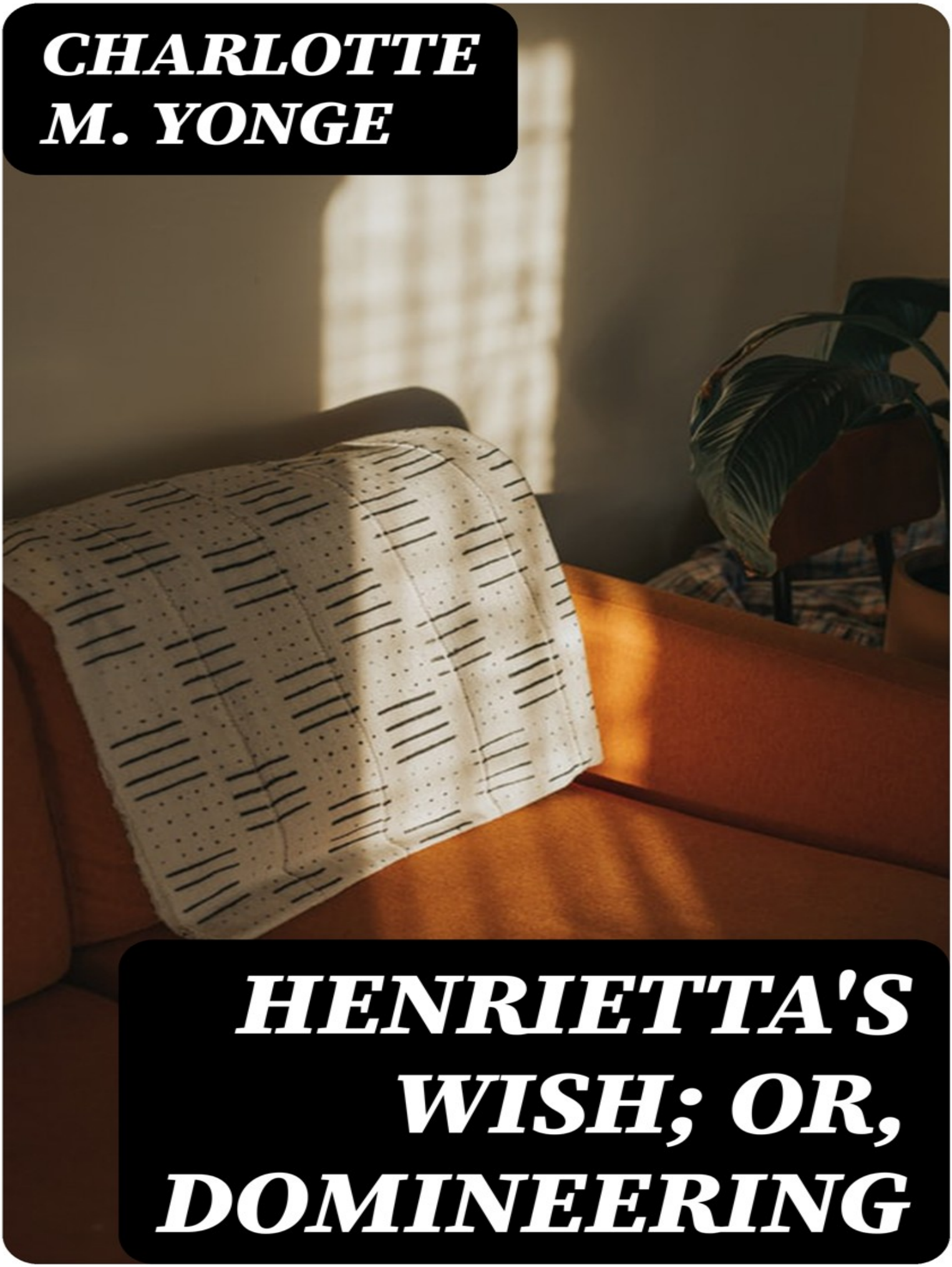
CHARLOTTE
M. YONGE
HENRIETTA'S
WISH; OR,
DOMINEERING

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CHAPTER I.

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On the afternoon of a warm day in the end of July, an open carriage was waiting in front of the painted toy-looking building which served as the railway station of Teignmouth. The fine bay horses stood patiently enduring the attacks of hosts of winged foes, too well-behaved to express their annoyance otherwise than by twitchings of their sleek shining skins, but duly grateful to the coachman, who roused himself now and then to whisk off some more pertinacious tormentor with the end of his whip.

Less patient was the sole occupant of the carriage, a maiden of about sixteen years of age, whose shady dark grey eyes, parted lips, and flushed complexion, were all full of the utmost eagerness, as every two or three minutes she looked up from the book which she held in her hand to examine the clock over the station door, compare it with her watch, and study the countenances of the bystanders to see whether they expressed any anxiety respecting the non-arrival of the train. All, however, seemed quite at their ease, and after a time the arrival of the railway omnibus and two or three other carriages, convinced her that the rest of the world only now began to consider it to be due. At last the ringing of a bell quickened everybody into a sudden state of activity, and assured her that the much-desired moment was come. The cloud of smoke was seen, the panting of the engine was heard, the train displayed its length before the station, men ran along tapping the doors of the carriages, and shouting a word which bore some distant resemblance

to “Teignmouth,” and at the same moment various travellers emerged from the different vehicles.

Her eye eagerly sought out one of these arrivals, who on his side, after a hasty greeting to the servant who met him on the platform, hurried to the carriage, and sprang into it. The two faces, exactly alike in form, complexion, and features, were for one moment pressed together, then withdrawn, in the consciousness of the publicity of the scene, but the hands remained locked together, and earnest was the tone of the “Well, Fred!” “Well, Henrietta!” which formed the greeting of the twin brother and sister.

“And was not mamma well enough to come?” asked Frederick, as the carriage turned away from the station.

“She was afraid of the heat. She had some business letters to write yesterday, which teased her, and she has not recovered from them yet; but she has been very well, on the whole, this summer. But what of your school affairs, Fred? How did the examination go off?”

“I am fourth, and Alex Langford fifth. Every one says the prize will lie between us next year.”

“Surely,” said Henrietta, “you must be able to beat him then, if you are before him now.”

“Don’t make too sure, Henrietta,” said Frederick, shaking his head, “Langford is a hard-working fellow, very exact and accurate; I should not have been before him now if it had not been for my verses.”

“I know Beatrice is very proud of Alexander,” said Henrietta, “she would make a great deal of his success.”

“Why of his more than of that of any other cousin?” said Frederick with some dissatisfaction.

“O you know he is the only one of the Knight Sutton cousins whom she patronizes; all the others she calls cubs and bears and Osbaldistones. And indeed, Uncle Geoffrey says he thinks it was in great part owing to her that Alex is different from the rest. At least he began to think him worth cultivating from the time he found him and Busy Bee perched up together in an apple-tree, she telling him the story of Alexander the Great. And how she always talks about Alex when she is here.”

“Is she at Knight Sutton?”

“Yes, Aunt Geoffrey would not come here, because she did not wish to be far from London, because old Lady Susan has not been well. And only think, Fred, Queen Bee says there is a very nice house to be let close to the village, and they went to look at it with grandpapa, and he kept on saying how well it would do for us.”

“O, if we could but get mamma there!” said Fred. “What does she say?”

“She knows the house, and says it is a very pleasant one,” said Henrietta; “but that is not an inch—no, not the hundredth part of an inch—towards going there!”

“It would surely be a good thing for her if she could but be brought to believe so,” said Frederick. “All her attachments are there—her own home; my father’s home.”

“There is nothing but the sea to be attached to, here,” said Henrietta. “Nobody can take root without some local interest, and as to acquaintance, the people are always changing.”

“And there is nothing to do,” added Fred; “nothing possible but boating and riding, which are not worth the

misery which they cause her, as Uncle Geoffrey says. It is very, very—”

“Aggravating,” said Henrietta, supplying one of the numerous stock of family slang words.

“Yes, aggravating,” said he with a smile, “to be placed under the necessity of being absurd, or of annoying her!”

“Annoying! O, Fred, you do not know a quarter of what she goes through when she thinks you are in any danger. It could not be worse if you were on the field of battle! And it is very strange, for she is not at all a timid person for herself. In the boat, that time when the wind rose, I am sure Aunt Geoffrey was more afraid than she was, and I have seen it again and again that she is not easily frightened.”

“No: and I do not think she is afraid for you.”

“Not as she is for you, Fred; but then boys are so much more precious than girls, and besides they love to endanger themselves so much, that I think that is reasonable.”

“Uncle Geoffrey thinks there is something nervous and morbid in it,” said Fred: “he thinks that it is the remains of the horror of the sudden shock—”

“What? Our father’s accident?” asked Henrietta. “I never knew rightly about that. I only knew it was when we were but a week old.”

“No one saw it happen,” said Fred; “he went out riding, his horse came home without him, and he was lying by the side of the road.”

“Did they bring him home?” asked Henrietta, in the same low thrilling tone in which her brother spoke.

“Yes, but he never recovered his senses: he just said ‘Mary,’ once or twice, and only lived to the middle of the

night!”

“Terrible!” said Henrietta, with a shudder. “O! how did mamma ever recover it?—at least, I do not think she has recovered it now,—but I meant live, or be even as well as she is.”

“She was fearfully ill for long after,” said Fred, “and Uncle Geoffrey thinks that these anxieties for me are an effect of the shock. He says they are not at all like her usual character. I am sure it is not to be wondered at.”

“O no, no,” said Henrietta. “What a mystery it has always seemed to us about papa! She sometimes mentioning him in talking about her childish days and Knight Sutton, but if we tried to ask any more, grandmamma stopping us directly, till we learned to believe we ought never to utter his name. I do believe, though, that mamma herself would have found it a comfort to talk to us about him, if poor dear grandmamma had not always cut her short, for fear it should be too much for her.”

“But had you not always an impression of something dreadful about his death?”

“O yes, yes; I do not know how we acquired it, but that I am sure we had, and it made us shrink from asking any questions, or even from talking to each other about it. All I knew I heard from Beatrice. Did Uncle Geoffrey tell you this?”

“Yes, he told me when he was here last Easter, and I was asking him to speak to mamma about my fishing, and saying how horrid it was to be kept back from everything. First he laughed, and said it was the penalty of being an

only son, and then he entered upon this history, to show me how it is."

"But it is very odd that she should have let you learn to ride, which one would have thought she would have dreaded most of all."

"That was because she thought it right, he says. Poor mamma, she said to him, 'Geoffrey, if you think it right that Fred should begin to ride, never mind my folly.' He says that he thinks it cost her as much resolution to say that as it might to be martyred. And the same about going to school."

"Yes, yes; exactly," said Henrietta, "if she thinks it is right, bear it she will, cost her what it may! O there is nobody like mamma. Busy Bee says so, and she knows, living in London and seeing so many people as she does."

"I never saw anyone so like a queen," said Fred. "No, nor anyone so beautiful, though she is so pale and thin. People say you are like her in her young days, Henrietta; and to be sure, you have a decent face of your own, but you will never be as beautiful as mamma, not if you live to be a hundred."

"You are afraid to compliment my face because it is so like your own, Master Fred," retorted his sister; "but one comfort is, that I shall grow more like her by living to a hundred, whereas you will lose all the little likeness you have, and grow a grim old Black-beard! But I was going to say, Fred, that, though I think there is a great deal of truth in what Uncle Geoffrey said, yet I do believe that poor grandmamma made it worse. You know she had always been in India, and knew less about boys than mamma, who had been brought up with papa and my uncles, so she might really believe that everything was dangerous; and I have

often seen her quite as much alarmed, or more perhaps, about you—her consolations just showing that she was in a dreadful fright, and making mamma twice as bad.”

“Well,” said Fred, sighing, “that is all over now, and she thought she was doing it all for the best.”

“And,” proceeded Henrietta, “I think, and Queen Bee thinks, that this perpetual staying on at Rocksand was more owing to her than to mamma. She imagined that mamma could not bear the sight of Knight Sutton, and that it was a great kindness to keep her from thinking of moving—”

“Ay, and that nobody can doctor her but Mr. Clarke,” added Fred.

“Till now, I really believe,” said Henrietta, “that the possibility of moving has entirely passed out of her mind, and she no more believes that she can do it than that the house can.”

“Yes,” said Fred, “I do not think a journey occurs to her among events possible, and yet without being very fond of this place.”

“Fond! O no! it never was meant to be a home, and has nothing homelike about it! All her affections are really at Knight Sutton, and if she once went there, she would stay and be so much happier among her own friends, instead of being isolated here with me. In grandmamma’s time it was not so bad for her, but now she has no companion at all but me. Rocksand has all the loneliness of the country without its advantages.”

“There is not much complaint as to happiness, after all,” said Fred.

“No, O no! but then it is she who makes it delightful, and it cannot be well for her to have no one to depend upon but me. Besides, how useless one is here. No opportunity of doing anything for the poor people, no clergyman who will put one into the way of being useful. O how nice it would be at Knight Sutton!”

“And perhaps she would be cured of her fears,” added Fred; “she would find no one to share them, and be convinced by seeing that the cousins there come to no harm. I wish Uncle Geoffrey would recommend it!”

“Well, we will see what we can do,” said Henrietta. “I do think we may persuade her, and I think we ought; it would be for her happiness and for yours, and on all accounts I am convinced that it ought to be done.”

And as Henrietta came to this serious conclusion, they entered the steep straggling street of the little town of Rocksand, and presently were within the gates of the sweep which led to the door of the verandahed Gothic cottage, which looked very tempting for summer’s lodging, but was little fitted for a permanent abode.

In spite of all the longing wishes expressed during the drive, no ancestral home, beloved by inheritance, could have been entered with more affectionate rapture than that with which Frederick Langford sprung from the carriage, and flew to the arms of his mother, receiving and returning such a caress as could only be known by a boy conscious that he had done nothing to forfeit home love and confidence.

Turning back the fair hair that hung over his forehead, Mrs. Langford looked into his eyes, saying, half-interrogatively, half-affirmatively, “All right, Fred? Nothing

that we need be afraid to tell Uncle Geoffrey? Well, Henrietta, he is grown, but he has not passed you yet. And now, Freddy, tell us about your examination," added she, as fondly leaning on his arm, she proceeded into the drawing-room, and they sat down together on the sofa, talking eagerly and joyously.

Mrs. Frederick Henry Langford, to give her her proper style, was in truth one whose peculiar loveliness of countenance well deserved the admiration expressed by her son. It was indeed pale and thin, but the features were beautifully formed, and had that expression of sweet placid resignation which would have made a far plainer face beautiful. The eyes were deep dark blue, and though sorrow and suffering had dimmed their brightness, their softness was increased; the smile was one of peace, of love, of serenity; of one who, though sorrow-stricken, as it were, before her time, had lived on in meek patience and submission, almost a child in her ways, as devoted to her mother, as little with a will and way of her own, as free from the cares of this work-a-day world. The long luxuriant dark brown hair, which once, as now with Henrietta, had clustered in thick glossy ringlets over her comb and round her face, was in thick braids beneath the delicate lace cap which suited with her plain black silk dress. Her figure was slender, so tall that neither her well-grown son nor daughter had yet reached her height, and, as Frederick said, with something queenlike in its unconscious grace and dignity.

As a girl she had been the merriest of the merry, and even now she had great playfulness of manner, and threw herself into the occupation of the moment with a life and

animation that gave an uncommon charm to her manners, so that how completely sorrow had depressed and broken her spirit would scarcely have been guessed by one who had not known her in earlier days.

Frederick’s account of his journey and of his school news was heard and commented on, a work of time extending far into the dinner; the next matter in the regular course of conversation on the day of arrival was to talk over Uncle and Aunt Geoffrey’s proceedings, and the Knight Sutton affairs.

“So, Uncle Geoffrey has been in the North?” said Fred.

“Yes, on a special retainer,” said Mrs. Langford, “and very much he seems to have enjoyed his chance of seeing York Cathedral.”

“He wrote to me in court,” said Fred, “to tell me what books I had better get up for this examination, and on a bit of paper scribbled all over one side with notes of the evidence. He said the Cathedral was beautiful beyond all he ever imagined.”

“Had he never seen it before?” said Henrietta. “Lawyers seem made to travel in their vacations.”

“Uncle Geoffrey could not be spared,” said her mamma; “I do not know what Grandmamma Langford would do if he cheated her of any more of his holidays than he bestows upon us. He is far too valuable to be allowed to take his own pleasure.”

“Besides, his own pleasure is at Knight Sutton,” said Henrietta.

“He goes home just as he used from school,” said Mrs. Langford. “Indeed, except a few grey hairs and crows feet,

he is not in the least altered from those days; his work and play come in just the same way.”

“And, as his daughter says, he is just as much the home pet,” added Henrietta, “only rivalled by Busy Bee herself.”

“No,” said Fred, “according to Aunt Geoffrey, there are two suns in one sphere: Queen Bee is grandpapa’s pet, Uncle Geoffrey grandmamma’s. It must be great fun to see them.”

“Happy people!” said Mrs. Langford.

“Henrietta says,” proceeded Fred, “that there is a house to be let at Knight Sutton.”

“The Pleasance; yes, I know it well,” said his mother: “it is not actually in the parish, but close to the borders, and a very pretty place.”

“With a pretty little stream in the garden, Fred, “said Henrietta, “and looking into that beautiful Sussex coom, that there is a drawing of in mamma’s room.”

“What size is it?” added Fred.

“The comparative degree,” said Mrs. Langford, “but my acquaintance with it does not extend beyond the recollection of a pretty-looking drawing-room with French windows, and a lawn where I used to be allowed to run about when I went with Grandmamma Langford to call on the old Miss Drakes. I wonder your Uncle Roger does not take it, for those boys can scarcely, I should think, be wedged into Sutton Leigh when they are all at home.”

“I wish some one else would take it,” said Fred.

“Some one,” added Henrietta, “who would like it of all things, and be quite at home there.”

“A person,” proceeded the boy, “who likes Knight Sutton and its inhabitants better than anything else.”

“Only think,” joined in the young lady, “how delightful it would be. I can just fancy you, mamma, sitting out on this lawn you talk of, on a summer’s day, and nursing your pinks and carnations, and listening to the nightingales, and Grandpapa and Grandmamma Langford, and Uncle and Aunt Roger, and the cousins coming walking in at any time without ringing at the door! And how nice to have Queen Bee and Uncle and Aunt Geoffrey all the vacation!”

“Without feeling as if we were robbing Knight Sutton,” said Mrs. Langford. “Why, we should have you a regular little country maid, Henrietta, riding shaggy ponies, and scrambling over hedges, as your mamma did before you.”

“And being as happy as a queen,” said Henrietta; “and the poor people, you know them all, don’t you, mamma?”

“I know their names, but my generation must have nearly passed away. But I should like you to see old Daniels the carpenter, whom the boys used to work with, and who was so fond of them. And the old schoolmistress in her spectacles. How she must be scandalized by the introduction of a noun and a verb!”

“Who has been so cruel?” asked Fred. “Busy Bee, I suppose.”

“Yes,” said Henrietta, “she teaches away with all her might; but she says she is afraid they will forget it all while she is in London, for there is no one to keep it up. Now, I could do that nicely. How I should like to be Queen Bee’s deputy.”

“But,” said Fred, “how does Beatrice manage to make grandmamma endure such novelties? I should think she would disdain them more than the old mistress herself.”

“Queen Bee’s is not merely a nominal sovereignty,” said Mrs. Langford.

“Besides,” said Henrietta, “the new Clergyman approves of all that sort of thing; he likes her to teach, and puts her in the way of it.”

CHAPTER II.

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From this time forward everything tended towards Knight Sutton: castles in the air, persuasions, casual words which showed the turn of thought of the brother and sister, met their mother every hour. Nor was she, as Henrietta truly said, entirely averse to the change; she loved to talk of what she still regarded as her home, but the shrinking dread of the pang it must give to return to the scene of her happiest days, to the burial-place of her husband, to the abode of his parents, had been augmented by the tender over-anxious care of her mother, Mrs. Vivian, who had strenuously endeavoured to prevent her from ever taking such a proposal into consideration, and fairly led her at length to believe it out of the question.

A removal would in fact have been impossible during the latter years of Mrs. Vivian’s life: but she had now been dead about eighteen months, her daughter had recovered from the first grief of her loss, and there was a general impression throughout the family that now was the time for her to come amongst them again. For herself, the possibility was but beginning to dawn upon her; just at first she joined in building castles and imagining scenes at Knight Sutton, without thinking of their being realized, or that it only depended upon her, to find herself at home there; and when Frederick and Henrietta, encouraged by this manner of talking, pressed it upon her, she would reply with some vague intention of a return some time or other, but still

thinking of it as something far away, and rather to be dreaded than desired.

It was chiefly by dint of repetition that it fully entered her mind that it was their real and earnest wish that she should engage to take a lease of the Pleasance, and remove almost immediately from her present abode; and from this time it might be perceived that she always shrank from entering on the subject in a manner which gave them little reason to hope.

“Yet, I think,” said Henrietta to her brother one afternoon as they were walking together on the sands; “I think if she once thought it was right, if Uncle Geoffrey would tell her so, or if grandpapa would really tell her that he wished it, I am quite sure that she would resolve upon it.”

“But why did he not do so long ago?” said Fred.

“O! because of grandmamma, I suppose,” said Henrietta; “but he really does wish it, and I should not at all wonder if the Busy Bee could put it into his head to do it.”

“Or if Uncle Geoffrey would advise her,” said Fred; “but it never answers to try to make him propose anything to her. He never will do it; he always says he is not the Pope, or something to that effect.”

“If I was not fully convinced that it was right, and the best for all parties, I would not say so much about it,” said Henrietta, in a tone rather as if she was preparing for some great sacrifice, instead of domineering over her mother.

To domineering, her temptation was certainly great. With all her good sense and ability, Mrs. Langford had seldom been called upon to decide for herself, but had always relied upon her mother for counsel; and during her long and

gradual decline had learnt to depend upon her brother-in-law, Mr. Geoffrey Langford, for direction in great affairs, and in lesser ones upon her children. Girls are generally older of their age than boys, and Henrietta, a clever girl and her mother's constant companion, occupied a position in the family which amounted to something more than prime minister. Some one person must always be leader, and thus she had gradually attained, or had greatness thrust upon her; for justice requires it to be stated, that she more frequently tried to know her mamma's mind for her, than to carry her own point, though perhaps to do so always was more than could be expected of human nature at sixteen. The habit of being called on to settle whether they should use the britska or the pony carriage, whether satin or silk was best, or this or that book should be ordered, was, however, sufficient to make her very unwilling to be thwarted in other matters of more importance, especially in one on which were fixed the most ardent hopes of her brother, and the wishes of all the family.

Their present abode was, as she often said to herself, not the one best calculated for the holiday sports of a boy of sixteen, yet Frederick, having been used to nothing else, was very happy, and had tastes formed on their way of life. The twins, as little children, had always had the same occupations, Henrietta learning Latin, marbles, and trap-ball, and Frederick playing with dolls and working cross-stitch; and even now the custom was so far continued, that he gave lessons in Homer and Euclid for those which he received in Italian and music. For present amusement there was no reason to complain; the neighbourhood supplied

many beautiful walks, while longer expeditions were made with Mrs. Langford in the pony carriage, and sketching, botanizing, and scrambling, were the order of the day. Boating too was a great delight, and had it not been for an occasional fretting recollection that he could not go out sailing without his mamma, and that most of his school fellows were spending their holidays in a very different manner, he would have been perfectly happy. Fortunately he had not sufficient acquaintance with the boys in the neighbourhood for the contrast to be often brought before him.

Henrietta did not do much to reconcile him to the anxious care with which he was guarded. She was proud of his talents, of his accomplishments, of his handsome features, and she would willingly have been proud of his excellence in manly sports, but in lieu of this she was proud of the spirit which made him long for them, and encouraged it by her full and entire sympathy. The belief that the present restraints must be diminished at Knight Sutton, was a moving spring with her, as much as her own wish for the scenes round which imagination had thrown such a brilliant halo. Of society they had hitherto seen little or nothing; Mrs. Langford’s health and spirits had never been equal to visiting, nor was there much to tempt her in the changing inhabitants of a watering-place. Now and then, perhaps, an old acquaintance or distant connexion of some part of the family came for a month or six weeks, and a few calls were exchanged, and it was one of these visits that led to the following conversation.

“By the by, mamma,” said Fred, “I meant to ask you what that foolish woman meant about the St. Legers, and their not having thoroughly approved of Aunt Geoffrey’s marriage.”

“About the most ill-placed thing she could have said, Freddy,” replied Mrs. Langford, “considering that I was always accused of having made the match.”

“Made the match! O tell us, mamma; tell us all about it. Did you really?”

“Not consciously; Fred, and Frank St. Leger deserves as much of the credit as I do.”

“Who was he? a brother of Aunt Geoffrey’s?”

“O yes, Fred,” said Henrietta, “to be sure you knew that. You have heard how mamma came home from India with General St. Leger and his little boy and girl. But by the by, mamma, what became of their mother?”

“Lady Beatrice? She died in India just before we came home. Well, I used to stay with them after we came back to England, and of course talked to my friend—”

“Call her Beatrice, mamma, and make a story of it.”

“I talked to her about my Knight Sutton home, and cousins, and on the other hand, then, Frank was always telling her about his school friend Geoffrey Langford. At last Frank brought him home from Oxford one Easter vacation. It was when the general was in command at ——, and Beatrice was in the midst of all sorts of gaieties, the mistress of the house, entertaining everybody, and all exactly what a novel would call brilliant.”

“Were you there, mamma?”

“Yes, Beatrice had made a point of our coming to stay with her, and very droll it was to see how she and Geoffrey were surprised at each other; she to find her brother’s guide, philosopher, and friend, the Langford who had gained every prize, a boyish-looking, boyish-mannered youth, very shy at first, and afterwards, excellent at giggling and making giggle; and he to find one with the exterior of a fine gay lady, so really simple in tastes and habits.”

“Was Aunt Geoffrey ever pretty?” asked Fred.

“She is just what she was then, a little brown thing with no actual beauty but in her animation and in her expression. I never saw a really handsome person who seemed to me nearly as charming. Then she had, and indeed has now, so much air and grace, so much of what, for want of a better word, I must call fashion in her appearance, that she was always very striking.”

“Yes,” said Henrietta, “I can quite see that; it is not gracefulness, and it is not beauty, nor is it what she ever thinks of, but there is something distinguished about her. I should look twice at her if I met her in the street, and expect her to get into a carriage with a coronet. And then and there they fell in love, did they?”

“In long morning expeditions with the ostensible purpose of sketching, but in which I had all the drawing to myself, while the others talked either wondrous wisely or wondrous drolly. However, you must not suppose that anything of the novel kind was said then; Geoffrey was only twenty, and Beatrice seemed as much out of his reach as the king’s daughter of Hongarie.”

“O yes, of course,” said Henrietta, “but that only makes it more delightful! Only to think of Uncle and Aunt Geoffrey having a novel in their history.”

“That there are better novels in real life than in stories, is a truth or a truism often repeated, Henrietta,” said her mother with a soft sigh, which she repressed in an instant, and proceeded: “Poor Frank’s illness and death at Oxford brought them together the next year in a very different manner. Geoffrey was one of his chief nurses to the last, and was a great comfort to them all; you may suppose how grateful they were to him. Next time I saw him, he seemed quite to have buried his youthful spirits in his studies: he was reading morning, noon, and night, and looking ill and overworked.”

“O, Uncle Geoffrey! dear good Uncle Geoffrey,” cried Henrietta, in an ecstasy; “you were as delightful as a knight of old, only as you could not fight tournaments for her, you were obliged to read for her; and pining away all the time and saying nothing about it.”

“Nothing beyond a demure inquiry of me when we were alone together, after the health of the General. Well, you know how well his reading succeeded; he took a double first class, and very proud of him we were.”

“And still he saw nothing of her,” said Fred.

“Not till some time after he had been settled in his chambers at the Temple. Now you must know that General St. Leger, though in most matters a wise man, was not by any means so in money matters: and by some unlucky speculation which was to have doubled his daughter’s

fortune, managed to lose the whole of it, leaving little but his pay.”

“Capital!” cried Frederick, “that brings her down to him.”

“So it did,” said his mother, smiling; “but the spectators did not rejoice quite so heartily as you do. The general’s health was failing, and it was hard to think what would become of Beatrice; for Lord St. Leger’s family, though very kind, were not more congenial than they are now. As soon as all this was pretty well known, Geoffrey spoke, and the general, who was very fond of him, gave full consent. They meant to wait until it was prudent, of course, and were well contented; but just after it was all settled, the general had a sudden seizure, and died. Geoffrey was with him, and he treated him like a son, saying it was his great comfort to know that her happiness was in his hands. Poor Beatrice, she went first to the St. Legers, stayed with them two or three months, then I would have her to be my bridesmaid, though”—and Mrs. Langford tried to smile, while again she strangled a sobbing sigh—“she warned me that her mourning was a bad omen. Well, she stayed with my mother while we went abroad, and on our return went with us to be introduced at Knight Sutton. Everybody was charmed, Mrs. Langford and Aunt Roger had expected a fine lady or a blue one, but they soon learnt to believe all her gaiety and all her cleverness a mere calumny, and grandpapa was delighted with her the first moment. How well I remember Geoffrey’s coming home and thanking us for having managed so well as to make her like one of the family, while the truth was that she had fitted herself in, and found her place from the first moment. Now came a time of grave private

conferences. A long engagement which might have been very well if the general had lived, was a dreary prospect now that Beatrice was without a home; but then your uncle was but just called to the bar, and had next to nothing of his own, present or to come. However, he had begun his literary works, and found them answer so well, that he believed he could maintain himself till briefs came in, and he had the sort of talent which gives confidence. He thought, too, that even in the event of his death she would be better off as one of us, than as a dependent on the St. Legers; and at last by talking to us, he nearly persuaded himself to believe it would be a very prudent thing to marry. It was a harder matter to persuade his father, but persuade him he did, and the wedding was at Knight Sutton that very summer."

"That's right," cried Fred, "excellent and glorious! A farthing for all the St. Legers put together."

"Nevertheless, Fred, in spite of your disdain, we were all of opinion that it was a matter of rejoicing that Lord St. Leger and Lady Amelia were present, so that no one had any reason to say that they disapproved. Moreover, lest you should learn imprudence from my story, I would also suggest that if your uncle and aunt had not been a couple comme il-y-en a peu, it would neither have been excellent nor glorious."

"Why, they are very well off," said Fred; "he is quite at the head of his profession. The first thing a fellow asks me when he hears my name is, if I belong to Langford the barrister."

"Yes, but he never would have been eminent, scarcely have had daily bread, if he had not worked fearfully hard, so

hard that without the buoyant school-boy spirit, which can turn from the hardest toil like a child to its play, his health could never have stood it."

"But then it has been success and triumph," said Fred; "one could work like a galley-slave with encouragement, and never feel it drudgery."

"It was not all success at first," said his mother; "there was hard work, and disappointment, and heavy sorrow too; but they knew how to bear it, and to win through with it."

"And were they very poor?" asked Henrietta.

"Yes: but it was beautiful to see how she accommodated herself to it. The house that once looked dingy and desolate, was very soon pretty and cheerful, and the wirtschaft so well ordered and economical, that Aunt Roger was struck dumb with admiration. I shall not forget Lady Susan's visit the last morning we spent with her in London, how amazed she was to find 'poor Beatrice' looking so bright and like herself, and how little she guessed at her morning's work, the study of shirt-making, and the copying out a review of her husband's, full of Greek quotations."

"Well, the poverty is all over now," said Henrietta; "but still they live in a very quiet way, considering Aunt Geoffrey's connexions and the fortune he has made."

"Who put that notion into your head, my wise daughter?" said Mrs. Langford.

Henrietta blushed, laughed, and mentioned Lady Matilda St. Leger, a cousin of her aunt Geoffrey's of whom she had seen something in the last year.

"The truth is," said Mrs. Langford, "that your aunt had display and luxury enough in her youth to value it as it

deserves, and he could not desire it except for her sake. They had rather give with a free hand, beyond what any one knows or suspects."

"Ah! I know among other things that he sends Alexander to school," said Fred.

"Yes, and the improvements at Knight Sutton," said Henrietta, "the school, and all that grandpapa wished but could never afford. Well, mamma, if you made the match, you deserve to be congratulated on your work."

"There's nobody like Uncle Geoffrey, I have said, and shall always maintain," said Fred.

His mother sighed, saying, "I don't know what we should have done without him!" and became silent. Henrietta saw an expression on her countenance which made her unwilling to disturb her, and nothing more was said till it was discovered that it was bed time.

CHAPTER III.

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“Where is Madame?” asked Frederick of his sister, as she entered the breakfast room alone the next morning with the key of the tea-chest in her hand.

“A headache,” answered Henrietta, “and a palpitation.”

“A bad one?”

“Yes, very; and I am afraid it is our fault, Freddy; I am convinced it will not do, and we must give it up.”

“How do you mean? The going to Knight Sutton? What has that to do with it? Is it the reviving old recollections that is too much for her?”

“Just listen what an effect last evening’s conversation had upon her. Last night, after I had been asleep a long time, I woke up, and there I saw her kneeling before the table with her hands over her face. Just then it struck one, and soon after she got into bed. I did not let her know I was awake, for speaking would only have made it worse, but I am sure she did not sleep all night, and this morning she had one of her most uncomfortable fits of palpitation. She had just fallen asleep, when I looked in after dressing, but I do not think she will be fit to come down to-day.”

“And do you think it was talking of Uncle and Aunt Geoffrey that brought it on?” said Fred, with much concern; “yet it did not seem to have much to do with my father.”

“O but it must,” said Henrietta. “He must have been there all the time mixed up in everything. Queen Bee has told me how they were always together when they were children.”

“Ah! perhaps; and I noticed how she spoke about her wedding,” said Fred. “Yes, and to compare how differently it has turned out with Aunt Geoffrey and with her, after they had been young and happy together. Yes, no doubt it was he who persuaded the people at Knight Sutton into letting them marry!”

“And their sorrow that she spoke of must have been his death,” said Henrietta. “No doubt the going over those old times renewed all those thoughts.”

“And you think going to Knight Sutton might have the same effect. Well, I suppose we must give it up,” said Fred, with a sigh. “After all, we can be very happy here!”

“O yes! that we can. It is more on your account than mine, that I wished it,” said the sister.

“And I should not have thought so much of it, if I had not thought it would be pleasanter for you when I am away,” said Fred.

“And so,” said Henrietta, laughing yet sighing, “we agree to persuade each other that we don’t care about it.”

Fred performed a grimace, and remarked that if Henrietta continued to make her tea so scalding, there would soon be a verdict against her of fratricide; but the observation, being intended to conceal certain feelings of disappointment and heroism, only led to silence.

After sleeping for some hours, Mrs. Langford awoke refreshed, and got up, but did not leave her room. Frederick and Henrietta went to take a walk by her desire, as she declared that she preferred being alone, and on their return they found her lying on the sofa.

“Mamma has been in mischief,” said Fred. “She did not think herself knocked up enough already, so she has been doing it more thoroughly.”

“Oh, mamma!” was Henrietta’s reproachful exclamation, as she looked at her pale face and red swollen eyelids.

“Never mind, my dears,” said she, trying to smile, “I shall be better now this is done, and I have it off my mind.” They looked at her in anxious interrogation, and she smiled outright with lip and eye. “You will seal that letter with a good will, Henrietta,” she said. “It is to ask Uncle Geoffrey to make inquiries about the Pleasance.”

“Mamma!” and they stood transfixed at a decision beyond their hopes: then Henrietta exclaimed—

“No, no, mamma, it will be too much for you; you must not think of it.”

“Yes,” said Fred; “indeed we agreed this morning that it would be better not. Put it out of your head, mamma, and go on here in peace and comfort. I am sure it suits you best.”

“Thank you, thank you, my dear ones,” said she, drawing them towards her, and fondly kissing them, “but it is all settled, and I am sure it is better for you. It is but a dull life for you here.”

“O no, no, no, dearest mamma: nothing can be dull with you,” cried Henrietta, wishing most sincerely to undo her own work. “We are, indeed we are, as happy as the day is long. Do not fancy we are discontented; do not think we want a change.”

Mrs. Langford replied by an arch though subdued smile.