

real regret. He could wish that she had been different, that she could have realised his conception of her as he imagined her at first. For that conception he could mourn, but not for the frivolous woman who had courted death by her folly.

Elizabeth was fourteen when he met Laura Dent. He had no thoughts of a second marriage ever, until then, and although he came in contact with the girl many times during the year that followed, still the idea was remote from him. Outbursts of temper on the part of Elizabeth, always violent, became more pronounced that year, and at last her father decided to place her in a convent to finish her education.

By every means in their power the good nuns strove to help the self-willed girl. What little good they succeeded in doing her was uprooted, when, the year following, her father wrote to her of his approaching marriage. Just as long as they dared the Religious kept her, and then reluctantly informed Benjamin Wing that he must take his daughter home—that she was a menace to the discipline of the house.

Laura Wing welcomed her husband's daughter with open arms. In her own gentle, quiet way, she stood between her and his anger. Many times she made peace when war seemed inevitable. With soft speech she strove to win her favor, but all her efforts were in vain, and oftentimes Elizabeth wrung her stepmother's heart. All this she concealed from her husband, praising his daughter to him, and praying without ceasing for the poor girl who, she felt, had never known a mother's love.

One day, however, Benjamin Wing returned unexpectedly, and found his wife in tears. Elizabeth had been particularly belligerent, and, even before Laura could make excuses for her, turned stormily upon her father. A dreadful scene ensued, and Laura became deathly ill. That night Benjamin Wing resolved that Elizabeth must find shelter under another roof, and before Laura recovered had himself taken the girl to a distant relative of her mother's.

The years that followed for man and wife were happy ones. Laura was an ideal woman, indeed, gentle and lovable. One beautiful little girl came to them to complete their happiness, and for the decade that passed over their heads, the man, once so cruelly disappointed and disillusioned, knew what it was to lead an existence almost like that of paradise. His little daughter was ten years old, when, one morning, received a letter from Elizabeth, announcing that she would pay him a short visit the following month.

'And 't shall be a short visit,' he said, and his tone was stern. 'She has never tried in any way to conciliate me. All her life she has seemed to hate me—as if I were a stranger who had wronged her, and not her father, who had done his best to make her happy. And I warn you, Laura, that unless she proves of different mind than she was ten years ago, her visit must terminate immediately.'

Strangely enough his daughter Elizabeth—no longer a passionate, self-willed child of fourteen, but a slender, dark-eyed young woman of twenty-four—seemed, indeed, a new character. She was brilliant as her mother had been, gay and talented, and devoted herself at once to her father. Her visit, instead of being a short one, lengthened into months, and at last the father decided that she must remain with them altogether. To his praises of his daughter, Laura listened, and tried with all her heart to echo them. Only she seemed to read below the surface; only he knew what Elizabeth made her suffer by quiet snubs, by petty meannesses.

Little by little Benjamin Wing leaned less upon his wife and more upon Elizabeth. Elizabeth decided this question and that, Elizabeth decided this change or that plan, Elizabeth, always Elizabeth. She had the elusive charm of her mother—the charm that had captivated Benjamin Wing in the past years, and which had so soon vanished, once the shallow nature, underneath asserted itself.

By and by Laura withdrew more and more, and allowed Elizabeth to become first—as she had meant to be from the day she entered the house. She still fully concealed her contempt of her stepmother, her dislike of her half-sister. The man, man-like, noticed the subdued demeanor of the woman, and ascribed it as Elizabeth meant he should, to jealousy. He did not mean to be cruel or unjust, and he loved Laura and his second daughter. But the gay manner of Elizabeth held him. She was always happy, always cheerful, her wit pleasant, her talents many—a striking contrast to the others.

The climax came when Benjamin Wing was stricken with apoplexy one day, and was carried to the room from which he was never to emerge alive. Here, in

the fight he waged with death, he had no desire to have any one about him but his daughter Elizabeth. Night and day, she tended him and was assiduous in her attentions and care.

Well, Benjamin Wing died, and when Benjamin Wing's will was read, it was discovered, to the astonishment of all, that his widow and his daughter Laura had not even been left the proverbial shilling, while every bit of his real estate and personal property went to Elizabeth. No one realised the meaning of this less than the gentle-hearted woman—not even when Elizabeth, without preamble, told her that she must leave the house. Indignant friends sought Laura and advised her to contest the will. But in all her wedded life she had never gone contrary to her husband's desires, and now she was too stunned to comprehend. There seemed to have been some frightful misunderstanding—surely the husband who had been so much to her could not have been capable of an act so cruel.

Smitten and wounded she stole quietly away—she and her little girl—and buried herself in an obscure street, hiding from all those who had known her. Here the sale of her personal belongings kept her for a few years. She made no provisions for the future, since she could foresee no future. Presently the little girl, grown into blossoming maidenhood, took from the weary shoulders the burden of struggle. She appealed to certain friends for aid in securing employment. They helped her, doing what they could, but as it so chanced, the wealthiest are not always the most willing. Laura was glad to secure the bare necessities of life, and Mrs. Wing's heart ached to see her daughter—who should have been surrounded by every luxury—thus reduced to the condition of a drudge.

If Laura longed for the privileges which had been taken away from her, she suppressed the longing quietly. She was an odd creature in her own way, deeply religious, and in all this privation she read the will of God. Her faith that things would change never failed her.

'I don't know why father made such a will,' she would say often to the heartsick mother; 'and I doubt if he ever did. I do not accuse Elizabeth of dishonesty—I can't understand how she could manage to be dishonest—but some day we will find out the truth.'

And this hopefulness came part of her.

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Dr. Burton entered the house, drew off his water-soaked overcoat, and rubbers, and then, damp and tired, sought the cosy study where warmth and comfort awaited him. A summons brought his tidy servant with a steaming bowl of coffee and as he sipped it he gazed into the open fire thoughtfully. For that very evening he had listened to a singular story—one that read like a romance.

He had been called to the bedside of a protegee of Miss Elizabeth Wing's—a wealthy young woman, whom he admired very much. In fact she had shown a decided preference for his society, and he in turn had been attracted by her charm and beauty. So when she gave him the address of a certain John Hempstead, and told him, in her dignified way, that he had been a faithful servant of her father's, and was now a pensioner on her bounty, he made haste to call upon him.

His two visits were made in the presence of Miss Elizabeth herself. She was much concerned, and drew Dr. Burton aside to find out if there was any hope of him. Dr. Burton could give no hope.

'I must make a thorough examination of the man first,' he said; 'I will return later—say in about an hour.'

He did so—to find Miss Wing still with the old man, as faithful in her care as if he had been her father, and not her father's servant. Several things happened during that visit to annoy Dr. Burton. In the first place, Elizabeth did not seem inclined to leave him alone with John Hempstead, and when he requested her politely but firmly to retire for a short while, the old man in turn begged him to allow her to remain. And, in spite of the apparent earnestness of his request, there seemed such an expression of pleading in his eyes, that the look haunted the physician.

'If this medicine does not help him within the next few days, let me know,' he said, writing out the prescription. He did not think it necessary to tell Elizabeth that he had resolved to call at some unexpected hour, so that he might have the patient to himself. And at ten o'clock that evening, in spite of the uncomfortable weather and his own state of fatigue, he had stepped into the hallway of John