

"That rests with yourself," I answered gravely.

"Then I am sure she will not," Sybil retorted in her flippant way. "I think I will go and lie down, my head aches," and she left the room.

An hour or two later, when I went to see how she was, I found the room was empty. But at lunch-time Sybil appeared as though she had but just risen. "Where have you been, dear?" I asked quietly. She gave me one keen glance, and then resumed her old nonchalant manner.

"Out," she answered, "to see if it would do my head any good."

The next day passed quietly enough, then came Thursday, the day of Lucy Wrexham's return. I rose for the first time for many a day with a light heart. But my cheerful mood found no echo in Sybil. She sat through breakfast, eating scarcely anything, and rarely speaking. After breakfast she strolled about the garden, while I gathered flowers for Lady Wrexham's room. She did not speak much, and the little she did say was disconnected and dull. She spoke as one trying to make conversation, while her mind was pre-occupied.

"You will change your gown before Lady Wrexham comes, won't you, dear? Put on something light and pretty; I want you to look your best when you meet her first. Sybil was then dressed in an unusually sombre fashion, and I had wondered at it.

"Yes," she agreed, "but I think I— I would like a walk first."

I was troubled that the thought of meeting her aunt should so upset her; at the same time her quietness was an improvement on her usually boisterous, self-assured manner.

"Yes, do, dear," I said, "but you will be back in good time, won't you? I expect Lady Wrexham to lunch."

"Very well," she answered gravely, and went upstairs for her hat and gloves.

A few moments later there was a ring at the bell, and just as the maid crossed the hall to open the door, Sybil was coming down the stairs slowly, buttoning her gloves as she came. At the sound of the opening door she paused and looked up, and as she looked I saw her expression turn to one of perfect terror, then with a swift rush she ran down,

crept round the end of the bannisters, — was so miserable, Aunt Lucy. I and, darting past me, disappeared out wanted to do as father wished—but of the kitchen entrance. She did not when I came to face it, I—I realised speak, nor did I, but her face I saw as how unfit I was. I knew I was only she passed me was ashy white, and as half educated, that your ways, and she ran she gave little frightened gasp—everything were strange to me, and I ing moans.

The next moment the maid was stand- I could not bear either," her voice ing before me. "Miss Carlton, ma'am, trembling a little, "to leave the place and she wishes to see you at once," where father was buried, to go so far "Miss!—" I began, but seeing the from—" "We would have tried to make you myself together as best I could, and has- Eustace was very dear to me, and you tended to the morning-room." for his sake."

How much later it was that a carriage drew up at the house, and the door bell again pealed loudly. I do not re- member. But the moment I heard it I knew that Lucy Wrexham had come, and that I had to break to her what had been broken to me.

I think my face must have prepared her for something, for as she caught sight of it she stopped abruptly in her first greetings, "What has happened, Helen? Something is wrong, I know. Is it about—Sybil?" she demanded.

"Yes," I gasped incoherently. "Oh, Lucy, everything is wrong. She is not your niece at all; she has been tricking us all this time. The real Sybil has now come—she is in my room. Oh, Lucy, what will you say to me—but how could I help it?"

Lucy Wrexham threw her arms round me affectionately. "Try to be calm," she urged; "tell me, who was the other girl? How could she—"

"Sybil shall explain, I can't." Sybil, the real Sybil, was sitting looking the picture of trouble and shame when we entered.

"I have brought Lady Wrexham," I said. At the sound of my voice she lifted her white face eagerly, then dropped her eyes again.

"I am ashamed to meet you," she said as she rose. "Aunt Lucy, I don't know how to tell you how grieved and ashamed I am for all that has happened, I had no idea Enid Lewis would really do what I had talked of in fun—"

"It would be more satisfactory to me," said Lady Wrexham coldly, "if I might hear the story from the beginning."

Sybil looked at her aunt with fright- ened eyes. "Where shall I begin?" she asked, turning nervously to me. "I—

have looked more dismayed. "Oh!" she cried despairingly, "is there no end to my perplexities! Sybil," she went on, half-laughing, half serious, "I do think you might have spared me this! But," more gravely, "of course I must know more about it. You are too young to take a step so serious, without advice. In fact, you may not, without your guardian's consent."

"But—I have promised," stammered Sybil. "I—"

"But, child, how could you be so—but there, tell me all about it, I will promise not to be severe—only trust me."

Sybil blushed shyly, but she told her story frankly. "He often came to our house, and father liked him very much, he was always kind to me, too, and—and I was sorry for him."

"Sorry! Why?" asked Lucy. "He is lame, and he suffers a good deal at times."

"Yet he asked you to marry him?" cried Lucy indignantly.

"Yes, but not until I had gone into the situation I had got. He was vexed with me for not coming to you, but when I insisted on going away and getting work to do, he made me promise that I would always let him know where I was. So I sent him my address, and soon a letter came from him. He said he was as lonely and unhappy as I was, he missed father and—and me terribly, and asked me to marry him that he might make a home for us both. He said that he would not have dared to ask me, but that I was alone in the world."

"And you?"

"I told him I would."

"But did you care for him?"

"Lare!"

There was no need to probe deeper, the tone in which that one word was spoken was sufficient. I saw Lucy's face grow more grave.

"But you have broken the engagement now, as you have come away?"

"Sybil looked up with eyes wide with amazement. "Oh, no," she cried. "But he said it was my duty to come."

There was a moment's silence. "You have not told us his name, or what, or who he is," said Lucy meekly.

"He is a gentleman, Aunt Lucy," poor Sybil answered her eagerly, "and he has

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