

## **Chapter VI. Sydney Teaches.**

Mrs. Presty had not very seriously exaggerated the truth, when she described her much-indulged granddaughter as "a child who had never been accustomed to wait for anything since the day when she was born."

Governesses in general would have found it no easy matter to produce a favorable impression on Kitty, and to exert the necessary authority in instructing her, at the same time. Spoiled children (whatever moralists may say to the contrary) are companionable and affectionate children, for the most part--except when they encounter the unfortunate persons employed to introduce them to useful knowledge. Mr. and Mrs. Linley (guiltily conscious of having been too fond of their only child to subject her to any sort of discipline) were not very willing to contemplate the prospect before Miss Westerfield on her first establishment in the schoolroom. To their surprise and relief there proved to be no cause for anxiety after all. Without making an attempt to assert her authority, the new governess succeeded nevertheless when older and wiser women would have failed.

The secret of Sydney's triumph over adverse circumstances lay hidden in Sydney herself.

Everything in the ordinary routine of life at Mount Morven was a source of delight and surprise to the unfortunate creature who had passed through six years of cruelty, insult, and privation at her aunt's school. Look where she might, in her new sphere of action, she saw pleasant faces and heard kind words. At meal times, wonderful achievements in the art of cookery appeared on the table which she had not only never tasted, but never even heard of. When she went out walking with her pupil they were free to go where they pleased, without restriction of time--except the time of dinner. To breathe the delicious air, to look at the glorious scenery, were enjoyments so exquisitely exhilarating that, by Sydney's own confession, she became quite light headed with pleasure. She ran races with Kitty--and nobody reprov'd her. She rested, out of breath, while the stronger child was ready to run on--and no merciless voice cried "None of your laziness; time's up!" Wild flowers that she had never yet seen might be gathered, and no offense was committed. Kitty told her the names of the flowers, and the names of the summer insects that flashed and hummed in the hillside breezes; and was so elated at teaching her governess that her rampant spirits burst out in singing. "Your turn next," the joyous child cried, when she too was out of breath. "Sing, Sydney--sing!" Alas for Sydney! She had not sung since those

happiest days of her childhood, when her good father had told her fairy stories, and taught her songs. They were all forgotten now. "I can't sing, Kitty; I can't sing." The pupil, hearing this melancholy confession, became governess once more. "Say the words, Syd; and hum the tune after me." They laughed over the singing lesson, until the echoes of the hills mocked them, and laughed too. Looking into the schoolroom, one day, Mrs. Linley found that the serious business of teaching was not neglected. The lessons went on smoothly, without an obstacle in the way. Kitty was incapable of disappointing her friend and playfellow, who made learning easy with a smile and a kiss. The balance of authority was regulated to perfection in the lives of these two simple creatures. In the schoolroom, the governess taught the child. Out of the schoolroom, the child taught the governess. Division of labor was a principle in perfect working order at Mount Morven--and nobody suspected it! But, as the weeks followed each other, one more remarkable circumstance presented itself which every person in the household was equally quick to observe. The sad Sydney Westerfield whom they all pitied had now become the pretty Sydney Westerfield whom they all admired. It was not merely a change--it was a transformation. Kitty stole the hand-glass from her mother's room, and insisted that her governess should take it and look at herself. "Papa says you're as plump as a partridge; and mamma says you're as fresh as a rose; and Uncle Randal wags his head, and tells them he saw it from the first. I heard it all when they thought I was playing with my doll--and I want to know, you best of nice girls, what you think of your own self?"

"I think, my dear, it's time we went on with our lessons."

"Wait a little, Syd; I have something else to say."

"What is it?"

"It's about papa. He goes out walking with us--doesn't he?"

"Yes."

"He didn't go out walking with me--before you came here. I've been thinking about it; and I'm sure papa likes you. What are you looking in the drawer for?"

"For your lesson books, dear."

"Yes--but I haven't quite done yet. Papa talks a good deal to you, and you don't talk much to papa. Don't you like him?"