

URSULA SWAYNE'S TROUBLE.

BY THE AUTHOR OF "THE FRENCH DOLL."

URSULA SWAYNE'S face was not pleasant to look at as she came home from her French lesson on Saturday afternoon. It was not a pretty face, but its intelligence made it remarkable; and usually the frank, open expression of the eyes and mouth made it pleasing too.

Now the straight, well-cut brows were contracted, the under-lip was so pinched upwards that the corners of the mouth drooped, and a sort of restless quiver in the long, dark eyelashes gave warning that the poor little troubled heart belonging to the pale, brown-eyed child had hard work just then to keep the tears from springing.

When she reached the small house her father lived in, she went straight up-stairs, threw her books and hat on her bed, and then stood pushing some straggling hairs off her forehead.

Ursula did not go to regular school—only twice a week for French lessons. She had a singular aptitude for languages, a good memory, and showed intelligence as well as diligence in preparing her exercises, and yet she had come away from Mrs. Smith's school with a troubled, sorrowful face.

"I hate Monsieur Jeanneton;"—and there was something very like a stamp on the bare wooden floor as she spoke—"and yet I would rather do lessons for him than any one; he is so clever; he knows exactly what is difficult, and shows where it comes and why it is difficult; he is so different from Miss Grey. Miss Grey! Why, when I ask *her* to explain, she only makes things more confused: she says, 'Well, I'm sure I don't know; it always has been so; you ask too many questions, Ursula;' but then—" the child paused an instant reflectively—"Miss Grey is an idiot. I could teach just as well as she does, poor silly thing. Yes, Monsieur Jeanneton is very, very, very clever, but he is unjust, and I hate people to be unjust; of course, I do my lessons as well as I can; I don't choose to be beaten; but he has a spite against me, or——"

The colour rose up to her forehead, and tears came along with it, crimsoning and swelling the slender throbbing throat, till they forced away the pride that had held them back. Ursula sat down, and, hiding her face in her hands, had an unrestrained sobbing-fit.

Poor little wounded heart! Monsieur Jeanneton would scarcely have believed that

this humbled, tear-stained face was that of the proud, uncourteous pupil who made such strangely clever but intolerably insolent comments on his teaching.

"Yes, madame," he had said to Mrs. Smith, "the young ladies are charming, so amiable, so *bien élevées*, except Mees Ursule: and yet, for ten years, she is of an intelligence quite remarkable; but she has not a heart."

And the polite Frenchman went his way quite unconscious of the tempest he had raised, or of the vanity he had fed; for Ursula's trouble was not only because the faultless exercise at which she had worked so resolutely had been given back to her with a "bien, Mademoiselle" said in the master's gravest tones, but that Mary Hallet, the silliest, least clever girl at Mrs. Smith's, should be almost always the object of Monsieur Jeanneton's warm praise.

There was a strange under-current of generosity in Ursula. She hated herself even for the passing thought.

"Why should I grudge Mary praise? She cannot do her exercises, but she is a good sort of girl enough."

"Lully, are you never coming down? Do make haste."

A boy about two years older than Ursula shouted this from the bottom of the stairs.

"What do you want, Willie? I suppose I may have time to wash my hands and take off my things?"

"That's right, fire up, young un! I don't think French agrees with you, Lul, you are so precious cross when you come home. Are you coming to play cricket with Fred and me, or aren't you? Just say Yes or No."

Ursula's heart was very full now.

"If I'm cross you can't want me, so I say No."

"All right, cross-patch;" and Willie ran off to join his eldest brother.

Ursula's heart seemed bursting. She could not stay in-doors. She wanted to get into the air away from every one.

She stood at the glass door leading into the garden. She did not want to fall in with her brothers; but they were not to be seen on the lawn.

At the end of the lawn came the kitchen-garden, fenced out of sight by a thick shrubbery, and beyond this again was a field; on one side of the field was a bit of waste ground, with a good-sized hillock in