

But as soon as she was outside the door her demeanor changed. She burst into tears as she sped swiftly up the broad staircase, and her eyes were so blinded that she did not even see a white figure hovering on the landing until she found herself suddenly in Margaret's arms. In defiance of all rules—disobedient for nearly the first time in her life— Margaret had waited and watched for Janetta's coming; and now, clasped as closely together as sisters, the two friends held a whispered colloquy on the stairs.

"Darling," said Margaret, "was she very unkind?"

"She was very horrid, but I suppose she couldn't help it," said Janetta, with a little laugh mixing itself with her sobs. "We mustn't be friends any more, Margaret."

"But we will be friends—always, Janetta."

"Janetta, I shall behave to you exactly as I have always done." The gentle Margaret was in revolt.

"She will write to your mother, Margaret, and to my father."

"I shall write to mine, too, and explain," said Margaret with dignity. And Janetta had not the heart to whisper to her friend that the tone in which Miss Polehampton would write to Lady Caroline would differ very widely from the one that she would adopt to Mr. Colwyn.

CHAPTER II.

LADY CAROLINE'S TACTICS.

Helmsley Court was generally considered one of the prettiest houses about Beaminster; a place which was rich in pretty houses, being a Cathedral town situated in one of the most beautiful southern counties of England. The village of Helmsley was a picturesque little group of black and white cottages, with gardens full of old-fashioned flowers before them and meadows and woods behind. Helmsley Court was on slightly higher ground than the village, and its windows commanded an extensive view of lovely country bounded in the distance by a long low range of blue hills, beyond which, in clear days, it was said, keen eyes could catch a glimpse of the shining sea. The house a very fine old building, with a long terrace stretching before its lower windows, and flower gardens which were the admiration of half the county. It had a picture gallery and a magnificent hall with polished floor and stained windows, and all