and ask your father if you may spend a few days with Margaret. I do not think that Mr. Colwyn will refuse us," she said, graciously. "I wonder when those men are coming, Margaret. Suppose you open the piano and let us have a little music. You sing, do you not?"

"Yes, a little," said Janetta.

"A little!" exclaimed Margaret, with contempt. "She has a delightful voice, mamma. Come and sing at once, Janetta, darling, and astonish mamma."

Lady Caroline smiled. She had heard a great many singers in her day, and did not expect to be astonished. A little governess-pupil, an under-teacher in a boarding-school! Dear Margaret's enthusiasm certainly carried her away.

But when Janetta sang, Lady Caroline was, after all, rather surprised. The girl had a remarkably sweet and rich contralto voice, and it had been well trained; and, moreover, she sang with feeling and passion which were somewhat unusual in one so young. It seemed as if some hidden power, some latent characteristic came out in her singing because it found no other way of expressing itself. Neither Lady Caroline nor Margaret understood why Janetta's voice moved them so much; Sir Philip, who came in with his host while the music was going on, heard and was charmed also without quite knowing why; it was Mr. Adair alone whose musical knowledge and experience of the world enabled him, feather-headed as in some respects he was, to lay his finger directly on the salient features of Janetta's singing.

"It's not her voice altogether, you know," he said afterwards to Philip Ashley, in a moment of confidence; "it's soul. She's got more of that commodity than is good for a woman. It makes her singing lovely, you know—brings tears into one's eyes, and all that sort of thing—but upon my honor I'm thankful that Margaret hasn't got a voice like that! Its women of that kind that are either heroines of virtue—or go to the devil. They are always in extremes."

"Then we may promise ourselves some excitement in watching Miss Colwyn's career," said Sir Philip, dryly.

After Janetta, Margaret sang; she had a sweet mezzo-soprano voice, of no great strength or compass, but perfectly trained and very pleasing to the ear. The sort of voice, Sir Philip thought, that would be soothing to the nerves of a tired man in his own house.