

**ALLINA GREY;
OR, THE DECISION**

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Allina Grey; Or, the Decision by G. M. Sterne

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"Not my mamma's Bible!—any punishment but that! Please, aunt, let me have my dear mamma's Bible."—
Page 23.

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OR,

THE DECISION.

By G. M. STERNE,

AUTHOR OF "GENERALSHIP;" "A STRONG WILL AND A FAIR FIDE,"
ETC., ETC.

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CHAPTER I.

ONE of the dullest rooms, in one of the gloomy houses of Harley Street, London, had been chosen by Lady Mildmay for a schoolroom for her three little girls, of the ages of twelve, ten, and five.

She had decided on this room, being under the impression that their thoughts would be more firmly fixed on their studies than they would be if they had anything attractive to look at from the window. Miss Cooper, their governess, thought differently. She knew from experience the pleasing relief afforded to the eye and mind by a glance at a bed of flowers, and she would have voted for the sight of even a London garden; but as Lady Mildmay did not ask for her opinion she was wisely silent.

The schoolroom party had just finished their breakfast, and they were placing their books on the table when Lady Mildmay entered the room.

Miss Cooper rose and bent respectfully to her formal greeting, whilst the little girls ran eagerly towards her.

Little Carry, the youngest, was the only one who received a kiss. The other two gently shook their mamma's hand, and inquired for her health.

Poor Miss Cooper perceived by a glance that something was wrong. She was not long left in ignorance of what it was; for, after answering her little girls, Lady Mildmay turned to her, saying,—

“I think, Miss Cooper, I have before this morning expressed my extreme dislike to the excited manner in which your pupils receive me whenever I enter the room.”

“I am sorry,” murmured the governess.

“So you said the last time,” returned Lady Mildmay. “I must request that an additional half-hour may be given daily for some weeks to the reception lesson.”

Miss Cooper said she would attend to her wishes.

She could not avoid a glance of reproach to the two elder girls, although she felt sorry that the joyous feeling of welcoming their mamma should be restrained to the cold formality of a woman's manner.

Both Ellen and Amelia understood the meaning of her glance; the former, with a disdainful shrug of her shoulders, drew a chair forward for her mamma.

The latter answered her glance with a blush, and tears started to her eyes; her mamma's attention was occupied with Ellen, or she certainly would have reproved her for her emotion, and demanded the cause.

Lady Mildmay politely requested Miss Cooper to resume her seat, and then, turning to her eldest daughter, said,—

“Your papa has just gone to the Docks for your cousin Allina: the vessel entered early this morning.”

“I hope she is pretty and elegant,” said Ellen.

"Poor Allina," said Amelia, "how sad she must be! no papa, no mamma."

"She shall be your little girl," whispered Carry, as she nestled close to her mamma's side.

"I shall be very pleased to increase the number of my little daughters," returned her mamma, coolly.

"How old is Miss Grey?" inquired Miss Cooper.

"About the age of Ellen," answered Lady Mildmay. "I think she was born the May following her birth."

"As I was born in March I am just two months older than my cousin," said Ellen.

"Will she live with us, mamma?" inquired Amelia.

"I hope so," replied her mamma. "Will you receive another pupil, Miss Cooper?—of course your salary shall be increased."

Miss Cooper said she would instruct her with much pleasure, and thanked her for the promised addition to her salary, and inquired whether Miss Grey's education had been attended to."