



The Making of Mona
Quiller-Couch, Mabel

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About Quiller-Couch:

(Florence) Mabel Quiller-Couch (c. 1866, Cornwall – November 1924) was an English editor, compiler and children's writer.

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Chapter 1

The kettle sat on the hob, and Mona sat on the floor, both as idle as idle could be.

"I will just wait till the kettle begins to sing," thought Mona; and became absorbed in her book again.

After a while the kettle, at any rate, seemed to repent of its laziness, for it began to hum softly, and then to hum loudly, and then to sing, but Mona was completely lost in the story she was reading, and had no mind for repentance or anything else. She did not hear the kettle's song, nor even the rattling of its cover when it boiled, though it seemed to be trying in every way to attract her attention. It went on trying, too, until at last it had no power to try any longer, for the fire had died low, and the kettle grew so chilly it had not even the heart to 'hum,' but sat on the black, gloomy-looking stove, looking black and gloomy too, and, if kettles have any power to think, it was probably thinking that poor old granny Barnes' tea would be scarcely worth drinking when she came home presently, tired and hungry, from her walk to Milbrook, for Mona, even if she realised that the water had boiled, would never dream of emptying it away and filling the kettle afresh, as she should do.

But Mona had no thought for kettles, or tea, or granny either, for her whole mind, her eyes, her ears, and all her senses were with the heroine of the fascinating story she was absorbed in; and who could remember fires and kettles and other commonplace things when one was driving through a lovely park in a beautiful pony carriage, drawn by cream-coloured ponies, and seated beside an exquisitely dressed little lady who had more money than she could count, and insisted on sharing all with her companion?

Mona certainly could not. She never could manage to remember two things at the same time; so, as all her thoughts were absorbed by her golden-haired friend in the blue silk frock, granny in her old black merino and heavy boots was forgotten as completely as the fire, and it was not until someone came stumbling up the garden path and a tired voice said, "Well, dearie, I'm come at last, how have you got on since I've been

gone?" that she remembered anything about either; and when she did she felt almost sorry that granny had come quite so soon, for if she had only been a few minutes later Mona might just have finished the chapter.

"Oh, I'm so tired!" groaned granny, dropping wearily into her arm-chair. "I have been longing for a nice cup of tea for this hour and more." Then, as her eyes fell on the black grate, her voice changed to one of dismay. "Why, Mona!" she cried, "the fire's gone clean out! Oh, dear! oh, dear!" Granny's voice was full of disappointment. With anyone but Mona she would have been very cross indeed, but she was rarely cross with her. "I daresay it'll catch up again quickly with a few sticks," she added patiently.

Mona, really ashamed of herself, ran out to the little wood-rick which stood always in the back-yard. "Stupid old fire," she muttered impatiently, "of course it must go out, just to spite me because I wanted to have a little read," and she jerked out the sticks with such force that a whole pile of faggots came tumbling down to the ground. She did not stay, though, to pick them up again, for she really was sorry for her carelessness, and wanted to try and catch up the fire as quickly as possible. She had fully meant to have a nice fire, and the tea laid, and the kettle on the point of boiling, and everything as nice as could be by the time her grandmother got back from the town. But one never got any credit for what one meant to do, thought Mona with a feeling of self-pity.

By the time she got back to the kitchen her grandmother had taken off her bonnet and shawl and was putting on her apron. "My feet do ache," she sighed. "The roads are so rough, and it's a good step to Milbrook and back—leastways it seems so when you're past sixty."

Mona felt another pang of shame, for it was she who should have gone to the town to do the shopping; but she had not wanted to, and had complained of being tired, and so granny had gone herself, and Mona had let her.

"Let me unlace your boots, granny, and get your slippers for you." She thought she would feel less guilty if she did something to make her grandmother more comfortable. "You sit down in your chair, I'll do all that's got to be done."

Mrs. Barnes leaned back with a sigh of relief. "Bless the dear child," she thought affectionately, "how she does think for her old granny!" She had already forgotten that Mona had let the fire go out, and neglected to make any preparations for her home-coming; and Mona, who could be very thoughtful and kind if she chose, knelt down and unlaced the heavy

boots, and slipped the warm, comfortable slippers on to the tired old feet, laughing and chattering cheerfully the while.

"Now you are to sit there, gran, and not to dare to move to do one single thing. I'm going to talk to that fire, and you'll see how I'll coax him up in no time, and if that kettle doesn't sing in five minutes I'll take the poker to him." And, whether it was because of her coaxing or not, the fire soon flamed cheerfully, and the kettle, being already warm, began to sing almost as soon as Mona had got the cloth spread.

While she waited for it to come to boiling point, she sat down on her little stool by the fire, and took up her book again. "Just to have a little look at the pictures for a minute," she explained. "Oh, granny, it is such a lovely story, I must tell you about it."

"Yes, dear, I'd like to—some day."

But Mona did not hear the 'some day.' She was already pouring into granny's ear all she had read, and granny interjected patiently, "Yes, dearie," and "Oh my!" and "How nice!" though she was so faint and weary she could not take in half of Mona's chatter.

Presently the kettle boiled again, but Mona was once more lost to everything but her story, and it was granny who got up and made the tea.

"It's all ready, dearie," she said, as she sank into her chair once more. "You must tell me the rest while you are having it. Oh, there's no butter out." She had to get up again and drag her aching feet to the little larder for the butter, and as soon as she had settled herself again she had to get up and get a teaspoon. Mona had forgotten a half of the things she should have laid, and she had forgotten, too, that granny was tired.

"And oh, granny," she went on breathlessly, "on her birthday Pauline wore a muslin dress, with blue forget-me-nots worked all over it, and a blue sash, and—and a hat just covered with forget-me-nots."

"She must have looked like a bed of them," remarked Granny.

"Oh, *I* think she looked perfectly sweet! I'd love to have clothes like she had. Of course, she didn't have to do *any* work—nothing at all all day long."

"Well, I know a little girl who doesn't do much," remarked granny quietly, but Mona did not hear her.

"Granny, do you think I'll be able to have a new hat this summer? Mine is ever so shabby—and shall I have forget-me-nots on it? I'd rather have forget-me-nots than anything. I suppose I couldn't have a blue sash to wear with it, could I, Gran? I don't think they cost very very much. Millie Higgins, in at Seacombe, had a plaid one, and she was sure it

didn't cost a great deal, she said. Her uncle brought it to her, but Millie never wears it. She doesn't like plaid; she wishes it was pink. I'd wear it if 'twas mine, but I'd rather have a blue one. Do you think I can have a new hat, granny?"

"We will see. If your father is able to send some more money for you I might be able to manage it; but with your stepmother always ailing his money seems to be all wanted for doctor's bills and medicines. It does seem hard."

Mona's face fell. "And I don't suppose the medicine does any good, do you, granny?"

"Some folks believe in it, and I s'pose if you believe in it it does you good. For my own part, I never had but two bottles in my life, and I don't see that I'm any the worse for going without. In fact, I——"

Mona, who always sat at the side of the table facing the window, sprang to her feet excitedly. "Why, it's the postman! and he's coming in here," she interrupted, and was at the door to meet him before he had power to knock. She came back more slowly, carefully studying the one letter she held. "It's from father," she said eagerly, as she at last handed it to her grandmother. "Oh, granny! I wonder if he has sent any money?"

Granny was evidently surprised. "A letter from your father! Whatever can he be writing about? I haven't written to him since I had his last. I hope he isn't having more trouble."

"Perhaps he has written to know why you haven't," said Mona shrewdly.

"Oh, granny, do make haste and open the letter, I am longing to know what's inside!"

But letters did not come every day to Hillside Cottage, so when they did they must be made the most of. Mrs. Barnes examined the envelope back and front; the handwriting, the stamp, the postmark; then she had to go to a drawer to get a skewer with which to slit the envelope, then her spectacles had to be found, polished, and put on, and at long last she took out the letter and began to read.

Mona chafed with impatience as she watched her. Her eyes looked ready to pop out of her head with eagerness. "Why don't you let me read it to you?" she cried at last, irritably, and regretted her words as soon as they were spoken. Granny laid the letter on the table beside her and fixed her eyes on Mona instead. "I am not got past reading my own letters yet," she said sternly, looking out over the tops of her spectacles at her. Mona was dreadfully afraid they would fall off, and then the polishing and fixing process would all have to be gone through again, but she

had the wisdom to hold her tongue this time, and granny took up the letter again, and at last began to read it, while Mona tried hard to read granny's face.

She did not utter aloud one word of what she was reading, but presently she gave a little half-suppressed cry.

"Oh, granny, what's the matter?" Mona could keep quiet no longer.

"Oh, dear! oh, dear! Here's a pretty fine thing. Your father wants you to go home."

Mona's face fell again. Then he had not sent any money, and she would not be able to have her hat! For the moment nothing else seemed to matter.

"What does he want me home for?" she asked sullenly.

"Your stepmother has been ill again, and the doctor says she mustn't be left alone, and must have someone to help her. She's terrible nervous when your father's away to the fishing, so you've got to be fetched home." Mrs. Barnes spoke resentfully. Her daughter, Mona's mother, had died when Mona was a sturdy little maiden of ten, and for eighteen months Mona had run wild. Her father could not bear to part with her, nor would he have anyone to live with them. So Mona had been his housekeeper, or rather, the house had kept itself, for Mona had taken no care of it, nor of her father's comforts, nor of her own clothes, or his. She just let everything go, and had a gloriously lazy, happy time, with no one to restrain her, or make her do anything she did not want to do.

She was too young, of course, to be put in such a position; but she did not even do what she might have done, and no one was surprised, and no one blamed her father—no one, at least, but Mrs. Barnes—when at the end of eighteen months he married pretty, gentle Lucy Garland, one of the housemaids at the Squire's.

Mrs. Barnes, though, resented very strongly anyone being put in her dead daughter's place, with control over her daughter's child, and she had written angrily enough to Peter, demanding that Mona should be given up to her. And though he doubted the wisdom of it, to please and pacify her, Peter Carne had let her have the child. "Not for good," he said, "for I can't part with her altogether, but for a long visit."

"If she puts Mona against Lucy, it'll be a bad job," he thought anxiously, "and mischief may be done that it'll take more than I know to undo."

However, Mona felt none of the dislike of her stepmother that her grandmother felt. In fact, she was too happy-go-lucky and fond of change to feel very strongly about anything. She had got her father's

home and all his affairs into such a muddle she was not sorry to go right away and leave it all. She was tired of even the little housework she did. She hated having to get up and light the fire, and, on the whole, she was very glad for someone else to step in and take it all off her shoulders. And as she had left her home before her stepmother came to it, she had not experienced what it was to have someone in authority over her.

So Mona felt no real grievance against her stepmother, and, with all her faults, she was too healthy-minded to invent one. Her grandmother's not too kind remarks about her had fallen on indifferent ears, and, fortunately, had had no effect except to make Mona feel a sort of mild scorn for anyone so constantly ailing as Lucy Carne was.

She felt no sympathy for the cause of the ill-health, even though she knew that it all began one bitter, stormy night when Lucy and the wives of the other men who were out at sea stood for hours watching for the first signs of the little storm-tossed boats, in the agony of their hearts, deaf and blind, and entirely unconscious of the driving sheets of rain and the biting east wind which soaked and chilled them to the bone.

When at daybreak the storm lulled, and the boats, with all safe on board, were seen beating up before the wind, all the misery and wet and cold were forgotten as they hurried joyfully home to make up big fires and prepare hot food for the exhausted men. But more than one woman paid heavily for the night's experience, and Lucy Carne was among them.

For days she had lain writhing in the agony of rheumatic fever. For days she had lain at the gates of death, and when at last she came back to life again, it was such a wreck of her old self that she was scarcely able to do anything. And this in Granny Barnes' eyes had been an added grievance.

It was a greater grievance than ever now, for it meant that her grandchild, her very own daughter's child, was to be taken from her, to work for the stranger who had taken her daughter's place.

Fortunately, Mona had no such foolish thoughts. Her only grievance was that the money which might have been spent on a new hat would have to be spent on the carrier. "And nobody will be any the better for it, except Mr. Darbie, and he's got lots already. They say he has a whole bagful in a box under his bed."

"Your stepmother will be better off. She'll have you," said Granny Barnes crossly. "Well, the letter's spoilt my tea for me. Anyway, I don't want anything more. I've had enough for one while."

Mona looked surprised. "Oh, has it! I thought you were hungry, granny. I am," and she helped herself to another slice of bread and butter. "I wonder which day I'd better go?—and I must wear my best frock, mustn't I? Such a lot of people go by the van, and you've got to sit so close you can't help seeing if anybody's clothes are shabby."

"Um, you seem to have thought it all out, but you don't seem to think anything of leaving me, nor of what my feelings may be. You'd better wear your best frock and your best hat too, then your father and your stepmother will see that you want something new for Sundays. It's as well folk should learn that all the money can't be spent on doctors and physic—that there's other things wanted too!"

But this speech only sent Mona's expectations higher, and lessened her regrets at leaving. If going home to Seacombe and her new mother meant having a new hat and dress, she would only be the more pleased at having to go. She was so occupied with these thoughts that she did not notice her grandmother rise and leave the kitchen, nor did she see the tears in the sad old eyes. But her dreams of a journey, clad all in her best, were suddenly broken in upon by a sharp scream. The scream came from the backyard. Mona flew out at once. It was getting dark out of doors now, but not too dark for her to see her grandmother stretched on the ground with faggots of wood lying all around her.

For a moment Mona's heart seemed to stand still with fear. She thought her grandmother was killed, or, at any rate, had broken her leg. Then, to her intense relief, Mrs. Barnes groaned, and began to rouse herself.

"However did these things come scattered about like this, I should like to know," she cried angrily. But in her relief at knowing she was able to move and speak Mona did not mind granny's crossness.

"Didn't you pull them down?"

"I pull them down." Granny's voice was shrill with indignation. "It was they pulled me down! I wonder I wasn't killed outright. It must have been those cats that knocked them over. They are always ranging all over the yard. I shall tell Mrs. Lane if she can't keep them in she'll have to get rid of them. Oh, dear, what a shaking I've had, and I might have broke my leg and my head and everything. Well, can't you try an' give me a hand to help me up?"

But Mona was standing dumb-stricken. It had come back to her at last. It was she who had pulled down the faggots and left them. She had meant to go out again and pick them up, and, of course, had forgotten about them, and she might have been the cause of a terrible accident! She

was so shocked and so full of remorse, she could not find a word to utter. Fortunately, it was dark, and her grandmother was too absorbed to notice her embarrassment. All her time was taken up in getting on to her feet again and peering about her to try and catch sight of the cats.

Perhaps if granny had been less determined to wage war on the cats, Mona might have found courage to make her confession, but while she waited for a chance to speak her courage ebbed away. She had done so many wrong things that afternoon, she was ashamed to own to more, and, after all, she thought, it would not make it better for granny if she did know who really scattered the faggots. So in the end Mona held her tongue, and contented herself with giving what assistance she could.

"This is Black Monday for me!" she said to herself as she helped her grandmother into the house again. "Never mind, I'll begin better to-morrow. There's one good thing, there's no real harm done."

She was not so sure, though, that 'no harm was done' when she woke the next morning and heard loud voices and sound of quarrelling coming from the garden. She soon, indeed, began to feel that there had been a great deal of harm done.

"Well, what I say is," her grandmother cried shrilly, "your cats were nearly the death of me, and I'll trouble you to keep them in your own place."

"And what I say is," cried her neighbour, "my cats were never near your faggot rick. They didn't go into your place at all last night; they were both asleep by my kitchen fire from three in the afternoon till after we'd had our supper. Me and my husband both saw them. You can ask him yourself if you like."

"I shan't ask him. I wouldn't stoop to bandy words about it. I know, and I've a right to my own opinion."

"Do you mean to say you don't believe what I say?" cried Mrs. Lane indignantly. "Do you mean to tell me I'm telling an untruth? Well, Mrs. Barnes, if you won't speak to my husband, and won't believe me, perhaps you'll ask your Mona! I daresay she can tell you how the faggots got scattered. She was out there, I saw her from——"

"That's right! Try and put it off on the poor child! Do you expect me to believe that my Mona would have left those faggots——"

"Ask her, that's all," said Mrs. Lane, meaningly. "And now I've done. I ain't going to have anything more to say. You're too vi'lent and onreasonable, Mrs. Barnes, and I'll trouble you not to address me again till you've 'pologised."

Granny laughed, a short sarcastic laugh. "'Pologise!" she cried shrilly, "and me in the right too! No, not if I lived next door to you for fifty years, I wouldn't 'pologise. When you've 'pologised to me, Mrs. Lane, I'll begin to think about speaking to you again."

Mona, standing shivering by the window, listened to it all with a sick feeling of shame and dismay. "Oh, why does granny say such dreadful things! Oh, I wish I'd spoken out at once! Now, when granny asks me, I shall have to tell her, and oh," miserably, "won't she be angry?"

But Mona escaped that ordeal. Her grandmother did not mention the subject, for one reason; she felt too unwell; an outburst of anger always made her ill; and for another, she was already ashamed of herself and of what she had said. Altogether, she was so uncomfortable about the whole matter, and so ashamed, and vexed, she wanted to try to forget all about it.

Chapter 2

John Darbie and his one-horse van journeyed from Milbrook to Seacombe every Tuesday and Friday, passing Mrs. Barnes' cottage on their way; and on Wednesdays and Saturdays he journeyed home again. The two places were only ten miles apart, but, as John's horse 'Lion' never travelled faster than three miles an hour, and frequent stops had to be made to pick up passengers and luggage, and put down other passengers and other luggage, the journey was seldom accomplished in less than six hours.

The day that Mona travelled to Seacombe the journey took longer than usual, for they had to stop at Barnes Gate—an old turnpike—to pick up a couple of young pigs, which were to be brought by a farm boy to meet them there; and as the pigs refused to be picked up, and were determined to race back to their home, it took John and the farmer's boy, and some of the passengers, quite a long time to persuade them that their fate lay in another direction.

Mona, homesick and depressed, was quite glad of the distraction, though she felt sorry for the poor pigs. At that moment she felt sorry for anyone or anything which had to leave its old home for a new one.

Only a few days had elapsed since that evening when her father's letter had come, and her grandmother had fallen over the faggots, but such long, unhappy days they had been. Her grandmother had been silent and depressed, and she herself had been very unhappy, and everything had seemed wrong. Sometimes she had longed to be gone, and the parting over. Yet, when at last the day came, and she had to say good-bye to granny, and her own little bedroom, and the cottage, and to leave without saying good-bye to Mrs. Lane, it seemed almost more than she could bear. She looked out at the cottage and at granny, standing waving her handkerchief, but she could scarcely see either because of the mist in her eyes, and, when at last the van turned a corner which cut them off entirely from view, the mist in her eyes changed to rain.

If it had not been for the other people in the van, Mona would have jumped out and run back again, and have confessed all to granny, and

have been happy once more. She knew that if she asked granny to forgive her, she would do so before long, even if she was vexed with her at first.

But Mona's courage failed her. The people in the van would try to stop her, and very likely would succeed, and there would be such a chattering and fuss. Her spirit sank at the thought of it, and so she hesitated and wavered until it was too late.

It was not to be wondered at that she welcomed the little scene with the pigs at the four cross-roads, and felt quite glad when Mr. Darbie asked her to get out and stand at the end of one of the roads to keep the poor little things from running down it.

"We shan't get to Seacombe till nightfall," grumbled the old man when at last he had got the pair into two sacks, and had fastened them up securely on the tail-board of the van.

"And I've got to catch the five o'clock train from there," said one of the passengers sourly. "If ever you want to be a little bit earlier than usual, you're bound to be later. It's always the way."

Old John Darbie always recovered his temper when other people had lost theirs. He realised how foolish they looked and sounded. "Aw, don't you worry, missus," he said, with a mischievous twinkle in his eyes. "She'll wait for me. They wouldn't let no train start 'fore me and my passengers was in!"

All the rest of the passengers laughed, Mona too, at which the sour-faced woman glared at them angrily. Then they jogged on again, and by that time Mona had recovered sufficiently to be able to take more interest in her surroundings.

She noticed that the woman beside her, and the woman opposite her, were looking her up and down, and she felt very glad that she had on her best hat and dress. She did wish, though, that she had mended the hole in her gloves, for one of the women seemed more attracted by them than by anything else, and it was really rather embarrassing. She longed to put her hands behind her back to hide them, but that would have looked too pointed; so, instead, she turned round and looked out of the window, pretending to be lost to everything but the view.

It was a very pretty road that they were travelling, but very hilly, and Lion's pace grew, if possible, even slower. One or two of the passengers complained loudly, but Mona was enjoying herself thoroughly now. To her everything was of interest, from the hedges and the ploughed fields, just showing a tinge of green, to the cottages and farms they passed here and there. To many people each mile would have seemed just like the

last, but to Mona each had a charm of its own. She knew all the houses by sight, and knew the people who dwelt in some of them, and when by and by the van drew near to Seacombe, and at last, between a dip in the land, she caught her first glimpse of the sea, her heart gave a great leap, and a something caught in her throat. This was home, this was her real home. Mona knew it now, if she had never realised it before.

At Hillside something had always been lacking—she could hardly have told what, but somehow, she had never loved the place itself. It had never been quite 'home' to her, and never could be.

"I expect you're tired, dear, ain't you?" the woman beside her asked in a kindly voice. The face Mona turned to her was pale, but it was with feeling, not tiredness.

"Oh, no," she cried, hardly knowing what she felt, or how to put it into words. "I was a little while ago—but I ain't now. I—I don't think I could ever feel tired while I could see that!" She pointed towards the stretch of blue water, with the setting sun making a road of gold right across it and into the heaven that joined it.

The woman smiled sadly. "Are you so fond of it as all that! I wish I was. I can't abide it—it frightens me. I never look at it if I can help it. It makes me feel bad."

"And it makes me feel good," thought Mona, but she was shy of saying so. "I think I should be ashamed to do anything mean when I was in sight of the sea," she added to herself. And then the old horse drew up suddenly, and she saw that they had actually reached their journey's end.

As she stepped down from the van and stood alone in the inn yard, where John Darbie always unloaded, and put up his horse and van, Mona for the first time felt shy and nervous. She and her new mother were really strangers to each other. They had met but once, and that for only a little while.

"And p'raps we shan't get on a bit," thought Mona. "P'raps she's very particular, and will be always scolding!" and she felt very miserable. And then, as she looked about her, and found that no one, as far as she could tell, had come to meet her, she began to feel very forlorn, and ill-used too. All the sharp little unkind remarks about Lucy Carne, which had fallen from Granny Barnes' lips, came back to her mind.

"I do think somebody might have come to meet me!" she said to herself, and being tired, and nervous, and a little bit homesick for granny, the tears rushed to her eyes. Hastily diving in her pocket for her handkerchief, her fingers touched her purse, and she suddenly realised

that she had not paid John Darbie his fare! With a thrill and a blush at her own forgetfulness, she hurried back to where he was busy unloading his van. He had already taken down the pigs and some bundles of peasticks, and a chair which wanted a new cane seat, and was about to mount to the top to drag down the luggage which was up there, when he saw Mona waiting for him.

"Please, here's my fare. I'm sorry I forgot it, and how am I to get my box up to my house?"

"Get your box up? Why the same way as you'll get yourself up. Hop inside again, and I'll drive 'ee both up in a minute. I promised your mother I would. You hold on to your money now, it'll be time enough to settle up when I've done my job," and the old man chuckled amiably at his little joke.

But Mona did not want to get back into the close, stuffy van again, and sit there in solitary state, with everyone who passed by staring at her. So, as soon as John Darbie was safely on the top and busy amongst the boxes there, she walked quietly out of the yard and into the street.

How familiar it all was, and how unchanged! After Milbrook—the little ugly new town, scarcely worthy the name of town—and the hamlet where her granny lived, the street and houses looked small and old-fashioned, but they looked homelike and strong. The Milbrook houses, with their walls half a brick thick, and their fronts all bow-windows, would not have lasted any time in little stormy, wind-swept Seacombe. Experience had taught Seacombe folk that their walls must be nearly as solid as the cliffs on which many of them were built, and the windows must be small and set deep in the walls; otherwise they were as likely as not to be blown in altogether when the winter storms raged; that roofs must come well down to meet the little windows, like heavy brows protecting the eyes beneath, which under their shelter, could gaze out defiantly at sea and storm.

To Mona, seeing them again after many months' absence, the houses looked rough and poor, and plain; yet she loved them, and, as she walked up the steep, narrow street, she glanced about her with eager, glowing eyes. For the time her loneliness and nervousness were forgotten. Here and there someone recognised her, but at that hour there were never many people about.

"Why, Mona Carne! is it really you! Well, your mother and father'll be glad to have you home again." Mona beamed gratefully on the speaker.

"Is it really Mona," cried another. "Why, now, you've grown! I didn't know you till Mrs. Row said your name!"

Mona began to feel less forlorn and ill-used, and she was more glad than ever that she had on her best clothes, and had put her hair up in squibs the night before.

Outside one of the few shops Seacombe possessed, she drew up and looked in at the windows with interest. They had improved a little. The draper's was particularly gay with new spring things, and to Mona who had not seen a shop lately, unless she walked the three miles to Milbrook, the sight was fascinating. One window was full of ties, gloves, and ribbons; the other was as gay as a garden with flowers of every kind and colour, all blooming at once. Many of them were crude and common, but to Mona's eyes they were beautiful. There were wreaths of wall-flowers, of roses, and of lilacs, but the prettiest of all to Mona was one of roses and forget-me-nots woven in together.

"Oh," she gasped, "how I'd love to have that one! Oh, I'd love it!" There were hats in the window, too. Pretty, light, wide-brimmed hats. Mona's eyes travelled backwards and forwards over them till she saw one of the palest green straw, the colour of a duck's egg.

"Oh, wouldn't the roses and forget-me-nots look lovely on that, with just a bow of white ribbon at the back. Oh, I wish——"

"Why, it's Mona Carne!" cried a voice behind her, and Mona, wheeling swiftly round, found Millie Higgins at her elbow.

"Why, who ever would have thought of meeting you strolling up the street just as though you had never been away!" cried Millie. "But you've grown, Mona. You are ever so much taller than when you went away, and your hair's longer too. Do you think I am changed?"

Mona was delighted. She wanted to be tall, and she wanted to have nice long hair. She had never cared for Millie Higgins before, but at that moment she felt that she liked her very much indeed, and they chattered eagerly to each other, lost to everything but the news they had to pour into each other's ears.

After a little while, though, Millie tired of talking. She wanted to get on, and what Millie wanted to do she generally did. "I must fly—and there's your poor mother home worrying herself all this time to a fiddle-string, wondering what has become of you. She expected the van an hour ago, and had got your tea all ready and waiting for you."

Mona started guiltily, and then began to excuse herself. "Well, we were late in coming, we were so long on the road. Mr. Darbie said he'd drive me up, but I liked walking best. If I had gone up by the van I shouldn't have been there yet, so it's all the same."

"The van! Why, it's gone by. Only a minute ago, though. If you run you'll be there almost as soon as he will."

Without staying to say good-bye, Mona ran, but either Millie's minute had been a very long one, or 'Lion' had stepped out more briskly at the end of the day than at the beginning, for when Mona got to the house John Darbie was just coming away. "Thank'ee, ma'am," he was saying, and Mona saw him putting some coins in his pocket.

"I've got the——" she began to call out to him, but stopped, for her new mother came out to the gate, and looked anxiously down the hill. She was looking for herself, Mona knew, and a fit of shyness came over her which drove every other thought from her mind.

But almost as quickly as the shyness came it disappeared again, for Lucy's eyes fell on her, and, her face alight with pleasure, Lucy came forward with arms outstretched in welcome. "Why, you poor little tired thing, you," she cried, kissing her warmly, "you must be famished! Come in, do. I was quite frightened about you, for I've been expecting you this hour and more, and then when Mr. Darbie came, and brought only your box, it seemed as if I wasn't ever going to see you. Come in, dear," drawing Mona's arm through her own, and leading her into the house. "Sit down and rest a bit before you go up to see your room."

Exhausted with excitement, and talking, and the extra exertion, Lucy herself had to sit down for a few minutes to get her breath. Mona, more tired than she realised until she came to sit down, lay back in her father's big chair and looked about her with shy interest. How familiar it all seemed, yet how changed. Instead of the old torn, soiled drab paper, the walls were covered with a pretty blue one, against which the dresser and table and the old familiar china showed up spotless and dainty; the steel on the stove might have been silver, the floor was as clean and snowy as the table.

Mona's memory of it all was very different. In those days there had been muddle, dust, grease everywhere, the grate was always greasy and choked with ashes, the table sloppy and greasy, the floor unwashed, even unswept, the dressers with more dust than anything else on them. Mona could scarcely believe that the same place and things could look so different.

"Oh, how nice it all is," she said in a voice full of admiration, and Lucy smiled with pleasure. She knew that many girls would not have admitted any improvement even if they had seen it.

"Shall we go upstairs now?" she said. "I've got my breath again," and she led the way up the steep little staircase, which Mona remembered so well.

"You know the way to your old room, don't you?"

Mona walked ahead to it, but at the door she drew up with a cry of delight. "Oh, Mother!" she turned to say with a beaming face, and without noticing that she had called her by the name about which she and granny had debated so long.

Lucy noticed it though, and coloured with pleasure. She had felt more shy than had Mona, about suggesting what her stepchild should call her. "Thank you, dear, for calling me that," she said, putting her arm about her and kissing her. "I didn't know, I wondered how you would feel about it."

But Mona was too delighted with everything she saw to feel anything but pleasure and gratitude then. The walls had been papered with a pretty rose-covered paper, the shabby little bed had been painted white. Pretty pink curtains hung at the window, and beside the bed stood a small bookcase with all Mona's own books in it. Books that she had left lying about torn and shabby, and had thought would have been thrown away, or burnt, long ago. Lucy had collected them, and mended and cleaned them. And Lucy, who had brought to her new house many of the ideas she had gathered while in service at the Squire's, had painted the furniture white too, to match the bed.

Mona had never in her life before seen anything so pretty and dainty. "Isn't it lovely!" she cried, sitting down plump on the clean white quilt, and crushing it. "I can't believe it's for me." She looked about her with admiring eyes as she dragged off her hat and tossed it from her, accidentally knocking over the candlestick as she did so.

Lucy stooped and picked up both. The candlestick was chipped, the hat was certainly not improved.

"The chipped place will not show much," said Lucy in her gentle, tired voice, "but you've crushed the flowers in your hat."

Mona looked at the hat with indifferent eyes. "Have I? Oh, well, it's my last year's one. I shall want a new one for the summer."

"Shall you, dear?"

Mona did not notice the little anxious pucker of her mother's forehead. Carried away by all that had been done for her already, she had the feeling that money must be plentiful at Cliff Cottage. Her father's boat had done well, she supposed.

But before any more was said, a sound of footsteps reached them from below, and a loud voice, gruff but kindly, shouted through the little place "Lucy, where are you, my girl? Has the little maid come?" and the next moment Mona was darting down the stairs and, taking the last in one flying leap, as in the old days, sprang into her father's arms.

"My word! What a big maid you are grown!" he cried, holding her a little way from him, and eyeing her proudly. "Granny Barnes must have taken good care of you! And now you've come to take care of Lucy and me. Eh! Isn't that it?"

"Yes, dad, that's it," cried Mona, excitedly, and sat back with all her weight on the pretty flowers and the fresh eggs that her grandmother had sent to Lucy by her.

Her father looked vexed. He knew how much his ailing wife enjoyed fresh eggs, and how seldom she allowed herself one, but he could not very well express his feelings just when Mona had come back to her home after her long absence, so he only laughed a little ruefully, and said, "Same as ever, Mona! Same as ever!"

But, to his surprise, tears welled up into Mona's eyes. "I—I didn't mean to be," she said tremulously. "I meant to try to be careful—but I—I've done nothing but break things ever since I came. You—you'll be wishing you had never had me home."

"We shan't do that, I know," said Lucy kindly. "There's some days when one seems to break everything one touches—but they don't happen often. Now I'll make the tea. I'm sure we all want some. Come, Peter, and take your own chair. There's no moving around the kitchen till we've put you in your corner. Mona, will you sit in the window?"

"I think I ought to stand," said Mona tragically. "I've sat down once too often already."

At which they all burst out laughing, and drew round the table in the happiest of spirits.

Chapter 3

From the moment she lay down in her little white bed, Mona had slept the whole night through. She had risen early the day before—early at least, for her, for her grandmother always got up first, and lighted the fire and swept the kitchen before she called Mona, who got down, as a rule, in time to sit down to the breakfast her grandmother had got ready for her.

On this first morning in her home she woke of her own accord, and half-waking, half-sleeping, and with not a thought of getting up, she turned over and was about to snuggle down into the cosy warmth again, when across her drowsy eyes flashed the light from her sunny window.

"Why, how does the window get over there?" she asked herself, and then recollection came pouring over her, and sleepiness vanished, for life seemed suddenly very pleasant and interesting, and full of things to do, and see, and think about.

Presently the clock in the church-tower struck seven. "Only seven! Then I've got another hour before I need get up! But I'll just have a look out to see what it all looks like. How funny it seems to be back again!" She slipped out of bed and across the floor to draw back the curtains. Outside the narrow street stretched sunny and deserted. The garden, drenched with dew, was bathed in sunshine too. But it was not on the garden or the street that her eyes lingered, but on the sea beyond the low stone wall on the opposite side of the way. Deep blue it stretched, its bosom gently heaving, blue as the sky above, and the jewels with which its bosom was decked flashed and sparkled in the morning sunshine.

"Oh-h-h!" gasped Mona. "Oh-h-h! I don't know how anyone can ever live away from the sea!"

In spite of the sun, though, the morning was cold, with a touch of frost in the air which nipped Mona's toes, and sent her scuttling back to her bed again. She remembered, joyfully, from the old days, that if she propped herself up a little she could see the sea from her bed. So she lay with her pillow doubled up under her head, and the bedclothes drawn up to her chin, and gazed and gazed at the sea and sky, until presently

she was on the sea, in a boat, floating through waves covered with diamonds, and the diamonds came pattering against the sides of the boat, as though inviting her to put out her hands and gather them up, and so become rich for ever. Strangely enough, though, she did not heed, or care for them. All she wanted was a big bunch of the forget-me-nots which grew on the opposite shore, and she rowed and rowed, with might and main, to reach the forget-me-nots, and she put up a sail and flew before the wind, yet no nearer could she get to the patch of blue and green.

"But I can smell them!" she cried. "I can smell them!" and then remembered that forget-me-nots had no scent and realised that the scent was that of the wallflowers growing in her own garden; and suddenly all the spirit went out of her, for she did not care for what she could reach, but only for the unattainable; and the oars dropped out of her hands, and the diamonds no longer tapped against the boat, for the boat was still, and Mona sat in it disappointed and sullen. The sun went in too, and nothing was the same but the scent of the flowers. And then, through her sullen thoughts, the sound of her father's voice came to her.

"Mona! Mona! It's eight o'clock. Ain't you getting up yet? I want you to see about the breakfast. Your mother isn't well."

Mona jumped up with a start, and felt rather cross in consequence. "All right, father," she called back. "I'll come as soon as I can," but to herself she added, in an injured tone, "I s'pose this is what I've been had home for! Hard lines, I call it, to have to get up and light the fire the very first morning."

Her father called through the door again. "The fire's lighted, and burning nicely, and I've put the kettle on. I lighted it before I went out. I didn't call 'ee then, because I thought I heard you moving."

Then her father had been up and dressed for an hour or two, and at work already! A faint sense of shame crossed Mona's mind. "All right, father," she called back more amiably, "I'll dress as quick as I can. I won't be more than a few minutes."

"That's a good maid," with a note of relief in his voice, and then she heard him go softly down the stairs.

It always takes one a little longer than usual to dress in a strange place, but it took Mona longer than it need have done, for instead of unpacking her box the night before, and hanging up her frocks, and putting her belongings neatly away in their places, she had just tumbled everything over anyhow, to get at her nightdress, and so had left them. It had taken her quite as long to find the nightdress as it would have to lift the things out and put them in their proper places, for the garment was almost at

the bottom of the box, but Mona did not think of that. Now, though, when she wanted to find her morning frock and apron, she grew impatient and irritable. "Perhaps if I tip everything out on the floor I'll find the old things that way!" she snapped crossly. "I s'pose I shan't find them until they've given me all the trouble they can," and she had actually thrown a few things in every direction, when she suddenly stopped and sat back on her heels.

"I've half a mind to put on my best dress again, then I can come and look for the old one when I ain't in such a hurry." The dress—her best one—was lying temptingly on a chair close beside her. She hesitated, looked at it again, and picked it up. As she did so, something fell out of the pocket. It was her purse, the little blue one her granny had bought for her at Christmas. She picked it up and opened it, and as she did so the colour rushed over her face. In one of the pockets was the eighteen-pence which had been given to her to pay John Darbie with. "I—I suppose I ought to have given it to mother, but it went right out of my head." She completed her dressing in a thoughtful mood, but she did find, and put on, her old morning dress. "I suppose I had better tell her—about the money." She put the blue purse in a drawer, however, and tossed in a lot of things on top of it.

When at last she got downstairs it was already past half-past eight, and the fire was burning low again. "Oh, dear," she cried, irritably, "how ever am I going to get breakfast with a fire like that and how am I to know what to get or where anything is kept. I think I might have had a day or two given me to settle down in. I s'pose I'd better get some sticks first and make the fire up. Bother the old thing, it only went out just to vex me!"

She was feeling hungry and impatient, and out of tune with everything. At Hillside she would have been just sitting down to a comfortable meal which had cost her no trouble to get. For the moment she wished she was back there again.

As she returned to the kitchen with her hands full of wood, her mother came down the stairs. She looked very white and ill, and very fragile, but she was fully dressed.

"I thought you were too bad to get up," said Mona, unsmilingly. "I was going to bring you up some breakfast as soon as I could, but the silly old fire was gone down——"

"I was afraid it would. That was why I got up. I couldn't be still, I was so fidgeted about your father's breakfast. He'll be home for it in a few minutes. He's had a busy morning, and must want something."

Mona looked glummer than ever. "I never had to get up early at granny's," she said in a reproachful voice. "I ain't accustomed to it. I s'pose I shall have to get so."

"Did you let your grandmother—did your grandmother come down first and get things ready for you?" asked Lucy, surprised; and something in her voice, or words, made Mona feel ashamed, instead of proud of the fact.

"Granny liked getting up early," she said, excusingly. Lucy did not make any comment, and Mona felt more ashamed than if she had.

"Hasn't father had his breakfast yet?" she asked presently. "He always used to come home for it at eight."

"He did to-day, but you see there wasn't any. The fire wasn't lighted even. He thought you were dressing, and he wouldn't let me get up. When he'd lighted the fire he went off to work again. He's painting his boat, and he said he'd finish giving her her first coat before he'd stop again; then she could be drying. I'll manage better another morning. I daresay I'll feel better to-morrow."

Lucy did look very unwell, and Mona's heart was touched. "I wish father had told me earlier," she said in a less grumbling tone. "I was awake at seven, and got up and looked out of the window. I never thought of dressing then, it seemed so early, and I didn't hear father moving."

"Never mind, dear, we will manage better another time. It's nice having you home, Mona; the house seems so much more cheerful. You will be a great comfort to us, I know."

Mona's ill-temper vanished. "I do want to be," she said shyly, "and I am glad to be home. Oh, mother, it was lovely to see the sea again. I felt—oh, I can't tell you how I felt when I first caught a glimpse of it. I don't know how ever I stayed away so long."

Lucy laughed ruefully. "I wish I loved it like that," she said, "but I can't make myself like it even. It always makes me feel miserable."

A heavy step was heard on the cobbled path outside, and for a moment a big body cut off the flood of sunshine pouring in at the doorway. "Is breakfast ready?" demanded Peter Carne's loud, good-tempered voice. "Hullo, Lucy! Then you got up, after all! Well—of all the obstinate women!"

Lucy smiled up at him bravely. "Yes, I've got down to breakfast. I thought I'd rather have it down here with company than upstairs alone. Isn't it nice having Mona home, father?"

Peter laughed. "I ain't going to begin by spoiling the little maid with flattery, but yet, 'tis very," and he beamed good-naturedly on both. "Now, then, let's begin. I'm as hungry as a hunter."

By that time the cloth was laid, a dish of fried bacon and bread was keeping hot in the oven, and smelling most appetisingly to hungry folk, and the kettle was about to boil over. Through the open doorway the sunshine and the scent of wallflowers poured in.

"Them there wallflowers beat anything I ever came across for smell," remarked Peter as he finished his second cup of tea.

"I dreamed about wallflowers," said Mona, "and I seemed to smell them quite strong," and she told them her dream—at least a part of it. She left out about the forget-me-nots that she rowed and rowed to try and get. She could not have told why she left out that part, but already a vague thought had come to her—one that she was ashamed of, even though it was so vague, and it had to do with forget-me-nots.

All the time she had been helping about the breakfast, and all the time after, when she and her stepmother were alone again, she kept saying to herself, "Shall I give her the money, shall I keep it?" and her heart would thrill, and then sink, and inside her she kept saying, "There is no harm in it?—It is all the same in the end." And then, almost before she knew what she was doing, she had taken the easy, crooked, downhill path, with its rocks and thorns so cleverly hidden.

"Mona, haven't you got any print frocks for mornings, and nice aprons?"

Mona's thoughts came back suddenly from "Shall I? Shall I not?" and the eyes with which she looked at her mother were half shamed, half frightened. "Any—any what?" she stuttered.

"Nice morning aprons and washing frocks? I don't like to see shabby, soiled ones, even for only doing work in."

"I hadn't thought about it," said Mona, with more interest. "What else can one wear? I nearly put on my best one, but I thought I hadn't better."

"Oh, no, not your best."

"Well, what else is there to wear? Do you always have a print one like you've got on now?"

"Yes, and big aprons, and sleeves. Then one can tell when they are dirty."

"Oh, I thought you put on that 'cause you were wearing out what you'd got left over. You were in service, weren't you, before you married father?"

"Yes."

"I haven't got any print dresses. I haven't even got a white one. I've two aprons like this," holding out a fanciful thing trimmed with lace. "That's all, and I never saw any sleeves; I don't know what they are like."

"I'll have to get you some as soon as father has his next big haul. You'd like to wear nice clean prints, if you'd got them, wouldn't you?"

"Oh, yes!" eagerly. But after a moment she added: "I do want a summer hat, though, and I don't s'pose I could have both?" Her eyes sought her mother's face anxiously. Lucy looked grave and a little troubled. "Wasn't that your summer hat that you had on yesterday? It was a very pretty one. I'm so fond of wreaths of daisies and grasses, aren't you?"

"Yes—I was—I'm tired of them now. I wore that hat a lot last summer."

"Did you? Well, you kept it very nicely. I thought it was a new one, it looked so fresh and pretty."

"I'd like to have one trimmed with forget-me-nots this year," Mona went on hurriedly, paying no heed to her mother's last remarks.

"They are very pretty," agreed Lucy, absently. In her mind she was wondering how she could find the money for all these different things.

"I've got eighteenpence," broke in Mona, and the plunge was taken. She was keeping the eighteen-pence, though she knew it belonged either to her granny or to Lucy. As soon as the words were spoken she almost wished them back again, but it was too late, and she went on her downhill way.

"Mother, if you'll get me the hat, I'll buy the wreath myself. They've got some lovely ones down at Tamlin's for one and five three. There are some at one and 'leven three, but that's sixpence more, and I haven't got enough."

"Very well, dear, we'll think about it. It's early yet for summer hats." She was trying to think of things she could do without, that Mona might have her hat. If she had been her own child, she would have told her plainly that she did not need, and could not have a new one, but it was not easy—as things were—to do that.

Mona's heart leaped with joy. Though she had known Lucy such a little while, she somehow felt that she could trust her not to forget. That when she said she would think about a thing, she would think about it, and already she saw with her mind's eye, the longed-for hat, the blue wreath, and the bow of ribbon, and her face beamed with happiness.

"I can do without the aprons and the print frocks," she said, in the generosity of her heart, though it gave her a wrench. But Lucy would not hear of that. She had her own opinion about the grubby-looking blue

serge, and the fancy apron, which were considered 'good enough' for mornings.

"No, dear, you need them more than you need the hat. If ever anyone should be clean it's when one is making beds, and cooking, and doing all that sort of thing, I think, don't you?"

Mona had never given the subject a thought before. In fact, she had done so little work while with her grandmother, and when she 'kept house' herself had cared so little about appearance or cleanliness, or anything, that it had never occurred to her that such things mattered. But now that her stepmother appealed to her in this way she felt suddenly a sense of importance and a glow of interest.

"Oh, yes! and I'll put my hair up, and always have on a nice white apron and a collar; they do look so pretty over pink frocks, don't they?"

"Yes, and I must teach you how to wash and get them up."

"Oh!" Mona's interest grew suddenly lukewarm. "I hate washing and ironing, don't you, mother?"

"I like other kinds of work better, perhaps. I think I should like the washing if I didn't get so tired with it. I don't seem to have the strength to do it as I want it done. It is lovely, though, to see things growing clean under one's hand, isn't it?"

But Mona had never learnt to take pride in her work. "I don't know," she answered indifferently. "I should never have things that were always wanting washing."

Lucy rose to go about her morning's work. "Oh, come now," she said, smiling, "I can't believe that. Don't you think your little room looks prettier with the white vallance and quilt and the frill across the window than it would without?"

"Oh, yes!" Mona agreed enthusiastically. "But then I didn't have to wash them and iron them."

"Well, I had to, and I enjoyed it, because I was thinking how nice they would make your room look, and how pleased you would be."

"I don't see that. If you were doing them for yourself, of course, you'd be pleased, but I can't see why anyone should be pleased about what other people may like."

"Oh, Mona! can't you?" Lucy looked amazed. "Haven't you ever heard the saying, 'there is more pleasure in giving than in receiving'?"

"Yes, I think I've heard it," said Mona, flippantly, "but I never saw any sense in it. There's lots of things said that ain't a bit true."

"This is true enough," said Lucy quietly, "and I hope you'll find it so for yourself, or you will miss half the pleasure in life."

"Well, I don't believe in any of those old sayings," retorted Mona, rising too. "Anyway, receiving's good enough for me!" and she laughed boisterously, thinking she had said something new and funny.

A little cloud rested for a moment on Lucy's face, but only for a moment. "It isn't nice to hear you speak like that, Mona," she said quietly, a note of pain in her voice, "but I can't make myself believe yet that you are as selfish as you make out. I believe," looking across at her stepdaughter with kindly, smiling eyes, "that you've got as warm a heart as anybody, really."

And at the words and the look all the flippant, silly don't-careishness died out of Mona's thoughts and manner.

Yet, presently, when in her own little room again, she opened her little blue purse and looked in it, a painful doubt arose in her mind. It was nice to be considered good-hearted, but was she really so? And unselfish? "If I was, wouldn't I make my last year's hat do? Wouldn't I give back the eighteenpence?" What tiresome questions they were to come poking and pushing forward so persistently. Anyhow, her mother knew now that she wanted a hat, and she knew that she had the money, and that she was going to spend it on herself—and yet she had called her unselfish!

And downstairs, Lucy, with an anxious face, and a weight at her heart, was thinking to herself, "If Mona had lived much longer the idle, selfish life she has been living, her character would have been ruined, and there is so much that is good in her! Poor child, poor Mona! She has never had a fair chance yet to learn to show the best side of her, and I doubt if I'm the one to teach her. I couldn't be hard with her if I tried, and being her stepmother will make things more difficult for me than for most. I couldn't live in the house with strife. I must try other means, and," she added softly, "ask God to help me."

Chapter 4

For a while, after that talk with her mother, Mona worked with a will. She swept, and scrubbed, and polished the stove and the windows and helped with the washing and ironing, until Lucy laughingly declared there would soon be nothing left for her to do.

"That's just what I want," declared Mona. "I want you not to have anything to do. Perhaps I can't manage the cooking yet, but I'll learn to in time." Excited by the novelty and change, and buoyed up by the prospect of her new hat, and new frocks and aprons too, she felt she could do anything, and could not do enough in return for all that was to be done for her, and, when Mona made up her mind to work, there were few who could outdo her. She would go on until she was ready to drop.

As the spring days grew warmer, she would get so exhausted that Lucy sometimes had to interfere peremptorily, and make her stop. "Now you sit right down there, out of the draught, and don't you move a foot till I give you leave. I will get you a nice cup of tea, and one of my new tarts; they're just this minute ready to come out of the oven."

A straight screen, reaching from floor to ceiling, stood at one side of the door, to keep off some of the draught and to give some little privacy to those who used the kitchen. Mona dried her hands and slipped gratefully into the chair that stood between the screen and the end of the table.

"Oh, mother, this is nice," she sighed, her face radiant, though her shoulders drooped a little with tiredness.

"Isn't it beautiful? I love these sunny, quiet afternoons, when everything is peaceful, and the sea quite calm." Her eyes looked beyond the little kitchen to the steep, sunny street outside, and beyond that again to where the blue sea heaved and glittered in the distance. The little window, as well as the door, stood wide open, letting in the scent of the sun-warmed wallflowers, and box, and boy's love. The bees buzzed contentedly over the beds. One made his way in to Lucy's plants in the window.

"I seem to smell the sea even through the scent of the flowers," said Lucy.

"I am sure I do. I can't think how people can choose to live inland, can you, mother?"

"I don't suppose they choose, they just live where God has seen fit to place them—where their work lies."

"Well, I hope my work will always be in some place near the sea," said Mona decidedly. "I don't think I could live away from it."

Lucy smiled. "I think you could, dear, if you made up your mind to it! I am sure you are not a coward."

"I don't see that it has got anything to do with being a coward or not," objected Mona.

"But indeed it has. If people can't face things they don't like without grumbling all the time they are cowards. It is as cruel and cowardly to keep on grumbling and complaining about what you don't like as it is brave to face it and act so that people never guess what your real feelings are. Think of my mother now. She loved living in a town, with all that there is to see and hear and interest one, and, above all, she loved London. It was home to her, and every other place was exile. Yet when, after they had been married a couple of years, her husband made up his mind to live right away in the country, she never grumbled, though she must have felt lonely and miserable many a time. Her mother, and all belonging to her, lived in London, and I know she had a perfect dread of the country. She was afraid of the loneliness. Then my father tried his hand at farming and lost all his savings, and after that there was never a penny for anything but the barest of food and clothing, and sometimes not enough even for that. Well, I am quite sure that no one ever heard a word of complaint from mother's lips, and when poor father reproached himself, as he did very often, with having brought ruin on her, she'd say, 'Tom, I married you for better or worse, for richer or poorer. I didn't marry you on condition you stayed always in one place and earned so much a week.'"

"Mother didn't think she was being brave by always keeping a cheerful face and a happy heart—but father did, and I do, now. I understand things better than I did. I can see there's ever so much more bravery in denying yourself day after day what you want, and bearing willingly what you don't like, than there is in doing some big deed that you carry through on the spur of the moment."

Mona sat silent, gazing out across the flowers in the window to the sky beyond. "There's ever so much more bravery in denying yourself what

you want." The words rang in her head most annoyingly. Could Lucy have spoken them on purpose? No, Mona honestly did not think that, but she wished she had not uttered them. She tried to think of something else, and, unconsciously, her mother helped her.

"I want to go to see mother on Monday or Tuesday, if I can. Do you think you'll mind being left here alone for a few hours?"

Mona looked round at her with a smile. "Why, of course not! I used to spend hours here alone. I'll find plenty to do while you're gone. I'll write to granny, for one thing. I promised I would. I could take up some of the weeds in the garden, too."

She was eager to do something for her stepmother, so that she herself would feel more easy in her mind about the one thing she could not summon up courage to do.

"Yes, if you'll do a little weeding it'll be fine. I'm ashamed to see our path, and the wallflowers are nearly choked, but I daren't do it. I can't stoop so long."

On Sunday Mona went to Sunday school for the first time, and was not a little pleased to find that her last year's hat, with the daisy wreath, was prettier than any other hat there. With every admiring glance she caught directed at it her spirits rose. She loved to feel that she was admired and envied. It never entered her head that she made some of the children feel mortified and discontented with their own things.

"If they think such a lot of this one, I wonder what they'll think of me having another new one soon!" To conceal the elation in her face, she bent over her books, pretending to be absorbed in the lesson. Miss Lester, the teacher, looked at her now and again with grave, questioning eyes. She was wondering anxiously if this little stranger was going to bring to an end the peace and contentment of the class. "Is she going to make my poor children realise how poor and shabby their clothes are, and fill their heads with thoughts of dress?" She said nothing aloud, however. She was only a little kinder, perhaps, to the most shabby of them all.

Mona, who had been quite conscious of her teacher's glances, never doubted but that they were glances of admiration, and was, in consequence, extremely pleased. She returned home quite elated by her Sunday afternoon's experiences.

The next day, at about eleven, Lucy started on her three mile walk to her mother's.

"Isn't it too far for you?" asked Mona, struck anew by her stepmother's fragile appearance. "Hadn't you better put it off till you're stronger?"

But Lucy shook her head. "Oh, no, I shall manage it. If I go to-day I shall be able to have a lift home in Mr. Lobb's cart. It's his day. So I shall only have three miles to walk, and I do want to see mother. She has been so bad again."

Mona did not try any more to stop her, but bustled around helping her to get ready. "If you hadn't been going to drive back, I'd have come to meet you. Never mind, I expect I'll be very busy," and she smiled to herself at the thought of all she was going to do, and of the nice clean kitchen and tempting meal she would have ready by the time Mr. Lobb's cart deposited Lucy at the door again.

"Now, don't do too much, and tire yourself out, dear," said Lucy, warningly. "There isn't really much that needs doing," but Mona smiled knowingly.

As soon as Lucy had really started and was out of sight, she washed and put away the few cups and plates, and swept up the hearth. Then, getting a little garden fork and an old mat, she sallied forth to the garden. There certainly were a good many weeds in the path, and, as the ground was trodden hard, they were not easy to remove. Those in the flower beds were much easier.

"I'll do the beds first," thought Mona. "After all, that's the right way to begin." So she dug away busily for some time, taking great care to dig deep, and lift the roots right out. "While I am about it, I may as well turn all the earth over to make it nice and soft for the flowers. I don't know how they ever manage to grow in such hard, caked old stuff, poor little things."

Here and there a 'poor little thing' came up root and all, as well as the weed, or instead of it, but Mona quickly put it back again, and here and there one had its roots torn away and loosened. In fact, most of Lucy's plants found themselves wrenched from the cool, moist earth they loved, and their hold on life gone. Presently Mona came to a large patch of forget-me-nots. The flowers were not yet out, but there was plenty of promise for by and by. It was not, though, the promise of buds, nor the plant itself which caused Mona to cease her work suddenly, and sit back on her heels, lost in thought.

"I've a good mind to go down now this minute and get it," she exclaimed eagerly, "while mother's away. Buying a hat won't seem much if she hasn't got to buy the trimmings. And—and if—if I don't get the wreath, Mr. Tamlin may—may sell it before mother goes there."

This fear made her spring from her knees. Without any further hesitation, she rushed, into the house, washed and tidied herself, got her blue

purse from the drawer in which it was still hidden, and in ten minutes from the moment the thought first struck her she was hurrying down the street, leaving the mat and the fork where she had been using them. But she could think of nothing. Indeed, she could scarcely breathe for excitement until she reached Tamlin's shop, and, to her enormous relief, saw the blue wreaths still hanging there.

"Of course, it is much the best way to buy it now and take it home," Mona argued with herself. "It will only get dirty and faded where it is."

She felt a little nervous at entering the big shop by herself, especially as she seemed to be the only customer, and the attendants had no one else at whom to stare. She went up to the one who had the pleasantest smile and looked the least grand of them all.

"Forget-me-nots? Oh, yes, dear, we have some lovely flowers this season, all new in. Perhaps you'd prefer roses. We have some beautiful roses, pink, red, yellow, and white ones—and wreaths, we have some sweet wreaths, moss and rose buds, and sweet peas and grasses." She proceeded to drag out great boxes full of roses of all shapes and kinds. Mona looked at them without interest. "No, thank you I want forget-me-nots."

"Oh, well, there's no harm in looking at the others, is there? I've got some sweet marg'rites too. I'll show you. P'raps you'll change your mind when you see them. Blue ties you so, doesn't it?"

"I've got daisies on a hat already. I'm tired of them. I want something different."

"Of course, we all like a change, don't we? I'll show you a wreath—perfectly sweet it is, apple-blossom and leaves; it might be real, it's so perfect." And away she went again for another box.

Mona felt as though her eighteenpence was shrivelling smaller and smaller. It seemed such a ridiculously small sum to have come shopping with, and she wished she had never done so. The girl dropped a huge box on the counter, and whipped the cover off. She was panting a little from the weight of it. Mona longed to sink out of sight, she was so ashamed of the trouble she was giving, and only eighteenpence to spend after all!

"There, isn't that sweet, and only three and eleven three."

But Mona was by this time feeling so ashamed and bothered and uncomfortable, she would not bring herself to look at the flowers. "Yes, thank you, it's very pretty, but—but—it's too dear—and—I want forget-me-nots."

Then, summoning up all the courage she had left, "You've got some wreaths for one and fivepence three-farthings; it's one of those I want."

The girl's face changed, and her manner too. "Oh, it's one of the cheap wreaths you want, like we've got in the window," and from another box she dragged out one of the kind Mona had gazed at so longingly, and, without handing it to her to look at, popped it into a bag, screwed up the top, and pushed it across the counter. "One and five three," she snapped rudely, and, while Mona was extracting her eighteenpence from her purse, she turned to another attendant who had been standing looking on and listening all the time.

"Miss Jones, dear, will you help me put all these boxes away."

Mona noticed the sneer in her voice, the glances the two exchanged. She saw, too, Miss Jones's pitying smile and toss of her head, and she walked out of the shop with burning cheeks and a bursting heart. She longed passionately to throw down the wreath she carried and trample on it—and as for Tamlin's shop! She felt that nothing would ever induce her to set foot inside it again.

Poor Mona, as she hurried up the street with her longed-for treasure—now detestable in her eyes—all the sunshine and happiness seemed to have gone out of her days. She went along quickly, with her head down. She felt she did not want to see or speak to anyone just then. She hurried through the garden, where the patch of newly-turned earth was already drying under the kiss of the sun, and the wallflowers were beginning to droop, but she saw nothing of it all. She only wanted to get inside and shut and bolt the door, and be alone with herself and her anger.

"There!" she cried passionately, flinging the wreath across the kitchen, "take that! I hate you—I hate the sight of you!" She would have cried, but that she had made up her mind that she would not. "I'll never wear the hateful thing—I couldn't! If I was to meet that girl when I'd got it on I—I'd never get over it! And there's all my money gone; wasted, and—and——" At last the tears did come, in spite of her, and Mona's heart felt relieved.

She picked out the paper bag from inside the fender, and, carrying it upstairs, thrust it inside the lid of her box. "There! and I hope I'll never see the old thing ever any more, and then, p'raps, in time I'll forget all about it."

As she went down the stairs again to the kitchen she remembered that her father would be home in a few minutes to his dinner, and that she had to boil some potatoes. "Oh, dear—I wish—I wish——" But what was

the use of wishing! She had the forget-me-nots she had so longed for—and what was the result!

"I'll never, never wish for anything again," she thought ruefully, "but I suppose that wishing you'd got something, and wishing you hadn't forgot something, are two different things, though both make you feel miserable," she added gloomily.

For a moment she sat, overwhelmed by all that she had done and had left undone. The emptiness and silence of the house brought to her a sense of loneliness. The street outside was empty and silent too, except for two old women who walked by with heavy, dragging steps. One of the two was talking in a patient, pathetic voice, but loudly, for her companion was deaf.

"There's no cure for trouble like work, I know that. I've had more'n my share of trouble, and if it hadn't been that I'd got the children to care for, and my work cut out to get 'em bread to eat, I'd have give in; I couldn't have borne all I've had to bear——"

The words reached Mona distinctly through the silence. She rose to her feet. "P'raps work'll help me to bear mine," she thought bitterly. "When my man and my two boys was drowned that winter, I'd have gone out of my mind if I hadn't had to work to keep a home for the others——" The voices died away in the distance, and Mona's bitterness died away too.

"Her man, and her two boys—three of them dead, all drowned in one day— oh, how awful! How awful!" Mona's face blanched at the thought of the tragedy. The very calmness with which it was told made it seem worse, more real, more inevitable. Even the sunshine and peace about her made it seem more awful. Compared with such a trouble, her own was too paltry. It was not a trouble at all. She felt ashamed of herself for the fuss she had been making, and without more ado she bustled round to such good purpose that when her father returned to his meal she had it all cooked and ready to put on the table.

"That's a good maid," he said, encouragingly. "Why, you've grown a reg'lar handy little woman. You'll be a grand help to your poor mother."

"I do want to be," said Mona, but she did not feel as confident about it as her father did. "I'm going to have everything ready for her by the time she gets home."

"That's right, I shan't be home till morning, most likely, so you'll have to take care of her. She'll be fairly tired out, what with walking three miles in the sun, and then being rattled about in Mr. Lobb's old cart. The roads ain't fit for a horse to travel over."

"I should think she'd be here about six, shouldn't she, father?"

"Yes, that's about the old man's time, but there's no reckoning on him for certain. He may have to go a mile or more out of his way, just for one customer."

Apparently that was what he had to do that day, for six came and went, and seven o'clock had struck, and darkness had fallen before the cart drew up at Cliff Cottage, and Lucy clambered stiffly down from her hard, uncomfortable seat.

She was tired out and chilly, but at the sound of the wheels the cottage door was flung open, letting out a wide stream of cheerfulness, which made her heart glow and drove her weariness away. Inside, the home all was neat and cosy, the fire burned brightly, and the table was laid ready for a meal. Lucy drew a deep breath of happiness and relief.

"Oh, it is nice to get home again," she sighed contentedly, "and most of all to find someone waiting for you, Mona dear."

And Mona's heart danced with pleasure and happy pride. She felt well repaid for all she had done.

Chapter 5

When Mona woke the next morning she felt vaguely that something was missing. "Why it's the smell of the wallflowers!" she cried, after lying for some minutes wondering what it could be. But in her new desire to get dressed and downstairs early she did not give the matter another thought.

Lucy, coming down later, stepped to the door for a moment to breathe in the sunshine and sweet morning air. "Oh," she cried, and her voice rang out sharply, full of dismay, "Oh, Mona, come quick. Whatever has happened to our wallflowers! Why, look at them! They are all dead! Oh, the poor things! Someone must have pulled them up in sheer wickedness! Isn't it cruel? Isn't it shameful!"

Mona, rushing to the door to look, found Lucy on her knees by the dying plants, the tears dropping from her eyes. Only yesterday they were so happy and so beautiful, a rich carpet of brown, gold, tawny, and crimson, all glowing in the sunshine, and filling the air with their glorious scent—and now! Oh, it was pitiful, pitiful.

"I'll fill a tub with water and plunge them all in," cried Lucy, frantically collecting her poor favourites—then suddenly she dropped them. "No, no, I won't, I'll bury them out of sight. I could never give them new life. Oh, who could have been so wicked?"

Mona was standing beside her, white-faced and silent. At her mother's last question, she opened her lips for the first time. "I—I did it," she gasped in a horrified voice. "I—didn't know, I must have done it when I was weeding. Oh, mother, I am so sorry. What can I do—oh, what can I do!"

"You! Oh, Mona!" But at the sight of Mona's distress Lucy forgot her own.

"Never mind. It can't be helped. 'Twas an accident, of course, and no one can prevent accidents. Don't fret about it, dear. Of course, you wouldn't have hurt them if you'd known what you were doing!"

But her words failed to comfort Mona, for in her inmost heart she knew that she should have known better, that she could have helped it. It was just carelessness again.

"They wouldn't have lasted more than a week or two longer, I expect," added Lucy, consolingly, trying to comfort herself as well as Mona. "Now, we'll get this bed ready for the ten-weeks stocks. It will do the ground good to rest a bit. I daresay the stocks will be all the finer for it later on." But still Mona was not consoled.

"If I hadn't run away and left them to go and buy that hateful wreath," she was thinking. "If only I had remembered to press the earth tight round them again—if—if only I'd been more careful when I was weeding, and—if, if, if! It's all ifs with me!" Aloud, she said bitterly, "I only seem to do harm to everything I touch. I'd better give up! If I don't do anything, p'raps I shan't do mischief."

Lucy laughed. "Poor old Paddy," she cried. "Why, you couldn't live and not do anything. Every minute of your life you are doing something, and when you are doing what you call 'nothing' you will be doing mischief, if it's only in setting a bad example. And you can work splendidly if you like, Mona, and you *do* like, I know. I shan't forget for a long while how nice you'd got everything by the time I came home last night, and how early you got up this morning."

Mona's face brightened.

"You've got to learn to think, that's all, dear; and to remember to finish off one thing before you leave it to go to another. It's just the want of that that lies at the root of most of your trouble."

A sound of many feet hurrying along the street and of shouting voices made Lucy break off suddenly, and sent them both running to the gate.

"Boats are in sight, missis. Fine catch!" called one and another as they hurried along.

Lucy and Mona looked at each other with glad relief in their eyes. There had been no real cause for anxiety because the little fishing fleet had not been home at dawn, yet now they knew that they had been a little bit anxious, Lucy especially, and their pleasure was all the greater. For a moment Mona, in her excitement, was for following the rest to the quay where the fish would be landed. It was so exciting, such fun, to be in all the bustle of the unloading, and the selling—and to know that for a time, at any rate, money would not be scarce, and rent and food and firing would be secure.

Mona loved nothing better than such mornings as this—but her first step was her last. "I won't remember 'too late' this time," she said to

herself determinedly, and turning, she made her way quickly into the house. There would be more than enough to do to get ready. There would be hot water, dry clothes, and a hot breakfast to get for the tired, cold, famished father.

"Now you sit down, mother, and stoke the fire, I'll see to the rest," and for the next hour she flew around, doing one thing after another, and as deftly as a woman. She was so busy and so happy she forgot all about the beach and the busy scene there, the excitement, and the fun.

But before Lucy did any 'stoking' she went out with a rake and smoothed over the rough earth of the empty wallflower bed. "If it's looking tidy, perhaps he won't notice anything's wrong when he first comes home," she thought. "When he's less tired he'll be able to bear the disappointment better." She knew that if he missed his flowers one of his chief pleasures in his homecoming would be gone, and she almost dreaded to hear the sound of his footsteps because of the disappointment in store for him. Because she could not bear to see it, she stayed in the kitchen, and only Mona went out to meet him. Lucy heard his loved voice, hoarse and tired, but cheerful still. "Hullo, my girl!" he cried, "how's mother, and how 'ave 'ee got on? I was 'fraid she'd be troubling. Hullo! Why, what's happened to our wallflowers?"

At the sound of the dismay in his voice, Lucy had to go out. "Poor Mona," she thought, "it's hard on her! Why, father!" she cried brightly, standing in the doorway with a glad face and happy welcome. "We're so glad to see you at last. Make haste in, you must be tired to death, and cold through and through. Mona's got everything ready for you, as nice as can be. She's worked hard since we heard the boats were come. We've all got good appetites for our breakfast, I guess."

Then, in his pleasure at seeing his wife and child again, Peter Carne forgot all about his flowers. Putting his arms around them both, he gave them each a hearty kiss, and all went in together. "I ain't hardly fit to," he said, laughing, "but you're looking as fresh and sweet as two daisies this morning."

Diving his hand deep into his pocket, he drew out a handful of gold and silver. "Here, mother, here's something you'll be glad of! Now, Mona, my girl," as he dropped into his arm-chair, "where's my old slippers?"

Mona picked them up from the fender, where they had been warming, and, kneeling down, she pulled off his heavy boots. Once more she was filled with the feeling that if she could only do something to make up for the harm she had done she would not feel so bad.

"Thank'ee, little maid. Oh, it's good to be home again!" He leaned back and stretched his tired limbs with a sigh of deep content. "But I mustn't stop here, I must go and have a wash, and change into dry things before I have my breakfast. I can tell you, I'm more than a bit hungry. When I've had it I've got to go down and clean out the boat."

"Oh, not till you've had a few hours' sleep," coaxed Lucy. "You must have some rest, father. I've a good mind to turn the key on you."

Her husband laughed too. "There's no need for locks and keys to-day," he said, ruefully. "If I was to start out I believe I'd have to lie down in the road and have a nap before I got to the bottom of the street. I'll feel better when I've had a wash."

As he stumbled out of the kitchen Lucy picked up the coins lying on the table, and put them in a little locked box in the cupboard. Mona, coming back into the kitchen from putting her father's sea-boots away, saw that there seemed to be quite a large sum.

"Shall I have my new hat?" she wondered eagerly. "There's plenty of money now." But Lucy only said, "I'll have to get wool to make some new stockings for your father, and a jersey, and I'll have to go to Baymouth to get it. Mr. Tamlin doesn't keep the right sort. Can you knit stockings, Mona?"

"Ye—es, but I hate——" She drew herself up sharply. "Yes, I can, but I'd rather scrub, or sweep, or—or anything."

"Never mind, I'll make them. I'm fond of all that kind of work. I'll have to be quick about the jersey, for I see that one he's got on has a great hole in the elbow, and he's only got his best one besides. I'd better go to Baymouth on Wednesday. It won't do to put it off."

"I wish I could take you with me," she said to Mona regretfully when the Wednesday came, and she was getting ready to start. "I would, only your father thinks he'll be back about tea-time, and he'll need a hot meal when he comes. Never mind, dear, you shall go next time."

"Oh—h—that's all right." Mona tried to speak cheerfully, but neither face nor voice looked or sounded all right! The thought uppermost in her mind was that there was no chance of her having her new hat. Her mother could not get that unless she was there to try it on.

She saw her mother off, and she did try to be pleasant, but she could not help a little aggrieved feeling at her heart.

"Granny would have bought me one before now," she said to herself. She did really want not to have such thoughts. She still felt mean and uncomfortable about the wreath, and in her heart she knew that her step-mother was kinder to her than she deserved.

When she had done the few things she had to do, and had had her dinner, and changed her frock, she went out into the garden. It would be less lonely there, she thought, and she could weed the path a little. She would never touch one of the flower beds again! Before she had been out there long, Millie Higgins came down the hill. At the sight of Mona, Millie drew up. "So you ain't gone to Baymouth too?" she said, leaning over the low stone wall, and evidently prepared for a talk. "I saw your mother starting off. Why didn't she take you with her? You'd have liked to have gone, wouldn't you?"

"Yes," Mona admitted.

"Well, why didn't you?"

"Somebody had to be here to look after father. He'll be home before mother gets back."

Millie Higgins snorted sarcastically. "Very nice for some people to be able to go off and enjoy themselves and leave others to look after things for them! If I were you I'd say I'd like to go too."

Mona resented Millie's tone. A sense of fairness rose within her too. "If I'd said I wanted to go, I daresay I could have gone," she retorted coldly. "I'm going another time."

"Oh, are you? Well, that's all right as long as you are satisfied," meaningly. "Good-bye," and with a nod Millie took herself off. But before she had gone more than a few paces she was back again.

"Come on out and play for a bit, won't you?"

"I'd like to," Mona hesitated, "but I don't know for certain what time father'll get back."

"Well, I do! I know they won't be home yet awhile. They'll wait till the tide serves. Come along, Mona, you might as well come out and play for half an hour as stick moping here. You might spend all your life waiting about for the old boats to come in, and never have a bit of pleasure if you don't take it when you can. We'll go down to the quay, then you'll be able to see the boats coming. After they're in sight there'll be heaps of time to run home and get things ready."

The temptation was great, too great. Mona loved the quay, and the life and cheerfulness there. Towards evening all the children in the place congregated there, playing 'Last touch,' 'Hop-Scotch,' and all the rest of the games they loved, to a chorus of shouts, and screams, and laughter. Then there was the sea to look at too, so beautiful and grand, and awe-inspiring in the fading light. Oh, how dearly she loved it all!

In her ears Millie's words still rang: "You might spend all your life waiting about for the old boats, and never have a bit of pleasure, if you don't take it when you can."

"Wait a minute," she said eagerly, "I'll just put some coal on the fire and get my hat."

She banked up a good fire, unhung her hat, and, pulling the door after her, ran out to Millie again, "I'm ready now," she said excitedly.

When they arrived at the quay they received a very warm welcome; they were just in time to take part in a game of 'Prisoners.' After that they had one of 'Tip,' and one or two of 'Hop-Scotch,' then 'Prisoners' again; and how many more Mona could never remember, for she had lost count of time, and everything but the fun, until she was suddenly brought to her senses by a man's voice saying, "Well, it's time they were in, the clock struck seven ten minutes ago."

"Seven!" Mona was thunderstruck. "Did you say seven?" she gasped, and scarcely waiting for an answer she took to her heels and tore up the street to her home. Her mind was full of troubled thoughts. The fire would be out, the house all in darkness. She had only pulled the front door behind her, she had not locked it. Oh, dear! what a number of things she had left undone! What a muddle she had made of things. When, as she drew near the house, she saw a light shining from the kitchen window, her heart sank lower than ever it had done before.

"Father must have come! Oh! and me not there, and—and nothing ready. Oh, I wouldn't have had it happen for anything." She rushed up to the house so fast and burst into the kitchen so violently that her mother, who was sitting in her chair, apparently lost in thought, sprang up in alarm.

"Oh, Mona! it's you! You frightened me so, child. Where's your father," she asked anxiously. "Haven't you seen him?"

"No, he hasn't come yet."

Lucy's face grew as white as a lily. Her eyes were full of terror, which always haunted her. "P'raps he came home while you were out, and went out again when he found the house empty."

"He couldn't. I've been on the quay all the time. The boats couldn't have come in without my seeing them. I was waiting for him. Everybody was saying how late they were. They couldn't think why."

"Yes—they are dreadfully late—but I—I didn't think you'd have gone out and left the house while I was away," said Lucy with gentle reproach. "But, as you did, you should have locked the door behind you. I s'pose Mr. King called before you left?"

"He hasn't been," faltered Mona, her heart giving a great throb. She had entirely forgotten that the landlord's agent was coming for his rent that afternoon. "The money's on the dresser. I put it there."

"Is it? I couldn't see it. I looked for it at once when I found the door wide open and nobody here."

"Open! I shut it after me. I didn't lock it, but I pulled the door fast after me. You can't have looked in the right place, mother. I put it by the brown jug." And, never doubting but that her mother had overlooked it, Mona searched the dressers herself. But there was no money on them, not even a farthing for the baker. "But I put it there! I put it there myself!" she kept repeating more and more frantically. She got upon a chair and searched every inch of every shelf, and turned every jug and cup upside down. "It *must* be somewhere."

"Yes, somewhere! But it isn't here, and it isn't in Mr. King's pocket." Poor Lucy sank back in her chair looking ready to faint. Five shillings meant much to her. It was so horrible, too, to feel that a thief had been in, and had perhaps gone all over the house. Who could say what more he had taken, or what mischief he had done.

She was disappointed also in her trust in Mona, and she was tired and faint from want of food. All her pleasure in her day and in her homecoming was gone, changed to worry and weariness and disappointment.

"But who can have been so wicked as to take it!" cried Mona passionately. "Nobody had any right to open our door and come into our house. It's hard to think one can't go out for a few minutes but what somebody must come and act dishonest——"

"We can't talk about others not doing right if we don't do right ourselves! Your father and I left you here in charge, and you undertook the charge. We trusted you."

Mona got down from the chair. "It's very hard if I can't ever go anywhere—I only went for a little while. Millie said father wouldn't be here—the boats weren't in sight. And you see she was right! They are ever so late."

"Well, I suppose we are all made differently, but I couldn't have played games knowing that the boats ought to have been in, and not knowing what might have happened to my father."

"I get tired of always sticking around, waiting on the old boats. I never thought of there being any danger, they're so often late. It was only towards the end that people came down looking for them and wondering."

Lucy groaned. "Well, I'm thankful you don't suffer as I do, child. P'raps I'm foolish, but I'm terrified of the sea, and I never get accustomed

to the danger of it." And she looked so white and wan, Mona's heart was touched, and some of the sullenness died out of her face and voice.

"I never thought—there was only a little wind," she began, when a sharp rap at the door interrupted her, then the latch was raised, and the door opened briskly. "Boats are in sight, Mrs. Carne! and all's well!" cried a voice cheerfully, and old Job Maunders popped his grizzled head round the screen. "I thought you might be troubling, ma'am, so I just popped 'fore to tell 'ee. I'm off down to see if I can lend a hand."

And before Lucy could thank him, the kindly old man was hurrying away through the garden and down the street.

But what changed feelings he had left behind him! Tired though she was, Lucy was on her feet in a moment and her face radiant. "Come, dear, we've got to bustle round now for a bit. You run and get some sticks and make a good fire, and I'll get out his clean, dry things. Then while I'm cooking the supper you can be laying the cloth."

While she spoke she was gathering up a lot of parcels which were lying scattered over the table.

"I'm longing to show you what I've bought."

"Yes," thought Mona, "and I am longing to see!"

"I wonder if you'll like what I've chosen for you."

"I wonder, too!" thought Mona.

"We'll have a good look at everything when we've had supper. Then we needn't be hurrying and scurrying all the time, and there'll be more room."

In spite of the upset to her feelings, Mona was interested, but all real pleasure was gone. She knew that probably there was something for her in one of the fat parcels, but the thought of taking any more kindness from Lucy, to whom she had behaved so badly, was painful. She wanted, instead, to make amends to replace the lost five shillings. She longed to have the money to pay back, but she had not one penny! All she could do was to work, and to go without things she wanted. She could do the first better than the last, and she would rather. She did not really mind working, but she did mind denying herself things she had set her heart on. "But I will, I will," she thought to herself while the shock of the theft was still on her.

Before very long the fire was burning brightly, the kettle was beginning to sing, and Lucy was cooking the sausages and bacon she had brought back with her from Baymouth. The savoury smell of them wafted through the kitchen and reached the hungry, weary man trudging heavily up the garden. Then Mona caught the sound of his coming, and

rushed out, while Lucy stood behind her with radiant face and glowing eyes.

"You must be chilled to the bone, and dead beat," she cried. "Ain't you, father?"

"I thought I was—but I ain't now. It's worth everything just for the pleasure of coming back to a home like mine, my girl."

Chapter 6

Mona was growing more and more impatient. "Grown-ups do take so long over everything," she thought irritably. "If it gets much later mother will say, 'there isn't time to open the parcels to-night, we must wait till morning!' Oh, dear!"

It was long past eight before they had sat down to their meal, and then, her father and mother both being very tired, they took it in such a leisurely fashion that Mona thought they never would have finished. They, of course, were glad to sit still and talk of their day's doings, but Mona, as soon as her hunger was satisfied, was simply longing to be up and examining the contents of the tempting-looking parcels which had waited so long on the side-table.

She fidgeted with her knife and fork, she rattled her cup and shuffled her feet, but still her father went on describing his adventures, and still Lucy sat listening eagerly. To them this was the happiest and most restful time of the day. The day's work was done, duty would not call to them again until morning. The kitchen was warm and comfortable. It was just the right time for a leisurely talk, but Mona did not realise this.

At last, disturbed by her restlessness, her mother and father broke off their talk and got up from the table.

"Now you have a pipe, father, while Mona and I put away the supper things. After that I'll be able to sit down and hear the rest of it. I expect Mona's tired and wants to be off to bed."

"No, I am not," said Mona sharply. In her heart she grumbled, "Work, work, always work—never a bit of fun." She had forgotten the hours she had spent playing on the quay only a little while before. She would not remind her mother of the parcels, but sulked because she had forgotten them. Lucy looked at her anxiously now and again, puzzled to know why her mood had changed so suddenly. She was still puzzling over the matter, when, in putting something back on the side-table, she saw the pile of parcels.

"Why, Mona," she cried, "I'd forgot all about my shopping, and the things I was going to show you. Make haste and dry your hands and

come and look. We'll be able to have a nice, quiet little time now before we go to bed!"

Mona's face changed at once, and her whole manner too. It did not take her long after that to finish up and be ready.

"That," said Lucy, putting one big roll aside, "that's the blue wool for father. We needn't open that now. Oh, and this, is for you, dear," pushing a big box towards Mona. "I hope you will like it. I thought it sweetly pretty. Directly I saw it I thought to myself, now that'll just suit our Mona! I seemed to see you wearing it."

Mona's heart beat faster, her cheeks grew rosy with excitement. "Whatever can it be!" she wondered, and her fingers trembled so with eagerness, she was ever so long untying the string.

"If you don't like it," went on Lucy, busy untying the knots of another parcel, "Mr. Phillips promised he'd change it, if it wasn't damaged at all."

How tantalising Lucy was! Whatever could it be! Then at last the knot gave way, and Mona lifted the lid, and pushed the silver paper aside. "Oh, mother!" She clapped her hands in a rapture, her eyes sparkled with joy. "Oh, mother! It's—it's lovely. I didn't know, I didn't think you could get me a hat to-day—oh—h!"

"Then you like it?"

"It's lovely!"

"Try it on, and let us see if it suits you. That's the chief thing, isn't it?" Lucy tried to look grave, but she was nearly as excited and delighted as Mona herself.

Mona put it on and looked at her mother with shy questioning. She hoped so much that it did suit her, for she longed to keep it.

Lucy gazed at her critically from all sides, then she nodded with grave approval. "Yes, I never saw you in one that suited you better, to my mind. Go and see for yourself—but wait a minute," as Mona was hurrying away to the scullery, where hung a little mirror about a foot square. "Don't treat that poor box so badly," as she rescued it from the floor, "there's something else in amongst all that paper. Look again."

Mona opened the box again, but her heart had sunk suddenly. Yes, there it was, the very thing she had dreaded to see—a wreath of blue forget-me-nots and soft green leaves! There was a piece of black ribbon velvet too, to make the whole complete.

It was a charming wreath. Compared with it, her own purchase seemed poor and common.

Mona held it in her hand, gazing at it with lowered lids. Then suddenly her eyes filled with tears. "Oh, mother," she stammered brokenly.

There was such real pain in her voice that Lucy looked at her in anxious surprise. "Don't you like it?" she asked, disappointed. She had hoped for a rapturous outburst of pleasure, and, instead, Mona stood silent, embarrassed, evidently on the verge of tears.

"Don't you like it, dear?" she asked again. "I thought you would have been pleased. The blue on that silvery white straw looks so pretty, I think. Don't you?"

Mona nodded, but did not speak. "Mona, dear, what is it? Tell me what's wrong? I am sure there is something. Perhaps I can help you, if I know."

Tears had been near Mona's eyes for some moments, and the kindness in her mother's face and voice broke down all restraints. Tossing the hat one way and the wreath another, Mona ran into Lucy's arms, sobbing bitterly.

"Oh—I must tell. I can't keep it in any longer! Oh, mother, I've got a wreath already, I bought it myself, and I hate it—oh, I hate it! I—I can't tell you how bad I've felt about it ever since I got it!" And then the whole of the miserable story came pouring out. She kept nothing back. She told of her keeping the eighteenpence, of her dream, of her mortification in the shop. "And—and it seemed as if my dream came true," she said, when presently the worst was told. "I was so crazy for the forget-me-nots that I couldn't get, that I never thought anything of the wallflowers close beside me, and then, when I had got forget-me-nots, I was disappointed; and when I lost the wallflowers, I began to think all the world of them!"

Lucy, with her head resting against Mona's, as she held her in her arms, smiled sadly. "It's the same with all of us, dear. We're so busy looking into our neighbour's garden patch, envying them what they've got, that we don't see what we've got in our own, and, as like as not, trample it down with reaching up to look over the wall, and lose it altogether. Now, pick up your hat and your flowers and try to get all the pleasure you can out of them. I hoped they'd have brought you such a lot. Or would you rather change the wreath for another?"

But Mona would not hear of that. "Oh, no, I wanted blue forget-me-nots, and these are lovely. I'd rather have them than anything, thank you, mother."

"You couldn't have anything prettier," said Peter Carne, rousing suddenly from his nap.

Lucy laughed. "Now, father, whatever do you know about it! You go to sleep again. Mona and I are talking about finery." She was busy undoing a large parcel of drapery. "I've got the print here for your frocks," she

turned to Mona again. "I'd have liked to have had both dark blue, but I thought you might fancy a pink one, so I got stuff for one of each. There, do you like them?"

"Like them! Oh, mother, are they really both for me! And what pretty buttons! Are those for me, too?"

"Yes, it's all for you, dear." Lucy's voice had begun to sound tired and faint. She had had a long, wearying day, and the parcels had been heavy. Mona, though, did not notice anything. She was busy arranging the wreath round the crown of her hat. "If I only had a white dress, wouldn't it look nice with this! Oh, I'd love to have a white dress. If I'd stayed with granny, she was going to get me one this summer."

Her father turned and looked across at them. "What've you bought for yourself, Lucy, my girl?" he asked suddenly. Lucy looked up in surprise. "I—oh, I didn't want anything, father," she said, somewhat embarrassed. "I don't need anything new this summer. My dove-colour merino is as good as it was the day I bought it. It seems foolish to—to buy new when one doesn't need it," she added hastily. "It is only a trouble to keep."

"Do you mean the one you were married in?" asked Peter shrewdly.

Lucy nodded. "Yes—the one you liked. I'll get myself a new pair of gloves. I can get those at Tamlin's."

"Um!" There was a deal of meaning in Peter Carne's 'Um.' "Well, you'll never get one that's prettier, but you ought to have something new and nice, too. And what about your medicine?"

"Oh!" Lucy coloured. "Oh, I—I'm trying to do without it. It isn't good for anyone to be taking it too often."

"That's what granny always says," chimed in Mona. "She says if people get into the way of taking medicine they get to think they can't do without it."

Lucy's pale cheeks flushed pink, and a hurt look crept into her eyes. Her husband was deeply annoyed, and showed it. "I think, my girl," he said, in a sterner voice than Mona had ever heard before, "you'd better wait to offer your opinion until you are old enough to know what you are talking about. You are more than old enough, though, to know that it's wrong to repeat what's said before you. After all your mother's bought for you, too, I'd have thought," he broke off, for Mona's eyes were once more full of tears. Never in her life before had her father spoken to her so severely.

"I—I didn't mean any harm," she stammered, apologetically.

"Then you should learn to think, and not say things that may do harm. If what's on your tongue to say is likely to hurt anybody's feelings, or to

make mischief, then don't let it slip past your tongue. You'll get on if you keep that rule in your mind."

Lucy put her arm round her little stepdaughter, and drew her close. "I know that our Mona wouldn't hurt me wilfully," she said kindly. "She's got too warm a heart."

Peter Carne patted Mona's shoulder tenderly. "I know—I know she has. We've all got to learn and you can't know things unless they are pointed out to you. I'm always thankful to them that helped me in that way when I was young. Mona'll be glad, too, some day."

"Grown-ups always say things like that," thought Mona, wistfully. She did not feel at all glad then. In fact, she felt so ashamed and so mortified, she thought gladness could never enter into her life again.

It did come, though, for the hurt was not as deep as she thought. It came the next day when her mother trimmed the new hat. Lucy had good taste, and when living at the Grange she had often helped the young ladies with their millinery.

"If I put the velvet bow just where the wreath joins, and let the ends hang just ever so little over the edge of the brim, I think it'll look nice and a little bit out of the common. Don't you, dear?" She held up the hat to show off the effect. Mona thought it was lovely.

"Then, as soon as ever I can I'll cut out your dresses, and, if you'll help me with the housework, I'll make them myself. It won't take me so very long, with my machine."

She spoke of it so lightly that Mona did not realise in the least what the fatigue of it would be to her.

"Oh, I'll do everything," she said, cheerfully. "You leave everything to me, mother, and only do your sewing, I can manage."

And she did manage, and well, too, in the intervals of trying on, and admiring, and watching the frocks growing into shape and beauty under Lucy's hands. They were quite plain little frocks, but in Mona's eyes they were lovely. She could not decide which of them she liked best.

Lucy finished off the pink one first, and as soon as it was completed Mona took it upstairs and put it on. New dresses very seldom came her way, and she was in a great state of excitement. She had never in her life before had one that she might put on on a week day and wear all day long. As a rule, one had to wait for Sunday, and then the frock might only be worn for a few hours, if the weather was fine, and as soon as ever church and Sunday school were over it had to be changed.

"Doesn't it look nice!" she cried, delightedly, running downstairs to show her mother. "And it fits me like a glove!" Her cheeks were almost

as pink as her gown. Her blue eyes glowed with pleasure. She looked like a pretty pink blossom as she stood with the sunshine pouring in on her.

Lucy smiled at the compliment to her skill. "You do look nice, dear."

Holding out her crisp, pink skirt, Mona danced gaily round the kitchen, the breeze blowing in at the open door ruffled her hair a little. She drew herself up, breathless, and glanced out. Everything certainly looked very tempting out of doors. She longed to go and have a run, the breeze and the sunshine seemed to be calling her. She scarcely liked, though, to leave her mother, tired as she was, and still busy at the blue frock.

While she was standing looking out, her father appeared at the gate, a letter in his hand. He came up the path reading it. When he came to the porch he looked up and saw Mona.

"Oh, my! How smart we are!"

"Do you like it, father? Isn't it pretty?"

"Fine! And now I s'pose you're longing to go out and show it off!" He laughed, and pinched her cheeks. Mona felt quite guilty at his quick reading of her thoughts, but before she could reply he went on, more gravely, "I've got a letter from your grandmother. She sends her love to you." He went inside and put the letter down on the table before Lucy.

"She doesn't seem very well," he said, with a pucker on his brow, "and she complains of being lonely. I'm very glad she's got nice neighbours handy. They'd be sure to run in and see her, and look after her a bit if she's bad. I shouldn't like to feel she was ailing, and all alone."

Mona's face dropped, and her heart too. She felt horribly guilty. "Would Mrs. Lane go in and sit with her for company? Would she look after her if she was bad? Had they made up their quarrel?" she wondered, "or were they still not on speaking terms?" She did not know whether to tell her father of the quarrel or not, so she said nothing.

Lucy had been busy trying to frame an excuse for sending Mona out. She knew she was longing to go.

"Mona," she said, when at last they had finished discussing the letter and its contents, "would you like to go down to Mr. Henders' for some tea and sugar, and go on to Dr. Edwards for my medicine? He said it would be ready whenever anyone could come for it."

Mona beamed with pleasure. "I'll go and put on my hat and boots now this minute," and within ten she was ready, and walking, basket in hand, and very self-conscious, down the hill to the shops.

The church clock struck twelve as she reached the doctor's. In a few minutes the children would all be pouring out of school, and wouldn't they stare when they saw her! She felt almost shy at the thought of facing them, and gladly turned into Mr. Henders' out of their way. She would dawdle about in there, she told herself, until most of them had gone by.

She did dawdle about until Mrs. Henders asked her twice if there was anything more that she wanted, and, as she could not pretend that there was, she had to step out and face the world again. Fortunately, though, only the older and sedater girls were to be seen. Philippa Luxmore and Patty Row, each carrying her dinner bag, Winnie Maunders, and Kitty Johnson, and one or two Mona did not know to speak to.

Philippa and Patty always brought their dinner with them, as the school was rather far from their homes. Sometimes they had their meal in the schoolroom, but, if the weather was warm and dry, they liked best to eat it out of doors, down on the rocks, or in a field by the school.

When they caught sight of Mona they rushed up to her eagerly. "Oh, my! How nice you look, Mona. What a pretty frock! It's new, isn't it? Are you going to wear it every day or only on Sundays?"

"Oh, every day." Mona spoke in a lofty tone. "It's only one of my working frocks. I've got two. The other's a blue one. Mother's made them for me."

"Um! Your mother is good to you, Mona Carne! I wish I'd got frocks like that for working in. I'd be glad to have them for Sundays. Where are you going?"

"Home." "Oh, don't go home yet. Patty and me are going down to eat our dinner on the rocks. Come on down too. You won't hurt your frock."

"I don't think I can stay—I ought to go back. I've got mother's medicine here. It's getting on for dinner-time, too, and father's home to-day." Glancing up the road, she caught sight of Millie Higgins and another girl in the distance. She particularly did not want to meet Millie just then. She made such rude remarks, and she always fingered things so. Mona had not forgiven her either for leading her astray the day her mother went into Baymouth.

She hesitated a moment and was lost. She turned and walked away from her home. Philippa slipped her arm through hers on one side, and Patty on the other, and almost before she knew where she was she was racing with them to the shore.

The wind had risen somewhat, so it took them some minutes to find a nice sheltered spot in the sunshine and out of the wind, and they had to sit on the land side of the rocks, with their backs to the sea. It was very

pleasant, though, and, once settled, Mona told them all about her new hat, and they gave her a share of their dinner.

After that they told her of the new summer frocks they were to have, and the conversation grew so interesting and absorbing, they forgot everything else until the church clock struck two!

With a howl of dismay, they all sprang to their feet, and then they howled again, and even more loudly.

"Oh, Mona, look! The tide's right in! We'll have to get back through the fields, and, oh, shan't we be late!" Patty and Philippa began to scramble back as fast as ever they could. "Good-bye," they called over their shoulders. "Oh, Mona, look out for your basket, it's floating."

They could not have stayed to help her, but it did seem heartless of them to run away and leave her alone to manage as best she could. Mona looked about her helplessly, her heart sinking right down, down. The tide at that point had a way of creeping up gently, stealthily, and then, with one big swirl would rush right in and around the group of rocks on which she stood. If the wind was high and the sea at all rough, as likely as not it would sweep right over the rocks and back again with such force that anyone or anything on them was swept away with it. There was not wind enough to-day for that. At least, Mona herself was safe, but her basket!—already that was swamped with water. At the thought of the ruined tea and sugar her eyes filled. Her mother's medicine was in the basket too. She would save that! At any rate, she would feel less guilty and ashamed if she could take that back to her. She made a dash to seize the basket before the next wave caught it, slipped on the slimy rock, and fell face forward—and at the same moment she heard the crash of breaking glass. The medicine was mingling with the waves, the basket was riding out on the crest of them!

Poor Mona! At that minute the hardest heart would have felt sorry for her. Her dress was ruined, her hands were scraped and cut, her mother's tonic was gone! The misery which filled her heart was more than she could bear. "I can't go home!" she sobbed. "I can't, I never can any more." Big sobs shook her, tears poured down her cheeks. "I can't go home, I can't face them. Oh, what shall I do! What shall I do!" She looked down over her wet, green-slimed frock, so pretty and fresh but an hour ago, and her sobs broke out again. "I'll—I'll run away—they won't want me after this, but p'raps they'll be sorry for me when they miss me. Oh, I wish I'd never come, I wish I'd never met Phil and Patty—they'd no business to ask me to come with them—it was too bad of them. I wish I'd

gone straight home. If it hadn't been for Millie Higgins I should have, and all this would have been saved. Oh, what shall I do?"

As there was no one but a few gulls to advise her, she received no comfort, and had, after all, to settle the question for herself.

For a few moments all she did was to cry. Then, "I'll go to granny," she decided. "She'll be glad to have me, and she won't scold. Yes, I'll go to granny. Father and mother will be glad to be rid of me—I—I'm nothing but a trouble to them!" But, all the same, she felt so sorry for herself she could scarcely see where she was going for the tears which blinded her.

Chapter 7

Mona's first thought was to avoid being seen by anyone who would recognise her; her second—that she must keep out of sight as much as possible until her dress was dry, and her face less disfigured, for anyone meeting her now would stop her to enquire if she had met with an accident.

By keeping along the shore for some little distance it was possible to get out on to the high road to Milbrook, but it was not an easy path to travel. It meant continued climbing over rocks, ploughing through loose, soft sand, or heavy wet sand, clinging to the face of a cliff and scrambling along it, or wading through deep water.

What her new pink frock would be like by the time she reached the road Mona did not care to contemplate. "It will be ruined for ever—the first time of wearing, too," and a sob caught in her throat as she remembered how her mother had toiled to get the material, and then to make the dress. Now that she was losing her she realised how much she had grown to love her mother in the short time she had lived with her, and how good and kind Lucy had been. It never occurred to her that she was doubling her mother's trouble by running away in this cowardly fashion. Indeed, she would have been immensely surprised if anyone had hinted at such a thing. She was convinced that she was doing something very heroic and self-denying; and the more she hurt herself clambering over the rough roads, the more heroic and brave she thought herself. And when, at last, she stepped out on the high road, and realised that she had seven miles to walk to her grandmother's house, she thought herself bravest of all, a perfect heroine, in fact.

Already she was feeling hungry, for breakfast had been early, and Patty and Philippa had only been able to spare her a slice of bread and butter and a biscuit.

On she trudged, and on, and on. A distant clock struck three, and just at the same moment she passed a sign-post with 'Milbrook, 6 miles,' painted on one arm of it, and 'Seacombe, 1 mile,' on another.

"Then she had six long tiresome miles to walk before she could get a meal!" she thought. "If she did not get on faster than she was doing, it would be dark night before she reached Hillside Cottage, and granny would be gone to bed. She always went to bed as soon as daylight began to go. How frightened she would be at being called up to let Mona in!"

The thought quickened her steps a little, and she covered the next mile in good time. She ran down the hills, and trotted briskly along the level. She got on faster in that way, but she very soon felt too tired to continue. Her legs ached so badly she had no heart left for running. Now and again she leaned back against the hedge for a little rest, and oh, how she did wish that it was the blackberry season! She was starving, or felt as though she was.

By and by, when she had quite despaired of ever reaching granny's that night, she caught sight of a cart lumbering along in the distance, and a man sitting up in it driving. It was the first sight of a human being that she had seen since she started, and she welcomed it gladly. "Perhaps it's going my way, and will give me a lift." The thought so cheered her that she went back a little way to meet the cart. When she drew nearer she saw that it was a market cart, and that the driver was a kindly-looking elderly man. Every now and again he talked encouragingly to his horse to quicken its pace. Between whiles he sang snatches of a hymn in a loud, rolling bass.

As soon as he saw that Mona was waiting to speak to him, he stopped his singing and drew up the horse.

"Good evening, missie," he said civilly. "Are you wanting a lift?"

"Oh, please—I wondered if you would—I am so tired I can hardly walk."

"Um! Where were you thinking of going?"

"To Hillside——"

"Um! You've got a brave step to go yet. We're a good three miles from Hillside. Have 'ee come far?"

"From Seacombe," Mona admitted reluctantly.

"My word! It's a brave long walk for a young thing like you to take alone. Why, you wouldn't reach Hillside till after dark—not at the rate you could go. You look tired out already."

"I am," sighed Mona, pathetically.

"Here, jump up quick, or my old nag'll fall asleep, and I'll have the works of the world to wake un up again."

Mona laughed. "Thank you," she said, eyes and voice full of gratitude as she clambered up the wheel, and perched herself on the high, hard

seat beside her new friend. "I'm very much obliged to you, sir. I don't believe I'd ever have got there, walking all the way. I didn't know seven miles was so far."

"I don't believe you would. A mile seems like two when you ain't in good trim for it, and the more miles you walk, the longer they seem. Gee up, you old rogue you!" This to the horse, who, after much coaxing, had consented to move on again.

"I never felt so tired in all my life before," sighed Mona, in a voice so faint and weary that her companion looked at her sharply.

"Had any dinner?" he asked.

Mona shook her head. "No, I—I missed my dinner. I—I came away in a hurry."

"That's always a bad plan." He stooped down and pulled a straw bag towards him. "I couldn't eat all mine. My wife was too generous to me. P'raps you could help me out with it. I don't like to take any home—it kind of hurts my wife's feelings if I do. She thinks I'm ill, too. Can you finish up what's left?"

He unrolled a clean white cloth and laid it and its contents on Mona's lap.

"Could she!" Mona's eyes answered for her.

"Do you like bread and ham? It may be a trifle thick——"

"Oh!" gasped Mona, "I think bread and ham, *thick* bread and ham is nicer than anything else in the world!"

"Um! Peg away, then. And there's an orange, in case you're thirsty."

"Oh, you are kind!" cried Mona, gratefully. "And oh, I am so glad I met you, I don't believe I'd have got much further, I was feeling so faint."

"That was from want of food. Here, before you begin, hadn't you better put something about your shoulders. It's getting fresh now the sun's gone down, and when we get to the top of that hill we shall feel it. Have you got a coat, or a shawl, or something?"

"No, I haven't. I—I came away in a hurry—but I shall be all right. I don't mind the cold."

"I should think you were in too much of a hurry—to have forget your shawl, and your dinner, too. Wasn't there anybody to look after you, and see you started out properly?"

"No."

"You ain't an orphan, are you?"

"Oh, no, I've got a father and a stepmother——"

"Oh-h!" meaningly. "Is that the trouble?"

Mona fired up at once in defence of Lucy. "No, it isn't. She's just the same as my own mother. She's so kind to me—if she hadn't been so kind I—I wouldn't have minded so much. She sat up last night to—to finish making my frock for me." Her words caught in her throat, and she could say no more.

Her companion eyed first her disfigured face, and then her bedraggled frock. "It seems to have seen trouble since last night, don't it?" he remarked drily, and then the words and the sobs in Mona's throat poured out together.

"That's why—I—I'm here. I can't go home and show her what I've done. It was so pretty only this morning—and now——" Then bit by bit Mona poured forth her tale of woe into the ears of the kindly stranger, and Mr. Dodds sat and listened patiently, thoughtfully.

"And what about your poor father and mother and their feelings," he asked when Mona had done.

"Oh—oh—they'll be glad to be rid of me. They'll be better without me," said Mona, with the air and voice of a martyr.

"Um! If you're certain sure of that, all well and good, but wouldn't it have been better to have went back and asked them? It does seem a bit hard that they should be made to suffer more 'cause they've suffered so much already. They won't know but what you've been carried out to sea 'long with your poor mother's tonic."

Mona did not reply. In her inmost heart she knew that he was right, but she hadn't the courage to face the truth. It was easier, too, to go on than to go back, and granny would be glad to see her. She would be sorry for her, and would make much of her. Granny always thought that all she did was right.

In spite of her feelings, though, Mona finished her meal, and felt much better for it, but she presently grew so sleepy she could not talk and could scarcely keep on her seat. Mr. Dodds noticed the curly head sink down lower and lower, then start up again with a jerk, then droop again.

"Look here—what's your name, my dear?"

"Mona—Carne," said Mona, sleepily, quite oblivious of the fact that she had given away her identity.

"Well, Mona, what I was going to say was, you'll be tumbling off your seat and find yourself under the wheel before you know where you are; so I'd advise you to get behind there, and curl down into the straw. Then, if you draw my top-coat over you, you'll be safe and warm both."

Mona needed no second bidding. She almost tumbled into the clean, sweet-smelling straw. "Thank you," she was going to say, as she drew

the coat up over her, but she only got as far as 'thank,' and it seemed to her that before she could say 'you,' she was roused again by the cart drawing up, and there she was at her grandmother's gate, with granny standing on the doorstep peering out into the dimness. She thought she had closed her eyes for only a minute, and in that minute they had travelled three miles.

"Is that you, Mr. Dodds?" Granny called out sharply. "Whatever made 'ee come at this time of night? 'Tis time your poor 'orse was 'ome in his stable, and you in your own house!"

"I've come on purpose to bring you something very valuable, Mrs. Barnes. I've got a nice surprise for 'ee here in my cart. Now then, little maid, you've come to the end of your journey—and I've got a brave way to go."

Mona was still so sleepy that she had to be almost lifted out of the cart.

"What! Why! Mona!" Then, as Mona stumbled up the path she almost fell into her grandmother's arms. "What's the meaning of it? What are they thinking about to send 'ee back at this time of night! In another few minutes I'd have been gone to bed. I don't call it considerate at all."

"They don't know," stammered Mona. "I wasn't sent, I came. Oh, granny, don't ask about it now—let me get indoors and sit down. I'm so tired I can't stand. I'll tell you all about it tomorrow."

But tired though she was, she turned back and thanked her rescuer. "I'd have been sleeping under a hedge to-night, if it hadn't been for you," she said gratefully.

"Oh, what I did isn't anything," he said amiably. "'Tisn't worth speaking about. I don't doubt but what you'd do as much for me, if I wanted it. Good night, Mrs. Barnes. Take care of yourself, ma'am, it's a bit fresh to-night. Good night, little maid. Gee-up, Nettle, my son."

What he had done was a mere nothing, as he said. But what he did do before the night was over was a very big something. Between two and three hours later he was in Seacombe, and knocking at Peter Carne's door.

"I knew you'd be anxious, so I thought I'd just step along and let 'ee know that your little maid's all right," he said quietly, making no mention of the seven long miles he had tramped after he had fed and stabled his horse for the night.

"Anxious!" Lucy lay half fainting in her chair. Peter's face was white and drawn with the anguish of the last few hours. Neither of them could doubt any longer that Mona had been swept off the rock and out to sea. Nothing else could have kept her, they thought. Patty and Philippa had

told where they had last seen her, but it was four o'clock before they had come out of school and heard that she was missing. So the crowds clustering about the shore had never any hope of finding her alive.

Peter Carne almost fainted, too, with the relief the stranger's words brought him. The best he had dared to hope for when the knock came was the news that Mona's body had been washed in. The revulsion of feeling from despair to joy sent him reeling helpless into a chair.

Humphrey Dodds put out his arms and supported him gently. "I didn't know, I ought to have thought, and told 'ee more careful like."

"Where is she?" gasped Lucy.

"Safe with her grandmother—and there I'd let her bide for a bit, if I was you," he added, with a twinkle in his eye. "It'll do her good."

They tried to thank him, but words failed them both. They pressed him to stay the night, he must be so tired, and it was so late, but he refused. A walk was nothing to him, and he had to be at work by five the next morning. "But I wouldn't say 'no' to a bit of supper," he said, knowing quite well that they would all be better for some food.

Then, while Lucy got the meal ready, Peter went down to tell his good news, and send the weary searchers to their homes.

Over their supper Mr. Dodds told them of Mona's pitiful little confession. "It doesn't seem hardly fair to tell again what she told me, but I thought it might help you to understand how she came to be so foolish. It don't seem so bad when you know how it all came about."

When he had had his supper and a pipe, he started on his homeward way, with but the faintest chance of meeting anyone at that hour who could give him a lift over some of the long miles.

Little dreaming of the trouble she was causing, Mona, clad in one of her grandmother's huge, plain night-gowns, and rolled up in blankets, slept on the old sofa in the kitchen, as dreamlessly and placidly as though she hadn't a care on her mind.

Overhead, Grannie Barnes moaned and groaned, and tossed and heaved on her bed, but Mona slept on unconcerned and happy. Even the creaking of the stairs when granny came down in the morning did not rouse her. The first thing that she was conscious of was a hand shaking her by the shoulders, and a voice saying rather sharply, "Come, wake up. Don't you know that it's eight o'clock, and no fire lit, nor nothing! I thought I might have lain on a bit this morning, and you'd have brought me a cup of tea, knowing how bad I've been, and very far from well yet. You said you did it for your stepmother. It's a good thing I didn't wait any longer!"

Mona sat up and stretched, and rubbed her eyes. "Could this be granny talking? Granny, who had never expected anything of her!"

No one feels in the best of tempers when roused out of a beautiful sleep, and to be greeted by a scolding when least of all expecting it, does not make one feel more amiable.

"I was fast asleep," she mumbled, yawning. "I couldn't know the time if I was asleep. You should have called me." She dropped back on her pillow wearily. "Oh, I'm so tired and I am aching all over. I don't believe I'll ever wake up any more, granny. Why—why must I get up?"

"To do some work for once. I thought you might want some breakfast."

This was so unlike the indulgent granny she had known before she went away, that Mona could not help opening her eyes wide in surprise. Then she sat up, and, as granny did not relent, she put her feet over the edge of the sofa and began to think about dressing.

"What frock can I put on, granny?" It suddenly struck her that it would not be very pleasant to be living in one place while all her belongings were in another.

"The one you took off, I s'pose."

"But I can't. It isn't fit to wear till it has been washed and ironed. It wants mending, too. I tore it dreadfully."

"Um! And who do you think is going to do all that?"

Mona stared again at her granny with perplexed and anxious eyes. There used to be no question as to who would do all those things for her. "I don't know," she faltered.

"Well, I can't. I haven't hardly got the strength to stand and wash my own few things, and I'm much too bad to be starching and ironing frocks every few days. Better your stepmother had got you a good stuff one than such a thing as that. If she had, it wouldn't have been spoilt by your falling on the seaweed. Nonsense, I call it!" Granny drew back the curtains sharply, as though to give vent to her feelings. The perplexity in Mona's mind increased. She was troubled, too, by the marked change in her grandmother. In the bright morning light which now poured in, she noticed for the first time a great difference in her appearance as well as in her manner. She was much thinner than she used to be, and very pale. Her face had a drawn look, and her eyes seemed sunken. She seemed, somehow, to have shrunk in every way. Her expression used to be smiling and kindly. It was now peevish and irritable.

For the first time Mona realised that her grandmother had been very ill, and not merely complaining.

"I'll light the fire, granny, in a minute—I mean, I would if I knew what to put on."

"There's one of your very old frocks upstairs, hanging behind the door in your own room. It's shabby, and it's small for you, I expect, but you'll have to make it do, if you haven't got any other."

"It'll do for the time, till my pink one is fit to wear again."

"Yes—but who's going to make it fit? That's what I'd like to know. Can you do it yourself? I s'pose you'd have to if you was with your stepmother."

"No, I can't do it. Do you think Mrs. Lane would? I'd do something for her——"

Her grandmother turned to her with a look so full of anger that Mona's words died on her lips. For the moment she had forgotten all about the quarrel.

"Mrs. Lane! Mrs. Lane! After the things she said about you—you'd ask her to do you a favour? Well, Mona Carne, I'm ashamed of you! Don't you know that I've never spoken to her nor her husband since that day she said you'd pulled down the faggots that threw me down, and then had left her cats to bear the blame of it. I've never got over that fall, and I've never got over her saying that of you, and, ill though I've been, I've never demeaned myself by asking her to come in to see me. I don't know what you can be thinking of. I'm thankful I've got more self-respect."

Mona's face was crimson, and her eyes were full of shame. Oh, how bitterly she repented now that she had not had the courage to speak out that day and say honestly, "Granny, Mrs. Lane was right, I did pull over the faggots and forgot them. It was my fault that you tripped and fell—but I never meant that the blame should fall on anyone else."

She longed to say it now, but her tongue failed her. What had been such a little thing to start with had now grown quite serious.

When her father had wanted her to come home, he had consoled himself for taking her from granny by the thought that she had neighbours and friends about her for company, but now it seemed that she would rather die alone than ask their help, or even let them know that she was ill.

Mona turned despondently away, and slowly mounted the stairs. "If you do ever so little a thing wrong, it grows and grows until it's a big thing! Here's granny all alone, 'cause of me, and mother all alone, 'cause of me, and worrying herself finely by now, I expect, and—and I shouldn't wonder if it makes her ill again," Mona's eyes filled at the

thought, "and—and I never meant to be a bad girl. I—I seem to be one before I know it—it is hard lines."

She unhung her old frock from behind the door, and in the chest of drawers she found an old apron, "I shall begin to wonder soon if I've ever been away," she thought to herself, as she looked at herself in the tiny mirror.

"Puss, puss, puss," called a voice. "Come along, dears. Your breakfast is ready."

Mona stepped to the window and peeped out. Mrs. Lane was standing with a saucer of bread and milk in each hand. At the sound of her voice her two cats came racing up the garden, chattering as they went, and she gave them their meal out there in the sunshine. As she turned to go back to the house she glanced up at Granny Barnes', and at the window where Mona stood. Perhaps she had been attracted by the feeling that someone was looking at her, or she may have heard something of Mona's arrival the night before.

For a second a look of surprise crossed her face, and a half-smile—then as quickly as it came it vanished, and a look of cold disapproval took its place.

Mona felt snubbed and hurt. It was dreadful to have sunk so low in anyone's opinion. It was worse when it was in Mrs. Lane's, for they used to be such good friends, and Mrs. Lane was always so kind to her, and so patient, and, oh, how Mona had loved to go into her house to play with her kittens, or to listen to her stories, and look at the wonderful things Captain Lane had brought home with him from some of his voyages.

Captain Lane, who had been a sailor in the Merchant Service, had been to all parts of the world, and had brought home something from most.

Mona coloured hotly with the pain of the snub, and the reproof it conveyed.

"I can't bear it," she thought. "I can't bear it—I'll have to tell."

She went down to the kitchen in a very troubled state of mind. Life seemed very sad and difficult just now.

Granny was sitting by the fire, a few sticks in her hand. "It's taken me all this time to get these," she said pathetically, "and now I can't stoop any more. What time we shall get any breakfast I don't know, I'm sure, and I'm sinking for the want of something."

"I'll get you a cup of tea soon. I won't be any time." It cheered her a little to have something to do, and she clutched at anything that helped her not to think. She lighted the fire, swept the hearth up, and laid the cloth. Then she went out to sweep the doorstep. It was lovely outside in

the sweet sunshine. Mona felt she could have been so happy if only— While she was lingering over her task, Mrs. Lane came out to sweep her step and the tiled path, but this time she kept her head steadily turned away.

"I'll go right in and tell granny now this minute," thought Mona, her lip quivering with pain. "Then, perhaps, we'll all be friends again. I can't bear to live here like this."

But when she turned into the kitchen the kettle was boiling, and her grandmother was measuring the tea into the pot. "Get the loaf and the butter, child, I feel I can eat a bit of bread and butter this morning."

Mona got them, and the milk, and some more coal to make up the fire, and all the time she was saying over and over to herself different beginnings of her confession. She was so deeply absorbed in her thoughts that she did not notice the large slice of bread and butter that her grandmother had put on her plate.

"Don't you want it?" Granny asked sharply. "Why, how red you are, child! What have you been doing to make your colour like that. You haven't broken anything, have you?"

Her tone and her sharpness jarred on Mona cruelly, and put all her new resolutions to flight. "No, I haven't," she said, sullenly. "There wasn't anything to break but the broom, and you saw me put that right away."

Granny looked at her for a moment in silence. "Your manners haven't improved since you went home," she said severely. "If I'd spoken to my grandmother like that, I'd have been sent to bed."

A new difficulty opened before Mona's troubled mind. If she was rude, or idle, or disagreeable, the blame for it would fall upon Lucy, and that would be an injustice she could not bear. Now that she had lost her she realised how good Lucy had been to her, and how much she loved her. For her sake, she would do all she could to control her temper and her tongue.

She had coloured again—with indignation this time—hot words had sprung to her lips in defence of Lucy, but she closed them determinedly, and choked the words back again. She felt that she could say nothing; she felt, too, that Lucy would not wish her to say anything. She could not explain so as to make her granny understand that it was not Lucy's fault that she was rude and ill-tempered. It was by acts, not words, that she could serve Lucy best. And for her sake she *would* try. She would try her very hardest to control her temper and her tongue. The determination brought some comfort to her poor troubled heart. At any rate, she would be doing something that Lucy would be glad about.

Her confession, though, remained unspoken.

Chapter 8

Mona did try to be good, she tried hard, but she was very, very unhappy. She missed her home, she missed Lucy, and her father, and her freedom. She longed, too, with an intolerable longing, for the sight and the sound of the sea. She had never, till now that she had lost them, realised how dearly she loved the quaint little steep and rambling village, with the sea at its foot, and the hills behind it. She was always homesick.

Perhaps if she had been sent to Hillside, and it had been her plain duty to live there, and nowhere else, she might have felt more happy and settled. Or, if granny had been the same indulgent, sympathetic granny as of old, but she had placed herself where she was by her own foolish, unkind act, which she now bitterly repented; and she was there with a cloud resting on her character and motives. She had shown herself ungrateful and unkind; she had played a coward's part, and had bitterly pained her father and Lucy.

They did not reproach her—she would have felt better had they done so— but she knew. And, after all, granny did not want her, or so it seemed!

Mona did not realise that her grandmother was really seriously unwell, and that her irritability she could not help. Mrs. Barnes did not know it herself. Mona only realised that she was almost always cross, that nothing pleased her, that she never ran and fetched and carried, as she used to do, while Mona sat by the fire and read. It was granny who sat by the fire now. She did not read, though. She said her eyes pained her, and her head ached too much. She did not sew, either. She just sat idly by the fire and moped and dozed, or roused herself to grumble at something or other.

The day after she came to Hillside, Mona had written to her mother. She told her where she was, and why, and tried to say that she was sorry, but no reply had come, and this troubled her greatly.

"Were they too angry with her to have anything more to say to her? Was Lucy ill?"

Every day she went to meet the postman, her heart throbbing with eager anxiety, and day after day she went back disappointed. If it had not been for very shame, she would have run away again and gone home, and have asked to be forgiven, but she could not make up her mind to do that. Probably they would not want her at home again, after all the trouble and expense she had been to them. Perhaps her father might even send her back to Hillside again. The shame of that would be unbearable!

She was uncomfortable, too, as well as unhappy. She wanted her clothes, her brush and comb, her books, and all her other belongings. She had, after a fashion, settled into her old room again, but it seemed bare and unhomelike after her pretty one at Cliff Cottage.

Then one day, after long waiting and longing, and hope and disappointment, her father came. For a moment her heart had leaped with the glad wild hope that he had come to take her back with him. Then the sight of the box and parcel he carried had dashed it down again. He had brought her all her possessions.

"Well, Mona," he said quietly, as she stood facing him, shy and embarrassed. "So you prefer Hillside to Seacombe! Well, it's always best to be where you're happiest, if you feel free to make your choice. For my own part, I couldn't live away from the sea, but tastes differ."

"But—mine—don't differ," stammered Mona. "I am not happier." She was so overcome she could hardly speak above a whisper, and her father had already turned to Mrs. Barnes.

"Well, mother," he cried, and poor Mona could not help noticing how much more kindly his voice sounded when he spoke to granny. "How are you? You don't look first rate. Don't 'ee feel up to the mark?" He spoke lightly, but his eyes, as they studied the old woman's face, were full of surprise and concern. Granny shook her head. "No, I ain't well," she said, dully. "I'm very, very far from well. I don't know what's the matter. P'raps 'tis the weather."

"The weather's grand. It's bootiful enough to set everybody dancing," said her son-in-law cheerfully, but still eyeing her with that same look of concern.

"P'raps 'tis old age, then. I'm getting on, of course. It's only what I ought to expect; but I seem to feel old all of a sudden; everything's a burden to me. I can't do my work as I used, and I can't walk, and I can't get used to doing nothing I'm ashamed for you to see the place as it is, Peter if I'd known you was coming I'd have made an effort——"

"That's just why I didn't tell 'ee, mother. I came unexpected on purpose, 'cause I didn't want 'ee to be scrubbing the place from the chimney pots down to the rain-water barrel. I know what you are, you see."

Poor old Granny Barnes smiled, but Mona felt hurt. She did her best to keep the house clean and tidy, and she thought it was looking as nice as nice could be. "What I was, you mean," said granny. "I don't seem to have the strength to scrub anything now-a-days."

"Oh, well, there's no need for 'ee to. You've got Mona to do that kind of thing for 'ee."

Mona's heart sank even lower. "Then he really had no thought of having her home again!"

"I've brought your clothes, Mona," he said, turning again to her. "Lucy was troubled that they hadn't been sent before. She thought you must be wanting them."

"Thank you," said Mona, dully, and could think of nothing more to say, though she knew her father waited for an answer.

"I've brought 'ee some fish, mother," picking up the basket. "It come in last night. I thought you might fancy a bit, and Lucy sent a bit of bacon, her own curing, and a jelly, or something of that sort." Granny's face brightened. Though she had not approved of Mona's being given a step-mother, she appreciated Lucy's kindness, and when they presently sat down to dinner and she had some of the jelly, she appreciated it still more. Her appetite had needed coaxing, but there had been nothing to coax it with. "It tempts anyone to eat," she remarked, graciously. "When one is out of sorts, one fancies something out of the common."

"Lucy'll be rare and pleased to think you could take a bit," said Peter, delighted for Lucy's sake.

"Yes, thank you. She's made it very nice. A trifle sour, perhaps, but I like things rather sharpish."

"Mother," said Peter suddenly, "I wish you'd come to Seacombe to live. It'd be nice to have you near." His eyes had been constantly wandering to his mother-in-law's face, and always with the same anxious look. The change in her since last he had seen her troubled him greatly. Her round cheeks had fallen in, her old rosiness had given place to a grey pallor. She stooped very much and looked shrunken too.

"Oh, granny, do!" cried Mona, eagerly. It was almost the first time she had spoken, but the mere suggestion filled her with overwhelming joy and relief.

"Then I could look in pretty often to see how you was, and bring you in a bit of fresh fish as often as you would care to have it. Lucy would

take a delight, too, in making 'ee that sort of thing," nodding towards the jelly, "or anything else you fancied. We'd be at hand, too, to help 'ee if you wasn't very well."

Granny Barnes was touched, and when she looked up there were tears in her eyes. The prospect was tempting. She had felt very forlorn and old, and helpless lately. She had often felt too that she would like:

"A little petting At life's setting."

"It's good of you to think of it, Peter," she said, hesitatingly. Then, fearing that he might have spoken on the impulse of the moment, and that she was showing herself too anxious for his help and Lucy's, she drew herself up. "But—well, this is *home*, and I don't fancy I could settle down in a strange place, and amongst strangers, at my time of life."

"You'd be with those that are all you've got belonging to you in this world," said Peter. But granny's mood had changed. She would not listen to any more coaxing, and her son-in-law, seeming to understand her, changed the subject.

Poor Mona, who did not understand so well, felt only vexed and impatient with the poor perverse old woman, for not falling in at once with a plan so delightful to herself. Mona learned to understand as time went on, but she was too young yet.

"But, granny, it would be ever so much nicer than this dull old place, and—and you'd have mother as well as me to look after you. I like Seacombe ever so much better than Hillside. Why won't you go, granny?"

Peter Carne groaned. Mona, by her tactlessness, was setting her grandmother dead against such a plan, and undoing all the good he had done. Granny Barnes would never be driven into taking a step, but she would see things in her own time and in her own way, if she felt that no one was trying to force her. He held up his hand for silence.

"Your grandmother knows best what'll suit her. It isn't what you like, it's what's best for her that we've all got to think about."

But granny's anger had been roused. "It may be a dull old place, but it's home," she said sharply. "You can't understand what that means. You don't seem to have any particular feeling or you wouldn't be so ready to leave first one and then the other, without even a heartache. I wonder sometimes, Mona, if you've got any heart. Perhaps it's best that you shouldn't have; you're saved a lot of pain." Granny began to whimper a little, to her son-in-law's great distress. "Anyway, you were ready

enough to run to the 'dull old place' when you were in trouble," she added, reproachfully, and Mona had no answer.

She got up from the table, and, collecting the dishes together, carried them to the scullery. "Oh, dear!" she sighed, irritably, "I seem to be always hurting somebody—and somebody's always hurting me. I'd better go about with my mouth fastened up—even then I s'pose I'd be always doing something wrong. People are easily offended, it's something dreadful."

She felt very much aggrieved. So much aggrieved that she gave only sullen words and looks, and never once enquired for Lucy, or sent her a message, or even hinted at being sorry for what she had done.

"She didn't send any message to me," she muttered to herself, excusingly. "She never sent her love, or—or anything, so why should I send a message to her?" She worked herself up into such a fine state of righteous anger that she almost persuaded herself that her behaviour had been all that it should be, and that she was the most misunderstood and ill-treated person in the whole wide world.

In spite, though, of her being so perfect, she felt miserably unhappy, as she lay awake in the darkness, and thought over the day's happenings. She saw again her father's look of distress as she snapped at her grandmother, and answered him so sulkily. She pictured him, too, walking away down the road towards home, without even a smile from her, and only a curt, sullen, good-bye! Oh, how she wished now that she had run after him and kissed him, and begged him to forgive her.

A big sob broke from her as she pictured him tramping those long lonely miles, his kind face so grave and pained, his heart so full of disappointment in her.

"Oh how hateful he will think me—and I am, I am, and I can't tell him I don't really mean to be," and then her tears burst forth, and she cried, and cried until all the bitterness and selfishness were washed from her heart, and only gentler feelings were left.

As she lay tired out, thinking over the past, and the future, a curious, long cry broke the stillness of the night.

"The owl," she said to herself. "I do wish he'd go away from here. He always frightens me with his miserable noise." She snuggled more closely into her pillow, and drew the bedclothes up over her ear. "I'll try to go to sleep, then I shan't hear him."

But, in spite of her efforts, the cry reached her again and again. "It can't be the owl," she said at last, sitting up in bed, the better to listen. "It sounds more like a person! Who can it be?"

Again the cry came, "Mo—na! Mo—o—na!"

"Why, it's somebody calling me. It must be granny! Oh, dear! Whatever can be the matter, to make her call like that."

Shaking all over with fear, she scrambled out of bed, and groped her way to the door. As she opened it the cry reached her again.

"Mo—na!" This time there could be no doubt about it. It came from her grandmother's room.

"I'm coming!" she called loudly. "All right, granny, I'm coming." She ran across the landing, guided by the lights shining through the chinks in her grandmother's door.

"What's the matter?—are you feeling bad, granny? Do you want something?"

"Yes, I'm feeling very bad. I'm ill, I'm very ill—oh, dear, oh dear, what shall I do? Oh, I've no one to come and do anything for me. Oh, dear, oh what can I do?" Granny's groans were dreadful. Mona felt frightened and helpless. She had not the least idea what to do or say. What did grown-ups do at times like this? she wondered. She did not know where, or how, her grandmother suffered, and if she had she would not have known how to act.

"Do you want me to fetch the doctor? I'll go and put on my clothes. I won't be more than a minute or two, then I'll come back again——"

"No—no, I can't be left alone all the time, I might die—here, alone; oh dear, oh dear, what a plight to be left in! Not a living creature to come to me—but a child! Oh, how bad I do feel!"

"But I must do something, or call somebody," cried Mona desperately. She had never seen serious illness before, and she was frightened. Poor old Mrs. Barnes had always been a bad patient, and difficult to manage, even when her ailments were only trifling; now that she really felt ill, she had lost all control.

"Granny," said Mona, growing desperate. "I must get someone to come and help us, you must have the doctor, and I can't leave you alone, I am going to ask Mrs. Lane to come, I can't help it—I can't do anything else. I'll slip on my shoes and stockings, I won't be more than a minute."

Granny Barnes stopped moaning, and raised herself on her elbow. "You'll do no such thing," she gasped.

"But granny, I must—you must have help, and you must have somebody to go for the doctor, and—and, oh, granny, I'm afraid to be here alone, I don't know what to do, and you're looking so bad."

"Am I?" nervously. "Well—if I've got to die alone and helpless, I will, but I won't ask Mrs. Lane to come to me. Do you think I'd—ask a favour

of her, after all her unneighbourliness—not speaking to me for weeks and weeks——"

Mona burst into tears, confession had to come. "Granny," she said, dropping on her knees beside the bed. "I—I've got to tell you something—Mrs. Lane was right——"

"What!" Granny's face grew whiter, but she said no more. If she had done so, if she had but spoken kindly and helped her ever so little, it would have made things much easier for poor Mona.

"I—I—it was me that pulled the faggots down that night, and not Mrs. Lane's cats, and she won't look, or speak to me because I didn't tell, and I let her cats bear the blame. I—I didn't mean to do any harm, I was in such a hurry to light up the fire, and the old things all rolled down, and I forgot to go out and pick them up again. I didn't think you'd be going out there that night, but you went out, and—and fell over them. If you hadn't gone out it would have been all right, I'd have seen them in the morning and have picked them up."

But Granny Barnes was not prepared to listen to excuses, she was very, very angry. "And fine and foolish you've made me look all this time, Mona Carne, and risked my life too. For bad as I was a little while back, I wouldn't bring myself to ask Mrs. Lane to come to me, nor Cap'en Lane to go and fetch the doctor, and—and if I'd died, well, you know who would have been to blame!"

Granny's cheeks were crimson now, and she was panting with exhaustion. "Now what you've got to do is—to go in—and tell her the truth yourself."

"I'm going," said Mona, the tears streaming down her face. But as she hurried to the door, the sight of her, looking so childlike and forlorn in her nightgown, with her tumbled hair and tear-stained face, touched her grandmother's heart, and softened her anger.

"Mona," she cried, "come back—never mind about it now, child——" But Mona was already in her own room tugging on her shoes and stockings. Granny heard her come out and make her way stumbling down the stairs; she tried to call again, but reaction had set in, and she lay panting, exhausted, unable to do anything but listen. She heard Mona pulling back the heavy wooden bolt of the front door, then she heard her footsteps hurrying through the garden, growing more distant, then nearer as she went up Mrs. Lane's path. Then came the noise of her knocking at Mrs. Lane's door, first gently, then louder, and louder still—and then the exhausted, over-excited old woman fainted, and knew no more.

Mona, standing in the dark at Mrs. Lane's door, was trembling all over. Even her voice trembled. When Mrs. Lane at last opened her window and called out "Who's there?" it shook so, she could not make herself heard until she had spoken three times.

"It's me—Mona Carne. Oh, Mrs. Lane, I'm so frightened! Granny's very ill, please will you—come in?—I—I don't know what to do for her."

"Mona Carne! Oh!" Mona heard the surprise in Mrs. Lane's voice, and feared she was going to refuse her. Then "Wait a minute," she said, "I'll come down."

Mona's tears stopped, but she still trembled. Help was coming to granny—but she still had her confession to make, and it seemed such an awful ordeal to face. All the time she stood waiting there under the stars, with the scent of the flowers about her, she was wondering desperately how she could begin, what she could say, and how excuse herself.

She was still absorbed, and still had not come to any decision, when the door behind her opened, and a voice said kindly, "Come inside, Mona, and tell me what is the matter," and Mona stepped from the starlit night into the warm, dimly lighted kitchen, and found herself face to face with her old kind friend.

"Now, tell me all about it," said Mrs. Lane again catching sight of Mona's frightened, disfigured face. "Why, how you are trembling, child, have you had a shock? Were you in bed?"

Mona nodded. "Yes, I'd been in bed a good while when I heard a cry, such a funny kind of cry! At first I thought it must be the owl, but when I heard it again and again I thought it must be granny, and I got up and went to her. And, oh, I was frightened, she was lying all crumpled up in the bed, and she was groaning something dreadful. She was very ill, she said, and she must have the doctor—but she wouldn't let me go to fetch him, 'cause she was afraid to be left alone. I was frightened to be there by myself, and I didn't know what to do for her and I said I'd run in and ask you to come—but she said she'd rather die—she said I mustn't because—because—oh you know," gasped Mona, breathless after her outpouring of words, "and—and then—I—told her—about—about that—that 'twas me pulled down the faggots, and you were right, and she looked—oh she looked dreadful, she was so angry! And then I came in to tell you; and, oh Mrs. Lane, I am so sorry I behaved so, I—I never meant to, I never meant Tom and Daisy to have the blame. And, please Mrs. Lane, will you forgive me, and speak to me again? I've been so—so mis'rubble, and I didn't know how to set things right again." But here Mona's voice failed her altogether, and, worn out with the day's events,

and the night's alarm, and all the agitation and trouble both had brought, she broke down completely. Mrs. Lane was quite distressed by the violence of her sobs.

"There, there, don't cry so, child, and don't worry any more," she said gently, putting her arm affectionately round Mona's shaking shoulders, "It's all over now! and we are all going to be as happy and friendly again as ever we used to be. Mona, dear, I am so glad, so thankful that you have spoken. It hurt me to think that I had been deceived in you, but I know now that you were my own little Mona all the time. There, dear, don't cry any more; we must think about poor granny. Come along, we will see what we can do to help her."

They stepped out into the starlit night, hand in hand, and though her grandmother's illness filled Mona with anxiety, she felt as though a heavy care had been lifted from her heart, a meanness from her soul; and, as she hurried through the scented gardens, she lifted up her face to the starry sky, and her heart to the God who looked down on her through Heaven's eyes.

In the house, when they reached it, all was as she had left it, except that now a deep, deep silence reigned; a silence that, somehow, struck a chill to both hearts.

"How quiet it is! She was making such a noise before," Mona whispered, hesitating nervously at the foot of the stairs.

"I expect she has fallen asleep, I'll go up first and see; you light the lamp in the kitchen, and bring me up a glass of cold water. Or would you rather come with me?"

"I—I will come with you." She could not rid herself of the feeling that her granny was dead—had died angry with her, at the last. She felt sure of it, too, when she saw her lying so still and white on her pillow.

Mrs. Lane placed her hand over the tired, faintly-beating heart. "She is only faint," she said assuringly, a note of intense relief in her voice. "She is coming round. Run and fetch me some water, dear, and open that window as you pass."

So granny, when she presently opened her eyes and looked about her, found Mona on one side of her and her old friend on the other; and both were looking at her with tender anxious eyes, and faces full of gladness at her recovery.

The old feud was as dead as though it had never existed.

"It's like going to sleep in a world of worries and waking up in a new one." The poor old soul sighed contentedly, as she lay with the stars looking in on her, and the scent of the flowers wafting up to her through

the open window. "It was too bad, though, to be calling you up in the night—out of your bed. I'm very much obliged to you, Mrs. Lane, I—I'm very glad to see you."

"Not as glad as I am to come, I reckon," her neighbour smiled back at her, "we are all going to start afresh again from to-day, ain't we? So it's as well to begin the day early, and make it as long as we can!"

Chapter 9

Granny was much better, and was downstairs again, but she was weak and very helpless still. She was sad too, and depressed. The last few weeks had shaken her confidence in herself, her spirit was strong enough still, but more than once lately her body had failed her. When, in her old way, she had said that she would do this, or that, or the other thing, she had found out after all, that she could not. Her body had absolutely refused to obey her.

"I ain't dependent on other folks yet!" she had said sharply, and had afterwards found out that she was, and the discovery alarmed her. It saddened her, and broke her spirit.

"I ought to be in a home. I'd rather be in one, or—or be dead, than be a burden on other folks," she moaned.

Granny was very hard to live with in those days. Even a grown-up would have found it difficult to know what to say in answer to her complainings.

"Granny, don't talk like that!" Mona would plead, and she would work harder than ever that there might be nothing for granny to do, or to find fault with. But however hard she worked, and however nice she kept things, she always found that there were still some things left undone, and that those were the very things that, in granny's opinion, mattered most.

As for reading, or play-time, Mona never found any for either now, and oh, how often and how longingly her thoughts turned to the Quay, and to the rocks, and the games that were going on there evening after evening! Sometimes it almost seemed that she could hear the laughter and the calls, the voice of the sea, the rattle of the oars in the rowlocks, the cries of the gulls, and then she would feel as though she could not bear to be away from them all another moment. That she must race back to them then and there; never, never to leave them any more!

The loneliness, and the hard work, and the confinement to the house told on her. She became thin, the colour died out of her cheeks, and the gladness from her eyes, and all the life and joyousness seemed to go out

of her. She grew, and grew rapidly, but she stooped so much she did not look as tall as she really was.

Granny Barnes, looking at her sweeping out the path one day, had her eyes suddenly opened, and the revelation startled her. She did not say anything to Mona, she just watched her carefully, but she did not again blame her for laziness; and while she watched her, her thoughts travelled backwards. A year ago Mona had been noisy, lively, careless, but cheerful, always full of some new idea. She had been round and rosy too, and full of mischief. Now she was listless, quiet, and apparently interested in nothing.

"Have you got a headache, Mona?"

"No," said Mona indifferently, "I don't think so."

"Is your back aching?"

"It always is."

"Then why didn't you say so, child?"

"What's the good? The work has to be done."

"If you're bad you must leave it undone. You can't go making yourself ill."

"I ain't ill, and I'd sooner do the work. There's nothing else to do."

"Can't you read sometimes? You used to be so fond of reading."

"If I read I forget to do things, and then——" She was going to say "there's a row," but she stopped herself just in time. "I've read all my books till I know them by heart nearly." Even while she spoke she was getting out the ironing cloth, and spreading it on the table. The irons were already hot on the stove.

Granny Barnes did not say any more, but sat for a long time gazing into the fire, apparently deep in thought. Mona looking up presently, attracted by the silence, was struck by her weary, drooping look, by the sadness of the tired old eyes. But she did not say anything. Presently granny roused herself and looked up. "Put away your ironing, child," she said kindly, "and go out and have a game of play. The air will do you good."

"I don't want to go out, granny. There's no one to play with—and I'm afraid to leave you; what could you do if you were to faint again?"

Granny sighed. The child was right. "I—I could knock in to Mrs. Lane, perhaps," she said, but there was doubt in her voice, and she did not press Mona any further.

Mona went on with her ironing, and granny went on staring into the fire, and neither spoke again for some time. Not until Mona, going over

to take up a fresh hot iron, saw something bright shining on her grandmother's cheek, then fall on to her hand.

"Are you feeling bad again, granny?" she asked anxiously. The sight of the tear touched her, and brought a note of sympathy into her voice, and the sympathy in her voice in turn touched her granny, and drew both together.

"No—I don't know that I'm feeling worse than usual, but—but, well I feel that it'd be a good thing if my time was ended. I'm only a trouble and a burden now—no more help for anybody."

"Granny! Granny! You mustn't say such things!" Mona dropped her iron back on the stove again, and threw herself on the floor beside her grandmother. "You mustn't talk like that! You're weak, that's all. You want to rest for a bit and have some tonics. Mrs. Lane says so."

"Does she? I seem to want something," leaning her weary head against Mona's, "but it's more than tonics—it's a new body that I'm needing, I reckon. I daresay it's only foolishness, but sometimes I feel like a little child, I want to be took care of, and someone to make much of me, and say like mother used to, 'Now leave everything to me. I'll see to it all!' It seems to me one wants a bit of petting when one comes to the end of one's life, as much as one does at the beginning—I don't know but what a little is good for one at any age."

Mona slipped down till she sat on the floor at her granny's feet, her head resting against granny's knee. "I think so too," she said wistfully. Silence fell between them, broken only by the crackling of the fire within and the buzz of insects, and the calling of the birds, outside in the garden.

"Mona, how would you like it if we went into Seacombe to live?"

Mona was up in a moment, her face alight with eagerness, but some instinct stopped her from expressing too much delight. In the softened feeling which had crept into her heart, she realised that to her grandmother the move would mean a great wrench.

"She must love Hillside as much, or *nearly* as much as I love Seacombe," she told herself. Aloud she said, "I'd like it, but you wouldn't, would you, granny?"

"I think I would. I'd like to be nearer your father, and—and you would be happy there, and perhaps you'd feel stronger. I'm getting to feel," she added after a little pause, "that one can be happy anywhere, if those about one are happy. Or, to put it another way, one can't be happy anywhere if those about one ain't happy."

Mona felt very guilty. "Granny," she said, but in rather a choky voice, "I'll be happy here, if you'd rather stay here—I will really. I do love Hill-side—it's only the sea I miss, and the fun, and—and the excitement when the boats come in—but I shall forget all about it soon, and I'll be happy here too, if you'd like to stay."

She did try to put aside her own feelings, and speak cheerfully, and she succeeded—but, to her surprise, her grandmother did not jump at her offer.

"No, child, I wouldn't rather stay. I'd like to go. I feel I want to be near my own, and your father and you are all I've got. I think I'll ask him if he can find a little house that'll suit us."

"Won't you live with us, granny? You can have my room."

But granny would not hear of that. "I've always had a home of my own, and I couldn't live in anybody else's," she said decisively. "Your stepmother's too much of an invalid herself too, to be able to look after another."

"Then you'd want me to live with you?" asked Mona, with a little break in her voice. She was disappointed, but she tried not to show it.

"Yes, dearie," her eyes scanning Mona's face wistfully, "wouldn't you like that?"

Mona hesitated for only a second, then "Yes, granny, I should," she said, and then as the idea became more familiar, she said more heartily, "Yes, I'd love to, and oh, granny, if we could only get one of the little houses down by the Quay it would be lovely! I'm sure you'd like it——"

"I couldn't live down by the Quay," granny interrupted sharply, "I wouldn't live there if a house was given me rent free. It is too noisy, for one thing, and you feel every breath of wind that blows."

"But you're close, when the boats come in——"

"Aye, and when they don't come in," said granny. "I ain't so fond of the sea as you are, and I should never know any rest of mind down close by it. Every time the wind blew I'd be terrified."

Mona looked vexed. "It isn't often that there's any place at all to let," she said crossly. "If we don't take what we can get, we shall never go at all."

But Granny Barnes was not alarmed. "Don't you trouble yourself about that. Your father'll find us something for certain. He'd got his eye on a little place when he was here, he wanted me to take it then. I almost wish I had, now. Never mind, I'll write to him to-night or to-morrow. If I was well I would go in by John Darbie's van and have a look about for myself."

All this sounded so much like business, that Mona sat up, all her glumness falling from her. When Granny Barnes once made up her mind to do a thing, she did not let the grass grow under her feet. There was, after all, much of Mona's nature in her, and when once she had made up her mind to leave her old home, it almost seemed as though she could not get away quickly enough.

Perhaps it was that she felt her courage might fail her if she gave herself much time to think about things. Perhaps she felt she could not face the pain and the worry if she gave herself time to worry much. Or, it may have been that she really did feel anxious about Mona's health and her own, and wanted to be settled in Seacombe as soon as possible.

At any rate she so managed that within a fortnight all her belongings were mounted on to two of Mr. Dodd's waggons and were carried off to the new home, while she and Mona followed in John Darbie's van, seen off by Mrs. Lane. Mrs. Lane was very tearful and sad at parting with them.

"I know it's for the best for both of you—but I feel as if I can't bear the sight nor the thought of the empty home." Then she kissed them both, and stood in the road in the sunshine, waving her hand to them till they were out of sight.

"Wave your handkerchief to her, Mona; blow another kiss to her, child." But granny kept her own head turned away, and her eyes fixed on the bit of white dusty road which lay ahead of them. Neither could she bear the sight of the empty house, nor of the neighbour she was leaving.

Mona's eyes were full of tears, but granny's were dry, though her sorrow was much deeper than Mona's. John Darbie tactfully kept his tongue quiet, and his eyes fixed on the scenery. He understood that his old friend was suffering, and would want to be left alone for a while. So, for the first part of the way, they jogged along in silence, except for the scrunching of the gravel beneath the wheels, and the steady thud, thud of the old horse's hoofs, Granny Barnes looking forward with sad stern eyes, and a heart full of dread; Mona looking back through tears, but with hope in her heart; the old driver staring thoughtfully before him at the familiar way, along which he had driven so many, old and young; happy and sad, some willing, some unwilling, some hopeful, others despondent. The old man felt for each and all of them, and helped them on their way, as far as he might travel it with them, and sent many a kind thought after them, which they never knew of.

"I suppose," he said at last, speaking his thoughts aloud, "in every change we can find some happiness. There's always something we can do for somebody. So far as I can see, there's good to be got out of most things."

Mrs. Barnes' gaze came back from the wide-stretching scene beside her, and rested enquiringly on the old speaker. "Do 'ee think so?" she asked eagerly. "'Tis dreadful to be filled with doubts about what you're doing," she added pathetically.

"Don't 'ee doubt, ma'am. Once you've weighed the matter and looked at it every way, and have at last made up your mind, don't you let yourself harbour any doubts. Act as if you hadn't got any choice, and go straight ahead."

"But how is anyone to know? It may be that one took the way 'cause it was the easiest."

"Very often it's the easiest way 'cause it's the way the Lord has opened for us," said the old man simply, and with perfect faith. "Then I count it we're doubting Him if we go on questioning."

The look of strained anxiety in Granny Barnes' eyes had already given way to one more peaceful and contented.

"I hadn't thought of that," she said softly, and presently she added, "It takes a load off one's mind if one looks at it that way."

Mona, who had been listening too, found John Darbie's words repeating themselves over and over again in her mind. "There's always something we can do—there's good to be got out of most things." They set themselves to the rhythm of the old horse's slow steps—"There is always something—there is always something—we can do—we can do, there is always something we can do."

Throughout that long, slow journey on that sunshiny day they rang in her head, and her heart chanted them. And though in the years that followed she often forgot her good resolutions, and many and many a time did wrong and foolish things, knowing them to be wrong and foolish, though she let herself be swayed by her moods, when she should have fought against them, she never entirely forgot old John Darbie's simple, comforting words, nor the lesson they had taught her that day, and unconsciously they helped her on her life's road, just as he himself helped her along her road to her new home.

There was indeed a great deal that she could do, as she discovered presently, when the van deposited them and their parcels at the door of their new home, for the furniture had arrived but a couple of hours earlier, and though her father and the man had lifted most of the heavier

things into their places, and Lucy had done all that she could to make the little house look habitable, there was much that Mona, knowing her grandmother's ways as well as she did, could do better than anyone else.

As soon as the van drew near, Lucy was at the door to greet them, and in the warmth and pleasure of her welcome, Mona entirely forgot the circumstances under which they had last parted: and it never once occurred to her to think how different their meeting might have been had Lucy not been of the sweet-tempered forgiving nature that she was.

Lucy had forgotten too. She only remembered how glad she was to have them there, and what a trying day it must have been for poor old Granny Barnes. And when, instead of the stern, cold, complaining old woman that she had expected, she saw a fragile, pale-faced little figure, standing looking forlorn, weary, and half-frightened on the path outside her new home, Lucy quite forgot her dread of her, and her whole heart went out in sympathy.

Putting her arms round her, she kissed her as warmly as though it had been her own mother, and led her tenderly into the house.

"Don't you trouble about a single thing more, granny, there are plenty of us to see to everything. The fire is burning, and your own armchair is put by it, and all you've got to do is to sit there till you're rested and tell us others what you'd like done."

Granny Barnes did not speak, but Lucy understood. She took up the poker and stirred the coals to a more cheerful blaze. "It's a fine little stove to burn," she said cheerfully, "and it is as easy as possible to light."

Granny was interested at once, "Is it? How beautiful and bright it is. Did you do that, Lucy?"

Lucy nodded. "I love polishing up a stove," she said with a smile, "it repays you so for the trouble you take. Don't you think so?"

"Yes, I used to spend hours over mine, but I don't seem to have the strength now. Mona does very well though. Where's Peter? Out fishing?"

"No, he's upstairs putting up your bed. He has nearly done. Mona's is up already. You've got a sweet little room, Mona. You'll love it, I know."

Mona ran upstairs at once to inspect. She was bubbling over with excitement and happiness. Her room was, she knew, at the back of the house, so she went to it straight. It was in a great muddle, of course, but the bed was in place, and the chest of drawers. The walls had been newly papered, the paper had little bunches of field daisies all over it, white and red-tipped, each bunch was tied with a blade of green grass. Mona thought it perfectly exquisite, but it was the window which took her fancy captive. It was a lattice window, cut deep in the wall, and before it

was a seat wide enough for Mona to sit in—and beyond the window was the sea!

"I'll be able to sit there, and read, and sew, and watch the boats going by," she thought delightedly, "and I'll have little muslin curtains tied back with ribbons, and a flounce of muslin across the top. Oh, I shall love it up here! I shall never want to go out. It's nicer even than my room at father's, and ever so much nicer than the 'Hillside' one!"

A sound of hammering and banging came from the other side of the tiny landing.

"That must be father, putting up granny's bed," she hurried out, and across to him. He had just finished, and was pushing the bed into place. Two great bundles tied up in sheets filled up most of the rest of the floor. One held Granny Barnes' feather-tie, the other her pillow-cases, sheets and blankets.

"I do hope your grandmother'll be well and comfortable here," he said anxiously, "and happy. If it rests with us to make her so, she shall be. Mona, you'd better make up her bed soon. Don't leave it for her to do herself. She'll most likely be glad to go to bed early to-night, she must be tired. There's no moving round the room, either, with those great bundles there. I'll lift the feather-tie on to the bed for you."

"All right—in a minute, father."

Granny's bedroom window looked out on the hill. Further up the hill, on the opposite side, was Cliff Cottage. It could be just seen from granny's new home. How small and strange it all looked, thought Mona, and how narrow the hill was, but how homelike and beautiful.

While she gazed out Millie Higgins and Philippa Luxmore appeared, they were coming down the hill together. Millie had on a pink dress almost exactly like Mona's.

"Why—why, she's copied me!" thought Mona indignantly, a wave of hot anger surging up in her heart. "She's a regular copy-cat! She can't think of a thing for herself, but directly anyone else has it, she must go and copy them. I'd be ashamed if I was her. Now I shan't like my pink frock any more!"

As though attracted by the gaze on her, Millie looked up at the window, and straight into Mona's eyes, but instead of feeling any shame, she only laughed. She may not have remembered her own frock, or Mona's, she was probably not laughing at Mona's annoyance, it is very likely that she was amused at something she and Philippa were talking about, but Mona thought otherwise, and only glared back at her with angry, contemptuous eyes. She saw Millie's face change, and saw her whisper in

Philippa's ear, then she heard them both laugh, and her heart was fuller than ever of hatred, and mortification. Mortification with herself partly, for allowing Millie to see that she was vexed.

Oh, how she wished now, that instead of letting Millie see how she had annoyed her, she had acted as though she did not notice, or did not mind.

"Mona, give me a hand here a minute, will you?" Her father's voice broke in on her musings, "that rope is caught round the bedpost."

Mona went over, and released the rope, but returned again to the window.

"If you don't bustle round, little maid, we shall never be done," said her father. "I want to get it all as right as I can before I go, or your grandmother'll be doing it herself, and making herself ill again. You can look out of window another day, there'll be plenty of time for that."

"I'm tired," grumbled Mona sulkily, "I can't be always working."

Her father straightened his back, and looked at her. His eyes were reproachful and grieved. Mona's own eyes fell before them. Already she was sorry that she had spoken so. She did not feel in the least as she had said she did. She was put out about Millie, and Millie's frock, that was all.

"Mona, my girl," he said gravely, "you put me in mind of a weather-cock in a shifty wind. Nobody can tell for half an hour together what quarter it'll be pointing to. 'Tis the shifty wind that does the most mischief and is hardest to bear with. When you came in just now, I'd have said you were pointing straight south, but a few minutes later you've veered right round to the north-east. What's the meaning of it, child? What's the matter with 'ee. It doesn't give 'ee much pleasure to know you're spoiling everybody else's, does it?"

Mona gulped down her tears. "No—o, I—I—it was Millie Higgins' fault. She's been and got a dress——" And then she suddenly felt ashamed of herself, and ashamed to repeat anything so petty, and she gulped again, and this time she swallowed her bad temper too. "No—I'm—I'm 'set fair' now, father!" she added, and, though there was a choke in her voice, as though her temper was rather hard to swallow, there was a smile in her eyes, and in a very little while granny's feather-bed was shaken up as soft and smooth as ever granny herself could have made it, and the bed was made up. And then by degrees everything in the room was got into place just as its mistress liked it, so that when granny came up later on and saw her new room, she exclaimed aloud in pleased surprise:

"Why, it looks like home already," she cried, "and that's our Mona's doing, I know!"

Chapter 10

Mona sat reading, curled upon the window seat in her bedroom. She spent a great deal of her time there. Sometimes sewing, but more often either reading, or looking out at the view. For a few days she had been busy making curtains for her window, and a frill to go across the top, and, as granny had firmly refused to buy wide pink ribbon to fasten back the curtains, Mona had hemmed long strips of some of the print left over from her own pink dress.

But all this was done now, and Mona was very proud of her handiwork. The frill was a little deeper on one side than the other, but that was a trifle. Mona thought that the whole effect was very smart; so smart, indeed, that she sometimes wished that her window was in the front of the house, so that people going up and down the hill might see it. "But I s'pose one can't have everything," she concluded, with a sigh.

Granny's window, which did look out on the hill, was anything but smart, for she had had neither time nor strength to make her curtains, and Mona had not offered to make them for her.

Granny had gone up to Lucy's that very afternoon, and taken them with her, hoping to work at them a little while she talked. She often went up to sit with Lucy. Perhaps she found it dull at home, with Mona always shut up in her own room. Lucy's garden delighted her too. She had none herself that could compare with it. In the front there was a tiny patch close under her window, and there was a long strip at the back, but only a very few things had the courage to grow there, for the wind caught it, and the salt sea-spray came up over it, and blighted every speck of green that had the courage to put its head out. Lucy's garden and Lucy's kitchen both delighted her. She said the kitchen was more cheerful than hers, but it was really Lucy's presence that made it so. Lucy was always so pleased to see her, so ready to listen to her stories, or to tell her own, if granny was too tired to talk. She always listened to her advice, too, which was quite a new experience to Mrs. Barnes.

This afternoon, while granny was talking, and taking a stitch occasionally, Lucy picked up the other curtain and made it. It was not a very big

matter; all the windows in Seacombe houses were small. Then she put on the kettle, and while it was boiling she took the other curtain from granny's frail hand and worked away at that too. The weather was hot, and the door stood wide open, letting in the mingled scents of the many sweet flowers which filled every foot of the garden. A sweet-brier bush stood near the window, great clumps of stocks, mignonette and verbenas lined the path to the gate.

"I didn't mean to stay to tea," said granny, realizing at last that Lucy was preparing some for her. "I was going to get home in time."

"Mona won't have got it, will she?"

"Oh, no, she won't think about it, I expect. She has got a book, and when she's reading she's lost to everything. I never knew a child so fond of reading."

"You spoil her, granny! You let her have her own way too much."

Then they both laughed, for each accused the other of 'spoiling' Mona.

"I don't like her to work too hard," said granny. "She'd got to look very thin and delicate. I think she's looking better, though, don't you?"

"Yes, ever so much," Lucy reassured her, and granny's face brightened.

Mona, meanwhile, went on reading, lost, as granny said, to everything but her book. She did not even look out to sea. She heard no sound either in the house or out. Heart and mind she was with the people of the story. She was living their life.

The baker came and knocked two or three times; then, opening the door, put a loaf on the table, and went away. Then presently came more knocking, and more, but none of it reached Mona's brain. She was flying with the heroine, and enjoying hairbreadth escapes, while running away from her wicked guardian, when her bedroom door was flung open, and Millie Higgins—not the wicked guardian—appeared on the threshold.

Mona gave a little cry of alarm, then immediately grew angry with herself for having let Millie see that she had startled her.

"What are you doing up here?" she demanded, bluntly. "Who told you to come up? Granny isn't in, is she?"

Millie laughed. "If your grandmother had been in I should have been at the other end of the street by this time. I've no fancy for facing dragons in their caves."

"Don't be rude," retorted Mona, colouring with anger. Millie always laughed at Mrs. Barnes, because she was old-fashioned in her dress and ways. "How did you get in, and why did you come? If granny didn't send you up, you'd no right to come. It's like your cheek, Millie Higgins, to go forcing your way into other people's houses!"

"It's like your carelessness to shut yourself up with a story-book and leave your front door open. I ain't the first that has been in! Wouldn't your grandmother be pleased if she knew how trustworthy her dear, good little Mona was."

Mona looked frightened, and Millie noticed it. "What do you mean, Millie?"

Millie had seen the baker come, knock, open the door, and leave again after depositing a loaf on the table. She had also seen Mrs. Barnes comfortably settled in Lucy Carne's kitchen, and she determined to have some fun. She loved teasing and annoying everyone she could.

"Come down and see what they've done. At any rate, you might be civil to anyone who comes in to warn you before any more harm is done."

Mona, still looking alarmed, slipped from the window-seat and followed Millie down the stairs.

While she stood at the foot of them, glancing about her anxiously, Millie stepped over and shut the house door.

"Where?—What?—I don't see anything wrong," said Mona. Millie burst into mocking laughter. "I don't suppose you do! Silly-billy, cock-a-dilly, how's your mother, little Mona! Why, how stupid you are! Anyone can get a rise out of you! I only wanted to frighten you and get you downstairs. You're going to ask me to tea now, and give me a nice one, too, aren't you?"

Mona was trembling with mortification and anger. "No, I am not," she said, "and if you don't go out of here in a minute I'll—I'll——"

"Oh, no—you won't, dear. You couldn't if you wanted to—but you don't really want to, I know. Now poke up the fire and get me some tea. I hope you have something nice to eat."

Mona stood by the dressers, her thoughts flying wildly through her brain. What could she do? Millie was taller, older, and stronger than herself, so she could not seize her, and put her out by force. Mona knew, too, that she would not listen to pleading or to coaxing.

"Oh, if only someone would come!" She made a move towards the door, but Millie was too quick for her, and got between her and it.

"Millie, you've got to go away. You'll get me into an awful row if you are found here, and—and I can't think how you can push yourself in where you ain't wanted."

"Oh, fie! Little girls shouldn't be rude—it shows they haven't been properly brought up."

Mona did not answer. She was trying to think what she could do. If she went out of the house would Millie follow?

Millie picked up a newspaper, and pretended to read it, but over the top of it she was watching Mona all the time. She loved teasing, and she thought she had power to make younger girls do just as she wished. But Mona stood leaning against the dressers, showing no sign of giving in.

Millie grew impatient. "Wake up, can't you!" she cried, and, picking up a cushion from an armchair beside her, she threw it across the room at Mona. "I want my tea!"

The cushion flew past Mona without touching her, but it fell full crash against the china on the dressers behind her. Mona screamed, and tried to catch what she could of the falling things. Cups, plate, jugs came rolling down on the top of those below. What could one pair of small hands do to save them!

The set, a tea-set, and her grandmother's most treasured possession, had been kept for a hundred years without a chip or a crack. It had been her grandmother's and her great-grandmother's before that.

Mona, white to the lips, and trembling, stood like an image of despair. Her hands were cut, but she did not notice that. Millie was pale, too, and really frightened, though she tried to brazen it out. "Now there'll be a fine old row, and you will be in it, Mona Carne. It was all your fault, you know."

But Mona felt no fear for herself yet. She could think of nothing but her grandmother's grief when she learned of the calamity which had befallen her. Somebody had to break the news to her, too, and that somebody would have to be herself. Mona leaned her elbows on the dressers amongst the broken china and, burying her face in her hands, burst into a torrent of tears.

Millie spoke to her once or twice, but Mona could not reply. "Well, if she won't open her lips, I might as well go," thought Millie, and, creeping out of the front door, she hurried away down the hill, only too delighted to have got away so easily.

Mona heard her go, but made no effort to stop her. She felt too utterly miserable even to reproach her.

Presently other footsteps came to the door, followed by a gentle knocking. Mona, in consternation, straightened herself and wiped her eyes. "Who can it be? I can't go to the door like this!" Her face was crimson, and her eyes were nearly closed, they were so swelled.

The knock was repeated. "Mona, may I come in?" It was Patty Row's voice. Mona was fond of Patty, and she had begun to long for sympathy and advice.

"Cub id," she called out as well as she could. "Cub id, Paddy." Patty opened the door. "What a dreadful cold you've got," she said, sympathetically. "I've just seen your grandmother, and she asked me to tell you she's having tea with Lucy." Mona turned and faced her.

"Why!—Why! Mona! Oh, my! Whatever is the matter?"

Mona's tears began again, nearly preventing her explanation. "Millie Higgins came in, and—and got teasing me, and—and——"

"I've just seen her hurrying home," cried Patty. "I thought she came out from here. What has she done, Mona? She's always bullying somebody."

"She—she threw the cushion at me, 'cause—'cause I didn't get her some tea, and—oh, Patty, what shall I do?—just look at what she has done. That tea-set was more than a hundred years old, and—and granny thinks the world of it—and I've got to tell her." Mona's voice rose to a pitiful wail. "Oh, my. I wish—I wish I was dead. I wish——"

"That'd only be another great trouble for her to bear," said wise little Patty, soberly. "Millie ought to tell her, of course. It's her doing. P'raps that is where she has gone."

Mona shook her head. She had no hope of Millie's doing that.

"Well," said Patty, in her determined little way, "if she doesn't it shan't be for want of being told that she ought to."

"She'll never do it," said Mona, hopelessly. "I'll have to bear the blame. I can't sneak on Millie, and—and so granny'll always think I did it."

Patty pursed up her pretty lips. "Will she?" she thought to herself. "She won't if I can help it," but she did not say so aloud. "Let's sort it out, and see how much really is broken," she said, lifting off the fatal cushion. "P'raps it isn't as bad as it looks."

Mona shook her head despondently. "It sounded as if every bit was smashed. There's one cup in half, and a plate with a piece out—no, those jugs were common ones, they don't matter so much," as Patty picked up a couple, one with its handle off, the other all in pieces. "Here's a cup without any handle—oh, poor granny, it'll break her heart, and—and she'll never forgive me. I don't see how she can. Oh, Patty! Did anybody in all the world ever have such a trouble before?"

"I shouldn't be surprised," said Patty. "There, that's the lot, Mona. It's bad enough, but not so bad as it seemed at first. There's two cups, a plate, and a saucer of the set broken. Two jugs, a basin, and a plate of the common things."

She put the broken bits of the tea-set on the table, and began to arrange what was left on the dressers, so as to conceal the painful gaps. "There, it doesn't look so dreadful now. What had we better do next, Mona?"

Mona turned away and dropped into granny's big chair. "I—I've got to tell her, that's what I'd better do next!" she cried. She flung her arms out on the table, and buried her face in them, sobbing aloud in her misery.

Patty, alarmed at her grief, went over and put her arms around her shaking shoulders. "Mona!—Mona, dear, don't cry so. You'll be ill. I'll go and tell Mrs. Barnes about it, and—and I'll tell her it wasn't your fault."

A slight sound made them both look towards the door—and they saw that there was no longer any need for anyone to break the news. Granny Barnes knew it already.

For what seemed to the two girls minutes and minutes, no one uttered a word. Granny with wide eyes and stricken face, stood staring at her broken treasures, and the two girls stared at granny. All three faces were tragic. At last she came slowly forward, and took up one of the broken pieces. Her poor old hands were shaking uncontrollably.

Mona sprang to her, and flung her arms about her. "Oh, granny, granny, what can I do? It—was an accident—I mean, I couldn't help it. Oh, I'd sooner anything had happened to me than to your tea-set."

Patty Row slipped out of the house, and gently closed the door behind her. She had meant to stay and speak up for Mona, but something told her that there would be no need for that.

Poor Mrs. Barnes dropped heavily into her seat. "I wouldn't then, dear. There's worse disasters than—than broken china."

Mona's sobs ceased abruptly. She was so astonished at her grandmother's manner of taking her trouble, she could scarcely believe her senses. "But I—I thought you prized it so, granny—above everything?"

"So I did," said granny, pathetically. "I think I prized it too much, but when you get old, child, and—and the end of life's journey is in sight, you—you—well, somehow, these things don't seem to matter so much. 'Tis you will be the loser, dearie. When I'm gone the things will be yours. I've had a good many years with my old treasures for company, so I can't complain."

Mona stood looking at her grandmother with a dawning fear on her face. "Granny, you ain't ill, are you? You don't feel bad, do you?"

Mrs. Barnes shook her head. "No, I ain't ill, only a bit tired. It's just that the things that used to matter don't seem to, now, and those that—that,

well, those that did seem to me to come second, they matter most—they seem to be the only ones that matter at all."

Patty Row had done well to go away and leave the two alone just then. Granny, with a new sense of peace resting on her, which even the loss of her cherished treasures could not disturb, and Mona, with a strange seriousness, a foreboding of coming trouble on her, which awakened her heart to a new sympathy.

"Why, child, how you must have cried to swell your eyes up like that." Granny, rousing herself at last out of a day-dream, for the first time noticed poor Mona's face. "Isn't your head aching?"

"Oh, dreadfully," sighed Mona, realizing for the first time how acute the pain was.

"Didn't I see Patty here when I came in? Where has she gone?"

"I don't know."

"Patty didn't break the things, did she?"

"Oh, no."

"Did she tell you what she came about?"

"To tell me you were having tea with mother."

"But there was more than that. She came to ask if you'd go to Sunday School with her on Sunday. Her teacher told her to ask you. You used to go, didn't you? Why have you given it up?"

Mona nodded, but she coloured a little. "I thought the girls—all knew about—about my running away."

"I don't think they do—but I don't see that that matters. You'd like to go again, wouldn't you?"

"Yes, I'd like to go with Patty. Miss Lester's her teacher, and they've got a library belonging to their class. You can have a book every week to bring home." Mona's face grew quite bright, but a faint shadow had crept over granny's.

"You read a lot, Mona. So many stories and things ain't good for you. Do you ever read your Bible?"

Mona looked surprised. "N—no. I haven't got it here. It's up at Lucy's."

Mrs. Barnes groaned. "Oh, child, to think of our not having a Bible in the house between us!"

"There's the Fam'ly Bible back there," said Mona, quickly, feeling suddenly that a house without a Bible in it was not safe.

"Yes—but it's never opened, not even to look at the pictures. If you had one in every room in the house you wouldn't be any the better for it if you never read them, and—and acted 'pon what you're taught there."

"But if you can't see to read," said Mona, trying to find excuses, "what's the good of your having a Bible?"

"But you can see, and can read too, and I could till lately, and, anyway, you can read to me, and that's what I ought to have got you to do. I feel I haven't done my duty by you, child."

Mona threw up her head. "I don't s'pose we're any worse than some that read their Bibles every day," she said, complacently. She had often heard others say that, and thought it rather fine.

"That's not for you or me to say," retorted granny sternly. "That's the excuse folks always bring out when they ain't ashamed of themselves, but ought to be. If we ain't any worse, we ain't any better, and until we are we've no right to speak of others; and if we are—why, we shouldn't think of doing so. Most folks, though, who say that, do think themselves a deal better than others, though they don't say so in as many words."

Mona stood staring into the fire, thinking matters over. She was very apt to take things to herself, and she was trying to assure herself that she never did think herself better than others—not better even than Millie Higgins. But she was not very well satisfied with the result.

Granny's voice died away, the sun went down, and the room began to grow dim. Two lumps of coal fell together, and, bursting into a blaze, roused Mona from her reverie. She turned quickly, and found her grandmother gazing at the two halves of the broken tea-cup which she held in her hands. In the light of the fire tears glistened on her cheeks.

Mona felt a sudden great longing to comfort her, to make life happier for her. "Granny, would you have liked me to have read some of my books to you sometimes?"

"Very much, dearie. I always loved a nice story."

"Oh—why ever didn't you say so before." The words broke from Mona like a cry of reproach. "I didn't know, I never thought—I thought you'd think them silly or—or—something."

"I know—it wasn't your fault. Sometimes I think it'd be better if we asked more of each other, and didn't try to be so independent. It's those that you do most for that you care most for—and miss most when they're gone!" added granny, half under her breath.

Once again Mona was struck by the curious change in granny's tone and manner, and felt a depressing sense of foreboding.

"Would you like me to read to you now, granny? Out of—of the Bible?" She hesitated, as though shy of even speaking the name.

"Yes, dearie, I'd dearly love to hear the 86th Psalm."

Mona hurriedly lifted the big book out from under the mats and odds and ends that were arranged on its side. She had never read aloud from the Bible before, and at any other time her shyness would have almost overcome her. To-day, though, she was possessed with a feeling that in the Bible she would perhaps find something that would rouse and cheer granny, and charm her own fears away, and she was in a hurry to get it and begin.

Chapter 1

Patty found Millie Higgins down on the Quay, where she was shouting and laughing with five or six others who were playing 'Last Touch.' No one would have guessed that she had left two sad and aching hearts and a ruined treasure behind her but half an hour ago.

Patty, with a growing scorn in her eyes, stood by talking to Philippa Luxmore until the game had finished. She meant not to lose sight of Millie until she had had her say. Millie caught sight of Patty, though, and dashed into another game without any pause. She did not know that Patty had come especially to speak to her, but she did not want to have anything to say to Patty—not for a while, at any rate. She would rather wait until the events of the afternoon had been forgotten a little.

Patty guessed, though, what her purpose was, and, after she had waited for another game to end, she went boldly up to her.

"Millie," she said, without any beating about the bush, "I've come to ask you to go and tell Mrs. Barnes that it was you that broke her beautiful tea-set."

Millie coloured, but she only laughed contemptuously. The rest of the little crowd looked on and listened, open-mouthed. "Dear me! Have you really, Miss Poll Pry! Well, now you have asked me you can go home again, and attend to your own affairs. We don't want you here."

Patty took no notice of her rudeness. "Millie," she pleaded, "you will tell? You won't let Mona bear the blame."

"I don't know what you're talking about——"

"Oh, yes, you do. I saw you come out. I mean, I thought that was where you came from. I was just going in to speak to Mona myself, and I found her——"

"Mona Carne's a sneak."

"No, she isn't."

"Well, she needn't tell her grandmother that she knows anything about it. It might have been the wind blew the things over, or a cat. If I was Mona I'd go out to play, and let her come in and find the things."

"Mona couldn't be so mean and underhand. Mrs. Barnes knows about it already, too."

"Then there's no need for me to tell her," retorted Millie, dancing away. "Ta-ta, Patty-preacher."

Patty's patience gave out, she could not hide her disgust any longer.

"Millie Higgins, I knew you were a bully and a coward, but I didn't know how mean a coward you were."

Her voice rang out shrill with indignation, attracting the attention of everyone around. The children stopped their play to stare; two or three people stopped their talk to listen. They looked from Patty to Millie, and back again in shocked surprise. Patty's voice was not so much angry as it was contemptuous, disgusted. Millie could have better borne anger. People would then have thought Patty merely a cross child, and have passed on. Instead of that they looked at her sympathetically, and at Millie askance.

Millie walked away with her head in the air, but she was furious. "I'll pay her out!" she thought. "I'll pay her out yet!" She was so angry she could not get out a retort to Patty. Her words seemed to catch in her throat and choke her.

Patty walked away to the end of the Quay, and leaned out over the railings, looking towards the sea. She was disheartened and angry, and ashamed of herself. She was horribly ashamed of having called out like that to Millie. It was a mean, common thing to do. She felt she wanted to get out of sight, to escape the questions and chatter they would pour into her ears. She would wait where she was until everyone else had gone home. If anyone followed her, they would soon go away again when they found she would not talk to them.

She got behind a tall stack of boxes, and turned her back on everyone. Her face was turned to the sea; her eyes gazed at the heaving waters, and the sun setting behind them, but her thoughts were with Mona.

"How she did cry, poor Mona! I didn't know she cared for her granny so much." Then she wondered what they were doing at that moment, and how Mrs. Barnes was taking her loss. By degrees the sun disappeared altogether, and twilight began to creep over her world. Gradually the sounds of play and laughter and gossiping voices ceased. One by one old folks and young went home.

"I'd better go too," thought Patty, "or mother will be wondering where I am. Oh, dear, there's my bootlace untied again!" Still standing close to the edge of the Quay, she had stooped to tie the lace when, suddenly from behind, she received a blow in the back which sent her completely

off her balance. Reeling forward, she grabbed wildly at the rail to try and save herself, but missed it, and with a shriek of terror she fell over the edge and into the water below. With another shriek she disappeared, and the water closed over her.

Whence the blow came, or how, she had not time to think. It seemed to her as though the sky had fallen and struck her. She did not hear another cry which broke from someone's throat as her body disappeared, nor hear or see Millie Higgins running as though the police were already after her.

Millie's first instinct was to get as far from the scene as possible. No one must know that she had been anywhere near the fatal spot. Then, fortunately, better and less selfish thoughts came to her. Patty was there alone in the deep cold water, in the dimness, fighting for her life. If help did not come to her quickly she would die—and who was there to help but herself?

"Patty!" she called. "Patty! Where are you?" Her voice rose high and shrill with terror. "Oh, Patty, do speak!"

Then up through the water came a small, dark head and white face, and then, to Millie's intense relief, a pair of waving arms.

She was not dead, and she was conscious. "Oh, thank God!" moaned Millie, and for perhaps the first time in her life she really thanked Him, and sent up a real prayer from the depths of her heart.

"Patty," she called, "swim towards me. I'll help you."

Poor Patty heard her, but as one speaking in a dream, for her senses were fast leaving her. Summoning up all the strength she had, she tried to obey, but she had only made a few strokes when she suddenly dropped her arms and sank again.

With a cry of horror and despair, Millie rushed down and into the water. She could not swim, but she did not think of that now. Nothing else mattered if she could but save Patty. She waded into the water until she could scarcely touch the bottom with her feet. A big wave came rolling in; one so big that it seemed as though it must carry her off her feet, and away to sea.

It came, but it lifted her back quite close to the steps, and it brought poor little unconscious Patty almost close to her feet.

Millie reached out and grabbed her by her hair and her skirt, and gripped her tight, but it was not easy. Patty was a dead weight, and she had to keep her own foothold or both would have been carried away as the wave receded. Millie felt desperate. She could not raise Patty, heavy

as she was in her water-soaked clothes, and Patty, still unconscious, could not help herself.

Fortunately, at that moment, Peter Carne came rowing leisurely homewards, and in his boat with him was Patty Row's father.

Millie caught sight of them, and a great sob of relief broke from her. She shouted and shouted at the top of her voice, and, clinging to Patty with one hand, she waved the other frantically. "Would they see? Would they see?" She screamed until she felt she had cracked her throat. "Oh, what a noise the sea made!" she thought frantically, "how could anyone's voice get above it."

They heard or caught sight of her at last. Her straining eyes saw the boat heading for them. She saw Patty's father spring up and wave to them, then seize another pair of oars, and pull till the lumbering great boat seemed to skim the waves. Then strong arms gripped them and lifted them into safety, and a moment or two later they were on the Quay once more, and hurrying homewards.

Before she had been in her father's arms for many minutes Patty opened her big blue eyes, and looked about her wonderingly.

"Where—am—I?" she asked, through her chattering teeth.

"You're in your old dad's arms now," said her father, brokenly, but with an attempt at a smile, "but you'll be rolled up in blankets in a few minutes, and popped into bed. It's where you have been that matters most. How did you come to be taking a dip at this time, little maid, and with your boots on too?"

"I fell in," whispered Patty, and closed her eyes again as the tiresome faintness crept over her.

"It was my fault," sobbed Millie, thoroughly subdued and softened, and slightly hysterical too. "I—I didn't mean to push her into the water——"

"It was an accident," said Patty, coming back out of her dreaminess. "I was stooping down—and overbalanced—that was all. I was tying up my boot-lace." And as she insisted on this, and would say nothing more, everyone decided that there was nothing more to say; and, as she had received no real injury, and was soon out and about again, the matter was gradually forgotten—by all, at least, but the two actors in what might have been an awful tragedy.

Patty received no real injury, but it was a very white and tired little Patty who called on Mona on the following Sunday to go with her to Sunday School.

Mona, having a shrewd suspicion that Patty could have told much more if she had chosen, was longing to ask questions, but Patty was not encouraging.

"Did you think you were really going to die?" she asked.

"Yes," said Patty, simply.

"What did it feel like? Were you——"

"I can't tell you." Patty's voice was very grave. "Don't ask me, Mona. It's—it's too solemn to talk about."

When they reached the school-yard gate, Millie Higgins came towards them. "Then you're able to come, Patty! I'm so glad." There was real feeling in Millie's words. Her voice was full of an enormous relief. Mona was astonished. She herself did not look at Millie or speak to her. She had not forgiven her for that afternoon's work, and she more than suspected her of being the cause of Patty's accident.

As Millie did not move away, Mona strolled across with Patty still clinging to her arm, to where a group of girls stood talking together. Millie Higgins, with a rush of colour to her face, turned away and joined another group, but the group apparently did not see her, for none of them spoke to her, and Millie very soon moved away again to where two girls stood together, but as she approached the two they hastily linked arms and, turning their back on her, walked into the schoolroom. Mona noticed both incidents, and, beginning to suspect something, kept both eyes and ears open. Her suspicions were soon confirmed.

"I believe that all the girls are giving Millie the cold shoulder," she whispered at last in Patty's ear. "They must have planned it all before. You just watch for a few minutes. She has been up to ever so many, and then, as soon as they notice her, they move away. I wonder what's the meaning of it? Millie notices it herself. You just look at her. She's as uncomfortable as she can be."

Patty raised her head sharply, and followed the direction of Mona's eyes. Millie was just joining on to a group of four or five. Patty saw a glance exchanged, and two girls turned on their heels at once; then another, and another, until Millie, with scared face and eyes full of shame and pain, stood alone once more. She looked ready to cry with mortification.

Patty, her face rosy with indignation, called across the yard to her; her clear voice raised so that all should hear. "Millie, will you come for a walk when we come out of school this afternoon?" Then going over and thrusting her arm through Millie's, she led her back to where Mona was still standing.

"Mona is going, too, ain't you, Mona? I don't know, though, if we shall have much time for a walk; we're going to the Library to choose a book each. Which do you think Mona would like?"

But Millie could not answer. The unkindness she had met with that morning and the kindness had stabbed deep; so deep that her eyes were full of tears, and her throat choked with sobs. Mona, looking up, saw it, and all her resentment against her faded.

"I wish you'd come, too, Millie, and help us choose," she said. "You read so much, you know which are the nicest."

"All right," said Millie, in a choked kind of voice. "I'd love to." And then the doors opened, and they all trooped into their places.

When they came out from the morning service each went home with her own people. Patty, looking fragile and pale, was helped along by her father. Mona joined her father and grandmother. She was quiet, and had very little to say.

"Did you like your class?" asked granny. She was a little puzzled by Mona's manner. She had expected her to be full of excitement.

"Yes, I liked it very much," but she did not add anything more then. It was not until evening, when they were sitting together in the firelight, that she opened her heart on the subject. "I wish I'd known our teacher all my life," she said, with a sigh.

"Why, dearie?"

"Oh—I don't know—gran—but she makes you see things, and she makes you feel so—so—well as if you do want to be good, and yet you feel you want to cry."

"Try and tell me what she said," said granny. "Perhaps 'twould help an old body, too."

But Mona could not do that, nor could she put her feelings into words very well. "I'll read to you instead, if you'd like me to, granny."

When Millie Higgins had come out of church she had walked rapidly homewards by herself. Patty and her father had gone on. Mona was with her father and grandmother, and Millie felt that she could not face Mrs. Barnes just then. She was fighting a big fight with herself, and she had not won yet. But in the afternoon, when they came out of the school library, the two walked together. They took Patty home, because she was too tired to do any more that day. Then Mona and Millie hesitated, looking at each other. "I must go home, too," said Mona. "I thought I'd have been able to go for a walk, but it's too late. Granny'll be expecting me."

Millie looked at her without speaking, half turned to leave her, hesitated, and finally walked on at Mona's side. She seemed nervous and

embarrassed, but Mona did not notice it. She did not realize anything of the struggle going on in Millie's mind. She was too much occupied in glancing at the pictures in her book, and reading a sentence here and there.

"I'm longing to begin it. I think granny'll like it too."

Millie did not answer, and they walked the rest of the way in silence. When they reached the house Mona stood for a moment without opening the door. She was somewhat troubled in her mind as to what to do. She did not want to ask Millie in, yet she was afraid of hurting her feelings by not doing so. Millie stood, and did not say good-bye. Her cheeks were flushed, and she was evidently very nervous.

"May I come in?" she asked at last. "Yes, do come inside." Mona was a little surprised at Millie's daring, and not too well pleased, but she tried to speak cordially. Opening the door, she went in first. "Granny, here's Millie Higgins come to see you. She's been to school with Patty and me, and we've walked back together!"

Mrs. Barnes was sitting in her chair by the fire. "Well, Millie," she said kindly. "It's a long time since I've seen you. Sit down." Whether she suspected the truth neither of the girls could make out. Millie grew even redder in the cheeks, and looked profoundly uncomfortable.

"I—I've come to say—" she burst out in a jerky, nervous fashion, "I—I came here on Wednesday—when you were out, and I—behaved badly—" She hesitated, broke down, looked at the door as though she would have dashed out through it, had it only been open, then in one rush poured out the words that had been repeating and repeating themselves in her brain all that day.

"I'm very sorry I broke your beautiful set, Mrs. Barnes. I'm—ever so sorry, I—don't know what to do about it——"

Mona, guided by some sense of how she would have felt under the circumstances, had disappeared on the pretence of filling a kettle. She knew how much harder it is to make a confession if others are looking on and listening.

"Oh!" said Mrs. Barnes, gravely, "was it you that broke my china? I didn't know."

Millie stared with astonishment. "Didn't—Mona tell you?" she gasped, quite taken aback. She could scarcely believe her own ears. Granny Barnes shook her head. "No, I didn't know but what she did it herself. I believe little Patty did say that she didn't, but I was too upset to take in what was said. My precious tea-set was broken, and it didn't seem to me to matter who did it."

Millie was silent for a moment or so. "Well, I did it," she said at last. "I threw a cushion at Mona, and it hit the china behind her! I've felt dreadful about it ever since, and I—I didn't dare to come near you. I don't know what to do about it, Mrs. Barnes. Can it be mended?" she added, colouring hotly again. "I—I mean I've got some money in the bank. I'll gladly pay for it to be mended, if it can be."

"I don't know, Millie. Perhaps one or two bits can—but nothing can ever make the set perfect again." Mrs. Barnes' voice quavered, and tears came into her eyes. "But I wouldn't let you pay for it. We won't talk any more about it—I can't. P'raps I set too much store by the things." She got up from her seat, and stood, leaning heavily on the table. "It's all right, Millie. I'm very glad you came and told me you did it. Yes, I'm very glad of that. Now we'll try and forget all about it."

Millie burst into tears, and moved away towards the door.

"Stay and have some tea with Mona and me," Granny urged, hospitably. "Don't run away, Millie."

But Millie felt that she must go. She wanted to be alone. "I—I think I'd rather not—not now, thank you. I'll come—another day, if you will ask me." Then she hurried out, and up the hill, thankful that it was tea-time, and that nearly everyone was indoors. She quickly turned off the main road into a little frequented narrow lane, and by way of that to the wide stretch of wild land which crowned the top of the hill. She wanted to be alone, and free, to fight out her battle alone.

"If I'd known Mona hadn't told—" The mean thought would try to take root in her mind, but she weeded it out and trampled on it. In her heart she was profoundly impressed by Mona's conduct, and she was glad, devoutly glad, that she had not been less honourable and courageous. She could face people now, and not feel a sneak or a coward.

In all her life after Millie never forgot her walk on that sunny summer evening. The charm and beauty, the singing of the birds, the scent of the furze and the heather, the peace of it, after the storms she had lived through lately, sank deep into her soul.

Her wickedness of the past week had frightened her. "I felt I didn't care what I did, I was so wild with Mona. I wonder I didn't do more harm than I did. And then Patty, poor little Patty. I nearly drowned her! Oh-h-h!" She buried her face and shuddered at the remembrance. "I knew she'd fall into the water if I pushed her, so it was as bad as being a murderer. If she had died—and she nearly did—I should have been one, and I should have been in jail now, and—oh, I *will* try to be good, I *will* try to be better!"

Long shadows were falling across the road as she went down the hill, on her homeward way. The flowers in Lucy Carne's garden were giving out their evening scent. Lucy, standing enjoying them, looked up as Millie came along, and nodded.

"Wouldn't you like a flower to wear?" she asked.

Millie paused. "I'd love one," she said, looking in over the low stone wall. "I never smell any so sweet as yours, Mrs. Carne."

Lucy gathered her a spray of pink roses, and some white jessamine. "There," she said, "fasten those in your blouse. Isn't the scent beautiful? I don't think one could do anything bad, or think anything bad, with flowers like those under one's eyes and nose, do you?"

"Don't you?" questioned Millie, doubtfully. "I don't believe anything would keep me good."

Lucy looked at her in faint surprise. It was not like Millie to speak with so much feeling. "You don't expect me to believe that," she began, half laughing; then stopped, for there were still traces of tears about Millie's eyes, and a tremulousness about her lips, and Lucy knew that she was really in need of help.

"I know that you've got more courage than most of us, Millie," she added gently. "If you would only use it in the right way. Perhaps my little flowers will remind you to."

"I hope they will. I wish they would," said Millie, fastening them in her coat. "Goodbye."

Before she reached her own home Millie saw her father out at the door looking for her. As a rule, it made her angry to be watched for in this way, "Setting all the neighbours talking," as she put it. But to-day her conscience really pricked her, and she was prepared to be amiable. Her father, though, was not prepared to be amiable. He had got a headache, and he wanted his tea. He had been wanting it for an hour and more.

"Where have you been gallivanting all this time, I'd like to know. I'll be bound you've been a may-gaming somewhere as you didn't ought to on a Sunday, your dooty to me forgotten."

To Millie this sounded unjust and cruel. She had let her duties slip from her for a while, but she had been neither may-gaming nor wasting her time. Indeed, she had been in closer touch with better things and nobler aims than ever in her life before, and in her new mood her father's words jarred and hurt her. An angry retort rose to her lips.

"I haven't been with anybody," she replied sharply. "I've been for a walk by myself, that's all. It's hard if I can't have a few minutes for myself sometimes." But, in putting up her hand to remove her hat, she

brushed her flowers roughly, and her angry words died away. In return for a blow they gave out a breath of such sweetness that Millie could not but heed it. "I—I was thinking, and I forgot about tea-time," she added in a gentler voice. "But I won't be long getting it now, father."

While the kettle was coming to the boil she laid the cloth and cut some bread and butter; then she went to the larder and brought out an apple pie. With all her faults, Millie was a good cook, and looked after her father well.

He looked at her preparations approvingly, and his brow cleared. "You're a good maid, Millie," he said, as he helped the pie, while Millie poured out the tea. "I'm sorry I spoke a bit rough just now. I didn't really mean anything. I was only a bit put out."

Millie's heart glowed with pride and pleasure. "That's all right, father," and then she added, almost shyly, "I—I'd no business to—to forget the time, and stay out so long." It was the first time in her life she had admitted she was wrong when her father had been vexed with her and given her a scolding.

Chapter 12

Lucy Carne knocked at Granny Barnes' door, and waited. She had a little nosegay of flowers in her hand and a plate of fresh fish. Almost every day she brought granny something, even if it was only a simple flower, and granny loved her little 'surprises.'

Lucy waited a moment, hearing a voice inside, then she knocked again, and louder.

"I do believe Mona's reading to her again, and they've forgotten their tea!"

Getting no answer even now, Lucy opened the door a little way and popped her head in. "May I come in? I don't know what world you two are living in to-day, but I knocked twice and I couldn't reach you."

Mona carefully placed the marker in her book and closed it, but reluctantly. Miss Lester, her Sunday School teacher, had given her the marker. It was a strip of ribbon with fringed ends, and with her name painted on it, and a spray of white jessamine. Every girl who had joined the library had had one. Some were blue, some red, some white, and the rest orange colour. Mona's was red. She was glad, for she liked red, and the delicate white flower looked lovely on it, she thought. Miss Lester had painted them herself, and the girls prized them beyond anything.

Mona's eyes lingered on hers as she closed the book. It was rather hard to have to leave her heroine just at that point, and set about getting tea. She did wish Lucy had not come for another ten minutes.

Granny looked up with a little rueful smile. "I felt it was tea-time," she said, "but I thought Mona would like to finish out the chapter, and then before we knew what we were doing we had begun another. It's a pretty tale. I wish you had been hearing it too, Lucy. It's called 'Queechy.' A funny sort of a name, to my mind."

"'Queechy'!—why, I read that years ago, and I've read it again since I've been married. I borrowed it from mother when I was so ill that time. Mother had it given to her as a prize by her Bible-class teacher. She thinks the world of it. So do I. I love it."

"I'm longing to get to the end," said Mona, turning over the pages lingeringly. "There's only three chapters more."

"Oh, well, that's enough for another reading or two," said Granny. "They are long chapters. It would be a pity to hurry over them just for the sake of reaching the end. We'll have a nice time to-morrow, dearie. I shall be sorry when it's all done."

But Mona was impatient. "To-morrow! Nobody knows what may happen before to-morrow. Something is sure to come along and prevent anybody's doing what they want to do," she said crossly.

Granny looked at her with grieved eyes. "I think you generally manage to do what you want to, Mona," she said, gravely. "I don't think you can have profited much by what you've read," she added, and turned to Lucy.

Mona laid down her book with a sigh. "It's much easier to read about being good than to be good oneself," she thought.

Lucy came in from the scullery with a vase full of water. "I'll have a few nice flowers for you to take to Miss Lester on Sunday, Mona, if you'll come and fetch them."

"Thank you," said Mona, but she looked and spoke glumly. She was still vexed with Lucy for coming in and interrupting them. She did not know that Lucy came in at meal-times just to make sure that granny had her meals, for Mona thought nothing of being an hour late with them if she was occupied in some other way.

"Don't trouble about it, if you don't care to have them," Lucy added quietly. And Mona felt reproved.

"I'd like to," she said, looking ashamed of herself. "Miss Lester loves having flowers. I'll run up on Saturday evening for them, mother. They'll be better for being in water all night."

"That's right. Now, I'll cook the fish while you lay the cloth. Granny'll be fainting if we don't give her something to eat and drink soon. I should have been down before, but I had to see father off."

"Will he be out all night?" Granny asked, anxiously. She never got over her dread of the sea at night.

"Yes. If they get much of a catch they'll take it in to Baymouth to land. The 'buyers' will be there to-morrow. I'm hoping Peter'll be back in the afternoon. These are fine whiting. You like whiting, don't you, mother?"

"Yes, very much. It's kind of you to bring them. I feel now how badly I was wanting my tea. You'll have some with us?"

"I think I will. I was so busy getting Peter off that I didn't have anything myself."

Mona laid the cloth with extra care. Lucy's vase of stocks stood at one corner. Though it was August, the wind was cold, and the little bit of fire in the grate made the kitchen very pleasant and cosy.

"I've got a bit of news for you, Mona," said Lucy, coming back from putting away the frying-pan. "Mrs. Luxmore told me that Miss Lester is engaged. Had you heard it?"

"Oh, no! What, my Miss Lester? Miss Grace?" Mona was intensely interested. "Oh, I am so glad. Who is she engaged to, mother?"

"Why, Dr. Edwards! Isn't it nice! Doesn't it seem just right?" Lucy was almost as excited as Mona. "I am so glad she isn't going to marry a stranger, and leave Seacombe."

"Can it be true! really true?"

"It's true enough. Mrs. Luxmore told me. Her husband works two days a week at Mrs. Lester's, and Mrs. Lester told him her very own self. So it must be true, mustn't it?"

Mona's thoughts had already flown to the wedding. "We girls in Miss Grace's class ought to give her a wedding present. What would be a nice thing to give her? And, oh, mother!" Mona clapped her hands in a fresh burst of excitement. "I wonder if she will let us all go to the wedding and strew roses in her path as she comes out of the church—"

"It'll depend a good deal on what time of the year the wedding is to be," remarked granny, drily. But Mona's mind was already picturing the scene.

"We ought all to be dressed in white, with white shoes and stockings, and gloves, and some should wear pink round their waists and in their hats, and the rest should have blue, and those that wear pink should throw white roses, and those that wear blue should throw pink roses. Wouldn't it look sweet? I'd rather wear blue, because I've got a blue sash."

A door banged upstairs, and made them all jump. "Why, how the wind is rising!" said Lucy, in a frightened voice. She hurried to the window and looked out anxiously. "Oh, dear! and I was hoping it was going to be pretty still to-night."

"What I'd give if Peter was a ploughman, or a carpenter!" cried granny, almost irritably. "I don't know how you can bear it, Lucy, always to have the fear of the sea dogging you day and night!" Her own face had grown quite white.

"I couldn't bear it," said Lucy quietly, "if I didn't feel that wherever he is God's hand is over him just the same." She came back and stood by the fire, gazing with wistful eyes into its glowing heart.

"But sailors and fishermen do get drowned," urged Mona, putting her fears into words in the hope of getting comfort.

"And ploughmen and carpenters meet with their deaths, too. We've got our work to do, and we can't all choose the safest jobs. Some must take the risks. And no matter what our work is, death'll come to us all one day. Some of us who sit at home, die a hundred deaths thinking of those belonging to us and the risks they are facing."

Then, seeing that granny was really nervous, Lucy led the talk to other things, though, in that little place, with nothing to break the force of the wind, or deaden the noise of the waves, it was not easy to get one's mind away from either. "I don't suppose it is very bad, really," said Lucy, comfortingly. "It always sounds a lot here, but the men laugh at me when I talk of 'the gale' blowing. 'You must wait till you hear the real thing,' they say. But I tell them I have heard the real thing, and it began quietly enough. Now, Mona, you and I will put away the tea things, shall we?"

"You won't go home before you really need to, will you?" asked granny. "It'll be a long and wearying time you'll have alone there, waiting for morning. Oh, I wish it was morning now," she added, almost passionately, "and the night over, and the storm. I do long for rest."

Lucy looked at her anxiously, surprised by the feeling in her voice. "Why, mother! you mustn't worry yourself like that. It's nothing of a wind yet, and it may die down again quite soon. I think it was a mistake letting you come to live on this side of the road, where you feel the wind so much more. If I were you I'd move up nearer to us the first time there's a place to let. You feel just as I do about the storms, and it's only those that do who understand how hard it is to bear."

Granny nodded, but she did not answer. She turned to Mona. "Wouldn't you like to go for a run before bedtime?" she asked. "The air'll do you good, and help you to sleep."

"I didn't want her to get nervous just before bedtime," she confided to Lucy when Mona had gone. "I try not to let her see how nervous I get—but sometimes one can't help but show it."

Mona did not need any urging. Her thoughts were full of Miss Lester's coming marriage and her own plans for it, and ever since she had heard the news she had been longing to go out and spread it and talk it over.

"Patty ought to wear blue, to match her eyes; Millie will be sure to choose pink, she has had such a fancy for pink ever since she had that print frock."

But when she reached the Quay she met with disappointment. There was hardly anyone there but some boys playing 'Prisoners.' Certainly it

was not very tempting there that evening, the wind was cold and blustery, and both sea and sky were grey and depressing. Mona was glad to come away into the shelter of the street.

She looked about her for someone to talk to, but, seeing no one, she made her way home again. It was very aggravating having to keep her great ideas bottled up till morning, but it could not be helped. When she reached home again, Lucy was still there, but she had her hat on ready to start.

"I wish you hadn't to go," said Granny Barnes, wistfully. "I wish you could stay here the night."

Lucy looked at her anxiously. "Are you feeling very nervous, mother? Would you rather I stayed? I will if you wish."

"No,—oh, no," granny protested, though she would have liked it above all things. "I wasn't thinking about myself; I was thinking about you, up there all alone."

"Oh, I shall be all right. I am getting used to it. Now you go to bed early, and try to go to sleep, then you won't notice the weather. You are looking dreadfully tired. Good night—good night, Mona."

"I think I'll do as Lucy said," said granny a little while later. "I'm feeling tireder than ever in my life before. If I was in bed now this minute, I believe I could sleep. If I once got off I feel as if I could sleep for ever." And by half-past eight the house was shut up, and they had gone to bed.

Granny, at least, had gone to bed, and had fallen almost at once into a heavy slumber. Mona was more wakeful. The news of her teacher's engagement had excited her, and not having been able to talk it out, her brain was seething with ideas.

She put out her candle, drew back her curtains, and looked out into the gathering darkness. An air of gloom and loneliness reigned over everything. Far out she could see white caps on the waves, but not a boat, or vessel of any kind. The sky looked full and lowering.

With a little shiver Mona drew her curtains again and relighted her candle. As it flickered and burnt up, her eyes fell on the book so reluctantly put aside until to-morrow.

"Oh, I wish I could have just a little read," she thought, longingly. "Just a look to see what happens next."

She took up the book and opened it, glancing over the chapters she had read—then she turned to the one she and granny were going to read to-morrow. Her eyes travelled greedily over a few paragraphs, then she turned the page. Presently she grew tired of standing, and sat on the side of the bed, lost to everything but the pages she was devouring hungrily.

The wind blew her curtains about, the rain drove against the panes, but Mona did not heed either. She had drawn herself up on the bed by that time and, leaning up against her pillows, was reading comfortably by the light of the candle close beside her. She was miles away from her real surroundings, and driving with Fleda in England, and no other world existed for her.

Her eyelids growing heavy, she closed them for a moment. She didn't know that she had closed them, and imagined she was still reading. She was very surprised, though, presently, to find that what she thought she had been reading was not on the open pages before her. She rubbed her tiresomely heavy lids and looked again; then she raised herself on her elbow and began again at the top of the mysterious page, and all went well for a paragraph or two. Fleda was walking now alone, through a grassy glade. Oh, how lovely it was—but what a long walk to be taking in such a high wind. Mona forced open one eye, and let the other rest a moment. "The trees sometimes swept back, leaving an opening, and at other places," stretched—stretched, yes it was, "stretched their branches over,"—over—but how the wind roared in the trees, and what a pity that someone should have had a bonfire just there, the smell was suffocating—and the heat! How could she bear it! And, oh, dear! How dazzling the sun was—or the bonfire; the whole wood would be on fire if they did not take care! Oh, the suffocating smoke!

Mona—or was she Fleda?—gasped and panted. If relief did—not—come soon—she could not draw—another breath. She felt she was paralysed—helpless—dying—and the wind—so much—air—somewhere—she was trying to say, when suddenly, from very, very far away she heard her own name being called. It sounded like 'Mona'—not Fleda—and—yet, somehow she knew that it was she who was meant.

"Oh—what—do they—want!" she thought wearily. "I can't go. I'm——"

"Mona! Mona!" She heard it again; her own name, and called frantically, and someone was shaking her, and saying something about a fire, and then she seemed to be dragged up bodily and carried away. "Oh, what rest! and how nice to be out of that awful heat—she would have—died—if—if—" Then she felt the cold air blowing on her face, the dreadful dragging pain in her chest was gone, she could breathe! She opened her eyes and looked about her—and for the first time was sure that she was dreaming.

The other was real enough, but this could only be a dream, for she was lying on the pavement in the street, in the middle of the night, with people standing all about staring down at her. They were people she knew, she thought, yet they all looked so funny. Someone was kneeling beside her, but in a strange red glow which seemed to light up the darkness, she could not recognise the face. Her eyelids fell, in spite of herself, but she managed to open them again very soon, and this time she saw the black sky high above her; rain fell on her face. The red glow went up and down; sometimes it was brilliant, sometimes it almost disappeared, and all the time there was a strange crackling, hissing noise going on, and a horrible smell.

By degrees she felt a little less dazed and helpless. She tried to put out her hands to raise herself, but she could not move them. They were fastened to her sides. She saw then that she was wrapped in a blanket. "What—ever—has happened!" she asked sharply.

"There has been an accident—a fire. Your house is on fire—didn't you know?"

"Fire!—our house—on fire!" Mona sat upright, and looked about her in a bewildered way. Could it be that she was having those dreadful things said to her. She had often wondered how people felt, what they thought—what they did, when they had suddenly to face so dreadful a thing.

"Where's granny?" she asked abruptly—almost violently.

There was a moment's silence. Then Patty Row's mother said in a breathless, hesitating way, "Nobody—no one knows yet, Mona. Nor how the house was set on fire," she added, hastily, as though anxious to give Mona something else to think of. "Some say the wind must have blown down the kitchen chimney and scattered some red-hot coals about the floor."

"But 'twas the top part of the house that was burning first along," broke in old Tom Harris. "Mrs. Carne saw smoke and fire coming through the bedroom windows and the roof." "The top part!—where granny was sleeping!" Mona threw open the blanket and struggled to her feet. "Oh, do stop talking, and tell me—hasn't anyone found granny?" Her question ended almost in a scream.

"They—they're getting her——" said somebody. The rest preserved an ominous silence.

"There's a chain of men handing up buckets of water through the back garden," said someone else, as though trying to distract her thoughts. "They'll soon get the fiercest of the fire down."

"But—but think of granny. We can't wait for that. She's in the fire all this time. She was in bed. Hasn't anyone been to her? Oh, they must have. They can't have left her—an old woman—to save herself!"

Mona was beside herself with the horror of the thing.

"They tried," said Mrs. Row, gently, "but they were beaten back. Mrs. Carne tried until she was—There! She's gone—Mona's gone!" Her explanation ended in a scream. "Oh, stop her—somebody, do, she'll be killed."

"It'd have been sensibler to have told her the truth at once," said Tom Harris, impatiently. "She's got to know, poor maid. Now we shall have another life thrown away, more than likely, and Mrs. Carne with a broken leg, and nobody knows what other damage."

Slipping through the crowd in the darkness, Mona, in a perfect frenzy of fear, dashed into the house. All she was conscious of was hot anger against all those who stood about talking and looking on and doing nothing, while granny lay helpless in her bed suffocating, perhaps burning; were they mad!—did they want granny to die?—didn't they care, that no one made any attempt to save her. Through the semi-darkness, the haze of smoke and steam, she heard people, and voices, but she could not see anyone. The heat was fearful, and the smell of burning made her feel sick.

She groped her way stumblingly through the kitchen. The furniture seemed to her to be scattered about as though on purpose to hinder her, but she kept along by the dressers as well as she could. They would be a guide, she thought. "Poor tea-set! There will be little of it left now." Her fingers touched something soft. Lucy's stocks, still in the vase. At last she found herself at the foot of the staircase. The door was closed. Someone had wisely shut it to check the rush of air up it. After a struggle, Mona managed to open it again, and fell back before the overpowering heat and the smoke which choked and blinded her. She clapped her hand over her nose and mouth, and crouching down, dragged herself a little way up, lying almost flat on her face, she was so desperate now with the horror of it all, beside herself. Ahead of her was what looked like a blazing furnace. All around her was an awful roaring, the noise of burning, broken into every now and again by a crash, after which the red light blazed out brighter, and the roaring redoubled.

How could anyone live in such a furnace. An awful cry of despair broke from her parched throat. "Granny!" she screamed. "Oh, granny! Where are you? I can't reach—" Another crash, and a blazing beam fell across the head of the burning staircase.

"Granny! Oh, God save my——" But before she could finish she was seized by strong arms and lifted up, and then darkness fell on her brain, and she knew no more.

Chapter 13

When poor Lucy Carne next opened her eyes and came back with a sigh to the horrors and suffering of which she had for a time been mercifully unconscious, her first thought was for her husband.

"Has the boat come in? Did the storm die down?—or did it get worse? Has anyone heard or seen anything of my husband?" She panted feebly. But before they could answer her, she had floated off again into a troubled delirium.

"Oh, the wind! Oh, the awful wind!" she kept on repeating. "Oh, can't anything stop it! It's fanning the flames to fury; it's blowing them towards granny's room. Oh, the noise—I must find her—I must save her—she's so feeble. Oh, granny! Granny!" Her voice would end in a scream, followed by a burst of tears; then she would begin again.

Once or twice she had recovered consciousness, and then had asked for her husband or Mona. "Is she badly hurt?—will she get over it?"

The nurse soothed and comforted her, and did all she could. "She isn't conscious yet, but they think she will be soon. She's got slight concussion, and she has cut herself a bit—but she will do all right if she gets over the shock. They are keeping her very quiet; it is the only way. You must try not to scream and call out, dear. For if she began to come round and heard you, it might be very, very serious for her."

After that Lucy lay trying hard to keep fast hold of her senses. "Don't let me scream!" she pleaded. "Put something over my head if I begin. I can keep myself quiet as long as I have my senses—but when they drift away—I—don't know what I do. I didn't know I made a noise. Oh—h—h!" as some slight movement racked her with pain.

"Poor dear," said Nurse. "I expect you're feeling your bruises now, and your leg."

"I seem to be one big lump of pain," sighed poor Lucy. "But I don't mind if only Mona pulls through, and Peter is safe. Oh, my poor husband—what a home-coming!"

"Now try not to dwell on it. You'll only get yourself worse, and for his sake, poor man, you ought to try and get well as fast as you can. There, look at those flowers Patty Row has brought you. Aren't they sweet!"

"Oh, my!" Lucy drew in deep breaths of their fragrance. "Stocks, and sweet-brier—oh, how lovely! They'll help to take away the—smell of the burning." Then her mind seemed to float away again, but not this time through a raging furnace, but through sweet-scented gardens, and sunlight, and soft pure air.

When she came back to the hospital ward again, Nurse smiled at her with eyes full of pleasure. "I've good news for you," she said, bending low, so that her words might quite reach the poor dazed brain. "Your husband is safe!"

"Oh, thank God! Thank God!" Her eyes swam in tears of joy. "Does—he know?" she asked a moment later, her face full of anxiety. The thought of his sad home-coming was anguish to her.

Nurse nodded. "Yes, dear, he knows. The Vicar went to Baymouth by the first train and brought him back. He did not want him to have the news blurted out to him without any preparation."

"How very kind! How is he? Peter, I mean. Is he feeling it very badly? Oh, I wish I could be there to help him, to comfort him. He'll be so lonely—and there will be so much to do."

"My dear, he won't want for help. Everyone is ready and anxious to do what they can. Of course, he is upset. He wouldn't be the man he is if he wasn't. It is all a terrible shock to him! But it might have been so much worse. He is so thankful that you and Mona are safe. He doesn't give a single thought to himself."

"He never does," said Lucy, half-smiling, half-weeping. "That's why he needs me to take thought of him. When may I see him, Nurse?"

"That's what he is asking. If you keep very quiet now, and have a nice sleep, perhaps you'll be strong enough for just a peep at him when you wake up."

"I'll lie still, and be very quiet, but I can't promise to sleep." She did sleep, though, in spite of herself, for when next she turned her head to see if the hands of the clock had moved at all, she found her husband sitting beside her, smiling at her.

"Why, however did you get here, dear? I never saw you come—nor heard a sound."

"I reckon I must have growed up out of the floor," said Peter, bending to kiss her. "Well, my girl, this isn't where I expected to see 'ee when I

came back—but I'm so thankful to find you at all, I can't think of anything else."

"Oh, my dear, I'm so glad you've come," she cried, clinging to him passionately. "I never thought we should meet again in this world. Oh! Peter—what we've been through! Oh! That night! That awful night!"

He patted her soothingly, holding her hand in his. "I know, I know—but you must try not to dwell on it. If you throw yourself back, I shan't be allowed to come again."

Lucy put a great restraint upon herself. "They've told you:—poor granny is dead?" she whispered, but more calmly.

"Yes—they've told me. I believe I know the worst now. I've one bit of comfort, though, for all of us. I've just seen the doctor, and he says she was dead before the fire reached her. She must have died almost as soon as she lay down."

Then Lucy broke down and wept from sheer relief. "Oh, thank God," she said, fervently, "for taking her to Himself, and sparing her the horrors of that awful night. Thank Him, too, for Mona's sake. The thought that granny perished in the fire because no one reached her in time would have been the worst of all the thoughts weighing on her mind. She will be spared that now."

At that moment, though, Mona was troubled by no thoughts at all. She lay in her bed in the ward just as they had placed her there hours before, absolutely unconscious. If it had not been for the faint beating of her heart she might have been taken for dead. Doctors came and looked at her and went away again, the day nurses went off duty, and the night nurses came on and went off again, but still she showed no sign of life. With her head and her arms swathed in bandages, she lay with her eyes closed, her lips slightly parted. It was not until the following day, the day Granny Barnes was laid to rest in the little churchyard on the hill, that she opened her eyes on this world once more, and glanced about her, dazed and bewildered.

"Where?" she began. But before she had finished her sentence, her eyes closed.

This time, though, it was not unconsciousness, but sleep that she drifted off into, and it was not until afternoon that she opened her eyes once more.

"Where am I?" She completed her question this time. Then, at the sight of a nurse in uniform, a look of alarm crept into her eyes.

"Where are you, dear? Why, here in hospital, being taken care of, and your mother is here, too."

"Mother."

"Yes, and we are looking after you so well! You are both better already."

The cheerful voice and smile, the kindly face, drove all Mona's fears away at once, and for ever. But, as memory returned, other fears took their place.

"Is—mother—hurt?"

"Yes—but, oh, not nearly as badly as she might have been. She will be well again soon. You shall go into the ward with her when you are a little better. You must keep very quiet now, and not talk."

"But—granny—and father?" faltered Mona. "I *must* know—I can't rest—till—I do."

For a moment the Nurse hesitated. It was very difficult to know what to do for the best. "She will only fret and worry if I don't tell her, and imagine things worse than they are," she thought to herself.

"Your father is home, and safe and well. You shall see him soon. Your poor granny is safe, too, dear, and well. So well, she will never suffer any more."

"They—let her—die——"

"No one let her die, dear. She had died in her sleep before the fire broke out. She was mercifully spared that—and isn't that something to be thankful for, Mona? There, there, don't cry, dear. You mustn't cry, or you will be ill again, and, for your father's and mother's sake, you must try and get well. Your father wants you home to take care of him until your mother can come. Think of him, dear, and how badly he needs you, and try your best to get better. He is longing to come to see you."

Mercifully for Mona, she was too weak to weep much, or even to think, and before very long she had sunk into an exhausted sleep. Mercifully, too, perhaps, in the horror of her awakening, that terrible night, and the distracting hours that followed, it never entered her head that it was she who had brought about the disaster. It was not till later that that dreadful truth came home to her, to be repented of through years of bitter regret.

The next day her father came to see her, and a few days after that she was carried into the adjoining ward and put into the bed next to her mother.

That was a great step forward. For the first time a ray of sunshine penetrated the heavy cloud of sorrow which had overshadowed them all.

"Keep them both as cheerful as possible," the doctor had said, "and don't let them dwell on the tragedy if you can help it." So every day a

visitor came to see them—Miss Grace Lester, Mrs. Row, and Patty, Millie Higgins, and Philippa—and as they all brought flowers and fruit, the little ward became a perfect garden, gay with bright colours and sweet scents.

Miss Grace brought a book for Mona, and a soft, warm shawl for Lucy. They were delighted. "And please, Miss," said Lucy, "may I give you my best wishes for your happiness? We heard you were going to be married before so very long."

Grace Lester blushed prettily. "Yes, but not till next spring," she said. "Thank you for your good wishes, Mrs. Carne. It was very sweet of you to remember me through all the troubles you have been through lately. I am so glad my new home will be in Seacombe, where I know and love everyone. I should have been very grieved if I had had to leave it. Mona, what are you thinking about, to make you look so excited? You know the doctor ordered you to keep calm! I don't know what he would say if he saw you now. He would blame me for exciting you, and I should never be allowed to come again."

"Oh, Miss Grace, I am calm—I really am. I won't be excited, I won't be ill, but, oh, I must tell you—I thought of something as soon as ever I heard there was to be a wedding—and oh, I wish you would—I am sure it would be lovely. We want—all your Sunday School girls, I mean, Miss Grace—to be allowed to come and strew flowers in your path as you come out of church, and we'd all be dressed in white, and—and some would have pink, and some blue in their hats, and—Oh, Miss Grace, do please think about it and try and say 'Yes!'"

Grace Lester's eyes were misty with happy tears by the time Mona had done. "Why, you nice, kind children," she cried, "to have such plans for making my wedding day beautiful and happy! I had not thought of anything so charming."

For a few moments she sat silent, thinking deeply, and Mona lay back on her pillow watching her face. "Would she consent—Oh, would she? It would almost be too lovely, though," she concluded. "It could not really come true."

"Mona," said Miss Grace at last. "Do you know what I thought you might be going to ask?"

Mona shook her head, her eyes were full of questioning.

"I thought, perhaps, you were going to ask if you might come and be my little housemaid in my new home!"

"Oh—h—h!" Mona and her mother both exclaimed aloud and in the same tone of delight. "Oh, Miss Grace!" Mona sprang up in her bed and

clapped her hands, bandages and all. "Oh, Miss Grace! do you really mean it? That would be better than anything, because that would be for always. Oh, mother," turning to Lucy, her face radiant, "wouldn't that be lovely!"

"Lovely," said Lucy, her eyes full of deep pleasure. "I wouldn't ask for anything better for you, Mona. I think—I know, it'll be the best that can possibly happen."

"How very nice of you, Mrs. Carne." Grace Lester pressed Lucy's hand. "You make me feel—very, very proud—but—well, I will try to do my best for her. Good-bye. I must not stay any longer now, or Nurse will be coming to scold me, but," with a smile, "I must just stay long enough to say I engage Mona now to come to me in April. We will talk about wages and uniform, and all those things later on, when you are both stronger, and I have had time to think. Now, good-bye—and Mona, don't keep your mother awake, or I shall be in everyone's bad books."

"Oh, I'm as excited as she is, I think," said Lucy, smiling up at Mona's future mistress, "and it will be a real pleasure to me to teach her and get her as ready as I can—and I can't tell you, Miss, how pleased her father'll be that she is going where she will be so happy and well looked after."

Grace Lester clasped Lucy's hand again. "It will be a great pleasure to me to have her," she said warmly, "and, trained by you, I know she will be a comfort to any mistress."

With this new interest to lift her thoughts from her troubles, Mona regained health so rapidly that she was able to leave the hospital sooner than anyone had dared to hope. Poor Lucy, who had to stay there some weeks longer, watched her departure with tearful eyes. "I shall feel lonely without you, dear," she said, "but for your own sake, and father's, I am glad you are going home. You will look after him, won't you, and see to his comforts—and I'll be back in about three weeks, they say, though I'll have to go about on crutches for a bit."

"Oh, yes, I'll look after father. Don't you worry, mother, I'll see to things," Mona reassured her.

"I expect you will find the house in a pretty mess, and the garden too. When I ran out that night, I little thought I wouldn't be back for nigh on two months. It's a lesson to one to be always prepared."

"Don't you worry, mother, we'll soon get it all straight again. I am sure your place was tidier than any other in Seacombe would be, left in a hurry like that, and in the middle of the night."

"But, Mona, you mustn't do too much." Lucy's anxieties took a new direction. She knew how Mona could, and would work, when she was in

the mood to. "Don't be doing too much and making yourself ill. That would trouble me ever so much more than having the house untidy. You leave it all till I come home. When I am able to move about again I'll soon get things nice."

Mona nodded, with a laugh in her eyes. "Why, of course, everything will be scrubbed inside and out, top and bottom, when you get home to do it, mother." But in her mind she added, "if you can find anything needing it."

Then she kissed her 'good-bye,' promising to come again soon. "And I'll take her a few flowers out of her own garden," she thought. "She will love that better than anything. But I expect the garden has run wild by this time."

She did not say as much to her mother, for she had learnt how much such thoughts worried her; but she did to her father when he came to fetch her. He only smiled though. "You wait till you see it, my girl," he said mysteriously, "then you'll know how things have gone since you have been away."

"There!" triumphantly, when they presently drew up at the gate. "Do you say now that a poor lone man can't keep his place tidy while his women-folk are away!" and Mona stared, wide-eyed with surprise, for, instead of bushes all beaten down and tangled, weedy paths, and stripped flower beds, as she had pictured, the whole garden seemed full. Geraniums, phlox, mignonette, roses, snapdragons, and pansies made the beds gay, while at the back of them great bushes of Michaelmas daisies and chrysanthemums stood erect, neatly tied up to stakes.

"But how?—who—whenever did you find time, father?"

"I've never put a hand to it."

"Then it must have been the fairies," she laughed. "Flowers may grow by themselves, but paths can't pull up their own weeds—I wish they could—nor bushes tie themselves up to stakes."

Her father laughed too. "Well, never having seen a fairy, I can't contradict. But I'm bound to say that Matthew Luxmore was never my idea of one."

"Mr. Luxmore?"

"Yes, he's come two and three times a week, all the time your mother's been in hospital, and tended the garden the same as if it had been his own. Don't you call that acting the real Christian?"

"I do. Oh, father, I wish mother could see it. Wouldn't it make her happy." Mona was touched almost to tears. "And doesn't it make you

want to do something nice for people in return! But everybody has been so kind I don't know where to begin."

"The only way to begin," said Peter Carne, as he led Mona slowly up the path, "is to take the first oppertoonty that comes along of doing a kindness to one of them, and to keep on taking all the oppertoonties you can. I know that the folks that have been good to us would be cut to the heart if we were to talk about returns. You can't return such things as they've done for us. You can only let them know how grateful you are. And if a chance comes of doing anything for them—why, do it. Now, you come along in, my girl, and sit down. You've done enough for one while. You've got to sit there and rest while I make you a cup of tea. That's right, the fire's just proper for making a nice bit of toast."

Mona sank down in the arm-chair, and stared about her in speechless surprise. "Why, it's like a palace! I came home meaning to clean it from top to bottom, and there's nothing for me to do. Has Mr. Luxmore been acting the fairy here too, father!"

"No, the fairies in this department were a smaller sort, and more like my idea of fairies. It's Millie Higgins and Patty that have set this all to rights for you. They came and begged of me to let them, till I couldn't refuse any longer. Patty's mother has cooked for me and looked after me all the time. There never was such folk as Seacombe folk I'm certain sure. There, there's a nice bit of toast for you, child, and the kettle just going to boil right out over our shining fender. We'll have a cup of tea in a brace of shakes now. Then you will feel like a new woman."

"I do that already," said Mona. "I mean," she added softly, "I am going to try to be, father."

Chapter 14

More than six months have passed away, and spring has come. Lucy Carne, strong and well again, is able to walk without even a trace of a limp. Mona has grown an inch or two, has put up her hair, and lengthened her skirts.

"You see I must learn to do it nicely by the time Miss Grace wants me," she explained, when, on Christmas day, she appeared for the first time with it coiled about her head. And, for a few weeks after, knew no peace of mind. "I shall never keep it up," she sighed, "unless I take a hammer and nails and fix it to my head that way."

Lucy complained that she spent a fortune in hairpins, and her father said he could always trace where Mona had been by the hairpins strewing the place.

Lucy and she had been busy since the New Year came in making her uniform, blue print frocks, and large white linen aprons for the mornings, and a brown cloth dress and muslin aprons for the afternoons. She was to have muslin caps too, and white collars and cuffs.

"I don't think black is really more serviceable than any other colour," Miss Lester had said when she came to talk to Lucy about Mona, "and I think I would like to have something new. So I want my servants to wear a pretty warm brown."

Mona was enraptured. The idea of wearing a uniform was delightful enough, but to have one unlike what other servants wore was doubly attractive. And when, on top of that, Miss Grace had said she had been thinking a great deal about Mona's pretty suggestion for her wedding day, and would be very happy indeed if her Bible-class girls would carry it out, Mona thought that life was almost too full of happiness. "I'm afraid I shall wake up and find it's all a dream," she said pathetically. "Mother, I'm not dreaming, am I?"

"And I would like to give you all the muslin to make your dresses of," added Miss Grace.

Lucy looked at her gratefully. "It's too good of you, Miss, and you with so much else to think about, and such a lot to get. I don't know how to thank you."

"Then don't try," said Miss Grace. "I understand. I shall leave it to you," turning smilingly to Mona, "to provide the flowers you are going to throw."

"Oh, we are all doing our best to get plenty of those," said Lucy. "There's a proper rivalry all through Seacombe, trying which of us can get the best. There won't be any out-door roses, but we've all got bushes in our windows."

Seacombe folk that spring tried to outdo each other in their cleaning, too. As soon as the March winds died down, and the days grew light and fine such a fury of whitewashing and painting, scrubbing and polishing set in, as had never been known in Seacombe before. By the middle of April there was not a whitewashing brush left, nor a yard of net for curtains.

"It dazzles one to walk up the street when the sun shines," Dr. Edwards complained. "What's the meaning of it all. Is it any special year——"

"It's your year, sir," laughed Lucy. "That's the meaning of it! It's all for your wedding day. You see, sir, you have been so good to us all, we want to do what we can to show you and Miss Grace what we feel towards you both."

Dr. Edwards was touched. Seacombe folk did not talk much of their feelings, and he had never dreamed how much they felt. "It is very, very kind of you all," he said, "and the knowledge will make us more happy than all our wedding presents put together."

"And we are all praying, sir, that the day may be as perfect a one as ever anybody knew," chimed in Mrs. Row, who was standing close by.

And surely no people ever had their prayers more graciously granted. The sun shone in a cloudless sky from morning till night. A soft little breeze from the sea tempered the warmth, and set all the flags and streamers waving. And as the bride walked down the churchyard path on her husband's arm, it blew the rose petals over her, pink, and crimson, and white.

Mona, her wishes realised, wore a blue sash and forget-me-nots in her hat; Millie stood next her with pink roses in hers, and a pink sash. Patty was a blue girl, and Philippa a pink one. And though the baskets they carried held not so very many roses, they were flowing over with other flowers, for the girls had walked miles to gather bluebells and primroses,

violets and delicate anemones, the air smelt sweetly of spring, and the joy of spring was in their faces, and in their hearts as well.

And as the bride walked away down the path, Mona looked after her with tender, wistful eyes, and an unspoken prayer in her heart, that she might be given the grace, and the power to serve her new mistress well and loyally, and to do her share towards making her new life in her new home as happy as life could be.

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This 1901 novel is the story of one man's ingenuity, perseverance and struggle in the construction of a grain elevator, and of his exhilarating triumph. Ayn Rand declared it her favorite novel, and it served inspiration for the heroes of her novel *Atlas Shrugged*.

"Calumet 'K'" is the name of a two-million bushel grain elevator being constructed by Charlie Bannon. Farmers and commodity markets are depending on Bannon to build it on time. In opposition are several tycoons wagering on it not getting built.

Bannon must heroically overcome incompetence, scheming, and sabotage, in addition to the daunting task of building the massive grain elevator. This is the story of competence – of single-minded effort, unstoppable determination, unflagging certainty and unbeatable ability.

Victor Appleton

Tom Swift Among the Diamond Makers

While young Tom Swift is in a jewelry store shopping for a ring for Mary, he meets a man who claims to be willing to teach Tom how to make diamonds. Later, the man (who happens to be one of the party that Tom rescued in the book *Tom Swift and his Wireless Message*) tells Tom his story -- how he was approached by a group of men who knew how to make diamonds, how he actually watched them make diamonds, and how he gave them some money, and how they dumped him (but not before giving him a fortune in diamonds). The man urges Tom to go with him on a hunt for these diamond makers.

After some thought on the matter, Tom agrees to go after the diamond makers, taking with him Ned, Mr. Damon, and Mr. Parker (the doomsday-predicting scientist in *Tom Swift and his Wireless Message* who predicted the destruction of the island). After a long search and plenty of adventures along the way, the small band locates the diamond makers -- but is then captured.

Can they escape from Phantom Mountain? Can they learn the secret of the diamond makers? Will the mountain really be destroyed, as Mr. Parker predicted? It's all there, in Tom Swift Among the Diamond Makers.

Henry Adams

Democracy

First published anonymously, March 1880, and soon in various unauthorized editions. It wasn't until the 1925 edition that Adams was listed as author. Henry Adams remarked (ironically as usual), "The wholesale piracy of Democracy was the single real triumph of my life."—it was very popular, as readers tried to guess who the author was and who the characters really were.

Henry Adams

The Education of Henry Adams

The Education of Henry Adams records the struggle of Bostonian Henry Adams (1838-1918), in early old age, to come to terms with the dawning 20th century, so different from the world of his youth. It is also a sharp critique of 19th century educational theory and practice. In 1907, Adams began privately circulating copies of a limited edition printed at his own expense. Commercial publication had to await its author's 1918 death, whereupon it won the 1919 Pulitzer Prize.

Wilkie Collins

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When a condemned woman asks the local Minister to take her daughter home, the childless man is touched and finds himself unable to refuse. Yet the prisoner is unrepentant of the murder of her husband. Will her vices be passed on to this seemingly sweet child?

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