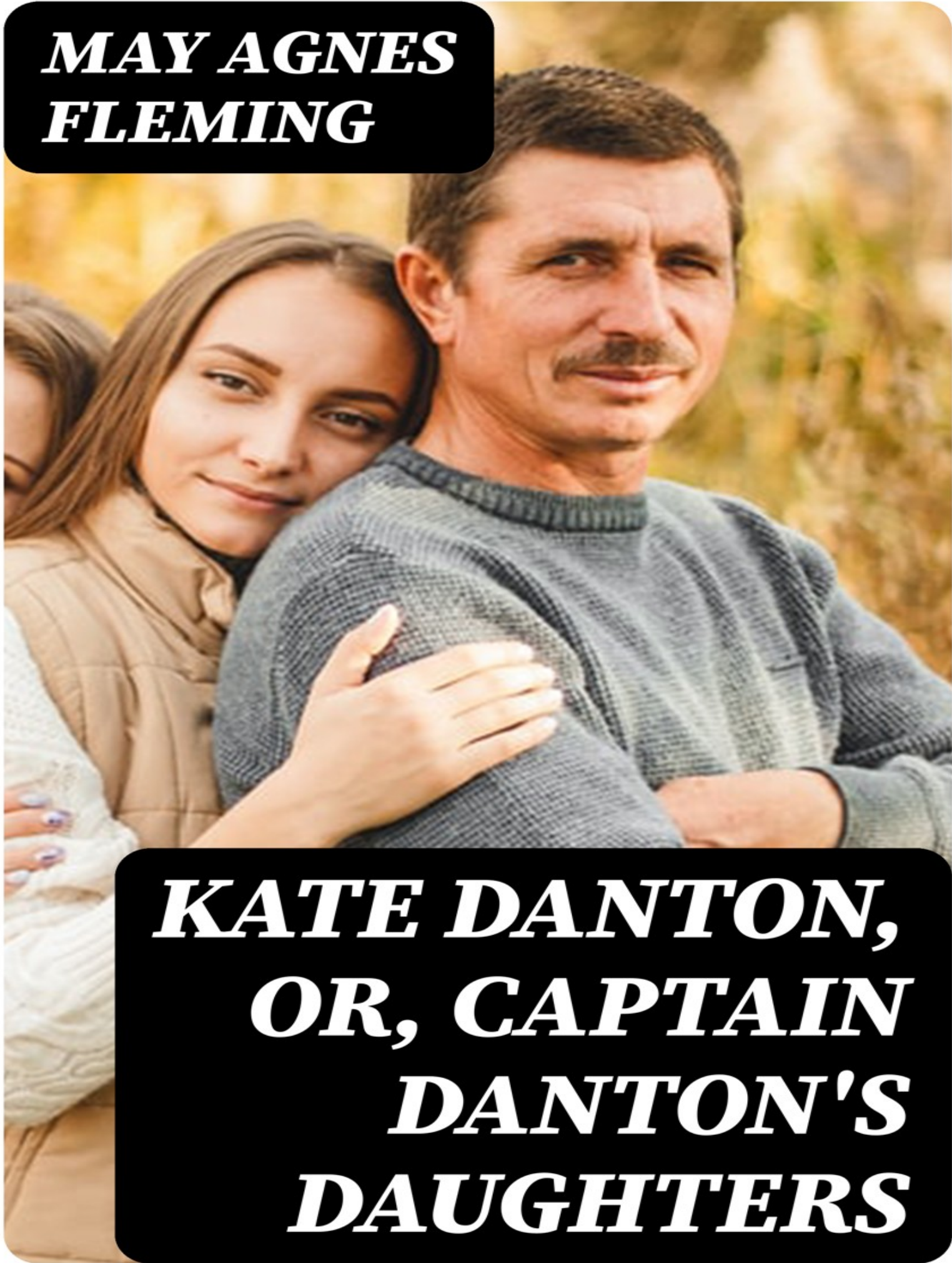


***MAY AGNES
FLEMING***



***KATE DANTON,
OR, CAPTAIN
DANTON'S
DAUGHTERS***

May Agnes Fleming

Kate Danton, or, Captain Danton's Daughters

A Novel

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CHAPTER I.

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GRACE DANTON.

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A low room, oblong in shape, three high narrow windows admitting the light through small, old-fashioned panes. Just at present there was not much to admit, for it was raining hard, and the afternoon was wearing on to dusk; but even the wet half-light showed you solid mahogany furniture, old-fashioned as the windows themselves, black and shining with age and polish; a carpet soft and thick, but its once rich hues dim and faded; oil paintings of taste and merit, some of them portraits, on the papered walls, the red glow of a large coal fire glinting pleasantly on their broad gilded frames.

At one of the windows, looking out at the ceaseless rain, a young lady sat—a young lady, tall, rather stout than slender, and not pretty. Her complexion was too sallow; her features too irregular; her dark hair too scant, and dry and thin at the parting; but her eyes were fine, large, brown and clear; her manner, self-possessed and lady-like. She was very simply but very tastefully dressed, and looked every day of her age—twenty six.

The rainy afternoon was deepening into dismal twilight; and with her cheek resting on her hand, the young lady sat with a thoughtful face.

A long avenue, shaded by towering tamaracks, led down to stately entrance-gates; beyond, a winding road, leading

to a village, not to be seen from the window. Swelling meadows, bare and bleak now, spread away to the right and left of the thickly-wooded grounds; and beyond all, through the trees, there were glimpses of the great St. Lawrence, turbid and swollen, rushing down to the stormy Gulf.

For nearly half an hour the young lady sat by the window, her solitude undisturbed; no sign of life within or without the silent house. Then came the gallop of horse's hoofs, and a lad rode up the avenue and disappeared round the angle of the building.

Ten minutes after there was a tap at the door, followed by the entrance of a servant, with a dark Canadian face.

"A letter, Miss Grace," said the girl, in French.

"Bring in some more coal, Babette," said Miss Grace, also in French, taking the letter. "Where is Miss Eeny?"

"Practising in the parlour, Ma'moiselle."

"Very well. Bring in the coal."

Babette disappeared, and the young lady opened her letter. It was very short.

"MONTREAL, November, 5, 18—.

"MY DEAR GRACE—Kate arrived in this city a week ago, and I have remained here since to show her the sights, and let her recruit after her voyage. Ogden tells me the house is quite ready for us, so you may expect us almost as soon as you receive this. We will be down by the 7th, for certain. Ogden says that Rose is absent. Write to her to return.

"Yours sincerely,
HENRY DANTON."

"P. S.—Did Ogden tell you we were to have a visitor—an invalid gentleman—a Mr. Richards? Have the suite of rooms on the west side prepared for him. H. D."

The young lady refolded her note thoughtfully, and walking to the fire, stood looking with grave eyes into the glowing coals.

"So soon," she thought; "so soon; everything to be changed. What is Captain Danton's eldest daughter like, I wonder? What is the Captain like himself, and who can this invalid, Mr. Richards, be? I don't like change."

Babette came in with the coal, and Miss Grace roused herself from her reverie.

"Babette, tell Ledru to have dinner at seven. I think your master and his daughter will be here to-night."

"Mon Dieu, Mademoiselle! The young lady from England?"

"Yes; and see that there are fires in all the rooms upstairs."

"Yes, Miss Grace."

"Is Miss Eeny still in the parlour?"

"Yes, Miss Grace."

Miss Grace walked out of the dining-room, along a carved and pictured corridor, up a broad flight of shining oaken stairs, and tapped at the first door.

"Come in, Grace," called a pleasant voice, and Grace went in.

It was a much more elegant apartment than the dining-room, with flowers, and books, and birds, and pictures, and an open piano with music scattered about.

Half buried in a great carved and gilded chair, lay the only occupant of the room—a youthful angel of fifteen, fragile in form, fair and delicate of face, with light hair and blue eyes. A novel lying open in her lap showed what her occupation had been.

"I thought you were practising your music, Eeny," said Grace.

"So I was, until I got tired. But what's that you've got? A letter?"

Grace put it in her hand.

"From papa!" cried the girl, vividly interested at once. "Oh, Grace! Kate has come!"

"Yes."

The young lady laid down the letter and looked at her.

"How oddly you said that! Are you sorry?"

"Sorry! Oh, no."

"You looked as if you were. How strange it seems to think that this sister of mine, of whom I have heard so much and have never seen, should be coming here for good! And papa—he is almost a stranger, too, Grace. I suppose everything will be very different now."

"Very, very different," Grace said, with her quiet eyes fixed on the fire. "The old life will soon be a thing of the past. And we have been very happy here; have we not, Eeny?"

"Very happy," answered Eeny; "and will be still, I hope. Papa and Kate, and Mr. Richards—I wonder who Mr. Richards is?—shall not make us miserable."

"I suppose, Eeny," said Grace, "I shall be quite forgotten when this handsome Sister Kate comes. She ought to be

very handsome."

She looked up at an oval picture about the marble mantel, in a rich frame—the photograph of a lovely girl about Eeny's age. The bright young face looked at you with a radiant smile, the exuberant golden hair fell in sunlight ripples over the plump white shoulders, and the blue eyes and rosebud lips smiled on you together. A lovely face, full of the serene promise of yet greater loveliness to come. Eeny's eyes followed those of Grace.

"You know better than that, Cousin Grace. Miss Kate Danton may be an angel incarnate, but she can never drive you quite out of my heart. Grace, how old is Kate?"

"Twenty years old."

"And Harry was three years older?"

"Yes."

"Grace, I wonder who Mr. Richards is?"

"So do I."

"Did Ogden say nothing about him?"

"Not a word."

"Will you write to Rose?"

"I shall not have time. I wish you would write, Eeny. That is what I came here to ask you to do."

"Certainly, with pleasure," said Eeny. "Rose will wait for no second invitation when she hears who have come. Will they arrive this evening?"

"Probably. They may come at any moment. And here I am lingering. Write the note at once, Eeny, and send Sam back to the village with it."

She left the parlour and went down stairs, looking into the dining-room as she passed. Babette was setting the

table already, and silver and cut-glass sparkled in the light of the ruby flame. Grace went on, up another staircase, hurrying from room to room, seeing that all things were in perfect order. Fires burned in each apartment, lamps stood on the tables ready to be lit, for neither furnace nor gas was to be found here. The west suite of rooms spoken of in the letter were the last visited. A long corridor, lit by an oriel window, through which the rainy twilight stole eerily enough, led to a baize door. The baize door opened into a shorter corridor, terminated by a second door, the upper half of glass. This was the door of a study, simply furnished, the walls lined with book-shelves, surmounted by busts. Adjoining was a bathroom, adjoining that a bedroom. Fires burned in all, and the curtained windows commanded a wide western prospect of flower-garden, waving trees, spreading fields, and the great St. Lawrence melting into the low western sky.

"Mr. Richards ought to be very comfortable here," thought Grace. "It is rather strange Ogden did not speak of him."

She went down stairs again and back to the dining-room. Eeny was there, standing before the fire, her light shape and delicate face looking fragile in the red fire-light.

"Oh, Grace," said she, "I have just sent Babette in search of you. There is a visitor in the parlour for you."

"For me?"

"Yes, a gentleman; young, and rather handsome. I asked him who I should say wished to see you, and—what do you think?—he would not tell."

"No! What did he say?"

"Told me to mention to Miss Grace Danton that a friend wished to see her. Mysterious, is it not?"

"Who can it be?" said Grace, thoughtfully. "What does this mysterious gentleman look like, Eeny?"

"Very tall," said Eeny, "and very stately, with brown hair, and beard and mustache—a splendid mustache, Grace! and beautiful, bright brown eyes, something like yours. Very good-looking, very polite, and with the smile of an angel. There you have him."

"I am as much at a loss as ever," said Grace, leaving the dining-room. "This is destined to be an evening of arrivals I think."

She ran upstairs for the second time, and opened the parlour door. A gentleman before the fire, in the seat Eeny had vacated, arose at her entrance. Grace stood still an instant, doubt, amaze, delight, alternately in her face; then with a cry of "Frank!" she sprang forward, and was caught in the tall stranger's arms.

"I thought you would recognize me in spite of the whiskers," said the stranger. "Here, stand off and let me look at you; let me see the changes six years have wrought in my sister Grace."

He held her out at arm's length, and surveyed her smilingly.

"A little older—a little graver, but otherwise the same. My solemn Gracie, you will look like your own grandmother at thirty."

"Well, I feel as if I had lived a century or two now. When did you come?"

"From Germany, last week; from Montreal at noon."

"You have been a week in Montreal then?"

"With Uncle Roosevelt—yes."

"How good it seems to see you again, Frank. How long will you stay here—in St. Croix?"

"That depends—until I get tired, I suppose. So Captain Danton and his eldest daughter are here from England?"

"How did you learn that?"

"Saw their arrival in Montreal duly chronicled."

"What is she like, Grace?"

"Who?"

"Miss Kate Danton."

"I don't know. I expect them every moment; I should think they came by the same train you did."

"Perhaps so—I rode second-class. I got talking to an old Canadian, and found him such a capital old fellow, that I kept beside him all the way. By-the-by, Grace, you've got into very comfortable quarters, haven't you?"

"Yes, Danton Hall is a very fine place."

"How long is it you have been here?"

"Four years."

"And how often has the Captain been in that time?"

"Twice; but he has given up the sea now, and is going to settle down."

"I thought his eldest daughter was a fixture in England?"

"So did I," said Grace; "but the grandmother with whom she lived has died, it appears; consequently, she comes to her natural home for the first time. That is her picture."

Miss Danton's brother raised his handsome brown eyes to the exquisite face, and took a long survey.

"She ought to be a beauty if she looks like that. Belle blonde, and I admire blondes so much! do you know, Grace, I think I shall fall in love with her?"

"Don't. It will be of no use."

"Why not? I am a Danton—a gentleman—a member of the learned profession of medicine and not so bad-looking. Why not, Grace?"

He rose up as he said it, his brown eyes smiling. Not so bad-looking, certainly. A fine-looking fellow, as he leaned against the marble mantel, bronzed and bearded, and a thorough gentleman.

"It is all of no use," Grace said, with an answering smile. "Doctor Danton's numberless perfections will be quite lost on the heiress of Danton Hall. She is engaged."

"What a pity! Who is the lucky man?"

"Hon. Lieutenant Reginald Stanford, of Stanford Royals, Northumberland, England, youngest son of Lord Reeves."

"Then mine is indeed a forlorn hope! What chance has an aspiring young doctor against the son of a lord."

"You would have no chance in any case," said Grace, with sudden seriousness. "I once asked her father which his eldest daughter most resembled, Rose or Eeny. 'Like neither,' was his reply. 'My daughter Kate is beautiful, and stately, and proud as a queen.' I shall never forget his own proud smile as he said it."

"You infer that Miss Danton, if free, would be too proud to mate with a mere plebeian professional man."

"Yes."

"Then resignation is all that remains. Is it improper to smoke in this sacred chamber, Grace? I must have

something to console me. Quite a grand alliance for Danton's daughter, is it not?"

"They do not seem to think so. I heard her father say he would not consider a prince of the blood-royal too good for his peerless Kate."

"The duse he wouldn't! What an uplifted old fellow he must be!"

"Captain Danton is not old. His age is about forty-five, and he does not look forty."

"Then I'll tell you what to do, Grace—marry him!"

"Frank, don't be absurd! Do you know you will have everything in this room smelling of tobacco for a week. I can't permit it, sir."

"Well, I'll be off," said her brother, looking at his watch, "I promised to return in half an hour for supper."

"Promised whom?"

"M. le Curé. Oh, you don't know I am stopping at the presbytery. I happened to meet the curate, Father Francis, in Montreal—we were school-boys together—and he was about the wildest, most mischievous fellow I ever met. We were immense friends—a fellow-feeling, you know, makes us wondrous kind. Judge of my amazement on meeting him on Notre Dame street, in soutane and broad-brimmed hat, and finding he had taken to Mother Church. You might have knocked me down with a feather, I assure you. Mutual confidences followed; and when he learned I was coming to St. Croix, he told me that I must pitch my tent with him. Capital quarters it is, too; and M. le Curé is the soul of hospitality. Will you give me a glass of wine after that long speech, and to fortify me for my homeward route?"

Grace rang and ordered wine. Doctor Danton drank his glass standing, and then drew on his gloves.

"Have you to walk?" asked his sister. "I will order the buggy for you."

"By no means. I rode up here on the Curé's nag, and came at the rate of a funeral. The old beast seemed to enjoy himself, and to rather like getting soaked through, and I have no doubt will return as he came. And now I must go; it would never do to be found here by these grand people—Captain and Miss Danton."

His wet overcoat hung on a chair; he put it on while walking to the door, with Grace by his side.

"When shall I see you again, Frank?"

"To-morrow. I want to have a look at our English beauty. By Jove! it knows how to rain in Canada."

The cold November blast swept in as Grace opened the front door, and the rain fell in a downpour. In the black darkness Grace could just discern a white horse fastened to a tree.

"That is ominous, Grace," said her brother. "Captain Danton and his daughter come heralded by wind and tempest. Take care it is not prophetic of domestic squalls."

He ran down the steps, but was back again directly.

"Who was that pale, blue-eyed fairy I met when I entered?"

"Eveleen Danton."

"Give her my best regards—Doctor Frank's. She will be rather pretty, I think; and if Miss Kate snubs me, perhaps I shall fall back on Miss Eveleen. It seems to me I should like

to get into so great a family. Once more, *bon soir*, sister mine, and pleasant dreams."

He was gone this time for good. His sister stood in the doorway, and watched the white horse and its tall, dark rider vanish under the tossing trees.



CHAPTER II.

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KATE DANTON.

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Grace went slowly back to the parlour and stood looking thoughtfully into the fire. It was pleasant in that pleasant parlour, bright with the illumination of lamp and fire—doubly pleasant in contrast with the tumult of wind and rain without. Very pleasant to Grace, and she sighed wearily as she looked up from the ruby coals to the radiant face smiling down from over the mantel.

"You will be mistress to-morrow," she thought; "the place I have held for the last four years is yours from to-night. Beautiful as a queen. What will your reign be like, I wonder?"

She drew up the arm-chair her brother had vacated and sat down, her thoughts drifting backward to the past. Backward four years, and she saw herself, a penniless orphan, dependent on the bounty of that miserly Uncle Roosevelt in Montreal. She saw again the stately gentleman who came to her, and told her he was her father's third cousin, Captain Danton, of Danton Hall. She had never seen him before; but she had heard of her wealthy cousin from childhood, and knew his history. She knew he had married in early youth an English lady, who had died ten years after, leaving four children—a son, Henry, and three daughters, Katherine, Rosina and Eveleen. The son, wild and wayward all his life, broke loose at the age of twenty, forged his

father's name, and fled to New York, married an actress, got into a gambling affray, and was stabbed. That was the end of him. The eldest daughter, born in England, had been brought up by her maternal grandmother, who was rich, and whose heiress she was to be. Mrs. Danton and her two youngest children resided at the Hall, while the Captain was mostly absent. After her death, a Canadian lady had taken charge of the house and Captain Danton's daughters. All this Grace knew, and was quite unprepared to see her distant kinsman, and to hear that the Canadian lady had married and left, and that she was solicited to take her place. The Captain's terms were so generous that Grace accepted at once; and, a week after, was domesticated at the Hall, housekeeper and companion to his daughters.

Four years ago. Looking back to-night, Grace sighed to think how pleasant it had all been, now that it was over. It had been such a quiet, untroubled time—she sole mistress, Rose's fits of ill-temper and Eeny's fits of illness the only drawback. And now it was at an end forever. The heiress of Danton Hall was coming to wield the sceptre, and a new era would dawn with the morrow.

There was a tap at the door, and a voice asking: "May I come in, Grace?" and Grace woke up from her dreaming.

"Yes, Eeny," she said; and Eeny came in, looking at her searchingly.

"Have you been crying?" she asked, taking a stool at her feet.

"Crying? no! What should I cry for?"

"You look so solemn. I heard your visitor go, and ran up. Who was it?"

"My brother, who has just returned from Germany."

"Dear me! Didn't I say he had eyes like you? He's a Doctor, isn't he?"

"Yes."

"Grace, I thought you said you were poor?"

"Well, I am poor—am I not?"

"Then who paid for your brother studying medicine in Germany?"

"Uncle Roosevelt. He is very fond of Frank."

"Is your Uncle Roosevelt rich?"

"I believe so. Very rich, and very miserly."

"Has he sons and daughters?"

"No; we are his nearest relatives."

"Then, perhaps, he will leave you his fortune, Grace."

"Hardly, I think. He may remember Frank in his will; but there is no telling. He is very eccentric."

"Grace, I hope he won't leave it to you," said Eeny soberly.

"Really, why not, pray?"

"Because, if you were rich you would go away. I should be sorry if you left Danton Hall."

Grace stooped to kiss the pale young face.

"My dear Eeny, you forget that your beautiful sister Kate is coming. In a week or two, you will have room in your heart for no one but her."

"You know better than that," said Eeny; "perhaps she will be like Rose, and I shall not love her at all."

Grace smiled.

"Do you mean to say you do not love Rose, then?"

"Love Rose?" repeated Eeny, very much amazed at the question; "love Rose, indeed! I should like to see any one who could love Rose. Grace, where is your brother stopping? At the hotel?"

"No; at Monsieur le Curé's. He knows Father Francis. Eeny, do you hear that?"

She started up, listening. Through the tempest of wind and rain, and the surging of the trees, they could hear carriage wheels rattling rapidly up to the house.

"I hear it," said Eeny; "papa has come. O Grace, how pale you are!"

"Am I?" Grace said, laying her hand on heart, and moving towards the door. She paused in the act of opening it, and caught Eeny suddenly and passionately to her heart. "Eeny, my darling, before they come, tell me once more you will not let this new sister steal your heart entirely from me. Tell me you will love me still."

"Always, Grace," said Eeny; "there—the carriage has stopped!"

Grace opened the door and went out into the entrance hall. The marble-paved floor, the domed ceiling, the carved, and statued, and pictured walls, were quite grand in the blaze of a great chandelier. An instant later, and a loud knock made the house ring, and Babette flung the front door wide open. A stalwart gentleman, buttoned up in a great-coat, with a young lady on his arm, strode in.

"Quite a Canadian baptism, papa," the silvery voice of the young lady said; "I am almost drenched."

Grace heard this, and caught a glimpse of Captain Danton's man, Ogden, gallanting a pretty, rosy girl, who

looked like a lady's maid, and then, very, very pale, advanced to meet her master and his daughter.

"My dear Miss Grace," the hearty voice of the sailor said, as he grasped her hand, "I am delighted to see you. My daughter Kate, Miss Grace."

My daughter Kate bowed in a dignified manner, scarcely looking at her. Her eyes were fixed on a smaller, slighter figure shrinking behind her.

"Hallo, Eeny!" cried the Captain, catching her in his arms; "trying to play hide-and-go-seek, are you? Come out and let us have a look at you."

He held her up over his head as if she had been a kitten, and kissed her as he set her down, laughing and breathless.

"You little whiff of thistle-down, why can't you get fat and rosy as you ought? There, kiss your sister Kate, and bid her welcome."

Eeny looked timidly up, and was mesmerized at one glance. Two lovely eyes of starry radiance looked down into hers, and the loveliest face Eeny ever saw was lighted with a bewitching smile. Two arms were held out, and Eeny sprang into them, and kissed the exquisite face rapturously.

"You darling child!" the sweet voice said, and that was all; but she held her close, with tears in the starry eyes.

"There, there!" cried Captain Danton; "that will do. You two can hug each other at your leisure by-and-by; but just at present I am very hungry, and should like some dinner. The dining-room is in this direction, isn't it, Grace? I think I know the way."

He disappeared, and Kate Danton disengaged her new-found sister, still holding her hand.

"Come and show me to my room, Eeny," she said. "Eunice," to the rosy lady's-maid, "tell Ogden to bring up the trunks and unpack at once. Come."

Still holding her sister's hand, Kate went upstairs, and Eeny had eyes and ears for no one else. Eunice gave her young lady's order to Ogden, and followed, and Grace was left standing alone.

"Already," she thought, bitterly, "already I am forgotten!"

Not quite. Captain Danton appeared at the head of the stairs, divested of his great-coat.

"I say, Ogden. Oh, Miss Grace, will you come upstairs, if you please? Ogden, attend to the luggage, and wait for me in my dressing-room."

He returned to the parlour, and Grace found him standing with his back to the fire when she entered. A portly and handsome man, florid and genial, with profuse fair hair, mustache and side-whiskers. He placed a chair for her, courteously, and Grace sat down.

"You are looking pale, Miss Grace," he said, regarding her. "You have not been ill, I trust. Ogden told me you were all well."

"I am quite well, thank you."

"You wrote to Rose, I suppose? Where is it she has gone?"

"To the house of Miss La Touche; a friend of hers, in Ottawa. Eeny has written to her, and Rose will probably be here in a day or two, at most."

The Captain nodded.

"As for you, my dear young lady, I find you have managed so admirably in my absence, that I trust we shall retain you for many years yet. Perhaps I am selfish in the

wish, but it comes so naturally that you will pardon the selfishness. Kate is in total ignorance of the mysteries of housekeeping. Heaven help me and my friends if we had to depend on her catering! Besides," laughing slightly, "some one is coming before long to carry her off."

Grace bowed gravely.

"So you see, my fair kinswoman, you are indispensable. I trust we shall prevail upon you to remain."

"If you wish me to do so, Captain Danton, I shall, certainly."

"Thank you. Is that rich old curmudgeon, your uncle, alive yet?"

"Yes, sir."

"And your brother? In Germany still, I suppose."

"No, sir; my brother is in Canada—in St. Croix. He was here this evening."

"Indeed! Where is he stopping? We must get him to come here."

"He is on a visit to M. le Curé, and I do not think means to stay long."

The door opened as she said it, and Kate and Eeny came in. The sisters had their arms around each other's waist, and Eeny seemed entranced. Kate went over and stood beside her father, looking up fondly in his face.

"How pretty the rooms are, papa! My boudoir and bedroom are charming. Eeny is going to chaperone me all over to-morrow—such a dear, romantic old house."

Grace sat and looked at her. How beautiful she was! She still wore slight mourning, and her dress was black silk, that fell in full rich folds behind her, high to the round white

throat, where it was clasped with a flashing diamond. A solitaire diamond blazed on her left hand—those slender, delicate little hands—her engagement ring, no doubt. They were all the jewels she wore. The trimming of her dress was of filmy black lace, and all her masses of bright golden hair were twisted coronet-wise round her noble and lovely head. She was very tall, very slender; and the exquisite face just tinted with only the faintest shadow of rose. "Beautiful, and stately, and proud as a queen!" Yes, she looked all that, and Grace wondered what manner of man had won that high-beating heart. There was a witchery in her glance, in her radiant smile, in every graceful movement, that fascinated even her father's sedate housekeeper, and that seemed to have completely captivated little Eeny. In her beauty and her pride, as she stood there so graceful and elegant, Grace thought her father was right when he said a prince was not too good for his peerless daughter.

He smiled down on her now as men do smile down on what is the apple of their eye and the pride of their heart, and then turned to Eeny, clinging to her stately sister.

"Take care, Eeny! Don't let Kate bewitch you. Don't you know that she is a sorceress, and throws a glamour over all she meets? She's uncanny, I give you warning—a witch; that's the word for it!"

Eeny's reply was to lift Kate's hand and kiss it.

"Do witches ever eat, papa?" laughed Miss Danton; "because I am very hungry. What time do we dine?"

"What time, Miss Grace?" asked the Captain.

"Immediately, if you wish, sir."

"Immediately let it be, then."

Grace rang and ordered dinner to be served. Thomas, the old butler, and a boy in buttons made their appearance with the first course. Grace had always presided, but this evening she sat beside Eeny, and Miss Kate took the head of the table.

"The first time, papa," she said. "If I make any blunders, tell me."

"Oh, papa!" exclaimed Eeny, "I thought some one else was coming. A sick gentleman—Mr. what?—oh, Richards?"

The face of Captain Danton and his eldest daughter darkened suddenly at the question. Grace saw it in surprise.

"He will be here presently," he said, but he said it with an air of restraint; and Kate, leaning forward with that radiant smile of hers, began telling Eeny some story of their life at sea that made her forget Mr. Richards.

They adjourned to the drawing-room after dinner. A long, low, sumptuous apartment, very stately and very grand, and decorated with exquisite taste.

"What a beautiful room!" Kate said. "We had nothing half so quaint and old as this at home, papa?"

There was a grand piano near one of the tall windows, with a music-rack beside it, and the young lady went over and opened it, and ran her fingers with a masterly touch over the keys.

"That's right, Kate," said her father; "give us some music. How do you like your piano?"

"Like is not the word, papa. It is superb!"

The white hands sparkled over the polished ivory keys, and the room was filled with melody. Eeny stood by the piano with a rapt face. Captain Danton sat in an arm-chair

and listened with half-closed eyes, and Grace sat down in a corner, and drew from her pocket her crochet.

"Oh, Kate, how beautifully you play?" Eeny cried ecstatically, when the flying hands paused, "I never heard anything like that. What was it?"

"Only a German waltz, you little enthusiast! Don't you play?"

"A little. Rose plays too, polkas and waltzes; but bah! not like that."

"Who is your teacher?"

"Monsieur De Lancey. He comes from Montreal twice a week to give us lessons. But you play better than he does."

"Little flatterer!" kissing her and laughing, and the white hands busy again. "Papa, what will you have?"

"A song, my dear."

"Well, what do you like? Casta Diva?"

"I'd be sorry to like it! can you sing the Lass o' Gowrie?"

"I shall try, if you wish."

She broke into singing as she spoke, and Grace's work dropped in her lap as she listened. What an exquisite voice it was! So clear, so sweet, so powerful. The mute-wrapped stillness that followed the song was the best applause. Miss Danton rose up, laughing at her sister's entranced face.

"Oh, don't stop!" Eeny cried, imploringly. "Sing again, Kate."

There was a loud ring at the doorbell before Kate could answer. Captain Danton and Grace had been listening an instant before to a carriage rolling up the drive. The former started up now and hurried out of the room; and Kate stood still, intently looking at the door.

"Who is that?" said Eeny. "Mr. Richards?"

Kate laid her hand on the girl's shoulder, and still stood silent and intent. They could hear the door open, hear the voices of the Captain and his man Ogden; and then there was a shuffling of feet in the hall and up the stairs.

"They are helping him upstairs," said Kate, drawing a long breath. "Yes, it is Mr. Richards."

Eeny looked as if she would like to ask some questions, but her sister sat down again at the piano, and drowned her words in a storm of music. Half an hour passed, nearly an hour, Miss Danton played on and on without ceasing, and then her father came back. The girl looked at him quickly and questioningly, but his high coloured face was as good-humoured as ever.

"Playing away still," he said, "and Eeny's eyes are like two midnight moons. Do you know it is half-past ten, Miss Eeny, and time little girls were in bed?"

Grace rose up, and put her work in her pocket. Eeny came over, kissed her father and sister good-night, and retired. Grace, with a simple good-night, was following her example, but the cordial Captain held out his hand.

"Good-night, my little housekeeper," he said; "and pleasant dreams."

Miss Danton held out her taper fingers, but her good-night was quiet and cool.

Her father's housekeeper, it would seem, did not impress her very favourably, or she was too proud to be cordial with dependants.

Up in her own room, Grace turned her lamp low, and sitting down by the window, drew back the curtains. The

rain still fell, the November wind surged through the trees, and the blackness was impenetrable. Was this wintry tempest, as her brother had said, ominous of coming trouble and storms in their peaceful Canadian home?

"I wonder how she and Rose will get on," thought Grace. "Rose's temper is as gusty as this November night, and I should judge those purple eyes can flash with the Danton fire, too. When two thunder-clouds meet, there is apt to be an uproar. I shall not be surprised if there is war in the camp before long."

Her door opened softly. Grace turned round, and saw Eeny in a long night-dress, looking like a spirit.

"May I come in, Grace?"

"It is time you were in bed," said Grace, turning up the lamp, and beginning to unbraid her hair.

Eeny came in and sat down on a low stool at Grace's feet.

"Oh, Grace, isn't she splendid?"

"Who?"

"You know whom I mean—Kate."

"She is very handsome," Grace said quietly, going on with her work.

"Handsome! She is lovely? She is glorious! Grace, people talk about Rose being pretty; but she is no more to Kate than—than just nothing at all."

"Did you come in merely to say that? If so, Miss Eveleen, I must request you to depart, as I am going to say my prayers."

"Directly," said Eeny, nestling more comfortably on her stool. "Did you ever hear any one play and sing as she

does?"

"She plays and sings remarkably well."

"Grace, what would you give to be as beautiful as she is?"

"Nothing! And now go."

"Yes. Isn't it odd that papa did not bring Mr. Richards into the drawing-room. Ogden and papa helped him up stairs, and Ogden brought him his supper."

"Who told you that?"

"Babette. Babette saw him, but he was so muffled up she could not make him out. He is very tall and slim, she says, and looks like a young man."

"Eeny, how soon are you going?"

"Oh, Grace," she said, coaxingly, "let me stay all night with you."

"And keep me awake until morning, talking? Not I," said Grace. "Go!"

"Please let me stay?"

"No! Be off!"

She lifted her up, led her to the door, and put her out, and Eeny ran off to her own chamber.

As Grace closed her door, she heard Kate Danton's silk dress rustle upstairs.

"Good-night, papa," she heard her say in that soft, clear voice that made her think of silver bells.

"Good-night, my dear," the Captain replied. And then the silk dress rustled past, a door opened and shut, and Miss Danton had retired.
