

to me because my father demands an obedience which I should regard as submission to tyranny.'

'That is the modern creed,' Miss Felicia said, quietly, 'but it isn't the creed in which I was brought up, you know.'

'Oh, I know!' The bright young eyes swept the garden enclosure in eloquent commentary. You were brought up to accept whatever was laid on you, to obey all commands, however arbitrary, and to sacrifice the happiness of your whole life, rather than revolt against the authority of your parents.'

'I should put it differently,' Miss Felicia's tones were clear and sweet and a little proud. 'I was trained to believe that there were certain obligations higher than that of following one's own will and seeking one's own happiness, obligations of honor and respect due to one's parents, of loyalty to one's family traditions, and of the necessity of bearing whatever burdens, or making whatever sacrifices, are demanded in the name of duty.'

'It is a fine doctrine,' Fay admitted, 'and you are a fine product of it. There's something wonderfully exquisite about you—like the perfume of your own roses—but nevertheless my soul rises in revolt against the doctrine, and your life which is the consequence of it. I never expect to understand how you could let yourself be browbeaten into giving up the man you loved because your family disapproved of him.'

Again Miss Felicia corrected her. 'You choose your terms badly,' she said. 'I was not browbeaten in the least. But when I found that I had to choose between seeking happiness in my own way, at the cost of wounding and alienating those whom I loved and who had a right to my obedience, or yielding my own wishes—'

'Why, you just immolated yourself on the family altar,' Fay interrupted. 'And not only yourself, but Geoffrey Brett also. Now you had a right, perhaps, to sacrifice your own life, but not his.'

Miss Felicia looked at the speaker with an expression in her beautiful dark eyes which clutched at the girl's heartstrings.

'I did not sacrifice Geoffrey Brett's life,' she said. 'He married within a year.'

'Oh!' Fay cried, 'but every one knows—'

Miss Felicia's glance stopped her. 'His wife had a very unfortunate disposition,' she said, 'and I fear there is no doubt that she did not make him happy. But there are other, there are even better things than happiness in the world, Fay. I have been glad to hear that he bore with her admirably, and that even she before she died, acknowledged his wonderful kindness, forbearance, and consideration. Our great work in life is character-building, dear, and I cannot tell you what a comfort it has been to me to believe that the difficult discipline of his married life perhaps wrought better results for Geoffrey Brett than if he had been happy—with me.'

'That,' Fay declared, 'is impossible; for the man who missed spending his life with you missed not only happiness but the most inspiring influence. The only trouble is that your ideals are too high. You have given up your happiness to them, and you would make me give up mine if I allowed myself to listen to you. But I can't—I won't.' She shook her head mutinously. 'Sacrifice and renunciation don't appeal to me, Aunt Felicia.'

'They don't appeal to any of us,' Miss Felicia told her gently. 'But the power to make them is the test of character. You will make them if they are required.'

'No, Aunt Felicia.'

'Yes, Fay. Listen to me now. You have been a headstrong, undutiful child, not only refusing obedience to your father, but absolutely defying him in the manner in which you have left home—'

'I've come to you—there's no harm in that.'

'Speak the truth, Fay. Have you only come to me?'

A quick flush rose into the girl's face.

'Well—no,' she admitted. 'I wrote to Geoffrey Brett to meet me here. I thought that perhaps you would be glad to help us; and if I could be married in the old Ravenel home, with your sanction, it—it wouldn't look like an elopement.'

There was something of indignation, as well as of reproach, in the eyes which looked at the speaker now.

'In other words, you thought I would help you to do a disgraceful thing,' Miss Felicia said severely. 'No; the Ravenel roof shelters no runaway daughter, Fay.'

Fay rose to her feet—disappointment and anger struggling together on her face. 'Then I—I'll go to Geoffrey,' she said.

'You will do nothing of the kind,' her aunt replied. She drew the girl down beside her again. 'You did not let me finish,' she said. 'I was going to tell you

that, although you have been such a disobedient child, your father has written me that he puts your love affair in my hands, and allows me to give or withhold consent to your marrying Geoffrey Brett.'

'Oh, Aunt Felicia!' The girl fell to kissing her rapturously. Then, of course, you will be glad to make us happy.'

'Don't be too sure of that,' Miss Felicia said, smiling a little sadly. 'I may call upon you to show the mettle of your courage, your power to make a sacrifice if necessary—'

'But it isn't necessary! Haven't you just said that my father has practically consented?'

'No; I only said that he has left the responsibility of consenting to me; and my consent depends on—do you know what, Fay?'

The girl mutely shook her head.

'On Governor Brett's consent, my dear. This, as you probably know, he has explicitly and, I am sorry to add, insultingly refused. In a letter to your father he says that since in times past the Ravenels declined to accept him as a husband for one of their daughters, he can only suppose that if they are now willing to accept his son for another, it is owing to the fact that he has won great wealth, while the Ravenels have almost lost theirs. He therefore begs to decline the alliance, and adds that he has informed his son that if he persists in marrying Miss Ravenel he will never inherit any part of his fortune.'

'Oh!' Fay's eyes blazed. 'And this is your Geoffrey Brett—the man you loved, Aunt Felicia?'

'This,' Miss Felicia said, 'is the Geoffrey Brett whom long-cherished resentment and too much association with the vulgar side of worldly prosperity have made. And so the case stands thus, Fay—you may call yourself as modern and as independent as you will, but I am sure you can't disown the traditions of self-respect and pride that make it impossible for you to enter a family, the head of which has refused to receive you, and to condemn the man you love to poverty, as well as to alienation from his father.'

With a very pale face the girl looked at the speaker. 'Aunt Felicia!' she gasped, appealingly.

Miss Felicia took both her hands. 'Fay,' she said, 'you will not disappoint me?'

It was as if a spark of fire went out from her soul to kindle the spirit of the other. Fay lifted her head. 'No,' she replied, 'I won't disappoint you. I will not marry Geoffrey Brett unless his father consents.'

Miss Felicia leaned forward and kissed her. 'I was sure of you,' she said simply. 'And now tell me, is Geoffrey Brett—your Geoffrey Brett—in town?'

'Geoffrey Brett, who isn't to be mine any longer, is no doubt in town, though I haven't seen him,' Fay answered. 'It was arranged that we should both come here to-day; but I couldn't tell by what train I would arrive, and besides I didn't want him to meet me in public. So I sent a note from the station to his hotel, making an appointment to meet him to-night—in your garden.'

'Fay!'

'I thought,' Fay said, with something between a sob and a laugh, 'that it would be delightfully romantic and appropriate for a Felicia Ravenel and a Geoffrey Brett to meet again in this old garden; and—and—oh, Aunt Felicia, how you must have suffered! And how can I—how can I ever give up my Geoffrey?'

The bright head went down into the elder woman's lap, and while the sobs overpowered the laughter, Miss Felicia looked around the garden, which had heard such sobs before, with a glance which said many things. Then she bent over the weeping girl.

'Fay,' she said gently, 'have courage, dear. Suffering passes after a while and leaves things behind it which are worth gaining, worth learning at any cost. I, who have suffered, assure you of this. I am glad that you have responded, as I thought you would, to the appeal I have made to you, but I promise you that I will spare no effort to gain happiness for you if it can be gained—'

Fay lifted her tear-stained face proudly. 'There is no effort possible, Aunt Felicia,' she said, 'least of all for you.'

'There may be one,' Miss Felicia answered. 'Let the appointment you have made to meet your lover in the garden here to-night remain unrevoked. When he comes I will meet him, and then—well, then we shall see.'

The roses, the syringa, and the honeysuckle were filling the soft night air with almost overpowering perfume, and the young May moon was hanging in silver beauty in a hyacinth sky, when a man's figure stopped at the east half-hidden in the hedge which bordered the Ravenel garden. Almost unconsciously his fingers caught a familiar latch, while he had an odd sensation of stepping back across the gulf a quarter of a century and