

"Am I like mamma, grannie?" the girl asked in that hushed tone in which we speak of those who had been near and dear to us.

"No," answered her grandmother thoughtfully, looking at her, "though you are fair too, Ada had golden hair and blue eyes, while your eyes are grey and your hair is brown. You are taller, too, and more upright than she."

"Then I resemble papa?"

"No, Frances, I can't say you do, though your eyes are a little like when one looks at them closely."

"Poor mamma," the girl said softly, "her's was but a short life."

"But not an unhappy one," her grandmother answered, while her kindly blue eyes were set with tears. "Henry and she were very happy—there is consolation in that thought."

"Were papa's friends not pleased with his marriage?"

"So I heard then. It seemed his uncle wished him to marry a ward of his, and I believe they never spoke to each other again."

"That was Roland's father?"

"Yes, Mr. Hugh Brentwood, a bitter, bad man, I fear. He didn't even attend poor Hugh's funeral."

"And he and Roland would have inherited Brentwood but for me?"

"Yes. Your father had no will made. A poor little mite you were to be such a great heiress."

"And uncle Hugh and you were appointed my guardians. Somehow I never cared much for uncle Hugh. Roland isn't a bit like him."

"Not much. Still since his father's death Roland has grown more like him."

"Oh! not a bit, grannie."

"Well, perhaps not. Isn't Roland coming to-morrow?"

"Yes, this is our last quiet evening. Mr. and Mrs. Parr and Annie are coming to-morrow, too."

"Of course I shall be glad to see them, but for all that I am beginning to regret our quiet life at Rosemount—though that is selfish."

"You selfish! Why, you wouldn't know how. But come out to the terrace, and I will fix you famously."

Frances assisted her grandmother to her feet. She was still a youthful-looking woman for her years. Those delicate, sensitive women, with fair hair and blue eyes, have a charm all their own in their old age. All her trials she was wont to say came together. A year or two previous to her daughter's marriage her husband died, then came her daughter's death, caused, the doctors said, by the shock of Mr. Brentwood's death. At that time she herself was ill with some spinal complaint that had left its marks behind.

It was to this woman in her quiet country home that Mrs. Harper brought her daughter's child. Mrs. Harper had lived with Mrs. Acland for some years, and had been sent to attend that lady's daughter before Mr. Brentwood's death, but when she brought the baby home after that terrible night in the *Earl of Ulster*, not all Mrs. Acland's persuasions, backed by the offer of a generous salary, could induce her to remain. She was ill, she said, and besides her boy needed a mother's care; so she left Rosemount. From a village named Donaghbeg Mrs. Acland had heard from her at long intervals during a few years, but since she and Frances left Ireland some years ago she had heard nothing of her.

The view from the terrace was always fine, and Mrs. Acland, unable to walk far, spent much of her time there. This evening, with the rays of the sun falling on the beeches and oaks that stood thickly together, and flashing here and there on the little stream that rushed merrily along, Frances thought she had never seen Brentwood look fairer. Away in the distance the thick smoke showed where Sudbury, the nearest town, stood. A few houses gathered round a little church, not far from the park gates, made up the village of Brentwood.

"How beautiful Brentwood is!" Frances said, "or is it that the early summer makes all places beautiful?"

"It being all your very own, as the children say, perhaps gives you that feeling."

"No, that's not it; but I think that my father and mother both dying here so young has something to do with it."

"Why Frances, child," the elder woman said, "I see now how I have spoiled you. You need companions of your own age, while here I have always kept you tied to my side. You are growing morbid."

"Indeed, I am not, grannie. But," speaking quickly, "I did not tell you of my adventure."

"Adventure?"

"A tiny little one only. You know I walked to Sudbury to-day for your wools, and I lingered longer than I intended, so that I was hurrying for luncheon. Well, there is a path through the meadows, a saving of a mile or more, and I came that way, and in crossing the river the plank gave way, and there I was left clinging to a tree that stretched over the river. It must have broken in a second or two when a gentleman lifted me over, and—guess who he was?"

"I don't know, indeed."

"Mr. Rivers, the member for South Tyrall."

"How did he come to this quarter of the world?"

"He is staying with Sir Charles Darce. Perhaps we may meet him to-night. And now, grannie, if you are tired I shall settle you in your chair and run off for some roses for my hair."

But Mrs. Acland was not destined to rest long.

"A lady desires to see you, ma'am; she is in the library," said her own maid, coming to her side.

"A lady! Who is she, Jane?"

"I don't know, ma'am. She gave no name."

"Thank you, Jane, that will do. I can manage now myself," and Mrs. Acland went towards the library, and opening the door saw the person Frances and she had been speaking of a little before—Mrs. Harper.

She was plainly dressed, but Mrs. Acland saw at a glance that she expected to be treated in a different manner from that of former days.

"Why, Mrs. Harper, how glad I am to see you again!" said Mrs. Acland. "You should have told your name at once, and I would have brought Frances. She will be pleased to see you."

"Thank you, Mrs. Acland, but I wished to see you first, and I don't think I need trouble Miss Brentwood."

"Oh, just as you like," Mrs. Acland said, puzzled by something in her visitor's manner. "Pray sit down. Did you walk from Sudbury?"

"No," Mrs. Harper answered laconically. "I did not."

"Perhaps I can offer you some refreshments—a glass of wine?"

"No, thank you, Mrs. Acland, nothing. I wish to speak to you first."

"Very well, but I am sorry we dine out this evening, and," looking at her watch, "my time must be necessarily short."

"I will not detain you long. Do you know a gentleman named Mr. Rivers?"

"The member for South Tyrall?"

"Yes."

"No, but I expect to make his acquaintance to-night. Why?"

"He is my son."

"Your son!"

"Yes, my son."

"But his name—"

"Is Charles Harper Rivers."

"I don't understand."

"No. Well it is easily explained. All my savings were expended on his education, and a gentleman, Mr. Rivers, took a fancy to him when at school, and helped him to get on."

"And left him a fortune, I make no doubt. Indeed, Mrs. Harper, I am very glad he was so fortunate."

"He was not fortunate in that respect. Mr. Rivers died intestate. My boy has nothing save what he makes himself."

"But I am sure he will succeed now. You must be very proud of him, Mrs. Harper."

"I am," she answered, "and anxious to see him marry a woman of means."

"Naturally enough," smiled Mrs. Acland.

"He might rise to any position if he once had money. Mrs. Acland, I wish to see him married to your granddaughter."

For a minute there was silence, then Mrs. Acland rose, speaking slowly.

"Mrs. Harper, you forget yourself strangely. Please excuse me, but I really have no further time to spare."

But Mrs. Harper, more active than she, stood before the doorway, "You shall listen to me," she said, her black eyes glittering,

"Why should not this match take place? He is young, handsome, and talented. Why should he not wed Miss Brentwood?"

"As I said before you forget. He is your son, and she—"

"Is Frances Nolan whose mother earns her bread by charring."

Mrs. Acland never moved, and she went on,

"On the night I came from Fleetwood with your daughter's child, you may remember there was a storm. Only another woman was on board, and she, too, had a baby with her nearly of the same age as the child I carried. While we were waiting for the ship to go to pieces, a wave swept the deck. How, I cannot tell, but the child was borne out of my arms, and at the same moment Mrs. Nolan was thrown violently on the deck. She struck her head in falling, and I, not meaning but to save the child, lifted it. There was great confusion on deck, and this passed unnoticed. When, at length, help came to us, all assumed that it was her child that had been swept overboard. I did not enlighten them then, and finally I resolved to bring her child to you."

While the woman was speaking Mrs. Acland dropped into the chair.

"You are saying this to frighten me," she gasped.

"I am not. It is true. I knew how you would feel for the baby, and the woman Nolan was poor, and not likely to recover from the effects of her fall, as I was told, so I brought her child here,