

CHAPTER I. "None doubted that the Messengers were fortunate in possessing so charming a house as the Ness. It was built on a hillside of a narrow, steeply rising slope, and by two hills, and beyond the sloping lawn stretched a wide expanse of sea. Mr. and Mrs. Messinger were simple unadorned people, devoted to their duty, and to the welfare of their young step-daughter. They treated her with a kind of reverential tenderness, chiefly due to the fact that she was entirely dependent on them for her support. Her mother, Nancy, filled the place of a loving sister to the little ones, and of friend-in-chief to her gentle sister-in-law. On sunny afternoons in early summer Mrs. Messinger sat at the open bay window of the drawing room, reading a novel, and looking out at the sea. She was a placid little lady, seldom ruffled by wind or tempest, and her sweet face and soft blue eyes were pleasant to contemplate. The door opened presently and Nancy came in smilingly. Her hair was pinned up in a sweet and gentle as her sister's, but her great dark eyes and firmly-bent mouth and chin bore evidence of much greater strength and firmness of character than the other. She sat down at the window and read herself in a low-backed chair with an air of constraint. "When did you have a letter from Jim," she said. "Yes, I saw it on the hall table," replied Nancy, laying down her book. "Does he say when he is coming?" "Yes, he came by the same steamer as I did, but he says he will not come now, I suppose."

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CHAPTER II. "I have a confession to make," said Nancy, nervously looking over her shoulder. "I thought I loved Jim when he was only a boy, but I don't love him now. I have known each other all our lives and I mistook our friendship for love. When did you have a letter from Jim," she said. "Yes, I saw it on the hall table," replied Nancy, laying down her book. "Does he say when he is coming?" "Yes, he came by the same steamer as I did, but he says he will not come now, I suppose."

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A. J. C. McNEIL, N.Y.

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