

Coolidge Susan

A Little Country Girl



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Susan Coolidge

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CHAPTER I.

ON THE "EOLUS."

IT was on one of the cool, brilliant days which early June brings to the Narragansett country, that the steamer "Eolus" pushed out from Wickford Pier on her afternoon trip to Newport. The sky was of a beautiful translucent blue; the sunshine had a silvery rather than a golden radiance. A sea-wind blew up the Western Passage, so cool as to make the passengers on the upper deck glad to draw their wraps about them. The low line of the mainland beyond Conanicut and down to Beaver Tail glittered with a sort of clear-cut radiance, and seemed lifted a little above the water. Candace Arden heard the Captain say that he judged, from the look of things, that there was going to be a change of weather before long.

Captain Peleg King was a great favorite on his line of travel. He had a pleasant, shrewd face, grizzled hair, a spare, active figure; and he seemed to notice every one of his passengers and to take an interest in them.

"Going down to Newport, Miss?" he said to Candace, after

giving her one or two quick looks.

The question was superfluous, for the "Eolus" went nowhere else except to Newport; but it was well-meant, for the Captain thought that Candace seemed lonely and ill at ease, and he wished to cheer her.

"Yes, sir," she answered, shyly.

"Your folks there for the summer?" he went on.

"No, sir; I'm going to stay with my cousin Mrs. Gray."

"Mrs. Courtenay Gray you mean, I guess. Well, it's queer, but I sort er thought that you favored her a little. She's down early this year. I fetched her and the family across on my evening trip more 'n two weeks ago. Mrs. Gray's a mighty nice lady; I'm always pleased when she comes aboard. Wouldn't you like to take a seat in the wheel-house, Miss? The wind's blowing pretty fresh."

Candace was not aware that this was a distinguishing attention which the Captain did not pay everybody, and which she owed partly to her connection with Mrs. Gray and partly to her solitary look, which had touched Captain Peleg's benevolent heart. He had a girl of his own "over to Wickford," who was about the same age; and it made him "kind of tender" toward other girls who didn't seem to have any one to look after them. But the wind *was* fresh, and it was pleasant to be spoken to and noticed by some one on this, the first long journey of her short life; so she thankfully accepted the Captain's invitation, and let him escort her along the deck, and assist her to mount the two steps which led into the wheel-house.

It was rather a pleasant-looking place in which she found herself. Three sides of the little enclosure were lined with windows, through which the green shores, which seemed to be rapidly drifting past them, could be seen. The fourth side was filled with a long cushioned bench. In the middle of the glassed front was the big brass wheel, shining with polish and friction, and revolving artistically in the hands of its steersman, who kept his eye fixed alternately on the water and on his compass. There seemed to be no regulation against speaking to this "man at the wheel," or if there were, it was not strictly regarded; for two young ladies, who were already ensconced in one corner of the long seat, were plying him with all manner of questions.

They were rather pretty girls of that hard modern type which carries the air of knowing everything worth the knowing, having a right to everything worth the having, and being fully determined to claim that right to its fullest extent. As Candace entered, they favored her with one rapid, scrutinizing glance that took in every detail of her apparel, from the goat-skin boots which were too large for her feet to the round hat whose every bow bore witness to a country milliner, and after that they noticed her no more.

She, for her part, only too glad to be left unnoticed, looked shyly out of the corners of her eyes at them. They seemed to her inexpressibly stylish; for their tailor-made suits, though almost as plain as her own dress and jacket of blue alpaca, had that perfect fit and finish which makes the simplest dress seem all that can be

desired. There was a knowing look to each little detail, from the slender silver bangles which appeared beneath the loose wrinkled wrists of their very long gloves to the tortoise-shell pins with which their hats were fastened to the tightly braided hair coiled low down on the nape of the neck. Candace's hair fell in curls to her waist. She had always worn it so, and no one had ever thought anything about it; but now, all in a moment, she felt that it was wrong and improper.

"Been up to New York, Miss Joy?" said the Captain.

"No; only as far as the Junction, to meet a friend," replied the prettier of the two girls. "Why weren't you on the boat this morning, Captain?"

"I was on the boat. I never miss a trip, except sometimes the night one in the summer-time, when the sleeping-train is a running. I don't always come over in that. Let me see, how did I come to miss you to-day?"

"Oh, I sat in the ladies' cabin all the way, not on deck. But I didn't see you when we landed."

"Well, I don't know how it happened, I'm sure. Are your folks down for the season?"

"Yes: that is, mamma and I and my brother are here; my married sister won't come till next month." Then she turned to her friend, but without lowering her voice.

"You can't think how dull it's been, Ethel: no men, no dinners; nothing going on as yet. The Casino is only just opened, and people haven't begun to go there. We tried to get up a tennis

match, but there weren't enough good players to make it worth while. There's absolutely nothing. Mrs. Courtenay Gray had a girls' lunch on Tuesday; but that is all, and that didn't count for much."

"That's Georgie Gray's mother, isn't it? Is she there?"

"Oh, yes, – she and Gertrude, all the Grays. They're as nice and delightful as can be, of course, but somehow they're so literary and quiet, and Mrs. Gray is awfully particular about the girls. She makes them keep on with studying all summer, and she's so exclusive, – she won't let them visit half the new people."

"Gracious! why not?"

"Oh, I don't know, – she says they're not good form, and all that; but I'm sure she knows queer people enough herself. There is that tiresome old Miss Gisborne down in Washington Street, – the girls are forever going there; and I've seen them myself ever so many times coming out of the Hares', – and *they* take boarders!"

"Fancy! How extraordinary! Oh, there are the frigates!"

For the "Eolus," leaving the wooded, wall-like bank of Gould's Island behind, and rounding a point, had now reached the small curving bay to the eastward of Coasters' Harbor, where lay the training-ships, the "New Hampshire" and the "Minnesota." It was a beautiful sight, – the two great war-vessels at anchor, with their tall tapering spars and flying flags reflected in the water on which they floated. Lines of glinting white flashed along the decks; for it was "wash-day," and the men's clothes were drying

in the sun. Two or three barges were disembarking visitors at the gangway ladders, and beyond them a sail-boat was waiting its turn to do the same. On the pier a file of blue-uniformed boys were marching with measured tread. The sound of their feet came across the distance like the regular beat of a machine. A girl in a row-boat was just pushing out from the farther beach, above which rose a stone house covered with vines.

"That's Miss Isherwood," said one of the young ladies. "She's a splendid rower, and Tom says she swims as well as he does."

The whole scene was like enchantment to Candace, who had lived all her life among the hills of Connecticut, and had never till that day seen the ocean. She was much too shy to ask questions, but she sat like one in a dream, taking in with wide-open eyes all the details of the charming view, – the shores, broken by red-roofed villas and cottages rising from clouds of leafy greenery; the Torpedo Island with its tall flag-staff and floating banner over the dwelling of the Commandant; Fort Adams, whose steep glacis seemed powdered with snow just then from the multitude of daisies in bloom upon them; the light-houses; the soft rises of hill; and beyond, the shimmering heave of the open sea. Cat-boats and yachts flitted past in the fair wind like large white-winged moths; row-boats filled with pleasure-parties dipped their oars in the wake of the "Eolus;" steam-launches with screeching whistles were putting into their docks, among old boat-houses and warehouses, painted dull-red, or turned of a blackish gray by years of exposure to weather.

Behind rose Newport, with the graceful spire of Trinity Church and the long bulk of the Ocean House surmounting the quaint buildings on the lower hill. The boat was heading toward a wharf, black with carriages, which were evidently drawn up to wait the arrival of the "Eolus."

"There's Mrs. Gray's team now, Miss," said the sharp-eyed Captain; "come down for you, I reckon."

The two girls glanced at her and then at each other. They shrugged their shoulders, and Candace heard one of them whisper, —

"Did you ever?" and the reply, "No; but after all, we didn't say anything very bad, and who would have dreamed that a hat like that had anything to do with the Grays?"

She felt herself blush painfully. The hat was a new one of brown straw trimmed with dark blue ribbon. She had felt rather proud of it when it came home from the milliner's the day before, and had considered the little blue pompon with which Miss Wilson, who was authority in matters of fashion in North Tolland, had enriched the middle bow, as a masterpiece of decoration. Alas! the apple of knowledge was at her lips; already she felt herself blush at the comments of these unknown girls whose hats were so different from her own, and was thoroughly uncomfortable, though she could hardly have told why.

Captain Peleg politely carried her bag for her across the landing-plank to where the "team," a glossy coupé with one horse, was waiting. He beckoned to the smart coachman, who

wore a dark green overcoat with big metal buttons, to draw nearer.

"Here's your passenger," he said, helping Candace into the carriage. "Good-day, Miss. I hope we'll see you again on the 'Eolus.' All right, driver."

"Oh, thank you," cried Candace, finding voice and forgetting shyness in her gratitude; "you've been real kind to me, Captain."

"That child's got mighty pretty eyes," soliloquized Captain King, as he marched down the wharf. "I wonder what relation she is to the Grays. She don't seem their sort exactly. She's been raised in the country, I expect; but Mrs. Gray'll polish her up if anybody can, or I'm mistaken. Steady there – what're you about?" as a trunk came bounding and ricochetting across the gangway; "this wharf ain't no skittle-ground!"

Meanwhile the coupé was slowly climbing a steep side-street which led to the Avenue. Looking forth with observant eyes, Candace noted how the houses, which at first were of the last-century build, with hipped roofs and dormer windows like those to which she was accustomed in the old hill village that had been her birthplace, gave way to modernized old houses with recent additions, and then to houses which were unmistakably new, and exhibited all manner of queer peaks and pinnacles and projections, shingled, painted in divers colors, and broken by windows of oddly tinted glass. Next the carriage passed a modern church built of pinkish-brown stone; and immediately after, the equable roll of the wheels showed that they were on a smooth

macadamized road. It was, in fact, though Candace did not know it, the famous Bellevue Avenue, which in summer is the favorite drive for all fashionable persons, and thronged from end to end on every fair afternoon by all manner of vehicles, from dainty pony-wagons to enormous mail-coaches.

There were only a few carriages in sight now, though they seemed many to our little country maid. Shops were opening for the season. Men were busy in hanging Eastern rugs and curtains up to view, and arranging in the windows beautiful jars and plates of porcelain and pottery, glittering wares from Turkey and Damascus, carved furniture, and inlaid cabinets. Half a dozen florists exhibited masses of hot-house flowers amid a tangle of palms and tree-ferns; beyond was the announcement of an "opening" by a well-known dressmaker, whose windows were hung with more beautiful things than Candace in her small experience had ever dreamed of before, – laces, silks, embroideries.

The shops gave way to houses, each set in a court-yard gay with newly planted beds of flowers or foliage plants. Vines clustered everywhere; the trees, not yet fully in leaf, were like a tossing spray of delicate fresh green: a sense of hope, of expectation, of something delightful which was being prepared for, seemed to be in the air.

Suddenly the coupé turned in between a pair of substantial stone gate-posts, and drew up before a large square house, with piazzas on two sides, and a small but very smooth lawn, whose

closely cut grass looked like green velvet. It was dappled with weeping-trees and evergreens, and hedged with a high wall of shrubs which shut off the view of the street. A continuous flower-bed ran all round the house close to its walls, planted full of geraniums, heliotrope, nasturtiums, mignonette, and pansies. Every window and balcony boasted its box of ferns or flowers; and in spite of the squareness of the building, and the sombre green-gray with which it was painted, the general effect was of cheerfulness, and shade broken by color, – an effect which is always pleasant.

Candace had forgotten herself in the excitement of new sights and experiences; but her shyness came back with a rush as the carriage stopped and the door was opened by a very smart French butler.

"Is Mrs. Gray at home?" she asked timidly, bending forward.

"Descendez, Mademoiselle, s'il vous plaît. Madame est occupée pour le moment; il y a du monde dans le salon." Then, seeing the perplexed look in Candace's eyes, he explained in broken English: "Mees is to get out. Madame is beesy with coompany for little while. Mees will please go up-stair."

Candace got out; the carriage drove away, and she followed the butler into the hall. He gave a low call at the foot of the stairs, which brought down a ladies'-maid with a ruffed cap perched on the back of her head.

"This way, if you please, Miss," she said, and led Candace up the staircase, which was a wide one with three square turns and a

broad landing, lit with a range of windows and furnished with a low cushioned seat; then came an upper hall, and she was shown into a pretty corner room.

"If you'll please sit down and rest yourself, Miss," said the maid, "Mrs. Gray'll be up as soon as some company she has is gone. Would you like to have a cup of tea, Miss?"

"No, thank you," faltered Candace; and then the maid went away, shutting the door behind her.

The room, which had no bed in it, and was, in fact, Mrs. Gray's morning-room, was so full of curious things that Candace's first thought was that it would take a week at least to see half that was in it. The sage-green walls were thickly hung with photographs, watercolors, charcoal sketches, miniatures, bits of faience, lacquered trays and discs, and great shining circles of Syrian and Benares metalwork. There were many pieces of pottery of various sorts, set here and there, on the chimney-piece, on book-shelves, on the top of a strangely carved black cabinet, with hinges and handles of wrought iron. In one corner stood an Italian spinning-wheel of ebony and silver; in another an odd instrument, whose use Candace could not guess, but which was in reality a Tyrolean zither. An escritoire, drawn near a window, was heaped with papers and with writing appliances of all sorts, and all elegant. There were many little tables covered with books and baskets of crewels and silks, and easy-chairs of every description. Every chair-back and little stand had some quaint piece of lace-work or linen-work thrown over it. It was, in

fact, one of those rooms belonging distinctly to our modern life, for the adornment of which every part of the world is ransacked, and their products set forth in queer juxtapositions, to satisfy or to exhibit the varied tastes and pursuits of its occupants. To Candace it was as wonderful as any museum; and while her eyes slowly travelled from one object to another, she forgot her strangeness and was happy.

Tick, tick, tick, tick, went the little French clock on the mantelpiece. Suddenly it struck her that it was a long while that she had been left alone in this room. She glanced at the clock; it really was almost an hour. All her latent homesickness returned with fresh force. Her eyes filled with sudden tears; in another moment she would have been actually crying, but just then came a quick step, a little rustle, and she had just time to wipe away the drops when the door opened, and Mrs. Gray hurried into the room.

"My poor child," she exclaimed, "have you been alone all this time? It is quite too bad! I made sure that I should hear the carriage drive up, and at least run out and give you a welcome, but somehow I didn't; and people came so fast and thick that I couldn't get a chance to glance at the clock." She kissed Candace, and looked at her with a sort of soft scrutiny. It was to the full as penetrating as that of the strange girls on the steamer had been; but it did not hurt like theirs. Mrs. Gray had beautiful, big, short-sighted blue eyes with black lashes; when she smiled they seemed to brim with a sudden fascinating radiance. She smiled now, and

reminded Candace somehow of a great, soft, fully opened garden rose.

"You have something of your mother's looks, Cannie," she said. "I knew her best when she was about your age. I never saw much of her after she married your father and went up to live among the hills." She sighed softly: there was a short pause. Then, with a sudden change of tone, she continued: "And all this time you have never shown your room. I can't think why they were so stupid. Who was it put you here, Cannie?"

"It was – a lady – in a cap," replied Candace, hesitatingly.

"A lady? – cap? Oh, it must have been Elizabeth. She's my maid, – don't make such a mistake again, dear; you must learn to discriminate. Well, come with me now, and let me see you comfortably established. The girls are gone on a yachting-party to the upper end of the island. It was an old engagement, made before your aunt's letter came, or they would not have been absent when you arrived. They were very sor – "

But in the very middle of the word came Frederic, the butler, with the announcement of new visitors; and, just taking time to lead Candace down the entry to a room whose door stood wide open, Mrs. Gray hurried away, saying rapidly: "Take off your hat, dear. Lie down for a rest, hadn't you better? I'll be up again presently."

"I wonder if everybody is always in a hurry in Newport?" Candace thought.

She was again alone, but this time she felt no disposition to cry.

Her trunk had been brought up by somebody, and stood already in its place, with the straps unloosened. She took off her hat and jacket, unpacked a little, and peeped out of the window to see where she was. The room faced the east, and across a corner of the lawn and the stable-yard she had a glimpse of the sea, which had become intensely blue with the coming of the later afternoon.

"Oh, that is good," she said to herself. "I shall see it all summer." She glanced about the room with a growing sense of proprietorship which was pleasant. It was not a large room, but it looked cheerful, with its simple furniture of pale-colored ash and a matted floor, over which lay a couple of Persian rugs. There was a small fireplace bordered with blue tiles which matched the blue papering on the walls; and the tiles on the washstand, and the chintz of the easy-chair and lounge, and the flower-jars on the mantelpiece were blue also. Altogether it was a pretty little chamber, with which any girl might be sufficiently well-pleased; and as Candace noticed the tiny nosegay of mignonette and tea-roses which stood on the bureau, her heart lightened with the sense that it had been put there for *her*. Some one had thought of her coming, and prepared for it.

She brushed out her curls and washed her face and hands, but did not change her dress. The blue alpaca was the newest she had, and she wished to look her best on that first evening. She sat down in the window to listen to the soft boom of the surf, which seemed to grow louder as the night drew on, and did not

hear Mrs. Gray as she came down the entry. That lady stood a moment in the half-open door, surveying her young visitor.

"What am I to do with her?" she thought. "I want to befriend Candace's child, but I did not quite realize, till I saw her just now, what a disadvantage she would be at among all these girls here, with their French clothes and their worse than French ideas. She's not plain. There's a good deal of beauty about that shy little face of hers, and refinement too, if only she were not so awkward. If I can once get her into a dress that fits, and do something with that mop of curls, she would look well enough. I wonder if she will take it kindly, or flare up and feel offended at every little suggestion. That would be terrible! – You are listening to the surf, dear. I'm afraid it means rain to-morrow. That sound generally is a symptom of mischief."

"Is it?" said Candace; "what a pity!"

"A pity about the rain?"

"No – but it's such a pretty sound."

"So it is. Well, if you are ready, let us go downstairs. I expect the girls every moment. Ah, there they are now!"

The line of windows on the staircase landing commanded a view of the gate and approach, and looking through them Candace saw a village cart with two girls on the front seat, one driving, and a third girl in the rumble behind, approaching the house. A couple of young men on horseback rode close beside the cart. One of them jumped from his horse, helped the young ladies out, there was a moment of laughter and chat; then,

touching their hats, the riders departed, and the three girls came into the hall.

"Mamma! mammy! where are you, dear?" sang out three youthful voices.

"Here I am, half-way upstairs," replied Mrs. Gray, seating herself on the cushioned bench of the landing.

"What on earth are you doing up there? And who's that with you?"

"It's your cousin Candace. Come up and be introduced."

Up they came at a run, each trying to be the first to arrive. Candace had never known many girls, but these were of a different species from any she had seen before. They seemed full of spirits, and conveyed the idea of being, so to speak, bursting with happiness, though I suppose not one of the three but would have resented the imputation of being happier than people in general are or ought to be. Georgie, the eldest, was short and round, and had her mother's blue near-sighted eyes without her mother's beauty. Gertrude was unusually tall, and had a sort of lily-like grace; her light hair was very thick, and so fine in quality that it stood out like a nimbus round her pale pretty face. Little Marian, the youngest, two years Candace's junior, was not yet in society, but had been allowed to go to the picnic as a great favor. Her hair had a reddish tint in its chestnut, and was braided in one large plait down her back; she had brown eyes and a capable little face which was full of expression.

They all spoke kindly to Candace, they all kissed her, but

she felt much less at ease with them than with their mother, whose peculiarly charming manner seemed to invite confidence from everybody. After a few questions and a few words of welcome, they plunged into a description of their picnic, – the yacht-sail, the landing, the luncheon, the general delightfulness of everything.

"Berry Joy was not there," remarked Georgie. "She had gone up to Wickford to meet some one. By the way, she must have come down on the 'Eolus' with you, Candace. Did you see her?"

"There were two young ladies," answered Candace, timidly.

"Did you hear their names? Did you talk to them?" asked Gertrude.

"No – yes – no – I mean the Captain called one of them Miss Joy. I didn't talk to them, but they knew you."

"Why, how could you tell that?"

"I heard them talking about you."

"What fun! What did they say?"

Candace hesitated. Her face grew crimson. "I'd rather – I don't –" she began. Then with a great effort, rallying her powers, she went on: "I didn't like to sit there and hear them and not tell them that I was your cousin; but I was too – too – frightened to speak to them, so I thought I would never repeat what they said, and then it wouldn't be any matter."

"Quite right, Cannie," said Mrs. Gray, quickly. Something in the girl's little speech seemed to please her very much.

CHAPTER II.

THE FIRST EVENING

CANDACE ARDEN'S mother had not only been Mrs. Gray's cousin, but her particular friend as well. The two girls had been brought up together, had shared their studies and secrets and girlish fun, and had scarcely ever been separated for a week, until suddenly a change came which separated them for all the rest of their lives.

Pretty Candace Van Vliet went up to New Haven on her nineteenth birthday to see what a college commencement was like, and at the President's reception afterward met Henry Arden, the valedictorian of the graduating class, a handsome fellow just twenty-one years old. He came of plain farming-people in the hill country of Connecticut; but he was clever, ambitious, and his manners had a natural charm, to which his four years of college life had added ease and the rubbing away of any little rustic awkwardness with which he might have begun. Candace thought him delightful; he thought her more than delightful. In short, it was one of the sudden love-affairs with which college commencements not infrequently end, and in the course of a few weeks they engaged themselves to each other.

Henry was to be a minister, and his theological course must be got through with before they could marry. Three years the

course should have taken, but he managed to do it in a little more than two, being spurred on by his impatient desire for home and wife, and a longing, no less urgent, to begin as soon as possible to earn his own bread and relieve his father from the burden of his support. No one knew better than he with what pinching and saving and self-sacrifice it had been made possible for him to get a college education and become a clergyman; what daily self-denials had been endured for his sake in that old yellow farmhouse on the North Tolland hills. He was the only son, the only child; and his father and mother were content to bear anything so long as it gave him a chance to make the most of himself.

It is not an uncommon story in this New England of ours. Many and many a farm-house could tell a similar tale of thrift, hard work, and parental love. The bare rocky acres are made to yield their uttermost, the cows to do their full duty, the scanty apples of the "off year" are carefully harvested, every pullet and hen is laid under contribution for the great need of the moment, — the getting the boys through college. It is both beautiful and pitiful, as all sacrifices must be; but the years of effort and struggle do not always end, as in the case of the Ardens, with a disappointment and a grief so bitter as to make the self-spending seem all in vain.

For the over-study of those two years proved too much for Henry Arden's health. It was not hard study alone; he stinted himself in food, in firing as well; he exacted every possible exertion from his mind, and systematically neglected his body.

The examinations were brilliantly passed; he was ordained; he received a "call" to Little Upshire, the village nearest to North Tolland; there was a pretty wedding in the old Van Vliet mansion on Second Avenue, at which Kate Van Vliet, herself just engaged to Courtenay Gray, acted as bridesmaid; and then the cousins parted. They only met once again, when Mrs. Arden came down from the country to see her cousin married. Henry did not come with her; he was not very well, she explained, and she must hurry back.

That was the beginning of a long wasting illness. Some spring of vitality seemed to have been broken during those two terrible years at the theological seminary; and though Henry Arden lived on, and even held his parish for several years, he was never fit for any severe study or labor. The last three years of his life were spent in the old farm-house at North Tolland, where his aunt Myra, a spare, sinewy, capable old maid, was keeping house for his father. Mrs. Arden had died soon after her son's illness began; her heart was "kind of broken," the neighbors said, and perhaps it was.

And little Candace and her mother lived on with the old people after the long, sorrowful nursing was done, and another gray headstone had been placed beside the rest in the Arden lot in the North Tolland graveyard, having carved upon it, "Sacred to the memory of the Rev. Henry Arden, aged thirty-four. The Lord gave, and the Lord hath taken away. Blessed be His Holy name." There seemed nothing else for them to do but to live

on where they were. Mrs. Gray was in China with her husband, who at that time was the resident partner in a well-known firm of tea-importers. Aunt Van Vliet had gone to Europe after her daughter's marriage. There was no one to come to the aid of the drooping young widow, and carry her away from the lonely life and the sad memories which were slowly killing her. For her child's sake she did her best to rally; but her strength had been severely taxed during her husband's illness, and dying was easier than living; so she died when Candace was just eight years old, and the little girl and the two old people were left alone in the yellow farm-house.

A twelvemonth later, Grandfather Arden had a stroke of paralysis. – Don't be too much discouraged, dear children; this is positively the last death that I shall have occasion to chronicle in this story. But it seemed necessary to show what sort of life Candace had lived, in order to explain the sort of girl she was. – After her grandfather died, Aunt Myra, aged sixty-nine, and little Cannie, aged nine, alone remained of the once large household; and the farm-house seemed very big and empty, and had strange echoes in all the unused corners.

It was a lonely place, and a lonely life for a child. Candace had few enjoyments, and almost no young companions. She had never been used to either, so she did not feel the want of them as most little girls would have done. Aunt Myra was kind enough, and, indeed, fond of her in a dry, elderly way; but she could not turn herself into a play-mate. It is not often that a person who is

as old as sixty-nine remembers how it feels to play. Aunt Myra approved of Cannie especially, because she was "such a quiet child;" but I think Cannie's mother would rather have had her noisier.

"She's a nice girl as I want to see," Aunt Myra was wont to tell her cronies. "She's likely-appearing enough, – and that's better than being too pretty. And she's helpful about the house for such a young cretur, and she's not a bit forth-putting or highty-tighty. I don't know how I should have managed if Candace had turned out the sort of girl some of 'em are, – like those Buell girls, for instance, always raising Ned because they can't get down to Hartford or Bridgeport to shop and see the sights and have a good time. As if good times couldn't be had to home as well as anywhere! Why, I reckon that Miss Buell has more fuss and trouble in fitting out those girls every spring of her life than I've had with Cannie since her mother died. She never makes one mite of difficulty, or bothers with objections. She just puts on whatever I see fit to get her; and she likes it, and there's the end."

This was not quite as true as Aunt Myra supposed. Candace wore whatever it was ordained that she should wear, but she did not always "like" it. From her mother she inherited a certain instinct of refinement and taste which only needed the chance to show itself. But there was little chance to exercise taste in the old yellow farm-house, and Candace, from training and long habit, was submissive; so she accepted the inevitable, and, as her great-aunt said, "made no difficulty."

Letters came now and then from "Cousin Kate," far away in China, and once a little box with a carved ivory fan as fine as lace-work, a dozen gay pictures on rice paper, and a scarf of watermelon-pink crape, which smelt of sandalwood, and was by far the most beautiful thing that Cannie had ever seen. Then, two years before our story opens, the Grays came back to America to live; and a correspondence began between Mrs. Gray and Aunt Myra, part of which Candace heard about and part she did not. Mrs. Gray was anxious to know her cousin's child and be of use to her; but first one thing and then another delayed their meeting. The first winter the Grays spent at a hotel looking for a house; the second, they were all in Florida on account of Mr. Gray's health. These difficulties were now settled. A town house had been chosen, a Newport cottage leased for a term of years, and Cannie was asked for a long summer visit.

It was Mrs. Gray's secret desire that this visit should lead to a sort of adoption, that Cannie should stay on with them as a fourth daughter, and share all her cousins' advantages of education and society; but before committing herself to such a step, she wished to see what the girl was like.

"It's so much easier to keep out of such an arrangement than to get out of it," she told her husband. "My poor Candace was an angel, all sweetness and charm; but her child has the blood of those stiff Connecticut farmers in her. She may be like her father's people, and not in the least like her mother; she may be hopelessly stupid or vulgar or obstinate or un-improvable. We

will wait and see."

This secret doubt and question was, I think, the reason why Mrs. Gray was so pleased at Cannie's little speech about Miss Joy and her friend.

"That was the true, honorable feeling," she thought to herself, "the child is a lady by instinct. It wasn't easy for her to say it, either; she's a shy little thing. Well, if she has the instinct, the rest can be added. It's easy enough to polish a piece of mahogany, but you may rub all day at a pine stick and not make much out of it."

As these thoughts passed rapidly through her mind, she stole her arm across Candace's shoulders and gave them a little warm pressure; but all she said was, —

"Dinner in twenty minutes, children. You would better run up at once and make ready. Cannie, you and I will go to the library, — you haven't seen my husband yet."

The library was a big, airy room, with an outlook to the sea. There were not many books in it, only enough to fill a single low range of book-shelves; but the tables were covered with freshly cut magazines and pamphlet novels; there was a great file of "Punch" and other illustrated papers, and that air of light-reading-in-abundance which seems to suit a house in summer-time. A little wood-fire was snapping on a pair of very bright andirons, and, June though it was, its warmth was agreeable. Beside it, in an enormous Russia-leather armchair, sat Mr. Gray, — an iron-whiskered, shrewd-looking man of the world, with a pair of pleasant, kindly eyes, and that shining

bald spot on his head which seems characteristic of the modern business man.

"Court, here is our new child," said Mrs. Gray; "poor Candace's daughter, you know."

Mr. Gray understood, from his wife's tone, that she was pleased with her little visitor so far, and he greeted her in a very friendly fashion.

"You have your mother's eyes," he said. "I recollect her perfectly, though we only met two or three times, and that was seventeen – let me see – nearly eighteen years ago it must have been. Her hair, too, I should say," glancing at Cannie's chestnut mop; "it was very thick, I remember, and curled naturally."

"Aunt Myra always says that my hair is the same color as mother's," replied Candace.

"It is almost exactly the same. Do you remember her at all, Cannie?" asked Mrs. Gray.

"Just a little. I recollect things she used to wear, and where she used to sit, and one or two things she said. But perhaps I don't recollect them, but think I do because Aunt Myra told them to me."

"Is there no picture of her?"

"Only a tin-type, and it isn't very good. It's almost faded out; you can hardly see the face."

"What a pity!"

"Le dîner est servi, Madame," said the voice of Frederic at the door.

"We won't wait for the girls. They will be down in a moment," said Mrs. Gray, as she led the way to the dining-room. The sound of their feet on the staircase was heard as she spoke; and down they ran, the elder two in pretty dresses of thin white woollen stuff, which Candace in her unworldliness thought fine enough for a party.

People in North Tolland did not dine in the modern sense of the word. They took in supplies of food at stated intervals, very much as a locomotive stops for wood and water when it cannot go on any longer without such replenishment; but it was a matter of business and necessity to do so rather than of pleasure.

Candace, who had sat down opposite Aunt Myra every day as long as she could remember at the small pine table in the yellow-painted kitchen, with always the same thick iron-stone ware plates and cups, the same little black tray to hold the tea-things, the same good, substantial, prosaic fare, served without the least attempt at grace or decoration, had never dreamed of such a dinner as was usual at the Grays'. She said not a word to express her astonishment; but she glanced at the thick cluster of maiden-hair ferns which quivered in the middle of the table from an oval stand of repoussé brass, at the slender glasses of tea-roses which stood on either side, at the Sèvres dishes of fruit, sweet biscuits, and dried ginger, and wondered if this were to be all the dinner. Did fashionable people never eat anything more substantial than grapes and crackers? She felt very hungry, and yet it seemed coarse not to be satisfied when everything was so

pretty.

"Consommé, Mademoiselle?" murmured Frederic in her ear, as he placed before her a plate full of some clear liquid which smelt deliciously, and offered a small dish of grated cheese for her acceptance.

"Oh, thank you, sir," said Candace, wondering confusedly if cheese in soup was the correct thing.

Mrs. Gray's quick ear caught the "sir." She did not even turn her head, but she mentally added another to the hints which must be administered to Candace as soon as she was sufficiently at home to bear them.

Spanish mackerel was the next course. Candace inadvertently took up the steel knife placed beside her plate, instead of the silver one meant for use with fish. The result was that when the saddle of mutton was served, she had no usable knife. Mr. Gray observed her difficulty, and directed Frederic to bring a steel knife for Mademoiselle, which Frederic did, first casting a scrutinizing glance about as if in search of something; and again Candace felt that she was somehow out of the way.

The climax of her discomfort came with the pretty tinted fruit plates and finger-bowls. Candace's tumbler was empty, and without particularly thinking about the matter she took a drink out of her finger-bowl, which she mistook for some sort of lemonade, from the bit of lemon which floated in the water.

The moment after, she was conscious of her blunder. She saw Georgie dabbling her fingers in her bowl. She saw Gertrude with

difficulty keeping back a smile which would flicker in her eyes, though her lips were rigidly grave. Little Marian giggled outright, and then relapsed into a frightened solemnity. Candace felt utterly miserable. She looked toward Mrs. Gray apprehensively, but that lady only gave her an encouraging smile. Mr. Gray put a bunch of hot-house grapes on her plate. She ate them without the least idea of their flavor. With the last grape a hot tear splashed down; and the moment Mrs. Gray moved, Candace fled upstairs to her own room, where she broke down into a fit of homesick crying.

How she longed for the old customary home among the hills, where nobody minded what she did, or how she ate, or "had any manners in particular," as she phrased it to her own mind, or thought her ignorant or awkward. And yet, on sober second thought, did she really wish so much to go back? Was it not better to stay on where she was, and learn to be graceful and low-spoken and at ease always, like her cousin Kate, if she could, even if she had to undergo some mortification in the process? Candace was not sure.

She had stopped crying, and was cooling her eyes with a wet towel when she heard a little tap at the door. It was Mrs. Gray herself.

"Where are you, Cannie?" she said, looking about the room with her short-sighted eyes. "You are so dark here that I cannot see you."

"I'm here by the washstand," faltered Candace; and then, to

her dismay, she began to cry again. She tried to subdue it; but a little sob, which all her efforts could not stifle, fell upon her cousin's observant ear.

"My dear child, you are crying," she exclaimed; and in another minute Candace, she scarcely knew how, was in Mrs. Gray's arms, they were sitting on the sofa together, and she was finishing her cry with her head on the kindest of shoulders and an unexpected feeling of comfort at her heart. Anything so soft and tender as Cousin Kate's arms she had never known before; there was a perfume of motherliness about them which to a motherless girl was wholly irresistible. Gertrude declared that mamma always stroked people's trouble away with those hands of hers, and that they looked just like the hands of the Virgin in Holbein's Madonna, as if they could mother the whole world.

"Now, tell me, Cannie, tell me, dear child," said Mrs. Gray, when the shower was over and the hard sobs had grown faint and far between, "what made you cry? Was it because you are tired and a little homesick among us all, or were you troubled about anything? Tell me, Cannie."

"Oh, it's only because I'm so stupid and – and – countrified," said Candace, beginning to sob again. "I made such horrid mistakes at dinner, and Gertrude wanted to laugh, – she didn't laugh, but I saw her want to, – and Marian did laugh, and I felt so badly."

"Marian is such a little girl that you must forgive her this once," said Mrs. Gray, "though I am rather ashamed of her

myself. I saw all your 'mistakes,' as you call them, Cannie, even one or two that you didn't see yourself. They were very little mistakes, dear, not worth crying about, – small blunders in social etiquette, which is a matter of minor importance, – not failures in good feeling or good manners, which are of real consequence. They did not make anybody uncomfortable except yourself."

"Cousin Kate," Candace ventured to ask, "will you tell me why there is such a thing as etiquette? Why must everybody eat and behave and speak in the same way, and make rules about it? Is it any real use?"

"That is rather a large question, and leads back to the beginning of things," said Mrs. Gray, smiling. "I don't suppose I quite understand it myself, but I think I can make you understand a part of it. I imagine, when the world was first peopled, in the strange faraway times of which we know almost nothing except the hints we get in the Bible, that the few people there were did pretty much as they liked. Noah and his family in the ark, for instance, probably never set any tables or had any regular meals, but just ate when they were hungry, each one by himself. Savage tribes do the same to this day; they seize their bone or their handful of meat and gnaw it in a corner, or as they walk about. This was the primitive idea of comfort. But after a time people found that it was less trouble to have the family food made ready at a certain time for everybody at once, and have all come together to eat it. Perhaps at first it was served in one great pot or dish, and each one dipped in his hand or spoon. The Arabs

still do this. Then, of course, the strongest and greediest got the most of everything, and it may have been some weak or slow person who went hungry in consequence, who invented the idea of separate plates and portions."

"But that is not etiquette," objected Cannie. "People have plates and set tables everywhere now, – in this country, I mean."

"Yes, but can't you imagine a time when to have a bowl or a saucer to yourself was considered finical and 'stuck up,' and when some rough Frank or Gaul from the mountains looked on disapprovingly, and said that the world was coming to a pretty pass if such daintiness was to be allowed? A bowl to one's self was etiquette then. All sorts of things which to us seem matter of course and commonplace, began by being novelties and subjects for discussion and wonderment. Remember that tea, potatoes, carpets, tobacco, matches, almost all our modern conveniences, were quite unknown even so lately as four or five hundred years ago. As the world grew richer, people went on growing more refined. The richest folks tried to make their houses more beautiful than the houses of their neighbors. They gave splendid feasts, and hired sculptors and artists to invent decorations for their tables, and all kinds of little elegant usages sprang up which have gradually become the custom of our own day, even among people who are not rich and do not give feasts."

"But do they mean anything? Are they of any real use?" persisted Cannie.

"I confess that some of them do not seem to mean a great

deal. Still, if we look closely, I think we shall find that almost every one had its origin in one of two causes, – either it was a help to personal convenience, or in some way it made people more agreeable or less disagreeable to their neighbors. We have to study, and to guess a little sometimes, to make out just why it has become customary to do this or that, for the original reason has been forgotten or perhaps does not exist any longer, while the custom remains."

"I wonder," said Cannie, whose mind was still running on her own mishaps, "why people mustn't cut fish with a steel knife. I read in a book once that it was not genteel to do so, and I couldn't think why. And then to-night I didn't see the little silver one – "

"I imagine that in the first instance some old *gourmet* discovered or fancied that a steel knife gave a taste to fish which injured it. So people gave up using knives, and it grew to be said that it was vulgar and a mark of ignorance to cut fish with them. Then, later, it was found not to be quite comfortable always to tear your bit of fish apart with a fork and hold it down with a piece of bread while you did so, and the custom arose of having a silver knife to cut fish with. It is a convenient custom, too, for some reasons. Waiting on table is quite an art, now-a-days, when there are so many changes of plates, and a good waiter always tries to simplify what he has to do, by providing as much as possible beforehand. You can see that if each person has beside his plate a silver knife for fish and a steel knife for meat and two forks these two courses will go on more easily and quietly than if the

waiter has to stop and bring a fresh knife and fork for each person before he helps to the dish, whatever it is."

"But why is there nothing on the table but flowers and pretty little things? And why do they put lemon-peel in the bowls of water?"

"Well, the lemon is supposed to take the smell of dinner away from the fingers. And it isn't always lemon. Frederic is apt to drop in a geranium leaf or a sprig of lemon-verbena, and those are nicer. As for the other thing, it is more convenient for many reasons not to have the carving done on the table; but aside from that, I imagine that in the first instance the custom was a matter of economy."

"Economy!" repeated Candace, opening wide her eyes.

"Yes, economy, though it seems droll to say so. In the old days, when the meat came on in a big platter, and the vegetables each in its large covered dish, people had to put more on table than was really wanted, for the sake of not looking mean and giving their neighbors occasion for talk. Now, when everything is carved on a side-table and a nice little portion carried to each person, you are able to do with exactly what is needed. There need not be a great piece of everything left over for look's sake. One chicken is enough for four or five people if it is skilfully carved, but the chicken would look rather scanty on a platter by itself; don't you think so?"

"Yes," said Cannie, with a little laugh. She had forgotten her troubles in the interest of the discussion.

"A dish containing one mutton-chop and a spoonful of peas for each person would be called a stingy dish in the country, where every one sees his food on the table before him," continued Mrs. Gray; "but it is quite enough for the single course it is meant to be at a city dinner. There is no use in having three or four chops left over to toughen and grow cold."

"I see," said Cannie, thoughtfully; "what else did I do that was wrong, Cousin Kate?"

"You called Frederic 'sir,'" replied her cousin, with a smile. "That was not wrong, but not customary. Servants are expected to say 'sir' and 'ma'am' to their employers as a mark of respect; and people not servants use the word less frequently than they formerly did. They keep such terms for elderly or distinguished persons, to whom they wish to show special deference."

"But Aunt Myra always *made* me say 'sir' and 'ma'am' to her and grandpapa. She said it was impolite not to."

"She was quite right; for she and your grandfather were a great deal older than yourself, and it was only respectful to address them so. But you need not use the phrase to everybody to whom you speak."

"Not to you?"

"Well, I would quite as soon that in speaking to me you said, 'Yes, Cousin Kate,' as 'Yes, ma'am.' That is what I have taught my children to do. They say, 'Yes, mamma;' 'Did you call me, papa?' I like the sound of it better; but it is only a matter of taste. There is no real right or wrong involved in it."

Candace sat for a moment in silence, revolving these new ideas in her mind.

"Cousin Kate," she said timidly, "will you tell me when I make little mistakes, like that about the knife? I'd like to learn to do things right if I could, and if it wouldn't trouble you too much."

"Dear Cannie," – and Mrs. Gray kissed her, – "I will, of course; and I am glad you like to have me. Your mother was the sweetest, most refined little lady that I ever knew. I loved her dearly; and I should love to treat you as I do my own girls, to whom I have to give a hint or a caution or a little lecture almost every day of their lives. No girl ever grew into a graceful, well-bred woman without many such small lessons from somebody. If your mother had lived, all these things would have come naturally to you from the mere fact of being with her and noticing what she did. You would have needed no help from any one else. But are you sure," she went on, after a little pause, "that you won't end by thinking me tiresome or interfering or worrisome, if I do as I say?"

"No, indeed, I won't!" cried Candace, to whom this long talk had been like the clearing up after a thunder-shower. "I think it would be *too* mean if I felt that way when you are so kind."

CHAPTER III.

A WALK ON THE CLIFFS

IT is always an odd, unhomelike moment when one wakes up for the first time in a new place. Sleep is a separation between us and all that has gone before it. It takes a little while to recollect where we are and how we came there, and to get used to the strangeness which had partly worn away, but has come on again while we dreamed and forgot all about it.

Candace experienced this when she woke in the little blue room the morning after her arrival in Newport. She had gone to bed, by Mrs. Gray's advice, when their long talk about manners and customs was ended, and without going downstairs again.

"You are very tired, I can see," said Cousin Kate. "A long night's sleep will freshen you, and the world will look differently and a great deal pleasanter to-morrow."

Candace was glad to follow this counsel. She *was* tired, and she felt shy of Mr. Gray and the girls, and would rather put off meeting them again, she thought, till the morning. Ten hours of unbroken sleep rested her thoroughly, but she woke with a feeling of puzzled surprise at her surroundings, and for a few moments could not gather up her thoughts or quite recollect where she was. Then it all came back to her, and she was again conscious of the uncomfortable sensations of the night before.

She lay a little while thinking about it, and half wishing that she need not get up at all but just burrow under the blanket and hide herself, like a mouse or rabbit in his downy hole, till everybody had forgotten her blunders, and till she herself could forget them. But she said to herself bravely: "I won't be foolish. Cousin Kate is just lovely; she's promised to help me, and I'm sure she will. I will try not to mind the others; but, oh dear! I wish I were not so afraid of the girls."

She jumped out of bed resolutely and began to dress, taking her time about it, and stealing many glances out of the open window; for she knew it must be early, and as yet there were no sounds of life about the house. After her hair was curled, she stood for some time at the door of the closet, debating what dress she should put on.

The choice was limited. There were only a brown plaided gingham, a blue calico, and a thick white cambric to choose from. The latter seemed to her almost too nice to be worn in the morning. It was the first white dress she had ever been allowed to have, and Aunt Myra had said a good deal about the difficulty of getting it done up; so it seemed to Candace rather a sacred garment, which should be reserved for special state occasions.

After hesitating awhile she put on the brown gingham. It had a little ruffle basted round the neck. Candace tried the effect of a large blue bow, and then of a muslin one, very broad, with worked ends; but neither pleased her exactly. She recollected that Georgie and Gertrude had worn simple little ruches the night

before, with no bows; and at last she wisely decided to fasten her ruffle with the little bar of silver which was her sole possession by way of ornament, for her mother's few trinkets had all been sold during her father's long illness. This pin had been a present from the worldly-minded Mrs. Buell, who so often furnished a text to Aunt Myra's homilies. She had one day heard Cannie say, when asked by one of the Buell daughters if she had any jewelry, "Are napkin-rings jewelry? I've got a napkin-ring." Mrs. Buell had laughed at the droll little speech, and repeated it as a good joke; but the next time she went to Hartford she bought the silver pin for Cannie, who was delighted, and held it as her choicest possession.

Her dressing finished, Candace went softly downstairs. She paused at the staircase window to look out. Cousin Kate's storm had not come after all. The day was brilliantly fair. Long fingers of sunshine were feeling their way through the tree-branches, seeking out shady corners and giving caressing touches to all growing things. A book lay on the window-bench. It was "A York and a Lancaster Rose," which little Marian had been reading the night before. It looked interesting, and, seeing by a glance at the tall clock in the hall below that it was but a little after seven, Candace settled herself for a long, comfortable reading before breakfast.

Mrs. Gray was the first of the family to appear. She swept rapidly downstairs in her pretty morning wrapper of pale pink, with a small muslin cap trimmed with ribbons of the same shade

on her glossy black hair, and paused to give Cannie a rapid little kiss; but she looked preoccupied, and paid no further attention to her, beyond a kind word or two, till breakfast was over, the orders for the day given, half a dozen notes answered, and half a dozen persons seen on business. The girls seemed equally busy. Each had her own special little task to do. Georgie looked over the book-tables and writing-tables; sorted, tidied, put away the old newspapers; made sure that there was ink in the inkstands and pens and paper in plenty. After this was done, she set to work to water the plant boxes and stands in the hall and on the piazza. Gertrude fell upon a large box of freshly cut flowers, and began to arrange them in various bowls and vases. Little Marian had three cages of birds to attend to, which, as she was very particular about their baths and behavior, took a long time. Candace alone had nothing to do, and sat by, feeling idle and left out among the rest.

"I think I shall put you in charge of the piazza boxes," said Mrs. Gray, noticing her forlorn look as she came back from her interview with the fishmonger. "See, Cannie, the watering-pot is kept *here*, and the faucet of cold water is just there in the pantry. Would you like to take them as a little bit of daily regular work? They must be sprinkled every morning; and if the earth is dry they must be thoroughly watered, and all the seed-pods and yellow leaves and dead flowers must be picked off. Do you feel as if you could do it?"

"Oh, I should like to," said Cannie, brightening.

"Very well. Georgie has plenty to attend to without them, I imagine. She will be glad to be helped. Georgie, Cannie has agreed to take the care of all the outside flower-boxes in future. You needn't have them on your mind any more."

"That's nice," said Georgie, good-naturedly. "Then I will look after the plants on your balcony, mamma. Elizabeth doesn't half see to them."

"Oh, mightn't I do those too?" urged Cannie. "I wish you would let me."

"Well, you can if you like. They are all watered for to-day, though. You needn't begin till to-morrow."

"That is just as well," said Mrs. Gray; "for now that I am through with the orders and the tradesmen, I want Cannie to come up to the morning-room for a consultation. Georgie, you may come too. It's about your hair, Cannie. Those thick curls are very pretty, but they look a trifle old-fashioned, and I should think must be rather hot, like a little warm shawl always on your shoulders all summer long." She stroked the curls with her soft hand, as she spoke. "Should you dislike to have them knotted up, Cannie? You are quite old enough, I think."

"No, I shouldn't dislike it, but I don't know how to do my hair in any other way. I have always worn it like this."

"We'll teach you," cried Georgie and Gertrude, who had joined them while her mother was speaking. "Let us have a 'Council of Three' in the morning-room, and see what is most becoming to her."

So upstairs they went, and the girls pounced on Cannie, and put a towel over her shoulders, and brushed out her curls, and tried this way and that, while Mrs. Gray sat by and laughed. She would not interfere, – though Cannie at times resisted, and declared that they were pulling her hair and hurting her dreadfully, – for she was anxious that the cousins should grow intimate and familiar with each other. In fact, Cannie's shyness was quite shaken out of her for the moment; and before the experiments were ended, and it was decided that a little bang on the forehead, and what Marian called a "curly knot" behind, suited her best, she felt almost at home with Georgie and Gertrude.

"There," said Georgie, sticking in a last hair-pin, "come and see yourself; and if you don't confess that you are improved, you're a very ungrateful young person, and that is all I have to say."

Candace scarcely knew her own face when she was led up to the looking-glass. The light rings of hair lay very prettily on the forehead, the "curly knot" showed the shape of the small head; it all looked easy and natural, and as if it was meant to be so. She smiled involuntarily. The girl in the glass smiled back.

"Why, I look exactly like somebody else and not a bit like myself," she cried. "What *would* Aunt Myra say to me?"

"I am going out to do some errands," said Mrs. Gray; "will you come along, Cannie, and have a little drive?"

Mrs. Gray's errands seemed to be principally on behalf of

her young companion. First they stopped at Seabury's, and after Mrs. Gray had selected a pair of "Newport ties" for herself, she ordered a similar pair for Candace. Then she said that while Cannie's shoe was off she might as well try on some boots, and Cannie found herself being fitted with a slender, shapely pair of black kid, which were not only prettier but more comfortable than the country-made ones which had made her foot look so clumsy. After that they stopped at a carpet and curtain place, where Cannie was much diverted at hearing the proprietor recommend tassels instead of plated rings on certain Holland shades, for the reason that "a tassel had more poetry about it somehow." Then, after a brief pause to order strawberries and fresh lettuce, the carriage was ordered to a milliner's.

"I want to get you a little hat of some sort," said Cousin Kate. "The one you wore yesterday is rather old for a girl of your age. I will retrim it some day, and it will do for picnics and sails, but you need more hats than one in this climate, which is fatal to ribbons and feathers, and takes the stiffness out of everything."

So a big, shady hat of dark red straw, with just a scarf of the same color twisted round the crown and a knowing little wing in front, was chosen; and then Mrs. Gray spied a smaller one of fine yellowish straw with a wreath of brown-centred daisies, and having popped it on Cannie's head for one moment, liked the effect, and ordered that too. Two new hats! It seemed to Cannie's modest ideas like the wildest extravagance; and after they returned to the coupé she found courage to say, —

"Cousin Kate, please, you mustn't buy me too many things."

"No, dear, I won't. I'll be careful," replied Mrs. Gray, smiling. Then, seeing that Cannie was in earnest, she added, more seriously: "My child, I've no wish to make you fine. I don't like finery for young girls; but one needs a good many things in a place like this, and I want to have you properly dressed in a simple way. It was agreed upon between Aunt Myra and myself that I should see to your summer wardrobe after you got here, because Newport is a better shopping-place than North Tolland; and while we are about it, we may as well get pretty things as ugly ones. It doesn't cost any more and is no more trouble, and I am sure you like them better, don't you?"

"Oh, yes, indeed," replied Cannie, quite relieved by this explanation. "I like pretty things ever so much – only – I thought – I was afraid – " She did not know how to finish her sentence.

"You were afraid I was ruining myself," asked her cousin, looking amused. "No, Cannie, I won't do that, I promise you; and in return, you will please let me just settle about a few little necessary things for you, just as I should for Georgie and Gertrude, and say no more about it. Ah! there is the old Mill; you will like to see that. Stop a moment, John."

The coupé stopped accordingly by a small open square, planted with grass and a few trees, and intersected with paths. There was a music-stand in the centre, a statue on a pedestal; and close by them, rising from the greensward, appeared a small, curious structure of stone. It was a roofless circular tower,

supported on round arches, which made a series of openings about its base. Cannie had never heard of the Stone Mill before, and she listened eagerly while Mrs. Gray explained that it had stood there since the earliest days of the Colony; that no one knew exactly how old it was, who built it, or for what purpose it was built; and that antiquarians were at variance upon these points, and had made all sorts of guesses about its origin. Some insisted that it was erected by the Norsemen, who were the first to discover the New England shores, long before the days of Columbus; others supposed it to be a fragment of an ancient church. Others again – and Mrs. Gray supposed that these last were probably nearest the truth – insisted that it was just what it seemed to be, a mill for grinding corn; and pointed out the fact that mills of very much the same shape still exist in old country neighborhoods in England. She also told Cannie that the mill used to be thickly overhung with ivies and Virginia creepers, and that it had never been so pretty and picturesque since the town authorities, under a mistaken apprehension that the roots of the vines were injuring the masonry, had torn them all away and left the ruin bare and unornamented, as she now saw it.

Конец ознакомительного фрагмента.

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