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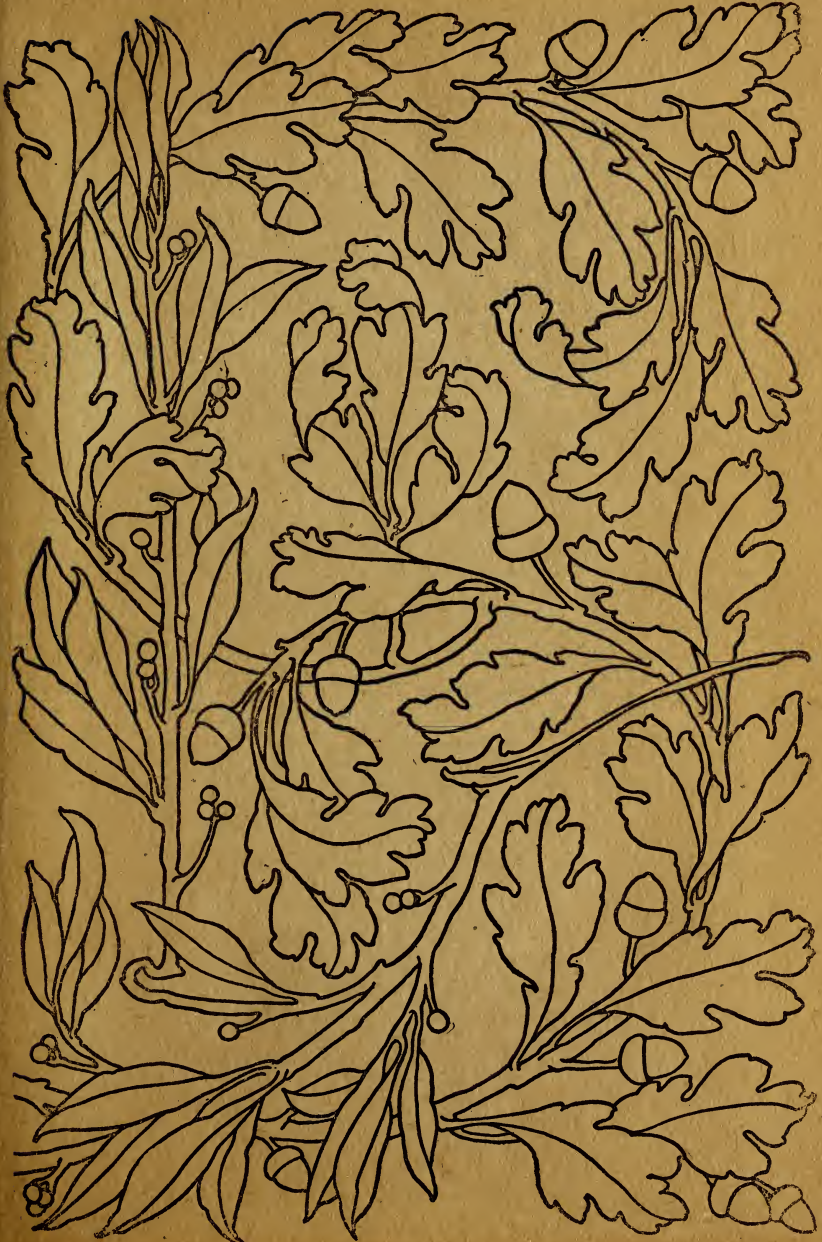
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A GIRL FROM AMERICA



# A GIRL FROM AMERICA

BY

L. T. MEADE

Author of "Daddy's Girl," "A World of Girls,"  
"A Madcap," "A Girl in Ten Thousand,"  
"Polly, a New-Fashioned Girl," etc.



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A decorative border with a repeating floral and leaf pattern surrounds the text. The border is composed of stylized leaves and small flowers, creating a frame for the central content.

## BIOGRAPHY AND BIBLIOGRAPHY

L. T. MEADE (Mrs. Elizabeth Thomasina Smith), English novelist, was born at Bandon, County Cork, Ireland, 1854, the daughter of Rev. R. T. Meade, Rector of Novohal, County Cork, and married Toulmin Smith in 1879. She wrote her first book, *Lettie's Last Home*, at the age of seventeen and since then has been an unusually prolific writer, her stories attaining wide popularity on both sides of the Atlantic.

She worked in the British Museum, living in Bishopsgate Without, making special studies of East London life which she incorporated in her stories. She edited *Atlanta* for six years. Her pictures of girls, especially in the influence they exert on their elders, are drawn with intuitive fidelity; pathos, love, and humor, as in *Daddy's Girl*, flowing easily from her pen. She has traveled extensively, being devoted to motoring and other outdoor sports.

Among more than fifty novels she has written, dealing largely with questions of home life, are: *David's Little Lad*; *Great St. Benedict's*; *A Knight of To-day* (1877); *Miss Toosey's Mission*; *Bel-Marjory* (1878); *Laddie*; *Outcast Robbin. or, Your Brother and Mine*; *A Cry from the Great City*; *White Lillie and Other Tales*; *Scamp and I*; *The Floating Light of Ringfinnan*; *Dot and Her Treasures*; *The Children's Kingdom: the Story of Great Endeavor*; *The Water Gipsies*; *A Dweller in Tents*; *Andrew Harvey's Wife*; *Mou-setse: A Negro Hero* (1880); *Mother Herring's Chickens* (1881); *A London Baby: the Story of King Roy* (1883); *Hermie's Rose-Buds and Other Stories*; *How it all Came Round*; *Two Sisters* (1884); *Autocrat of the Nursery*; *Tip Cat*; *Scarlet Anemones*; *The Band of Three*; *A Little Silver Trumpet*; *Our Little Ann*; *The Angel of Love* (1885); *A World of Girls* (1886); *Beforehand*; *Daddy's Boy*; *The O'Donnells of Inchfawn*; *The Palace Beautiful*; *Sweet Nancy* (1887); *Deb and the Duchess* (1888); *Nobody's Neighbors*; *Pen* (1888); *A Girl from America* (1907).



# A GIRL FROM AMERICA.

## CHAPTER I.

### THE VISITORS.

PATTY and Curly Falkland had never gone to school. They were the only daughters of a rich City merchant. Their mother had died when they were quite little children. From the time of her death until the present hour, when the girls were, one of them fourteen and the other fifteen years of age, they had been brought up and, with the aid of masters, instructed by their excellent governess and friend, Miss Dawson.

Mr. Falkland went to town every day, returning again late in the evening. The Falklands' house was between three and four miles from the railway station; Mr. Falkland, when the girls were very young, rode the distance on the quickest horse that money could buy, but of late years he had used a motor-car for the same purpose.

Mr. Falkland was essentially a man of the world—capable, high-principled, kind, but very much occupied with his own special business, and, in consequence, not able to give much time to his two little daughters, who adored him nevertheless, made him a sort of king in their own hearts, and thought all he did and said the best in the world.

Patty was a pretty girl, with bright brown eyes, a clear and yet rosy complexion, hair of a curly, fuzzy nature to match her eyes, and a neat little figure. Curly, whose real name was Charlotte, was called Curly from the fact that she had wept very piteously as a little child because of her straight locks. She had exclaimed with sudden passion that if she was not curly-headed like Patty, she would at least be called Curly. Her angry remark had been received with shouts of laughter, and the nickname had clung to her ever since.

She was a nice child, in her way, with more thought in her eyes and more character in her nature than her very pretty sister.

When this story opens it happened to be Midsummer Day, the 24th of June; and June was June in all its glory on this occasion. There was still the soft, delicious freshness of spring in the air, and the birds were still in full song, and some of the most beautiful of the flowering trees had not quite shed all their blossoms.

Mr. Falkland's place was called Tamaresk. This somewhat

quaint title had been given to it by the late owner. The house was old and the grounds well matured. There were acres and acres of land; and here the little Falklands lived in close contact with the great world of London, and yet in the very depth and heart of the country.

It was their father's wish that they should live thus in this innocent and healthy fashion until they grew up. He provided them with masters for every accomplishment that good-natured Miss Dawson did not possess, and gave the governess abundant money for their clothes. Each girl had her own horse to ride, and they had, besides, a beautiful little low carriage which was drawn by a pair of Shetland ponies, in which they went about the country.

They were particularly happy to-day, for they were expecting visitors.

"I wonder what she will be like," said Curly, turning and looking at her sister as she spoke.

"Oh, we'll soon know. Where is the good of thinking about it beforehand?" was Patty's answer.

"But I do so love to dream about things—to make an imaginary person in my own mind, and then afterwards to find out if the real person is the least like," was Curly's answer. "Now this Selma—hasn't she a quaint name?—must be totally different from other girls."

"Selma Dudley," was Patty's reply, "and her uncle, Mr. Seymour—it is so queer. This morning, at breakfast, we didn't know such people existed; then a telegram arrived from father to say that he was bringing them both to Tamaresk to lunch. Oh, there's dear old Dawson! I'll just fly to her and ask her to give me the telegram to read over again."

Patty ran across the garden. Miss Dawson, in a soft gray dress, with gray hair to match, a faded complexion, and eyes a very little darker than her hair, paused as the bright, pretty girl approached her side.

"I was thinking," she said, "that cutlets and mayonnaise of lobster and fried potatoes, with a savory, and——"

"Oh, don't, dear Dawson!" said Patty. "What *do* we care about lunch? We are so pleased; we so seldom have visitors here. I wonder what these people can be like. And father coming back also in the middle of the day—it's enough to excite us, isn't it, dear Miss Dawson?"

"You are looking very neat, Patty," said Miss Dawson. "Your white frock is quite correct, and I can always trust Charlotte to put on the right things. Now, my dear, you will please restrain your feelings. I own that a new girl, whom you have never seen before, coming to visit here is somewhat of an event; but well-brought-up children take these occurrences with composure. Show your excellent breeding on this occasion, Patty, and tell Charlotte from me that I expect the same of her."

"Let me see the telegram, please," was Patty's reply; and

as Miss Dawson, notwithstanding her words, was a wee bit excited herself, and as telegrams did not come to her every day and she had this particular one carefully stowed away in her pocket, she gave it, without any more ado, to Patty, who ran back with it to her sister.

"Here," she said. "Here it is. I will read it to you: 'Expect me to lunch with Mr. Seymour and his niece, Selma Dudley, by the twelve fifty train. Send motor to station.'"

"The niece may be grown up, after all," said Curly, a note of disappointment in her voice.

"I don't think she is," answered Patty. "I feel, somehow, that she is young—about our age. It would be nice to have a girl friend of our own age."

"Perhaps so," said Curly. "Not that I am dissatisfied," she continued. "I think dear old Dawson is so wise. She says that two only sisters can have such a very close and perfect friendship, and that while we are so busy with our lessons it is really best for us not to know outsiders. That is what she says, and I'm sure she is right."

"Well, I don't think so," said Patty. "I love you with all my heart and soul, but I do want to know other people."

"We shall know plenty of people when we go out into the world," said Curly.

Patty did not answer. She was gazing expectantly in the direction of the avenue.

"I hear the motor," she said. "They're coming! Oh, Curly, aren't you trembling just a very little bit?"

"Nonsense!" said Curly. "But we can go round to the front entrance to meet them. Father will wish that, as he sent a telegram to announce their arrival."

The girls went hand-in-hand across the beautiful lawns of Tamaresk until they found themselves close to the main entrance of the old house. A lady and gentleman had stepped out of the automobile, and Mr. Falkland himself was leading them in the direction of the girls.

"Here they are," said Mr. Falkland in his pleasant, gentlemanly voice.—"Come here, my dears.—Miss Dudley, may I introduce you to my daughters, Patty and Curly? Curly's real name, I may say, is Charlotte.—Mr. Seymour, my daughters."

The girls looked eagerly into the faces of the two visitors. A great deal depended on this crucial moment. They saw a large, loosely made man, with side-whiskers and a somewhat fat face. He was dressed in what might be described as a truly prosperous man's fashion. His waistcoat was made of a large black-and-white check, his trousers were light gray, and his frock-coat owed its existence to one of the most fashionable London tailors. He also wore a very large and heavily made watch-chain, to which was attached a ponderous bunch of seals, and several quaint, old-fashioned rings.

"I am much obliged, Squire," he said, turning as he spoke, and addressing Mr. Falkland. "It is lovely to be presented

to your two young ladies. I hail from New York, my dears, and I trust you won't think me any the worse for that.—Come, Selma; make friends with our new acquaintances.—This is my niece, young ladies—American born and bred; Selma Dudley by name, and none the worse for that.”

A girl with a wonderfully dark face and magnificent hair, which she wore in two very long, thick plaits reaching far below her waist, now extended her hand.

“I am delighted to make your acquaintance,” she said.—“Say, Uncle Joe, isn't this just quite too delicious? An English home—such lawns, too!—I guess we both feel just in the seventh heaven. May I walk with you a bit, and will you show me round?”

Selma's manner appeared both to Patty and Curly altogether fresh and charming. She had no shyness, and yet she was not intentionally forward. She was an altogether new type to them, and when, a moment later, she laid a frank, confiding hand within Patty's arm, and another frank, confiding hand within Curly's arm, the three girls found themselves chatting to their hearts' content.

“I am so glad that you came,” said Patty.

“I guess I'm glad too,” answered Selma; “you do seem interested. Is your life a monotonous one? I should have thought that in a charming place like this you would have too many acquaintances to care about a mere American girl.”

“But that is wrong,” said Patty. “We haven't any acquaintances—at least, of course,” she added, correcting herself, “very few. We shall have plenty by and by; but we are busy with our lessons now.”

“Good land!” said Miss Selma. “How dull! I couldn't stand that. That style wouldn't suit Selma Dudley; no, nor Consuelo Seymour either. I guess you'll jump when you see Consuelo; she is worth knowing. Say now, can you guess that we are to be your nearest neighbors?”

“Our nearest neighbors?” said Patty, her face coloring crimson and her eyes dancing with excitement. “You haven't—”

“Yes, we have. Uncle Joe has bought Castle Rocco. It's only a stone's throw from your estate, so that delightful man, Mr. Falkland, told us on our way here. Do say—aren't you pleased? We can be the loveliest friends.”

“Yes, I am quite delighted,” said Patty. But Curly was silent. She was not less pleased than her sister, but she felt so overcome by this sudden excitement which had, so to speak, swept itself without a moment's warning into their lives that she had no ready words at hand.

“There's the luncheon-gong,” she said, suddenly. “You must be hungry, Miss Dudley.”

“Miss—what?” answered the girl. “Why, I am only a child, like yourselves. You don't suppose now, for one single instant, that I'm going to “Miss Falkland” either of you. So now you are Patty, and you are Curly. I like these names.

Well, then, I am Selma. Say out at once Selma, and never call me anything else, or I'll fret myself to a decline."

"Selma," said Patty; and Curly also pronounced the name slowly and with a sense of wonder.

## CHAPTER II.

### DIFFERENT OPINIONS.

WHEN the three girls entered the large and beautiful dining-room at Tamaresk, Miss Dawson had already taken her place at the head of the table, while Mr. Falkland and Mr. Seymour had begun to partake of the excellent meal provided for them.

"You are late, Patty," said Mr. Falkland, glancing with some slight annoyance at his eldest daughter.

"Oh, please," exclaimed Selma, "it was my fault. I was just making a little arrangement with these two dear young people that in future I was to be 'Selma' to them, and they 'Patty' and 'Curly' to me. But will no one introduce me to the kind lady at the head of the board? I feel somehow, down in my heart, that she and I will be real friends."

Patty colored, and introduced Selma to Miss Dawson, who bowed somewhat stiffly, and evidently regarded her guest with small favor.

"Will you have the goodness to sit here, Miss Dudley?" she said; and her gentle, refined English voice formed a marked contrast to Selma's more pronounced accent.

Without a word the young lady dropped into her place. As she did so her bright, black eyes took in her surroundings at a glance. Those same eyes were soon sparkling with irresistible fun and mischief. She labelled Miss Dawson "the superior person," and Patty and Curly "the poor innocents." She decided that Mr. Falkland could be easily managed, for Uncle Joe could twist the Squire, as she called him, round his little finger. Uncle Joe was clever enough to twist any person round that same finger, and Mr. Falkland, at the first glance, did not seem to Selma a victim hard to capture.

Selma, born in New York, had travelled in her fifteen years over a large part of the world. Nature had given her as sharp an intellect as any young girl could possess, and before she had consumed her first course at that luncheon-table she had made her plans.

It was glorious to have a castle all one's own in ancient, beautiful, aristocratic England. She and Consuelo need not live there long, but while they were there they must have friends. Patty looked nice. Curly, or Charlotte, or whatever her ridiculous name was, was also worth cultivating.

"All the same," thought Miss Selma, "I guess that Curly has a will of her own. But so much the better. Consuelo and I will soon mold her. I'd like to prophesy that, before

a week is out, these good people will just be doing what Consuelo and I wish; for they don't know a bit of the world; and we, I guess, are acquainted with a considerable portion. What fun it will all be!—something new and fresh. Dear old England! England forever! Castle Rocco, the most desirable residence on earth, and Patty and Curly Falkland typical English girls to experiment upon, to be kind to, and thoroughly exploit."

As Selma came to the termination of these reflections she glanced again at Miss Dawson.

"The superior person," she said to herself, "will require a little management; but I just reckon that Consuelo and I can act up to her rôle too."

At this moment Patty's voice was heard breaking in on the conversation.

"Oh, Miss Dawson," she said, "such news! Selma Dudley is going to live at Castle Rocco. Isn't it just delightful?"

"Yes, I guess that we have done a good bargain in securing that antiquated house," cried Mr. Seymour from his end of the table. "Going dirt cheap, too.—One of those ancient piles that you never can secure in our country, sir." Here he turned and looked at his host. "I am everlastingly obliged to you, Mr. Falkland, for having put me in the way of purchasing it, and also for the favor of introducing my niece and me into the bosom of your family."

"One reason why we bought Castle Rocco," cried Selma in her pert, clear voice, "was just because of you, Patty, and you, Curly. Consuelo and I made up our minds that there must be young folks for us to fraternize with; and when we heard of you we said that the notion of taking up with you was altogether lovely. Wasn't it nice of us? Say, now."

"I should think it rather peculiar," remarked Miss Dawson, coldly. "My dear," she added, turning to Selma, "how could you feel anxious to know young ladies whom you have never seen?"

"Guess that's our American way," said Selma. "Consuelo and I are guided by intuition. We felt certain that the Misses Falkland would be charming—as they are."

Miss Dawson looked her disapproval. Her eyes said plainly, "I dislike flattery," and Selma, quick to perceive this, changed the subject.

"Well," she said, "whatever our reasons may have been, Uncle Joe has bought the castle, and we are going to live there. We shall all sleep there to-night, for my aunt and Consuelo are coming down on the very next train. You will be friends with us, won't you, Patty—won't you, Curly?"

"Forgive me," said Miss Dawson again; "it is not the custom in England for young ladies to call each other by their Christian names on first acquaintance."

"Oh, now, you use me up when you talk like that," replied Selma; "but I am not English," she added; "I am cosmo——"

"Selma means that she is cosmopolitan," interrupted Patty. "I will explain to you afterwards, Miss Dawson." Then she added, "We are so glad, Selma, to have found a friend in you."

"If we can help you, Miss Dudley, in any way, we shall be pleased," said Miss Dawson. "But my girls are very much occupied; they have their lessons to attend to. Don't mistake me for a moment, but English people are slow to make rapid friendships."

Selma smiled. The "superior person" would have to be snubbed. She put on a meek expression, however, and said nothing at all for a moment. When lunch was over she danced round to the side of the table where Mr. Seymour was talking to Mr. Falkland.

"Say, uncle, when is that train due? Aunt Amy and Consuelo will arrive before we are there to meet them if we don't hurry."

Mr. Seymour took out his watch.

"You are right, Selma," he replied. "We must be at the station in less than a quarter of an hour.—I am afraid, Squire, my niece and I must go at once. I am real vexed, but my wife and daughter must be my excuse. See, though, Squire: a straight word is enough. I want my girls and your nice young ladies to be tip-top, special friends, and to start right away at their friendship from the very beginning. That is my notion—come, now—let them come right in—that's the American way. That is this girl's way; and I guess it's Consuelo's way, too. And what I want to say is this: that we look for you, Squire, and your young ladies round at our place this evening. There's nothing against that; is there, Selma?"

"Against it!" cried Selma. "Nothing at all; but everything for it. Why, Uncle Joe, you're just too quaint. And Patty and Curly are my biggest friends already. As to Consuelo, she'll be just on tenter-hooks to hug them.—Now, of course, you'll come to-night; won't you, Patty?—you and Curly and the Squire—you'll all take us as we are?"

"You forget, young ladies," said Miss Dawson, "that your dancing-master is coming this evening. We cannot put Mr. Ford off; therefore you must remain at home."

"Oh, but why not put him off?" said Selma, pouting. "The occasion is so very special—two American girls settling down to spend their first night in an English ancestral hall. Oh, my! I feel like crying."

Mr. Falkland could not help laughing.

"We could send Ford a telegram," he said, glancing at Miss Dawson.

Both Patty and Curly laughed and skipped with glee.

"Oh, then it's all right," said Curly. "What fun!—what fun!"

"Your cousin Roger is also coming this evening," said Miss Dawson.

"My!" ejaculated Selma. "Do say at once, and quickly—is Mr.—Mr.—Roger—young or old?"

"He is quite young; he is our cousin; he is twenty," said Curly.

"Well now, I call that real lovely," answered Selma. "Bring him along, of course; the more the merrier. Consuelo will like a young man to come with you."

The motor-car now drew up at the front door, and a moment later Patty, Curly, and Miss Dawson found themselves alone. It seemed to the two Falkland girls that they had been lifted into a wonderful and interesting world. Miss Dawson was nowhere in sight. As the motor-car turned the corner of the avenue they clasped each other's hands, looked into each other's faces, and then, without a word, rushed upstairs to examine their wardrobes.

"Jane," said Patty to their special maid, "we are going to have such fun to-night."

"No more dull times," said Curly. "The castle is taken—Castle Rocco—and by such jolly people! One of the girls lunched here to-day, Jane. She is American—and so nice! Miss Dawson, I'm afraid, doesn't like her much, but I think we can bring her round. Aren't you glad, Jane? Isn't it nice for us to have a friend at last—a real friend?"

Jane was an old woman. She had been with the Falklands almost from their birth. They loved her dearly—better, even, than Miss Dawson.

"It's I that am glad for you to have your fun," she said, "and that it's to begin at once. I never held with keeping you out of things the way Miss Dawson does. Not that I have anything to say against her; but she's a little too prim for the ways of the present world. She is a bit old-fashioned; that's what ails her."

"Oh, no," said loyal Patty; "she is just perfect. I don't want really to vex her, although I do wish to go to Castle Rocco."

"I'm afraid," said Curly, "that I am not so good. If I were asked to-night to give up going to Castle Rocco because of Miss Dawson, I am afraid I should refuse. I am naughty, I know; but that is simply what I should do."

"Well, as the master has given leave," said Jane, "there's no necessity to discuss the matter. Miss Dawson always agrees with what the master wishes. And now I'll prepare your very prettiest frocks, my darlings. What do you say to the pink silks that you wore on Miss Curly's last birthday?"

"Oh, yes, they will do beautifully," replied both girls. "Please get them in order for us, Jane."

"I will, my loves; I will. And now will you go down and pick some flowers for the dinner-table? Mr. Roger's room has to be got ready for him, and there's a sight of other things to attend to."

The next minute Curly and Patty were in the garden.



Patty felt that she could never stop talking, but Curly was rather silent. They had both brought out baskets and scissors, and were picking quantities of roses and sweet-peas when they saw Miss Dawson going toward the house with her eyes suspiciously red.

Patty touched Curly on the arm.

"What can be the matter with the dear old thing?" she said. "I had best go to her and find out."

"No, no, Patty," replied Curly. "I will go to her. I can manage her better than you can. I won't be away a second."

She laid down her basket of flowers, and running swiftly across the lawn, reached her governess.

"Aren't you very glad that we're going to be so happy this evening?" said Curly.

Miss Dawson turned and faced the child.

"If you only would be guided by me, darling," she said, "you would not make friends with that queer, vulgar girl so rapidly. To tell you the truth, my love, I am not at all taken with her. The whole thing seems to me, if I may venture to say so, undignified, and not what I should expect from your father."

"But father approves," said Curly.

"Yes," replied Miss Dawson; "and as that is the case, and as he is going with you, I have, of course, nothing to say. I am only sorry and disappointed, that is all."

Miss Dawson disappeared into the house. Curly stood for a moment in meditation. She then ran back to her sister.

"What is up?" asked Patty.

"It's only that Miss Dawson doesn't like Selma Dudley; but, of course, she knows that we must go to Castle Rocco to-night, as father wishes it. She'll be all right to-morrow; don't let us fuss about it, Patty."

"I never should have supposed," said Patty, "that Selma was in Miss Dawson's style. For my part, I like her immensely; she is so fresh and interesting. I *am* glad we are going to have a real change at last."

She went on picking the flowers. When she had gathered enough, the two girls took them into the house and spent some time arranging them.

Soon after tea Roger Wareham arrived. He was a tall, good-looking young fellow, a lieutenant in a regiment which was quartered at Dovedale, the nearest town. The girls regarded him as an elder brother, and he often came over to Tamaresk for a few days.

"Oh, Roger!" said Curly, "what do you think has happened? Oh, it is just too delicious!"

"How can I possibly tell, Curly? What a state of excitement you are in!"

"The most wonderful thing has occurred," said Patty. "Castle Rocco is taken at last, and oh, Roger——"

"It is taken by the very funniest people," interrupted Curly—"Americans; and, oh! so wonderfully jolly. Two of

them were here to lunch: a Mr. Seymour—quite a funny-looking old gentleman!—father took to him awfully—and the very jolliest girl you ever looked at. Mr. Seymour is a little bit of everything, I should imagine; but as to Selma, his niece—oh! she is just wonderful; she has a sort of magic about her.”

“She is so pretty,” said Patty.”

“We have both fallen in love with her,” interrupted Curly; “and so will you too, Roger—that is, unless you prefer Consuelo.”

Roger Wareham laughed.

“How you do bewilder me, Kiddies!” he said. “Selma, and Mr. Seymour, and Castle Rocco—and now Consuelo. Who in the name of fortune is Consuelo?”

“Mr. Seymour’s daughter,” laughed Curly. “Selma says she is lovely; and, oh, isn’t it fun? You’ll never complain of being dull again when you come to see us at Tamaresk. We shall have ever such a jolly time now that Castle Rocco is let. But sit down in this cool corner, and we’ll pour out your tea and tell you just everything.”

Wareham was quite pleased to comply. The day was sultry, and he was hot. The girls were as his own sisters. He had just got leave of absence from his regiment for two days, and the thought of a little excitement at Tamaresk was exhilarating.

Curly told her story with much gusto.

“We are all going up to Castle Rocco to-night,” she said. “We are dining early on purpose, and afterwards we will drive up in the motor.”

“But we could so easily walk,” said the young man. “Much more fun than driving, wouldn’t it be? Why,” he continued, “the grounds of Castle Rocco join the grounds of Tamaresk. We have only to walk to the end of the next meadow and cross the stile, and there we are.”

“We can’t,” said Curly, shaking her head very wisely. “Dad, I suppose, wants to make an impression. He has ordered the motor to be in readiness, and we are to drive round by the road.”

“Very well,” answered Roger; “it’s all the same to me. You do look pleased, you two. I never saw you, Curly, with such a flush on your cheeks before.”

“It’s because of Selma,” exclaimed Curly.

“What!” cried Roger; “you don’t mean to tell me that you call that girl by her Christian name already?”

“But indeed we do,” said Curly; “and she calls us by ours. As likely as not, she’ll speak to you as ‘Roger’ before the night is over.”

“She had better not,” replied Wareham.

“Oh, Roger,” said Patty, “don’t be stuck up and proud. Just forget you’re grown up. Selma is only a girl; and we are only girls; and Consuelo, of course, is only a girl. Let’s have fun all together. Don’t let’s give ourselves airs.”

"I mean to have plenty of fun, little girls, but I disapprove of Christian names on such short acquaintance. There, you needn't look so downcast. I am glad that old Castle Rocco is inhabited again. The Coverdales were a terrible loss to the neighborhood."

"Were they?" said Curly. "I don't remember them."

"Well, I do, How old are you, Curly—fourteen? Well, I am twenty. I was only a very little fellow when last I saw Lord Coverdale. He was very kind to me. It was sad. When he and old Lady Coverdale died, the place was left unoccupied for such a long time——"

"But why—why? It is such a lovely place," said Patty.

"Well, you see, the heir has not been discovered. I believe the lawyers are still searching for him. There is a Lord Coverdale somewhere in the world, but neither advertisements nor efforts made by the cleverest people who could be put on his track have led to the smallest clue to his whereabouts. That is why the place has been unlet for so long. It has been waiting for the heir. Now, the solicitors, I suppose, think it best to rent the dear old house and grounds."

"Well, never mind about the Coverdales," said Patty. "Let's think of all the fun we shall have this evening."

Soon after dinner the little party drove away to Castle Rocco. The castle stood on high ground, giving a magnificent view of the surrounding country.

"How delightful to see them to-night!" said Curly. "I don't suppose they will have a single thing unpacked. Dear, dear! I hope we are not dressed too grandly." She looked almost with dismay at her pretty, pink silk frock. "It would be awkward," she continued, glancing at Patty, "if you and I and father and Roger were the only people in dinner-dress."

"Oh, I dare say things will pass all right," said Mr. Falkland. "We won't stay long, of course.—Now, Roger, tell me how you managed about that dispute with Captain Jenkins."

Roger and Mr. Falkland immediately entered into an animated conversation, and the girls had to curb their impatience as best they could. Whatever their father might say to the contrary, they would feel uncomfortable in their dinner-dresses if Selma and Consuelo were in a state of confusion—nothing unpacked, nothing smart or pretty for them to wear. But Curly quickly found all her fears lulled to rest. A powdered and liveried servant flung open the wide doors of Castle Rocco, and the party were conducted by a second man in livery into one of the great drawing-rooms, where Mrs. Seymour, a stout, dark woman wearing purple velvet and diamonds, advanced to meet them.

She had a nervous manner, notwithstanding the pomposity of her dress, and looked with great eagerness, first at the girls, then at the Squire and Roger.

"I call this real kind," she said. "I don't know when I was treated in so neighborly a fashion.—Welcome, Mr. Falk-

land!—Welcome, my dear young ladies; and you also, sir—forgive me if I have not the pleasure of knowing your name.”

“My cousin, Mr. Wareham,” said Patty.

A gay young laugh sounded at that moment behind them, and turning, the girls saw their friend Selma skimming across the room to meet them, dressed as though she were a butterfly.

Her dinner-dress was of the palest pink. Her hair was arranged in the height of the fashion, and her little pink shoes and delicate pink stockings, which peeped just below her short skirt, seemed to the Falkland girls the most fascinating things they had ever beheld. There was a certain *chic* about Selma, and they knew at once that their poor, pretty pink frocks and they themselves, however smartly dressed, could never come up to her.

“Say, you darlings!” cried Selma. “Welcome, Patty! Welcome, Curly!—Aunt Coralie, have you done your duty? Yes, I see you have.—Curly, present me, will you? to the gentleman.—Sir, I ought to be introduced, ought I not?”

Here Selma raised her roguish black eyes and fixed them on Wareham’s face.

“My cousin, Mr. Wareham: Miss Dudley,” said Patty again.

“I am quite charmed to make your acquaintance, Mr. Wareham,” said Selma. “I am not an English girl—oh, no—I am a little bit of everybody else, I think, but not English—not a scrap English. I hail from New York; but, all the same, I am a bit Irish, and a bit Spanish, and a bit Russian, too, I think. I guess you’ll think I’m funny. I guess you’re all laughing at me in your sleeves.”

“Of course we’re not, Selma,” said Patty. “We couldn’t be so rude.”

“And we admire you like anything,” said Curly; “but we do just want to see your cousin.”

“Consuelo? Good land! she’s raging with the desire to acquaint herself with you all. Come this minute, and I’ll take you to her.—You will come too, of course, Mr. Wareham; you are not going to immolate yourself on the altar of the old people.”

Here Selma cast an audacious glance at Mr. Falkland, who was talking to Mrs. Seymour. Mr. Seymour had not yet appeared.

“I’ll send Uncle Joe spinning in here as fast as possible to keep you company, aunt,” said the incorrigible Selma. “Until he arrives, ta-ta. The rest of us are off to Consuelo.”

Wareham could not help laughing. His laughter was infectious.

Selma led her little party across several splendidly furnished rooms, and at last up a few stairs, and then into a boudoir where the light of day was rigorously excluded, and where a tall, very slim girl was standing, her head slightly thrown back and her slim figure brought into strong relief against a velvet curtain. The girl’s dress may have been

white—there is no saying—but the pink, artificial light of the room gave it a sort of rainbow tint. She was very statuesque, and as different from Selma in appearance as one girl could differ from another.

“Consuelo!” exclaimed Selma, as she flung open the door. “Here they all are. These are my two English pearls. This is Curly, otherwise Charlotte; this is Patty, otherwise I don’t know what. Here they are, and they mean to take us right up, and polish us a bit, and show us what is correct by the English standard, and what is wrong by the English standard. They have been just dying to see you, Consuelo; and so has this charming young man, who holds a commission in His Majesty’s army. This young man’s name is Mr. Wareham. Now, Consuelo, for goodness’ sake come forward, and stop being a carven image.”

Consuelo moved into the center of the room with a swift and sudden grace.

“I am very glad indeed to see you all,” she said; “and if you will really inform me about English manners, and what is done amongst the people you consider good society, I shall be vastly entertained. I am very ignorant at present; but I am willing to learn, and so is Selma. Selma has manners of her own, and so have I; but I guess they’re about wrong from your point of view. I guess you do things different. Sit down, won’t you? all three of you, and let’s talk.”

The graceful creature flung herself as she spoke into a low chair, and motioned to the Falkland girls and to Wareham to find places for themselves.

“But, Consuelo,” exclaimed Selma, “your way of going on isn’t a bit the English way. Notwithstanding your grand airs, you are not a princess. You should keep standing until your guests have found seats.”

“I divine they won’t mind,” answered Consuelo. “These two English young ladies and the English gentleman must take me as I am until I am trained. I am untrained now, and I just guess I can’t begin anything new until I see my way. Now, which of you two girls will begin to work the spell on me? Will you all try? I am quite ready to learn.”

Wareham laughed.

“Would it be an impertinence to ask your age, Miss Consuelo?” he said.

“I am fifteen and a half,” replied Consuelo. “Quite old for America.”

“Well, then, if I may say what I think, you don’t want any training; it would be a sad pity to alter you.”

“Those are my sentiments,” exclaimed Selma. “Isn’t Consuelo just too lovely? Don’t you imagine that she’ll make a sensation wherever she goes?”

“I have no doubt you are right,” said Wareham, smiling at the younger girl, and then looking again at Consuelo.

“But I don’t understand English ways,” said Consuelo in her languid voice; “and my opinion is that there is no man-

ner of use in crossing the herring-pond to learn nothing at all. I guess I have come here to learn. In Japan I did what the Japanese ladies did; and in China—oh, good land! I imitated the ladies also. Now, you may all be sure that if your English ways don't suit me I won't adopt them. But I take it that it's a bit fair that I should see for myself, and form my own resolutions when I clearly understand what English folks expect of me."

"Very well," said Wareham, suddenly. "Then perhaps you won't mind beginning at once. An English girl, exactly in your position, would take her friends into a room that is not quite so hot, and on the longest day in the year would not use artificial light."

"In that case, Mr. Wareham," interrupted Consuelo, using her most languid drawl, "I thank you very much, but I won't begin training to-night. I hope you will all excuse me, but nothing would induce me to step out of my rose-colored boudoir except to retire to my bedroom.—Selma, you may take the English people away, and do what you can for them until they think fit to take their departure. I wish you adieu, ladies; and you, sir."

She lay back in her chair, folded her long white hands, and closed her eyes.

Selma immediately jumped up. "Come," she said to the others.

A minute later, to their intense relief, they found themselves in one of the corridors.

"You mustn't mind Consuelo," began Selma. "She'll catch it from me to-morrow morning for her conduct. But she is just dead-tired to-night; and really, Mr. Wareham, you did put her out immensely by asking her to come into the broad light of day. Couldn't you guess that she was got up for effect? She considers herself statuesque; and she made, oh! such a fuss about that rose-colored light. You have just put your foot into it, Mr. Wareham; and I guess you had best take your foot out, or you'll have a bad time. But now let's return to the drawing-room, or would you rather I took you over the house?"

Patty and Curly much preferred this, and Selma was in her element as she took her friends from room to room, upstairs and downstairs, and all over the beautiful old place. Soon, to her great surprise, she found that she was changing places with Wareham.

Wareham knew much more of Castle Rocco than did Selma herself. He had often been there as a little boy, and was able to tell the young American girl and his own two cousins a great deal about the pictures, and some interesting stories relating to the old Coverdales.

Selma cried, "Do say!" and "I guess that's queer," and "Wouldn't I like to stand in his shoes!" and sundry other remarks of a like nature, while Patty and Curly, standing close together, were somewhat silent, and did not speak at all.

By-and-by the tour of the house had been taken, and they all returned to the drawing-room. There Mr. Falkland immediately told them it was time for them to leave, and, with a warm invitation from Selma that they should both come up on the following day, the little girls parted from their new friends.

### CHAPTER III.

#### THE SEA-FOAM DRESS.

"If I were you, Uncle Edward," said Roger Wareham, "I would not allow Patty and Curly to spend too much time with those young American girls. I have no doubt they are absolutely harmless; but their ways are not our ways, and Mr. Seymour's own daughter seems a very extraordinary creature."

Mr. Falkland was one of the most particular people in the world. He had always been most exclusive with regard to Patty's and Curly's friends. Wareham, therefore, supposed that he would immediately agree with his remarks, and say that it would be his object to use caution with regard to the intimacy likely to spring up between the family at Castle Rocco and the girls at Tamaresk. But, to his surprise, the elder man laid his hand on Wareham's shoulder and said quietly, "There are circumstances which make it necessary for me to be friendly with Joseph Seymour. He has come here to give his own daughter and niece an opportunity of knowing English people; in fact, the whole family wish to be introduced into English society, and I must help them to the best of my power."

"But why?" asked the young man.

Falkland looked hard at him.

"You are young, Roger, and, I trust, commercially sound. Now, at the present moment I am receiving considerable benefit from Seymour's money. Don't ask me any more. I trust I shall weather the storm, and that my little girls will be none the worse for this intimacy."

Wareham was about to make a remark, but Falkland suddenly turned on his heel as much as to intimate that their conversation had come to an end. The young man was obliged to return to his regiment early in the day. He felt not a little disturbed in his mind. He could not understand his uncle, and, although he had nothing whatever to say against Selma, he felt that he did not like Consuelo, nor did he think her a good companion for his innocent young cousins.

Meanwhile Consuelo and Selma were spending an animated morning together.

"Say, Connie," cried her cousin, "what did you think of those two English girls?"

"I thought nothing at all about them," said Consuelo. "It

is good for us to learn all we can about England and the ways of England, but I am not especially attracted by the two first specimens we have seen. I guess they'd be thought dowdy in New York City."

"But that's just what I like about them," said Selma. "England is the old country, and they are old-fashioned. I guess we'll have to see a lot of 'em. Uncle Joe wishes it."

"Yes; that's the worry," said Consuelo. "If they were grown up I shouldn't mind so much; but they're just children. They did look ridiculous last night. I suppose they had their best party frocks on. My! weren't they queer?"

"They are brought up by a very old-fashioned governess," said Selma; "and I tell you what it is, Connie, she doesn't like us a bit."

"What fun!" said Consuelo, languidly. "I should dearly like to inspire hatred in some one; it would be such a relief. I do hope that Miss—Miss—what's her name?"

"Dawson is her name."

"I hope that I may get her to hate me, and to make a fuss about the girls coming to Castle Rocco; only it will be precious dull unless we get to know all the county people."

"Your father means to manage that by the aid of the Falklands," said Selma.

Consuelo shrugged her shoulders.

"There is no use," she said; "we are not in their set. I might be, it is true, for I can drawl to any extent, and put on languid, fine-lady airs. But there's mother, for instance, and father himself—and you, too, Selma; you haven't got repose of manner. Now, I take it that repose of manner is the sign manual of good breeding. I have it—you haven't; therefore I cannot see that you have much chance of achieving a success."

"I'll do my best, anyhow," said Selma; "and, to begin with, let's go this very minute to Tamaresk and pay a call on the Misses Falkland."

"Oh, we can't do it so early in the morning," said Consuelo. "It wouldn't be considered good style."

"Then say; we can lunch early and go immediately afterwards. And now let's see all over the place."

Consuelo, young as she was, had quite the airs of a grown-up girl. Selma, however, although but a few months younger than her cousin, was quite a child. Consuelo liked to wear long dresses with trains. She had a particularly slim figure, and in these quaint garments she imagined that she looked exactly like one of Burne Jones's heroines. She arranged her hair in sweeping waves back from an almost colorless face. Her eyes were large. They were pretty eyes in themselves. Nothing ever brought color to her cheeks. She had somewhat full lips and a very drawling voice.

Selma, however, who was the very soul of activity, dragged her cousin along.

"We must see the place; we must be spirited; we must



do our very best to have a good time. Oh, do come along, Consuelo! Just forget you're an American girl and one of the greatest heiresses in New York, and be your natural and jolly self for the time being."

"Right you are, girls!" said a hearty voice; and the girls, who had been wandering along the terrace in front of the house, suddenly came face to face with Mr. Seymour. "I overheard you, Selma; and I applaud every word you say. Now, I am glad to take this opportunity to have a little talk with you both. I don't mean anything shabby, mind you; but I have taken Castle Rocco with a purpose. I want to get to know the people all around, and I can be helped in this endeavor of mine by my friend Falkland of Tamaresk. I'll make it worth Falkland's while to help me, and you must make it worth his daughters' while to help you. A great deal hangs on this—more than I can explain at the present moment. But what I mean to say is this: there must be no shyness or hanging back, or not endeavoring to get all the good you can out of those girls. Selma, you are on the right tack; but you, Consuelo, are on the wrong. You think that you are so rich that you can dare anything; but let me tell you that fortunes are lost as quickly as they are made in New York City. Now you know what I am hinting at, and if you don't do your utmost to fall in with my plans—why, you'll rue the day."

Joseph P. Seymour, as he was generally called, waved his hand to the girls with these last words. A moment later they saw him stepping into the motor *en route* for the railway station.

"That's always the way," said Consuelo.

"What?" said Selma.

"Joseph P. Seymour has his schemes, and he expects me to fall in with them. Now, of course, I want to have my fun, and I wish to make as good an appearance as possible; but I don't choose to be treated as a little girl when I feel grown up. I hate doing things from ulterior motives. When we were at Newport a few years ago, and I was much younger than I am now, I had to look graceful in the drawing-room when mother was giving her strawberry teas in late October, and her chrysanthemum entertainments in May. Oh, the money we spent! It was the fashion in Newport that year to turn everything topsy-turvy, and what good did it do in the end? I was taken away from my lessons just when I was beginning to enjoy them, and all to lounge about and look like a chrysanthemum, or wear a pink dress, the color of a strawberry, with a green frill round my neck." Selma laughed. "Now it seems I am to do the same thing over again. It is true you are with me now, so things won't be quite so bad; but if Joseph P. Seymour means for a moment to go too far with me, he will find his mistake. There! I am going to whisper something dreadful to you, Selma. I don't care one dollar—no, not one—whether I am a great

heiress or not. I want to lie about and lounge, and never exert myself at all, and have a right good time. If I can have it in the English way, well and good; but if not, I guess I'll have it in the American way; and I guess, what's more, that the American way is good enough for me. Oh, there's momma calling. Now I ask you, Selma Dudley, if there's any one in creation clever enough to put style into momma?—Coming, momma," exclaimed Consuelo.

She went slowly forward, trailing her long skirt of strawberry-colored Liberty silk. It clung round her lissome young figure. Her hair was arranged as fashionably as the very best lady's-maid straight from Paris could manage it. Consuelo's hair had a sort of tawny glow about it. It was neither red nor golden, but nevertheless it was remarkable. In looking at Consuelo, the very first thing the eye rested on was her hair. It looked natural, and yet not natural. It accentuated the grace of a singularly graceful head that was set in a very perfect way on slim and yet broad young shoulders. In addition to this glowing, wonderful hair, Consuelo had a white neck like a swan; her complexion was pale but creamy, her eyes large and languorous. They were of a bright and yet light blue—china eyes, as people were fond of calling them.

"Well, momma?" she said, coming up to her parent.

Mrs. Joseph P. Seymour had by no means become accustomed to the wealth which her rich husband lavished on her. She was a very stout woman of about five-and-forty years of age. She had rosy cheeks, a round face, and very staring, bright brown eyes. Her eyes were extraordinarily vivid in expression, so that at the first glance one would almost be tempted to say that Mrs. Seymour had a great soul. But as the eyes always wore that expression, that eager, inquisitive look, people soon got tired of them.

It was partly on account of her mother's eyes and their peculiar wide-awake glance that Consuelo was so languorous, that the heavy lids seldom opened to the fullest. It was on account of her mother's brisk voice that Consuelo drawled her words.

"Well, momma?" she said now, and she made a pause, standing in the center of the beautiful lawn.

"I guess," said Mrs. Joseph P. Seymour, "that this place is just what will suit you and Selma and poppa; but it doesn't suit me one bit. It is lonely; and I don't like loneliness. I don't see the use of being the wife of one of the richest men in New York if I have got to molder here. I don't like the process of moldering, and that's flat."

"You'll have to stay here all the same, momma," said Consuelo, "for poppa wishes it. We all bow to the dictates of poppa; don't we, Selma?"

Selma shrugged her shoulders. Mrs. Seymour uttered a sigh.

"Your father wants those girls asked over to spend the

afternoon. Now shall I send a messenger, or will you two go right along to their place and take an invitation from me?"

"I will go if you like, Aunt Coralie," said Selma.

"Do, now; that's a good girl," replied Mrs. Seymour, her eyes looking more wide-awake than ever. I guess we'll have to show them round and give them a right good time; and if only Consuelo would wake, it could be done."

"I am wide-awake," said Consuelo. Then she laughed. "I hate the whole thing from first to last," she added; "but I am wide-awake. 'Tisn't in me to sleep when there are mysteries in the air, and when poppa's on the war-path."

"Oh, hush, Consuelo; hush!" said Mrs. Seymour. "You have no right to animadvert on your poppa. I am sure he is a very good man."

"He's just a money-grubber," said Consuelo.

"Well," said Mrs. Seymour; "and what is better than money? You tell me that."

"Oh, lots of things," said Consuelo. "Thoughts, for instance."

She laughed a little. Her laughter was quite musical. Her eyes opened wide for a flash of time, then resumed their sleepy expression.

"Almost everything is better than money," she continued; "above all things, that which I won't mention." She gave a quick sigh, and, turning impatiently, trailed her long dress across the flower garden.

"If there is one person who would try a parent to the point of distraction, it is Consuelo," said Mrs. Seymour, looking at Selma for support. "Now, what is she going to do? Does she mean to thwart poppa? He won't stand it; she knows that well enough."

"You had better let her alone, Aunt Coralie."

"Let her alone, Selma?" replied the lady. "Am I not always letting her alone? Haven't I given way to her until my friends laugh—yes, laugh at me? There's her ridiculous dress, for instance. She, a girl scarcely sixteen years of age, trailing a gown like that over the grass; and her hair, instead of hanging down her back as it ought, looped up in all those bows and curves! Why, she isn't a year older than you, Selma, and yet from the way she dresses you would suppose she was out and in the world. It vexes poppa not a little."

Selma was silent for a minute. Then she laid a pretty, little white hand on Mrs. Seymour's shoulder.

"You have a lot to do, haven't you, Aunt Coralie?"

"To do?" answered the good woman. "I'm just fairly distracted with doing, what with English servants, and English ways, and this great lonely house, every room in it called by a different name—the blue room, the pink room, the white room, the red room—and no light to speak of on the landings upstairs, and lamps everywhere to light the place instead of what I am accustomed to—electric burners. I want

to ask you, Selma, if it isn't enough to turn the head of a poor woman?"

"If I were you," said Selma, "I'd leave things to the servants."

But here Mrs. Seymour, like the proverbial worm, thought it well to turn.

"And who are you, Selma Dudley," she said, "to dictate to me? Do you suppose for a minute that my Consuelo's poppa would have amassed the fortune he has if I had not saved for him, and looked into the consumption of the scraps, and saw that not a quarter of a dollar's worth of anything was wasted? That is all you know. I am going on saving as long as I live, for I wasn't put into the world for anything else."

Selma smiled.

"Very well, auntie," she said. "Save to your heart's content. Would you like me to run over to Tamaresk and invite the young Falklands to lunch?"

"Do; and I guess, if you could manage it, you might take Consuelo with you."

"I am not going, momma," said Consuelo, who managed from her distant point of observation to hear this last remark of her mother's.

Mrs. Seymour sighed profoundly and entered the house. Selma ran up to her cousin.

"Why do you vex your momma?" she said. "There is no sense in it; I call it small-minded."

"Why does she vex me?" said Consuelo. "Run off, Selma, and do what you promised to do. Bring those girls back with you, if you can; but I guess they've got spirit, and won't yield to all poppa's designs."

"There's no use talking to you," said Selma. "You are just in one of your unmanageable moods. But I'll be off."

"Are you going to walk?" called out Consuelo.

"Yes; there's a short cut which will take me to Tamaresk in a quarter of an hour. It is all downhill, too. I'll get the girls to walk back with me the same way. Be sure you are ready to receive them, and for goodness' sake look nice."

"Send Ronsard out to me," said Consuelo; "I want to talk to her about my dress."

Ronsard was the name of the Parisian maid. As Consuelo spoke she sank into a garden-chair, arranged her Liberty draperies so as to fall effectively round her, and smiled at her cousin.

"I can resist her except when she smiles," thought the young girl; "but then it is impossible."

Selma ran into the house. She found the French maid, who was busily occupied in Mademoiselle Consuelo's room.

"You are to go to your mistress in the garden," said Selma, and then, without waiting for the maid's reply, left her.

Ronsard was a black-eyed, typical Frenchwoman, but as she had been in several English families, she could speak the

lingo with tolerable accuracy. She was well pleased to wait on the young American heiress, from whom she hoped to reap rich spoils. She was by no means conscientious, or a specially good woman; but she was an admirable hairdresser, and had an eye to effect. Consuelo was remarkable, and completely out of the common. Ronsard did not in the least mind what Selma wore. It is true, she was supposed to look a little after her as well as after Mademoiselle Consuelo. But Selma hated being waited on, so that in reality she did little or nothing for the young girl. Now, uttering a sigh and looking with discontent at the outside world, she shrugged her shoulders and went daintily downstairs.

Her appearance was, of course, very *chic*, and her own hair was most beautifully arranged.

"But mademoiselle," she exclaimed, when she saw Consuelo waiting like a picture in the middle of the green lawn, "you have the effect the most admirable!" Consuelo raised her eyes. "The *tout ensemble* of mademoiselle is to the eye the most ravishing."

"I don't want you to flatter me," said Consuelo. "I want to talk about my dress. Have the gowns we ordered come from Paris?"

"But just now, at this moment, mademoiselle, I am arranging them. They are of the most beautiful. They are *chic*; they are, in one word, *magnifiques!*"

"Describe them," said Consuelo.

This was a pleasing task to Ronsard.

"There is the robe of green," she said—sea-green, like the wave when it breaks into foam. It is of the texture of the cobweb. The train is long, and the sleeves fall back so as to show mademoiselle's white arms."

"My arms are very thin," said Consuelo, "something like sticks. Do they look pretty when they are seen?"

"Ah, mademoiselle! but are they not the arms of slender youth?"

"I know," said Consuelo; "but slender youth can be very ugly, all elbows and angles."

"Say not so," answered Ronsard. "With the hair of mademoiselle, and the eyes so sleepy and yet so alert, she can well afford to disregard the angles which the time will make to disappear."

Consuelo laughed.

"You are too funny, Ronsard," she said. "Well, there is the sea-green dress with the bell sleeves. What else?"

"The cream velvet, mademoiselle; the velvet which one calls 'velour,' so light, and yet so elegant. There are spangles on the neck, and lace on the sleeves which would make your heart ache with the desire to wear it. Then there is a robe of turquoise blue, soft and cloudy; and there is a robe like the sunset cloud, with a touch of pink and a touch of opal; and there are also white dresses innumerable for mademoiselle's wear in the mornings."

"That's enough," said Consuelo. "I am tired of this dress. I will get you to put me into one of the new dresses—one of the Parisian gowns. Which shall it be?"

Ronsard fixed her keen, black eyes on Consuelo's young face.

"Is not mademoiselle of the sort that no sun can burn and no harsh wind cause to flush? Is it not that mademoiselle is serious beyond her years? But the hour is morning. Will mademoiselle not wear a dress which in England one calls '*comme il faut*?'"

Consuelo sprang upright.

"No!" she said. "I will never resemble an English miss. I will not have a short, stiff, starched white frock with a belt, and what we call a waist, but what English people call a blouse, on my body. I will wear the sea-green dress with the foamy appearance. I like the sound of it. I want to be a sort of siren. Oh, I have my ambitions."

"Mademoiselle is too wonderful," said Ronsard; "and the dress can be worn both in the morning and afternoon, for it closes at the throat when desirable, but for evening wear the neck piece can be removed."

"Come and dress me in it," said Consuelo.

She swept restlessly across the grass, and, followed by Ronsard, went up to her bedroom. There she surveyed her finery with but small interest. To a girl who from her earliest days had secured every single thing that took her fancy, dress was a mere nothing. It was the slight diversion of a minute, no more.

When Consuelo was attired in the green, foamy dress she scarcely glanced at her appearance, but snatched up a book of poetry and returned to her seat in the garden.

The sun was shining with great power, for the day was even hotter than the day before. Consuelo scorned to wear a hat. She liked the heat. She would not shade her tawny locks by any parasol.

"I guess I am about weary," she said to herself after a time. "There seems nothing to live for. Guess money isn't worth so much after all. Guess that man I once heard preach in New York City was in the right. He said that money stunted the soul. Now, here am I, learned in one sense, but ignorant in another; and I'm just about full of the world. I have been mostly all round it. I know something of Japan, of China, and of India; and as to America—well, I am an American girl, and I adore the Stars and Stripes; and what's more, I am never going to be ashamed of my country, but I will uphold America and American freedom to the end of all time. But what I'm no good at all at is just diplomacy. There's poppa, with his schemes. I hate them. There's mamma with her savings: I call that sort of thing splitting hairs. Selma's a good sort, but she's of the accommodating species, and will settle down to anything that is wanted of her; whereas I—there's rebellion in my heart. I don't know

what I'll do or how I'll do it; but it's pretty bad for an American girl to be deprived of her freedom, and I shall be sure to do something desperate. I keep sleepy-looking, and I dress in this queer, outlandish fashion, showing my hideous thin arms and my shallow face—for it is shallow, when all's said and done—just to kill time and to get people to think me an oddity; but inside of me there is something living, and crying at me, and I guess that if it cries loud enough, Consuelo Seymour will break away from Joseph P. Seymour and from the momma as well. I wouldn't be an English miss for creation, and yet we have been brought here to study the ways of the English misses and to make an entry into English society. I guess they'll talk about me. Let them; I want them to."

She sat on, her long, thin fingers interlaced and clasped round one knee, her head bent slightly forward as though she were arguing a problem with some one, although that some one was her own conscience, which resisted its trammels and fought hard for a different life.

"I am ignorant, too," she said to herself. "I know the world on the surface, but I don't know the beautiful things of the world—not one little bit. I have never come bang up with goodness, for instance; or with real love, for instance. Heigh-ho! I suppose I am too young to be thinking like this; but it's my firm impression the daughters of American millionaires are born old. Ah, and here comes Selma and those two prim little misses, Patty and Curly. Simple names enough, and simple maids; but they have nothing in common with me."

## CHAPTER IV.

### THE CHAPERON.

SELMA came briskly across the lawn, Patty and Curly walking one at each side of her. The little English misses were wearing the sort of frocks that Consuelo despised. They were dressed very neatly in brown holland skirts and little tussore silk blouses to match. Their hair floated freely about their shoulders. They had sailor-hats on their heads. Each girl, in her way, was the very essence of prim propriety; at least, so it seemed to the queer American girl who was waiting for them.

She did not move as they approached, but sat quite still in that utter calm which she so admired in herself. Selma's voice sounded fresh and cheerful.

"Hallo, Connie!" she cried. "I guess you're real lovely. Where did you get that confection from?"

Consuelo raised her eyes slowly.

"It's not manners to talk about dress when one has visitors, is it?" she said, turning to Patty. "Please, Miss Patty

Falkland, will you correct our American ways? Please tell Selma when she shows her origin too freely."

"I think," said Curly, "that English girls of our age can talk about anything that takes their fancy—dress as well as anything else; and," she added, lowering her voice a trifle, "your dress is most beautiful! It is so—so uncommon."

Consuelo smiled very faintly.

"Jump up, Connie," said Selma. "Put off those ridiculous, languid airs of yours, and let's be cheerful. I call it real fine of these girls to come over like this; and, I can tell you, I had hard work to get them. Miss Dawson did not approve, and she would only let them come by saying that she would follow in a quarter of an hour."

"Oh," said Consuelo, with real interest coming into her voice. "Your strict English governess—is she coming to guard you?"

"No," said Patty; "certainly not. But it is the fashion in this country for girls like Curly and me to go out chaperoned by some one."

Consuelo laughed.

"Sit down and talk," she said. "I'm real glad the chaperon is coming. I guess I'll find her very entertaining. I have never seen a chaperon—never, in the whole course of my life."

"I will bring chairs," said Selma. "Lunch won't be ready for quite an hour."

She ran off as she spoke, and presently a footman appeared from the house bearing two or three deck-chairs. Consuelo had risen, and continued to talk vaguely, evidently with her thoughts far away. Now and then she glanced in the direction of the avenue.

"Henry," she said to the man as he placed the chairs on the grass, "we want another chair, please."

"Yes, miss," he answered.

"A comfortable chair, please, Henry."

"Yes, miss," he said again.

"We must make the chaperon real happy, anyway," said Consuelo, just smiling, with a peculiar expression on her face, at Curly, who could not make out whether she was laughing at dear Miss Dawson or not.

The extra chair was brought. Selma, Curly, and Patty sat round Consuelo. Consuelo lay back in her own chair. She crossed her hands lightly on her lap, and leaned her head against the back of the chair.

"Is this the English way?" she said, glancing at Patty.

"Oh, no," said Patty.

"Say now, what is the English way," continued Consuelo.

"May I really?" said Patty, glancing at Selma as she spoke.

"Why, yes; I guess you may, and must," said Selma. "When Consuelo says a thing she means it; don't you, Connie?"



"Guess so," replied Consuelo. "But it don't matter a bit; if Patty would rather not speak, she needn't."

"I will tell you, if I may," said Curly. "I will tell you what we do at this hour every ordinary day."

Consuelo again looked up the avenue, and, putting her hand to her mouth, suppressed a yawn.

"Begin at the very beginning, please, Curly," said Selma. "Tell us how early you wake, when you rise, how you breakfast, what you have for breakfast, and every single thing. Connie may pretend she's not interested, but I guess that isn't true. Connie's just mad with interest. Now then, begin. We're all dying to listen."

"We wake at seven," said Curly, "and get up immediately. We have breakfast at eight; I can't exactly tell you what we have—coffee, rolls, porridge, bacon, fish—oh, different things every day."

"Guess you haven't the American girl's love for eating," said Selma. "Haven't you dough-nuts—*Pfannkuchen*—and haven't you candy afterwards, and chocolates full of liqueurs? Oh, my! I shouldn't like your breakfasts if you hadn't all those sort of things."

"Well, we never have them," said Curly stoutly.

"That's not the English way," interrupted Patty.

"Go on," said Consuelo; "I'm so glad there is a difference. When breakfast is over, what do you do?"

"We have lessons, of course. Patty and I are in the schoolroom at nine. Miss Dawson teaches us."

"I guess you're learned; I guess you're blue-stockings," said Consuelo.

"No, indeed," answered Curly; "we're rather ignorant for our age. Father sometimes says that we ought to know twice as much; but Miss Dawson has her own ideas on the subject."

"I am glad of that, said Consuelo. "I am glad she has the courage of her opinions."

"She is awfully nice," said Patty. "We love her most dearly."

"Is she prim?" asked Consuelo.

"You might call her so."

"Oh, I hope she is," said Consuelo; "I should love her to be prim."

"How queer you are!" said Curly suddenly.

Consuelo laughed. "I want to be queer," she said.

"Then I am sure you are, Connie," said Selma—"the queerest thing on earth: an American heiress who won't try to please anybody."

Consuelo roused herself; a slight flush of color came into her cheeks. This was a very uncommon occurrence, and excited Selma's wonder.

"I ask you two young English girls," said Consuelo, "if it is good manners or bad manners to mention the fact publicly that I have got money at my back. I ask you to reply, and to speak the truth."

"We don't do it in England," said Patty.

"But perhaps," added Curly, "it's the American way."

Consuelo stamped a small foot which was clothed in a green satin shoe.

"I don't do it," she said. "I despise money."

"Oh, my!" said Selma. "You are queer, Consuelo Josephine Seymour; you are too odd for anything. Where would you be, I'd like to know, without money?"

"Go on," said Consuelo, turning to Curly. "When your lessons are finished, what else do you do?"

"We have lessons of different sorts until lunchtime," said Curly. "Not always with Miss Dawson, for generally a master or mistress comes from town and teaches us."

"Now I call that real cunning," said Consuelo. "It must make a pleasant change."

"It does, very. We have some one nearly every day. This is the only day in the week that we are free; otherwise, of course, we couldn't have come to you."

"I like that," said Consuelo. "I am glad you are determined. I like people who inflict discipline on themselves. I have never exercised any on myself, but I admire others who do."

"I never heard you talk quite so queerly before," said Selma.

"Never mind what she says," interrupted Consuelo, "but go on telling me about the English way. After lunch, what happens?"

"We amuse ourselves," said Curly. "We have nothing at all to do except to go out and walk in the grounds, or drive in our pony-carriage, or ride, between lunch and tea. After tea we have an hour and a half in which we prepare lessons for the next day, and then Patty practices on the piano and I do some sketching. Then there comes late dinner, and father—— Of course, when father comes back all the rest of the time is—is—heaven."

"I guess that's not the American way," said Consuelo. She gave a great sigh. Selma stared at her.

"Selma," said Consuelo, "tell me, as an honest girl should: does heaven begin for us when Joseph P. Seymour returns home?"

"I don't suppose it does," said Selma; "but there are different sorts of fathers in the world."

"I take it," said Consuelo, very gravely, "that he is a poppa, not a father, and that there's a wide difference between the terms."

Just then Patty uttered an exclamation.

"There's Miss Dawson!" she said. "May I run to meet her?"

"Certainly you may," said Selma. "I conclude," she added, "that Miss Dawson must be hungry after her walk."

"You had best go in and tell my mamma that the English chaperon is going to lunch with us," said Consuelo to Selma.

Selma rushed off to the house. Consuelo fixed her eyes on Curly.

"Guess I shall be glad to know your chaperon," she said.

"How queer you are!" was Curly's answer.

"That's so; but then, I like to be."

Miss Dawson was always exceedingly particular with regard to her dress. She was not fashionable; she prided herself on that fact. She wore gray in summer and black in winter. This was the time of summer, the time of roses for the young and of cool garments for those in middle life.

Miss Dawson was between forty and fifty years of age. She was as slim as Mrs. Joseph P. Seymour was stout. She had a long face, which was rather pale. Her eyes were dark, and her hair, black once, was now a sort of iron-gray. She wore it parted simply on her brow and folded back in a coil round her head. It looked the essence of neatness, and had not a scrap of style about it. Miss Dawson's dresses just touched the ground, and no more. She had boots with broad toes and low heels; she had a horror of pointed toes and high heels. Round her shoulders she wore a little cape which just reached to her waist, and was of the same material as her gray dress. Her bonnet was also gray, very neat, close fitting, and tied with gray silk strings.

If Consuelo did not feel the heat in the least, Miss Dawson felt it intensely, and held over her head a parasol, black outside, and lined with green silk.

She came forward very slowly. She was much annoyed at having to appear at Castle Rocco at all, and nothing would have induced her to allow her precious young charges to visit the American girls at what she considered such an unearthly hour had not Mr. Falkland given her a very decided hint on the subject that morning. Mr. Falkland had said that the intimacy between the families was not only to be allowed but encouraged. Miss Dawson knew well that when her beloved friend Mr. Falkland assumed that tone, there was nothing whatever for her to do but to comply. She made up her mind, however, that her darlings should not go alone, that she herself would look after them. In her heart of hearts she strongly disapproved of Selma; but her feeling of horror when she saw what she called "that Merry Andrew" on the lawn—namely, Consuelo—very nearly exceeded bounds. When Miss Dawson was mentally affected by any strong emotion she invariably turned white. The girls used to call it her "cold look." This look now spread over her face, masking all her real kindliness, and causing her to assume an appearance almost repellent.

Consuelo, however, rose with some eagerness.

"You are the chaperon?" she said. "I bid you welcome. It is truly kind of you to take this walk in the sun. Will you sit in this chair? It's real comfortable."

"No, thank you," answered Miss Dawson. "May I ask your name? Miss—Miss——"

Consuelo's blue eyes flashed again for a second.

"I am called in America, and by my friends, Consuelo Josephine Persis Seymour. I guess you'd find all that somewhat of a mouthful, so Consuelo will do."

"May I sit in the shade, Miss—Seymour?" said Miss Dawson.

"You do beat the Dutch," said Consuelo; "won't you shiver, just! I hate the shade. But come now, how can we manage?—Patty, move this lounge under the beech-tree. The dear, kind chaperon will rest her weary limbs under the beech-tree, and we'll stay close to her in the sun."

"I should like to get into the shade, too," said Patty.

"And so should I," said Curly.

Miss Dawson went with firm steps across the lawn into the shady place indicated by Consuelo. She sank on the easy-chair provided, and lowered her parasol. Consuelo dropped into her own chair. The sun's rays fell full upon her.

"I wonder you don't have sunstroke," said Miss Dawson.

"I guess the sun only warms me," said Consuelo. "I am an American, you know."

"I do know it," said Miss Dawson.

Consuelo looked suddenly round at Patty and Curly.

"Wouldn't you like to walk about and examine things?" she said. "I will take care of madame the chaperon."

"I should prefer your calling me by my name," said Miss Dawson.

"I will take care of Miss Dawson."

"Keep in the shade, dears," said Miss Dawson, feeling a sense of relief that her darlings should go away, even for a short time, from the presence of this pernicious and most extraordinary young person.

Patty and Curly were delighted. Selma was in the house expostulating with "momma," who dreaded the English chaperon immensely. The girls were alone. Patty linked her hand inside Curly's arm, and they walked off together.

"Keep in the shade," called Miss Dawson.

"I guess you take precious good care of 'em," said Consuelo.

"Naturally," said Miss Dawson. "They are my charges."

"I guess you love them," said Consuelo.

"Naturally," said Miss Dawson again.

"Have you had to do with them long?"

"I have been with them most of their lives."

Consuelo sat very still, her eyes fixed on Miss Dawson.

"Guess something," she said at last.

"What is it?" said Miss Dawson.

"You're just real mad with me, ain't you?"

"No," said Miss Dawson; "I am not mad with anybody."

"You don't approve of me—truth, now?"

"As you ask me a very blunt question, Miss Consuelo Seymour, I do not approve of you."

"And, pray," said Consuelo, "is that just? For you don't know me."

There was something in her tone which all of a sudden roused a new sensation in Miss Dawson. The coldness left her face as quickly as it had come. She bent a little forward, and said:

"My dear, you do right to reprove me. I do not know you; but, surely, appearances are against you."

"And why?" said Consuelo. "What is the matter?"

"For instance, your extraordinary dress."

Consuelo glanced down at her sea-foam costume.

"I did think I looked dandy," she said. "What can be wrong with my toilet? Doesn't it remind you of the sea—the sea-nymphs, the mermaids, coolness, freshness, beauty? I call it cunning. It is made by a Parisian *modiste*, and is most expensive."

"It is horrible!" said Miss Dawson.

"Why?" asked Consuelo.

"To say the least, it resembles a dress that an actress might wear. Don't ask me any more."

"But I do ask you," said Consuelo. "It is most refreshing to get the simple truth. Tell me all you think about my foam dress."

"All I think?" said Miss Dawson. "That would take some time; but as you really wish it, I will say a little about my sentiments with regard to it. It is exceedingly unlady-like, exceedingly unsuitable. Such a dress might be permitted in a London ball-room in the evening, but for any girl in the heart of the country to attire herself as you are now attired is inadmissible."

"Not your English style?" said Consuelo.

"It is certainly not our English way."

"I live for this sort of thing," said Consuelo languidly.

"You—what, my dear? You live for your dress?"

"Yes," said Consuelo. "It's deadly dull, but I've nothing better to live for."

"Oh, you poor child!"

"I am quite young, too," said Consuelo, a hungry look coming into her eyes. "Guess, now, how old am I?"

"Really, my dear, I cannot say. Twenty-two, perhaps."

Consuelo laughed very musically.

"I said I was born old, but in years I am much younger than you think. I shall be sixteen at Christmas."

Miss Dawson held up her hands.

"Impossible!" she said. "The same age as my Patty."

"You are sorry for me," said Consuelo.

"I cannot say that," answered Miss Dawson. "If one had room in one's heart to be sorry for all the silly fads of silly girls, one couldn't live. You choose to appear grown up when you are only a child. But perhaps it is because you are so very young that you are wearing that dress."

Consuelo rose languidly from her chair.

"Would you like to come indoors," she said, "and be introduced to momma?"

"Thank you; but I had better first find my little charges."

"They are quite safe, I assure you. Neither momma nor Selma nor I will eat them."

"I will bring them into the house, if you have no objection," said Miss Dawson.

"I will go and tell momma. You are very kind to come, and I thank you for what you have said with regard to my sea-foam costume."

Consuelo walked languidly across the lawn. Miss Dawson watched her until she had disappeared into the house; then she clasped her hands tightly together, and said to herself:

"How am I to stand this? What a girl! And to feel that she must be friendly with my Patty and Curly! And yet, poor thing! there was something a little pathetic about her. I felt touched just for a minute. But, oh, dear! I am silly to be touched by anything of that sort. That girl would drive me wild. Give me the English way."

Meanwhile, Consuelo floated upstairs—there is no other possible manner in which to describe her movements—and reached the great luxurious bedroom which had been set apart for her use. Ronsard was busily putting away the last of the new dresses.

"Ah, mademoiselle!" she said when the girl came in. "I have just completed my work. You are now furnished with gowns of the most ravishing for many long weeks to come."

"I want a gown that is not ravishing," said Consuelo. "Quick, Ronsard! Take this thing off."

"The so beautiful dress of mademoiselle?"

"Take it off, and be quick," said Consuelo. "I want something ugly, harsh, ungraceful; get me into it."

"There are mademoiselle's white embroidered dresses."

"Too fine," said Consuelo. "I won't have anything fine. I have a new idea—it is interesting—I am pleased. I will see the effect of looking ugly."

"But, mademoiselle—has the dear mademoiselle taken leave of her reason?"

"Obey me, Ronsard, and don't talk," said Consuelo.

Ronsard looked hastily through the new dresses.

"Too fine—too fine," said Consuelo as each one was brought out for her inspection. "Where are my old frocks? Have I nothing ugly?"

"Mademoiselle, I do so assure you that not one ugly dress has ever been permitted into your wardrobe since I had the so great felicity of attiring you."

"Then get something of Selma's."

"But Mademoiselle Selma——"

"Get something, or I will go myself. I'd best choose for myself."

Consuelo suited the action to the word. She left her own room, and presently reached Selma's. Selma was nothing

like so tall as Consuelo, and was decidedly stouter. Amongst her many frocks was one made of pink cotton. It was the simplest which she possessed. It had the "waist" which Consuelo so despised. It had the leather belt which Consuelo abhorred. Nevertheless, she gathered up skirt, waist, and belt now in her arms and returned with them to her bedroom.

"These will do," she said. "Quick—quick!"

Ronsard gave glances of serious alarm.

"It is the so great heat of the sun," she said. "It has affected the poor dear mademoiselle; it is her brain that has softened."

Consuelo was soon out of the foam dress, and a minute later she stood before the glass in the simple pink frock.

"Oh—my green shoes!" she said. "I must have something black. Get me some black stockings and shoes. Oh! do hurry—hurry, Ronsard, and don't stare anyway."

Ronsard selected the most delicate black silk stockings and a pair of small black, pointed shoes.

"Have you nothing plain?" said Consuelo. "These heels are so high. *She* won't like them."

"But, mademoiselle——"

"No more 'buts,' please, Ronsard. Help me into my shoes and stockings."

The change was effected.

"Now, how do I look?" said Consuelo.

She gazed at herself in the glass. She burst out laughing.

"I wanted to be queer," she said; "and I am queer, with a vengeance."

"It does not suit the elegance so *distinguée* of mademoiselle," said the French maid. "It is—oh, a *changement* most horrible! If mademoiselle will but be guided by me, there is the white embroidered dress with the sash of cerulean blue—simple, dignified, most chaste."

"No, no, no!" said Consuelo. "I want something ugly; and this is ugly. The frock only reaches to my ankles. How stimulating! I feel, somehow, that I can walk. Still, I look—oh, no, of course, it's my hair."

Ronsard removed the pins.

"Mademoiselle will not wear the hair falling on the back?"

"Yes, but I will; combed out, and hanging on my shoulders. There's the gong for lunch. Be quick, be quick, Ronsard!"

Consuelo seated herself, and Ronsard, in secret dismay, removed the pins which kept those long and glowing locks in their place. Down in thick waves they fell over the girl's shoulders, reaching far below her waist. She swept the thick hair back from her low forehead.

"Now I look—oh, I can't say how, but different," she said.

"Like a *jeune mademoiselle*," said Ronsard. "*Mais, ça ne va pas à mademoiselle.*"

Consuelo laughed.

"I can walk," she said. "Some of the languor has gone. It is the English chaperon. I somehow like the English way."

## CHAPTER V.

### THE PINK FROCK.

MOMMA was rather flushed. She sat at the head of a long table. If poppa had been at the other end she would have been quite comfortable. Poppa always knew the right thing to say, and how to say it. Nothing ever put poppa out. But it was quite different with momma. Momma was easily agitated; and that flush which rose to her cheeks on the slightest provocation was a great annoyance to the poor woman. It was the chaperon who was causing her to feel so very uncomfortable; for never had she met a chaperon before. She had, of course, heard of such beings, but had never come across them. They were, in her opinion, very awful, and this specimen of the special race of chaperons appalled Mrs. Joseph P. Seymour. How she did long for the old home in California that was hers before Joseph P. had made his pile! She had never been shy or uncomfortable then. She was a very jolly woman in those days, laughing and talking with the best, and receiving numerous compliments from the rough miners, her husband's friends.

But Joseph P. had struck "ile," as he expressed it, and from the moment he had done this apparently desirable thing his poor wife's happiness had vanished.

The chaperon was very stiff to Mrs. Seymour, but Mrs. Seymour was exceedingly flattering, not to say almost cringing, to her. The ladies were seated round the luncheon-table, and the grand, liveried servants were handing round numerous refreshments. Mrs. Seymour had just ventured to remark, "I wonder where Consuelo can be," when that young lady entered the room.

It is quite true that just for a moment no one recognized in the pink-frocked, almost untidy girl the spotless and graceful Consuelo of half-an-hour ago. Mrs. Joseph P. dropped her knife and fork with a clatter.

"Good land!" she cried. "Consuelo, have you gone mad?"

"I guess not, momma," replied that young lady. "Will some one oblige me by letting me have a seat near Miss Dawson?—Ah, thanks, Patty, so much; you may put yourself at my other side.—Miss Dawson, I feel quite comfortable; I am real obliged to you. I like the English way very much."

Miss Dawson gave Consuelo a penetrating glance.

"You have changed your dress," she said after a minute.

"Consuelo," exclaimed her mother, turning almost purple in the face with rage and annoyance, "you are an absolute fright!"

"Never mind, momma; it's all in the day's work. Fact is, I'm tired of being a beauty; I'm going to be a fright for a



change. You may all laugh as much as ever you please; the laughter is in the day's work, too. This is the English way to dress, momma, and we've come to Castle Rocco to learn the English ways."

Here she helped herself to a cutlet from a dish which was presented to her. As she began to use her knife and fork she turned toward Miss Dawson.

"You like me better now, don't you?" she said.

"If," said Miss Dawson very slowly, "I could feel sure that you had made this change in the right spirit and not with the object of laughing at me."

"Honest now, I never thought of laughing at you," said Consuelo. "Your words were very sharp, and they hurt; and I just went straight upstairs and did what you wanted—heigh-ho!—and I know I am ugly, but I feel rather pleasant all the same. I don't look twenty-two now, do I, Miss Dawson?"

"Your face," said Miss Dawson, "looks much older than the faces of my Patty and my Curly, but I suppose that is accounted for by the fact that you are an American girl. I have always heard that American girls keep very late hours and eat quantities of unwholesome sweetmeats."

"Candies and cookies of all sorts," said Consuelo. "Well, I guess you take us right in there."

"Then you must endure the consequences," said Miss Dawson. "People who live unwholesomely cannot expect to keep the freshness of their youth."

"Say, Miss Dawson," remarked Consuelo, laying her small, white hand on the governess's arm, to the intense annoyance of the reserved Englishwoman—"say, now, will you turn me into an English girl?"

"I cannot do the impossible, Miss Consuelo."

Consuelo sighed. Selma's black eyes were fixed on her, intense merriment in their gaze. Curly and Patty were severely proper. Mrs. Seymour ceased to eat, but fanned herself continuously, and remarked on the great heat of the weather.

"Oh, land!" she cried. "Give me America and cool verandas and punkas and ices. I don't like the English way."

"It is a very good way when you really understand it," remarked Miss Dawson.

"Momma," said Consuelo, very calmly, "if we have finished, can't we have ices and coffee and candies on the lawn?—Now, girls, wouldn't you like that?"

The girls' eyes sparkled.

"I will lead the way," said Consuelo, springing to her feet. "Oh, my, but can't I walk, just! No more clinging robes for me. I like the English way of dressing."

Momma excused herself, and did not join the party on the lawn. Miss Dawson just for a moment hesitated as to whether she would stay with this profoundly uninteresting woman—for so she considered her—or look after her poor

lambs, as she called Patty and Curly. But Consuelo managed the situation with much adroitness.

"Come," she said, "I have changed my dress for you, and I expect you to approve—if not of me, still of my dress."

They all went out into the garden.

"This dress is very baggy," said Consuelo when they got there. "It is really one of Selma's dresses, and she is much stouter than I am. But I suppose you like it baggy and untidy."

"You are vastly mistaken," said Miss Dawson; "I like a dress to fit properly. I like it to be absolutely neat. Yours is untidy; it doesn't fit, and, to be frank with you, I hate pink for morning wear."

"But not for evening," said Consuelo, with a smile, remembering the stiff pink silks in which Patty and Curly had been dressed on the previous evening.

"No; it is a suitable color for night; so is blue."

"Please tell me what colors an English girl may wear in the morning."

Now Miss Dawson had made a study of dress, but not at all from the fashionable point of view.

"Certain blues are allowable," she said, "but not too pale a shade. Grays are always nice and lady-like, and so are browns and drabs."

"Oh, my!" said Consuelo. "I guess—I do guess——"

"What?" asked Miss Dawson.

"Look at me, please, Miss Dawson," said Consuelo.

"I will, if you wish me to," said Miss Dawson; "but really, to tell you the truth, I don't think young girls should wish to be stared at. There is nothing remarkable about you, now that you are properly dressed."

"I thought you were not satisfied."

"Not quite; but compared to what you were, you are now, I consider, a respectable human being."

"Ugly, eh?" said Consuelo.

"I really don't know. It doesn't matter, does it?"

"Good land!" said Consuelo; "I thought that was the whole thing that mattered in life."

"Poor child, where have you been brought up?"

"All over the world," said Consuelo, spreading out her hands. "There's a little bit of every place in me, I guess—Japan, China, Europe generally, even Africa, and, of course, America. Now I'm going to have a bit of English grafted on to me; and you're going to do it, please. It is interesting, you know. English girls are best ugly. They mayn't wear pretty things, and they must have dull colors in the morning whatever their complexions. Think of me in drab; do just think of me for a minute, with my pale face and my—my want of color."

Miss Dawson drew herself up.

"I don't think of you in drab," she said, "or in white, or in any color. I think of you, Consuelo Seymour, as a young

girl who has got to prepare herself for life. You are not yet sixteen, and yet you talk in a more frivolous way than any other girl I have ever met. I don't know anything about your intellectual training, but I should not imagine that you knew much. Your cousin, Selma Dudley, is, in my opinion, more sensible than you; but I really don't pretend to know her either. As to appearance: outward appearance is nothing at all compared to the appearance of the heart. Think how your heart shows itself before God Almighty; and, for heaven's sake! cease to be frivolous."

Consuelo turned very white. The afternoon was so intensely hot that even she felt it a little; her thick hair, no longer confined round her head, but falling loosely about her neck and shoulders, caused her discomfort.

She said in a low tone, "Thank you," and went slowly toward the shady spot where the other girls were congregated. There she offered a chair to Miss Dawson, and sat down on one herself. Miss Dawson looked at her, and, to her astonishment, saw that the china-blue eyes were full of tears.

"My dear," said the good woman, her own tone immediately softening, "have I been too hard on you?"

"Perhaps not," said Consuelo; "but you have been very hard." Then she added, winking away the tears, "But I like it; you're sort of bracing. Since I was born every one has pandered to me, and made the way smooth for me, and fussed over me, and spoilt me. I am sick to death of being petted and spoilt and fussed about. I am sick to death of the cringing ways of servants and ladies'-maids, and even of poor mamma. I am not quite sick of poppa, because, although he pets me worse than all the others put together, there's something strong about him. But no one has ever, in all my life, spoken to me as you have spoken to me today. It hurts—it hurt awfully before lunch, and I ran away and put on this hideous dress just to please you. I thought you'd be pleased; but you are not. You have hurt me just now even worse than you did before lunch. You have made me feel, not like Consuelo Josephine Persis Seymour, but like a mite or a midge floating about in the air—a *thing*—of no account to anybody; a *creature*, not worth even a glance. It hurts—it does hurt; and yet I like it."

Miss Dawson was quite silent for a minute. She was the soul of sincerity. She could not even pretend at that moment that she liked the girl. The American girl was to her all that was detestable, and yet she recognized an absolutely sincere note in the girl's voice. She looked full at her, and said:

"If you are really hurt, it is, I know, for your good. Flatterers are the ruin of all those with whom they come in contact. I see one thing to approve of in you: you respect the truth."

## CHAPTER VI.

## BEYOND MONEY.

It was in the cool of the evening that the Falkland girls and Miss Dawson went home, and almost immediately afterwards Joseph P. Seymour drove at a spanking pace up to the house in his fine carriage.

Consuelo was still on the lawn, and still wearing Selma's pink frock. Selma had expostulated and laughed, and done everything in her power to induce Consuelo to put on a different dress before her poppa returned. But Consuelo did not pay the smallest attention to her cousin's entreaties.

"I have learnt a lesson," she said, "and I am going to stick to it. If I have been spoilt all my life and have had my own way from the time I was a little child, I mean to have my own way now. It's a sort of topsy-turvy way, I can tell you; it's a sort of twisting-and-twirling-right-round way. If you don't like it, you needn't join me; but if you think well of your own future interests, you'll do what I do."

"Hallo, girls!" called Mr. Seymour, as he descended from his carriage.

He had had a very successful day in town, and was, in consequence, in high spirits. He was busy just then promoting a huge company, which would mean, if it was well floated, that his own enormous wealth would probably be quadrupled, and that people would talk of him as one of the richest of the many rich American millionaires.

It was necessary for his purpose that Mr. Falkland should help him. It was further necessary that certain men of high position in the neighborhood should be drawn into the scheme. Mr. Falkland could achieve this purpose for him if he chose. In short, Mr. Seymour felt certain of success, and was consequently inclined to do anything in his power for Consuelo, whom he worshipped, and for Selma, whom he also loved very dearly.

On his way home that evening he had stopped at a Bond Street jeweler's, and bought a diamond brooch for each girl. He was fond of expending his money in really good jewelry, looking upon such purchases as investments, for he was too shrewd a business man ever to waste a penny. Consuelo might be as extravagant as she liked with regard to her dress, but then she was the one exception for whom no amount of money was to be spared.

As he approached the girls now as they were standing on the lawn, he raised his pince-nez and gazed with a puzzled expression at Consuelo's little figure. He was accustomed to her as a tall, willowy creature, who meant to him the soul of grace and the perfection of elegance and beauty. He imagined in his heart that when Consuelo trailed about the place in her long gowns of velvet or satin she showed high

breeding. She might have belonged at such times, in his opinion, to the proudest family in England. He hoped that by-and-by she would marry a great English duke; but that time was far off. He was not in the slightest hurry to part with her. Still, who was this creature on the lawn—a girl without any grace, in a dowdy frock of cotton? He hated cotton. He could not bear to see it even on Selma. It was cheap. He loathed cheap clothes. And what was the matter with her hair? It was hanging down her back, and her face was turned to him with a new expression; there was very little dignity or repose about it. It was quite an agitated face for Consuelo to wear.

"Well," he said, "what in the name of fortune is this? Why, Consuelo, are you masquerading for a play?"

"No, poppa," said Consuelo; "only I took the whim to wear these things to-day. They belong to Selma. She hasn't been at all generous with regard to lending them to me."

"She took them without leave, Uncle Joe," said Selma.

"Remove them, for the land's sake!" said Mr. Seymour. "You are a positive fright, Connie."

"I like being a fright for a change," said Consuelo very calmly.

Mr. Seymour looked in a puzzled way from one girl to the other. Consuelo put her hand through his arm.

"Poppa," she said, "we must go indoors now to get dressed for dinner; so I shall take off Selma's pink frock and put on something else. After dinner, poppa, I want to have a talk with you—a real straight talk, all by our two selves. Will you promise that I shall?"

"Well, now," said the millionaire, "I don't like to refuse you things, Consuelo, and that's flat; but I shall be precious busy this evening, and Falkland's coming along to have a smoke with me."

"My talk," said Consuelo, determinedly, "will only take about half-an-hour, and we can have it while you are smoking after dinner. I'll stay behind in the dining-room with you, and we'll send momma and Selma into the garden. Won't that do?"

"Have your way, child; have your way. You always bowl me over, Consuelo. But I don't like you in your present dress, and that's honest. Here, now, what do you say to this? Here's a keepsake for you, and here's another for Selma."

Mr. Seymour thrust a little morocco case into each girl's hand. Consuelo did not even open her case; her fingers closed round it indifferently. Selma, on the contrary, pressed the spring of the little case, and when she saw the diamond star which lay on its bed of satin she uttered a cry of delight.

"Say, uncle!" she exclaimed, "you are good—you're just lovely! How I shall adore to wear this!—Connie, let me look at yours."

"No," said Connie; "I'll open mine upstairs."

She turned away as she spoke. Mr. Seymour looked at Selma.

"In the name of fortune," he said, "what is up? What ails the child?"

"She has only a fad in her head," replied Selma. "She is taken with the English way."

"But that dress, Selma."

"It is one of mine, uncle. You don't mind *my* wearing it."

"It's cotton," said the millionaire, turning away with a look of disgust. Then a thought came to him, and he turned back suddenly:

"Say, have the Falklands been here this afternoon?"

"Have the Falklands been here?" echoed Selma. "We have *lived* on the Falklands; we have lunched on them, and teaed on them; we have, so to speak, absorbed them. Oh! must we see so much of them? I am sick to death already of their very names."

Mr. Seymour looked much displeased.

"You talk in a very extravagant way," he said; "and, I must add, you forget yourself. I wish you to be friends with the Falklands. You will see a great deal more of them, let me tell you, in the future; and what is also to the point, you are not to laugh at them or be disrespectful. I won't have it."

"Good land!" said Selma. "No, uncle; not if you take it like that"; and she vanished into the house, tossing back her heavy plaits of hair as she did so.

Consuelo came down to dinner in one of the pretty muslin frocks which she had so scorned on the morning of that day. In vain Ronsard expostulated, pleaded, almost cried; Consuelo would continue her rôle of a little girl, a child who wore short frocks and had her hair down her back. It is true, the embroidered frock she put on just reached to the ground, but Ronsard had directions to put tucks into all the said frocks, and to have one of them ready for wear on the following morning. She further received orders to write to town for brown holland skirts and brown tussore "waists." Ronsard felt inclined to resign her situation on the spot. The effect, however, of Consuelo in a lovely white dress made of the coolest muslin and richly embroidered, with a soft blue silk sash round her waist and her hair falling over her shoulders, was so altogether charming that even poppa forgave her when she took her place by his side.

Selma was very much dressed for the evening, and Mrs. Seymour had a magnificent dress of flame-colored velvet, worn low and covered with a profusion of diamonds. Mrs. Seymour raised her voice during the course of the meal in protest.

"Now, poppa," she said, "you see for yourself what your spoiling has done for this girl. Did you ever in all your life know anything so extraordinary as Consuelo's behavior?"

"Let her alone, Coralie," was Joseph P. Seymour's reply. "She has a fad on, but as it happens to coincide with my

order of mind, I am just as well pleased as not that she should carry it to the bitter end."

Consuelo smiled. She had not for many years felt altogether so stimulated and excited. Life had suddenly appeared to her under a new aspect. There was something in it beyond money. There was something in it beyond mere beauty and outward display. In short, there was character; there was the power of doing good and of being good. There was that fair and lovely goodness of heart which was more precious than any outside beauty.

## CHAPTER VII.

### TO BE SNUBBED.

"Now, Consuelo," said her father, "I have just half-an-hour, and no more, to give you. Time is precious with me, my girl, and cannot be wasted. So out with your request, whatever it may be."

"But I want you to understand it, poppa," said the girl, "and if I bounce it out in your face you won't understand. I can say everything I want to say in half-an-hour if you don't fluster me, poppa."

"All right, child," answered Joseph P., leaning back in his chair and puffing out great spiral rings of smoke from his pipe. "You always have had it your own way, Consuelo, and you will, I make no doubt, to the end."

"Then that's cozy and proper," answered Consuelo. She drew a very low chair forward, seated herself, and laid her arm on her father's knee. She could have done nothing in all the world to soften the hard, money-loving man more. As he looked down at her he remembered the time when he was inordinately proud of a little blue-eyed girl, when his first thought after a long day of toil was to see her cherubic face, to feel the pressure of the little fat arms round his neck, and the soft baby kisses on his cheek.

The girl had grown up. She had grown long and thin and pale. He regarded her as quite grown up, and loved her for her elegant appearance. But somehow, to-night, she seemed to be a child again. He laid his hand with an affectionate gesture on hers, and said in quite a soft tone:

"I ain't afraid of anybody slighting you, Connie, my pet. But I don't understand your present whim; if it pleases you to wear sort of baby clothes, I am not the one to interfere. You'll be toddling round next in short frocks and little socks and shoes. Good land! so you will. Your momma will be pleased with that, I guess. Ah, Connie! you were a rampageous infant, but the darling of my heart all the same."

"I am rampageous enough now," said Connie.

"You?" said Joseph P. "You might call Selma rampageous, if you like; but you, my girl—you are so still, and so grave, and so languid. Wonderful, I call it. You take to the

high life of the aristocracy as though you were to the manner born."

"Oh, no, I don't, poppa," said Consuelo. "You think I do, but I don't. The way I used to go on, the way I went on this very morning, isn't a scrap the way the English aristocracy live their life. And, to tell you the truth, poppa, I'm sick of it. I am just sick to death of being dull, and still, and languid. Why, poppa, you know you gave Ronsard *carte-blanche* to get me any number of fine clothes from the best people in Paris."

"So I did, my girl; and I'll give you as many more if you want 'em."

"But I don't; I'm sick of 'em."

"So it seems, to judge from the figure of fun you were when I came back to-day. You in a pink cotton—a pink cotton not your own! You, the daughter of a millionaire, the daughter of Joseph P. Seymour! I tell you what, Consuelo; I am likely to be much more than a millionaire before all's said and done. No need for you to wear cotton, my pet."

"No need, perhaps, in one sense," answered Consuelo. "But then, suppose I like it. Now listen, poppa. I know you are in a hurry, so I'll soon wind up my discourse. It is just this way, poppa. Ronsard was ever so pleased when the fine things came from Paris, and she got me to wear what she called a most elegant garment. It was green and soft; and it was—oh, I needn't describe it to you; but I looked like a sort of sea-nymph in it. She called it my sea-foam dress. I can tell you, I was proud."

"Very suitable, I should say," answered Joseph P., patting his daughter's hand appreciatively.

"Oh, you poor, ignorant old poppa!" said Consuelo. "There, don't be offended; I know I can say what I like to you. Well, there was I in my dress, and up came the Falkland girls."

"Quite right; very proper indeed," said Mr. Seymour.

"And afterwards their governess followed them. I like their governess."

"That stiff woman I lunched with only yesterday?"

"She is a lady, poppa. She just knows a few things that we don't know with all our money; and she said that I was like a popinjay and an actress in my sea-foam gown."

"She dared to—impertinent woman!" said Joseph, his face turning scarlet.

"She was not impertinent—not a bit," said Consuelo. "I liked her; I like her. She is the one person at the present moment I am interested in; and I will tell you why, poppa. Because she doesn't flatter me. I am just sick of being flattered. I am sick of being petted, too, except by you. I don't mind your petting, for you are a strong man and have a will of your own. But I don't want Selma to yield to me every minute, and the servants to bow down to me, and Ronsard to go into raptures over me; and even poor, dear mamma



—she doesn't stimulate me a bit by her pretty words. I want a good, honest, rough time, father; and what is more, I mean to have it."

"Are you quite well, Connie?" asked her parent.

He tried to put his hand on Connie's brow, but she had risen to her feet now, and stood before him.

"I am well enough," she said; "and I'll be better still if you'll let me have my way. I want a down-right rough old time—that's what I want. I am sick of the smooth side; I want to taste the seamy side. The only person on earth who will give it to me is those girls' English governess, Miss Dawson; and I want to go to her, and to live with her for a bit, and to dress as she wishes, and be snubbed, snubbed, *snubbed*—every hour and minute of the day. There! that's my wish; and I want you to see that it's carried out."

"Well," said Joseph P., "you are in earnest, Connie?"

"Sure and certain," answered Connie.

"You are the queerest girl I ever came across."

"Guess I am," answered Connie; "but I am in earnest, all the same." Then she added in a strangled sort of voice, "Oh, it is good to be in earnest about anything. I am so sick of just posing as what I am not—a beauty—and wearing ridiculous dresses that no English young girl who is properly trained would show her face in. Leave me to Miss Dawson, dad. She is true, if you like. She has a rough tongue, perhaps, and her speech is plain, and I just want her to hurt me. It's good for me; I like it. You know, daddy, you have never denied your little Connie anything—never—never since she was born; so you won't deny her this."

"But I don't understand you," said the bewildered millionaire. "That woman—Dawson, you call her—is engaged by Falkland to look after his daughters. She won't have anything to do with you even if you wish it."

"Oh, yes; she will have lots to do with me if you arrange it, dad. Now then, poppa, that is my wish, and I want it to begin just right away; so you can settle it up with Mr. Falkland when he comes here this evening."

"I take it you want to go away from your mamma and me?"

"That's about it," said Consuelo, nodding her head.

"It's a bit hard on us, ain't it?"

"No, poppa; it's the best thing for you, too. You'll have a daughter to be proud of when I come back to you again. Fact is, poppa, I don't want to be grown up, not for another year or two. Why, Miss Dawson took me for two-and-twenty, and I am not sixteen yet."

"Bless my heart!" said the millionaire. "I forgot you were so young."

"And why should I part with what is left of my childhood?" said Consuelo. "Guess I never had any; but guess I want it badly now. You'll do what I want, won't you?"

"I never did refuse you anything, my girl."

"That you didn't; and I am going to give you a right hearty kiss. I never could kiss you properly when I was in my trailing garments, with my hair all pinned up. I felt afraid to move, because, you see, I was a study, an effect—something to be gazed at. Now there is no one to gaze, and I can kiss the dear old man, and I will."

Connie flung her arms tightly round Joseph P. Seymour's neck, and pressed her young lips to his cheek. The next minute she had rushed out of the room.

Left alone, he sat very still. His eyes were full of a sort of dazed wonder. After a second or so he put up his hand softly to feel something on his cheek—something wet.

"Bless her heart!" he said to himself. "She is the queerest creature. But she was crying, my little Connie."

Joseph P. Seymour had finished his pipe when Mr. Falkland was announced. Seymour got up to welcome his guest. Wine and cigars were brought, and the two men began to talk. Joseph was very keen about his great scheme—that scheme which was to revolutionize a certain industry both in England and America. It was a great scheme, and a sound one. There was no humbug about it. There was nothing whatever dishonorable about it. It simply wanted English support, and Joseph P. saw his way to getting the necessary English influence through Mr. Falkland.

They talked long, Joseph letting the Englishman see that he himself would derive very considerable benefit if the company was formed and the scheme carried through. But, eager as Seymour was over this darling project of his brain—the greatest thing he, the great financier, had ever yet projected—the memory of Connie kept returning to him again and again. It slid into his heart with the feeling of that passionate kiss she had given him. It was a long time—years, in fact—since Connie had kissed her father like that. She, Consuelo, was, in his opinion, a very grand young lady—languid, grave, effective; some one to be intensely proud of; a girl who had truly sprung from the people, and yet had all the instincts of the high-born.

So he fondly believed. But to-night she had been his old Connie—simple, eager, enthusiastic, determined. In his heart of hearts he liked her much better as Connie than he did as Consuelo; and yet he regretted Consuelo, for she was, he considered, such a very proud possession. She gave, he believed, tone to his whole establishment.

When the two men had talked for some little time, their conversation was interrupted by the appearance of a girl who came and stood outside the window. The window was open, because the evening was so warm. The girl just peeped in and said:

"Joseph P., don't forget what I want."

There was a flash of bright hair and the vanishing of a white dress, and Mr. Falkland turned in some bewilderment to his companion.

"Was that your daughter?" he said.

"Yes, bless her! That is my Connie," said the father.

"What a pretty girl! I haven't seen her before."

"No more you have; no more you have, Mr. Falkland. Well, you have seen her now."

"I am surprised," said Falkland. "My children—my two girls have talked a great deal about her. Somehow they gave me quite a wrong impression. I imagined that she was—grown up."

"Well, sir, she was until this afternoon."

"I don't understand," said Mr. Falkland.

"I have something to say to you, Mr. Falkland, and I want you to listen to me. We have arranged pretty well who the directors are to be of the new company, and I can assure them that their shares will, one and all, be considerable. You leave that to Joseph P.; and you, sir, who introduce these gentlemen, will find yourself considerably the better."

"Thank you," said Mr. Falkland rather coldly. "The money I rightly earn I shall be glad to claim."

Joseph could not help winking very slightly. He felt impatient of what he considered English prudence. It was his fashion to allow his fortune to accumulate by leaps and bounds. The caution of the Englishman annoyed him.

"I am doing something for you, sir," he said. "I suppose you will admit that?"

"You certainly are doing a vast deal for me," answered Mr. Falkland, "and I will say frankly that I am exceedingly obliged. You are helping me, in fact, round a tight corner. In our mercantile trade, sir, we are often face to face with a problem which needs just the assistance you are now rendering to me to enable us to stem the tide."

"In another word, Mr. Falkland, consider me your banker, sir, to any extent. The help you give me is so invaluable, so necessary to the furtherance of my plans, that I could not possibly complete them without that help. I am proud to feel, at the same time, that I have to deal with a man of principle and an English gentleman."

"Thank you," said Falkland.

"And now, sir, there is just one little matter I should like to arrange. It is a personal, private matter; but as you have daughters of your own, I guess you will see some of my meaning. I have one child, and only one. Selma is my poor sister's child; she is my adopted child, for my sister is dead. But she ain't my own, and there's a wide difference between your own flesh and blood and anybody else's flesh and blood, I take it."

"Quite so," answered Mr. Falkland.

"They are good girls, both of them," said Seymour.

Falkland nodded.

"In especial is Consuelo good," continued the proud father. "You wouldn't see anywhere a girl of more character than my Consuelo. From her birth it was the same. Her mother

tells me that she took notice long before the time when ordinary babies are supposed to make observations. And from the time she was a little tot she had a queer, masterful way; a climbing-round-your-heart way, sir; a clinging-up-close-to-you way, sir. She is strong, too, as the ivy is strong; and she wound herself round and round me, so that all that I did was done for her. She was my world; she is my world still. It is a queer thing, when you come to think of it, to have to acknowledge that all your thoughts are centered on one bit of a girl. But that's the way with me. My money is for her; my labors are made for her sake. I want her to have the best and be the best. There is nothing mean or low in her. She has character through and through. That's what my Consuelo Josephine Persis is."

"Very interesting," said Mr. Falkland, feeling inclined to yawn all the same, and almost wishing that he might go back to his own Curly and Patty.

"I see you are a bit tired of the subject, sir," continued Joseph—his eye was quick to detect any motion of his visitor's face—"but I take it that you'll have to restrain your impatience, Mr. Falkland, for I ain't done yet. We've traveled right round the world, and my Con has seen a good bit; she knows a thing or two about men and manners, I take it. And now we are settled in our English home; and I tell you, sir, such a home as this has been the longing of my life——"

"A beautiful place," interrupted Mr. Falkland; "a place any man would be proud of. The late owners—— I beg your pardon!"

"You will excuse me, sir, but I am not thinking of the late owners, or of the house itself, just now. Connie came to me after dinner to-day and made a request. I have never refused her anything."

"I have no doubt of that." Mr. Falkland rose from his chair.

"Sit on a bit longer, Mr. Falkland. I'll have my say out in a minute or two. I want her request to be granted; and it lies in your power, and in your power alone, to oblige me in the matter."

"What do you mean? I am sure anything that I can do——"

"You can do this," said the millionaire. "Connie has taken it into her head to turn right round. She is sick of being a fine, grown-up young lady, and wants to romp a bit and be a child."

"Very wise; a most excellent resolution," said the other man.

"And it is your governess who has done the deed, sir."

"Miss—Dawson!" exclaimed the astonished Mr. Falkland.

"Well, yes—I suppose that is her name. Anyhow, the lady who has the honor of conducting the education of your two young ladies came here to-day and upset my apple-cart."

"Miss Dawson? Oh, surely—impossible!"

"It is true, sir; and I cannot say, to be frank with you, whether I am obliged to her or not. Time will prove what my feelings will eventually be. She is a pretty straight person, I take it; and, somehow, she gave my little girl some home-truths."

"Oh, I must speak to her," said Mr. Falkland, with some annoyance. "Miss Dawson is very truthful, and an excellent woman; she is perhaps apt to forget that all young girls are not her pupils. I apologize for her, Seymour. Please don't think of her again."

"But, good land, sir! I want to think of her again; and what is more, I must think of her again. For some extraordinary reason, my girl liked what she said, and, what is more, acted on it. And, now, this is her request—that she, and perhaps Selma, should join forces with your two young ladies, and that Miss Dawson should tell the truth to them all. That is what Connie wishes. She has put it strong; she has pointed it out plainly; and what is more, sir, it has got to be done. I have never coerced my girl, and I am not going to coerce her now. It's middling hot weather, I take it, at present—of course, nothing to the States—but I notice you all seem to feel it. Suppose I, Joseph P. Seymour, take a house by the seaside, and put your Miss Dawson there as commander-in-chief; and your girls, sir, and my girls, go there under the proviso that Miss Dawson looks after them. They could stay for a couple of months—the whole of July and the whole of August, and a bit longer if they fancied it. I guess, sir, that would about tide us over. The child would be pleased, and we could attend to business. What say you, Mr. Falkland?"

"Say?" answered Mr. Falkland. "I am bewildered. I never was more astounded in the whole course of my life. Miss Dawson is a very peculiar person, and I could not dream of assenting to anything without consulting her. I must think this over, and let you know in the morning."

"Thanks," answered Joseph. Then he added, "I help you; you help me. There are other men who would jump at the proposal I have made to you with regard to the company. Fact is this, Mr. Falkland, I don't think one quarter as much about making my pile as I do about pleasing my girl; and I don't want her to be in suspense. There, sir, I think that is enough, and you will let me know in the morning."

## CHAPTER VIII.

### MISS DAWSON.

JOHN FALKLAND spent a restless night. He arrived home late after that very important interview with Mr. Seymour. The girls had both gone to bed. He was rather glad than otherwise at this. Miss Dawson might be up. She often did

sit up late in her private sitting-room. But he did not want to interview Miss Dawson just then. All the same, his mind was full of the extraordinary, wonderful thing she had done. She, the inconspicuous, retiring, rather cold woman, had suddenly assumed immense proportions in his eyes. She was so important for the time being that on her hung John Falkland's own success or failure.

He did not like the position. He had been very glad when first the American millionaire was introduced to him through a mutual friend. He had decided to help Joseph P. as much as possible, and, aided by the American's own determination, had taken steps in that direction without delay.

Castle Rocco was rented at an enormous yearly sum. It was furnished extravagantly and well by the Seymours, those exceedingly wealthy Americans, when they had taken possession of it. Falkland himself held the proud position of one of the merchant princes of England. He belonged to an exceedingly good old family, and knew every person of importance in the neighborhood. Those people who owned country-seats near Tamaresk and Castle Rocco were exclusive of the exclusive, and proud of the proud. But they were, one and all, friendly with him. His people had belonged to the place before him. The fact that he himself was engaged in trade could not possibly affect those well-to-do and intellectual English people who lived in the beginning of the twentieth century. A hundred years ago things would have been different, but Falkland was a man of his own day.

Now, while commercially sound, he was at the same time approaching a grave crisis in his affairs. Some speculations had gone singularly wrong in the West Indies, and without help his great name might suffer; and although he was very far from bankruptcy, he might find it difficult to fulfill all his obligations.

Seymour, at this juncture, was just the man he needed to put him on his feet. It would never, never do for him to quarrel with Seymour. He saw his way to give the American just what he desired. Falkland was by no means too proud to interview on Seymour's behalf his titled neighbors and those squires of the soil who had lived on their own land for many generations.

But now something quite different from this was expected of him, and, although he wished his little girls to be on a friendly footing with the two American girls, he did not like the proposal made to him by Joseph P. It was a *sine qua non*. It meant his own success, or failure. If he acceded to Seymour's queer request, Seymour's purse would be at his command for a time, and Seymour's vast influence would raise him high on the tide of commercial success. If, on the other hand, he said "No," he would have to face a grave crisis; he would be obliged to retrench; he *might* have to go under. These being the conditions, this busy man,

who spent his life in a rush of work and ceaseless commercial enterprise, found himself unable to sleep.

In the morning he awoke early, got up, and went to the little town of Arnside to send off a few telegrams. These were to the effect that he could not be in the City until noon; he would have to take a later train than usual, for Miss Dawson must be interviewed, and perhaps also his own two children, Patty and Curly.

Falkland, being an Englishman, could ill understand Joseph P. Seymour's rush and dash. Seymour thought out a thing, and, lo and behold! the thing was done. There was no delay, no hesitation. The thing was on immediately, or off immediately. There was no waste of nerve tissue, no waste of mental power in the agonies of indecision. Joseph decided at once; his fiat went forth—yes or no—without an instant's hesitation; and he never changed: what he decided to do, he did. He had an enormous force about him, and that force was his mighty, unalterable will.

John Falkland was a strong man himself, but he felt as a puppet in the hands of Joseph Seymour. He walked restlessly about his beautiful grounds, and again his thoughts wandered to Miss Dawson. She really was an excellent creature, and, as the trainer of his children, was invaluable. She was always true, always faithful. She had never shirked her duties. There was no guile about her; she was a good woman. But to the master of Tamaresk this elderly, plain human being was profoundly uninteresting. She filled an important niche in his establishment, and he was glad to know that his own two dear children were fond of her. But, beyond that fact, he seldom or never gave Miss Dawson a thought. She was one of the pillars of the house, of course—a little more necessary than the cook, a little more necessary than the girls' faithful nurse—but still, just a subordinate in his establishment. It was amazing to him, and distasteful also, to feel that at the present moment she held the reins of power; that on her depended a decision which must mar or make his future. Falkland was proud, and, truth to tell, disliked the whole position immensely.

"Hallo, dad!" called a cheerful voice, followed immediately by another cheerful voice also crying, "Hallo, daddy!" and two girls came bounding out of the house to meet him.

"Why didn't you call us?" exclaimed Patty. "We might have gone for a walk with you. Oh, dad, you were unkind!"

"I was thinking, my pets, and did not want to be disturbed," said Mr. Falkland.

But he felt, as he walked across the lawn, that he was very glad to be disturbed by his two children. If Seymour lived for Consuelo, he lived for his Patty and his Curly—his nice, sweet, fresh, wholesome young girls, so childish, so innocent, so brisk, so active.

Patty now took one of his arms, and Curly hung upon the other. Thus they paced up and down the lawn, waiting until

the moment when the gong would sound for breakfast. It occurred to Falkland that this was a good opportunity to talk to his children. Of course he would not tell them what had really occurred, but he might sound them on the subject.

"You were in bed, my pets, when I got home last night," he said.

"Oh, yes, dad," answered Patty. "We waited up as long as we possibly could. Dear Miss Dawson was so kind, and allowed us both to sit up for half-an-hour longer than usual. But you never came. I'm afraid I fell asleep before you did come in, daddy."

"I didn't," said Curly. "I was awake. I heard when dad arrived home."

"If you had whistled to me, Curly, I'd have come up to you," said her father.

She turned and looked at him gravely. He noticed, with a keener observation than he had hitherto bestowed upon her, how much character Curly had in her face. He pressed her little hand affectionately.

"Now," he said, after a pause, "let's talk about what you did yesterday. I am not going to town quite as early as usual this morning, as I have some matters to attend to here first. Tell me, both of you, how you like Castle Rocco."

"Oh, pretty well, father," said Patty.

"And why pretty well?" asked her father impatiently.

"It's not a very easily understood sort of place," was Curly's remark.

"My dear children," said their father, "whatever you do, you must not be narrow. You must, once and for all, clearly understand that you and your governess only represent a very small portion of life. It is good for you to see other sides; it is very good for you."

"Is it?" said Curly. But she spoke dubiously.

Mr. Falkland looked at her again and knit his brow. He noticed the determination of her mouth. He had just such a determined mouth himself, and felt that he had no right to blame his child for exhibiting some of that character in which he also rejoiced.

"It's just this, dad," said Curly: "you want us to like the Americans."

"Of course I do," said Mr. Falkland.

"Selma isn't so bad," said Patty. "She is quite merry, and—oh, we don't mind Selma, do we, Curly?"

"No; we quite like her," said Curly.

"But," said Patty, "she's not the least like the Earnshaws or the Selwyns."

"The Earnshaws belong to the nobility, my dear."

"I thought ladies were the same everywhere," said the astute Curly.

Mr. Falkland felt more annoyed than ever,

"In one sense you are right," he said after a pause. "But



there's a certain polish that has nothing to do with the goodness of the heart."

"No," said Curly; "and I think Selma is quite good. It's——" then she added with a rush, "it's Consuelo we don't quite like. Neither does Roger like Consuelo. She——"

"What, Curly? Speak out."

"Well, father, *we* think—oh, please, don't frown—we think Consuelo vulgar."

"You little goose!" said Mr. Falkland. "It shows how very little you know."

"No, it doesn't," said Curly, reddening. "It shows that what you have been brought up to expect, you do expect. Father, please don't be angry, but you know you *have* been careful about us, and we have always lived in this darling house, and as long as ever we could remember, dear Miss Dawson has been with us, and Miss Dawson is such a lady."

"Oh, Miss Dawson," said Mr. Falkland. He would have dearly liked to add, "Bother Miss Dawson!" but restrained himself.

"Well," he said, after a pause, "go on."

"You see, father, it just depends on the point of view, doesn't it?" continued Curly, bringing a touch of depth unusual in so young a girl into her conversation. "It is true, Consuelo has seen the world, and we haven't; and it is true that she is enormously rich, and I don't suppose we are; and what is more, I don't care. But if you had seen her when we arrived yesterday—why, father, she wore a sort of evening-dress; but it wasn't her dress, it was her manner and—well, of course, she did nothing wrong exactly, but she didn't seem to us to be a lady. She was queer altogether; she wasn't really uninteresting, but she was queer. Patty and I felt at once that we could never be friends with her; and she was very, very funny about Miss Dawson."

"Miss Dawson again," thought Mr. Falkland.

"Just as though she were half-laughing at her all the time, and we felt, of course, inclined to fly at her for that. Then, do you know, she came down to lunch in the queerest, most untidy frock, with all her hair hanging down her back. She had taken off the queer dress which she had put on (I suppose to greet us when we arrived), and she wore a queerer dress, but it was so fearfully untidy and ill-fitting. Selma was very nice. We could do with Selma, though perhaps she is not exactly our kind. But Consuelo—oh, dad, darling! we don't want to be friends with Consuelo."

"No, dad," continued Patty. "We don't want to a bit. Need we, daddy?"

"There's the breakfast gong. My early rise has given me an appetite," said Mr. Falkland. "Come indoors, girls. I will talk to you about this later on."

They all entered the dining room. Of course Miss Dawson was present. She was already seated opposite the steaming, hissing urn.

The breakfast table was a model of English neatness and comfort. There were rows of hot dishes, and many cold meats on the sideboard, and different kinds of bread, and hot cakes, and, in fact, all sorts of good things.

The two girls and Mr. Falkland sat down to their excellent meal without giving it a thought. They were accustomed to this sort of breakfast every day of their lives. Mr. Falkland, as he ate, however, on this special morning, looked more than once with an inquiring sense of wonder at Miss Dawson.

She was really quite a plain woman—insignificant, he called her. She was dressed in a dull sort of brown to-day, and the day was a magnificent one. The primmest of women might, at least, have a flower in her belt or a bit of color at her throat; but Miss Dawson considered it wrong to wear cut flowers; and as to a piece of bright color at her throat, she would have shuddered at the bare notion.

Mr. Falkland gazed at her with growing apprehension. What if his womenkind—his two little, innocent, frank English girls and their admirable English governess—should frustrate his dearest plans? But they must not. He had but to exercise his authority, and that *sine qua non* of Joseph P. Seymour's would be carried into effect.

When breakfast had come to an end the servants were assembled for prayers, and immediately afterwards Mr. Falkland said some astonishing words.

"Girls, I want you to go out and amuse yourselves for an hour or so while I have a chat with Miss Dawson."

Miss Dawson found an unwonted color visiting her wintry cheeks. This was accompanied by a slight sense of chill. Had she done anything wrong? What could Mr. Falkland want to say to her, and at this hour of the morning, too, when he was generally in such frantic haste to get to town?

"Perhaps, Miss Dawson," said Mr. Falkland, "you wouldn't mind coming with me to my study. I have a little matter to discuss with you.—Now, girls, run off. Don't be curious."

"Curly," said her governess, "you can go to the school-room to practice, and Patty may take her Shakespeare into the garden. Go on reading 'Measure for Measure,' Patty; you will find a mark in the place where we left off the day before yesterday."

The girls obeyed. They were quite good girls. They never dreamed of disputing Miss Dawson's dictum. A minute or two later Mr. Falkland and Miss Dawson were comfortably seated in the study.

"Now," said Mr. Falkland, "I have a rather amazing piece of information to give you."

Miss Dawson folded her hands sedately in her lap. She sat with her back to the light, and Mr. Falkland faced the window. He almost wished that their positions might be reversed, but could not see his way to bringing it about.

"Yes, Mr. Falkland," said Miss Dawson.

"It has to do with the Americans," said Mr. Falkland.

"Ah, yes," said Miss Dawson. Then she added, "You wished us to be on friendly relations. In accordance with your desire, when young Miss Dudley called here yesterday morning and invited Patty and Curly to lunch, I allowed them to go."

"Quite so. You did right," said Mr. Falkland.

"The day happened to be fortunate, or I should have been obliged to withhold my permission," said the governess.

"I don't understand."

"The children's masters were not coming from London yesterday."

"Oh—ah!" said Mr. Falkland. "Well, if such a thing should occur again, you can wire or telephone to town."

Miss Dawson opened her eyes.

"Their education, sir"—she began.

"Is of no moment compared to this matter," said Mr. Falkland.

Miss Dawson now perceived that something very serious indeed had occurred. She became interested, and, in consequence, much less stiff.

"Tell me exactly what did happen yesterday," said Mr. Falkland.

"Miss Dudley came to invite the girls to lunch and to spend the afternoon. As I said—acting on your desires—I gave permission. But I could not let such young girls go from home alone. I followed them as soon as I conveniently could."

"Well?"

"We returned home soon after six o'clock."

"That has nothing to do with the matter. What did you do between one and six?"

"I had a little conversation with Mr. Seymour's daughter, Consuelo."

"Ah!" said Mr. Falkland. "Now we are coming to the point. It seems, Miss Dawson, that you have had a very marvelous influence on that young American girl."

"Oh no," said Miss Dawson in a deprecating voice. "Nothing of the sort, I can assure you; nothing of the sort. I know the American character—or, at least, I have studied it in books. Any words that I may have said were doubtless evanescent, and are forgotten by now."

"My dear friend, you are highly mistaken. I have a wonderful piece of information to give you."

Miss Dawson sat very still, her eyes fixed on John Falkland's face.

"You and I have been friends for years, my dear Miss Dawson."

"Most truly," said Miss Dawson. "I have your interests at heart."

"I know it. I trust most sincerely that you will have my interests at heart at the present juncture."

"What do you mean?"

"I will explain. Please have patience with me, and don't interrupt until I have finished my story."

Miss Dawson was the soul of patience. She had been patient all her life. She was always waiting for a better thing than had yet occurred to her. She meant to wait till the end. At the very end of life, when the curtain was lifted, she might find that for which she longed. She did not look for it in this present world. She was, therefore, well prepared to sit quiet now and to hear Mr. Falkland as long as he chose to speak.

"This is what has happened," said that gentleman. "It seems that you said some remarkable words to Consuelo Seymour yesterday. I don't know what they were. I am altogether in the dark as to what has occurred; but you have managed in an extraordinary manner to touch that young girl's heart."

"Ah!" said Miss Dawson. Her eyes softened. She bent forward, her hands tightly locked together on her knee.

"She wishes for something very strange, and her father intends her to have her desire; and he has put the matter to me in such a way that if that desire is not granted serious consequences will arise, about which I hope it may never be necessary to trouble you."

"He—he dares to threaten?" said Miss Dawson.

John Falkland got very red.

"We will not use ugly words, if you please, Miss Dawson."

"No, sir; I regret my mistake."

"Well," continued Mr. Falkland, "the matter lies so. Consuelo likes you, and she wishes to see more of you. She is one of the richest American heiresses of the day, and she has been treated like a grown-up girl. But her wish now is to turn back, and to cease to be a woman. She wants to be a child, and she wishes for discipline, and her desire is that you, Miss Dawson, should give her that discipline."

Miss Dawson half rose from her chair, but, putting great restraint on herself, remained seated.

"She wants to join forces with Patty and Curly——"

"Impossible——" began Miss Dawson.

"Just don't speak for a minute or two, dear friend. She and Selma Dudley wish to join my two girls, and Seymour proposes to take a house by the seaside. He further proposes that you shall control that household, and shall bring your influence to bear on four girls instead of two. It is, in short, an experiment which Consuelo wishes to make, and which her father is determined she shall make just because she wishes it. The experiment would last at the furthest for three months, and perhaps only for two. It rests for you to say—yes or no."

"I say 'No,'" answered Miss Dawson. "I say 'No' without an instant's hesitation. I have to think of my own two girls—yes, Mr. Falkland, I call them my own; for have I not

brought them up from their earliest years? Consuelo Seymour is a mass of contradictions. I know there are some attractive points about her; but she is the very last girl I should wish to be in the same company with Patty and Curly. I regret it extremely, Mr. Falkland; but if you have set your mind on this, and if Mr. Seymour and Consuelo have set their minds on it, I must very firmly decline."

## CHAPTER IX.

"NO."

MR. FALKLAND sat quite still for a minute. Miss Dawson's astonishing attitude, her amazing firmness, the strength which suddenly spread itself all over her face, caused him to look at her in a new light. She really was a very important person. Her words and her attitude took his breath away. He and Seymour—he, her master; Seymour, at the present juncture to a certain extent his master—desired a certain thing; but Miss Dawson said "No."

Now, to Mr. Falkland's credit be it spoken, he did not use the one weapon which he knew would mean immediate success. He did not again revert to that terrible problem which would assuredly face him if Joseph P. Seymour was refused his heart's desire. On the contrary, an inspiration came to him. He said slowly:

"I believe you are a good woman."

"Ah!" said Miss Dawson; "I have many faults, but I try hard for Divine guidance in all things."

"I am glad to hear that," said Mr. Falkland. "I should like you to seek that guidance just now, and I think the very best possible plan is for you to talk the matter over with Curly and Patty, and then to see Consuelo herself. I will not plead with you, Miss Dawson. There are reasons why I consider such a course of action degrading. I only ask you to believe that when a trust is offered to you—a great and tremendous trust—you may be wrong to refuse it. As to its being distasteful, that I can well believe, for we all of us, my dear friend, are brought face to face with distasteful things from time to time. Now, I think I have said my say. I wish for this thing; you decline to have anything to do with it. That is the present position. Nevertheless, I ask you to talk to the girls, and to see Consuelo."

Miss Dawson rose. She was feeling weak and trembling. Some of her courage had deserted her; but her resolution was as firm as ever.

"You will excuse me," she said. "In all things, since I came to this house, I have endeavored to carry out your wishes, and never until the day before yesterday has anything occurred which could make those wishes difficult of accomplishment. But when Mr. Seymour called here, and brought Miss Dudley with him, I did feel some qualms. Not

only were my natural inclinations violated by the conduct of the Americans, but also my conscience was alarmed. Nevertheless, I tried to obey you, Mr. Falkland, and even now could make no objection to my dear children occasionally visiting at Castle Rocco; but what you ask—the close intimacy of a home, the constant companionship of girls brought up so differently from either Patty or Curly—I cannot agree to.”

“Nevertheless, they are my children,” said Mr. Falkland, regretting the words after he had spoken them.

“Yes,” said Miss Dawson; “and if necessary, and it is really your wish to have this close companionship between the two Americans and your children, I—I”—she trembled exceedingly—“I must give up my darlings—I must resign them to the charge of another.”

Mr. Falkland was touched.

“You will never be asked to do that, I promise you,” he said. “But now, as you will not speak to Curly or Patty, will you write a letter to Consuelo? She is in suspense; write and put her out of her misery.”

“I will do so,” said Miss Dawson.

“And,” continued Mr. Falkland, “will you do something else? Will you prepare her, first by letter, and then go to see her?”

“Must I?”

“It would certainly please me if you did.”

“But I shall never change.”

“I hope you may; I sincerely hope you may. And now, I have something more to say. The girl is at heart a good girl. Why should she be balked in her first serious efforts after what is best and noblest? And are Patty’s principles so weak, and Curly’s desires for right so feeble, that girls who have not had your training in the past can so easily influence them? There, I will say no more; I must hurry to town. Write to Consuelo immediately, please, and go to see her either after or before lunch.”

Mr. Falkland did not even wait for the governess’s reply. He left the library, rang his bell sharply, desired a carriage to be sent round, and drove off to town.

He was more distressed, and even alarmed, than he cared to own.

“I could not have believed that Miss Dawson could act as she has done,” he could not help saying to himself. “And yet, and yet—is Consuelo stronger? My last and only chance of success now rests with Consuelo Seymour herself.”

When Miss Dawson found herself alone she paced briskly up and down the library several times. Then she rang the bell. The servant appeared.

“Henry,” said the governess, “tell the young ladies that I shall be altogether engaged this morning, and that I wish them to spend the time in the garden; and, please, I want a messenger to go in half-an-hour to Castle Rocco.”

The man withdrew. Miss Dawson retired to her own room, where she wrote a letter. She wrote it in haste, dreading the words as they formed themselves on the paper:

“DEAR MISS SEYMOUR,—Mr. Falkland has just made an astonishing proposition to me; what can you possibly be thinking of? I have told Mr. Falkland that your wishes cannot for a moment be acceded to; but, according to his desire, I am coming over to see you, and will follow this note in half-an-hour.—Yours sincerely,  
EMMA DAWSON.”

Consuelo, restless, impatient, her darling scheme burning a hole in her breast, was pacing restlessly up and down the lawn in front of the beautiful old house, when she saw the messenger from Tamaresk coming up the avenue. The man carried a letter, and Consuelo flew to meet him. She was again dressed in one of Selma’s frocks, for her own white embroidered ones were much too grand, according to her new ideas, for morning wear. She had been planning, ever since she saw her father, how her new life was to be proceeded with. Like the child she really was, the thought of so complete and absolute a change delighted her. She was all agog to be disciplined, to be, as she expressed it, reformed. She was keenly desirous to put character first, to banish luxuries, to think nothing at all of such ephemeral things as mere youth and mere beauty. Even wealth, that all-absorbing power, should sink out of sight when she, Selma, Patty, and Curly were under Miss Dawson’s rule at the seaside.

She wished for a plain house and plain food. She wondered how it would feel to be a little hungry once or twice. Her whole horizon was widening out, and she could not help thinking of matters which had never hitherto dawned on her mind. In consequence of this, she was gentler than she had been for some time. For instance, when she was dressing that morning, and Ronsard showed almost temper at her young lady’s aberrations with regard to dress, she (Consuelo) did not reply pertly, but even observed that Ronsard looked tired.

“Are you tired, Ronsard?” she said. “Guess you must be; the shadows under your eyes are so black.”

“I have a *migraine* the most unfortunate,” replied the maid; “and I desire so much my beloved Paris and the gay life of *La belle France*.”

“Poor Ronsard!” said Consuelo.

It occurred to her that in the immediate future she would not need Ronsard, so she said in a cheerful tone:

“Perhaps you will soon return to your country. I guess if I were you I’d cheer up.”

“Oh, mademoiselle!” cried the Frenchwoman. “Is it indeed within the possible that mademoiselle will soon visit our gay Paris?”

Consuelo laughed, shook her head, and ran downstairs. Her mother rebuked her for her hideous dress; but Con-

suelo wore her most determined air, shut her lips firmly, and declined to discuss the subject. Selma came to the conclusion that her cousin had gone a little off her head.

"What is the matter with you?" she said. "You have been so queer ever since the English girls and their governess came here yesterday. What can have happened? I don't know you a bit."

"Of course you don't, Selma," said Consuelo. "Is it likely you would? I have never shown you any of my real, real self up to the present; but I shall in future, I guess. I guess you'll be surprised. I wonder what you'll say when you know what is going to happen. Oh, what fun, what fun!" continued Consuelo, dancing merrily up and down the lawn. "I feel a child for the first time in my life. It is so good; it is so what you call delectable! Selma, don't you want to be a child too?"

"I must go to your momma; she wants me," said Selma. "I don't understand you a bit."

Consuelo longed to enlighten Selma; for half the fun of the great experiment would be the talking it over beforehand. But she had some of her father's caution, and would not broach a scheme until that scheme was finally settled on. That it would be settled, and almost immediately, her father had whispered into her ear before he went to town that day.

"I will look out for a house," he said to her. "You would like Westbourne as well as any other place. I will just telephone round to an agent and get him to bring me a list of suitable houses."

"We want a small, plain house," said Consuelo. "No riches, mind, poppa; I want to do without all that sort of thing."

Joseph P. Seymour frowned.

"You are the queerest girl," he said. But the next minute he smiled to himself. "Bless her little heart!" he murmured as he got into his comfortable carriage. "Bless her! It's just a whim she has. She'll soon tire of it, my pretty, sweet pet. But while it is on her, she shall be gratified up to the top of her bent."

It was, therefore, a perfectly happy Consuelo who paced up and down the lawn, and who suddenly flew, almost like an arrow from a bow, to receive Miss Dawson's letter.

"From the governess at Tamaresk, miss," said the messenger; "and there is not any answer."

He turned at once to go back, and Consuelo took her treasured letter into a summer-house, which happened to be close by, in order to read it in peace. She did not open it for a minute or two, but let it lie on her lap while her eager china-blue eyes scanned the writing.

Miss Dawson's writing was a little stiff, and belonged to that now ancient form of calligraphy which has a considerable slope. It sloped in long, even lines, and each letter was perfectly formed.



"I will learn to write like that," thought Consuelo.

She thought of her own enormous writing, each small letter as big as an ordinary capital; of her adored twists and flourishes; of her crested paper, which was also highly perfumed. This little, neat letter was written on pale-gray paper, and had not even an address on the top.

Consuelo took it tenderly and reverently from its envelope. She read the contents. She was quite a spoilt child, one of the darlings of circumstance; and the first time she read it a smart blow was dealt to her pride, her self-esteem, her immense self-importance. It was so sharp and direct that it very nearly stunned her. She read the letter a second time, and now her eyes filled with tears. But there was no anger whatever in her heart. She thought that she ought to be furious. She wished to be magnificently angry, to scorn the daring woman who opposed the richest girl in America.

But somehow, try as she would, the anger would not come at her bidding. However, something else came—an immense sorrow, a troubled sense of failure. She was not to have her two years of childhood. She was not to undergo the delight of discipline. The simple joys of life were never to be hers. She was to go on forever and ever posing. The narrowness of her intellectual outlook would get yet narrower. In short, this petted child of fortune felt that she had nothing whatever to live for.

She crushed the letter hotly in her young hand—crushed it into a ball. Then taking her handkerchief from her pocket, she burst into a fierce torrent of weeping.

Consuelo had not cried for years. It was the one desire of the Seymour household to keep tears from Consuelo's eyes. Whoever else suffered, she never did. When they traveled, the best and most comfortable seats were secured for Consuelo. On board the steamers her state-rooms were the most costly and the largest. At the hotels, even Mrs. J. P. Seymour consulted Consuelo first with regard to her choice of bedrooms. Consuelo's favorite dishes were supplied at every meal. Consuelo's clothes, Consuelo's amusements, were the first considerations in the minds of all those belonging to her. She had never been denied anything before.

She cried for her vanished dream. Her tears hurt her. Depths of existence which she had never suspected were suddenly revealed to her.

There was one part of Miss Dawson's letter, however, which, in her transport of grief, Consuelo had overlooked, and that was the fact that the governess, having dealt her cruel blow, meant to call and see her victim. Had Consuelo realized this part of the letter, she would have taken specially good care to be well out of the way when Miss Dawson came. But she was so overcome by the fact that the governess had said "No" to her request, that Consuelo overlooked the other fact that she was coming to see her. Her tears fell faster and faster. The summer sun, traveling on

his accustomed path of glory, shed long, hot rays into the summer-house. These rays of light fell upon the young American girl as she crouched in a corner, sobbing, writhing in her sorrow; but it so happened that, luckily for Consuelo, Miss Dawson passed that very summer-house on her way to Castle Rocco, and, passing it, heard a sound which caused her to pause and look in.

She had prepared herself for abuse from the spoilt child, indignation on the part of the rich family; but she certainly had not prepared herself for this prostration of intense grief. It was just a little girl—a little, everyday, human girl—who was crouching up in the summer-house, crying her heart out. It might be Patty; it might be Curly; it might be any other child who needed comfort. This sobbing, sorrowing child was as far removed from the languid, overdressed maiden of the day before as light is removed from darkness.

Miss Dawson looked at Consuelo with new eyes.

"Well?" she said. Her tone was quite quiet, and even sad. Consuelo looked up. Her eyelids were swollen, and her blue eyes were hardly recognizable. Her poor little face was all blotted and blotched with the violence of the tears she had shed.

When she saw Miss Dawson standing in the doorway of the summer-house she stared at her, and then, slowly opening her right hand, revealed the pulp-like letter which lay within.

"You sent it," she said, and she proffered it to the governess.

Miss Dawson entered the summer-house and sat down.

"Yes, my dear," she said gently.

Consuelo remained very still. She did not attempt to expostulate; she did not attempt to argue. She did not venture to plead, even by one word. She still held the letter on her open palm and looked at it, while tears flowed more and more freely from her eyes.

"Is it because of that letter you are crying?" said Miss Dawson.

Consuelo nodded. She had literally not power to speak. Miss Dawson, impelled by something she could not understand, found her arm slipping round the waist of the child, and she found herself drawing Consuelo close to her.

"You see," she then said, altering her whole tone and speaking as though she were addressing a grown-up person, "I could not do anything else, could I?"

"Yes, you could," said Consuelo.

"I have to think of Patty and Curly."

"They'd have helped," said Consuelo, giving another big sob.

Then she rose with a great effort, tried to mop her face with her drenched handkerchief, and said sorrowfully:

"I am going into the house. There is nothing left to say, is there?"

Miss Dawson murmured to herself, "There is certainly nothing left to say. I am not likely to change, and yet—oh, poor child!—poor child!"

Consuelo waited for a minute, hesitating. That elderly, faded face appealed to her as no face had ever appealed to her before. It seemed to her that she was going away from a strong rock against which she ought to be leaning. Hither-to she had stood alone; no one had ever attempted to guide her. She had brought herself up after her own impetuous fashion. Now that she had found one altogether different from herself, some one who thought nothing whatsoever about riches or what the world called greatness, some one who disliked fine clothes and who had only a contempt for luxuries, she felt that that one person was the only creature whom she could thoroughly respect and obey.

While she kept looking at Miss Dawson, Miss Dawson looked on the ground. Some of Mr. Falkland's last words returned to her: "Is it right for you to cast aside a great responsibility or a great trust?" Then she recalled other words: "Are Patty's principles so weak and Curly's desires for right so feeble that girls who have not had your training in the past can so easily influence them?" Impelled by the memory of these two speeches, and by something also in the little girl's own exceedingly forlorn attitude, she said very gently:

"I am terribly sorry. I see by your manner that you meant your proposal—that you wanted me to help you. I would have helped you but for Patty and Curly."

"Oh," said Consuelo, sitting down again at once close to the governess, taking her unwilling hand, and drawing that hand and arm confidently round her waist—"oh," she said, and she laid her head of bright hair on the prim, stiff shoulder, "that is just a little better. If you are sorry for me, why shouldn't you do what I want, even though Patty and Curly are there?"

"It seems to me impossible, my dear," said Miss Dawson. "All your ideas, all your tastes, all your desires, are absolutely opposed to the wishes and desires of my pupils."

"I can learn," said Consuelo. "Won't you try me?"

Miss Dawson shook her head. Consuelo then again rose from her seat. She did not cry any more, but she let the letter, which was truly pulp, fall to the floor of the summer-house. Then, without glancing at Miss Dawson, she turned away.

Miss Dawson wondered where she was going, and her first impulse was to follow. On second thoughts, however, she sat still. She believed that Consuelo was going back to the house. Had she had any idea that the impetuous girl was going straight to Tamaresk, she would certainly not have let her go alone. Consuelo, however, impelled by a strength of purpose which had never visited her before, went quickly down the steep avenue, and reached the turnstile which

communicated with the two estates. In less than a quarter of an hour she found herself at Tamaresk. She looked the most forlorn little object: no hat on her head, her untidy hair falling partly over her shoulders and partly shadowing her face, that same face flushed by tears, the eyes dim from weeping.

But Consuelo, for the first time in her life, was absolutely oblivious to all sense of personal appearance. Her strength of will, her determination to conquer at any cost, was carrying her right forward. The grand obstacle to her scheme was not Miss Dawson herself; it was Patty and Curly.

She would visit them. She would put the case before them. She would win them over to her side. If all the rest of her world was on her side, surely she must get her heart's desire.

Now, it so happened that Patty, busily engaged over her Shakespeare reading, was seated cosily on the lawn, and Curly had just come from the house. It would be idle to say that the girls were not more than curious with regard to Miss Dawson's extraordinary behavior that morning. They sat down close together, and began to talk it over. What did it mean? What could have occurred? Why was their father so queer at breakfast, and what did his request of Miss Dawson that she should have a private interview with him mean? Then there were Miss Dawson's strangest of strange directions that they were to amuse themselves that morning—in short, that they were to have a holiday, she being unable to attend to them.

"What can things mean?" said Patty; and just at that moment Consuelo herself appeared close at their side.

It took both the little Falkland girls a minute or two of hard staring before they recognized her.

"Why, it's you!" they both exclaimed impulsively. "What—what can have happened?"

"I want you to help me," said Consuelo. "You can do it; it rests with you both."

"To help you? Why, of course," said Patty. "Do sit down, please. How hot and tired and queer you look!"

"Do I?" said Consuelo. "But that doesn't matter; appearances don't matter a bit, do they?"

"Oh, I don't know," said Curly. "I must say I like to look nice."

"You like to look nice?" repeated Consuelo, opening her swollen eyes. "And yet *she* has trained you."

"You mean Miss Dawson?"

"Yes; I mean your governess, Miss Dawson."

"Do sit down," said Patty. She sprang out of her own chair. "Here, take this; I will kneel by you. Now, what is the matter? You look so sad."

Consuelo's eyes filled with tears.

"You are so different from what you were yesterday,"

said Curly. "I can hardly believe that you are the same girl."

"Guess I look forlorn," said Consuelo. "Guess I have reason."

"Poor Consuelo!" said Patty.

"I'm the sort of child you'd pity, am I not?" said the American girl.

"We do pity you; we are ever so sorry," said Curly.

"Then you will help me. You know, of course?"

"Know?" said Curly.

"We don't know anything," said Patty.

"Well, it's just this: I want something to be done, and Miss Dawson won't do it."

"Oh," said Curly, opening her brown eyes, "Miss Dawson won't do it? But what can she have to say to you, Consuelo?"

"Everything," said Consuelo, flinging out her arms with a gesture of despair. "Everything! I want her to do all things for me—to guide me, to help me. I—I—sort of love her." She choked over the words. "She sort of hates me; no one ever hated me before—never, never."

She began to cry again, covering her face. Her sobs were low and very tired. She was feeling quite exhausted, quite spent with emotion. So forlorn did she look that Patty put her arm round Consuelo's neck, and Curly caressed her, trying to pat her cheek and take down her trembling hands.

"Connie!" she said. "Connie, Connie—don't, don't!"

"You don't hate me, do you?" said Consuelo.

"Of course we don't," said Patty.

"Certainly we don't hate you," said Curly.

"Then, if that is the case, you will just move the obstacle away."

"We don't understand," said Curly.

"I will tell you; it is this. I want poppa to take a house at the seaside, and I want you, and Patty, and Selma, and I myself to go there; and I want Miss Dawson to teach Selma and me just the sort of things she teaches you and Patty. Poppa wants it done, and so does your poppa. Every one wants it done who knows about it except Miss Dawson. But she says 'No.'"

Curly could not quite explain why she felt a sense of relief. This scheme at the first unfolding did not present itself to her as specially attractive, but Patty, strange to say, understood Consuelo better than her sister did.

"It would be quite nice," she said.

"Only that we can't go, of course," said Curly.

At these words Consuelo sprang to her feet.

"And why can't you? Do you suppose that I'd do you any harm? Miss Dawson would look after me and do what I want but for you two. Are you so weak, both of you; is your English way so poor, that I, a poor little ignorant girl, could hurt you? Am I likely to?"

"Of course you couldn't hurt us, Consuelo," said Patty.

"And you might help me."

"Could we?"

"Oh, you could—you could! I want you to talk to Miss Dawson. I want you to get her to change her mind. Won't you?" Consuelo now knelt on the grass, pushed Patty into her seat, and began to plead. "I'll just be as good as anything," she said; "and it's only for three months. We needn't look further than three months. All the things that follow after need not be thought of now. Won't you make her do it? Won't you—won't you?"

While she pleaded some of that charm which she undoubtedly possessed began to exercise itself over both the girls—so much so that Patty said:

"I will talk to Miss Dawson. I should—I should like to make you happy."

And Curly said gravely, "Yes; I, too, will talk to Miss Dawson—"

"My dears, what is it?" said the governess's voice at that moment.—"Consuelo—you here?"

"They don't mind a bit," said Consuelo, springing to her feet. She took Miss Dawson's hand. "They are quite willing—willing to help me. You will help me, and they will help me. If you don't I—oh! I can't be good. If you don't, I will go back to the hideous dresses and the grown-up ways and the vanities of life."

"Don't—oh, don't let her, Miss Dawson!" said Curly, her eyes filling with tears.

"Oh, my dears!" said Miss Dawson, "you distract me, all of you."

"But she is going to yield, the old darling!" said Consuelo. She flung her arms round Miss Dawson's neck. "Yes—yes—she is going to yield; and I will be good, and Selma will be good, and everything will be just splendid!"

What Miss Dawson said she never quite knew; but whether it was that she only smiled, or whether it was that she only pressed Consuelo to her breast and kissed her—really kissed her on her lips—no one could ever afterwards quite tell. But certain it is that a few minutes later a girl, with a glad face, left the two Falkland girls and their governess, and returned briskly to Castle Rocco.

## CHAPTER X.

### DISCIPLINE HOUSE.

MISS DAWSON had yielded. She certainly never meant to. She disapproved of the scheme, although she no longer opposed it. But as she was slow to yield, so, having yielded, she made no further conditions of any sort. On the contrary, she said abruptly:

"We are not going for two or three days; until then we

will continue our usual life.—Curly, bring your Roman history; you shall read aloud to me till lunch-time.”

Meanwhile Consuelo went home. After all, she had won her case. Her victory almost frightened her. Having found it so hard to attain what she desired, she valued the curious life which lay before her far more than she would otherwise have done. She found Selma and Mrs. Seymour seated on the veranda which ran round a considerable portion of the old house.

Mrs. Seymour was in mauve satin, trimmed with a great deal of white lace. She looked fat and terribly bored. Selma was doing some fancy needle-work, and was seated at some little distance from the good lady.

“I take it,” said Mrs. Seymour, “that England is about the dullest place in creation; and I must say, plump, that I am in no way taken with old castles and monumental remains. I like a new country best. This house is horribly lonely. I don’t like it one bit; and as to Consuelo, it seems that the place is driving her out of her mind. I never met any one so queer as she has just become.”

Mrs. Seymour had scarcely uttered the words before there was a little whoop and cry, and Consuelo danced on to the veranda and flung herself at her mother’s knee.

“Say, mamma, you are bored to death, ain’t you?”

Mrs. Seymour looked down at the eager and altogether strange face of her child.

“What has come to you, Consuelo Josephine Persis?” she said. “You are as mad as a March hare. Have you taken leave of your senses?”

“No; I have got them,” said Consuelo—“pretty tight, too; and what is more, I am not going to let them go.—Say now, Selma, ain’t things just splendid? We are off, you and I, to Discipline House next week, most likely.”

“Discipline House?” cried Mrs. Seymour. “Good land! what awful place is that?”

“It is a small house,” said Consuelo; “not a bit fine.—I can wear all your old frocks, Selma.”

“But I shall want them myself,” said Selma rather crossly.

“There are plenty for both of us,” said Consuelo; “but, anyhow, I have ordered some ugly things from town. Ron-sard has sent for them. She was very cross—not that that matters.—Mamma, you can give her notice to leave to-day, if you like.”

“You distract me,” said Mrs. Seymour. “You talk wilder than ever. Oh, that I should have a child—and she my only one—who has lost her head!”

Consuelo was so happy that she patted her mother’s very fat hands with a touch of affection which she had not shown for a long time.

“I will try to explain, mamma,” she said. “Poor mamma! Oh, why do you wear so many diamond rings? They do hurt so when I try to stroke your hand. Long, long, very long

ago, mamma, I remember I was ill, and nothing would quiet me but that you should sit alongside of me and let me stroke your hand. You had only a wedding-ring on then, and, somehow, it was much nicer."

Mrs. Seymour stared at her child. Then all of a sudden her round, red, fat face softened.

"Guess I recall it," she said. "You were only four years old. We were on the ranch in California. You had fever, and your poppa and I were so frightened we didn't know what to do. You are right, Connie; I didn't wear many rings at that time."

"But when I got well again you were quite happy, weren't you, mamma?"

"Happy? I should think so. I had a lot to do at those times. I was not fat, as I am now. Yes, I was happy." She sighed faintly.

"That was your golden time, mamma," said her daughter. "Now I want to have my golden time. It's all settled, and there is no use talking. Poppa settled it with me last night; and Patty and Curly's poppa tried to settle it with Miss Dawson this morning. Miss Dawson was very hard to win over, but Patty, Curly, and I have conquered her at last. It is going to begin next week; and you, Selma, are coming with us. We four girls and Miss Dawson are off to Discipline House next week. It's a real fine idea, I call it. We're going just as poor people, and I mean to be a child again, and that's the long and the short of it. Poppa wishes it, and so do I. It is all settled.—You can talk to me about it as much as you please, Selma; there is no other subject in all the wide world that interests me now. You and I, we have never been disciplined. We are going to begin. Guess we'll find it hard, but it will be the saving of us, all the same. Guess Miss Dawson will lay it on pretty thick. I mean her to, for my part. When I do a thing of this sort, I don't do it by halves."

Mrs. Seymour rose suddenly.

"You must be real mad, Consuelo," she said. "I never heard of anything so detrimental in the whole course of my life; but if you suppose for a single minute that my girl is going to be under the thumb of that old-fashioned woman who lunched at Castle Rocco yesterday, you are greatly mistaken. I will speak to your poppa when he comes home."

"Do, mamma," said Consuelo in her softest and most purring tone.—"Selma, come out into the garden; I want to talk to you."

The girls paced about arm-in-arm. Mrs. Seymour went into the house. Really, one unmanageable daughter who insisted on having her own way in everything was something of a trial. Of course she was proud of Consuelo, but she was only proud of the girl in her own fashion. She liked to consider her grown up. She was proud of her taste, as she called it, and her distinguished bearing. As to Consuelo's character, her morals, her sense of right and wrong, the poor



woman never gave these things a thought. The girl was rich—very rich. What was the use of her living at all unless she enjoyed her wealth?

Mrs. Seymour resolved to say a sharp word or two to Joseph P. She would nip this queer, mad device in the bud. Consuelo, who had her way in most things, should certainly not have her way in this. But when Joseph P. returned home, and Mrs. Seymour almost flung herself into his arms and said eagerly, "Say, Joe, did you ever in all your life hear of anybody quite so mad as Consuelo? She has set her heart on being poor and going away somewhere with the Falklands' governess. You tell her it cannot be, Joseph; that she must give it right up." To her astonishment Joseph P.'s response to this was:

"It's just my wish, Coralie, that Consuelo Josephine Persis should have her way in this matter. I am arranging for a house already at Westbourne, and I guess the party will move there within a day or two; for Connie's just the sort that must not be balked. You and I, old girl, we've got to please Connie through thick and thin. Why, bless you, Coralie, my girl, if the child wants a taste of the seamy side, why shouldn't she have it? She is a fine girl—the best in creation. It will do her no harm."

"It will ruin her," said Mrs. Seymour, beginning to sob.

"Ruin her or not," said Seymour, "she is going to have her way. And now, cheer up. See, I have brought you this diamond bangle."

Mrs. Seymour did mop her eyes, and did smile when the bangle was slipped over her fat wrist.

"It looks very well," she said. "Guess it suits me"; and she held out her short arm in order to watch the sparkling lights leap up in the many gems which encircled the bangle. Joseph P., with his arm round her stout waist, led her into the house; and, somehow or other, when momma next met Consuelo she was silent with regard to what was about to happen.

As to Consuelo, she was in wild spirits. When she saw her father she rushed to him, tucked her hand inside his arm, and said:

"Have you taken the house?"

"Practically, yes," said Joseph P. "Why, you are in a hurry to leave me, Connie."

"Yes," said Connie; "I want to begin."

"Well, you can have your house when you please. I have got particulars of three, and you can choose. There is one facing the sea, on the cliff. It is a big sort of house with grounds, and plenty of nice bedrooms. I will send down servants to-morrow. I can telephone to the agent to-night to close with the offer, and you may all be off on Saturday."

"But that house is much too big," said Consuelo. "What about the others?"

"There is another facing the sea, without any grounds. It is a nice house, too; quite large enough for your small party."

"But you said there was a third."

"The third won't do, I am sure. It is inland a bit—in the middle of a street, too. I guess you wouldn't like that. And the rooms are small, and there are only two sitting-rooms."

"We'll settle on the third house, please, poppa. Listen, my dear poppa. If I do this thing, I do it thoroughly. I shall call the house Discipline House; and what is the good of giving it a name of that sort if it is not to be Discipline House?"

When Connie said this her father looked very hard at her. He suddenly removed her hand from his arm, and turned her round so that she could face him. He gazed into her eyes, which had lost all trace of tears now, and were far brighter and bluer than he had seen them for a long time.

"You are not going to balk me in the end, Consuelo Josephine Persis?"

"I want to be a real downright help to you, poppa," replied his daughter. Then she added, "But I must know things; I must see for myself. There's a lot in me, father, that has to be pruned and got rid of. Guess Miss Dawson will do the pruning; guess I want her to."

"Guess you're a fine girl—bless me if you're not!" said Joseph. He stooped and kissed her on her forehead. "I'll miss you, Connie, when you are away."

She winked her eyes hard at this.

"I'll be worth something, perhaps, when I come back to you," she said.

"Goodness!" he exclaimed. "Worth something? You are worth a thousand times your weight in gold to me now. In a measure, you are all I have got, my girl—all I live for—all your mamma and I live for. Don't forget that."

Consuelo kissed him very gravely in reply.

## CHAPTER XI.

### THROUGH PAIN.

DISCIPLINE HOUSE was quite in order, and the four girls and Miss Dawson took possession of it—not on Saturday, but on the following Monday. They arrived about the middle of the day. They traveled third class: this was Consuelo's wish, and Miss Dawson saw no reason why she should be thwarted in her desire.

Miss Dawson, in her heart of hearts, hoped that the whole scheme would come to an end in a week or a fortnight. She did not believe for a moment that the spoilt child of luxury would put up with disagreeables. In forming this idea she

failed to read Consuelo's character, as she was afterwards to understand.

Miss Dawson liked things plain and simple. She had been brought up in a very quiet way. While her mother lived, she and that mother occupied a small house in a village street. They had one servant, and did many things for themselves. They were both of them essentially ladies in all particulars; and because they were ladies, they lived well within their means, and owed no man anything but to love one another. When the mother died, however, Emma Dawson found that she had to earn her living.

Mr. Falkland required just such a capable, sensible woman to look after his motherless girls. She went to Tamaresk, and had been there ever since. Still, she had an affection for the old simple life. She quite liked traveling third class and saving money. It seemed to bring back the days of her vanished youth.

The whole party arrived at No. 5 Fairfax Street between two and three in the afternoon. The door was opened for them by a servant who had been sent down from a registry office in town. The four girls immediately dispersed themselves over the rooms. The house was certainly very small. The minute size of the bedrooms and of the two hot little sitting-rooms made Selma gasp.

"I guess we might be on board ship," she said; "and how the sun does pour in!"

Consuelo was silent and very grave. She had made up her mind, whatever happened, not to grumble. She was the originator of this expedition, and was second in all things to Miss Dawson. Miss Dawson was captain of their little ship, but she (Consuelo) felt herself in honor bound to take up the position of first mate. She must make the best of things. Accordingly, she said that for her part no room could ever be hot enough to please her; and, secondly, that she liked small bedrooms, because they were very convenient, and you need not tire yourself fetching things from a distant recess of the room, when you could have them quite handy close by.

Miss Dawson walked quickly through the house, perceived at a glance all its disadvantages, and in her own mind gave Consuelo within a week to return to the luxuries of Castle Rocco. She went upstairs to the very small room which Curly and Patty were to share together.

"We'll be suffocated here," said Curly.

"I don't think so," said Miss Dawson. "The weather is fine, and you can have the window open. But I will see the other bedrooms before I decide whether you occupy this chamber or not."

She went from room to room. There were only four bedrooms, with the exception of the one in the attics which the two servants were to sleep in. There was one fairly good-sized room over the little drawing-room. This faced the

front. It is true, it had the afternoon sun on it, and was, for the present, very hot; but Miss Dawson saw that it was a far more convenient room for her own two girls to occupy than the one they were now using. Consuelo was there. She had selected this room for herself. She meant, of course, to be extremely unselfish and obliging in every way, but it was second nature to her to occupy the best room, and she went into it without a moment's hesitation.

She was kneeling by her small trunk, unpacking her plain clothes with considerable energy, when Miss Dawson's sharp tap was heard on the door.

"May I come in?"

"Oh, yes, please," said Consuelo, rising, and holding an ugly brown holland skirt in her hand.

"I want to speak to you, Consuelo."

"Certainly, dear Miss Dawson."

"I prefer you not calling me 'dear' whenever you speak to me," said Miss Dawson.

"I guess I'll try to remember," said Consuelo.

"You will have to. In England we never give way to superlative modes of expression."

"Thank you," said Consuelo.

"You chose this house, didn't you?" said Miss Dawson.

"In a way—yes," said Consuelo; "that is, poppa did."

"I find it very small."

"Do you mind the house being small?" asked Consuelo, anxiously.

"Yes, and no. I am willing to stay in a small house for the present, but as it was perfectly within your right to choose a large one, you are the person who must suffer. I wish, therefore, to give this room, which is decidedly the largest of the four bedrooms, to Patty and Curly. You and I will take the two small back-rooms, and Selma will have the next largest room looking to the front. That is what I wish, but you can retain this room if you prefer it."

Consuelo felt herself coloring. An angry feeling rose in her heart; but she quickly suppressed it.

"Of course," she said; "I did not think. Forgive me."

"We'll move your trunks at once," said Miss Dawson.

"Shall I ring?" said Consuelo.

"Ring? No; you and I will do it. There are only two servants, remember. Alice, the parlor-maid, is getting tea, which we badly require; and the cook is doubtless occupied in her kitchen. Have you put anything yet into your drawers?"

"Oh, no."

"That is right. Well, catch hold of this handle, I'll take the other one, and we'll move you at once into the room you will occupy."

Consuelo obeyed. Her heart was beating rather fast, and there was a flush on her cheeks. But Miss Dawson did not take the slightest notice. Discipline House was certainly

small, and Consuelo's present room was very little more than what would be called a closet in America. Consuelo never remembered in the whole course of her life occupying such a tiny chamber. In addition to its being small, it was poorly furnished. There was a little iron bedstead, on which was laid a small, flat, hard mattress. The springs of the bedstead were by no means perfect. The sheets were of dingy cotton.

The arrangements of this seaside dwelling left much to be desired.

"There is no place to put my things in," said Consuelo.

"There are two drawers where you can stow some of your smaller articles," said Miss Dawson, "and there are pegs on the door to hang your skirts. The other things must remain in your trunk. Just get tidy, please, and come down to tea."

Miss Dawson now returned to her own charges.

"This room is too small for you, dears," she said. "You go into the room at the front. Selma will have this room."

"But where does Consuelo sleep?" asked the girls.

"She and I have arranged it, my loves. Come down as soon as you have unpacked."

Curly and Patty wondered not a little. Miss Dawson went downstairs with her lips compressed.

"I have firmly made up my mind on one thing," she said to herself: "that what few comforts this small house contains shall be given to my own two little girls. Consuelo wanted discipline, and she shall have her way."

Meanwhile Consuelo, up in her room, stood for a minute at her small window looking down at an unwonted sight. How tired she had been of the best of things! But did she really care for what suddenly seemed to her the worst? For the little back bedroom at Discipline House looked out on ugly roofs of houses, on back-yards, on the undesirable, and almost on the squalid. Consuelo had certainly to struggle with herself. But she was proud, and would not give in. After a time she became almost cheerful. She was Joseph P. Seymour's daughter after all. If Joseph P. had struggled, so surely would she. She would not give in at the first little breath of discomfort.

She ran downstairs, to find the three girls in the dining-room before her. Compared to the bedroom which she was to occupy, their rooms were almost luxurious. The little dining-room, too, seemed quite spacious. They sat down to tea, and some one suggested shrimps.

"Oh, lovely!" said Consuelo. "I always did dream of shrimps with tea at an English seaside place. Can't we have some?"

"If you like, my dear," said Miss Dawson.

"Shall I run and tell Alice to fetch some?" asked Consuelo.

"Certainly not. You can go out to fetch them yourself, if you wish. You have some money, haven't you?"

"I am to go to fetch them?" said Consuelo.

"If you wish for them, my dear; I see no other way of getting them. I noticed a fishmonger's a little way down the street as we drove up. You might get a pint of shrimps—the red ones, I think, are the best."

Consuelo looked at the others. Three pairs of eyes were fixed on her face.

"I'll go," said Selma.

"Certainly not, Selma," said Miss Dawson. "Consuelo is the one who wishes for shrimps; if she wants them, she can get them."

"All right," said Consuelo.

She left the room and ran upstairs. She put on the plain sailor-hat which had been bought for the occasion, drew gloves over her hands, and, with a dainty parasol over her head, went down the street. She had asked poppa to give her very little money. He had presented her with ten pounds, and she had promptly returned all but one.

"I must have the privations I am going for," she had answered; and he had pocketed nine golden sovereigns sorrowfully.

"Any minute you want to come back, you can do so, Connie," he said. "Remember that."

"I won't want to come back," she replied. "I expect to enjoy this as I never enjoyed anything in my life before."

But Consuelo Josephine Persis, as she went down the hot street now, tired from her journey, her head slightly aching, to fetch her own shrimps for her own tea, began to doubt if the ways of Discipline House were altogether so very agreeable. She bought a pint of shrimps, and brought them back rather disdainfully in a brown-paper bag. She entered the little dining-room, holding the bag in her hand.

"Here they are," she said.

"Will you kindly," said Miss Dawson, "go to the pantry and ask Alice for a plate to put them on?"

"Mayn't I ring?" said Consuelo.

"I should prefer your fetching the plate. Alice has brought everything in for tea, and is probably busy over something else. There are five of us to attend to, and I think we must help her all we can."

"Very well," said Consuelo, meekly.

She went to the pantry, found Alice, asked for a plate, and returned carrying the shrimps. As she sat down at last to her belated meal she felt hungry, as she had not felt for many a long day. In short, she had earned her fresh bread and butter, tea, and shrimps, and enjoyed them accordingly.

After tea Miss Dawson told the girls that they might all go out with the exception of Consuelo. Consuelo opened her eyes very wide.

"But I do want some fresh air," she said. "I should like to get to the front; I want to watch the waves."

"You and I will follow later," said Miss Dawson, "when we have made some little arrangements.—Girls, if you have

unpacked and put things in order, pray go out at once. We'll find you somewhere on the beach."

"But mayn't I stay to help Consuelo?" said Selma.

"No, Selma. What I order I expect to be done without any comment. If you have finished your unpacking, go out. Consuelo and I will join you in a few minutes."

The three girls left the room. Miss Dawson now rang. Alice appeared.

"Alice," said Miss Dawson, "take away, please. We will have dinner at half-past seven. Do you know what cook has ordered?"

"Cook hasn't ordered anything, miss. She was waiting to see you."

"Then I will go to the shops and send in what is necessary," said Miss Dawson. "Tell her so, please.—Consuelo, come with me into the drawing-room."

Consuelo and Miss Dawson crossed the narrow hall. The drawing-room belonged to that most hideous class of sea-side lodgings which is fortunately getting more and more obsolete. It was the sort of room to make one shudder. There were the conventional six chairs of the cheapest rosewood, their seats covered with faded rep. There were two arm-chairs to match, a table in the center of the room with wool mats on it, and a large glass case containing wax flowers. There were little antimacassars on the sofa and on the back of the arm-chairs, and there were very coarse and by no means over clean white curtains completely hiding the view at each small window. The carpet was very threadbare, and not too clean. Hot as the day was, the room felt almost damp, and Consuelo's first thought was to wish for a fire. Miss Dawson looked at her.

"Now," said the governess, "straight from your heart, Consuelo, how do you think you will like this?"

"Not at all," said Consuelo.

"Have you any reason for wishing to go on with it?"

Consuelo was silent for a time. Then she said firmly:

"Every reason; for I guess that poppa's daughter never spelt failure yet."

"Give me your hand," said Miss Dawson.

She took the girl's hand and wrung it hard.

"Now we know where we stand," said Miss Dawson. "This is your own scheme. You have disturbed two very happy girls in a very happy home. You have disturbed me, their governess. You have disturbed your cousin, Selma, who would certainly not have thought of this thing but for you. We have come here practically at your bidding. It is therefore fair that you should rough it more than the others. Are you agreeable?"

"What is fair must be done," said Consuelo. "You will forgive me if sometimes I don't understand. I have come here to be with you. I have called this house Discipline House, and I mean to go through with the discipline."

"Very well; you will expect me to treat you with more severity than I treat my own little pupils, and with more severity than I treat your cousin Selma."

"All the same," said Consuelo, "fair-play is fair-play."

"In this case," said Miss Dawson, "it is fair-play to give you the worst."

"Yes. Thank you," said Consuelo.

She went to the dingy window and tried to look out. There was a great lump in her throat. All that luxurious nature which had been so fostered by her training rose in sudden wild rebellion. She could so easily put an end to this scheme—just by a wire to poppa. Or she could make things not quite so pleasant as at home, and yet pleasant enough by wiring to poppa to take a larger house, to send down plenty of servants, to give the little party at the seaside the luxuries they had at home. But then where would the discipline come in? After a time she turned.

"I'll stick to my guns," she said.

"That is right," said Miss Dawson. "But I thought I'd make it plain to you. I thought I'd let you see once and for all that I don't mean to spare you. I will do nothing to injure your health but, short of that, you will learn some life lessons which you cannot possibly learn at Castle Rocco. You will see for yourself how those who have very small means live, and perhaps you will value money all the more in the future by this discovery. Your father, for instance, has sent two servants here. Now, I have been upstairs to the attic where these two women sleep, and it is so minute that it is physically impossible for them to enjoy health if they spend their nights there. I propose therefore, with your consent, Consuelo, to dismiss Alice to-morrow, and to ask cook to undertake all the work of this establishment; she can do this with a certain amount of help from you and from me. Are you agreeable?"

"What do you mean?" said Consuelo.

"We can make the beds, for instance," said Miss Dawson, "and dust the rooms."

"But won't the others do it, too?"

"I see no necessity. They didn't want to come here."

"Oh," said Consuelo. "Very well—if you think it right."

"We can, of course, go to a larger house."

"Oh, no; we'll stay here," said Consuelo.

"Very well, I will dismiss the servant called Alice. I must interview cook. If she doesn't wish to do all the work, I can easily get a good general servant to-morrow. Now run upstairs, put on your hat, and come out with me. We must immediately do the marketing."

This, at least, was a shade better. Consuelo flew from the room. She entered her little bedroom. There she clasped her hands tightly before her, and shut her eyes for a minute.

"Why is it that I put up with this?" she thought. "Why is it that, all the time, while she is quite harsh with me, I



care more for her than for any one else except my own poppa?"

Then she hastily looked round her untidy room. She had taken her things from her trunk, but did not know where to put them. Miss Dawson, on her way downstairs, tapped at the door.

"Are you ready?" she said.

"Yes; oh, yes."

"May I come in?"

"Yes."

"Consuelo," said Miss Dawson, "you must not leave your things about like this. In so small a room the most perfect neatness is indispensable. Please fold them all up carefully and put them away."

"But I have nowhere to put them."

"My dear, you must learn to contrive. If I take you in hand, I do it thoroughly. Now, be as quick as you can, or we shall have no dinner. I will wait for you downstairs."

Consuelo certainly felt inclined to rebel. She remembered poppa's temper, and that people had said she possessed it. It would be truly awful if it got the upper hand. She thought of Ronsard, ready to obey her smallest whim; of her luxurious bedroom at Castle Rocco; of her Parisian frocks. But she also thought—and that thought helped her—of the stimulating, arresting, breeze-like quality of independence—a quality which she, an American girl, must estimate at its full worth. Never, never, to her knowledge, had she been independent before. There had been people to do her bidding at every turn. Now there was no one. She must contrive; she must put up with discomforts. Truth to tell, she put up with them all very badly. She hung her ugly skirts one over the other on the two or three pegs which were fastened into the room door. She stuffed her blouses and ribbons into the shaky little drawers which were all the room contained for their accommodation. When she came downstairs her face looked quite tired. In short, she had not been so weary for many long days.

Miss Dawson and Consuelo went out shopping. Miss Dawson chose a very simple dinner: a little piece of mutton for roasting, a few potatoes, a simple green vegetable, and some fruit which could be stewed. She bought several other necessary things at the grocer's, and finally, when her shopping was over, turned her steps in the direction of the sparkling sea. Here, at least, was luxury, peace, sustaining rest for the rich and poor alike.

"You will enjoy this," said Miss Dawson, turning to the girl.

"Yes," she answered, her eyes beginning to shine.

"You are put on your trial," said Miss Dawson, suddenly, "and the longer you sustain the ordeal the greater will be my respect for you. But please remember that it is an ordeal, and that I have no intention of lightening it for you."

"I don't wish you to," said Consuelo.

Her voice was very low. Her eyes had a dazed look in them. The widening of Consuelo Josephine Persis Seymour's horizon was to be accomplished, but only through pain.

## CHAPTER XII.

## JUST IN TIME.

MISS DAWSON was the most orderly woman in the world. She was the very soul of method. The four girls and their governess had not been two days at Westbourne before their lives were marked out for them after such a fashion that there was not an unemployed minute. There was none of that graceful leisure that Consuelo had hitherto thought essential to well-being. Every little thing was done by clockwork, and the clock which ticked out Consuelo's day was set to more disagreeable hours than any one else's clock in that little establishment. For instance, she hated getting up early; but this had to be done, because Miss Dawson insisted on her going downstairs to help the "general," as she was called—the fine London cook having departed—to lay the breakfast-things and to dust both parlor and drawing-room. Consuelo found that dusting was a most disagreeable occupation. Her first experience caused her to become the author of several bad breakages. She whisked her duster about, and in consequence knocked down a hideous blue vase from the mantelpiece in the drawing-room.

Miss Dawson said calmly that the vase must be replaced.

"Have you any money?" she asked.

"Yes," said Consuelo. "Poppa gave me a pound. I spent a little of it on shrimps, but I have a good deal of change over."

"We must see to matching that vase," said Miss Dawson. "If you can't get one exactly like it, you must get the best you can."

"I hate dusting," said Consuelo.

"I do not allow the girls whom I am training," was Miss Dawson's response, "to say the words 'I hate' in my presence. Now sit down, please, and pour out tea. You will be more careful with your duster to-morrow."

Consuelo felt again inclined to say "I hate," but restrained herself. She had never before sat in front of the tea-tray, and she disliked her position immensely. She had to help every one else before herself, and in consequence her tea, which she liked very strong, had to be watered. She pushed her cup away with a discontented air, while Miss Dawson raised a quiet face and glanced at it.

"Is anything the matter?" she asked.

"I dislike my tea weak," said Consuelo.

"You can have my cup, Connie," exclaimed Selma. "Mine's beautifully strong. Here, change."

Consuelo was about to do so, when Miss Dawson raised a warning hand.

"Keep your own tea, Selma.—Consuelo, I desire that the meat and drink provided for us be partaken of without grumbling."

Consuelo swallowed her weak tea, but a resentful feeling began to grow in her heart. When breakfast was over she had to busy herself with household cares, while the other three girls went out. Selma was quite unhappy about her.

"Connie will never stand this," she said. "I wonder what her poppa would say if he saw his jewel of a girl drinking her tea too weak for her taste."

"But then she wanted to come here," said Patty; "and she might have known that Miss Dawson would carry out what was required of her."

"I don't care," said Selma, in an angry tone. "I will say it, whether you like it or not, Patty and Curly Falkland—that Miss Dawson is just beastly to Consuelo. She does her very best to make Connie feel wicked. I know Consuelo, and you don't; and I say that this sort of thing can't go on."

"We know Miss Dawson," said Patty. "She is very, very kind, really. She didn't want to come here a bit; she only did it to oblige Consuelo."

"I don't think Miss Dawson ought to be blamed," said Curly. "She is always like this until she has broken you well in; then she is all right."

"Dear me!" said Selma. "You are a priminy little pair! Now, do you suppose for a single moment that a woman like that will crush Consuelo's spirit out of her as she has crushed the spirit out of you?"

"We have plenty of spirit," said Curly. "It is not at all nice to be told that because we do things in a lady-like way we have no spirit."

"Well, I didn't mean to annoy you," said Selma. "Oh, there's the sea! How glorious it looks! Shall we go for a bathe?"

"What!" exclaimed Curly; "without leave?"

"Must we ask permission for every single thing we want to do?"

"Oh, no," said Curly, "not for little things; but bathing is a big thing. I have no doubt Miss Dawson will allow us to have a bathe in the sea presently, when she and Consuelo come along."

Selma stood and looked at the waves. The tide was exactly in the right state for perfect bathing. Selma knew how to go about in the water as though she were a veritable fish. She could swim and dive, and do anything, in short, but sink.

"Can you swim?" she said, looking at Patty.

"No," answered Patty Falkland; "I never learnt. Is it very difficult?"

"It's not difficult a bit," said Selma.

The three girls sat down on the beach. Curly took out a French exercise-book, and began to go over some work which Miss Dawson meant to correct in the afternoon. She began repeating French verbs under her breath. Selma looked at her with almost aversion. After a time Curly turned and spoke to Patty.

"Do you greatly mind if I leave you for a little? I must go home to fetch my French dictionary. Of course, if you like, you can come with me; but I don't think dear Miss Dawson will object to my going alone."

"And we don't mind staying a bit," said Selma, her bright eyes dancing.

Patty said nothing. Curly got up in her resolute way and left the beach. To reach Discipline House she had to go right through the town; but that did not matter, for she knew her way perfectly. When she was well out of sight Selma turned and caught Patty by the arm.

"Now let's have a dip," she said. "*She* is out of the way. What a dreadful cross-patch she is, and as narrow as they make 'em!"

"You must not abuse my sister," said Patty, getting very red.

"You're not a bit like her," said the artful Selma. "And look you here, Patty, or Patience, or whatever your name may happen to be; I can't live in this place unless I can speak out to some one. I daren't say a word to poor, darling Connie at present, so you'll have to be my safety-valve. Now, this is the position. We are sent here by Uncle Joseph to have a good time, I guess. He thinks—poor, dear, deluded man!—that we're scampering about all day on the seashore, and running in and out of the waves, and lying afterwards on the beach with the sun pouring on us until we're dry, and inclined to have another dip; and if we're not doing that, I guess he supposes that we are having ponies and riding away across the Downs toward Rocky Head over there. And I guess he believes that the house is a pretty nice one, instead of being the shabbiest, horriddest place I have ever been in; and I guess he thinks that we have enough servants to do our work for us, and that his Connie—his Consuelo Josephine Persis—is not soiling her pretty hands, or being scolded because she breaks a thing when she is dusting. Think of the richest heiress in New York *dusting!* It is too ludicrous for anything; I guess Uncle Joe would pretty well tear his hair out if he knew; and if you don't help me, I'll just have to write and tell him the truth."

"It would be a pity for you to do that," answered Patty, "without consulting your Consuelo; for she is the one who wished for discipline and who wished to understand the hardships of poverty. I am quite sure we don't want to be in that small house. Curly and I would much, much rather wait until August, and go away with our own father to the Highlands or some other beautiful place. We came here to

please Consuelo, and I don't think you ought to talk like that."

"That's the rub," said Selma. "I guess it's beastly hard. I guess I hate it all."

"So do I," said Patty, suddenly. "I hate it with all my heart and soul."

"Well, that's some comfort," answered Selma, suddenly taking Patty's hand and clasping it. "I say, Patience, you are quite a good-looking girl. By-and-by you'll be very pretty."

"Shall I?" replied Patty, the color filling her cheeks.

"Of course you will; more especially if you don't allow yourself to be crushed flat."

"Crushed flat! What *do* you mean?"

"What I say," replied Selma. "You'll be crushed to a mummy, and worse, if you go on obeying every single word that old-fashioned Miss Dawson says. Of course, as to your sister Curly, she's made that way. Mark my words; she'll be an old maid—she'll never marry. She'll be a second Miss Dawson. Think of it!"

"At any rate," said Patty, "your Consuelo, whom you are so proud of, adores Miss Dawson."

"Oh, I guess that won't last," said Selma. "But come along, Patty—do. Assert your independence. You were never told not to bathe this morning, were you?"

"That is true," answered Patty. "There was nothing said about bathing at all."

"Then, of course, you'll come with me this minute. I have plenty of money, and we can hire bathing-dresses and get a bathing-box, too. Let's be quick before Curly returns. Come, Patty; do be plucky for once."

Now, Patty was always considered the weak-minded member of the Falkland household. She was easily influenced, whereas Curly was not. She was a very good-natured, happy, high-spirited girl, and there suddenly rose within her breast an intense longing to do what Selma wished. The desire to be naughty, also, absolutely to disobey Miss Dawson, seemed most attractive. Selma was right when she said that Patty was disobeying no rule when she bathed, for she had never been told not to bathe. Selma did not think of the unspoken rules of conduct which Patty was well aware of. She dragged her young companion along, and soon Patty's whole heart and soul were absorbed in the fun of the stolen enterprise.

"You must help me when I am in the water," she said. "I can't swim—not really."

"But you're not a coward," said Selma. "All you want is to have confidence. I'll soon teach you. You will come out with me, and I'll show you the first strokes, and keep my hand under your chin. You can't sink if I do that. Now then, all you want is pluck. What a pretty little bathing-costume! Oh, this is real fun!"

The bathing-boxes stood in a long row facing the sea. Any ladies coming on the beach could not possibly distinguish the people who were getting ready for their dip; and when Selma presently danced rather than ran down to the shore, her black hair coiled up round her head, with a little oil-skin cap of somewhat fantastic appearance placed over it; and Patty, in a very pretty sky-blue costume, followed her example, no two girls felt more wildly delighted. Patty was quite certain that Selma could teach her to swim in no time. Selma did manage to show her some of the first elements of the art of swimming. But, alack and alas! Patty Falkland was by no means the bravest of the brave, and after a short time she gave up all attempts at swimming, and, getting into shallow water, contented herself with splashing about and occasionally allowing a wave to wash right over her.

Selma, now left to her own devices, performed prodigious feats in the way of swimming and diving. An admiring crowd of spectators quickly singled out the graceful and splendid young swimmer, and amongst these spectators, had she but known it, were Miss Dawson, Consuelo, and Curly.

It was Consuelo who first recognized her cousin.

"Oh," she said, "if that isn't Selma! Do look, please, Miss Dawson. She is swimming so splendidly!"

"You mean to tell me," said Miss Dawson, her face turning very white—"you mean to inform me that your cousin has gone into the water alone and without leave?"

"I suppose she has," answered Consuelo. "Selma can swim like a duck, and so can I. May I go and have a swim now, please?"

"You may not. Your cousin has forfeited your right."

Consuelo felt herself turning red and then white. With a great effort she restrained the torrent of rage which was rising to her lips.

"Where can Patty be?" asked Curly.

It was an unfortunate question, for just at that moment a little, dripping figure in pale blue was seen emerging from the waves, and Patty—unmistakably Patty—ran toward the bathing-box. Miss Dawson, without a word, marched in the same direction. Consuelo and Curly were left alone.

"Oh," said Curly, "isn't it a shame? I do think your Selma is too bad. Poor Patty! How could she disobey? She knew perfectly well she had no right to go into the water. But she'll catch it—they'll both catch it. You'll see what a severe punishment Miss Dawson will inflict on them both."

"Is it necessary to punish for what is not wrong?" said Consuelo then.

"I don't understand you," replied Curly. "It is always wrong to disobey."

She sat down as she spoke, and took out her French exercise-book once again. Consuelo looked at her with the greatest contempt, and then marched in the direction of the bathing-box. Her darling scheme had come off. She was

truly in the land of discipline. How ugly was her dress! She hated brown holland. She was not even allowed to wear a little brown silk blouse, but a harsh "waist," as she called it, of brown holland on her slim young body.

Miss Dawson approved of linen collars, and Consuelo hated them. A linen collar now rasped her neck. White linen cuffs hurt her wrists. She felt in a furious temper. Poppa's own terrible temper was aroused within her.

When she reached the bathing-box, she opened the door, without permission, and went in. Patty was standing there, crying very hard. Miss Dawson was herself rubbing Patty's hair, having first washed out the salt water in a basin brought for the purpose. Miss Dawson did not even glance at Consuelo. Consuelo came forward.

"She meant no harm," she said, after a pause. "Bathing is so good for one. Say, please, that you will forgive her."

"I must request you, Consuelo, not to interfere," said Miss Dawson. "Go out of this box at once."

"I won't," said Consuelo.

"You won't? What do you mean?"

Miss Dawson turned and looked at the girl.

"You are tired already," she added. "It is only the third day."

"No, no!" said Consuelo, struggling. "I never spelt 'failure' yet."

She turned at once and went out. She went down to the seashore, and, making a trumpet of her hand, shouted to Selma:

"Come in, Selma Dudley! You are causing ructions. Be quick; come in!"

Selma heard Consuelo's voice, and immediately swam to the shore.

"You'll catch it," said Consuelo, "even worse than poor Patty has caught it. There's no help for it; you must obey while we are here. I suppose it'll do you good in the long-run."

"I don't wish to be done good to," said Selma. "I don't see, if I dislike this plan of yours, why I should stick to it."

"Well; don't stand with all your things dripping about you, looking so ridiculous," said Consuelo.

"Aren't you going to have a swim yourself, Connie? It's a perfect morning; the sea is quite warm."

"No."

"No? What does that mean?"

"It means that I have got—got to—obey."

"Oh, you are a goose!" said Selma.

She wrapped her bathing-cloak round her and ran off to the bathing-box. Miss Dawson had now got Patty into her clothes.

"You disobeyed me," she said, when the other girl came in. "I had arranged a picnic for this afternoon, as I want you all to lead as happy a life as possible. But you and

Patience must stay at home. People never do wrong who are under my charge without being punished. You will, in future, bathe when you have permission; not otherwise."

"Thanks so much," said Selma, in an impertinent voice.

She began to put on her things, and Miss Dawson, holding Patty's hand, led her from the bathing-box. Selma presently joined the group. She was defiant, and sat down deliberately close to Consuelo. She could talk the deaf-and-dumb language on her fingers very well, for she and Consuelo had amused themselves with this mode of conversation over and over again during their many long journeyings. Now she began to talk in this fashion to her cousin.

"She is an old horror," were the first words.

Consuelo did nothing. She kept her two hands firmly in her lap.

"How long are you going to stick to this?" was Selma's next inquiry.

Consuelo immediately replied, "As long as I think well."

Miss Dawson looked up.

"Girls, don't be silly," she said. "It is against the rules for you to talk on your fingers. Now, if you like, we will walk from one end of the beach to the other. That will just get us home in time for early dinner.—Consuelo, you and I together; Patty walks by herself in front, Selma and Curly behind."

"I don't want to walk by myself," said Patty. "Mayn't I walk with Selma and Curly?"

"You will do what you are told, Patience."

Patty knew that tone; there was no disobeying it. She walked on, a forlorn little object. She had not worn a bathing-cap, and her hair was still damp. It hung down her back in heavy masses. Curly, thoroughly unsympathetic with Selma, made her walk very dull. Consuelo, out of sympathy with every one, maintained an ominous silence. Miss Dawson tried to make herself agreeable. It was one of her ways, even when she punished—and she did punish a great deal when necessary—not to show the slightest ill-will toward those under her displeasure. They must take their punishment, of course, but they need not have anything else unpleasant added to it.

Miss Dawson, therefore, tried to make the walk agreeable to Consuelo.

"You should read the works of nature," she said. "What sort of books have you been studying lately?"

"What sort of books?" said Consuelo. "Oh, novels; I never read anything else."

"Novels are exceedingly weakening to the mind," said Miss Dawson. "I do not altogether prohibit Scott, or even Dickens, if carefully chosen. Some of the old writers, too, are quite harmless. Miss Yonge teaches very valuable lessons. Have you ever read *The Daisy Chain*?"

"No. What is it?" said Consuelo.



"My dear girl, do you really tell me to my face that you never read *The Daisy Chain*?"

"I never heard of it," said Consuelo.

"You ought to be ashamed to say so. I did not think any one of ordinary intellect now lived who did not know that fine story."

Consuelo shrugged her shoulders.

"I read Gertrude Atherton," she said, "and—and Amélie Rives. I adore Amélie Rives."

"I never heard of her," said Miss Dawson, in her turn.

"What! you never heard of *Virginia of Virginia*?"

"No. I am sure the writer in question is objectionable."

"She is not; she's splendid," said Consuelo.

"Consuelo, may I request you not to contradict me?"

"I'll try not to," said Consuelo; "but it's very difficult."

"Would it be worth your while to go on with this if the thing were easy?" asked the governess.

"I suppose not. I guess I'll die of it, all the same."

"We'll turn now, please, girls," said Miss Dawson, raising her voice; and the little party wheeled round and went home.

Dinner was a dull repast, and decidedly badly cooked. The meat was hard and the gravy watery. The potatoes were too much done; the peas were old. Consuelo pushed her plate away, but Miss Dawson immediately desired her to eat what was put before her.

"One of the very first lessons in discipline," she said, "is to eat with thankfulness what one is given."

"Not if you have a pain afterwards," said Selma.

Miss Dawson glanced at the girl as though she would annihilate her. When the early dinner had come to an end Miss Dawson propounded her plans for the afternoon.

"I have ordered a wagonette," she said, "from the livery stables, thinking that we should be a party of five; but I think it would be better to countermand the wagonette and have a phaeton; for we shall, I regret to say, be only three."

"And why three?" said Consuelo. "What becomes of the other two?"

"Selma and Patty stay at home. They have disobeyed me. Their punishment is to stay in the house."

Selma sprang from her chair, then with a great effort seated herself again. Patty looked submissive and dull.

"You can have a trap that holds two," said Consuelo.

"If Selma and Patty stay, I stay with them."

"You are coming with me, Consuelo; no more words. Go upstairs at once and get ready."

"I—I guess I won't."

Miss Dawson sat very still.

"I give you five minutes," she said, after a pause. "You know our compact; it can be broken at any moment. You are the one to break it. An act of insubordination closes this arrangement at once, and—why, what is the matter?"

Miss Dawson felt herself coloring, for some one had just passed the windows—no less a person than Mr. Falkland.

“Oh, father!” cried Patty.

Nothing could keep her in at that moment; no one could suppress her. She was out of the dingy little house and in Mr. Falkland’s arms before Miss Dawson had time to utter a word. Mr. Falkland entered, looking hot and tired. Patty was clinging to his arm. Her face was radiant. Curly also flew to him, flung her arms round his neck, and kissed him over and over again.

“Oh, father! it is good to see you,” she cried.

Consuelo felt a lump in her throat. There was no doubt whatever that had Joseph P. Seymour arrived on the scene at that moment, Consuelo’s grand scheme for teaching herself discipline would have come to an end there and then. But Joseph P., following his daughter’s own implicit directions, had not dared to run down to Westbourne. Mr. Falkland, on the contrary, felt quite at liberty to visit his little daughters as often as he pleased.

“Why, what is the matter?” he said, looking round. “What a terribly ugly, poky room!—How do you do, Consuelo?—How do you do, Selma?”

He shook hands with both girls, then came up to Miss Dawson, whom he treated with great respect.

“This is a very small house,” he said.

“I chose it,” said Consuelo then.

It was one thing to hate her own scheme, to feel that she could no longer go on with it, and it was quite another thing for Mr. Falkland to come down and abuse it.

“Oh, well,” he said, cheerfully, “if you are all content, it is you who have got to live here; but I must say, if I had imagined that your father, Consuelo, had hired a house of this quality——”

“He didn’t want to,” said Consuelo. “Poppa would have put us into the biggest mansion at Westbourne. It was I who chose this house; it is called Discipline House, and it is full—full to the brim—of discipline.”

“I guess so, indeed!” said Selma.

“Please, Miss Dawson,” said Patty, turning eloquent eyes toward the governess, “you will forgive Selma and me now that father has come? Please, you will?”

“Why,” said Mr. Falkland, “has there been anything unpleasant going on? Aren’t you all good girls? I trust Miss Dawson, you know; but——”

“We are quite good, really—really,” said Patty. “We just——”

“I was teaching Patty to swim this morning,” said Selma, “but I unfortunately had not asked permission beforehand. That is the sum and substance of our offending.”

“It is a rather grave thing,” said Miss Dawson. “I thought it well to exercise my authority, and Selma and Patty were to have been punished by staying in this afternoon——”

"Another time—another time," said Mr. Falkland. "Not to-day, please—by no manner of means to-day. I have come down to have a bit of fun, and we're all going to have a jolly time—discipline relaxed, if you please, for the present. Discipline can begin her iron rule to-morrow morning, if necessary; but I want us all to go and have a huge tea at the finest shop in Westbourne, and then we'll go to the theater, and have a hot supper afterwards."

"Oh, father!" said each of his own girls in tones of rapture.

"You must do what you like, of course, Mr. Falkland," said Miss Dawson.

"Yes; we must all do what I wish," said Mr. Falkland. "I am in authority when I appear on the scene, and, dear Miss Dawson, you will be as jolly as any of us.—Consuelo, my dear, I mustn't go back to your father reporting such a long face.—Now then, all of you into your best frocks, and off we go for our fun."

It was during the walk which followed that Patty and Curly really enjoyed themselves, for Miss Dawson was one of those wise women who know when they are beaten. Consuelo was also to have the day off. Miss Dawson went to the girl in her bedroom.

"You were angry and impertinent just now," she said, "and I certainly should have kept my word if you had dared to oppose me, but Mr. Falkland arrived just in time to save the situation. For the rest of to-day, therefore, you are free. You and Selma can go out with the Falklands and enjoy yourselves to the top of your bent. Mr. Falkland has just gone on with his two daughters, but will meet you both at one of the shelters near the band-stand. Put on any dress you like. Discipline is relaxed until to-morrow morning."

"Thank you," said Consuelo. After a pause she said, "Aren't you coming?"

"No; I have letters to write, and there are many things to attend to here."

Consuelo made a great effort to say, "Oughtn't I to—to—stay and—wash up?"

"Not to-day," said Miss Dawson, smiling. She laid her hand for a brief moment on the girl's shoulder. "But thank you for reminding me," she added. Then she left the room.

The moment she had done so Consuelo proceeded to stand on her head. She made one or two somersaults across the room. It was difficult to do more, having regard to its minute proportions. She then rubbed her face with both hands, and, sitting down on the foot of her bed, burst into a peal of merry laughter.

Selma came running in.

"Consuelo Josephine Persis!" she said. "Have you gone stark, staring mad?"

"I guess I have," answered Consuelo. "I never was so

happy in all my life. We're free till to-morrow morning! Let's make the most of it, Selma. We may enjoy ourselves; we may eat nice things. 'Pon my word, I am hungry. Aren't you, Selma?"

"Starving," said Selma. "It's a hateful life altogether."

"Come now," said Consuelo, "we are not going to abuse it. We'll just put it right out of our minds until to-morrow morning. Oh, what a glorious, free time we'll have!"

"I guess we'll have a jolly meal," said Selma. "I've got a little money. I am going to buy chocolates and cookies of all sorts."

"Oh, *chocolats fondants!*" said Consuelo. "How just too delicious they are! Selma, what frock will you wear?"

"I don't know. I haven't brought anything very pretty with me."

"There's an old pink muslin of yours that I am going to put on," said Consuelo. "Oh, this collar! It nearly cuts my throat."

"Poor Connie! You certainly are the most perfect fright I ever looked at. Get into something pretty—do. You can have my pink muslin, and welcome. I believe I can furbish up something white for myself."

## CHAPTER XIII.

### ICES AND FONDANTS.

WHILE Consuelo and Selma were decking themselves in the very best finery they had brought with them to Westbourne, Mr. Falkland and his two young daughters were waiting for them on comfortable chairs facing the sea. The girls drew their chairs very close to their father. They were those delicious chairs with covers overhead which shelter you completely from the rays of the sun.

The day was a perfect one. The sea was of azure blue, fading away into a misty horizon. The sky above was blue also, and cloudless. There was very little wind.

Mr. Falkland drew a long breath of satisfaction.

"Well, girls," he said, "to put it frankly to you, I don't understand the position. Do you think that little girl Consuelo—that child with a queer name and almost wild expression in her eyes—is—quite all there?" He tapped his forehead.

"Why, father," said Patty, with a laugh, "Consuelo is cleverer than any of us. She learns a lesson while we, Curly and I, are thinking about beginning it. I don't believe she is especially well educated, but she is quite a splendid girl; and as to brains—she has the brains of two or three ordinary girls."

"Very well, my dear; I only wanted to know. Still, I cannot conceive why a girl brought up in the lap of luxury

should choose such an unpleasant house. I only trust it is healthy."

"That's the fun of it, father," said Patty. "She chose the house because it is ugly and—and—rather comfortless."

"It's very hard on us, though," said Curly.

"You don't like it?" said her father, turning and facing her.

"No," said Curly; "I don't like it at all. Why should I?"

"You don't like it either, do you, Patty?"

"I liked it awfully when I was in the water this morning," said Patty. "Oh, I say, father! I *wish* you could see Selma Dudley swim. It is perfectly magnificent. She has got that side-stroke which is so splendid. She tried to teach me to swim——"

"And a very good thing, too," said Mr. Falkland. "All girls should know how to swim."

"Well, that is what I think, father," said Patty; "but Miss Dawson turned so cross. She was in a rage with me, and also with Selma, and she meant to punish us by keeping us in that awful little house all the afternoon. Miss Dawson is never like that at Tamaresk."

"No, never," said Curly. "But, you know, you did disobey her, Patty. I warned you. If you had been guided by me you wouldn't have got into that trouble."

"I will speak to her," said Mr. Falkland. "This is a splendid opportunity for you both to learn to swim. Miss Dawson will give you leave after I have talked the matter over with her."

"And may Selma and Consuelo teach us, father?"

"Certainly—certainly. An excellent thing for them to do. You say they both swim beautifully?"

"Consuelo says she can swim; and if she is even half as good as Selma, she is first rate," said Patty with enthusiasm.

"Very well; I am glad to hear it."

"But all the same, father," said Curly, nestling up close to him, "we don't like the life a bit. There's something about it—I can't tell what—that makes poor Miss Dawson so cross. We'd much, much rather go home again. Why should we stay down in that poky little house by the seaside because Consuelo Seymour wishes it?"

Mr. Falkland turned gravely and looked at his girls.

"Tell me," he said, quickly; "is Miss Dawson cross to Consuelo?"

"Well, we think she is very cross. I suppose she hates her," said Curly, "very much—as I do myself," she added.

Mr. Falkland laid his hand emphatically on Curly's arm.

"Do you know, children," he said, "I had a prompting that I must come to pay you all a visit to-day. I was certain that if I did not come something would occur. It was most inconvenient to me to come, I can assure you; nevertheless, I am glad that I have appeared on the scene."

"Oh, and so are we, father," said Patty.

"So are we, father," echoed Curly.

"I perceive," continued Mr. Falkland, "that I am only just in time. Your way of talking of Consuelo is, to say the least of it, unkind. Now, my dears, I mean to confide in you. On this scheme of Consuelo's depends something which means—children, which means so much to me that were it to fall through I should, my dear little girls, be obliged to keep you in dingy houses all your lives."

"Father!" said Curly.

"Yes. I don't want to explain; but, in a few words, I may tell you this. Joseph P. Seymour is an enormously rich man. He has got a horrible temper, and he is devoured with pride in his only child. If, for any possible reason, Miss Dawson or you two girls were to offend Consuelo now, Consuelo's father would withdraw his support from me. Were that support withdrawn I should—*suffer*. I need not go into particulars. I should have a bad time. In short, I came down to-day to tell you that you have got to put up with Consuelo, and that you have to make her life here sufficiently agreeable to her to prevent her throwing the scheme up."

Curly and Patty both felt frightened, they scarcely knew why. They were immensely proud of their father's confidence. He had never given them any such confidence before, and they were at once astonished and gratified. But it is certain that they were also frightened. It seemed to them that on their young shoulders had suddenly been laid some of the burden of life. It was Curly who spoke first.

"I think, father," she said, "you ought to speak to Miss Dawson and tell her what you have told us. You know how Miss Dawson is always actuated by a sense of duty. She does not approve of Consuelo or of Selma. She wants to mold them. They are not really nice, father," continued Curly—"I mean, not according to our ideas."

"Oh, yes, they are, both nice," said Patty, astonishing Curly as she made this remark. "They are, after a fashion, quite splendid girls. I think it is quite magnificent the way Consuelo takes her discipline. Only, of course, she can't be strained too far."

"Father, you are right. You just came in the nick of time. I was watching Consuelo just at the very moment when you passed the window. She was about to burst out into something—something desperate. She has got, she says, her father's temper."

"Good heavens!" said Mr. Falkland. "If there were to be a disturbance now, I cannot tell what would happen. Consuelo, and Selma, and Joseph P. Seymour would be all right; but what about me? What about my children?"

It was at this moment that eager steps were heard approaching, and, looking round, the two Falkland girls saw Connie and Selma coming to meet them. Consuelo's face was wreathed in smiles. It was impossible to recognize the languid sort of girl of Castle Rocco in this animated young

person, her eyes bright, her magnificent hair falling thickly over her shoulders.

"When are we to have tea?" she said, eagerly.

"I guess I am starving," said Selma.

The interruption was most welcome. Mr. Falkland took Consuelo's hand and walked on in front with her; the three other girls followed behind. When they reached a very large and fashionable restaurant he ordered a private room, and then gave Consuelo *carte-blanche* with regard to the meal. She looked at him in a puzzled way.

"You're not going to act poppa with me, are you?" she said.

He laughed, and just for a minute felt slightly confused. Those clear blue eyes of Connie's seemed to read through motives. Mr. Falkland felt half afraid of her.

"You have no discipline to-day," he said. "We have banished all discipline out of sight until to-morrow morning. Please, will you and Selma order the sort of tea which you would have in New York City?"

"Guess we can't," said Selma, with a sigh. "There is nothing here like there is in New York."

"But we are hungry," said Consuelo. "May Selma and I go into the shop and choose? But, then," she added suddenly, "have I got to pay? For if I have, I have very little money. I told poppa only to give me one pound; and I have spent a little of it, and more has to go to replace a hideous blue vase."

"The tea is my affair," said Mr. Falkland. "Order it, my dears. Surprise us now with your American tastes."

Selma took Consuelo's hand and dragged her into the shop.

"Let's be quick," she said. "I am perfectly ravenous: just like a wolf. Oh, that dinner! Consuelo, let's have *fondants* of every sort and description."

"We can't begin on *fondants*, you silly," said Consuelo. "Now, let me think."

A young woman came forward, and Consuelo gave elaborate orders. In a short time the meal she wished to partake of graced the board.

"We'll begin with iced drinks," she said.

A tray of glasses filled with pink liquid stuff, quantities of ice, and some straws for sucking through appeared. The girls hailed them with rapture.

"These drinks cool one," said Selma. "Guess we'll want filling after we're well cooled. You try yours, Mr. Falkland. This is a sort of shandygaff, but not what we should treat you with were you in New York City."

Poor Mr. Falkland anything but appreciated the so-called shandygaff. It was followed by ices and little, delicate cakes.

"I shall get quite a chill," he said, "if you treat me to much more of this sort of thing."

"And ices don't take away one's appetite," said Curly. "Can't we have something English at our tea?"

"I was going to propose," said Consuelo, speaking in the languid voice she used when she was a fine young lady at Castle Rocco, "that we proceed to sample different sorts of chocolate and *fondants*."

"My dears," said Mr. Falkland, "I am most anxious to oblige you all, but if I have many more courses of this description I shall be ill, and shall be obliged to stay at Westbourne for a few days, and that would never do."

Consuelo smiled. "We'll have coffee afterwards," she said; "and after coffee, rich chocolate with cream. I guess that's about the best we can do in this outlandish town."

Patty and Curly pretended to enjoy their tea. Consuelo and Selma enjoyed theirs without any pretense. Mr. Falkland felt that there was a heavy price to pay even for the goodwill of Joseph P. Seymour, and they all went out of the shop, the American girls satisfied, the English girls and their father chilled to the bone.

"I propose a quick walk," said Mr. Falkland, "if you young ladies have no objection; and I further propose," he added, "that I choose the sort of supper we have after the theater to-night."

"Yes," said Consuelo, "that is fair-play. But now, say, didn't you find those ices and *fondants* and that chocolate just maddeningly grateful?"

"I found them very maddening," said Mr. Falkland; "but grateful—well, to be frank with you, no."

"How funny!" said Consuelo. "It takes a lot of training to understand the ways of New York City."

The rest of the day was passed in a state of rapture on the part of the four girls. They laughed until they cried over the funny piece being performed in the theater. They enjoyed the *recherché* supper which Mr. Falkland gave them at one of the most expensive restaurants at Westbourne, and when he brought them home they were all sleepy and tired, and glad to go to bed.

It was just before he left for the night that Mr. Falkland had a word with Miss Dawson.

"I know your position is a trying one," he said, "and I don't want to say much. All I beg of you is this: manage matters with such tact that Consuelo Seymour does not return to her father until the three months are up."

Now, all might have been well, and no unpleasant circumstances might have occurred, and the whole of this strange experiment might scarcely have been worth recording at all, had not Mr. Falkland made a grave mistake. He trusted his daughters sufficiently to make them see the importance of keeping well in with the Seymour family; but something—was it pride, or what?—prevented his telling Miss Dawson as much as he ought to have done of the real situation.

Miss Dawson replied rather stiffly, telling him at once that she was not leaving a stone unturned to perform her duty according to her own lights, and he went away satisfied that



such was the case, and telling the governess that he would return to London by the first train in the morning. Little did he guess what serious complications were immediately to arise.

## CHAPTER XIV.

## A NIGHTMARE.

MISS DAWSON spent an almost sleepless night. The scheme which she had never approved of was, in her opinion, turning out badly. She disliked the shabby little house more and more each day. She cordially detested the task she had undertaken. Consuelo, somehow or other, failed to appeal to her. Miss Dawson was not blessed with any great perception of character, and, although she did recognize the honesty and integrity of purpose which had made the rich young American girl propose such a plan for her own mortification, she could not see deeply enough into that same girl's character to appreciate in the least the work of training her. Mr. Falkland's words, too, made her feel uncomfortable. How was she to perform her duty, that duty which was as the breath of life to her, and yet use tact with regard to Consuelo Seymour? Above all things, must this most disagreeable state of affairs go on for three whole months?

Mr. Falkland was in earnest when he spoke, there was no doubt of that, and, what was far more to the purpose, he was, for some reason, worried. If Miss Dawson did not care for Consuelo, she would lay down her life willingly for any member of the Falkland family, and had she known what Patty and Curly knew; she would, at any personal inconvenience, have adjusted herself to the present position. But not knowing, not being confided in, she could not adapt herself to things as they were.

When morning came she fell into an uneasy sleep, in which she endured horrible nightmares. Consuelo had taken Patty and Curly out to sea. The tide was too strong, and, battle as they would, they could not reach the shore. Miss Dawson saw her beloved pupils drowning before her eyes. With a shriek, she flung herself, dressed as she was, into the waves to go to their rescue. Too late. As she was stretching out her anguished hand to grasp Patty's long hair, the girl sank out of sight. With another cry, the terrified governess awoke. She awoke to find Consuelo in the room and looking down at her.

Consuelo had certainly brought very ugly dresses to Westbourne, but the magnificent dressing-gown which was now wrapped round her slim young person was out of keeping with the rest of her garments.

"What is the matter with you?" said Consuelo. "Have you had a bad dream?"

"Oh, yes," said Miss Dawson, rubbing her eyes. "I—are they really safe? Did I really only dream it?"

Consuelo could not help laughing.

"You dreamt something that made you cry out. Were you having a nightmare?"

"I suppose so; I think so," said Miss Dawson, with a sigh. "Thank God it was only a nightmare!"

"Are you subject to that sort of thing?" said Consuelo, sitting down on the side of the bed.

"No," said the governess; "I never had nightmares until I knew you."

Consuelo was silent for a minute. Then she said:

"I guess that's rather a hard thing to say to me, isn't it?"

"It is true, all the same," said Miss Dawson.

Consuelo uttered another sigh.

"Discipline begins again to-day, doesn't it?" she said, after a minute's pause.

"Yes," said Miss Dawson.

She lay still for a minute, recovering her shattered nerves. Then she took up her daily cross with her wonted firmness:

"You ought not to come into my room like this, Consuelo, and in that—that magnificent garment, all lace and ribbons and satin. Disgusting, I call it."

"It's one of my home dressing-gowns," said Consuelo, stroking the satin surface with one of her white little hands. "I have no other, so it had to go into my trunk."

"Well," said Miss Dawson, "get dressed now. Take it off and put it away; you have your dusting to do."

"It is too early even for dusting," said Consuelo. "It isn't much more than six o'clock."

"Oh, dear!" said Miss Dawson. "Then why did you wake me?"

"It was a good thing I did," answered the girl; "that is, to judge from the expression of your face."

"Consuelo," said Miss Dawson, "I am having a very hard time."

"Guess I know," said Consuelo. "Guess you don't like me a bit."

"I must be true, at any cost," said Miss Dawson. "You are in no way the sort of girl who suits me."

Consuelo's lips suddenly quivered. She looked down on the ground. Her eyelashes were long and thick, and of the same color as her hair. Her features were delicate and refined. Her little face looked pale in the morning light. She looked very young, quite a child.

"I thought," she said, after a minute's reflection, "that those people—who—set themselves up as Guides, Teachers—those people who profess to help others over the stones and the briars and the roughnesses of life—were too high up to have likes or dislikes."

"I don't understand you, my dear," said Miss Dawson.

Nor did she. Consuelo's blue eyes were now fixed on the governess's face.

"I have, perhaps," she said, very slowly, "put a glamour

over you. I have, perhaps, seen you in a false light. You are, perhaps, neither a guide nor a real teacher. You perhaps don't preach the best life."

Miss Dawson felt herself coloring. After a minute she said:

"I have just undergone an awful nightmare, and now it seems I am to listen to a lecture. I should be glad if you would go to your room and stay in bed until it is time for you to rise."

"Thanks so much. I will after I have spoken."

"There is no reason why you should speak, Consuelo. You have come at your own request. You are my pupil. I am your governess. You are in my charge. I act to you as one who has authority. I desire you to go to your room."

"Yes," said Consuelo, "I will go; but there is just one thing to be said first. You understand that you are at liberty to throw the whole thing up, as I also am at liberty to seek another guide and another teacher."

"Manage matters with such tact that Consuelo Seymour does not return to her father until the three months are up," Mr. Falkland had said to Miss Dawson on the previous night. The words came back to her—insistent words. They rang in her ears, and at the same time she had a very distinct vision of the harassed, anxious, almost pathetic face of the speaker. How gladly would she have replied to Consuelo had she only to choose for herself, "My dear, I shall be glad to resign my responsibility with regard to you!" But, thinking of Mr. Falkland, she could not do this. Consuelo was watching her face.

"You don't want me to go?" she said.

"Not if you will stay," said Miss Dawson, in a choked voice.

"That is all right," said Consuelo. "I will stay with you if you will try, even a very little, to understand me. If not——" She paused, then added hurriedly, "Miss Dawson, I thought it all out in the night. You have been—perhaps because you don't understand me—just a bit cruel. You have made me, not a favorite, but a drudge. If you really think such discipline good for me, and will explain your reasons, I will put up with even that; but I want you to understand that I have got poppa's temper, and that yesterday that temper very nearly exploded. Momma and I know poppa's temper well. It goes off with a bang—no warning; one minute his face quite smiling and jolly, the next—well, I guess he's terrible the next minute, and that is the way with me, too. Only for the fact that Mr. Falkland came yesterday, Consuelo Josephine Persis would not be in this house now, sitting on your bedside and telling you a bit of her mind. Do all you will with me, only give me your reasons; that is what I ask."

Miss Dawson, still remembering Mr. Falkland's words, said gently:

"If you are not prepared for punishment when you deserve it, I do not understand how I am to educate you."

"Punish me to any extent," said Consuelo, "but please don't punish my friends when they don't deserve it."

"What do you mean?"

"Well, I guess that Selma was not to blame for having a swim in the briny yesterday morning. Selma has never yet in the whole course of her life been acquainted with the fact that it is wrong to swim. It's as natural to Selma to plunge into the salt sea waves when she is in their vicinity as it is for her to wash her face. As to her taking Patty—you didn't tell Patty that she was not to swim. Selma thought it unfair that you should render the remainder of their day miserable for an act which could not seem to her wrong; and I tell you what it is, Miss Dawson: Selma doesn't care for this scheme. She only came to oblige me. So will you do this in future: if Selma unknowingly annoys you, punish me, not her?"

"Vicarious punishment!" said Miss Dawson, suddenly.

"Call it what you like; only do it. Promise."

"I will do my best, Consuelo. My task is really one of great difficulty. Now leave me."

Consuelo went back to her room. By-and-by she was heard going downstairs. She went down early that morning. She was agitated and annoyed. Discipline was galling her very much. The thought that she must go through it, and that not the first week had yet gone by, weighed on her spirit. She would have her victory, but it would cost her something. The glamour was going off Miss Dawson. She was really not a guide. What was to be done? Consuelo had enjoyed her few hours of freedom on the previous day, and the discipline seemed a little more annoying this morning. Her linen collar, too, would not fasten comfortably round her throat; she ended by discarding it, and coming down with a hideous red handkerchief tied round her neck.

Her dusting, too, was a failure. She proceeded to dust both drawing-room and dining-room before the "general" had time to do out the rooms. When that young woman—a buxom girl of four or five and twenty—appeared with brushes and a dish of tea-leaves, she exclaimed over Consuelo's work.

"I ain't brushed up yet," she said. "You'll have the dust as thick as ever in a minute or two."

"Oh," said Consuelo, "you had best not brush the place this morning."

"Now that's a good notion," said the "general." "But, bless yer 'eart! *she'll* see. She 'ave the eye o' a hawk."

"If Miss Dawson notices," said Consuelo, "I will tell her that I suggested your not brushing the rooms."

"Thankee kindly, miss." The "general" flopped about, glancing now and then at Consuelo.

"You ain't well, be you miss?"

"I have a slight headache," said Consuelo. "I think I will go and have a dip before breakfast."

"Lor, miss! yer ain't goin' into the waves with a empty stummik?"

"Well, give me something to eat," said Consuelo—"a piece of dry bread—anything will do."

"Come 'long with me to the kitchen, then, missie. I'll wet the tea and pour out a cup for you. You're looking quite pingy."

"I don't know what that is," said Consuelo.

"Is it true, miss," said the "general," "as you comes across the herrin'-pond?"

"I hail from the States," said Consuelo, flinging back her head.

"Lor, now! To think o' that!"

Consuelo sank on a chair in the little kitchen, which was not kept at all too clean.

"What is your name, 'general'?" she said, after a pause.

"Lor, now!" said the "general." "I hates not being called by it. I'm Maud Emily Dora. I'm most times called Maud—or Maudie; it sounds sort o' home-like."

"I'll call you Maudie in the future," said Consuelo at once.

"Thank you, miss; I'd like that."

Consuelo drank her tea, and snatching her hat from a peg in the hall, went out. She went down to the seashore. There were a good many people already bathing, and she quickly joined the group. She enjoyed herself mightily, forgetting her incipient headache, her low spirits, and the fact that Miss Dawson was not really a guide. She also forgot another thing, and that was the flight of time. She came in half-an-hour late for breakfast.

Miss Dawson was occupying Consuelo's place in front of the breakfast-tray. She did not say a word when the girl sat down to table, but the expression of her face was ominous.

The tea was particularly bad and weak, so much so that Consuelo found she could not drink it. She sat still for a minute; then, without asking leave, got up and rang the bell. The two Falkland girls glanced at her in astonishment and a slight sense of fear. The "general" poked in her head.

"Please make some fresh tea, Maudie," said Consuelo, "and be as quick as you can."

"What did I hear you call Sykes?" asked Miss Dawson, suddenly finding her voice.

"I called her by her name," said Consuelo. "Her name is Maud Emily Dora, and she hates being spoken to as Sykes' or as the 'general.' She explained to me that she likes Maudie best, so I mean to call her by that name."

"Don't do it again; it is most unsuitable and vulgar."

Consuelo colored, and with difficulty kept back a retort. "Maudie" brought in the tea, which she put on the table with a bang.

"Water ain't boilin'," she said; "s'pose yer don't mind."

Consuelo poured out a cup for herself. Maudie left the room. The breakfast proceeded. Immediately after breakfast Consuelo, without waiting for permission, went upstairs. Selma followed her. Miss Dawson uttered a sigh of relief, looked toward the door almost wildly, and then, all of a sudden, burst into tears.

Instantly Patty and Curly flung themselves on her neck.

"Oh, darling!" said Patty.

"Oh, dearest, sweet Miss Dawson!" said Curly.

"My loves—my dear children!" said the poor woman.

"Oh, Curly! I had such an awful time last night. It was about you and Patty. My children, how are we to endure this? I really do not think I can go on with it. That dreadful, abominable girl! And to think of your sweet minds being contaminated! Oh, Curly, my pet! kiss me again; it is so sweet to feel your arms round me. Why, what is the matter, Curly? How you are trembling!"

"It's just because I am so fearfully sorry," said Curly. "But surely father told you last night?"

"Your father? Was there anything to say?"

"But he did tell you, didn't he? Please, do speak."

"He said very little, my loves. He hoped that I would use tact with that creature—as if she could know the meaning of the word, or as if any tact would have the slightest effect on her. She is impossible—impossible, my loves; and yet your father does not want us to come back under the three months. I shall be worn out by then. I really shall."

"But you mustn't be worn out, dear Miss Dawson. Oh, why didn't father tell you more? He said a lot to us—of course in the *greatest* confidence. Neither Patty nor I can make out what he means, but as far as we can gather, it seems that something—*something* will happen if Consuelo gets offended and goes back to her father."

"Nothing can happen, my loves, except that you will no longer have the disadvantage of this most undesirable friendship; that is the very worst that could possibly occur."

"But father—father didn't speak like that."

"Then what did he say, Patty?—What did dear Mr. Falkland say, Curly?"

"We must not tell you," said Curly; "for if father wished you to know he'd have spoken to you himself. But he has given us his confidence in full, and we'll just have to make the best of Consuelo and Selma."

## CHAPTER XV.

### THE TWO FIRST DAYS.

MISS DAWSON felt more annoyed than ever. The next three months seemed to spread themselves before her with a length and tediousness and a sense of dismay which she

could scarcely endure. On consideration she found that it was not the discomfort of the little house or the bad cooking of the "general"—*alias* Maudie—that so distressed her. It was the thought of Consuelo, with her queer, china-blue eyes and acute, watchful face. She did not mind Selma. It was Consuelo Josephine Persis who was getting on her nerves. Should she leave the girl alone, let her go her own sweet way, cease to discipline her? It suddenly occurred to Miss Dawson that this would be a good idea. Consuelo for a day or two might do as she liked. The poor lady quite brightened up as this notion visited her mind. After all, when people were at the seaside they had holidays. Why should she not give her four pupils—alas that she should be burdened with four!—a few days' grace?

She felt almost cheerful. It was her custom to assemble the young people in the dreary dining-room soon after nine o'clock, and there to set them tasks according to what she considered their relative abilities. Consuelo and Selma, who knew the geography of the earth, as it seemed to the Falkland girls, by heart, were sadly deficient in historical knowledge. They knew much of the present day history, and could rattle off long stories with regard to the folks who now lived on the earth; but as regarded English history, American history, and history generally speaking, Patty and Curly could put them to instant shame. On the other hand, the girls were both, for their ages, good linguists. Their French was by no means grammatically perfect, but they could chatter to their hearts' content in the language, and understood at once what was said to them. They knew German in much the same fashion. In short, they were well equipped for the necessities of daily life; but as to real mental training, according to Miss Dawson's ideas, they had none. Lessons, therefore, were exceedingly disagreeable to the governess. Consuelo had a sad habit of putting her elders and betters right when those elders and betters made a mistake. Miss Dawson quite dreaded to hear her American voice and the slight drawl with which she would remark:

"I guess that's not quite correct. We explain it like this in the States," or similar utterances.

Miss Dawson felt, in short, that the Americans made her look small in the eyes of her own pupils, and no woman living can endure such a position. But during the holiday-time lesson-books would be shut up and freedom would be the order of the hour.

Accordingly, when the four girls entered the little sitting-room with books in their hands and prepared to take their places at the table, Miss Dawson stood at one end and delivered her soul.

"It is a beautiful day," she began.

"Yes," said Curly, gently and expectantly, while the other three hung breathless on Miss Dawson's next words.

"I propose," said the governess, "that we take advantage

of this lovely weather. To-day is Thursday. There will be no lessons until Monday next."

"What?" said Patty.

Selma was seated next to Patty, and Patty, in her great excitement, squeezed that young lady's hand.

"And," said Miss Dawson, not taking any notice of the excitement on the young faces, "that being the case, I mean you all to have a certain amount of freedom. There are four of you, and there will be four days' holiday. Now, I propose that each girl in turn plans one day to be spent by herself and her companions as she likes best. Who will take the first turn? Which of you four will be the queen of the day?"

The three other girls looked at Consuelo, expectancy on their faces. Consuelo said slowly:

"I guess that I'll take Saturday, and Selma can have Sunday. Suppose Patty's queen of to-day, and Curly queen of to-morrow. How will that do?"

"You can arrange the matter amongst yourselves," said Miss Dawson.

"And are we at liberty, really, Miss Dawson," said Consuelo, her voice full of great animation, "to do what we please during these days?"

"Yes," said Miss Dawson, slowly; "always provided that I go with you and you do nothing wrong."

Consuelo's eyes grew brighter than ever; but it was now Selma's turn to interpose.

"I don't like Sunday to be my day at all," she said. "We can't really have our fun on Sunday, and the last day of the holiday ought to mean the greatest fun of all."

"Your remark is quite wise, Selma," said Miss Dawson. "I will, therefore, in order to accommodate you four, extend the time of holiday so that it shall include Monday."

"Thanks," said Selma.

"And I, if you please, Miss Dawson," said Consuelo, "will take Monday for my day.—You don't mind, do you, Selma?"

"No," answered Selma; "I should much prefer it."

"Well, then, that is settled," said Miss Dawson. "You may all go on the beach. You can let me know at lunch-time how Patty proposes that the afternoon should be spent. I trust you all four girls, and I hope you will be worthy of my trust."

"Of course, darling Miss Dawson," said Curly.

Miss Dawson smiled at her favorite.

"One question before we part," said Consuelo, getting up and speaking with great alacrity. "Is money to be thought of during these days?"

"There is plenty of money to give you innocent amusement," said Miss Dawson.

"Thank you," said Consuelo again.

They all went out. When they got on the sands Consuelo said:



"I had a jolly dip in the briny before breakfast. Who wants to bathe now?"

"I don't," said Curly. "Patty and Selma got into trouble about bathing the other day, and we can't bathe without leave."

"Well, it's Patty's day; Patty has the arrangement of things. What do you say about another lesson in swimming, Patty Falkland?"

Patty looked up. She was really longing for a dip.

"It isn't really wrong, Curly," she said. "You remember what father said."

"That is true," said Curly; "but all the same I shan't bathe without dear Miss Dawson knowing."

"I'm game for a dip," said Patty.

"Come along," said Consuelo.

The three girls all moved toward a bathing-box, and soon afterwards were disporting themselves in the waves. Patty was less nervous than she had been on the former occasion. She was beginning to feel her powers, and, with the aid of her two young companions, managed to swim a few strokes. She was exceedingly pleased and elated.

The four girls came back to lunch with excellent appetites. They expected Miss Dawson to question them with regard to their morning's amusement, but the governess did not make a single remark. The dinner was extra good; in fact, the poor woman had mostly cooked it herself. She was quite determined that the four days' holiday should be as pleasant as she could make it.

When the meal had come to an end—and the hungry girls much enjoyed it—Miss Dawson said:

"And now, what are your plans for the afternoon?"

"Donkey-rides," said Patty at once. "I saw a donkey-man on the shore, and he can bring us a donkey apiece. We might ride toward Rocky Head."

"I must come, too," said Miss Dawson.

"Yes, dear Miss Dawson," said Patty; "we ordered five donkeys, knowing, of course, that you could not possibly walk."

"Very well," said Miss Dawson, shuddering a little. After another pause she said, "When are we to go?"

"At three o'clock," said Patty. "The donkeys will be all waiting for us on the parade. It will be fun!" she added. "What do you say about taking tea with us, girls? We could, couldn't we? And the donkey-man, who has his own donkey, could carry the basket."

"That's an excellent idea," said Miss Dawson.

Patty, as queen of the day, went out immediately after lunch to buy the necessary things for a really sumptuous tea. Cups and saucers were packed into a basket; a little tea-pot and a kettle followed suit. The eatables were further packed, and then the party started for the beach.

They found a bevy of donkeys waiting for them, an ex-

cited crowd of little boys watching to see them mount, and the donkey-man in the height of good humor. All the ladies got on their steeds, and off they went, poor Miss Dawson feeling more miserable than she had done for many years. She was not a rider in any sense of the word, and she felt it almost impossible to keep her seat. But she would not complain. The four girls were enjoying themselves. Patty was really a very good queen of the day, and the expedition went off well.

The picnic was a grand success, and they all returned home pleasantly tired in the evening, and in the best of good humors.

"How are we to entertain ourselves to-night?" said Consuelo, turning to Patty. "It is your day, you know; you must end it up with a flourish."

"But I thought it was ended," said Patty. "I am sure I am tired enough," she added.

"Ended?" answered Consuelo. "Good gracious! it isn't more than seven o'clock. We can't think of going to bed until ten. What shall we do?"

Miss Dawson made no suggestion of any sort, but sat quite still, patiently waiting. In all probability the girls would go out; in that case she would have to go with them. She was feeling so stiff that she could scarcely move. Patty, however, who read her governess's face, was not so unmerciful.

"We'll sit in the dark and tell stories," she said.

Miss Dawson fidgeted.

"I have one remark to make," she said. "I have made up my mind not to interfere with you during your four days of holiday. As long as you keep out of personal danger, and do nothing really wrong, I—so to speak—lay down my scepter. But now, I forbid ghost stories, do you hear?"

"I suppose you believe in ghosts?" said Consuelo.

"Certainly not. What do you mean?"

"Then why should you be afraid of them?"

"I consider the subject of ghosts morbid and unhealthy."

"All right," said Consuelo; "we'll leave ghosts out of the running. Shall I tell that story about the very naughtiest girl at Newport, who cost her mother three hundred and fifty pounds for one dress?"

"It sounds an exceedingly silly tale," said Miss Dawson; "but you have, of course, *carte-blanche*."

"Then I'll tell it," said Consuelo; and she began a very racy description of a friend of hers in America. Miss Dawson quite shuddered as she listened, more particularly as she saw that Patty's eyes were sparkling with fun, and that even Curly could not repress peals of laughter.

"I call it real 'cute,'" said Consuelo, as she came to the end of her description.

"It's Patty's turn to tell a story now," said Miss Dawson.

"Patience, dear, do you remember that little tale about the suffering child in East London."

Patty's story, which she did not tell at all well, was listened to with scant attention. Curly said she was not good at story-telling; but Selma capped the evening's entertainment by a vigorous account of a bull-fight in Spain. The girls quite shuddered as they listened, and Miss Dawson could not make out which story was the worse, that of the extravagant and silly American or that of the cruelty of the Spanish people.

She was glad when the evening came to an end, and wondered how her dear Curly would conduct herself as queen of the next day.

At breakfast Curly propounded her scheme. She would have, she said, an improvement day. They would work a little bit in the morning, and in the evening have a sort of "bee."

"Bees are very American, are they not?" she asked, turning to Consuelo.

Consuelo replied that bees were out of date, but that momma used to tell her about them. She did not mind going back, she said, thirty years or so, if it pleased Curly.

A bee, then, it should be, and they would enjoy themselves on the beach.

During the morning Selma was seen to approach Consuelo and say something to her which caused that young lady to brighten up very considerably.

"Yes," she said—"yes."

Selma's eyes looked black and sparkling with mischief when she sat down again. Consuelo concealed a yawn, and applied herself to her book.

"Curly," she said, suddenly, "I never did think it of myself, but it's coming fast, and you're doing it."

The girls were all seated in the stuffy little parlor, busy over some books which Curly said would form the staple of their discourse in the afternoon.

"You ought not to interrupt," said Curly. "But what is it you want to say?"

"Only this," said Consuelo: "I did think I should be fond of learning. I adore our great Longfellow; I feel like crying 'Excelsior!' again and again and again; and 'Evangeline' is so beautiful that I could weep as I read it. You have got your great writers, too, only I guess they are not so smart as ours."

"Oh, my dear!" interrupted Miss Dawson, "you forget our Milton, our Tennyson, our Shelley."

"I come to my conclusions according to the old adage, 'By their fruits ye shall know them,'" said Consuelo. "You English girls, although you have been brought up on Milton and Tennyson, haven't half the go that we have with our Emerson and Howells and James and Hawthorne and dear Mark Twain. I guess we know a thing or two that you don't.

And what I want to say now is this: that if you are to go on teaching me, Curly, I shall hate learning for evermore."

Curly sighed.

"I am queen to-day," she said, after a pause, speaking in her rather prim little voice, "and I have to manage things according to my own lights."

"Yes," said Miss Dawson; "and, my dear girls, I must remind you that fair-play is fair-play.—You, Selma, will have your turn to-morrow, and Consuelo, hers on Monday. If we don't interfere with you, you ought not to interfere with us."

"Pax!" said Consuelo, frankly, holding out her hand to Curly. Then she added, "I know I was wrong, and I won't say anything more."

Nevertheless, with all the goodwill in the world, Curly's day was a dull one. It was even a duller day than when Miss Dawson was giving severe lessons and marching the girls up and down the beach. Consuelo thought that she preferred dusting, and having surreptitious cups of tea with Maudie.

But the longest day will have an end. At the "bee" the two Americans were sadly beaten, and the two English girls scored a distinct triumph. But, after all, what mattered it? The Americans were going to have their turn, when surely the tables would be completely reversed.

Saturday morning dawned on a glorious day. There was not a cloud in the sky, and Selma came joyfully into Consuelo's room.

"I have everything planned," she said, "and the wagonette will be at the door at nine o'clock."

"Have you arranged," said Consuelo, just raising her head from her hard pillow and looking at her cousin, "that Maudie comes too?"

"Yes, of course. She is nearly off her head with delight."

"Have all the things arrived?" asked Consuelo.

"Yes," said Selma; "Maudie has them in the kitchen. She stowed them away in a cupboard, fearing Miss Dawson might see them. She says there are heaps of black beetles in the cupboard, so I do hope they won't get at anything."

"Have you a rare pile of cookies? I guess I feel as though I'd like to live on *fondants* for all the rest of my days," said Consuelo.

"I have ordered a whole pound of *fondants* for each of us," said Selma. "I don't think," she added, "that more would be wholesome." Then she continued, "Even Maudie is satisfied; she says that more than a pound of sweeties, as she terms them, would give her a bad pain in her stum-mik."

"And the cakes—are they all right?" asked Consuelo.

"Yes—oh, yes! And every one of them frosted, too, and colored in different ways. The cakes, and *fondants*, and chocolates, and *marrons glacés* are all well to the fore."

"And the bottles of fizzy lemonade?" asked Consuelo.

"Yes. I ordered three dozen."

"Goodness! I'd like to add some sweet champagne," said Consuelo; "but I suppose I'd better not."

"No, no; lemonade must do."

"The main thing is this," said Consuelo: "have we got one single thing that is wholesome?"

"I think not," said Selma.

"Then that is all right. You must go along now, Selma Dudley; and I guess I'll rise. There'll be fun to-day. We'll open the eyes of Dawson & Co., and have a rare old time. But you listen to me. However good that time may be, it will be nothing to what I shall do when I am queen of the day."

"Oh, I guess that," said Selma; "you needn't tell me."

She marched out of the room, and Consuelo, with a light laugh, sprang out of bed. She discarded her discipline clothes, and put on the one smart frock which, unknown to herself, had been packed away at the bottom of her trunk. It was not very smart, but, compared to her hideous brown hollands, it seemed to the young girl to assume quite a lovely appearance. It was a little, pale-blue muslin, very simply made, but the lace was real, and the embroidery that decorated it of the finest.

As Consuelo looked at her small face in the cracked square of glass with which alone her bedroom was provided, she could not keep back the smile from her lips or the light of joyful anticipation from her eyes.

Sharp at eight o'clock the little party found themselves in the dining-room. Miss Dawson was feeling decidedly nervous. In her heart of hearts she was wondering what madness had possessed her when she had given the four girls leave to have a day apiece to be spent according to the individual will of the reigning queen. The moment Miss Dawson saw Consuelo's pale-blue dress, her dainty blue shoes, and open-work blue stockings, her heart misgave her more than ever. Her own girls, looking neat and trim as usual, took their places at the table. Miss Dawson rang the bell. After a short time this was answered by Maudie. Maudie was dressed for the occasion. She was wearing her very best Sunday-go-to-meeting frock. Her skirt was of green cotton, her blouse of pink, and she had a high hat stuck on the back of her head, adorned with artificial cherries and bunches of green gauze. Maudie's face was deeply flushed as she entered the room bearing a plate of cakes and a jugful of chocolate.

"Tea, please. What do you mean by bringing these things?" said Miss Dawson.

Maudie did not take any notice of Miss Dawson; but turned toward Selma.

"We thought you'd like a real American breakfast for a change," said Selma.—"Maudie, are the dough-cakes done?"

"They're a bit tough and 'ard, miss; but I done 'em according to your directions."

"Bring them in at once, then," said Selma.

The dough-cakes, when they did appear, were as unlike the real succulent morsels of sweetmeat as dough-cakes could be.

"I cannot take this breakfast," said Miss Dawson. "I must have tea and bread and butter."

"Very well," said Selma.

She gave directions to Maudie, who reappeared with some simple food for Miss Dawson; but the four girls drank their sweet chocolate and sampled their cakes with considerable appetite and appreciation.

Selma was dressed almost smartly. She wore a deep-crimson frock, which suited her dark skin, her black eyes, and black hair. Miss Dawson regarded both Selma and Consuelo as figures of fun. She had, of course, determined not to interfere, but she really trembled at the manner in which the day had begun. As Maudie was leaving the room poor Miss Dawson could contain herself no longer.

"Put on your proper dress, Sykes," she said, "and do not dare to come into the room again in that attire."

"If you please, miss," said Maudie, dropping a curtsy and rolling her eyes anxiously toward Consuelo, "I'm agoin', too. I'm goin' on the picnic, miss."

"Yes," said Selma, calmly; "Maudie is quite right."

Miss Dawson was speechless. Maudie whisked out of the room, banging the door after her.

"Ain't I goin' to have fun!" she said to herself as she reached the kitchen. "My word, ain't the old un cross! I'll cotch it after the fun's over; but I means to enjoy myself, that I does, to-day."

## CHAPTER XVI.

### SELMA'S DAY.

"WHAT are the arrangements for to-day, Selma?" said Miss Dawson as soon as the door had closed behind the "general." "I have given you all *carte-blanche* to do as you please, but it is only due to me that I should be acquainted with your plans. What are your plans for to-day?"

"I guess," said Selma, "that they're real jolly. We mean to be out in the heavenly air from morning till night. We are going in a wagonette across the Downs, and we'll just go as far as we please and no farther; and we are taking food with us, so that Maudie need not be troubled to cook anything; and when we come back to-night, what I wish to propose is this—that we take Maudie to the theater, for she's never been in it once since she was a little child, and then she only saw the pantomime. There's a very good piece on indeed, and we think it would elevate Maudie to see it.

It's about a young girl in her class of life marrying a lord. Maudie'll be very much interested, and think, perhaps, that she'll come to have a similar stroke of good fortune. After the theater we'll have supper out, so Maudie will have a complete holiday."

"And do you really think," said Miss Dawson, now nearly purple with anger, "that Mr. Falkland or your father, Consuelo, would wish you four young ladies to associate on equal terms with a servant-girl all day long, by so doing not only putting yourselves into a wrong position, but encouraging in that poor girl's mind all kinds of wrong ideas? A play, indeed, where a servant-girl marries a lord! I cannot allow any of you to go to it."

"But, please," said Selma, "there is nothing wrong in the play, for Patty and Curly's father took us all to it the other night, and we did enjoy it so much only Consuelo and I thought of Maudie, and so wished that Maudie was the heroine."

"Yes, we did," said Consuelo; "and it was the thought of that play that gave us both the notion how we'd spend Saturday. It cannot be wrong, can it, to go, when Mr. Falkland took us all the other day?"

This was such a poser to Miss Dawson that she was quite silent, and Selma sprang from her seat, saying briskly:

"The wagonette will be at the door in a minute, and, dear Miss Dawson, we will try to be good."

"Yes, we will, really," said Consuelo; "and, of course, you can revenge yourself on us when Tuesday comes and our discipline begins once more. Only it's half the fun to have Maudie, for she'll like everything just six times as much as we like things, because, you see, in her life she has only jam once a week, or perhaps once or twice a year, whereas we have it every day."

"That's nonsense!" said Miss Dawson. "I allow the servant jam in the kitchen."

"Oh, we meant metaphorically," said Selma. "It's a metaphorical jam we want to give poor Maudie to-day; and as to her not being our equal," she continued, "in America we consider every human being to have the same rights as every other human being. We have all souls, haven't we? and hungry bodies, and a great craving for *fondants* and for pleasure."

"Your conversation is beyond me, girls," said Miss Dawson. "I believe I have acted with a great want of wisdom in giving you these holidays. But I stick to my word now; only don't try me too far."

In a quarter of an hour the entire party had started on their picnic. They were all, with the exception of Miss Dawson, in high spirits; but she, poor woman, felt more shocked and distressed moment by moment.

Maudie, in her excess of glee, had invited her brothers and sisters from the next street to come and see her off. They

shouted with delight at her appearance, and said, "Go it, Maudie—good old girl! I say, Maudie, you *are* having a time of it!" and made other such-like remarks.

Consuelo insisted on Maudie sitting between her and Selma, and she began to ply the former with *fondants* quite early in the day. They drove on for several miles, and presently found a delightful dell with shady trees, and a little stream running through its midst. Here Selma elected that the picnic was to take place.

The cloth was laid on the grass, and the different viands produced. Miss Dawson looked at the frosted cakes and the piles of unwholesome sweetmeats with a sickly smile.

"Do you mean to tell me, Selma," she said, "that you intend to feed on those things, and on those alone? Didn't it occur to you to get some cold chicken or ham or beef, or anything whatever substantial and wholesome?"

"Guess these'll do," said Selma.

"They won't do for me."

"I thought of you," said Consuelo, "and I have brought something special." Here she produced from her pocket a little packet of meat-lozenges. "Guess you'll find these sup-  
porting," she said. "Momma always takes them on her journeys. She says that they don't bring on the gout as the *marrons glacés* do."

But Miss Dawson pushed them aside.

"I shall not touch them," she said. "We passed a village a mile back. I shall drive there and have some food at the hotel. I suppose, girls, you can look after one another while I am gone. I suppose I can trust you not to be up to any special mischief."

"Of course you can, Miss Dawson," said Curly.—"It is too bad," she added. "I think you are very unkind indeed, Selma; you know that dear Miss Dawson cannot eat things of that sort."

"Nor can you either, Curly, for the matter of that," said Miss Dawson. "Do you mind coming back with me, dear, and having a little wholesome food at the 'Red Lion'? We can return and join the rest of you girls within an hour's time."

This plan was carried out. The wagonette was brought forward again, and Miss Dawson and Curly returned to the small village through which they had passed.

"Now then, the rest of us can enjoy ourselves," said Selma.—"Maudie, you sit here; you are to have the place of honor. You are our guest, you know."

"Lor, miss!" said Maudie. "Now, be I? I do 'joy myself like anything, most partic'lar since old Cross-patch has gone."

"You mustn't speak of my governess in that way, Sykes," said Patty.

"I forgot you, miss," said Maudie, coloring crimson. "You won't go for to tell on me, now, will you, Miss Patty?"



"No; but you must behave yourself. There are limits to all things, and I won't have dear Miss Dawson abused."

"She ain't a kindly body, though, miss," said Maudie. "Now, true—she ain't. She treats me real crool, I call it—Callin' me Sykes, when she had the choice o' Maudie or Emily or Dora. I don't want to be called Sykes. I heard o' a book once, and the man wot committed the murder and killed his sweetheart was Sykes. It makes me sort o' shiver when I hear the name."

"Well, don't think of it now," said Consuelo. "Have a *marron glacé*. Aren't they good?"

"Derlicious, miss, they be," said Maudie. "Oh, my, though! Don't my stummik ache a bit already!"

"It's plain to be seen," said Selma, "that you are not an American girl. We can eat sweetmeats to any amount."

"Guess that's why we're pasty, though," said Consuelo. "I wonder," she added, "who that picturesque old body is who is coming down through the glade."

Maudie, who was in the act of sucking a *marron glacé*; sprang to her feet.

"Oh, my word!" she said in great excitement, "don't you 'ave nothin' to do with her. That's old Mother Jeremy. She's a sort o' witch, no less. She tells fortunes—and mostly bad uns. She's a real old terror. There ain't one o' us at West-bourne 'ud be seen with her for all you could give us. Don't you 'ave nothin' to do with her, young ladies. She'll come up to you a-whimperin' and a-beggin' you to cross her hand with silver. But don't you go and do it.—Don't 'e now, Miss Connie.—Don't 'e now, Miss Selma.—Don't 'e, Miss Patty.—Oh, my word! I am that frightened of her, I don't know what to do. Ef she was to stare at me I'd be took with a sort o' fit."

"You are very silly, Maudie," said Connie. "It's plain to be seen you know very little of the world. Why, a fortune-teller—a real, genuine fortune-teller—is the very person of all others we'd like to talk to. She shall tell our fortunes, that she shall. Now, I call that real fun; I guess I'm just delighted."

"And so am I," said Selma.

Maudie began to cry. She said the pain in her "stummik" got worse, and that she could not "eat any more o' them fondies." She remarked further that they weren't "fond o' her," and sobbed, and pressed her hand to her side, and altogether went on in a most uncomfortable manner.

The three girls looked at her with dismay. This wonderful, precious day had been mainly planned to give Maudie a treat, and yet here she was breaking down on the very first occasion, and showing the most unreasonable terror because a gipsy woman was approaching her.

"Now, look here," said Consuelo. "You must control yourself, Maudie. You needn't have any more sweets if you feel ill, and you needn't talk to Mother Jeremy if you are afraid

of her. But the rest of us mean to talk to her; don't we, Selma?"

"Of course we do," said Selma.

"We'll go to her one by one," said Consuelo, "so that two of us can stay with you turn and turn about. Now do be sensible, Maudie. I didn't know you were quite such a silly girl."

Maud wiped her eyes, tried to recover her valor, tried to say that she really did love the "fondies," and that she never had been so happy in the whole course of her "mortal life." But her evident terror of Mother Jeremy could not be repressed, and in the end Consuelo and Selma had to take her away, while Patty remained, quivering with excitement, to meet Mother Jeremy.

Patty decided that when her fortune was told she would whistle to the other girls; that one of them would come back to take her place; and she (Patty), when this girl appeared, would run off to join the suffering Maudie and the other girl.

Maudie left the scene doubled up with pain and uttering piteous groans, and Patty sat down to await Mother Jeremy's arrival.

Mother Jeremy was a tall old woman with a toothless mouth, a nose very like a beak, and glittering black eyes. One needed but to glance at her to discover her gipsy origin. Her dress was very poor and ragged, but showed signs of past splendor; for the old shawl which was pinned round her head and which partly concealed her face was woven in many fantastic colors and was made of the richest silk. Round her breast she wore crossed a somewhat tattered fichu of coarse, tawdry muslin. She also wore a white apron, but her feet were bare.

She came toward Patty now, dropping a succession of swift curtseys.

"Will my pretty little lady have her fortune told by good old Mother Jeremy?" she asked.

Patty immediately responded in the affirmative. The sun was shining brightly; the place was gay; there were flowers growing in profusion around her. Butterflies of various hues and colors were darting here and there. A dragon-fly swept past with a quick swoop, on brilliant wings. Patty had certainly no call to be alarmed. Mother Jeremy stood and looked down at her.

"My exceedingly pretty little lady," she said, fixing her bold eyes on Patty. "Will my lady cross the hand of a poor old woman with a bit of silver, and may the old woman roll back the curtains of the future and show the pretty lady what is about to take place?"

"Oh, yes, please!" said Patty, eagerly. "Only you must be quick, please, for there are two other girls waiting to have their fortunes told, and our governess will be back before long, and I don't think, perhaps, that she'd quite like it."

"You does what she don't like, pretty dear?" said the old

gipsy woman. "That is as it should be. We needs courage, and we don't want to be held in leading-strings. That's wot I like. I can see the courage in the pretty lady's eyes. I admire courage. Now then, cross my hand with the silver, dear, and I won't keep you long."

Patty produced a shilling from her pocket. The old woman looked at her suspiciously.

"There ain't much of a fortune in a shilling," she said. "Ain't yer got 'alf-a-crown, now—nor a five-shilling-bit?"

"No, I haven't," said Patty. "This is all the money I have about me." Then she added, "I don't see how the size of the silver can make any difference in my fortune—that is, if you speak the truth."

The old woman glared at Patty.

"Whoever yet said that Mother Jeremy told lies?" was her remark. "It's truth, and the whole truth, and nothing but the truth that I'm a-telling you, my dear. And why shouldn't I tell the truth? A small bit o' silver like a shilling only opens the doors of the future a very little way, whereas a five-shilling-piece throws 'em wide. But there! I'll do my best for the shilling; only 'twon't be much I'll be able to say."

Patty gave the shilling. Mother Jeremy crossed the little girl's palm with it, and then, staring down into the little hand, prophesied a rather ridiculous future, in which Patty was to have an equal share of sorrow and joy, in which she was to break away from her present shackles, and was to suffer grief by means of a young lady from foreign parts.

Patty thought this very strange and exciting; in fact, it made a much deeper impression on her than Mother Jeremy's further prophecy that eventually Patty would marry a tall, fair young man who would take her to live in a castle with him and give her every possible luxury.

She thanked Mother Jeremy for her words, and made the necessary signal for another girl to approach.

"Maybe you are hungry?" said Patty, suddenly noting how the keen old eyes watched the food.

Mother Jeremy immediately produced an old bag, and Patty shoveled into it a vast number of *fondants* and *marrons glacés*; also some little cakes. Mother Jeremy did not seem at all excited at the prospect of eating these dainties, but inquired with anxiety if the little bottles which stood in rows on the ground contained gin or whisky. On hearing that they were only full of lemonade, she uttered an angry exclamation and said that they were mere trash.

It was Consuelo who now appeared in view. She walked quickly, excitement quite perceptible in her manner. Patty immediately ran off to join the others, and Consuelo found herself alone with the gipsy.

Her manner was quite different from Patty's, and Mother Jeremy evidently discovered this at once, for she treated her with marked consideration, and even with respect.

"You be a young foreign lady from over the wide, lone seas," was her first remark.

"How can you possibly tell that?" inquired Consuelo.

"Ah, my pretty one," remarked the gipsy, "the good fairies tell me all I want to know."

"Are you speaking truth?" said Consuelo.

"And why should I lie to you, my dear?"

"I don't know why you should," replied the girl. "There are fortune-tellers in England—I have read about them; and the gipsies, the real, true gipsies, know wonderful things. I have read about them, too. I am glad to meet a real gipsy. You can read signs in the stars, can't you; and you can tell a lot about the future?"

"There be times when I can," said the gipsy.

"But," said Consuelo, fixing her bright eyes on the old, wrinkled face, "you don't tell those things to every one?"

The keen black eyes looked hard into the blue ones. Mother Jeremy altered her tone.

"And why should I?" she answered. "Why should I cast my pearls afore swine?"

Consuelo looked at her long and attentively.

"I think I understand you," she said, in a slow, meditative voice. "What you mean is this: you talk nonsense to most people; but it is possible—just possible—for you to speak the truth."

"Listen to me, my pretty lady," said the old gipsy woman. "I speak the truth to all just as they are able to bear it. Why, bless you, my dear! there are some folks with, so to speak, no future; and there are others—my dear young lady, my exceedingly pretty young lady from over the distant seas, there are others on whom destiny falls."

These words sounded most exciting to Consuelo.

"Am I one of those?" she asked, in a low tone.

It was now the gipsy's turn to be silent for a minute, but during this silence her watchful, keen black eyes were fixed on the girl's face.

"I am an old woman," she said. "I ha' lived long; I ha' lived hard. There ain't nothing, so to speak, that I ain't seen. I ha' seen sorrow and joy; and the bride with her husband, and the widow beside her dead; and the children with their mother, and the children again motherless. I ha' seen crime, too—bitter, dark crime; and I ha' seen the nobleness o' self-sacrifice; and I ha' seen the power o' the bonny red gold—the blessing o' it and also the curse o' it! Yes; I'm an old woman, and I've lived through much. It has been given to me to read signs and to read faces, and, mayhap, to look into hearts. There never was yet blue eyes like yours, and a face small and fine and pale, and an eager look like yours, that didn't have some mighty work to do. And there never yet was a voice sort o' thrillin'-like as your voice be, that didn't have much power over its fellow-men."

"This is very exciting," said Consuelo. "Please tell me

my fortune without a minute's delay. I want the truth—you understand?—the truth."

The old woman stood and reflected.

"You want a deal, it seems to me," she said, after a pause; "more nor I give to most. Now, be you the sort o' young lady to give the old gipsy silver to cross your bonny hand with, or gold? It all depends on that."

"I will give you what you really wish," said Consuelo; and then she remembered with a pang that she had no gold about her.

"It's this way," said the gipsy. "You cross my hand with silver. Give me a shillin'—one shillin'—my pretty dear, and I'll tell you sort o' truth and sort o' nonsense. I'll tell you wot you know already: that you come from foreign parts, and that you're rich, and that there'll be a many wantin' to marry you for the sake o' your riches. And I'll tell you that you'll have pain, because all human beings have pain—and pleasure, because it's the lot of few not to have some pleasure in life; and I'll prophesy for you a middlin' long life; for, although you're pale, you look kind o' healthy. That's wot I'll do for a shillin'."

"In fact, you'll do nothing at all," said Consuelo, with scorn. "You have found out doubtless from some neighbors that I am a rich American girl, and you made up all the rest, just as I should make it up if I chose."

"True for you, missie," said the old woman, fixing her intensely bright eyes on Consuelo with a look of admiration.

"Then your silver fortune is worth nothing," said Consuelo.

"I can go a bit further," said the woman. "Give me five shillin' now, and the door of the future will open wide. I'll read your palm, and your palm will tell me that which is to come."

"I can certainly give you five shillings," said Consuelo. "But you said something about a gold fortune. I want the very, very best you can give me."

As Consuelo uttered the last words the gipsy's whole manner changed.

"I can do," she said, "for a gold sovereign—a real gold sovereign—I can do wonders. I can consult the stars, and the face of the moon, and the old books that I have in my hut 'long by the Head."

"In fact, you can really tell me the future?"

"I swear it, my beautiful lady."

"And you are a real, real, true gipsy?"

"The daughter o' Enoch," said Mother Jeremy at once, "who was the son o' Hezekiah, who was the son o' Jonah. There's no doubt about my havin' the real blood o' the true Romanies in my veins."

"Very well," said Consuelo. "I believe you. You look like it, and I believe you. I don't want you to tell me anything false. I want my real future, and my real fortune, and my real fate in life explained to me. You shall have

gold, old gipsy woman; yes—gold. But I haven't it with me now."

"That's all right, my lovey," said the old woman; "nor could I tell it to yer now, for such a fortune as you want told must be uttered by the light of the moon and by the twinkling of the stars. You must come to me to the Head, my dear—yes, and at midnight; then I will tell you that which I have to say."

Consuelo thought for a moment. The wildness and romance of the thing fascinated her. She was in the mood for adventure, and she longed beyond anything to have her fortune told. She felt half-stranded at present. Miss Dawson proved, on nearer acquaintance, the reverse of satisfactory; her chosen plan for self-discipline was turning out a failure. The gipsy might give her a clue. Yes, she would go to the gipsy.

"I'll manage it," she said.

"And when, my pretty lady—when? When may Mother Jeremy see your bonny face at the door of her house? It's welcome you'll be, my bonny lady."

"I can't come to you to-night," said Consuelo, "or to-morrow night; but I'll try and come on Monday night."

"Be with me at twelve o' the clock. The moon will be at the full then, and the stars propitious. I'll be ready; and be sure, my bonny missie, that you bring plenty o' gold. One gold sovereign will do much, but two will do better, and three better still. The more gold there is, the kinder is the stars and the sweeter does the moon shine down. 'Tain't covetousness as makes me speak, pretty lady; but it's solemn truth. Why, I has to melt some o' the money to get the real true blaze which brings out the lines on yer bonny hands."

Consuelo's American common-sense inclined her to say, "You're an old humbug"; but something stronger than common-sense impelled her now. She had a curious vein of romanticism in her nature. This same vein is very strongly marked in many Americans. It is an inheritance from their English ancestors, handed down from father to son, and from mother to daughter—a passionate love for old places where all are new, for old ideas and old superstitions in a land where these things cannot of themselves exist.

"Expect me on Monday night," said Consuelo; "and here's a shilling for what you said. And now go, please—go."

"But ain't there another young lady?"

"There is; but you are not to see her. Prepare yourself for me. I want you to tell me the absolute truth."

"Yes, yes, my pretty. Yes, yes."

"And go now, please, Mother Jeremy," continued Consuelo, "for I hear the sound of wheels, and the lady who has charge of me and my friends is returning. If she were to see your face she might manage to prevent my meeting you in your house on Monday night."

"Well, then, I'll be off," said the old gipsy. "Don't you

fail to come. It's at the sea side of the Head, just where the cliff is steepest. But I'll meet you on the brow; then I can lead you to my hut."

Consuelo nodded, and the woman hastily turned down the glade and disappeared the way she had come.

Selma felt annoyed at not having her fortune told; but in Miss Dawson's and Curly's presence she could not attempt to say anything. She looked anxiously at Consuelo, who seemed excited, but did not utter a word.

Miss Dawson felt a keen sense of triumph in Maudie's illness. She could not refrain from the aggravating "I told you so" as she administered some peppermint-drops to the "general." Miss Dawson invariably took these restoratives about in her pocket, and they came in handily on the present occasion. Maudie's indisposition made the rest of the day fall somewhat flat. Even the theater in the evening was not quite so exciting as the girls had expected, for in the most crucial scenes, and in that grand moment of victory when the lord in the play proposes to the servant-girl, Maudie was discovered to be fast asleep. She was tired after her day, and not even this rapturous performance at the theater could keep her eyelids from closing over her sleepy eyes.

In the privacy of her room that night Consuelo informed Selma that she had given Maudie up.

"She is one of those young women who are meant always to remain in their own class," said Consuelo. "I shall not take her out on any more picnics, and I really don't greatly care whether she is called Maudie or Sykes."

"She was very disappointing," said Selma; "but we did our duty by her."

"Yes, we certainly did," said Consuelo.

"And now, please, Connie," said Selma, "do tell me what the old gipsy said to you. Maudie and Patty and I were watching you from behind a privet-hedge, and you did talk so earnestly and the gipsy seemed so excited; but, although we were fairly near, we could not observe that she took your hand or crossed it with silver. Patty said that she gave her rather a commonplace fortune—just the ordinary sort of thing—and the only remarkable statement was to the effect that Patty would get into trouble through a young foreign lady. I conclude she meant you or me. I wonder which of us will get poor Patty into trouble. I am sure I don't want to; she is a good little soul, and worth twenty of that horrid Curly. But there! I am keeping you up, and you look quite fagged. What sort of fortune did Mother Jeremy give you, Consuelo?"

"None whatsoever," answered Consuelo.

"None? Then what were you talking about?"

"My fortune is yet to be told," said Consuelo. "It will be real, not sham. The old gipsy is to cross my hand with gold. I mean to take her two whole sovereigns, and no more, and I've got to meet her on Monday night, just on the brow of

Rocky Head. She lives in a hut down the cliff. I've got to meet her at midnight, and she'll tell my fortune by the stars, and by the light of a full moon. It will be a real fortune, Selma. Think of it!"

Selma was very much excited.

"You don't mean——"

"Yes, I do mean to go, if that is what you are trying to say. I have arranged it with Mother Jeremy. I shall be there at twelve o'clock on Monday night."

"Connie, you can't! How can you?"

"That is just what I intend to do."

"But, Connie, it is impossible! Why, Rocky Head is some miles from here, and you can't go there alone at midnight."

"I have thought it all out," said Consuelo, "and I will tell you now in as few words as possible. They none of them know what my day is to be."

"I thought you had planned it out."

"Yes; but I've altered my plans. I am going to do something really adventurous. I am going to have a midnight picnic. Think of that! Of course Miss Dawson will object, but I shall manage to overrule her. We'll go off for our picnic, which shall be near the Head; and I am going to have tea, or some sort of meal, by moonlight; and then, just at twelve, or a little before, I'll creep away all by myself. Miss Dawson won't miss me until I am gone; and even if she is terribly angry afterwards, that won't matter, for I'll have got the information I want. Oh, I'll manage well. I thought it out as you were driving home while Maudie's head was resting on my shoulder."

"Horrid girl!" said Selma.

"She couldn't help being ill; she isn't trained with regard to candies as we Americans are," said Consuelo. "Don't let's think of her any more now. Oh, this is exciting! I never felt so pleased in all my life!"

"And so you really believe in the gipsy?"

"I don't believe in the sort of nonsense she told poor Patty, but I do firmly believe in what she means to say to me. She can read the palm of the hand; she is a real palmist, and, of course, she has secrets which have been handed down to her from her ancestors. She is a real gipsy, Selma. Her father was Enoch, who was the son of Hezekiah, who was the son of Jonah."

"It sounds quite biblical," said Selma.

"It's as old as the Bible," said Consuelo. "The only thing that I have left to arrange is the money part. I don't want to write to father, for that would spoil my plans and render the dear old man suspicious. He'd come, perhaps, on Monday to see me, and then everything would be at loggerheads. Have you got any money you can lend me, Selma?"

"I?" said Selma. "I've got exactly three shillings. You know you wouldn't let me bring any of my savings. I had quite a lot put away in a bag at Castle Rocco."



"I must borrow from Miss Dawson, that's all," said Consuelo. "I daren't write to poppa, and I mustn't write to momma, for I could never trust her not to tell. Two sovereigns I must and will have. Now, Selma, do go to bed. I am fairly worn out after all the excitement of to-day."

Selma went to her room. She presently lay down in bed, but for a time she did not sleep. Consuelo's plan was, in her opinion, working itself out in the dullest way. Even the days allotted to the four queens were, when all was said and done, very *triste* days. There was no order about them. Selma almost thought that she preferred the discipline days, for they at least had a sort of moral tonic in their action. Monday would be Consuelo's day. Selma thought of the gipsy. She believed fully in gipsies, even more so than Consuelo did. She would like to have her own fortune told. The hand crossed with gold evidently produced a true fortune, the hand crossed with silver a false one. How Selma did wish that she had her little money-bag with her at Westbourne!

"I might have known," she said to herself, "that Connie wouldn't do for three whole months without money. We have only been here a little over a week, and already she wants two sovereigns. I don't believe for a single moment Miss Dawson will give her the money; but if she does, why should she not give me some also? After all, my future is just as important as Consuelo's. Oh, dear! oh, dear! I wonder how this escapade is going to end."

Connie was already fast asleep in her tiny bedroom, and Selma soon after followed her example.

Sunday dawned on a happy world. The weather was as perfect as ever. The little party went to church. To tell the truth, they were all rather relieved to have normal conditions existing once more.

It was Miss Dawson who arranged the food to-day; who ordered Maud, who was exceedingly penitent and shamefaced; who sat by the girls in church, and walked with them afterwards on the beach. It was Miss Dawson at her best, too, wearing that soft, gray costume which became her so well. Even Consuelo felt drawn toward the Falklands' governess on this peaceful Sabbath-day. Some of the fascination which she had exercised over the girl when first Consuelo had made her acquaintance returned, although faintly. Consuelo kept glancing at her from time to time, and thinking, with a puzzled sense of soreness at her heart, how earnestly she wished Miss Dawson to be a true Guide—a true Leader. For Consuelo was looking for something which she had not yet found, and her queer, impulsive, and yet most faithful heart was aching because of that something. She was possessed, in reality, with a most earnest and passionate desire to do something with her life. Perhaps the gipsy woman could help her. Perhaps, after all, she was the Guide. Perhaps, through her means, she might discover her true Leader.

"Oh, how I'd follow!" thought Consuelo. "How I'd climb! How I'd struggle! Could I meet the right person, there is nothing I would despair of achieving."

Then she looked again at Miss Dawson, and the sadness of her thoughts filled her eyes.

The Sabbath-day was regarded by all this queerly assorted little party as a sort of resting stage, during which nothing very particular could occur. But every one, just out of respect for Sunday, would try to do and be her very best.

Miss Dawson was a very strict Sabbatarian. She never allowed Curly or Patty to read novels on Sunday. She insisted on church at least twice a day. She approved of Sunday-school teaching, and at Tamaresk each girl had her own little class of very tiny girls to instruct. On Sunday, too, Miss Dawson prohibited silly gossip, as she said she liked the girls to remember what a very special and holy day Sunday was, and to act as though they remembered it. But Consuelo and Selma had been brought up with very different ideas. Sunday was to them, as a rule, much like Monday, and to find that they must act quite differently on Sunday puzzled, but at the same time pleased, them.

Consuelo, however, although she was quite willing to go to church, and not to do any lessons, and not to read novels, and not to talk gossip, could not forget her great scheme for the morrow. She must have money to carry out that scheme. She must get it somehow or other.

It so happened that after early dinner Consuelo found herself alone with Miss Dawson. They were both in the hideous little drawing-room at Discipline House. The other three girls had gone out for a walk; but Consuelo, pleading a slight headache, stayed indoors. Miss Dawson, occupying herself with a book of sermons, sat near the window. She sat in the only easy-chair the room afforded. She was very quiet; her eyes slowly followed the words she was reading. Often they turned back to read a sentence once more. Consuelo found herself watching the governess, and as she watched a sense of irritation arose in her mind.

Consuelo had, when she pleased, the quickness of thought, the flashes of intuition, which characterize her nation. It had been her pose, for a short time, to assume the languid in life. But now she had cast this, as it were, behind her forever, and was all spirit and eager action. How could Miss Dawson read so slowly? Why didn't she move? Could she not tell that there was an eager, inquisitive, questioning girl in the room with her? Had she forgotten Consuelo's presence? What was there in that stupid, dull book to occupy all her thoughts?

Miss Dawson, quite unaware of Consuelo's reflections, read on. She felt peaceful and happy. She was a sincerely good woman, and loved her Sundays and her books of sermons. She was reading a sermon now by her favorite divine, and was endeavoring to take in some very lofty thoughts with

all the intellect she possessed. Consuelo, who had found an old volume of *The Leisure Hour* on a side-table, flung it from her with an impatient movement. The book missed its hold of the table and fell to the floor.

"Quietly, my dear," said Miss Dawson, without raising her eyes from the page which was occupying her.

"I can't sit quiet much longer," said Consuelo. "I wonder how you can."

"It is Sunday," said Miss Dawson.

"Yes," said Consuelo. "I know that; but our muscles and nerves are the same on Sunday and Monday, aren't they?"

"I don't wish to argue, dear. Just take your book and read it quietly. We'll have tea presently; and then we can go for a walk, if your head is better."

"I think I will go now," said Consuelo, "if you won't talk to me."

"You cannot go by yourself on Sunday. You chose to stay at home when the rest of the girls went out, and you must now wait until after tea."

"Oh, bother!" said Consuelo, kicking a footstool away with much viciousness.

Miss Dawson went on with her sermon. Consuelo sat and watched her.

"Can I get two sovereigns out of her?" thought the girl. "She looks quite nice, and that dress of her suits her; but she is as hard as a rock. She is not a bit what I thought her."

"Oh, dear me!" said Consuelo aloud.

She stretched up her arms and gave vent to a mighty yawn.

Miss Dawson gently closed her book.

"Why are you so troublesome?" she said. "Have you no consideration for others?"

"I don't think I have," answered Consuelo.

"I am glad you are truthful enough to acknowledge the fact; but aren't you ashamed of it?"

"No," said Consuelo.

Miss Dawson looked very hard at her. After a long pause she said:

"Your object in coming away with me, your object in upsetting all my life and the lives of my dear little pupils, was to improve your own character. Do you think you are improving it?"

"I was under the supposition when I came away," said Consuelo, "that *you'd* do that."

"And am I doing it, Consuelo?"

"No, Miss Dawson; to be frank with you, you are not."

"And yet," said Miss Dawson, sadly, "I have endeavored, as far as possible, to fall in with your views. You wished for discipline, and I have endeavored to apply it."

Consuelo got up swiftly.

"I had an imagination," she said. "I dreamt a dream. I built a castle in the air. Imagination, dream, castle, have

vanished into space. 'Tisn't your fault." She came eagerly forward. "Those who cannot understand are not to be blamed," she continued, "and those who have strongly fixed limitations cannot go beyond them."

"My dear, how queerly you speak!"

"Oh, Miss Dawson!" said Consuelo, "I feel queer. Sometimes I feel wild, just—just for what I cannot get."

"And that, my poor child?"

"I want a Guide," said Consuelo, "a Leader. I thought you would guide me and lead me. But you don't because you can't."

"Then," said Miss Dawson, eagerly, "believing that—and I must honestly say I think you are right: I fear I don't understand you; and if I do not understand you now, I shall certainly never be able to do so—believing that, had we not better bring this ridiculous scheme to an end?"

Consuelo thought.

"I will let you know presently," she said. "Not to-day, or—or to-morrow. Perhaps the day after—I am not quite sure. And please, Miss Dawson, may I have two sovereigns?"

Now, had Consuelo made this request in an ordinary tone, without that sudden flashing of her eyes and that swift, beautiful color rushing into her cheeks, and without trembling of her lips, Miss Dawson might have acceded to her request. But as it was, she became instantly suspicious. In short, it had been, up to the present, one of her great comforts that she unquestionably held the money. She was, therefore, in a position of power. Give Consuelo money to spend as she wished, and there was no saying what the wild girl would do with it.

"My dear," she said at once, "your father is the person to supply you with funds. I haven't got two sovereigns to give you."

"But I only want to borrow. Please, please!"

"I am sorry, but I cannot lend."

"You cannot? That means you will not."

"Put it so, dear, if you like. I will not lend."

"Miss Dawson, you drive me nearly mad!"

"Will you get up, please, Consuelo, and ring the bell? Sykes had better bring in tea early, as she will like to go out to visit her people."

Consuelo very sulkily complied.

## CHAPTER XVII.

### TWO SOVEREIGNS.

CONSUELO JOSEPHINE PERSIS was completely foiled. It was not often in her hitherto successful life that defeat had stared her in the face. Nevertheless, it did so now; and so resolute was Miss Dawson's tone, so absolutely did she make Consuelo realize her authority, that the girl knew it would

be useless to plead with her any longer. She could not borrow money from the governess; she must find it in some other way. How? This was the question.

Consuelo thought; and the more she thought, the more puzzled did she get. Here she was, one of the richest heiresses in New York City, pining for the use of ten dollars; for that was pretty nearly what two sovereigns would mean in American money. Ten dollars! How often had she flung away four times that sum on boxes of bonbons and useless toys, on the momentary desire of a momentary whim! And yet now, when she wanted that tiny sum of money to enable her to pass the turning-point of her life, she was refused it.

She could have laughed aloud at the irony of the situation. But she did not laugh, for she had an uncomfortable feeling that Miss Dawson suspected her; that Miss Dawson's eyes were opened; and that, in consequence, she would find it very difficult to carry out her whim, even supposing she had the money to do so. This would never do. She must dissemble; she must appear indifferent to the subject of money. In short, she must put Miss Dawson off her guard.

At tea-time, therefore, when the other girls returned, Consuelo was cheerful enough. It was during that meal that the idea of consulting Maudie occurred to her. Selma had no money to give her; and most assuredly neither Curly nor Patty could help her. But Maudie could. Maudie might even lend it to her. Maudie's money was not tied up in any mysterious bags in distant castles. Nor had Maudie a poppa who would upset all her plans, nor a momma who would betray her confidence. Maudie's life was above-board, simple, direct. She had been in service for some time—for she had told Consuelo as much—and she must have saved two sovereigns over and over and over again. Two sovereigns! They were but a drop in the ocean of Consuelo's real wealth, and she did not suppose there was a human being in this wide world with perfect liberty of action who could not find access to so minute a sum.

Yes, Maudie was the appointed deliverer. She would supply the funds. Consuelo therefore became cheerful. She took her tea with appetite, ate heartily of the excellent bread and butter and cake which were provided, and presently went out with the others in a state of suppressed high spirits. Selma said to her:

"Have you arranged things? Have you asked for the money?"

"Never mind," said Consuelo. "I'll manage."

"You must have arranged it," said Selma, "or you wouldn't look so awfully jolly. I always know when you are fidgeting about something, Consuelo. Guess you're real happy now, so, of course, that little matter is fixed up."

"Practically it is," said Consuelo.

The walk came to an end. The little party went to even-

ing church. When they came back there was a cold supper on the table. This had been laid by Maudie before she went out. According to the invariable custom of "generals," she would not be back until ten o'clock. Then she would go straight to bed.

Miss Dawson asked Consuelo to wash up the supper-things when the meal had come to an end, and Consuelo quite willingly went into the kitchen to do so. Patty soon joined her, eager and anxious to help.

"Oh, Consuelo! let me," she pleaded. "I do so want to share your discipline with you."

"Thank you, Patty," said Consuelo. "Well, all right; I'll wash and you'll wipe. I do hate touching greasy things, though; don't you?"

"I never have touched them—in that sense; I don't know what it means," said Patty.

"You look so good, Patty," said Consuelo, as the little girls proceeded with their work. "Does being good make you feel awfully happy?"

"I am not good, really," said Patty.

"That proves you are," answered Consuelo; "for all good people say they're bad; I never met one yet who didn't. I can't imagine why they put themselves out to tell so many lies, for, of course, they know they are good; they'd be sort of idiots if they didn't."

"You don't understand," said Patty. "When you begin to try to be good yourself, you'll begin at the same time to see your faults as you don't see them now."

"Goody!" said Consuelo. "Then I don't think I'll try."

The washing-up came to an end. As the girls were hanging up the cloths which they had used Patty said to Consuelo:

"We are all dying with curiosity about to-morrow. It's to be your day. You are the last of the queens. Don't you feel excited at the thought of wearing your crown?"

Consuelo considered.

"Perhaps I am," she said. "I can't quite tell. A good deal will certainly happen to-morrow."

"Oh! won't you tell me?" pleaded Patty.

"Certainly not. You must wait until the morning."

Patty came close to Consuelo and laid her hand on her arm.

"You are not going to make it too hard for Miss Dawson, are you, Consuelo?"

"I am going to have a right good time," said Consuelo. "Miss Dawson must be made of poor stuff if she can't stand my day as well as she has borne your day, and Curly's day, and Selma's day."

"Poor Miss Dawson!" said Patty. "The only day she really enjoyed was Curly's. Curly is the only one of us who is really good."

"I hate Curly!" said Consuelo.

"Connie! You hate my sister?"

"Awfully. There, don't tell. She is just the sort of girl that doesn't appeal to me. She does just the sort of things I don't like. Why, you—poor little Patience!—are worth fifty of her."

"I am not, and you know it," said Patience.

"I can't argue about it," replied Consuelo, "only I know what I know; and you may as well understand once and for all, Patience Falkland, that we are going to have a royal time to-morrow."

Patty, her curiosity unsatisfied, was obliged to retire to bed. In their bedroom she and Curly had a conversation together, in which Curly spoke in just as unflattering terms of Consuelo as Consuelo had done with regard to her. Patty, who was really a very nice child, would not on any account make mischief. Curly's last wish as she dropped asleep was that Consuelo Josephine Persis's awful day was over. But Patty could not help feeling a sense of curiosity with regard to how that day would be spent.

Meanwhile, Consuelo had made her plans. She was deprived of saying a single word to Maudie during Sunday, for Maudie, true to the arrangement universal amongst her class, went straight to her room and to bed when she came in. Consuelo did not dare to leave so important a matter undecided until the morning. She, therefore, made up her mind to creep upstairs to Maudie's attic when every one else was sound asleep, and arrange about the loan of the sovereigns before she herself retired to rest.

She wrapped herself, therefore, in her long, loose, luxurious dressing-gown, turned the key in her room door in order to avoid any chance encounters with Miss Dawson, and sat quiet.

By-and-by stillness fell over the whole house, and Consuelo very carefully unlocked her door, opened it very gently, and, in her slippered feet, glided up the attic stairs. Her dressing-gown, with its rich folds, fell with a long train behind her. It was belted round her waist by a heavy gold girdle with long gold tassels. It was altogether a most showy and striking robe. Holding a candle in her hand, Consuelo managed to open the door of the tiny attic where Maudie was reposing. She set the candle down on a small wooden box, shut the door after her, and stood for a minute looking down at the sleeping girl.

Maudie was not a pretty sight in her sleep. She lay on her back with her mouth wide open. She was snoring loudly. Connie, as she watched her, felt inclined to laugh. Maudie's hair hung in dark, untidy masses over her cheeks and round her forehead. Her cheeks were flushed, and, to judge by certain groans and sighs which she made at intervals, she was still thinking of those "fondies" that were not fond of her.

Consuelo smothered a laugh, and bending slightly forward, touched the girl on her shoulder.

"Leave go, now!" said Maudie. "I ain't goin' to no more; not ef yer coaxes me ever so."

She turned partly on her side, and went on snoring and sleeping. Consuelo did not want to be deprived of her own rest, and accordingly had recourse to more vigorous measures. By-and-by she roused Maudie sufficiently to cause that young woman to sit up in bed, exhibit two round, startled eyes, and to ejaculate:

"Oh, my word! Oh, mercy, dearie me! Whatever is that dazzlin' himage?"

"It's only me, you silly girl," said Consuelo. "Do wake up, please, Maudie. You must admit, Maudie, that I have been very kind to you."

"So you 'as, miss," said Maudie, now coming to full consciousness and recognizing Consuelo with a sort of gasp of wonder. "So you 'as, missie," she repeated. "No one in all the world meant it kinder—nor did it crooller!"

"What *do* you mean?" said Consuelo.

"The pyne, missie! It ain't gone quite yet. Niver, *niver* no more will fondies be sucked by me."

"You can't help being an English girl, poor Maudie!" said Consuelo. "They're made that way. Now, as to us Americans, we never suffer pain when we eat candies. But now let me talk to you. I want you to do something for me; and I—oh! I'll do so much for you when my three months here are up."

"You couldn't git me to live with yer in the carstle place, could yer now?" said Maudie.

"Yes; you shall come as scullery-maid. I'll get mamma to hire you."

"I ain't wantin' to go as no scullery-maid," said Maudie. "They's the lowest sort. I's wantin' to go as cook or own maid to yerself, with yer fine dresses thrown in as perks."

Consuelo could not help smiling.

"We'll see about that presently," she said. "But I can do nothing unless you'll do something for me."

"I'm willin' to, miss. Wot I said afore I means. You meant it kind, though you did it crool."

"Well, now, will you mean something kind for me without doing it cruel?"

"Ef I can, miss. It's awful late, though, and I'm drenched with sleep."

Connie knelt down by the bed. "Maudie," she said, "I want you to lend me two sovereigns; please, Maudie."

"Two yeller boys!" said Maudie. "My word!"

She gave a slight laugh, and looked up at Consuelo as though she believed that young lady had taken leave of her senses.

"Please, Maudie," said the girl, "I can't tell you what I want them for; but you don't know how richly you'll be rewarded if you will only help me. Now, listen to me. I'll



give you back—not two sovereigns but—but eight sovereigns, when I return to Castle Rocco. That'll be in three months' time. Think what splendid interest you'll get on your money—three hundred per cent no less!”

“Don't know wot that means,” said Maudie; “only I does know—”

“Oh, don't stop to consider! You probably have the money in a drawer in your room. Let me open the drawer and give you your purse. Please lend it me!”

But here Maudie burst into a shrill laugh. Consuelo was so terrified lest she should be discovered that she put her hand over Maudie's mouth.

“Oh, don't—don't go on like that!” she said.

“Missie, you be so droll!” said Maudie. “I give you two suvverign! Why, I ain't got at the present moment two shullin' to call my own. I ain't got it, miss. What little I earns I takes 'ome to fayther. I ain't got no money. We're all very poor folk, miss, I can't give yer wot I ain't got; can I now, missie?”

Maudie spoke with intense earnestness, and with such a firm assurance of the truth of her own words that Connie believed her on the spot. It seemed to poor Connie that her castle in the air was tumbling to pieces already at her feet. She felt for the moment as though she must clutch at something to keep herself from falling. Give up hearing her fortune! Give up meeting the gipsy on the brow of Rocky Head, and all because she could not obtain two sovereigns! It was not to be thought of.

“It seems a sight o' money,” said Maudie, who, wide-awake now, kept gazing at Consuelo and wondering.

“It's very little money,” said Consuelo. “It's a drop of money; it's hardly any money at all.”

Maudie again felt inclined to scream with laughter, and after a time she said, “It takes a sight o' earnin', all the same.”

“What is to be done?” said Consuelo. “Maudie, I must have it, can't you help me somehow?”

“There's Jones's plyce,” said Maudie, after a time. “'E might 'elp yer.”

“What do you mean? Who is Jones?”

“We puts things up the spout at Jones's,” said Maudie.

“Up the spout? Maud, you must be ill!”

“I ain't, miss. I know all about Jones. 'E's the pawnbroker; 'e might do it for yer, miss. As yer nothing you can put up the spout? 'E'd lend yer, p'r'aps, as much as that on something I could like to 'im.”

Consuelo stared in amazement.

Pawnbroker! She had just heard of such people. She thought of poppa and mamma, and of their magnificent house in New York City, and their palace at Newport, and their villa at Nice, and their lovely English home; and then she remembered that under existing conditions she was just a

very poor little girl who, in order to keep an important engagement, must have recourse to the pawnbroker.

"What can I do?" she asked. "Oh, Maudie, do manage it for me!"

"You give me wot you have on," said Maudie, "an' I'll tike it first thing in the mornin', and most likely, you'll get the money on it as you want."

## CHAPTER XVIII.

### THE LARGE PARCEL.

MAUDIE and Consuelo had some further conversation together, during which it was briefly arranged that Maudie was to get up very early in the morning, and go downstairs and get through her work in order to reach Jones's sign of the three balls sharp at eight o'clock. In vain Consuelo tried to persuade her to go to Jones earlier than that; but Maudie, though thoroughly ignorant with regard to the ways of the big world, was absolutely conversant with the manners and doings of pawnbrokers. She thought the pawnbroker a most valuable person. She had often been to his shop. She had gone sometimes for her mother, and sometimes for her father, and occasionally for herself. She had put things up the spout, and taken them down the spout again. She knew all about the system of pawning and the necessary pawn-tickets, and the more she looked at the dazzling dressing-gown with its gold girdle and long gold tassels, the more sure she was that Jones would rise to the dazzling height of lending two yellow boys on the garment.

"You can have it back again, missie, when you please," said Maudie; "and it won't cost you nothing like so much as you promised to pay to me ef I'd lent yer the money—which I couldn't niver do, missie; not ef I was to try ever so."

So the matter was arranged; and Connie, now quite at rest in her mind, left Maudie to renew her interrupted slumbers, and went downstairs. She was certainly more careless going down than she had been in coming up. She slipped, too, on one of the attic stairs, and made so much noise that Miss Dawson, ever on the alert, opened the door of her room and peeped out.

"Consuelo!" she said. "What are you doing? Why aren't you in bed and asleep?"

"I shall be in bed and asleep in a moment or two now," said Consuelo.

"But what have you been doing?"

"I wanted to say something to Maudie."

"You woke that poor, tired girl just for your own selfish pleasure! I am surprised and annoyed."

"She doesn't mind," said Consuelo. "I wished to tell her something, and had not an opportunity earlier in the day."

"Well, go to bed now, and don't disturb the house again."

Miss Dawson returned to her own room, and Consuelo went to hers. She took off the dressing-gown, and folded it up tenderly. Never before had she admired this rich garment, but now she examined it all over with extreme care. Could it be possible that by means of her dressing-gown she could attain her heart's desire? Would the pawnbroker—the great man who put things up the spout, whatever that extraordinary term might mean—really relinquish two sovereigns for this article of dress?

As Consuelo laid her head on her pillow, she found herself respecting that small sum of forty shillings more than she had ever done in her whole life before. She fell asleep at last, to dream of encounters with pawnbrokers and strange, wild-looking gypsy women. In short, her sleep was restless and unrefreshing, and when she awoke it was with a start.

She jumped out of bed to look eagerly at the time. She had scarcely done so before there came a very low tap at her door, and Maudie, fully dressed, came in.

"I'll tike it downstairs," she said, "and wrop it up. My word, ain't it helegant!"

Maudie felt the rich velvet of which a great part of the dressing-gown was made. She looked with wonder and lack of appreciation at the priceless lace, but the gold cord and tassels filled her with hope.

"*That 'ull do the business.* Now, you leave it to me, missie. I'll run out when you're all at yer breakfusses, and Miss Dawson 'ull never be the wiser."

"Be sure you are very careful, Maudie," said Consuelo. "If you were seen going with my dressing-gown to put it up the spout, I don't think my poppa would ever forgive me."

"Lor, missie! there ain't no crime in it."

"He'd think it a most awful crime," said Consuelo. "I don't know what he wouldn't say."

"But he ain't here, be he, miss?"

"No; that is quite true. But if any one else were to discover that you had done this thing the consequences might be—oh! terrible for me. You will be very, very, very careful, won't you, Maudie?"

"Trust me, Miss Connie. 'Ere now, I'll run downstairs with it. It is a helegant article, and no mistike!"

Consuelo slowly dressed herself. The day was not quite so fine as those days which had preceded it. Banks of cloud were already gathering on the distant horizon, and there was a slight wind.

When Consuelo and the rest of the girls and Miss Dawson assembled at the breakfast-table, Miss Dawson immediately announced that the wind was due east.

"I always feel it," she said, "in my teeth. Whenever the wind is east I suffer from a sort of neuralgia—no, not tooth-ache; neuralgia is the word.—Now, my dear Consuelo, I sincerely trust that you will not try my nerves too much today."

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"I thought you might rest during the earlier part of the day," said Consuelo. "Make it a sort of Liberty Hall—each do exactly what she pleases."

Miss Dawson looked relieved.

"Explain yourself more fully," she said. "But before you say anything further, allow me to remark that I shall suffer from illness, and so will my two pupils, if we are treated to the same sort of food as Selma gave us on Saturday."

"Oh, by no means," said Consuelo. "Now, listen," she added, after a pause. "You may choose the picnic—I mean you may choose the eatables. You know much better than I do what English girls like, and what elderly English ladies require. I am sure neither Selma nor I wish any of you to be ill."

"A picnic!" said Miss Dawson, looking slightly aghast. "I thought we said that you girls were to do what you liked to-day; that seemed to me quite sensible. You would sit on the seashore, and those of you who wished to read would read, and those who wished to chat or sketch would do so. But now you contradict yourself, and speak of a picnic!"

"Dear Miss Dawson," said Consuelo, "a picnic at the end of the day."

"The end of the day?" said Miss Dawson, looking quite terrified. "When we are all tired?"

"That's it," said Consuelo. "If we rest during the morning we won't be tired. I'll be as good as gold during the earlier part of the day, but I want—there! the fun's out—I must say it—I want a midnight picnic."

Miss Dawson gasped. The three girls looked interested. Even Curly was moved to change color, and her eyes sparkled. As to Selma, she clapped her hands.

"Well done, Consuelo Josephine Persis!" she said. "Now that is what I call doing the thing in style."

"We'll have a carriage which will hold us all comfortably," said Consuelo, "and we'll take our food with us, and—not very far from Rocky Head we'll enjoy ourselves. It's to be a midnight picnic, and I want the girls to—crown me queen of the night. I don't want a grand crown; it can be made of oak-leaves—or anything; and I'll sit on a throne, and perhaps tell stories. Oh, it will be fun!—Miss Dawson, you agreed to do what I wish. You won't go back now will you, dear Miss Dawson?"

Miss Dawson looked around her. Her appearance really was that of a creature who was driven to bay. She could not quite control her emotion. After a minute's pause she said, with a great gasp,

"If ever there was a woman in this world who has absolutely repented of her folly, that woman is myself."

"Well, it will soon be over," said Consuelo, in her gentle voice. "To-morrow, at this hour, Discipline resumes her sway. Discipline House will be Discipline House once more

You can't refuse me my request. A midnight picnic is what I want. You will give it to me, won't you?"

"I—oh, my child, how you torture me!"

"I am ever so sorry, but it will soon be over."

"You must give it, Miss Dawson," said Patty, suddenly. "It would be awfully unfair not to allow Consuelo to have her fun when all the rest of us have had ours."

"But the lateness of the hour—the chill—the dew on the grass!" said the poor governess. "We shall probably be all victims to rheumatic fever."

"Not at all," said Consuelo. "We'll take rugs and wraps. You don't suppose," she continued, "that this is the very first midnight picnic that has ever been thought of; and, oh, it will make me so happy, and I'll be so awfully good to-morrow! Just think what it will mean!" Then she added as an afterthought: "And if you would but trust us, perhaps—you need not come at all."

Here Miss Dawson rose to her feet.

"What is Sykes doing out at this hour?" she said. "She has gone past the window with a bundle under her arm."

Miss Dawson went to the window and tapped loudly on the pane. But Maud, instead of replying, put wings to her feet and began to run.

"Really, that girl is more than impertinent," said Miss Dawson. "It's my opinion she isn't honest taking a large parcel from the house at this hour, when we are all at breakfast. There never was such an unhappy woman as I am.—Well, Consuelo, I suppose you must have your way. I have made you a promise, and I will fulfill it whatever the consequences. I was mad to make the promise; there are girls in the world who would not put an elderly person like myself through such a terrible ordeal. But as to not going with you—I would rather cut my head off, so we won't speak of that again."

Here Miss Dawson marched out of the room. Consuelo clasped her hands softly.

"I wonder what Maudie was doing," said Selma. "Do you know, Consuelo," she added, "that I really do think Miss Dawson was right, because I caught a peep through that parcel of a gold tassel—at least I think it was a gold tassel. It might have been one of your gold tassels."

"Oh, nonsense!" said Consuelo. "How can you talk such rubbish? I do wish," she added, "that people would not watch that poor girl the way they do and imagine all sorts of things about her."

Maudie was presently seen returning with empty hands. And now Consuelo was all agog to meet the "general." But this was not quite so easy as she had hoped, for Miss Dawson, taking advantage of Consuelo's permission to arrange the food for that day, was in the kitchen, where she spent some little time.

"Why did you go out?" she said when Maudie, a good

deal blown—for she had run all the way back—noisily entered.

Now Maudie had many faults, but to tell lies was not one of them. She would not betray Miss Consuelo for the world, but her manner of hiding the object of her errand abroad was, to say the least of it, clumsy.

"I"—she took up a corner of her apron—"I 'ad to go, miss."

"Don't speak in that ridiculous, silly way," said Miss Dawson; "and don't twist your apron; and do put your cap on straight, Sykes: you are a positive object. Well, please understand in future that while you are employed in my service you do not go out in the morning on errands of your own. I saw you with a bundle under your arm, and I rapped to you on the window to stop. Why didn't you stop?"

"I tuk to me heels," said Maudie.

"So I saw. Now I want to know what you were carrying in that bundle."

"Oh, lor, miss!" said Maudie; "nothing, miss—that is, so to speak, nothing."

"Ridiculous," said Miss Dawson. "You know very well that a large parcel could not possibly hold nothing. What was in it?"

"It belonged to Miss Connie," said the desperate Maud.

"Miss Consuelo?"

"'Es. I can't come round that long name."

"Did she tell you to take the parcel out at this hour?"

"'Es. 'Adn't I better begin to wash up and git the place ship-shape?"

Miss Dawson stood very still in deep reflection. To Maud's infinite relief, she did not question her further, but presently went into the drawing-room where Consuelo was languidly turning over the pages of a book. The other girls were also in the room.

"This is Liberty Hall," said Consuelo, with a big yawn, when the governess appeared. "We can each of us do exactly what we like; therefore we each of us seem to wish to do nothing."

"That is an exceedingly bad way of passing the time," said Miss Dawson. "Consuelo, I wish to ask you a question."

"Certainly," said Consuelo.

"Sykes tells me that she went out with a parcel of yours."

Consuelo's pale face went a decided red. Her little American heart at that moment cordially hated Maudie.

"Can you deny it?" said Miss Dawson.

"Well, no, I don't mean to. She did take a parcel for me."

"What was in it?"

"I don't mean to say."

"You refuse to enlighten me?"

"Perhaps I'll tell you to-morrow," said Consuelo, "when we're under discipline again; but not to-day."

She moved slowly across the room. When she reached the door she turned to the three other girls.

"I am going to order our carriage to take us on our picnic exactly at half-past ten."

Miss Dawson shivered. Consuelo shut the door behind her. She went straight to the kitchen. When Maudie saw her she made a rush towards the young lady.

"'Ere they be—two on 'em! 'E said 'twas the finest thing 'e'd put into his shop for many a long day. 'E said 'e'd give you more than that on similar things ef you 'ad 'em."

"It really is put up the spout, then?" said Consuelo. "I can't imagine what that expression means. The spout can't belong to a teapot."

"No, miss; it belongs to a pawnshop."

Consuelo slipped the sovereigns into her pocket.

"'Ere's yer pawn-ticket, miss," said Maud.

"Oh, I don't want that."

"But yer must 'ave it, miss, or yer'll niver git the beautiful, dazmlin' thing out no more. I've pawned it for yer for a fortnight, and ef at the end o' that time yer ain't redeemed it, 'e'll sell it for wot 'e can git. 'E says 'e'll send it to London, for there's no one at Westbourne as could afford to wear it."

Consuelo took the pawn-ticket, and slipped it abstractedly into her pocket.

"Why did you tell Miss Dawson that you were taking a parcel for me?"

"Oh miss! I am sorry; but she come a-questionin', and I niver was no good at lies."

"It's all right," said Consuelo, carelessly; "you have done your part, and I won't forget you by-and-by. You're a very good girl on the whole, Maudie; and I respect you all the more for not telling lies. Now I must run away."

As Consuelo was coming out of the kitchen she met Miss Dawson. That lady gave her pupil a very suspicious glance; but Consuelo rushed upstairs to put her treasured money out of sight. Two whole sovereigns! How valuable they were! She gazed at them with a new expression in her blue eyes. Then, wrapping them tenderly in paper, and forgetting all about the pawn-ticket, which, in her excitement, she left on the floor—for she had taken it from her pocket with the sovereigns—she put on her hat and went out.

She was safe now. They would have their picnic. She would steal away at the crucial moment. Oh yes, she could manage everything; and she had the money, no matter how obtained, to satisfy the cravings of Mother Jeremy.

## CHAPTER XIX.

### THE MIDNIGHT PICNIC.

AT the appointed hour the four girls, accompanied by Miss Dawson, who had wrapped herself well up not only in a long

winter cloak, but in some furs which, as she reflected, she had most luckily brought with her, stepped into the wagonette.

Consuelo was in high spirits, although it could not be said that the night was exactly propitious. The east wind, which had been blowing all day, had now become almost a gale. There were clouds of dust too, owing to the weather having so long been dry without a keen wind.

When they were about half-way to the spot which Consuelo had arranged for her picnic Miss Dawson ventured on a timid remonstrance.

"Might we not go," she said, "in a less windy direction? Rocky Head is the most exposed spot on the whole coast. Why should we go there?"

"We are not going there," said Consuelo. "We are going to that little, sheltered wood just below Rocky Head. We can't change now, can we? Oh! I am so sorry you are cold."

As Consuelo spoke she changed seats with Patty, and going close to the well-wrapped-up governess, tried to take her hand.

"It will soon be over," she could not help saying. "This is the very last, the very last of troublesome me."

Miss Dawson resented the words at the time, although she was to think of them with much poignancy of grief later on.

"I am glad, Consuelo," she said; "I count the minutes until to-morrow morning. It is the thought that my great imprudence in giving you four girls a day apiece will so soon be over which alone sustains me through the ordeal you are making me suffer."

"I will explain all about it to you some day," said Consuelo. "You are not cold really, are you?"

"I assure you I am intensely cold. The raw night—midnight—this keen wind, and my precious children, who are unaccustomed to being out after nine—"

"Oh, we are all right," said Patty. "Two out of eight." "And the picnic is great fun. I know we shall enjoy it," said Curly.

As to Selma, her opinion was not required. She was an American, and therefore she would naturally take Consuelo's part.

By-and-by they arrived at a very sheltered wood behind Rocky Head, considerably below the spot where they had picnicked a few days ago. Consuelo, who was measuring her distance, was sorry to perceive that she would have to walk a long way to reach the gypsy's hut; but she was in such high spirits now that no difficulty seemed to daunt her.

When they got out of the carriage they proceeded to light some Chinese lanterns, which they hung on the boughs of the neighboring trees. There was the moonlight also shining in full radiance over them. The whole scene was wild and beautiful: there were the eager faces of the children, the anxious face of Miss Dawson, the stolid expression on the coachman's stolid countenance, and there were the patient



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horses eating their oats from bags which were fastened over their noses.

The wind had died away in this little dell, and no longer troubled them. A seat was provided for Miss Dawson made of innumerable rugs, and Consuelo selected a large stone, which was to be turned into a sort of throne for herself. A crimson rug was put over it, and when the feast was all arranged—and on this occasion the food was wholesome, and of a kind which even Miss Dawson might venture to partake of—Consuelo turned and addressed her companions.

It was not yet much after eleven o'clock, but she must leave them in order to keep her tryst with the gypsy in less than half-an-hour. She must make an excuse now for her proposed absence. Selma alone was in her secret, and Selma must help her.

"We'll light a fire," she said.  
"I object to a fire," said Miss Dawson. "It is highly dangerous with a high wind of this sort."

"But there isn't a breath of wind here," said Selma.  
"And," she added, "we put on woolen frocks on purpose; there isn't the slightest fear."

"I assure you there isn't," said Consuelo. "And you must have your hot soup; you'll catch a dreadful chill without it."

"I should like a cup of hot soup just awfully," said Curly.  
"I will light the fire myself, then," said Miss Dawson. "Not for worlds would I imperil any of your lives, my dears; but I, in my thick clothes, am fairly safe."

"Very well," said Consuelo. "If it makes you less nervous, perhaps you may as well do it. In the meantime we'll all collect wood for the fire; then, while you are lighting it, we will choose oak-leaves for my crown.—Come along, girls, we haven't a minute to spare."

She was all bustle and activity, and the three girls followed her into the heart of the wood. With a clever movement Consuelo now managed to find herself close to Selma.

"Selma," she said, "you have got to help me. It will take me from ten to twelve minutes to run to the top of the cliff, and from ten to twelve minutes to listen to my fortune being told, and at least seven or eight minutes to get back. Altogether I must give myself a little over half-an-hour. During that time you can keep Miss Dawson busily employed. She will have to boil the kettle and put the Bovril into the cups, and then she will have to put all the cups in their right places, and Patty and Curly can be decorating the throne. You brought those colored papers, didn't you?"

"Yes," said Selma.  
"Well, keep them busy; and if the worst comes to the worst and Patty makes a remark about me, tell her boldly that she must keep her suspicions to herself. It's Curly I dread; Patty will do what you tell her. If Miss Dawson asks where I am, you must suggest that you go to look for me;

but I really don't think I shall be missed if I am only just absent half-an-hour."

"You have left a frightful responsibility on me," said Selma, "and I do think I ought to get one reward."

"What is that?"

"That you tell me what the old gypsy woman, old Mother Jeremy, says to you."

"I will just tell you as much as I think right and no more. Now, Selma, you must go back; the time is flying. I am sure it is past half-past eleven, and I want to be there sharp at twelve."

"But you forget that Miss Dawson expects us to sit down to our feast at twelve."

"Begin to eat, for goodness' sake, if she wishes you to; but try to postpone the thing for a little if you can manage it. See, now, these sticks are quite damp; they will hinder the kettle boiling quickly. Oh, you can manage, Selma; you've got a head on your shoulders and a brain inside your head. Surely I needn't tell an American girl how she is to help a comrade at a moment of crisis."

Selma gave utterance to something between a sigh and a groan. Consuelo was all very fine, and, in her heart of hearts, Selma loved her dearly; but there were times when it was almost impossible to get on with her. Such a time was the present. The girl wanted to carry out a mad scheme, and Miss Dawson, about as sharp a woman as could be found in England, was to be hoodwinked. Selma promised to do her best, and the four girls returned to the scene of the picnic carrying supplies of undergrowth, small sticks, and other materials for lighting the fire.

"How long you have been!" said Miss Dawson.—"Harris"—here she spoke of the coachman—"thinks that it will rain before we get back."

"There's a great bank of cloud coming up from the south-west," said Harris.

"Well, the wind being in the east, they can't do much harm," said Selma.

"Ah, but the wind is veering," said Harris.

"We'll have our picnic all the same," said Selma. "Now, Miss Dawson, do please let me help you with the fire. You don't know what lots of picnics we have in America—just like this, only—only ten times as large. Why, Miss Dawson, I've sat by a camp-fire all night; and it has been jolly, too, I can tell you. I have even done it in winter, and I think that has been the best fun of all; and I've heard the wolves howling in the distance, and seen the snow round everything."

"Have you really, my dear?" said Miss Dawson. "What part of America were you in?"

Selma, seeing that she had struck an interesting note, proceeded to relate her experiences. Patty and Curly ceased decorating the throne, and Consuelo, with a smile, glided away. Even Harris lent an attentive ear to the young girl's

recitations, and no one saw the slim young figure of the real mistress of the ceremonies as she glided out of the wood.

Consuelo felt sure that she was late. How she longed to get those fat horses of Harris's to pull her up the steep hill which approached the brow of Rocky Head! But she was too thankful to get away on any terms to waste a thought over the impossible.

As soon as she was far out of the wood, and therefore beyond recall, she walked with swift, sure steps in the direction which the gypsy had pointed out. She did not know what the hour was, but she felt certain that she was in time.

At last she reached the very top of the Head. Here, to her relief, she found that the wind had dropped. In fact, Harris was right; it was veering to the south-west, and that heavy bank of cloud was getting nearer. Consuelo took no notice of it, however. Her eyes were fixed alternately on the brilliant moon, now at the full, and at the silver sea which lay far down below. Oh, if only she could get help! if only she could find what her passionate heart needed—a Guide!

This midnight expedition was no child's-play to Consuelo. She felt even more earnest about it than she had when she begged of her father to let her go with Miss Dawson to Discipline House. Alack and alas! Discipline House had turned out a failure; but this—this midnight scene, the words of hoary wisdom uttered by an ancient sage, might give to the young American girl the light she needed. Her heart beat high. She had not a scrap of fear. She went boldly forward. Suddenly she stood still. True to her promise, Mother Jeremy had come to meet her.

Mother Jeremy was standing very near the edge of the cliff. Consuelo saw her, and began to run. Mother Jeremy held up a warning hand, then, putting speed to her feet, came towards the girl.

"Don't you," she said. "The grass is slippery, and short on the brow. Many a body afore now has tumbled over. The water below is deep and cold. You ain't the first who has tumbled over."

"I have come," said Consuelo with a gasp of delight, "and you are here to meet me."

"I am true to my word."

The moonlight fell all over the queer, fantastic gypsy figure; for the gypsy, in preparation for this interview, had arrayed herself in every scrap of finery she possessed. Quaint beads of every shape and size and color dangled from her neck. She had queer rows of odd-looking bracelets jangling on her withered arms, and round her head she had twisted the silk scarf which she had worn when Consuelo met her in the glade down below. Her feet on this occasion were clothed with sandals, and she wore colored stockings of various hues. Her short but heavy skirt reached only slightly below the knees, and this was covered with cabbalistic writings. The skirt was bright red; the writings were in black.

Altogether, the figure of the gypsy was one to command attention. She looked far wilder than she had when Consuelo met her a couple of days ago. Her eyes were gleaming with excitement, and when she grasped Consuelo's young hand her own was hot as though it burned in a furnace.

"Come, my pretty one," she said. "The gypsy bids yer real welcome. I has the feast prepared. The stars are in the ascendant, and the moon at the full. Come, my pretty, and I will take you to my hut."

Consuelo, her courage as high as ever, followed the gypsy until they reached a zigzag path which wound round and round the cliff, going down lower and lower with each curious convolution. At last, however, it became so steep that the gypsy could only manage the descent by crouching to a sitting position and then propelling herself forward by means of her hands as well as her feet. Consuelo followed her example, and all of a sudden, when she least expected it, saw a faint light which seemed to proceed from the very heart of the great cliff. As to any appearance of an ordinary house, there was none; but there was a tiny plateau about three feet square, on which the gypsy stood. Below them was a sheer drop of seventy or eighty feet into the boiling, raging sea; for the black clouds from the south-west were coming nearer, and rapidly but surely would shut out the moon and the light of the stars.

"This is my house," said the gypsy woman, "and into it no one dares to enter who does not cross the threshold with the magic power of gold. Have you brought the money with you that you said you'd bring, my pretty, wandering bird from over the distant seas? For if you ain't brought it, and if you've come here to mock at Mother Jeremy, it's easy to give you one swift push, and no one ever sees yer bonny bit face again."

"It's very cruel of you to speak like that," said Consuelo, whom no angry words could daunt. "And do you really think," she added, "that I, a girl from the great United States of America—I, who proudly hail from the land of freedom—would break my word to a hapless old woman like yourself, and drag you out of your bed at this hour for nothing? I want some of your wisdom, old Romany queen; and if I must pay for it, I must. I have got the money you demanded."

"Three sovereigns, then," said the old woman at once.

"No," said Consuelo, firmly; "our bargain was for two. I have got two sovereigns, and nothing more. I will cross the threshold of your house with the bonny gold, and then go inside with you; and you will tell me my fortune, gypsy, and let me go back to my people."

Mother Jeremy who in reality would not hurt Consuelo for the world, and who had not expected a penny more than one sovereign, pretended, with some growls, to submit. Consuelo took the sovereigns from her pocket. The gypsy stood on the threshold of the tiny hut, or rather cave, in the heart of

the cliff, and Consuelo crossed her palm with one piece of gold, and then crossed it with a second piece of gold; whereupon the gypsy made room for her to enter.

"Oh, what a strange place!" said the girl.

It was, truly. It was bare of the bare, with no furniture, except a very old deal table and an equally old rickety chair, and something on a distant part of the floor which might be a bed or might not. On the table, however, lay an ancient book which stood open, and the leaves of which were covered with the same cabbalistic writing as covered the gypsy's red dress. There were a pair of candles in two old wine-bottles standing on the table, and it was these which had made the illumination which Consuelo had seen shining, as it were, out of the heart of the great cliff.

"Please be quick," said Consuelo. "I will show you my palm, and you will cross it with the gold of one sovereign; and you will melt the other in the fire, as you said, in order to get the right light. But you have no fire."

"Tain't needed," said the gypsy. "I ha' thought o' something better. I cross your hand with the two sovereigns held together, and it makes a cross as no gypsy queen ever yet failed to read the future by. Eh! I ha' been readin' up the ancient words, and ef you'll stand just where the light of the moon falls on yer bonny face, I'll tell you all about your present, your past, and your future."

Consuelo was now silent. She felt as one under a spell. The gypsy bent over the book, muttering words in a language which the girl could not distinguish.

"What a strange dress you are wearing!" said Consuelo.

"Aye," was the answer; "this robe is Egyptian, and it belonged to him who was the son o' Hezekiah, who was the son o' Jonah. To him who was my father was this robe given; and I keep it buried in the earth, only to wear when the spirit of true prophecy moves me."

"Well, begin—begin," said Consuelo. "Time is passing."

"Eh?" said the gypsy, raising her sunken eyes and looking full at the girl. "The spirit is comin' over me, and I must speak as the spirit moves me. Time isn't for one like me, at moments such as this; for I can see all time, as it were, and know that it will be rolled up as a scroll and be less than naught. But come into the moonlight, and let me cross yer bonny palm and speak as the spirit moves. Only interrupt me by no questions, for I can't brook 'em."

The gypsy now led Consuelo out of the cave. They both stood on the little plateau, where the moon, as yet undimmed by the fast-hurrying clouds, shone upon them.

"Lady Moon," said the gypsy as she crossed the girl's palm two or three times with the magic gold, "give your secret to me, and tell me what is in your bonny heart about this young maid who has come to me for counsel."

The gypsy looked, with a queer, freakish expression in her face, full up at the bright moon. She then began to mumble

something rapidly. At first her language was in that tongue which Consuelo could not understand. It was as though she were talking direct to the moon and the moon were replying to her. After a little, however, she seemed satisfied, drew herself up erect, and turned to the girl.

"The whole thing is clearer than the light o' day," she said. "You are one o' those who has a great work laid upon her to fulfill."

These words, uttered in the slow, majestic old voice, so exactly suited the mood of the romantic, enthusiastic girl that she felt herself thrilling all over.

"The power o' the bonny gold is yours," said the gypsy. "You can use it for ill, and bitter will be your curse—the curse o' the poor as they shiver in the cold o' winter; and as they die o' hunger while you fill yourself with dainties; and the curse o' all those who have been led by you into sin, who have been tempted as gold can tempt. Or you can have the blessin' o' gold, and give food to the hungry and clothes to the naked. It's a mighty load laid upon you; and you can take it up, for you are strong, and you has good health, and you has them that love you. And in the future I see you, oh! fallin' many and many a time, but always a-risin' up again and goin' a bit forrarder; and though you stumble once more, up you get again, and you reach some day, at the top o' the way, a golden gate, and that golden gate leads straight into the pathway o' the stars o' heaven."

The gypsy paused.

"I see what you were in the past." She began changing her tone. "No comfort too much for yer; you, who ought to be last, put first; you, who ought to be least, made the greatest. And I see the ugly growth o' selfishness like a weed clinging to yer, and you blind to it all the time. I see you at present; and something has happened. You ain't happy."

"No," said Consuelo; "I want—oh, Mother Jeremy, I want what I can't get! Mother Jeremy, I am an awfully rich girl, and I hate to be rich; and I am a selfish girl, and I hate to be selfish. I want just to be a good girl—good, and to get happiness that way. Oh, if you—if you and Lady Moon would help me!"

Mother Jeremy was so astonished at Consuelo's words that she remained quite silent for the space of a minute. Then she said abruptly:

"It lies with yourself. But there's Paul the hermit; and he lives away to Casterton, and that's ten mile as the crow flies from here. When we gypsies want what you call Faith and Light and Leading we go to Paul, the gypsy hermit. Mayhap he'd tell yer a thing or two; mayhap he wouldn't. You might say that Mother Jeremy, the daughter o' Enoch, who was the son of Hezekiah, who was the son o' Jonah, sent yer. He don't want no gold, nor silver, nor even a copper-piece; but he's a holy man. Now, missie, by the light o' the stars, I say to you that you ha' got the power, and you ha'

got the fair face that'll win hearts, and you ha' got the gold that all men and women love. It may be red gold to you, and then it will all be wickedness; but if it is gold like the sunshine, then it will be blessedness. Have I not been told by Lady Moon herself to warn you not to turn the gold red, for red is the color o' blood? There! She has said good-night to you, my bonny dear. She has put on her night-cap has Lady Moon; and, by the same token, the rain's a-comin' down."

So it was—such rain as Consuelo had never heard before. It began by a sweeping blast of angry and terrific wind, and then a great scud of rain swept across the cliff, and the sea rose into great mountains of white foam; and the gypsy and the girl went for shelter into the little cave.

The gypsy, having delivered herself of her prophetic utterances, now completely changed her manner. She put out one candle, and drew a bottle from its hiding-place in a corner of the cave. She took a copious draught from the mouth of the bottle, and then offered it to Consuelo, saying that it was fine, warming stuff. At the same time she retired into a dark part of the cave to divest herself of her red-and-black skirt, returning presently in the same garments that Consuelo had seen a couple of days before.

As to the girl herself, she was in a highly nervous state, and, although she refused the gypsy's cordial, could not for several minutes quite realize her position. At the end of that time she remembered that poor Miss Dawson must be in a transport of agony with regard to her. What should she do?

"I must go back," she said to the gypsy.

But scarcely had the words passed her lips before a flash of vivid lightning lit up the little cave, followed immediately by a crashing peal of thunder.

"We're safe here," said the gypsy. "No lightning will strike me in my cozy house in the rock. You must keep me company, missie, willy-nilly, for home you can't go. Why, you might be struck on the road."

"But I really ought to go," said poor Consuelo, "for we are all having a picnic down in a wood about a mile off. I had to slip away from the others to come to you. They will be nearly frantic about me. I ought to go back whatever happens."

"Not if you value your life, missie," said Mother Jeremy. "They must take care o' theirselves. Silly they were not to watch the way o' the clouds; for that bank comin' up so quickly against the wind foretold a thunderstorm, if anything ever did. My word, there's a blaze for you!"

Consuelo was silent. She was not afraid; but she did know that to leave the gypsy's hut at the present moment was to court unnecessary danger. She stood, therefore, near the entrance, very silent, watching the magnificent sea which lay far below. Never had she beheld such a thunderstorm. It lasted for about an hour and a half; then the clouds rolled

by; the sky became blue and tranquil once more; but Lady Moon had gone far on her way towards the distant horizon. Consuelo looked full up at the bright thing with quivering lips.

"The red gold, and the gold like sunshine," she kept saying to herself.

Suddenly she turned to the gypsy.

"The rain is over. I thank you with all my heart. It is ten miles from here, is it, where Paul the hermit lives?"

"Bless yer, missie, yes; and he is a good man—a saint, no less. It's over to Casterton. He'll mayhap tell yer somethin' to cure yer heart's hunger."

"Good-by. Let me kiss you, Mother Jeremy," said Consuelo.

The old gypsy was seated on the floor of her hut, her knees drawn up to her chin. The girl bent, gave her one light kiss, and fled from the spot.

## CHAPTER XX.

### A THUNDERSTORM.

THE grass was dripping wet, the cliff was slippery, but Consuelo knew no fear. She soon reached the summit. She was stimulated through all her being as she had never been stimulated before. Any one might have told her such a fortune as the gypsy had uttered, but from no other lips would she have believed it. The impressiveness of the scene, the strange old figure, the pure light of the moon reflected on Consuelo's own face and on the gypsy's face, had engraved each uttered word deep on the girl's heart.

She was singularly absorbed with herself, however, and her greatest desire was not to see Selma, or Miss Dawson, or the Falkland girls, but to find Paul the hermit. She had got definite information at last of that which was laid upon her. She had been told of the greatness of the trust which rested on her slim shoulders. But she did not know in what possible way she could carry her burden. The gypsy, however, said that Paul the hermit could tell her.

Consuelo presently reached the place where the fairy lanterns had burned under the trees and where the midnight supper had been laid. The stone which had been converted into a sort of throne for the queen of the night was still in its place. There were some scattered papers, also, about; but all other signs of the picnic and all trace of the people who had composed the picnic had completely vanished. The grass was dripping wet. The trees made a sighing sound, for the west wind was bringing up further clouds, and before long there would be more rain.

Consuelo stood like a forsaken creature, leaning against the stem of one of the trees. She did not know what she had



expected, but she scarcely thought that they would have all left before she arrived, that they would have tired of waiting for her, that they would have gone home. She could follow them, of course. It was the right thing, perhaps, to do. She would be very severely scolded, but the thought of any possible scolding scarcely weighed with her. She felt like one who had got a chart in her hand which gave directions how she was to proceed on her way. She felt imbued, through and through her being, with the spirit of the pilgrim.

When she had started on that picnic she was neither a pilgrim nor did she possess a map of the road. Now, metaphorically, she did. She thought for a little, and it seemed to her that the guiding Finger pointed her direct, not to Westbourne and Discipline House, but to Paul the hermit. She would go to him. She could occupy herself walking in his direction during the remainder of the night, for she could not possibly keep still.

The gypsy had said that he lived at a town called Casterton, and that it was, as the crow flies, ten miles away; and ten miles was a much greater walk than she had ever undertaken. Still, that mattered little. It was worth her while to make a great effort when so much was at stake.

She began, therefore, to walk through the wood until she reached the farther end. There the rain overtook her, drenching her so badly that she had to take shelter in the porch of a cottage. A dog began to bark, and presently a head was poked out of an upper window.

"Is any one there?" called a voice.

"Yes. I will go on when the rain is over," said Consuelo back.

"Mercy! A young gel out at this hour o' the night! Who be you, dear?"

"I am an American girl," called Consuelo back. "I have been caught in the rain. I am on my way to Casterton."

"The voice o' one o' the quality!" thought the woman to herself. Aloud she said, "It's a pity for you to stand out in the cold, dear. I'll let you in, and welcome. Bide a bit, and I'll be down. I'll just put something on."

Consuelo waited. In a very few moments the door was opened, and she was invited to enter. An elderly woman with gray hair was holding a candle in her hand.

"Now, to be sure," she said; "why, you're dripping through and through. Whatever is a young lady like you out for at this hour o' the night; and so far from every one, too, for there ain't another cottage, so to speak, for miles round?"

"I am all right," said Consuelo. "Thank you very much indeed for letting me in. I was waylaid by the thunderstorm, and missed my party, and then I thought I'd like to walk to Casterton. I want to see Paul the hermit. Do you know him?"

"Know 'im!" said the woman. "I wouldn't be Mercy Perkins without knowing 'im. Now, look here, my dear. Lady,

you be by birth, and lady by nature, and I'm right glad as my dog Snap barked at you, for you might ha' stood in my porch till morning, and got your death. I'm going to light a bit o' fire here to dry your clothes, and you'll put on one o' my bed-gowns and get into my warm bed, and then in the morning I'll put you on your way to Casterton. But it's a good bit off, my love; and mighty tough walking, too. Oh, lor, there's more lightning! It's a rare wild night, and no mistake."

While Consuelo was safely ensconced under the guiding care of the kindest old woman in the neighborhood—for Mercy Perkins was well known for her deeds of charity far and near—poor Miss Dawson was undergoing almost indescribable agony. She began to be alarmed about Consuelo when half-an-hour had gone by, when the soup had been poured into the cups ready for it, and when the rest of the little party had assembled to partake of their good food. Selma had done her best to blind the others with regard to Consuelo's whereabouts, declaring that that young lady was probably roaming about the wood. When all these subtuges failed she resorted to silence, and then declared that she knew nothing whatever about Consuelo, but that, if Miss Dawson was wise, she would not fret herself into a fever about one who was so well able to take care of herself.

Miss Dawson reproved Selma very sharply, and Selma again became mute.

By this time the heavy clouds hid all moonlight from view, and the coachman, Harris, declared his intention of going back to Westbourne, requesting the ladies to get into the carriage.

"Wherever young miss be," he said, "she is under shelter, for sure; and the rest of you may be killed with the trees all round you. There's a flash for you. I can drive back again to look for her when the storm is over; but get away from here we must."

"You are right, Harris," said Miss Dawson; "and the sooner we start the better. Oh, what misery am I not living through! But come, girls, come. We have no time even to grumble. I am simply terrified of lightning; we may all be dead if we don't hurry. Put cups and saucers and everything anyhow into the basket, and get into the wagonette."

The girls, much subdued—for really the storm was a terrific one—obeyed, and huddled together, shaking, trembling, and getting soaked to the skin. In this condition the unfortunate little party drove back to Westbourne.

Maudie was up to receive them. When Maudie saw no Miss Connie she uttered a shriek of horror.

"Why, now, to think on it!" she said. "And you ha' left the best o' the bunch all by her lonesome in the storm. It's myself 'ull go and look for her, ef I have to walk every yard o' the way."

"There's no good in acting in a foolish fashion," said Harris. "The young lady has taken shelter, and we'll go searching for her at an early hour in the morning."

"Yes," said Miss Dawson; "there is nothing whatever else to be done. Consuelo has strayed from her party, and I am deeply sorry; but you three have to be attended to. Into bed, my dears, you must all get—Sykes, do be reasonable.—Good-night, Harris. Be here at eight in the morning with a carriage, and I will go myself to look for that troublesome girl.—Sykes, boil some hot water, and bring it upstairs. Each of the young ladies must have a hot drink."

Miss Dawson helped her pupils off with their wet things and got them into their beds, and took off her own wet things, and trusted sincerely that neither her beloved Patty nor her precious Curly would suffer from this awful expedition. Selma certainly might have a bad cold if it would teach her a lesson. As to Consuelo, Miss Dawson made up her mind definitely that she would have nothing further to do with such a desperate specimen of humanity. As this thought came to her she happened to be passing the girl's room.

"It's as likely as not," she said to herself, "that Sykes has left the window open, and that the rain will have blown in. I had better go and see."

She opened the door. The window was shut, but on the floor lay the pawn-ticket. Miss Dawson stooped and picked it up. Her face grew first red, and then pale. She carried the ticket into her own room. What did this mean?

Sykes was not yet in bed, although it was two in the morning. Perhaps never in her life before had Miss Dawson been up at this hour. She felt absolutely bewildered. She left her door a little ajar, and, as the tired little servant was going upstairs, called her into her room.

"Now," she said, "you will have the goodness to explain. What does this mean?"

She held the little green ticket between her finger and thumb.

"Yes, 'um," said Maudie. She dropped a curtsy, turned a dull red, and twirled her apron.

"I found this in Miss Consuelo's room, on the floor. Does it belong to you?"

"Ye-s, 'um—no, 'um."

"What do you mean by 'Yes, um—no, 'um'?"

"I means," said Maudie, "that it don't, so a-speak, 'long o' me."

"You are unintelligible! Talk of Board School education when it produces creatures of your caliber!"

"Please, 'um, is those words curses? I don't understand 'em, not I?"

"Stop your impertinence, girl, and tell me the truth about this ticket."

"Well, 'um, it's Miss Connie's; I'll keep it for her, ef you'll—ef you don't mind, 'um."

"I do mind very much. I hold this ticket. So Miss Consuelo Seymour has recourse to pawnshops!"

"Two suvs I got for it," whispered Maudie.

"Two what? Speak out."

"Two suvveranes, miss."

"What did you get two sovereigns for?"

"The dressin'-gownd. It was the tassels as done it."

"You mean that *you* pawned Miss Seymour's dressing-gown—that hideous thing which I have seen her wear since she came here?"

"Tain't 'ideous," said Maudie. "Jones said—an' I s'pose 'e *ought* to know—that it was the most beauteous garment 'e'd ever sot eyes on. He fair screamed out when he seen it. But it wor the tassels an' the cord as drew the money from him."

"Did you steal the dressing-gown?"

"Me—steal!"

"How did you get it?"

"Miss Connie—she guv' it to me her own self! She niver meant to be crool when she guv' me the stummik-ache. She's a reel good 'eart, an' I loves her. She wanted the money, an' you wouldn't guv' it to her; so she sent me with the dressin'-gownd—an' beauteous it be."

"You can go to bed," said Miss Dawson.

Maudie retired up the narrow staircase, sobbing as she went. Miss Dawson stood still in the middle of the room. She remembered Connie's request for two sovereigns on the previous day. She sat down in a low chair. She felt a strange mixture of fear and self-reproach.

During the rest of that night Miss Dawson did not sleep, but in addition to that fact she lay with thoughts visiting her heart which had not come to it for a very long time. She began to be frightened about the queer girl who had been put under her care, and she began dimly and afar off to understand a little bit of that girl's character, of her tenacity of purpose, and her resolve to carry out her schemes, whatever they might be, in the face of almost impracticable difficulties. Miss Dawson recalled Consuelo as she had been that day when she saw her sobbing in the little arbor at Castle Rocco—the pathetic little figure, the tear-stained face, the imploring voice, the earnestness of the child's desire, her wish to get away from a false position in order to live a better life, and Miss Dawson's own very unwilling assent to Consuelo's proposition.

She recalled now how little she had really desired to help the girl. She had made no allowance for the difference of her bringing up. She had not even tried to realize how strange it was for Consuelo to begin to deny herself. She reflected on her grim resolve that if Consuelo needed discipline, discipline she should have. She had, therefore, given her the worst bedroom, the roughest time generally. The girl had submitted, but with a bad grace; and Miss Dawson

knew that in her heart of hearts she was glad of this, for she hoped that Consuelo would tire of her project, would elect to go back to her life of luxury, and that she (Miss Dawson) would have got rid of her.

So far nothing of the sort had occurred. Miss Dawson remembered Consuelo's request of Sunday—the request so modest, really, from her, and yet so unheard of from the governess's point of view. The girl wanted the money, and asked for it; she begged for it quite prettily. Miss Dawson refused it with asperity. But Consuelo was not to be baffled, any more than when she was at Castle Rocco, of her desire. She made Maudie her accomplice, and got the money in another way. Now, where was the child? While the rest of the girls were sleeping in their warm beds, where was the richest young American from New York City sheltering her pretty head?

## CHAPTER XXI.

### SNAP.

THE stormy night was succeeded by a day of mingled showers and sunshine. A very tired girl lay sound asleep on Mercy Perkins's hard but clean bed. Mercy Perkins stood and looked down at her.

"Ain't she a pretty un!" thought the woman. "Ain't her 'air lovely, and ain't her face pale and genteel! What long eyelashes she do have, to be sure—same color as her 'air, for all the world; and how pretty be her lips—small, like those o' a baby; and what a little face it be! I've took to her, that I have. She come to me like a poor, tired angel in the middle o' the stormy night, and I took her in. I'd do it again, and yet again, for one like she. Ain't she sweet to look at! It's a real treat for an old body like me to look down on a face o' that sort.—Here, Snap!"

Mercy Perkins stooped and picked up a mongrel specimen of an Irish terrier.

"There now, you barked; by the same token you saved her life. See here, Snap. You must love her like anything, for I love her already."

The dog raised those wonderfully expressive eyes that all his special breed possess to the gnarled but kindly face of the old woman. He licked her hand, and when she had put her own rough hand timidly on Consuelo's, which lay outside the bedclothes, Snap bent forward and also licked the little, white, slim hand.

"There now, you ha' done it," said Mercy. "You are her friend, her protector, if necessary, from this hour out. Ain't yer a good un, and a wise un too! Never did I see your like for intellect. I wouldn't part with you, Snap, for your weight in gold."

Just then Consuelo started, opened her sleepy, bright-blue eyes, and fixed them, first on Mercy, and then on Snap.

"Where am I?" she asked in a tone of astonishment.

"With me, my darling, in my little cot; and nice and warm you feel—as warm as a toast. I saved you—or, rather, Snap did—from a cold, and maybe worse. See you here now, my honey; Snap is waiting to make friends with you. Ain't he a real cunning little dog?"

Consuelo held out her hand to Snap, who licked it again.

"Thank you, kind Snap," she said.—"And thank you—oh! thank you, still kinder Mercy. Where should I be now but for you both?"

"The Lord only knows!" said Mercy Perkins. "But He led you here, so He has a loving feel for you in His heart. Now then, what will you have to breakfast on? I ain't got much, my dear; but what I have is at your disposal. I take it you are accustomed to dainties."

"I hate dainties," said Consuelo, sitting up and pushing back her thick hair.

"Now, ain't that wonderful!" exclaimed Mercy; "and your clothes are most delicate in make, more particular yer undergarments—real lace on 'em all, and as fine as the cambric you make babies' shirts o'. Why, you were soaked to the skin, my dear; but your pretty things are dry as a toast, and warm too, by now. I can bring you up a cup o' tea and some bread; but I don't have no butter, love; and the milkman, he only comes every second day. The milk I had in the house was turned by the thunder; so it's but a poor breakfast I can offer you, my dearie dear."

"Oh, it will do beautifully," said Consuelo. "I remember every single thing now," she added, "and I want to go as fast as ever I can to Paul the hermit."

"Well, now, and what do you want with him, if I may make bold enough to ask?"

"He is a Guide, and I want one."

"You mean you want a sort o' preacher—some one to tell yer things."

"Yes; I want him to tell me a great many things."

"He will, and no mistake. He is plain with his words, is Paul; no humbug 'bout 'im. It's a good eleven and three-quarter mile from this house to Casterton, and Paul's hovel—and 'tain't no more—is at the further side o' the town, out and away up a mountain-path. I misdoubt me that you'd find it, my dearie dear."

"Oh, but I can ask," said Consuelo.

"So you can. But you are a pretty young lady, and quite out o' the common in these parts; and there's them that'll stare at you, and there's them who might be rude to you. I tell you what it is, now. I have a thought in my head. You take Snap along with you. Bless you! you'll be safe enough then. Snap could walk blindfold to Casterton; and if you tell him, 'Paul the hermit,' why, he'll take you there straight, straight to the very door, for he and I have gone there scores and scores o' times."

"And will you really lend me your dog?" said Consuelo, looking very much excited.

"To be sure I will, if you'll promise to bring him back again."

"Yes, I'll do that; I'll make you a faithful promise."

"Aye, my dear," said the old woman, "there's only one sort o' promise worth having, and that's a promise that you keep. I don't look for false words from your young lips; you promise—that is enough."

"I promise," answered Consuelo, looking at the old woman with intense respect.

"Very well; now I'll hurry with your breakfast, for the sooner you are off the better. It's a weary long way to Casterton, and the days ain't as long as they were a month ago."

Mercy hurried downstairs, returning in the space of a few minutes with a little toasted bread and a cup of tea, minus sugar and milk. Never in all her life had Consuelo eaten such a plain meal. But, in the first place, she was keenly hungry, and that fact gave the dry toast a delicious taste; she was also thirsty. So the bitter tea was swallowed with a certain amount of appreciation. Then her dry, warm clothes, being brought to her, she put them on, and went downstairs.

"Now then," said Mercy, "off you go. You look nicely, and that I will say—a bit pale, to be sure, but then that is your nature, I expect."

"Yes," said Consuelo; "I never have color."

"I have told Snap everything that is necessary; and here's your leading-rein—you must hold on to that and just follow him. He'll take you the best and the safest way. It's a bit lonely on the great moors, and you have to cross two or three to get to Casterton. But you're safe enough with Snap, for he'd have his teeth into the legs o' any one who came along to worrit you. With Snap it's never 'let go'; he'd die first.—Now then, Snap, my boy."

Snap cocked an ear, looked intelligently from Mercy to Consuelo, and wagged a very short stump of a tail.

"You are to go for a walk," said Mercy.

Snap began to caper about and express his satisfaction by a series of short barks or yaps.

"But I stay at home," said Mercy.

Snap did not like this, and running up to Mercy, caught hold of her apron and tried to pull her towards the door.

"No, my poor boy; it's no use," said Mercy. "I couldn't walk that far, for if I could I would. It's laid on me to help this young lady, but I can't walk to Casterton even for her. But you can, being a young, strong dog and fond of exercise. Now then, you listen. Don't you let man or woman touch her. Do you understand me? Bark twice if you do." Snap flashed his bright eyes at Consuelo and gave two expressive barks. "And go through Casterton to Paul the hermit." Snap quivered with excitement and his eyes beamed with intelligence.

"He knows; he will take you," said Mercy. "There ain't a scrap o' fear; not a scrap. You go with the dog, and bring him back to me, if not to-day, to-morrow. Here, now; this is his leading-chain.—Snap, my boy, we must all submit to discipline; you walk on in front, and missie will follow you behind.—You had best start immediate, missie, for there are more clouds coming up.—Snap, if it rains get under the best shelter you can."

"Yap!" answered the dog.

"Oh, Mercy," said Consuelo, "I don't know in what way to thank you. I know I ought to pay you, but I haven't a penny with me. But I'll bring it to you—indeed I will, Mercy. I'll write to poppa for it. My poppa is very rich, and he will give you plenty of money."

"Now hark to the child!" said Mercy. "Do I do what I do for filthy lucre? That indeed would be far from me. Why, my love, you ha' paid me by cheering me up, and I look to get fine news o' you when you come back to-night. But now go, my dear, for it is getting on—a quarter to eight o' the clock—and you'll never get your journey done if you don't hurry up."

"Then I'll kiss you, Mercy," said Consuelo, which she proceeded to do.

The day was very fresh and yet balmy, and Consuelo walked for the first two or three miles with a springy step and a wonderfully lightened heart. She was still, however, intensely self-absorbed, and it did not occur to her to try to realize what agony of terror Miss Dawson and her companions might be enduring. Selma had often been present when Consuelo played pranks at home. Selma would at least know that she had gone to the gypsy, and would probably enlighten the others if she thought it necessary.

Oh, there was no real cause to be in the least anxious about Miss Dawson and her companions. She would be back with them all in good time, and what a changed, what a totally different, Consuelo they would find her!

Snap, true to his directions, kept straight on, bearing ever towards the left, and leading poor Consuelo through many rough paths. After an hour's hard walking the girl began to feel tired. She suggested to Snap that they should rest, and the dog immediately squatted down on a bed of springy heather. Consuelo sat by his side, and began to stroke his rough head.

"Why, Snap," she said, "dear little Snappy, I have got a sort of guide already in you."

She smiled to herself, but the heather on which she was seated was damp, and the clouds were still coming up from the west, and presently a great shower of cold rain came down, shutting away all sunshine and thoroughly wetting poor Consuelo. Snap, true to his directions, tugged at the chain and set off at a brisk trot, until they presently found themselves under the shelter of some old trees. But by this



time the girl was wet through, and it was better to walk on than to stay still.

The shower cleared away, and fresh sunshine filled the world. Consuelo walked fast, but somehow the spring and elasticity which had supported her were now absent. She felt strangely tired, and did not trace the fact to the very insufficient breakfast she had eaten, and to the intense excitement she had lived through on the previous evening. She had had no supper either, having gone to find the gypsy before that meal. She was really now very hungry, and, rich little girl that she was, had not one farthing in her possession. There was nothing for it but to walk on; but her head began to ache badly, and she disliked the sun as much as the rain. In short, it took Consuelo several long and weary hours to reach the straggling little town of Casterton. By that time she had encountered more showers than one. Her feet were sopping, for her shoes were quite unfit for a long ramble over the moors, and she was absolutely faint with hunger.

Snap, on the contrary, had not felt his walk in the least—unless, indeed, the chain which Consuelo held in her hand annoyed him. But he was a well-trained dog, and looked for restrictions to his liberty as some of the laws of life.

Straight through the village, the queer-looking pair passed, more than one person turning to gaze at the remarkable but now draggled-looking girl and the small, sharp-set, clever dog. Consuelo now felt that she was nearing her goal, but she was not prepared for the very steep climb which came at the end of her journey. She found herself catching her breath from time to time, and wondering dizzily when her sufferings would be over. There was surely nobody living on this bleak mountainside.

All of a sudden, however, she saw a thin curl of blue smoke ascending through the air, and the next minute a roughly-made house, without door or window, came into view. Consuelo hesitated. Truly no one who was worthy the name of Guide could live in such a place. Snap, however, had no doubts whatever on the subject. Paul the hermit was just Paul the hermit to him. He had to take Consuelo to Paul, and then his immediate task would be over. A bone would have been grateful, and a lap of water refreshing; but if he could not get them, why, somehow or other, it would not greatly matter. It was the law of life to Snap to endure discipline without a grumble.

He turned and looked at Consuelo when they reached the open door, and then, suddenly perceiving that she was speechless, and that her face looked as he had never seen face look before, he uttered two or three ringing barks by way of drawing attention to their arrival.

Consuelo leaned up against the wall of the hovel. She closed her eyes. For a minute all was dim and faint before her. When she opened them again she saw the kindest eyes she had ever looked at gazing into hers. A very quiet, el-

derly, gentlemanly man had taken one of her cold hands, and a voice, quite charming in its culture and refinement, said:

"Come in, my dear; you are very tired, and you want food and drink."

"Oh, I am so terribly hungry!" said Consuelo.

Then the kind face seemed to grow luminous and to recede from her vision until she only saw it a very long way off, and the very next thing that happened was this, poor Consuelo Josephine Persis, the richest girl in New York, fainted dead away.

## CHAPTER XXII.

### THE HERMIT.

CONSUELO was seated by the hermit's fire. Snap was lying in the full comfort of its blaze. The hovel, which looked so strange from the outside view, was fairly comfortable within. There was a table covered with a check red cloth; there was a lamp on the table with a shade made of delicate blue china. The lamp was lighted, and Consuelo thought she never saw anything so cheery as the circle of light it made. She herself was supported by pillows in a deep old wicker-work chair. Her feet were stretched out towards the grateful fire, and she had just finished drinking a cup of hot and most excellent soup. Snap had between his fore-paws a bone of large dimensions, and he had lapped up as much water as he thought necessary to assuage his thirst.

The walls of the little hut were papered, and there were a few good photographs (noticeably one of Holman Hunt's "Light of the World") hung on them. There was a shelf also which contained books—a dozen or more. In one corner of the hovel was a curtain, behind which, doubtless, the hermit's bed was to be found.

Consuelo looked drowsily round the little apartment. Never before in all her life had she found herself in so quaint and yet so charming a room. Here, surely, was no wealth at all. Here was the very extreme of poverty; and yet how strangely peaceful was the place!

The hermit, who had kept himself very much in the background while Consuelo was recovering and was drinking her soup and eating her delicious fresh bread, now came forward, and seating himself on the hard chair which he drew from its place by the wall, looked full at the girl.

"You are better," he said.

"Yes," said Consuelo, "oh, yes, I am quite well."

"That is right. You were very poorly when you arrived here. Did you come from far?"

"I don't exactly know from where I came," answered Consuelo; "but last night, at midnight, I was on Rocky Head. I wandered afterwards to the house of the—the—lady whose dog this is. She lent me the dog to guide me to you."

"I see that you have discernment," said the hermit. "Mercy Perkins is one of the truest ladies I know. I have met people who call themselves by that sacred title in the houses of the great, but I never came across any one in any class of life so imbued with the true spirit of the lady as Mercy Perkins."

"And you," said Consuelo—"you are a—gentleman."

Paul the hermit smiled very gently.

"I am one of the King's messengers, my dear; so it behooves me to act as He would wish."

Consuelo looked down. She found herself trembling. All of a sudden she said:

"Why do you live here? Is it necessary?"

"It is entirely a matter of choice," was the reply. "I live in this hut because I like to have plenty of time to myself, but I also like to be within reach of those who need my services. It is astonishing, young lady, how many people will come to consult me because I live here who would not dream of approaching me were I the owner of an ordinary house with an ordinary hall-door and an ordinary bell. I should diminish my work to an extent which would astonish you were I to live as ordinary people live. Besides, the silver and gold belong to the King. I should consider myself an unfaithful servant if I spent a penny more on myself than I need."

"Oh!" said Consuelo. "Oh! Then Mother Jeremy was right, and you are the very person for me. May I speak to you, and may I tell you my story?"

"Most assuredly. I am here to listen."

Then Consuelo, the proud, the shy, opened up her heart of hearts. She did not know until that moment the depths of that same heart. She did not know the anguish of her own sorrow until she began to explain it. But she did know that she was a desolate little girl who hated her present life and longed for a better.

She told Paul everything, drawn on by the kind expression in his eyes, by the certainty that he was listening to each word she uttered, and by his blessed and most restful silence. When she had finished he said: "I quite understand you. I judge that you want to turn straight round."

"Yes."

"It will be difficult."

"I don't mind."

"Forgive me," said Paul, "but you are minding very much."

"What do you mean?"

"You dislike your life in the house you call Discipline House. You dislike the lady who is doing her best to help you."

Consuelo stammered, and found herself coloring. "That scheme has failed," she said.

"But why has it failed? What is the matter with it?"

"It is terrible," said the girl; "it is irksome to the last degree."

"It strikes me," said Paul, "that what you call irksome, what you call terrible, ought to be spoken of by other names. You elected to put yourself under discipline. When you found yourself under it you were sorry. It is just because you dislike this thing that you ought to go on with it."

"Oh, but—" said Consuelo.

"There is no 'but.' Believe me, there is no possible way of winning the crown that you aspire to without wearing the cross that you despise. You may leave Westbourne, and go back to your father and mother, and think out some other scheme for self-mortification; but each scheme, as you think of it, will fail, just as this has failed, if you don't recognize the fact that by wearing the cross you secure the crown. There is no other way. I cannot live your life for you; you must live it for yourself. All I would say to you is this: bear the cross patiently; bear it willingly. By-and-by you would not do without it for all creation. And remember, too, that the gold and the silver belong to the Lord of Hosts. And now I must set you on your way, for it is getting late. Farewell!"

Consuelo rose to her feet. She was dazzled. Had the hermit helped her, or had he too failed her? She looked full up into his eyes.

"I do long to be good," she said then.

"The God above will help thee, child," was his answer. He touched her bright head for an instant with his hand, then turned and entered the cottage.

Consuelo and Snap turned back by the way they had come.

## CHAPTER XXIII.

### THE GRAND SECRET.

IF poor Consuelo had found it difficult to reach the hermit's house, she found it far more toilsome to get back again to Mercy Perkins's cottage. It is true, she had been refreshed by the hospitality of the hermit but her cup of soup and piece of bread were, after all, not as sustaining as the meals she were accustomed to. Her limbs ached badly, and her clothes were still so far from dry that long shivers passed through her frame.

Before she was half-way back over the moors her inclination was to fling herself down, to court sleep at any cost, and not to start until the morning. But when this temptation assailed Consuelo, Snap had something to say. There were limits to Snap's devotion. He had done his duty, barely his duty, by taking the strange girl to visit Paul. He had been unexpectedly rewarded by a good and delicious bone. He was therefore quite strong and well, and able to return to Mercy without the least discomfort. If he could have left

Consuelo, he might have been inclined to do so, for then he could have scampered back to the cottage, getting there in less than no time. But Snap knew better than that. His mistress's orders were clear, very clear, to his doggy brain. He was to take this girl out, and he was to bring her back. But, although he faithfully intended to do what was required of him, he did not mean to spend the night out.

Accordingly, when Consuelo flagged in her walking Snap began to pull at the chain, and to look at her with imploring and yet commanding eyes. Whatever happened, Consuelo must walk on.

There came more showers of heavy rain, and the poor child was now in serious pain. Every bone in her body ached. She could scarcely see. Her breath came with difficulty. She was conscious of pain in her side when she tried to draw that breath. She wondered dimly what poppa would say could he see her now, what mamma would feel, what Selma would do; and then, as she neared the end of her journey, she found herself forgetting her own people and Miss Dawson and the Falkland girls, and thinking only of Mercy in her cottage, and Paul in his hovel. Was it indeed true that these two people—these very poor, very simple folks—held the secret of all secrets, the grand secret of Contentment and Usefulness and Happiness?

It was past midnight when poor little Consuelo staggered across the threshold of Mercy Perkins's house.

"Oh, Mercy!" she said, with a sob.

Mercy caught her in her kind arms.

"Why, you are drenched, my lamb!" she said; "and fear it I did when I saw them angry clouds empty themselves. But I've warmed the bed, and I got a bit o' meat, and have made soup. You shall soon have something hot to drink; and I have a new loaf o' crusty bread, and you shall have a good hunk o' it; and what's more, Snap—dear Snap—shall have his mutton-bone.—The butcher he give it to me for nothing 'cause he has took a fancy to you, Snap.—Now then, up we go, darling, and you'll be popped into your hot bed."

Consuelo followed the old woman up the steep ladder which led into the little bedroom. Very soon she was lying between the warm sheets, and a hot cup of beef-tea was held to her thirsty lips. But she found she could drink very little and eat nothing at all. Mercy put her hand on the girl's hot forehead and felt her fluttering, rapid pulse, and quickly made up her mind what to do.

"There ain't no bed for me to-night," was her thought of thoughts. "But I'll set on some o' them fever-herbs which I keep handy, and get her to drink a good long drink, which will put her into a rare perspiration and bring down the fever."

Mercy bustled about and prepared the potion, and tried to get Consuelo to take it. But long before that stage was reached the poor little girl was quite unconscious. She was

raving in wild delirium, and Mercy sat staring at her, and wondering much what was to happen.

"She's a petted young un, and the darling o' some people's hearts, and I don't even know her name," thought Mercy. "And now she is ill—very ill—and I must fetch the doctor. Oh, not me—I won't let her die—not if I can help it. There's my bit o' a hoard; I must dig out a half o' a sovereign when the daylight breaks."

When the summer morning did break all the clouds had vanished, and the sky was as clear and blue as ever, and the summer sun shone with power. But Consuelo's eyes were unable to understand sunshine; in her fevered world all things strange, unreal, and dreadful seemed to exist. The tired girl dropped into troubled slumber.

When this happened Mercy stepped very softly from the room. She opened the cottage door and went out. There was a well at the bottom of her little garden. The well had a bucket and windlass. Mercy removed the stone which covered the mouth of the well, and went down in the bucket about five to six feet. There she poked about with her fingers until she found a loosened brick. This she removed, thrust in her old hand, and took from out of a hole at the back of the brick a little leather wallet. This contained a few scant savings—the treasures of her hard life. She had put this money by against her burying.

There were three pounds altogether in the little wallet. Three pounds, Mercy calculated, would lay her comfortably in the ground. She would not be beholden to the parish for her last narrow home. She removed half-a-sovereign, put the wallet back into its hiding-place, pulled at the rope, and again ascended to the top of the well.

Having covered up all trace of her descent, she returned to the house. She must act immediately. She called Snap to her side.

"You sit down there," she said to the dog, motioning as she spoke to a little knitted mat which lay outside her door. "You lie there and keep the young lady in her bed. I'll be back as soon as possible."

Snap looked full of intelligence and comprehension, and Mercy Perkins went abroad on her errand. She reached a small village called Chatley, and there made some purchases. She then went to the doctor's house. The doctor's name was Hayward. He was a young man who had not long come to the place. He came downstairs in a hurry, and Mercy told her errand quickly.

"Come along at once, doctor," she said. "There's a young maid at my house, and she's took rare and bad. She's in high fever, no less, and don't know a word she's saying. I never thought to ask her name. She come to me for shelter the night before last, and come back again last night very bad indeed. She's a rare, sweet young maid, and somebody's darling, I take it; so you and me have got, one o' us, to nurse

her, and the other to doctor her back to health and strength. That's about what we've got to do, and there ain't a minute to lose."

"I will come with you, of course, Mrs. Perkins," said Dr. Hayward, and he followed the poor woman back to her cottage.

A very brief examination of Consuelo showed the doctor that the girl was dangerously ill.

"She has every symptom of pleurisy, and I shouldn't be the least surprised if pneumonia intervened," he said. "She ought to be moved to the hospital at Westbourne without any delay."

"Now that she won't be," said Mercy, stoutly. "The good Lord put her into my house, and I mean to tend her."

"Very well," said the doctor. "I cannot insist, of course; but I may as well tell you that the child is very ill; in short, she is in danger, and her friends ought to be told."

"You are right about that, doctor," said old Mercy. "She is somebody's darling, and that somebody ought to know. She spoke of one she called poppa—never did I hear the word afore."

"I wonder if she is American," said the doctor. "That is the American way of speaking of one's father."

"Be it, now? I know nothing about her, except that she is sweet, and come to me to help her; and help her I will, if I die for it. She said that her poppa was rich. She wanted to pay me, poor lamb!"

"Well, Mrs. Perkins," said the doctor, "you can't possibly do what is necessary without money, and certainly the father ought to be found; and as the child has taken to you, you may perhaps be able to get her to confide in you during her calmer moments. You must do your best."

"That I will, doctor; and you won't spare your services, will you? The poppa, when he turns up, will pay you; and if he don't, why, the Lord above will."

"I will do my best, of course," said the doctor; "but the child ought to have a nurse."

"A nurse!" almost screamed old Mercy. "No, now; that is more than I can stand. Ain't I her nurse?"

"But this is a case for day and night nursing."

"To be sure; and didn't I nurse my own father through thick and thin, through ups and downs, during his last illness, and never took the clothes from my back for six weeks? I don't hold with your fashionable nurses. I believe in love nursing, not in the sort you talk on."

"Very well, Mrs. Perkins," said the doctor. "We'll do what we can for a day or so; but do try to get the names of the parents. Can you not see any markings on the girl's clothes which might guide us?"

"Beautiful linen they be," said old Mercy. "I'll look out and see if they're marked."

Dr. Hayward went straight back to his house. He was

very much interested in Consuelo, knowing quite well that the poor child would have a terrible fight for her life. At breakfast he consulted his wife.

"My dear, a strange thing has happened. A girl, name unknown, has been taken very ill at Mercy Perkins's remote cottage. You know there isn't a more lonely dwelling on the whole country-side. Well, this poor child seems to have wandered there, and went off to Casterton yesterday and got drenched through, and came back again, and is now very ill indeed, and quite unconscious. She is suffering from pleurisy, and is threatened with pneumonia. The poor old woman does not know her name, and the child is incapable in her present state of giving any information. You might step up to Mercy's cottage in the course of the day, and take some linen and a few comforts for the poor young creature. It is but to glance at her to know that she has been brought up in much luxury and is a lady by birth. She is quite a child, too. I should say she is not sixteen years of age. Altogether, I am most anxious about her, and wish we could discover who her relations are."

"Then you think her in danger, Felix?" said his wife.

"I certainly do. In any case, her disease is a severe one, and her present surroundings preclude the possibility of comfort."

"Oh, I don't know," said young Mrs. Hayward. "Mercy is a dear old soul, and will certainly not neglect her."

"Well, Annie," said her husband, "I have not the least doubt that eventually I shall discover the parents, but in any case the burden of this poor child must not be cast on old Mercy. Will you therefore, dear, have beef-tea made, and get milk and other things that I will order to be sent to Mercy's cottage? A messenger of some sort also should be at the old woman's disposal, so that she may send for me at any time, night or day, that I am required."

But though Dr. and Mrs. Hayward did all that was in their power for Consuelo, and though old Mercy did venture to ask the child one or two questions when she was lying apparently conscious, with her eyes open, gazing straight before her, yet none of these good people could get any information which was of the slightest use with regard to Consuelo's past.

"Now what be your pretty name, my love?" said Mercy, bending toward Consuelo, and trying to take one of the girl's small, hot hands.

But Consuelo flung the old woman's hand aside and turned restlessly on her pillow.

"Don't—don't touch me," she said. "The silver and the gold belong to the Lord—the silver and the gold."

"To be sure, dear—to be sure," said old Mercy; "and that is a beautiful and true saying, and many a time it's kept me up when I've watched the rich in their selfishness. But now, darling, you'd like the one you call poppa to come to you, wouldn't you?"



"Yes; and mamma," said Consuelo; and her bright blue eyes grew brighter still with the fever which was consuming her.

"I ha' looked on your linen, my love," said old Mercy, "and I see that you call yourself C. J. P. S."

Consuelo burst out laughing.

"Ha, ha!" she said. "Such a lot of names. Joey, after poppa. P—that's meant for Persis; she was a good woman, wasn't she? Why, who are you? Are you Persis?"

"Lord ha' mercy!" thought poor old Mrs. Perkins, "how am I to manage her?—No, no, dearie," she said; "I'm only old Mercy, and at your service, my own pet."

Consuelo lay still. She seemed to forget Mercy the next minute, and began to ramble in a low, rapid tone. She kept addressing mamma, calling her sometimes by endearing names, and then laughing at her.

"You shouldn't eat so much, mamma; you'll be a roly-poly if you go on. Poppa will do what I want; I know he will. Poor old poppa! he thinks everything of money; but the silver and the gold belong—belong— Mamma, what are the words? Tell me, mamma."

Here she fixed her eyes on Mercy. "Speak, speak!" she said.

"The earth is the Lord's, and the fullness thereof," answered Mercy solemnly; "and the silver and the gold belong to the Almighty."

Consuelo seemed soothed. She closed her weary eyes and dropped into troubled slumber.

Dr. and Mrs. Hayward came often to the cottage, and brought every possible thing that the sick girl required to eat, but even they could not get the slightest clue to her identity. Beyond doubt, she did not belong to Westbourne. Where had she sprung from? The initials C. J. P. S. threw no light on the subject.

"She spoke of Persis, a worthy Bible woman," said old Mercy, "and thought that I were her, poor sweet young thing! I ain't exalted to that yet, and never will be."

"I am sure you are just as good, Mercy," said young Mrs. Hayward.

But her face was anxious, for she knew that her husband thought badly of Consuelo, whose illness was a very severe one, and was rendered more so by several complications, for the girl had a threatening of rheumatic fever as well as pneumonia and pleurisy. The weather, however, was in her favor, and the kind, unceasing nursing of the faithful old woman left nothing to be desired.

Thus a week and more went by, and no clue whatever had been obtained to Consuelo's identity.

## CHAPTER XXIV.

"I CANNOT TOUCH YOUR MONEY."

How it came to pass that a girl like Consuelo should have got absolutely lost when there were so many people anxious to find her might have been almost incredible but for the fact that no one at all thought of looking for her in Mercy Perkins's cottage. The old gypsy woman, Mother Jeremy, had been sought for, and her queer little abode in the solid rock just below Rocky Head discovered; but the gypsy had gone away to visit a distant tribe immediately after Consuelo's visit. Her cave-dwelling was empty, and there was no one, therefore, to tell that she had advised the girl to visit Paul the hermit. Had she been there Consuelo could easily have been traced; for Paul would have been found, and would have told of her visit, and also explained that she had come from Mercy Perkins's cottage.

On the morning after the picnic Miss Dawson spent a day which she was likely to remember as long as she lived. In vain did she drive from spot to spot all over that part of the country; in vain did she even visit the police courts; in vain did the police themselves search for Consuelo. Not a trace of her could be discovered, from the simple fact that no one ever saw Mercy's cottage. It was quite shut away by itself and hidden from ordinary view, and no one thought for a single moment of going across the great plains in the direction of Casterton. If Consuelo could not be found the first day, she was still less likely to be discovered the second, and Miss Dawson knew at last that the terrible task lay before her of going to London and breaking the news of the poor girl's disappearance to Mr. Falkland and to Mr. Seymour. Her terror was that Consuelo had fallen from the top of the cliff, and that her body had been washed out to sea in that most terrible storm during which all their lives had been in danger. Miss Dawson was very subdued and meek during this time, and exercised no discipline over her own girls or over poor little Selma, whose very heart was breaking for the loss of Consuelo.

"I think I will go back to Castle Rocco," said Selma. "I ought to tell her poor mamma. I can't live any longer here, feeling all the time that neither her poppa nor her mamma know. Oh, what is to be done?"

"I have done all I could," said Miss Dawson. "I have no doubt I am to blame; and if I am, I am willing to take my full share of blame. I did not understand the child, and this thing should not have been put upon me. She crept away in the dark, and unknown to me; and I greatly fear that she is no longer alive."

"Miss Dawson!" said Selma. She sprang forward and grasped the governess's two thin hands. "Do you realize

what you are saying—that—that if Consuelo is dead Joseph P. Seymour will go mad—yes, mad; and that Consuelo's mamma will die of a broken heart? Consuelo—dead!—the richest girl in New York City—the petted, the darling, the idolized child of Joseph P. Seymour!"

"My dear," said Miss Dawson, "God is no respecter of persons. The child did wrong, and she may have been punished; but I blame myself bitterly for being so unsympathetic with her. I would give the world to see her face again now—yes, the world. Stay here, Selma, till to-morrow, for my own poor little girls must not be left. I will go to London to-morrow, and return here in the evening."

"Very well," said Selma; "but, remember, I don't remain here another day unless Consuelo is found."

Miss Dawson started for London on the following day. There never was before, perhaps, a poor woman so bowed down with a weight of inexpressible misery. She did not altogether blame herself for the catastrophe which had occurred, but to a certain extent she felt that she was not without blame. She had certainly been wanting in sympathy. She had failed to understand the ardent, excitable, loving heart of the American girl. The girl could so easily have been won. Her sympathies could have so easily been enlisted. Miss Dawson neither tried to win her nor had felt any interest in her character. She kept on saying to herself, as the rapid express brought her nearer and nearer to London, "I am not to blame for this; I was never fitted for the post; the task ought not to have been laid upon me." And yet somehow, she felt she was to blame, and that Consuelo might now be a happy and contented girl if she had done her part.

"But I couldn't do my part," thought the poor lady, "for the child and I never fitted each other in any way. If it had been Curly, now; if Curly had been in Consuelo's shoes, I could have sympathized with her and understood her at once. Oh dear! why does my heart beat so hard, and why am I troubled? Of course I am terribly distressed at the loss of the child, but why does something which I suppose I ought to call my conscience keep on telling me that I am to blame?"

When Miss Dawson got to London she drove straight to Mr. Falkland's very large and important offices in the City. Now, this happened to be an exceedingly anxious day for the great City merchant. He had to raise an exceptionally large sum of money to meet certain liabilities. If he failed to meet these liabilities his honorable and honored name would be tarnished. His difficulty was, after all, but a temporary one, and he had not felt it the least unreasonable to ask Joseph P. Seymour to assist him. He and Seymour had just had an interview together. Seymour had promised to put a very large sum of money at his friend's disposal; for Seymour's own grand scheme, his great company, was floating right well. Shareholders were taking up shares in abundance. The value of the shares was rising rapidly, and Joseph was now

absolutely sure of turning that vast pile of his round and round so as to make it much bigger than it had ever been before. A man with so much money and so many resources would in any case have succeeded. But Seymour knew well that the speed of his present success was greatly owing to Mr. Falkland's introductions, to his knowledge of the English markets, and, in short, to his advice. There was no one more generous than Seymour, and when he found that his friend, as he called Falkland, required a certain sum of money to tide him over a difficulty, he did not hesitate to give it.

Mr. Falkland, therefore, much relieved, was seated in his own private room, Seymour having left him but a quarter of an hour previously, when Miss Dawson was announced. Mr. Falkland was naturally startled when he heard that his faithful governess and friend wanted to see him.

When she got to the office, a place she had never visited before, and found herself surrounded by hurrying clerks, by typists innumerable, and by all the bustle and clatter of a great place of business, she felt a certain sense of confusion, and thought it best, therefore, to ask for pen and paper and write a brief line to Mr. Falkland.

"I must see you. I have bad news," were her words.

This brief note was delivered to the chief by one of his clerks. He instantly desired a man to show Miss Dawson in, and not to allow any one to interrupt them. A premonition of some trouble ahead naturally visited him, and he came forward with the eagerness of ill-concealed suspense to meet the governess.

"Well, what is it?" he said. "What is wrong? Curly ill? Patty not well? An accident?"

"Oh! let me speak," said Miss Dawson; "and please let me sit down."

Mr. Falkland pushed a chair toward her.

"What is it?" he said. "I can bear anything, of course—anything except not knowing."

"You will know soon enough. Consuelo is lost——"

Mr. Falkland stared hard at the perplexed woman who faced him.

"Consuelo?" he said, after a pause. "I—I beg your pardon. What is the matter?"

"She is lost—we can't find her."

Mr. Falkland sank into a chair. Ten minutes ago and Seymour himself would have been present to listen to these tidings—Seymour, who had hurried away to help his friend over a crisis. Seymour's daughter, his idol, the girl for whom the vast pile was being made—lost!

Mr. Falkland passed his hand over his forehead.

"Explain yourself, please," he said. "People aren't lost nowadays. You mean—do you—that she is dead?"

"I cannot tell you," answered Miss Dawson. "She may be alive or dead. I can relate what happened; that is all."

"Speak, then, please."

Miss Dawson then proceeded to give as lucid an account as she possibly could of the recent occurrences at Discipline House. She described the picnic, the storm, Consuelo's disappearance. She spoke of how she had occupied herself during the last two days, of all the means she had employed to try to find the missing girl before she broke the distracting news to Mr. Falkland. Mr. Falkland listened with what patience he could. At last he sprang to his feet.

"Have you the least idea," he said, "what this means to me?"

The governess looked up with a frightened expression.

"I have done my best!" she moaned.

"You never did your best; you were against this scheme from the first. I did not want to be too much beholden to you; I thought you would throw yourself into this with all your heart and soul, because—because—you must have seen that I wished it. If that girl is never found I tremble to think of the result to her good father, to her poor mother; while, as to us, we—must face"—his voice dropped—"bankruptcy."

Miss Dawson dropped into the nearest chair, for she had risen when Mr. Falkland began to speak.

"But what of that?" he continued in great excitement. "We must find the child; there isn't a moment—not one instant to be lost. Oh, Miss Dawson! you might have spared me this."

The poor governess looked with amazement at the man who had hitherto been so kind and gentle to her.

"Why didn't you confide in me fully?" she said at last. "But oh, I do know that I am to blame; I have fought against the voice of my own conscience; I am to blame!"

"Never mind that now; this is a moment for action. Girls aren't lost in these days—not girls like Consuelo. What are your fears with regard to her?"

"I know she went to the top of the great cliff. There was a terrific storm. My terror beyond all terrors is that she fell over the cliff and was carried out to sea."

Mr. Falkland's face turned very white.

"Even the police share my fears," continued the woman.

"But you say she went to consult some one?"

"Yes; a gypsy fortune-teller—Mother Jeremy."

"Where is she? She must be discovered immediately."

"We went there at once," said Miss Dawson. "I myself crept down to her cave under the cliff, but she had gone away. There was no one there."

"The child is probably with her," said Mr. Falkland, a momentary expression of relief crossing his face. "Now, please, keep your self-control. It does no manner of good to give way. This news must be immediately broken to Seymour, and I must do it. Take the next train back to Westbourne, and look after the rest of the poor children. Sey-

mour, and I will follow as quickly as possible. Oh, the poor child's mother! But I have hopes that she will yet be found. She is, in all probability, with the gypsy."

Miss Dawson left her employer's office with a feeling at her heart which she had never experienced before. Some scales had fallen away from her eyes, and she could see that in the matter of a great trust she had failed.

Meanwhile, Mr. Falkland jumped into a hansom and went off to find Seymour. Seymour had taken large offices, and already the name of his great company was legible in huge characters across the front of his place of business. These rooms were newly and recklessly furnished. Everything was done regardless of expense.

Falkland, without warning, burst into the man's private room. Seymour was standing by the window. He turned when he saw Falkland, and began to speak with great excitement.

"Applications for shares are pouring in," he said. "This will be the biggest thing of the day, and my little Connie—Why, what is it, Falkland? But cheer up; I'm the last sort of man to forsake one who has given me a helping hand. I have put the money that you require to your credit at the bank. I have just come from doing so. Oh, there are no thanks necessary. Why—but—what now? Do you want more? Well, Joseph P. has a heart big enough and a purse deep enough to satisfy all your requirements. The loan is but temporary, and I need no thanks. Now then, name the sum."

"There is no sum—none," gasped Falkland. "I can't borrow—not a farthing."

"Are you mad?" said the American, striding forward and putting his hand on the other man's shoulder. "You cannot—and you can! Come, I like plain speaking. You want a temporary loan, and I am willing to give it to you. What is up?"

"I cannot touch your money. Your child—Consuelo——"

Before Falkland could finish his speech all the high color rushed from Joseph P. Seymour's face. It turned chalky-white. He stammered, struggled to speak, then said:

"Out with it! What—what is up?"

Still Mr. Falkland made no reply. He kept staring at the other man as though his tongue was paralyzed.

"Is she—dead?" said Seymour. "Out with it—out with it! Man, I am—game. Joseph P., the father of Consuelo Josephine Persis, never failed yet. Come, out with it!"

"Perhaps not dead," said Falkland then, "but nowhere to be found. Seymour, I cannot touch your money."

## CHAPTER XXV.

## SELMA TO THE RESCUE.

WHEN the girls found themselves alone on that special day, Selma made up her mind to act. Neither Patty nor Curly was at all clever in resource; but Selma was of different mettle. She had promised Miss Dawson not to go to Castle Rocco that day, but she had promised herself that the day should not be passed without very strong and individual efforts on her own part.

Accordingly she went into Maudie's kitchen.

"Maudie—" she said.

That young person turned her face, quite blistered with tears, toward the young lady.

"Don't 'e, miss," she said. "I can't, somehow, abear the word. I'd a sight rayther be Sykes in future. It was she wot called me Maudie—I can't abear it from no other lips."

"Well," said Selma, with some impatience, "I will call you Sykes if you prefer it. But I think we've cried quite enough about Consuelo. Patty has been crying almost ever since that awful night, and Curly has refused to touch her food, and Miss Dawson—I can't imagine what does ail Miss Dawson; but I have no doubt she feels it just awfully. As to me, I haven't cried much, for it isn't our way in America. It's our way to bustle round and do things in our country; and that's what I think you and I had best set to work on to-day, Sykes."

"Yes, miss," said Maudie, dropping the apron with which she had been mopping her eyes, and turning to gaze at Selma with great respect in her expression.

"Suppose you and I find Consuelo to-day," said Selma.

"Miss—miss—it's the sea 'ave her now. I pictor 'er jest as she be, lyn' calm and beautiful with 'er 'ands folded in the bottom o' the deep, deep sea. It 'aunts me, miss; it do. There never were 'er like. No one else niver, niver were so bitter crool kind to Maudie. I'd bear my pynes again, miss, if only I could look at 'er beauteous face."

"Listen," said Selma. "There isn't the slightest doubt in *my* mind that Consuelo is not at the bottom of the sea. Why should she be there? I know her well. She never knew fright yet, and do you suppose a stupid old storm would make her lose her self-control? And as to her powers of climbing—why, she could climb anywhere since she was a little kid not the height of the table. I myself don't think for a single minute that Consuelo is out of the world."

"Then, miss, why don't she come 'ome?"

"Ah," said Selma, "that I cannot tell you. She may be ill; she may have got hurt; but killed—she is not. Now then, Maud, never mind washing up those stupid plates and dishes, but put on your hat and come along with me. I mean to search for her."

"I am willin'," replied Maud, who immediately left the kitchen.

Selma entered the dining-room.

"I'm off to the scene of our picnic," she said to the two girls.

"What?" they replied. They looked at her vaguely. "What is the good of it, Selma? We have spent the last couple of days hunting every hole and corner round that horrible spot."

"It strikes me," said Selma, "that we left out a few holes and some corners, and I guess I'm going to try for 'em to-day and penetrate their mysteries; and Maudie Sykes is coming along with me. What are *you* going to do?"

"I don't know," said Curly. "My head aches so badly, I don't feel able for anything."

"I'd love to go with you," said Patty. "May I? Do let me."

"Of course you may, if you like—that is, if Curly doesn't mind."

"I don't want to be left alone," said Curly, beginning to cry afresh.

Maudie at that moment opened the door and stepped in. She had put on her very showiest hat and the same costume she had worn at the picnic. Her face, blistered from tears, looked at the same time too comical for words. Curly burst into hysterical laughter. Patty took her sister's hand.

"Sykes will stay with you," she said. "Do—do let me go with Selma."

"But, please," said Selma, "I prefer to take Sykes; she knows the neighborhood a lot better than you do. You two stay together.—Now then, Sykes; off we go. Are you game for a walk?"

"That I be, miss."

Selma found her heart so sore, so anxious and troubled, that she preferred rapid exercise to staying quietly in a carriage while she was being driven to the scene of the picnic.

The day was very hot; there was no wind, and the two girls walked for some miles without addressing a word each to the other. Presently Maud began to groan.

"Now, what is it?" asked Selma.

"I'm took with a stitch in my side, miss. It's grief, I'm thinkin', and I have that pictor of 'er dear face and the folded arms of 'er lyin' so still at the bottom o' the sea."

"You are silly!" said Selma. "I tell you, Connie isn't at the bottom of the sea. Come, I have brought some chocolates; have one."

"You're crool kind, miss."

"Well, take it or leave it. We'll hurry on."

Maud, who had eaten no breakfast, felt now very hungry, and yielded to the seduction of the large chocolate which Selma presented to her. She sucked loudly and enjoyed it, and Selma hurried her steps. By-and-by they reached the scene of the picnic. This place had been well explored during the



two past days, and there was nothing further to be done in that direction. Selma now suggested that Maud should go to the edge of the cliff and shout to Mother Jeremy, who, if she had returned home, would doubtless reply to her. Maud was inclined to object to this, but Selma was very firm.

"Have we come here for our own pleasure, or have we come here to find Consuelo?" she said. "Oh! do run along, Sykes; you are a country girl, and won't lose your footing. Think what joy will be ours if we are the ones to discover where she is!"

"Oh miss—the 'appiness—it would near blind me!" replied Sykes. "I'll go myself, and I'll shout to that old gypsy, so as she can't but 'ear."

"If she doesn't hear," said Selma, "there is no earthly reason why you should not go down to her cave and look in."

"Me look in there! But 'tain't a safe place."

"Oh," said Selma with scorn, "if you begin to think of safe places when the finding of Consuelo is involved, I don't think much of you."

"Very well, miss," said Maud. "I'll do it, though 'ope's low within me. The pictor in my brain is too vivid, miss, for me to be mistook. We won't niver find 'er—not till the sea gives up its dead."

"Oh dear!" said Selma. "I feel as though I could slap you! I almost wish I had brought Patty with me. Now then, run off. I am going to the village. I mean to search every single house. I can't imagine why no one thought of the village before."

"There's no gentlefolks live in Chatley," said Maudie in a voice of scorn, "'cept, indeed, the doctor. It's the poorest plyce round, and the houses ain't the sort as Miss Connie 'ud look at."

"Be off, now, and let me do my part," said Selma.

Sykes accordingly went in the direction of Rocky Head, and Selma sat down to think. More and more did the conviction grow upon her that Consuelo—her darling cousin, the friend of all her life—was not far away. She rejected for ever poor Maudie's theory that Consuelo was lying at the bottom of the sea. Her foot was so sure, and her brain so clear, and her common-sense so strong that she would never submit to a fate of that sort, thought the girl.

"She is safe somewhere; I'd mightily like to know where. I guess I'll have a try for that village."

The village of Chatley was situated in a low valley completely sheltered from all winds. An intensely hot place it was in the summer, whereas in winter it was warm and sheltered. There were about half-a-dozen houses, for it was really nothing more than a tiny hamlet. People, however, lived at long intervals all round the surrounding moors, and Dr. Hayward had his work cut out for him, although that work took him to the poorest of the poor. To find one's self one hour in the gay and thriving town of Westbourne, and the

next in that little, forsaken spot known as Chatley, was to realize one of those curious facts that England always reveals—viz. that the exceedingly poor and the well-to-do are never far asunder.

Selma entered the village by its north side, walked down the tiny, straggling street, and looked into the cottages. Her appearance was sufficiently remarkable to cause people to come to their doors to watch her. The people were all of the poorest type, and there were many children amusing themselves on the road. These children were mostly dressed in rags, had dirty faces, and the blue eyes which characterize all the natives of the place.

The doctor's house was little better than the rest of the dwellings at Chatley. It was, in short, only two miserable cottages thrown into one. But it was neat, its steps clean, its hall-door painted a fresh white, its little knocker shining in the rays of the sun, and its narrow windows ornamented with neat white blinds and little curtains.

Selma stood in front of this house, wondering whether she might go and make inquiries there. She was quite undecided on this point, when a tall, good-looking young man came quickly out. At the same time a young woman called after him:

"Felix, I've put the fresh milk into that bottle, and the beef-tea I took up this morning. Will you take the milk with you, for Mercy will want some before the evening is out? Tell her I boiled it first, so it will keep quite sweet."

"Yes, dear," answered the man.

The lady, who looked young and pretty, thrust a basket into his hand.

"Tell Mercy that I will be with her about six o'clock," she said, and then she re-entered the house, but not before she had taken a long stare at Selma. Selma, with her jet-black hair in two long plaits down her back, with her singularly dark face and great black eyes, made a striking contrast to the people around.

A little group of boys and girls, natives of the place, came up to stare at her, but the man who had been addressed as Felix took off his hat courteously and hurried up the street.

It was then that Selma recovered her self-possession. Something seemed to clutch at her heart. A great hope filled her. The milk—the little basket—that man must surely be a doctor. Sykes had said the only gentlefolks who lived at Chatley were the doctor and his wife. Where was the doctor going with the milk that had been boiled? Selma's breath came fast, but not too fast for her to run after Dr. Hayward.

"Please—forgive me. I am Selma Dudley."

The doctor again took off his hat, stood still for a minute, then said:

"If you want me to help you, I must ask you to call again. I am off now to Mercy Perkins's cottage to see a girl who is exceedingly ill."

"Oh!" said Selma, with a gasp. "Oh—do you know the girl's name?"

"I wish I did," said Dr. Hayward. "No one knows her name, and she is far too ill to tell us."

"We have lost a—a girl," said Selma.

The great heat of the day, the great excitement of the moment, the hope which was realized, and yet only half realized—for Selma was wise enough to read aright the gravity in Dr. Hayward's face—had such an effect upon the warm-hearted child that for a minute all the world seemed to rush round before her in one giddy whirl. She had to hold out her hand to steady herself, but that hand was grasped by the friendly one of Dr. Hayward. The sense of relief which visited his heart it would be difficult to describe.

"One minute," he said. "Calm yourself; pull yourself together. You may be able to tell us. We are in very great distress about this young girl. You say you have lost a—a friend. Can it be really this girl? Will you describe her to me?"

Selma, panting and excited, gave the necessary description. The doctor listened attentively.

"What are her initials?" he asked, suddenly.

"Her name," said Selma, "is Consuelo Josephine Persis Seymour. Oh doctor! she is the richest girl in New York City, and she is the one idol of Joseph P. Seymour's life."

"You don't mean to tell me," said Dr. Hayward, "that the child I am struggling to keep alive is the daughter of that great multi-millionaire, Seymour? Why, all the world knows his name."

"She is his only child," said Selma; "and I am her cousin, and I have lived with her all my life, and I love her better than any one else on earth; and oh—oh—you must save her—you must!"

"She is exceedingly ill," said Dr. Hayward. He put up his hand to wipe the moisture from his forehead. "She is so dangerously ill that she lies at the point of death. I cannot tell you anything about her story since she left you, except that she is being nursed day and night by the most faithful old woman I have ever met. There has been no thought of gold in the matter, but a great many thoughts of love. Will you come with me? We have long wished to communicate with her parents."

"I will come with you," said Selma. "Oh, what is the matter? Who is that screaming?"

"There's a most strange-looking girl rushing wildly to meet us," said Dr. Hayward.

"Yes, of course, it is Maude," said Selma. "She is our servant at Westbourne. Oh, poor Maudie! you, after all, are not the one to discover Consuelo."

Maud now came up panting.

"Miss Selma! Miss Selma! I ha' got tidin's. Mother Jer-

emy's to home, and she says to go straight to Paul the hermit, that queer, mad gentleman at Casterton. She says that Miss Connie went straight to him. I'm off myself to Paul the hermit. We'll get tidin's of her there."

Selma took the girl's hand. She whispered a few words in her ear.

"I am staying where I am," she said. "Go back as quickly as ever you can to Westbourne. Tell Miss Patty and Miss Curly that our Consuelo is found. Yes, of course, Sykes; you did your best, and we should have discovered her in any case now. But I am here. I am going to her. I mean to stay with her. Sykes—tell—tell the young ladies to send a telegram to their father's address in London. Tell them to be quick. Say she is found."

"Say also that she is dangerously ill," said Dr. Hayward. "Now, please, come with me, Miss——"

"Dudley is my name," said Selma.

The girl and the doctor passed out of the village, and went up a side-road which led across a tiny bit of common and then through a copse of small trees, at the farther end of which Mercy Perkins's cottage lay concealed.

"It is strange," said Dr. Hayward, "that no one thought of looking here. But the house is quite remote, and Mercy, as she expresses it, keeps herself to herself. How your young friend found the cottage unaided is a mystery to me. But it was a lucky thing for her that she did find it, for in the whole of England there is not a more faithful soul than Mercy Perkins."

## CHAPTER XXVI.

### NO CROSS—NO CROWN.

SELMA had a vast amount of self-control. She was the only one of the girls who had not given way to endless weeping during the last two terrible days, and now that she had found Consuelo, now that she was really seated by her bedside, she looked as calm and cool and collected as though Consuelo was quite well—not lying at the point of death; as though they were both together in one of the spacious bedrooms at Castle Rocco, and not where they really were, in a little attic in the roof of the smallest cottage even outside Chatley.

Mercy had given way to Selma at once. She had rejected the offices of a trained nurse; but she stood in awe of the young girl who was own cousin to her pretty white lamb, as she called Consuelo. It was a relief to her old mind to know that a real, *bona fide* relation of Consuelo's was in the little house, and that Consuelo herself took the presence of Selma as a matter of course. The girl was very ill, however; her fever ran high, and Dr. Hayward did not scruple to say that he was anxious about her.

Selma suggested that one of the best doctors at Westbourne

should be sent for in consultation. Dr. Hayward agreed, and a man from the village was sent post-haste to the town for the best advice.

The doctor came in the course of the afternoon. He could do nothing, he said gravely; they must await events; the girl's illness must run its course; in short, he said that the next twenty-four hours would mean life or death to Consuelo.

As to the girl herself, she recognized Selma in a dim sort of fashion. She said in a feeble, far-off voice:

"Is that you, Selma Tell mamma that I'll soon be better; and tell poppa—please tell poppa—that the silver and the——"

But she never finished her sentence, although Selma hung over her, listening attentively.

It was about eight o'clock that evening when Mr. Seymour himself arrived on the scene. He came in a carriage, accompanied by Mr. Falkland. Dr. Hayward was in the house. Poor Mercy, quite bewildered by the numerous relations and friends that Consuelo seemed to possess, stood patiently in her little kitchen. Snap, the best dog in the world, had been put into an outhouse for fear that he would disturb the sick girl by his barking.

When Mr. Seymour arrived and found that Connie was still alive, he said, "Thank God!" with great fervor. Then he took off his hat and sank into a chair. Dr. Hayward came forward.

"Are you the child's father?" he asked.

"I am."

"Has she a mother living?"

"Yes."

"I think," said Dr. Hayward, speaking slowly, "that it would be advisable to send for her mother."

"I will go and fetch her if you wish," said Mr. Falkland.

Seymour looked round in a dull sort of way.

"Is there nobody in the whole of England," he said then, "who can cure the fever of a slip of a girl like my Consuelo? I tell you what it is, sir: money is no object in this matter. Your fortune is made if you cure my child. Why do you stand there doing nothing?"

"I have done all that man can do," said Dr. Hayward; "and I have not worked for money."

"That he ain't, poor dear!" suddenly cried Mercy's quavering old voice. "We never thought o' money, neither o' us; and what is more, we don't want it; and what is more still, we wouldn't take it. There are times when money ain't needed, and this is one."

The queer, shrill voice of the old woman roused the poor father from some of his numbness.

"I thought—I thought that the money—" he began, and then he stopped.

"There is only one physician who can help your daughter," said Dr. Hayward then—"the Great Physician, God Almighty. I would remind you of an old verse: 'Is there no balm in

Gilead: is there no physician there?' You must cry to Him, sir. He can raise the child to life again, but no human being can aid her."

Joseph P. Seymour staggered to his feet. He went toward the door, flung it open with a queer, rough movement, and found himself outside the cottage.

Once he had been a poor man; he had lived in a house very little better than this, and round him had stretched the great white plains of California. Bit by bit, even then, he had accumulated his gold, and day by day he had thought of his gold. It was the most precious thing in life to him. It was more precious even than Consuelo, that fairy of his heart, as she used to be called when she was a little girl. He had soothed what conscience he possessed by saying to himself that he was amassing his gold for her; that she should be his heiress; that all the delights of the world, and the glories thereof, should be hers. He had struggled and toiled and worked for his heart's desire, and he had attained it. Even now he was so much richer than he had been when last he saw Consuelo that he could not but tremble as the thought came to him. So rich was the man—so very rich—and yet so poor! A little girl dying in one of the humblest cottages in England—a little girl who had been nursed for love, not for gold—had the power to turn all his own gold to dross.

He shivered; he trembled mightily; he fell on his knees.

"Good and merciful God!" he cried—not aloud, but deep in his heart of hearts—"take the gold away if Thou dost will it, but leave me the love—the love of my child—the love of my only child!"

He came back after a time into the house, and although the close air of the place almost suffocated him, and mingled emotions made it difficult for him to breathe, he was more composed than when he went out.

Dr. Hayward was there. Dr. Hayward went up and down at intervals to visit Consuelo, and Selma kept constant watch by the girl's sick-bed. But her father did not venture near her.

"I am afraid," he said, "there is so much gold about me, I feel almost incrustated in it. I have no place by her—not—not just now."

No one asked him to go up, and Selma continued her watch.

It was early in the morning when the girl appeared in the little kitchen. She went straight up to Joseph P. Seymour and touched him on the arm. He sprang to his feet.

"Well," he said, "quick—tell me—is she—dead?"

"No," said Selma. "She wants—Miss Dawson."

Seymour turned and looked at Falkland.

"Your—governess?" he said.

"She has asked for her; she wants her very badly indeed," said Selma.

"I will fetch her," said Mr. Falkland.

"Consuelo is awake," said Selma, turning now to Dr. Hay-

ward, "and I think she is conscious—I am not sure. She talks rather wildly; still, I think she is perhaps a little better."

The doctor went upstairs at once. He administered restoratives and nourishment, and presently came down again.

"Has any one gone for the person whom Miss Seymour is so anxious to see?" he asked.

"Falkland has gone," said Seymour. "The child asks for that woman—not for me!"

"Let her have her way, sir," said the doctor. "She is a little better. Her temperature has gone down; it has gone down to a considerable extent. She is very weak, but conscious. She seems, however, to have a weight on her mind. Let her have her way. Our one object now is to keep up her strength, for the crisis is so far past."

"Then there is hope?" said Seymour.

"There is considerably more hope than there was last night; but her life is reduced almost to a flicker. I dare not say anything further at present."

How Mr. Falkland walked all the way to Westbourne; how he managed to rouse Miss Dawson, who was asleep from sheer exhaustion; how he fetched a carriage, and brought her back to Consuelo, he could only but dimly remember in the time to come. It was a time of intense and terrible feeling for them both. Miss Dawson had cried herself nearly sick; but when she reached the little cottage some of her old composure returned to her. She was, after all, at home in a poor sort of house, and the moment she looked at Mercy she liked her. Mercy also approved of Miss Dawson.

"She ain't got the glitter of gold about her," thought the old woman; "I 'ates them as shines with it. It's a sort o' curse, to my way o' thinking."

"You will go up to her," said Dr. Hayward when he saw the governess. "You will go very quietly into the room, and sit down by her, and soothe her with all the love and sympathy of which you are capable. In short, madam, it now rests with you whether the child lives or dies."

Mr. Seymour had scarcely noticed Miss Dawson until now, but at these words he rose to his feet, filling the little room with his great height, and stared down at the thin, pale, slender woman.

"You hold the key of the situation," said Falkland briefly.

"I have failed hitherto," thought the governess as she went quickly up the little ladder. "I wonder if at last"—she paused to catch her breath—"God will help me to understand."

The moment Miss Dawson entered the room Selma left her place by the bedside and went on to the tiny landing. She would be within reach but not within sight.

The day had dawned by now—the day which was to see either the end of the young life or the turning back from the shores of death of one whose feet had already touched the

cold waters. The sun shone in at the tiny lattice-window, and some golden bars lay across Consuelo's poor bed.

The girl was wearing one of Mercy's coarse night-dresses. Her long hair had been plaited, and lay across the pillow. Her little face, always small for her height, looked now wasted and deadly pale. The thick, soft eyelashes lay against her cheeks. She was breathing quietly, and round her lips—those pretty, refined lips which had always been the pride of Joseph P. Seymour's life—there lingered a smile.

Miss Dawson looked at the little sleeper, and there stirred within her withered heart a sort of glow which had never visited it since her own mother, a long time ago, had died. Even Curly, even Patty, had never brought that sense of real love to her nature. They belonged to her, and she truly loved them. But this pale child awakened an altogether new sensation. She felt as one who has been given power over a human being. She felt as one on whose shoulders had been laid the greatest trust of all: the redemption of a soul. All the hardness, the severity, the narrowness of her nature seemed to melt in the sunshine of that new emotion.

The bars of gold from the real sun crept up and up the little bed until at last they kissed the eyelids of the sleeper, and as Miss Dawson stepped forward to shade Consuelo from the brightness of their light the girl opened her great blue eyes.

When she saw Miss Dawson she smiled; and Miss Dawson, bending forward, said:

"I understand you, Consuelo, at last; and I—love you—at last. Consuelo, because I love you, I shall be able to help you."

Consuelo, weak as she was, managed to glide her hand into the hand of Miss Dawson.

"I—want—to go back—to you—and to—Discipline House. I have been—shown—the right way. There is the bearing of the cross—before—you win—the—crown. Let me—go—back——"

"My darling!" said Miss Dawson.

She did not add any more; and Consuelo, too weary to say another word, dropped asleep.

## CHAPTER XXVII.

### THAT "DO WITHOUT" SCHEME.

THE doctor said afterwards that it was undoubtedly owing to Miss Dawson that Consuelo's life was saved. He said this so emphatically, and with such manifest admiration for the lady, that Mr. Falkland quite restored her to his favor; while as to Joseph P. Seymour, he could not make enough fuss about her.

As no one seemed to soothe Consuelo so much as the governess during the first days of her recovery, it was decided that Miss Dawson was to take up her abode altogether at



Mercy Perkins's cottage, and was to look after Consuelo and help the old woman all she could.

Selma, therefore, went back to Discipline House, and Joseph P. Seymour and Mrs. Seymour stayed for a time with Dr. Hayward and his wife.

If Consuelo's illness had been very sudden and very rapid in its effect, bringing her in a few short days from the prime of health and strength to the gate of death, her recovery was very nearly as rapid. In a few days she was completely out of danger, and in about a fortnight was able to be removed back to Discipline House.

During her recovery she was very silent, saying little, but evidently thinking a great deal. All went well, and Consuelo's own plans for her future were quite clearly defined in her young mind, when there suddenly came an unlooked-for hitch. Joseph P. Seymour had been humble as man could be during the time of his daughter's danger; while as to poor mamma, she did precisely what was required of her. But when Consuelo became better, and when her removal to Discipline House was definitely decided on, Joseph thought it time to speak. He had, of course, seen his little girl several times now. He had sat holding her weak hand, and sometimes venturing to press the lightest of kisses on her forehead, and wondering as he looked at her how one so frail and, to him, so beautiful could be spared from the angel choirs of heaven.

But as Consuelo grew better and stronger some of the old masterful and domineering spirit of the man returned to him, and he made up his mind on one point.

"Miss Dawson," he said on one of these occasions, and as he spoke he asked the governess to come to walk with him on that little strip of common just outside Mercy's cottage, "you have got the whip-hand of Connie."

"Your dear child is good enough to be devoted to me," said Miss Dawson. "I can never feel grateful enough for her sweet and noble affection; and I will frankly say to you, sir, that I never deserved it."

"No more you did, my good friend. But you have got it, and that is the point. But now, see here. I guess that Joseph P. must have a voice in the affairs of young missie in the future, bless her! She can have anything in life she wants, except—and here I put down my foot—that 'do without' scheme of hers."

"What do you mean, sir?"

"Listen to me, Miss Dawson. Consuelo is *not* to do without money. She is *not* to do without comforts. She was born to have them, and whether she likes them or whether she don't, she will have to put up with them."

"She is very anxious herself, sir, on that point."

"I mean to have a talk with her," said Joseph P. "She owes something to me, I guess."

"Most assuredly she does."

"And I want you to help me out. Now, she is keen on that

discipline dodge. Bless her heart, she might be going into a nunnery by the way she talks. She might be taking a vow of perpetual poverty. I declare, it makes me sick."

"She wants to get back to Westbourne, and to learn life from the discipline point of view," said Miss Dawson.

"And you uphold her in this?" said the millionaire.

"Well—yes; I think she is right."

"Your plan very nearly sent her to her grave."

"I didn't treat her properly," said Miss Dawson; "I failed to understand her. Now I do understand her; things will never be the same again."

"My word, I should think not!" said Seymour. "The same again! I should think that I have a voice in this. The child may go back to Westbourne, but not to that poky abode where she endured that which nearly sent her to her grave. You can have a fine house to the front, if you please, with plenty of servants, and the comforts of life, to which my child is entitled, owing to my toils. There is reason in it, Miss Dawson. I am going to talk to her, and you must talk to her. There is such a thing as losing your life to save it. Well, Consuelo must lose some of her ridiculous notions in order to save her father's reason. Come now, what do you say?"

"I think I understand you," said Miss Dawson, "and if you will allow me to say a word to Consuelo first, perhaps your scheme may be managed."

"Well, do your best; but I say it *shall* be managed, whether the girl likes it or dislikes it."

## CHAPTER XXVIII.

### "GOD'S LESSON."

MR. SEYMOUR was very restless during the remainder of the day, for Consuelo was to be moved to Westbourne on the following day but one. During the short period which was to intervene between now and that time Miss Dawson had promised to prepare the way for his own special pleading with his young daughter. He felt choking with indignation, and, at the same time, had a latent feeling that the girl was right in the main, and that there was something in her which partook of his own obstinacy, and which, try as he would, he could not possibly subdue.

Miss Dawson told him that she would have to choose her own time to talk matters over with Consuelo; and he was obliged to submit. Miss Dawson, left to herself, selected the morning of the following day on which to prepare Consuelo for her father's views on the subject of wealth.

The little girl was able now to be dressed, and some very pretty garments had arrived for her from Castle Rocco. An easy-chair had, also been sent from Westbourne, and this easy-chair found a place between Mercy's bed and the little lattice-window.

The weather was still gloriously warm, and the doctor allowed Connie to sit hour after hour, while the sun was high in the meridian, by the open window, in order that she might inhale the fresh and balmy air.

Miss Dawson came to her about eleven o'clock, just after she had rested nicely from the fatigue of dressing. Consuelo turned her sweet and pathetic eyes toward the governess as she entered.

"I am going back to-morrow," she said. "In all probability I may never return here again. There are some people who belong to this place to whom I should much like to say good-by."

"Yes, dear," said Miss Dawson, cheerfully. "Here is your beef-tea. Take it, won't you, while I talk to you?"

Consuelo took the cup and saucer into her weak little hands.

"Oh, I am so hungry!" she said. "It is quite wonderful what an appetite it gives you to have been ill, and to be recovering so fast. Do sit down, please, dear Miss Dawson, and let's talk. Shall I tell you the people to whom I want to say good-by?"

Miss Dawson thought for a minute.

"I think not," she answered. "The person for you really to confide in is your father."

"Oh, dear old poppa! Of course," said Consuelo. "But perhaps he will disapprove."

"And if he does, do you mean to oppose him?" asked Miss Dawson.

The girl looked at her with knitted brows.

"What do you mean?" she said, anxiety in her tone. "Oh! I must lead my life in the right, the good, the just paths from this time forward."

"Quite so," said Miss Dawson. "But the one grand thing to ascertain is, what are the right and the just paths?"

"Well," said Consuelo, "I want to be poor, to begin with. I hate riches; I hate an idle, useless life. Poppa began at the bottom of the ladder, and he wants to put me on a pinnacle. I want to begin at the bottom too. You know that verse, 'The silver and the gold are the Lord's'?"

"I know the verse quite well," said Miss Dawson; "but it can be misinterpreted."

"Oh," said Consuelo, "what do you mean?"

"Well, now, for instance, what about having your own way—throwing aside, once and for all, your father's toil, and love and care of you, making his life-work quite useless; and, in short, because you won't rest content on that comfortable platform which he has made for you by the toils of a lifetime, sending him also to the bottom of the ladder?"

"How funny you are!" said Consuelo. "What do you mean?"

"I will tell you what I mean, and in a very few words. It gives your father such intense pain that you should willingly deprive yourself of the comforts which he has by his toil se-

cured for you that he is almost ill on the subject. In short, Consuelo, he wishes to speak to you, and I beg of you to learn God's lesson in God's way, not your own. There are many problems presented to us in life, and this is one which only the blind can fail to read."

Consuelo's eyes filled with tears. She looked out of the window. Presently she clenched her little hand.

"Am I to go back—to go back to the useless, the frivolous, the luxurious existence which never could, never would, satisfy?"

"Good gracious!" said Miss Dawson; "are there none whom you can help? Is there no one you can succor? There, child, I will say no more. You must not excite yourself. Speak to your father himself. Remember that he is your father, and that he loves you with a great and mighty love. Had you died, I believe that he would have died. I never in all my experience saw such anguish of grief on any face as I did on his when you were in danger of losing your life."

Consuelo sat very still. The summer breeze came in and ruffled the soft hair round her forehead. After a minute she said:

"Thank you. Send poppa here."

Miss Dawson flew downstairs.

"Mr. Seymour," she said, "I have paved the way for you; you must do the rest. But, remember, she is very weak. Try to oppose her as little as possible."

Joseph nodded. He had not been to London for a fortnight. As far as he knew, that colossal scheme which had hitherto occupied almost all his thoughts might have been scattered to the four winds. He had refused to answer telegrams; he had refused to read his letters. He had turned his back resolutely upon mere moneymaking. His thoughts were with his child. He remembered that moment when he had knelt in the moonlight and asked God to take away the gold, but to leave him the love. Now, stooping his tall head, he entered the little attic.

"Hello, Connie!" he said. "I guess you're getting a bit spunky again."

"Yes, poppa," she replied, very gravely.

He looked at her attentively. He earnestly wished that the expression of her face was not quite so grave. Consuelo was always an ethereal-looking girl, but now she had the frail appearance of one whom a breath might blow away. Her little face seemed to be all eyes. But the eyes were very sweet, and pathetic with a new light in them which Seymour had never noticed before.

"Hello!" he said, trying to speak cheerfully and dropping down on the side of the bed. "So here we are; and you're up, my pretty! Blessings on you, Connie! You'll get well like a house on fire when you have a bigger bedroom than this."

"Oh, but I love this little room," said Consuelo.

"And so do I too. It saw you at death's door, but it sees you now at the portals of life. 'Pon my word! I'm getting quite poetical. Fancy old Joseph P.! But you always did manage to bowl me over, Connie. You ever and always roused the sentimental side in me."

"Poppa," said Consuelo, "you want to speak to me."

"Well, now," said Joseph P., "that is so, but not to worrit you, my pet—by no means to worrit you. You can do what you like with the old man; he's here at your service."

"Put one of your big hands over mine," said Consuelo.

"Ah, bless those little hands!" said the millionaire.

Consuelo's very white hands lay like two little flakes of snow under Joseph P. Seymour's big and horny palm.

"Won't you tell me, father, what you want?" she asked at last.

"Well, now—well, now—reason. I want reason in all things."

"Yes, father."

"And look you here, Connie; I want my way for a bit."

"Yes, father."

"Hayward says that you can be moved to Westbourne tomorrow."

"Yes, father."

"And you want to get back to that unwholesome spot you call Discipline House. I went to see it. I went all over it. I looked into the bedroom which Miss Dawson told me you occupied, and—'pon my word!—I'd rather have you here. Here, at least, you have fresh and wholesome air. 'Pon my word, Connie, I'd rather have you here."

Connie was quite silent.

"In short," said Joseph, "I was so upset about that house that I have paid the landlord in full, and—don't stare at me—you're not going back there."

"Poppa!"

"Consuelo, I can't stand it. You have got to give way to me in this matter. I have taken another house at Westbourne, and that woman whom you find so much in, can read you moral lectures in that other house to your heart's content; but—'pon my word!—you shall have bodily comforts: a big bedroom, the best food, good servants. There, child, you don't want to make me ill, do you?"

"No, poppa."

"And, perhaps," continued Joseph, "a little bit of self-denial on your part with regard to me may be just the bearing of that cross which you seem so mighty anxious to lift on to your young shoulders."

"I would rather go to the other house," said Consuelo.

"And I would rather you didn't. Now, who is to win, you or I?"

"You," said Consuelo after a pause, and she bent her head and kissed the rough hand.

Joseph was so delighted with his victory that for a minute he was silent with amazement. After a little pause he said:

"As you have yielded to me in this, there is nothing under the sun that I won't do for you. It isn't to be supposed that a girl like you, Consuelo, should have struggled so hard as you have done, and gone through so much, without having many desires awakened within her. It strikes me, my child, that it is the will of the Almighty that you should accept your riches and turn them into a blessing."

"But can I?" said Consuelo, her eyes shining.

"Bless you, yes. You shall have as much money from me to play ducks and drakes with as ever you want."

"Oh! oh!" said Consuelo. "But that is the old way. I cannot—oh, I cannot go back to the old way!"

"And why should it be the old way?" said Joseph. "Is there no manner of disposing of money except in buying useless finery and killing time?"

"But," said Consuelo, her eyes growing bright as she fixed them on her father's face, "do you mean that I might help others?"

"I didn't take it in that sense, but it's all the same to me. You can found a college for struggling girls or a home for homeless people, or you can give dinners to poor persons in London, or you can do a little of all three. As long as my pile holds out and there is enough put by to ward off the rainy day from you, Consuelo—from you and from your mother—I don't mind how the gold is spent."

"Oh!" said Consuelo—"oh!" Then she added, putting out her hand and softly patting Joseph P. Seymour's cheek, "Aren't you the very best poppa in the world! I have had so much on my mind, and I have so dreaded going back to the old 'do nothing' existence; for you see, father, somehow, when I was born, some of your spirit got into me, and I am naturally very active, and intensely keen to lead a full and busy life. You see, father dear, your life has been very full and busy, because you have been making all that pile of gold; but I have had to sit by and look on, and I, having your spirit, got tired of that—so tired that when I saw Miss Dawson, and she explained a little to me of what the simple life might be, it was like cold water to a thirsty soul. My whole spirit sighed for it, and you agreed that I might try the simple life of Discipline House for a time. Well, somehow, I failed over that, and I got ill and nearly died. But when I got better again I found Miss Dawson's true heart, and she found mine; and I know that in the future she can help me. But just before I got ill, father, I saw a poor, very poor gypsy woman, and she read my fortune by means of the stars and the moon, and something or other told her that I was very rich, and that there was a great trust put upon me; and she said that I must not turn the gold into red gold, but into sunshine gold. She said very strong words, and they made a deep impression on me; and I wanted—oh, so dreadfully!—to find some one

who would lead and guide me, for Miss Dawson didn't understand me at all then. So I went to see a man called Paul the hermit, and he said words very much the same, and told me that I could never hope to wear my crown until I had borne my cross, and he said, too, that the silver and the gold were the Lord's.

"Father, dear, I am leaving here to-morrow; but before I go I should like to see Mother Jeremy, and Paul the hermit, and dear old Mercy all together. And I should like you to be with me when I see them, and I should like them to tell me how best I can make the silver and the gold the Lord's."

"'Pon my word!" said Joseph. "Well, now, you about stagger me; but you shall have your way. We don't leave here till the middle of the day to-morrow, and I dare say good old Mercy will find means to communicate with the people you want. There's money in plenty, and if you really think they know better how to spend it than your father, why, I won't say you nay."

## CHAPTER XXIX.

### THE RED AND THE YELLOW GOLD.

WHAT steps Mercy took to secure the appearance of Mother Jeremy and of Paul the hermit on the following day were best known to herself. Certain it is that shortly before noon a gorgeously dressed gypsy woman was seen approaching the solitary cottage. She had on that brilliant red robe with its queer Egyptian hieroglyphics which she had worn when she met Consuelo outside her cave. Round her neck were rows upon rows of colored beads of all sorts and descriptions. In her ears were very long ear-rings, and round her head was twisted that old scarf of many colors which was at once truly oriental and picturesque.

Mother Jeremy was very much excited when she was summoned by Mercy Perkins to appear at her little cottage. But, after all, it was arranged that Consuelo's visitors were to meet her out-of-doors.

When they appeared on the scene, she was fully dressed for her journey to Westbourne. Miss Dawson was in the background; so also were Dr. and Mrs. Hayward. But Joseph P. had drawn a chair close to the one where his little daughter was resting, and his face was flushed both with pride and pleasure. Paul the hermit, as he approached, presented a very different appearance from that of Mother Jeremy. Mercy herself motioned to the two to come forward, and was going into the background, when Consuelo called to her.

"Please stand," she said, "between Mother Jeremy and Mr. Paul."

Mercy immediately obeyed.

"I want to ask you three a question," said Consuelo then. "This gentleman is my poppa, and he is *very* rich. Now, I

want to please my poppa and to do right at the same time.—Mother Jeremy, will you tell me in what manner I can use the silver and the gold so that the gold may never become red and the sunshine of love may always beautify it?”

“Blessings on little missie!” said Mother Jeremy. She dropped on her knees and murmured some words in Egyptian. “Aye, now, to be sure,” she continued, looking greedily from Consuelo to her father. “Aye, now, there are the poor gypsies need many a gold coin to keep the fires burning on a winter’s night and to keep a bit o’ shelter over their heads. They need their bite and sup, and those golden coins bestowed on them will reflect a beautiful glitter upon them as gives ’em. Lady Moon ain’t to be seen at this time o’ day, but I guess if she could speak she’d say that little missie ought to help the pore gypsies.”

Mercy turned and whispered something to Mother Jeremy, who murmured again in the Egyptian tongue, looked rather angry, and then became silent.

“Please, Mercy, you tell me what I shall do,” said the girl.

“My darling,” said Mercy Perkins, “I can tell you nothing, and less than nothing, for I never in all my life—and I am an old woman close on eighty years—had aught to do with money. The good Lord willed it that I should eat the bread of poverty all my days; but never did I mind, for it was wonderfully sweetened by love. When I had no human being to love, I had my dog Snap, and there was seldom a day that the good Lord didn’t allow me to do a little kindness for others. That blessed day when you came will never be forgot by me. Oh! it wor’ a blessed day, and happy did it make me. But as to money, my pretty pet—why, I don’t understand nothing about it; only perhaps, as love sweetens poverty, it may sweeten the hard shining of money too. It may make it that blessed yellow gold, and not the hard red gold.”

“Please, Paul,” said Consuelo, “will you now tell me how I am to spend my money?”

“It is more blessed to give than to receive,” was Paul the hermit’s immediate answer. “There are those all over the world who want all sorts of things, and who can be helped wisely, not foolishly. There is great distress in all large towns, and that distress can be mitigated. There are a great many men and women who could be made useful and happy by the aid of money, given in the right way. It takes a lot of reading of books, and the advice of the wisest people of the day, to discover how to help the Lord’s poor. But those who are rich and have the willing mind can do it, and in so doing they will be blessed. The silver and the gold are the Lord’s, and those to whom He gives abundantly are His stewards. Their task is no light one, for they often find the burden of great wealth more severe than the burden of poverty. But those who spend wisely will themselves be blessed, and there is no cross bravely borne which does not win the Eternal Crown.”



As Paul spoke he wrapped his cloak round him and hurried swiftly back over the great plains.

Consuelo turned to her father.

"I think I understand," she said.

"And so do I," he answered; "and it shall be the yellow gold for you, my best child."

"The gold with the love in it," said Consuelo, and she put her two arms round her father's neck, and kissed him with such a feeling of complete understanding that their hearts were drawn together as they had never been before.

(4)

THE END.

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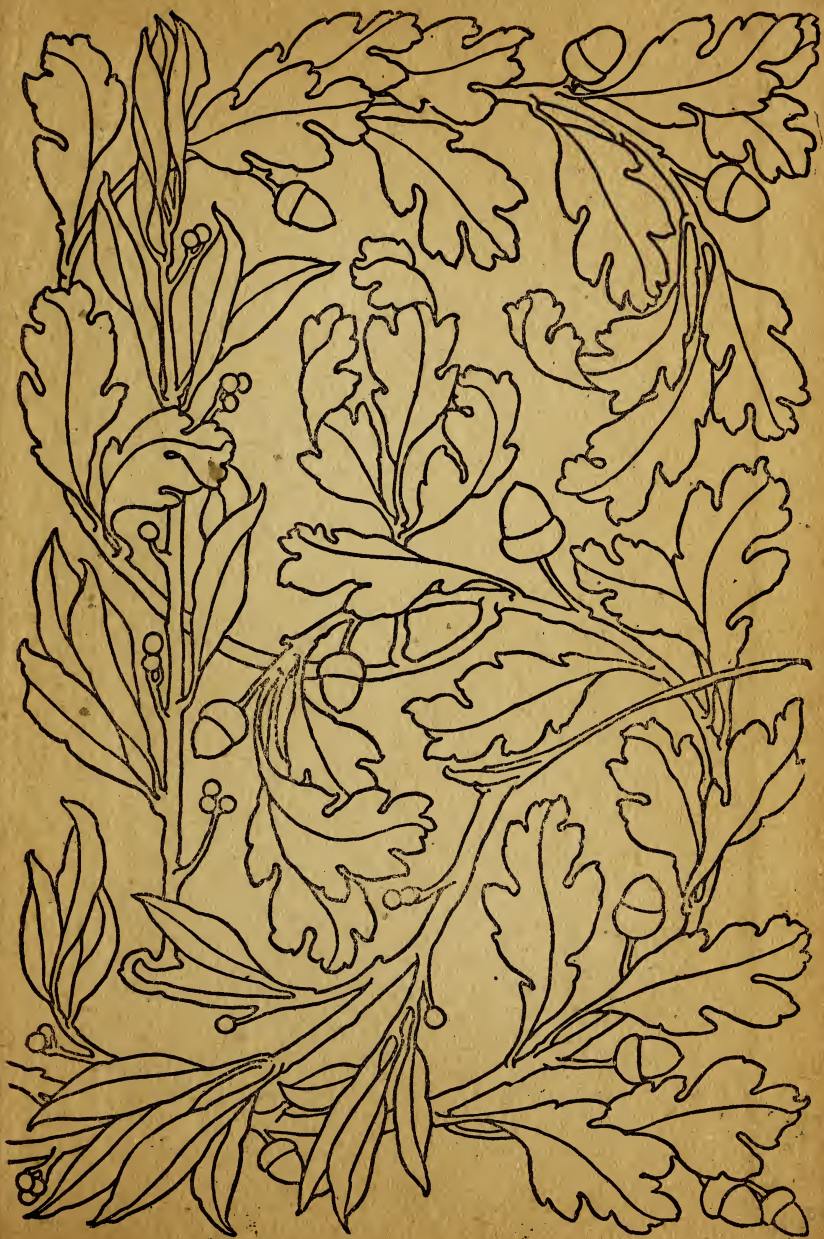
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