AN OLD CHESTER SECRET

MARGARET DELAND

Title: An Old Chester Secret

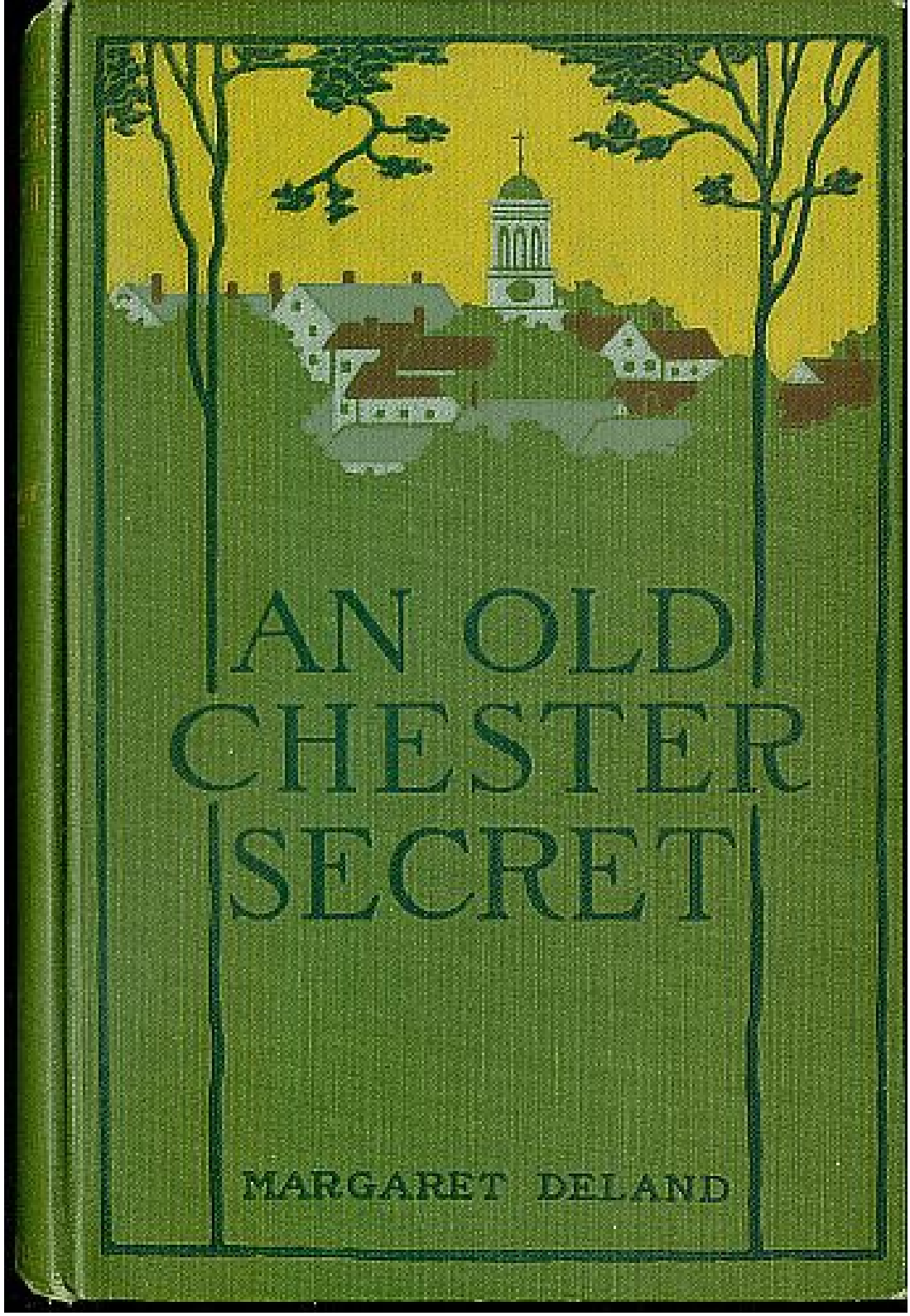
Author: Margaret Deland

Illustrator: F. Walter Taylor

Release Date: March 27, 2010 [EBook #31792]

Language: English

Produced by Suzanne Shell, Emmy and the Online Distributed Proofreading Team at http://www.pgdp.net

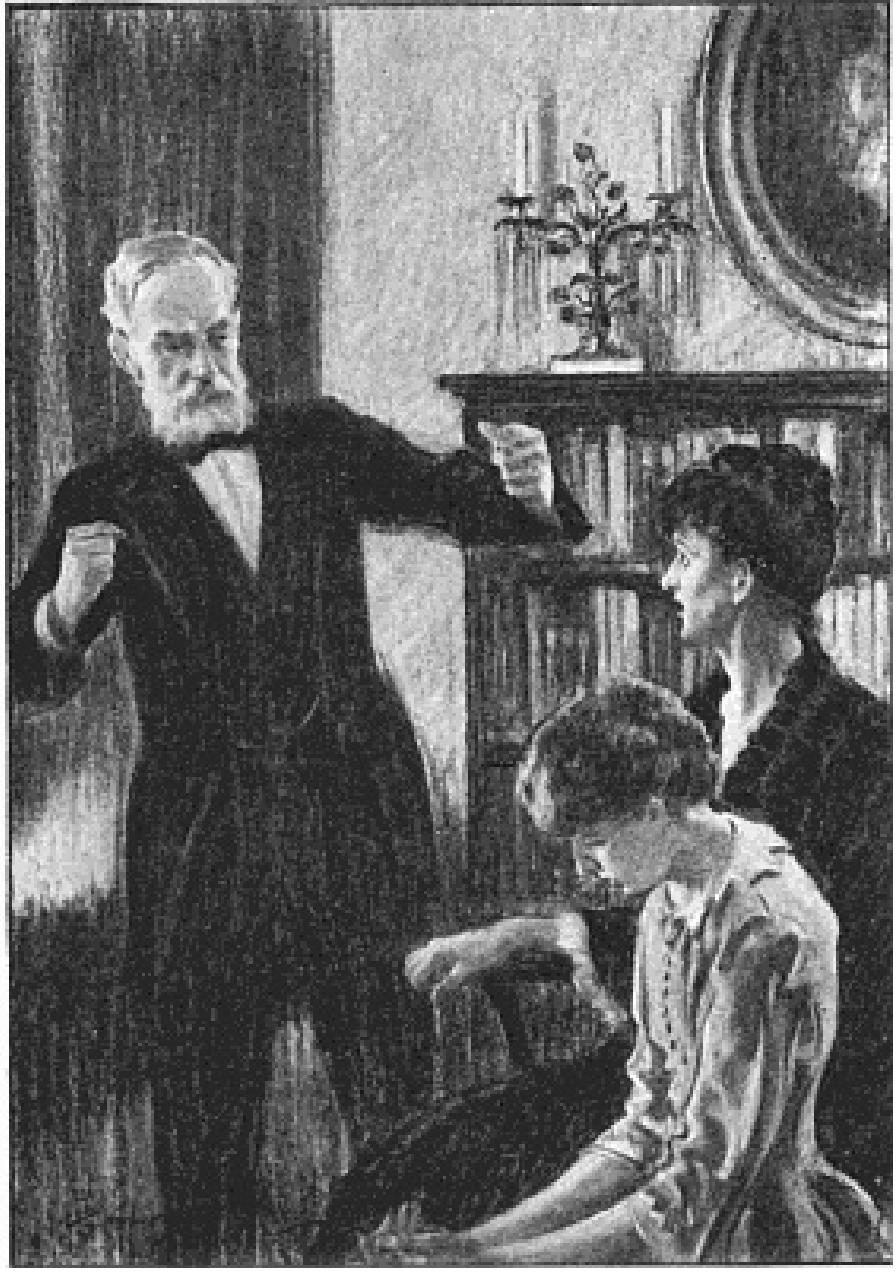


AN OLD CHESTER SECRET

BOOKS BY
MARGARET DELAND

AN OLD CHESTER SECRET
THE PROMISES OF ALICE
THE AWAKENING OF HELENA RICHIE
THE RISING TIDE
AROUND OLD CHESTER
THE HANDS OF ESAU
OLD CHESTER TALES
AN ENCORE
DR. LAVENDAR'S PEOPLE
PARTNERS
THE IRON WOMAN
THE VOICE
WHERE THE LABORERS ARE FEW

HARPER & BROTHERS, NEW YORK
Established 1817



[See p. 18

"WHAT! INSULT THIS LADY BY ASKING FOR A 'PROMISE'?"

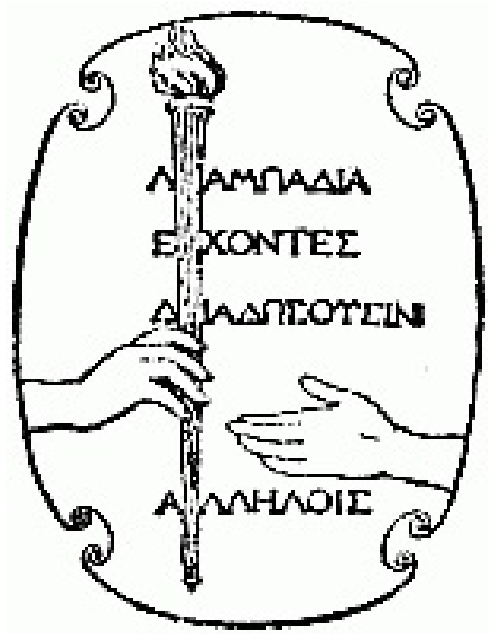
AN OLD CHESTER SECRET

By

MARGARET DELAND

Author of
"OLD CHESTER TALES" "THE IRON WOMAN"
"AROUND OLD CHESTER" ETC.

Illustrations by
F. WALTER TAYLOR



HARPER & BROTHERS PUBLISHERS
NEW YORK AND LONDON

Published October, 1920

To Lorin—
for this book, too,
is his.

Kennebunkport
August 12, 1920

ILLUSTRATIONS

AN OLD CHESTER SECRET

CHAPTER I

THERE was not a person in Old Chester less tainted by the vulgarity of secretiveness than Miss Lydia Sampson. She had no more reticence than sunshine or wind, or any other elemental thing. How much of this was due to conditions it would be hard to say; certainly there was no "reticence" in her silence as to her neighbors' affairs; she simply didn't know them! Nobody ever dreamed of confiding in Lydia Sampson! And she could not be reticent about her own affairs because they were inherently public. When she was a girl she broke her engagement to Mr. William Rives two weeks before the day fixed for the wedding—and the invitations were all out! So of course everybody knew *that*. To be sure, she never said why she broke it, but all Old Chester knew she hated meanness, and felt sure that she had given her William the choice of being generous or being jilted—and he chose the latter. As she grew older the joyous, untidy makeshifts of a poverty which was always hospitable and never attempted to be genteel, stared you in the face the minute you entered the house; so everybody knew she was poor. Years later, her renewed engagement to Mr. Rives, and his flight some ten minutes before the marriage ceremony, were known to everybody because we had all been invited to the wedding, which cost (as we happened to know, because we had presented her with just exactly that amount) *a hundred dollars!* At the sight of such extravagance the thrifty William turned tail and ran, and we gave thanks and said he was a scoundrel to make us thankful, though, with the exception of Doctor Lavendar, we deplored the extravagance as much as he did! As for Doctor Lavendar, he said that it was a case of the grasshopper and the ant; "but Lydia is a gambling grasshopper," said Doctor Lavendar; "she took tremendous chances, for suppose the party

hadn't scared William off?"

So, obviously, anything which was personal to Miss Lydia was public property. She simply couldn't be secretive.

Then, suddenly, and in the open (so to speak) of her innocent candor, a Secret pounced upon her! At first Old Chester didn't know that there was a secret. We merely knew that on a rainy December day (this was about eight months after William had turned tail) she was seen to get into the Mercer stage, carrying a carpetbag in one hand and a bandbox in the other. This was surprising enough—for why should Lydia Sampson spend her money on going to Mercer? Yet it was not so surprising as the fact that she did not come back from Mercer! And even that was a comparative surprise; the superlative astonishment was when it became known that she had left her door key at the post office and said she didn't know when she would return!

"Where on earth has she gone?" said Old Chester. But only Mrs. Drayton attempted to reply:

"It certainly looks *very* strange," said Mrs. Drayton.

It was with the turning of her front-door key that Miss Lydia made public confession of secrecy—although she had resigned herself to it, privately, three months before. The Secret had taken possession of her one hazy September evening, as she was sitting on her front doorstep, slapping her ankles when a mosquito discovered them, and watching the dusk falling like a warm veil across the hills. The air was full of the scent of evening primroses, and Miss Lydia, looking at a clump of them close to the step, could see the pointed buds begin to unfurl, then hesitate, then tremble, then opening with a silken burst of sound, spill their perfume into the twilight. Except for the crickets, it was very still. Once in a while some one plodded down the road, and once, when it was quite dark, Mr. Smith's victoria rumbled past,

paused until the iron gates of his driveway swung open, then rumbled on to his big, handsome house. He was one of the new Smiths, having lived in Old Chester hardly twenty years; when he came he brought his bride with him—a Norton, she was, from New England. A nice enough woman, I suppose, but not a Pennsylvanian. He and his wife built this house, which was so imposing that for some time they were thought of, contemptuously, as the *rich* Smiths. But by and by Old Chester felt more kindly and just called them the new Smiths. Mrs. Smith died when their only child, Mary, was a little girl, and Mr. Smith grew gradually into our esteem. The fact was, he was so good-looking and good-humored and high-tempered (he showed his teeth when he was in a rage, just as a dog does) Old Chester had to like him—even though it wished he was a better landlord to Miss Lydia, to whom he rented a crumbling little house just outside his gates. In matters of business Mr. Smith exacted his pound of flesh—and he got it! In Lydia's case it sometimes really did represent "flesh," for she must have squeezed her rent out of her food. Yet when, after her frightful extravagance in giving that party on money we had given her for the rebuilding of her chimney, Mr. Smith rebuilt it himself, and said she was a damned plucky old bird.—"Looks like a wet hen," said Mr. Smith, "but plucky! plucky!"—After that, our liking for him became quite emphatic. Not that Old Chester liked his epithets or approved of his approval of Miss Lydia's behavior (she bought kid gloves for her party, if you please! and a blue-silk dress; and, worse than all, presents for all Old Chester, of canary birds and pictures and what not, *all out of our hundred dollars!*)—we did not like the laxity of Mr. Smith's judgments upon the Grasshopper's conduct, but we did approve of his building her chimney, because it saved us from putting our hands in our own pockets again.

In the brown dusk of the September evening, Miss Lydia, watching her landlord roll past in his carriage, gave him a friendly nod. "He's nice," she said, "and so good-looking!" Her eyes followed him until,

in the shadows of the great trees of the driveway, she lost sight of him. Then she fell to thinking about his daughter, a careless young creature, handsome and selfish, with the Smith high color and black eyes, who was engaged to be married to another handsome young creature, fatter at twenty-three than is safe for the soul of a young man. Miss Lydia did not mind Carl's fat because she had a heart for lovers. Apparently her own serial and unhappy love affair had but increased her interest in happier love affairs. To be sure, Mary's affair had had the zest of a little bit of unhappiness—just enough to amuse older people. The boy had been ordered off by his firm in Mercer, at a day's notice, to attend to some business in Mexico, and the wedding, which was to have been in April, had to be postponed for six months. Carl had been terribly down in the mouth about it, and Mary, in the twenty-four hours given them for farewells, had cried her eyes out, and even, at the last minute, just before her young man started off, implored her father to let them get married—which plea, of course, he laughed at, for the new Mr. Smith was not the sort of man to permit his only daughter to be married in such hole-and-corner fashion! As it happened, Carl got back, quite unexpectedly, in September—but his prospective father-in-law was obdurate.

"It won't hurt you to wait. 'Anticipation makes a blessing dear!' December first you can have her," said the new Mr. Smith, much amused by the young people's doleful sentimentality.

Miss Lydia, now, slapping the mosquitoes, and thinking about the approaching "blessing," in friendly satisfaction at so much young happiness being next door to her, hugged herself because of her own blessings.

"I don't want to brag," she thought, "but certainly I am the luckiest person!" To count up her various pieces of luck (starting with the experience of being jilted): She had a nice landlord who looked like Zeus, with his flashing black eyes and snow-white hair and beard.

And she had so many friends! And she believed she could manage to make her black alpaca last another winter. "It is spotted," she thought, "but what real difference does a spot make?" (Miss Lydia was one of those rare people who have a sense of the relative values of life.) "It's a warm skirt," said Miss Lydia, weighing the importance of that spot with the expense of a new dress; "and, anyway, whenever I look at it, it just makes me think of the time I spilled the cream down the front at Harriet Hutchinson's. What a good time I had at Harriet's!" After that she reflected upon the excellent quality of her blue silk. "I shall probably wear it only once or twice a year; it ought to last me my lifetime," said Miss Lydia. . . . It was just as she reached this blessing that, somewhere in the shadows, a quivering voice called, "Miss Sampson?" and out of the darkness of the Smith driveway came a girlish figure. The iron gates clanged behind her, and she came up the little brick path to Miss Lydia's house with a sort of rush, a sort of fury; her voice was demanding and frightened and angry all together. "Miss Lydia!"

Miss Lydia, startled from her blessings, screwed up her eyes, then, recognizing her visitor, exclaimed: "Why, my dear! What is the matter?" And again, in real alarm, "What *is* it?" For Mary Smith, dropping down on the step beside her, was trembling. "My dear!" Miss Lydia said, in consternation.

"Miss Sampson, something—something has happened. A—a—an accident. I've come to you. I didn't know where else to go." She spoke with a sort of sobbing breathlessness.

"You did just right," said Miss Lydia, "but what—"

"You've got to help me! There's nobody else."

"Of course I will! But tell me—"

"If you don't help me, I'll die," Mary Smith said. She struck her soft

clenched fist on her knee, then covered her face with her hands. "But you must promise me you won't tell? Ever—ever!"

"Of course I won't."

"And you'll help me? Oh, say you'll help me!"

"Have you and he quarreled?" said Miss Lydia, quickly. Her own experience flashed back into her mind; it came to her with a little flutter of pride that this child—she was really only a child, just nineteen—who was to be married so soon, trusted to her worldly wisdom in such matters, and came for advice.

"She hasn't any mother," Miss Lydia thought, sympathetically. "If you've quarreled, you and he," she said, putting her little roughened hand on Mary's soft, shaking fist, "tell him you're sorry. Kiss and make up!" Then she remembered why she and her William had not kissed and made up. "Unless"—she hesitated—"he has done something that isn't nice?" ("Nice" was Miss Lydia's idea of perfection.) "But I'm sure he hasn't! He seemed to me, when I saw him, a very pleasing young man. So kiss and make up!"

The younger woman was not listening. "I had to wait all day to come and speak to you. I've been frantic—*frantic*—waiting! But I couldn't have anybody see me come. They would have wondered. If you don't help me—"

"But I will, Mary, I will! Don't you love him?"

"*Love* him?" said the girl. "My God!" Then, in a whisper, "If I only hadn't loved him—*so much*. . . . I am going to have a baby."

It seemed as if Miss Lydia's little friendly chirpings were blown from her lips in the gust of these appalling words.

Mary herself was suddenly composed. "They sent him off to

Mexico at twenty-four hours' notice; it was cruel—cruel, to send him away! and he came to say good-by— And. . . . And then I begged and begged father to let us get married; even the very morning that he went away, I said: 'Let us get married to-day. Please, father, *please!*' And he wouldn't, he wouldn't! He wanted a big wedding. Oh, what did I care about a big wedding! Still—I never supposed— But I went to Mercer yesterday and saw a doctor, and—and found out. I couldn't believe it was true. I said I'd die if it was true! And he said it was. . . . So then I rushed to Carl's office. . . . He was frightened—for me. And then we thought of you. And all day to-day I've just walked the floor—waiting to get down here to see you. I couldn't come until it was dark. Father thinks I'm in bed with a headache. I told the servants to tell him I had a headache. . . . We've got to manage somehow to make him let us get married right off. But—but even that won't save me. It will be known. It will be known—in January."

Miss Lydia was speechless.

"So you've got to help me. There's nobody else on earth who can. Oh, you must—you must!"

"But what can I do?" Miss Lydia gasped.

"Carl and I will go away somewhere. Out West where nobody knows us. And then you'll come. And you'll take—*It*. You'll take care of it. And you can have all the money you want."

"My dear," Miss Lydia said, trembling, "this is very, very dreadful, but I—"

The girl burst into rending crying. "Don't you—suppose *I* know that it's—it's—it's dreadful?"

"But I don't see how I can possibly—"

"If you won't help me, I'll go right down to the river. Oh, Miss Lydia,

help me! Please, *please* help me!"

"But it's impos—"

Mary stopped crying. "It isn't. It's perfectly possible! You'll simply go away to visit some friends—"

"I haven't any friends, except in Old Chester—"

"And when you come back you'll bring—*It* with you. And you'll say you've adopted it. You'll say it's the child of a friend."

Miss Lydia was silent.

"If you won't help me," Mary burst out, "I'll—"

"Does anybody know?" said Miss Lydia.

"No."

"Oh, my dear, my dear! You must tell your father."

"My *father?*" She laughed with terror.

Then Miss Lydia Sampson did an impossible thing—judging from Old Chester's knowledge of her character. She said, "He's got to know or I won't help you."

Mary's recoil showed how completely, poor child! she had always had her own way; to be crossed now by this timid old maid was like going head-on into a gray mist and finding it a stone wall. There was a tingling silence. "Then I'll kill myself," she said.

Miss Lydia gripped her small, work-worn hands together, but said nothing.

"Oh, please help me!" Mary said.

"I will—if you'll tell your father or Doctor Lavendar. I don't care which."

"Neither!" said the girl. She got on her feet and stood looking down at little shabby Miss Lydia sitting on the step with her black frizette tumbling forward over one frightened blue eye. Then she covered her face with those soft, trembling hands, all dimpled across the knuckles.

"Carl wanted to tell. He said, 'Let's tell people I was a scoundrel—and stand up to it.' And I said, 'Carl, I'll die first!' And I will, Miss Lydia. I'll die rather than have it known. Nobody must know—ever."

Miss Lydia shook her head. "Somebody besides me must know." Then very faintly she said, "*I'll* tell your father." There was panic in her voice, but Mary's voice, from behind the dimpled hands, was shrill with panic:

"You mustn't! Oh, you promised not to tell!"

Miss Lydia went on, quietly, "He and I will decide what to do."

"No, no!" Mary said. "He'll kill Carl!"

"I shouldn't think Carl would mind," said Miss Lydia.

The girl dropped down again on the step. "Oh, what shall I do—what shall I do—what shall I do? He'll hate me."

"He'll be very, very unhappy," said Miss Lydia; "but he'll know what must be done. I don't. And he'll forgive you."

"He won't forgive Carl! Father never forgives. He says so! And if he won't forgive Carl he mustn't forgive me!" She hid her face.

There was a long silence. Then she said, in a whisper, "When will you . . . tell him?"

"To-night."

Again she cringed away. "Not to-night! Please not to-night. Oh, you promised you wouldn't tell! I can't bear— Let me think. I'll write to Carl. No! No! Father *mustn't* know!"

"Listen," said Lydia Sampson; "you must get married right off. You can't wait until December. That's settled. But your father must manage it so that nobody will suspect—anything. Understand?"

"I mean to do that, anyway, but—"

"Unless you tell a great many small stories," said little, truthful Miss Lydia, "you can't manage it; but your father will just tell one big story, about business or something. Gentlemen can always tell stories about business, and you can't find 'em out. The way we do about headaches. Mr. Smith will say business makes it necessary for him to hurry the wedding up so he can go away to—any place. See?"

Mary saw, but she shook her head. "He'll kill Carl," she said again.

"No, he won't," said Miss Lydia, "because then everything would come out; and, besides, he'd get hanged."

Again there was a long silence; then Mary said, suddenly, violently:

"Well—*tell him*."

"Oh, my!" said Miss Lydia, "my! my!"

But she got up, took the child's soft, shrinking hand, and together in the hazy silence of the summer night they walked—Miss Lydia hurrying forward, Mary holding back—between the iron gates and up the driveway to the great house.

Talk about facing the cannon's mouth! When Miss Sampson came into the new Mr. Smith's library he was sitting in a circle of lamplight

at his big table, writing and smoking. He looked up at her with a resigned shrug. "Wants something done to her confounded house!" he thought. But he put down his cigar, got on his feet, and said, in his genial, wealthy way:

"Well, my good neighbor! How are you?"

Miss Lydia could only gasp, "Mr. Smith—" (there was a faint movement outside the library door and she knew Mary was listening). "Mr. Smith—"

"Sit down, sit down!" he said. "I am afraid you are troubled about something?"

She sat down on the extreme edge of a chair, and he stood in front of her, stroking his white beard and looking at her, amused and bored, and very rich—but not unkind.

"Mr. Smith—" she faltered. She swallowed two or three times, and squeezed her hands together; then, brokenly, but with almost no circumlocution, she told him. . . .

There was a terrible scene in that handsome, shadowy, lamplit room. Miss Lydia emerged from it white and trembling; she fairly ran back to her own gate, stumbled up the mossy brick path to her front door, burst into her unlighted house, then locked the door and bolted it, and fell in a small, shaking heap against it, as if it barred out the loud anger and shame which she had left behind her in the great house among the trees.

While Mary had crouched in the hall, her ear against the keyhole, Miss Lydia Sampson had held that blazing-eyed old man to common sense. No, he must *not* carry the girl to Mercer the next day, and take the hound by the throat, and marry them out of hand. No, he must *not* summon the scoundrel to Old Chester and send for Doctor Lavendar.

No, he must *not* have a private wedding. . . . "They must be married in church and have white ribbons up the aisle," gasped Miss Lydia, "and—and rice. Don't you understand? And it isn't nice, Mr. Smith, to use such language before ladies."

It was twelve o'clock when Miss Lydia, in her dark entry, went over in her own mind the "language" which had been used; all he had vowed he would do, and all she had declared he should not do, and all Mary (called in from the hall) had retorted as to the cruel things that had been done to her and Carl "which had just driven them *wild!*" And then the curious rage with which Mr. Smith had turned upon his daughter when she cried out, "Father, make her promise not to tell!" At that the new Mr. Smith's anger touched a really noble note:

"What! Insult this lady by asking for a 'promise'? Good God! madam," he said, turning to Miss Sampson, "is this girl mine, to offer such an affront to a friend?"

At which Miss Lydia felt, just for an instant, that he *was* nice. But the next moment the thought of his fury at Mary made her feel sick. Remembering it now, she said to herself, "It was awful in him to show his teeth that way, and to call Mary—*that*." And again, "It wasn't gentlemanly in him to use an indelicate word about the baby." Miss Lydia's mind refused to repeat two of the new Mr. Smith's words. The dreadfulness of them made her forget his momentary chivalry for her. "Mary is only a child," she said to herself; "and as for the baby, I'll take care of the little thing; I won't let it know that its own grandfather called it—No, it wasn't nice in Mr. Smith to say such words before a young lady like Mary, or before me, either, though I'm a good deal older than Mary. I'm glad I told him so!" (Miss Lydia telling Zeus he wasn't "nice"!)

This September midnight was the first Secret which pounced upon Miss Lydia. The next was the new Mr. Smith's short and terrible

interview with his prospective son-in-law: "You are never to set foot in this town." And then his order to his daughter: "Nor you, either, unless you come without that man. And there are to be no letters to or from Miss Sampson, understand that! I am not going to have people putting two and two together."

Certainly no such mental arithmetic took place at the very gay Smith wedding in the second week in September—a wedding with white ribbons up the aisle! Yes, and a reception at the big house! and rice! and old slippers!

But when the gayety was over, and the bride and groom drove off in great state, Miss Lydia waved to them from her front door, and then stood looking after the carriage with strange pitifulness in her face. How much they had missed, these two who, instead of the joy and wonder and mystery of going away together into their new world, were driving off, scarcely speaking to each other, tasting on their young lips the stale bitterness of stolen fruit! After the carriage was out of sight Miss Lydia walked down the road to the rectory, carrying, as was the habit of her exasperatingly generous poverty when calling on her friends, a present, a tumbler of currant jelly for Doctor Lavendar. But when the old man remonstrated, she did not, as usual, begin to excuse herself. She only said, point-blank:

"Doctor Lavendar, is it ever right to tell lies to save other people?"

Doctor Lavendar, jingling the happy bridegroom's two gold pieces in his pocket, said: "What? What?"

"Not to save yourself," said Miss Lydia; "I know you can't tell lies to save yourself."

Doctor Lavendar stopped jingling his gold pieces and frowned; then he said: "Miss Lydia, the truth about ourselves is the only safe way to live. If other folks want to be safe let them tell their own truths. It

doesn't often help them for us to do it for 'em. My own principle has been not to tell a lie about other folks' affairs, but to reserve the truth. Understand?"

"I think I do," said Miss Lydia, faintly, "but it's difficult."

Doctor Lavendar looked at his two gold pieces thoughtfully. "Lydia," he said, "it's like walking on a tight rope." Then he chuckled, dismissed the subject, and spread out his eagles on the table. "Look at 'em! Aren't they pretty? You see how glad Mary's young man was to get her. I'll go halves with you!"

Her recoil as he handed her one of the gold pieces made him give her a keen look; but all she said was: "Oh *no!* I wouldn't touch it!" Then she seemed to get herself together: "I don't need it, thank you, sir," she said.

When she went away Doctor Lavendar, looking after her, thrust out his lower lip. "*Lydia* not 'need' an eagle?" he said. "How long since?" And after a while he added, "Now, what on earth—?"

Old Chester, too, said, "What on earth—?" when, in December, Miss Lydia turned the key in her front door and, with her carpetbag and bandbox, took the morning stage for Mercer.

And we said it again, a few weeks later, when Mrs. Barkley received a letter in which Miss Lydia said she had been visiting friends in Indiana and had been asked by them to take care of a beautiful baby boy, and she was bringing him home with her, and she hoped Mrs. Barkley would give her some advice about taking care of babies, for she was afraid she didn't know much—("'Much'?" Mrs. Barkley snorted. "She knows as much about babies as a wildcat knows about tatting!")—and she was, as ever, Mrs. Barkley's affectionate Lyddy.

The effect of this letter upon Old Chester can be imagined. Mrs. Drayton said, "What I would like to know is, *whose baby is it?*"

Mrs. Barkley said in a deep bass: "Where will Lyddy get the money to take care of it? As for advising her, I advise her to leave it on the doorstep of its blood relations!"

Doctor Lavendar said: "Ho, hum! Do you remember what the new Mr. Smith said about her when she gave her party? Well, I agree with him!" Which (if you recall Mr. Smith's exact words) was really a shocking thing for a minister of the gospel to say!

Mrs. William King said, firmly, that she called it murder, to intrust a child to Miss Lydia Sampson. "She'll hold it upside down and never know the difference," said Mrs. King; and then, like everybody else, she asked Mrs. Drayton's question "Whose baby is it?"

There were many answers, mostly to the effect that Lydia was so scatterbrained—as witness her "party," and her blue-silk dress, and her broken engagements, etc., etc., that she was perfectly capable of letting anybody shove a foundling into her arms! Mrs. Drayton's own answer to her question was that the whole thing looked queer—"not that I would imply anything against poor Lydia's character, but it looks *queer;* and if you count back—"

Miss Lydia's reply—for of course the question was asked her as soon as she and the baby, and the bandbox and the carpetbag got off the stage one March afternoon—Miss Lydia's answer was brief:

"A friend's."

She did emerge from her secrecy far enough to say to Mrs. Barkley that she was to receive "an honorarium" for the support of the little darling. "Of course I won't spend a cent of it on myself," she added, simply.

"Is it a child of shame?" said Mrs. Barkley, sternly.

Miss Lydia's shocked face and upraised, protesting hands, answered her: "My baby's parents were married persons! After they —passed on, a friend of theirs intrusted the child to me."

"When did they die?"

Miss Lydia reflected. "I didn't ask the date."

"Well, considering the child's age, the mother's death couldn't have been very long ago," Mrs. Barkley said, dryly.

And Miss Lydia said, in a surprised way, as if it had just occurred to her: "Why, no, of course not! It was an accident," she added.

"For the mother?"

"For both parents," said Miss Sampson, firmly. And that was all Old Chester got out of her.

"Well," said Mrs. Drayton, "*I* am always charitable, but uncharitable persons might wonder. . . . It was last May, you know, that that Rives man deserted her at the altar."

"Only fool persons would wonder anything like that about Lydia Sampson!" said Mrs. Barkley, fiercely. . . . But even in Old Chester there were two or three fools, so for their especial benefit Mrs. Barkley, who had her own views about Miss Sampson's wisdom in undertaking the care of a baby, but who would not let that Drayton female speak against her, spread abroad the information that Miss Lydia's baby's parents, who had lived out West, had both been killed at the same time in an accident.

"What kind?"

"Carriage, I believe," said Mrs. Barkley; "but they left sufficient

money to support the child. So," she added, "Old Chester need have no further anxiety about Lydia's poverty. Their names? Oh—Smith."

She had the presence of mind to tell Lydia she had named the baby, and though Miss Lydia gave a little start—for she had thought of some more distinguished name for her charge—"Smith," and the Western parents and the carriage accident passed into history.

CHAPTER II

DURING the first year that the "Smith" baby lived outside the brick wall of Mr. Smith's place, the iron gates of the driveway were not opened, because business obliged Mr. Smith to be in Europe. (Oh, said Old Chester, so that was why Mary's wedding had to be hurried up?) When he returned to his native land he never, as he drove past, looked at the youngster playing in Miss Lydia's dooryard. Then once Johnny (he was three years old) ran after his ball almost under the feet of the Smith horses, and as he was pulled from between the wheels his grandfather couldn't help seeing him.

"Don't do that tomfool thing again!" the old man shouted, and Johnny, clasping his recovered ball, grinned at him.

"He sinks Johnny 'f'aid," the little fellow told Miss Lydia.

A month or two afterward Johnny threw a stone at the victoria and involuntarily Mr. Smith glanced in the direction from which it came. But, of course, human nature being like story books, he did finally notice his grandson. At intervals he spoke to Miss Lydia, and when Johnny was six years old he even stopped one day long enough to give the child a quarter. Mr. Smith had aged very much after his daughter's marriage—and no wonder, Old Chester said, for he must be lonely in that big house, and Mary never coming to see him! Such behavior on the part of a daughter puzzled Old Chester. We couldn't understand it—unless it was that Mr. Smith didn't get along with his son-in-law? And Mary, of course, didn't visit her father because a dutiful wife always agrees with her husband! A sentiment which places Old Chester chronologically.

The day that Mr. Smith bestowed the quarter upon his grandson

he spoke of his daughter's "dutifulness" to Miss Lydia. Driving toward his house, he overtook two trudging figures, passed them by a rod or two, then called to the coachman to stop. "I'll walk," he said, briefly, and waited, in the dust of his receding carriage until Miss Lydia and her boy reached him. Johnny was trudging along, pulling his express wagon, which was full of apples picked up on the path below an apple tree that leaned over the girdling wall of the Smith place.

As Miss Lydia approached her landlord her heart came up in her throat; it always did when she saw him, because she remembered the Olympian thunders he had loosed on that awful night six years ago.

"How do?" said Mr. Smith. His dark eyes under bristling, snow-white eyebrows blazed at her. He didn't notice the little boy.

"How do you do?" said Miss Lydia, in a small voice. She looked tousled and breathless and rather spotted, and so little that Mr. Smith must have felt he could blow her away if he wanted to. Apparently he didn't want to. He only said:

"You—ah, never hear from—ah, my daughter, I suppose, Miss Sampson?"

"No, sir," said Miss Lydia.

"She doesn't care to visit me without her husband, and I won't have him under my roof!" His lip lifted for an instant and showed his teeth. "I see her when I go to Philadelphia, and she writes me duty letters occasionally, but she never mentions—"

"Doesn't she?" said Miss Lydia.

"I don't, either. But I just want to say that if you ever need any—ah, extra—"

"I don't, thank you."

Then, reluctantly, the flashing black eyes looked down at Johnny. "Doesn't resemble—anybody? Well, young man!"

"Say, 'How do you do?' Johnny," Miss Lydia commanded, faintly.

"How do?" Johnny said, impatiently. He was looking over his apples and, discovering some bruised ones, frowned and threw them away.

"Where did you get your apples?" said Mr. Smith.

"On the road," said Johnny; "they ain't yours when they drop on the road."

"Say 'aren't,' Johnny," said Miss Lydia. "It isn't nice to say 'ain't.'"

"Why aren't they mine?" said the old man. He was towering up above the two little figures, his feet wide apart, his hands behind him, switching his cane back and forth like a tail.

"'Cause I've got 'em," Johnny explained, briefly.

"Ha! The nine-tenths! You'll be a lawyer, sir!" his grandfather said. "Suppose I say, 'Give me some'?"

"I won't," said Johnny.

"Oh, you won't, eh? You'll be a politician!" Mr. Smith said.

"It isn't right to say, 'I won't,'" Miss Lydia corrected Johnny, panting.

Mr. Smith did not notice her nervousness; the boy's attitude, legs wide apart, hands behind him, clutching the tongue of his express wagon, held his eye. "He's like me!" he thought, with a thrill.

"Isn't it right to say, 'I won't say I won't'?" Johnny countered.

"Jesuit!" Mr. Smith said, chuckling. "The church is the place for him, Miss Sampson."

"Anyway," Johnny said, crossly, "I *will not* give any of my apples back. They're mine."

"How do you make that out?" said Mr. Smith. (And in an undertone to Miss Lydia, "No fool, eh?")

"Because I picked 'em up," said Johnny.

"Well, here's a quarter," said his grandfather, putting his hand in his pocket.

Johnny took the coin with an air of satisfaction, but even as he slid it into his pocket he took it out again.

"Looky here," he said. "I thought I'd buy a pony with it, but I don't mind paying you for your apples—" And he held out the quarter.

Mr. Smith laughed as he had not laughed for a long time. "You're a judge of horseflesh!" he said, and walked off, switching his tail behind him.

The story-book plot

"I WILL NOT GIVE ANY OF MY APPLES BACK. THEY'RE MINE"

should begin here—the rich grandfather meets the unacknowledged grandchild, loves him, and makes him his heir—and, of course, incidentally, showers his largess upon the poor and virtuous lady who has cared for the little foundling; so everybody lives happy and dies wealthy. This intelligent arrangement of fiction might have been carried out if only Miss Lydia had behaved differently! But about two years later her behavior—

"She's put a spoke in my wheel!" Mr. Smith told himself, blankly. It was when Johnny was eight that the spoke blocked the grandfather's progress. . . . He had gradually grown to know the boy very well, and, after much backing and filling in his own mind, decided to adopt him. He did not reach this decision easily, for there were risks in such an arrangement; resemblances might develop, and people might put two and two together! However, each time he decided that the risk was too great, a glimpse of Johnny—stealing a ride by hanging on behind his grandfather's victoria, or going in swimming in deeper water than some of the older boys were willing to essay, or, once, blacking another fellow's eye—such a glimpse of

his own flesh and blood gave him courage. Courage gained the day when his grandson had scarlet fever and William King, meeting him after a call at Miss Lydia's, happened to say that Johnny was a pretty sick child. The new Mr. Smith felt his heart under his spreading white beard contract sharply.

"Sick! Very sick? Good God! the wet hen won't know how to take care of him!" His alarm was so obvious that Doctor King looked at him in surprise.

"You are fond of the little fellow?"

"Oh, I see him playing around my gate," Mr. Smith said, and walked off quickly, lest he should find himself urging more advice, or a nurse, or what not. "King would wonder what earthly difference it could make to me!" he said to himself, in a panic of secrecy. It made enough difference to cause him to write to his daughter: "I hear the child is very sick and may die. Congratulations to Robertson."

Mary, reading the cruel words and never guessing the anxiety which had dictated them, grew white with anger. "I will never forgive father!" she said to herself, and went over to her husband and put her soft hands on his shoulders and kissed him.

"Carl," she said, "the—the little boy is sick"; his questioning look made her add, "Oh, he'll get well"—but she must have felt some unspoken recoil in her husband, for she cried out, in quick denial, "Of course I don't want anything to—to happen to him!"

They did not speak of Johnny's illness for two or three days; then Mary said, "If anything had happened, we should have heard by this time?"

And Carl said, "Oh, of course."

When Johnny was well again his grandfather's fear that Doctor

King might "wonder," ebbed. "It's safe enough to take him," he said to himself; "he doesn't look like anybody. And if I adopt him I can see that he's properly educated—and it will scare Robertson to death!" he added, viciously, and showed his teeth. He even discussed adopting his grandchild with Doctor Lavendar:

"Mary hasn't done her duty," he said. "I've no grandchildren! I've a great mind to adopt some youngster. I'm fond of children."

"Good idea," said Doctor Lavendar.

"I've taken a fancy to that little rascal who lives just at my gate. Bright youngster. Not a cowardly streak in him! Quick-tempered, I'm afraid. But *I* never blame anybody for that! I've thought, once or twice, that I'd adopt him."

"And Miss Lydia, too?" Doctor Lavendar inquired, mildly.

"Oh, I should look after her, of course," said Mr. Smith. But it was still another six months before he really made up his mind. "I'll do it!" he said to himself. "But I suppose," he reflected, "I ought to tell Mary —and the skunk."

He went on to Philadelphia for the purpose of telling Mary, but he did it when Carl was not present.

Mary blenched. "Father, *don't!* People might—"

"Damn people! I like the boy. You're a coward, Mary, and so is—Robertson."

"No! He isn't! Carl isn't. I am."

"I won't compromise you," he ended, contemptuously. "Tell Robertson I mean to do it. If he has anything to say he can say it in a letter." Then he kissed her perfunctorily and said, "Goo'-by—goo'-by," and took the night train for Mercer.

He lost no time when he got back to Old Chester in putting his plan through. The very next afternoon, knowing that Johnny would be at Doctor Lavendar's Collect Class, he called on Miss Lydia. Miss Sampson's little house was more comfortable than it used to be; the quarterly check which came from "some one" patched up leaky roofs, and bought a new carpet, and did one or two other things; but it did not procure any luxuries, either for Johnny or for herself, and it never made Miss Lydia look like anything but a small, bedraggled bird; her black frizette still got crooked and dipped over one soft blue eye, and she was generally shabby—except on the rare occasions when she wore the blue silk—and her parlor always looked as if a wind had blown through it. "I wouldn't *touch* their money for myself!" she used to think, and saved every cent to give to Johnny when he grew up.

Into her helter-skelter house came, on this Saturday afternoon, her landlord. He had knocked on her front door with the gold head of his cane, and when she opened it he had said, "How do? How do?" and walked ahead of her into her little parlor. It was so little and he was so big that he seemed to fill the room.

Miss Lydia said, in a fluttered voice, "How do you do?"

"Miss Sampson," he said—he had seated himself in a chair that creaked under his ruddy bulk and he put both hands on the top of his cane; his black eyes were friendly and amused—"I've had it in mind for some time to have a little talk with you."

"Yes, sir," said Miss Lydia.

"I need not go back to—to a painful experience that we both remember."

Miss Lydia put her head on one side in a puzzled way, as if her memory had failed her.

"You will know that I appreciated your attitude at that time. I appreciated it deeply."

Miss Lydia rolled her handkerchief into a wabbly lamplighter; she seemed to have nothing to say.

"I have come here now, not merely to tell you this, but to add that I intend to relieve you of the care of—ah, the little boy."

Miss Lydia was silent.

"There are things I should like to give him. He says he wants a pony. And I mean to educate him. It would seem strange to do this as an outsider; it might cause—ah, comment. So I am going to take him."

"Any grandfather would want to," said Lydia Sampson.

Mr. Smith raised his bushy eyebrows. "Well, we won't put it on that ground. But I like the boy, though I hear he gets into fights; I'm afraid he has the devil of a temper," said Mr. Smith, chuckling proudly. "But I've watched him, and he's no coward and no fool, either. In fact, I hear that he is a wonder mathematically. God knows where he got his brains! Well, I am going to adopt him. But that will make no difference in your income. That is assured to you as long as you live. I am indebted to you, Miss Sampson. Profoundly indebted."

"Not at all," said Miss Lydia.

"I shall have a governess for him," said Mr. Smith; "but I hope you will not be too much occupied"—his voice was very genial, and as he spoke he bore down hard on his cane and began to struggle to his feet—"not too much occupied to keep a friendly eye upon him." He was standing now, a rather Jove-like figure, before whom Miss Lydia looked really like a little brown grasshopper. "Yes, I trust you will not lose your interest in him," he ended.

"I won't," she said, faintly.

"I have made all the arrangements," said Johnny's grandfather. "I simply told—ah, the people who know about him, that I was going to take him." He was standing, switching his cane behind him; it hit an encroaching table leg and he apologized profusely. "Mary was badly scared. As if I could not manage a thing like that! I like to scare—him"—the new Mr. Smith lifted his upper lip, and his teeth gleamed—"but, of course, I told her not to worry. Well, I hope you will see him frequently."

"I shall," said Miss Lydia.

"Of course you and I must tell the same story as to his antecedents. So if you will let me know how you have accounted for him, I'll be a very good parrot!"

"I haven't told any stories. I just let people call him Smith, and I just said—to Johnny, and everybody—that I was a friend of his mother's. That's true, you know."

"It is true, madam; it is, indeed!" said Mary's father. He bowed with grave courtliness. "There was never a better friend than you, Miss Sampson."

"I've been very careful not to tell anything that wasn't true," said Miss Lydia. "I told Johnny his father and mother had lived out West; they did, you know, for four months. Johnny began to ask questions when he was only five; he said he wished *he* had a mother like other little boys. I had to tell him something, so I told him her name had been Norton. That is true, you know. Mary's middle name is Norton. And I said I didn't know of any cousins or uncles; and that's true. And I said 'I had been told' that his father and mother had been killed in a carriage accident. I *was* told so; people made it up," said Miss Lydia, simply, "so I just let 'em. I never said his parents had died that way.

Well, it made Johnny cry. He used to say: 'Poor mamma! Poor mamma!' I haven't told what you'd call lies; I have only reserved the truth."

"Pathetic, his 'wanting' a mother," said Mr. Smith. "Damn my son-in-law! Excuse me, madam."

"It would be nice if you would forgive him," Miss Lydia suggested, timidly.

He shrugged his shoulders. "I never forgive. . . . Well, I will keep up the geographical fiction and the runaway horses. And now I must not detain you further. I will take the boy to-morrow."

He put out his big hand, and Miss Lydia, putting her little one into it, said:

"Who is going to adopt him?"

"Who?" said Mr. Smith. "Why, I! Who did you suppose was going to—Robertson? My dear Miss Sampson, reassure yourself on that point! That hound shall never get hold of him!"

"Of course," Miss Lydia agreed, nodding, "Johnny's parents, or his grandfather, have a right to him."

Mr. Smith was just leaving the room, but he paused on the threshold and flung a careless word back to her: "His parents could never take him. The thing would come out."

"If his *grandfather* takes him it will come out," said Miss Lydia, following him into the hall.

"Yes, but his 'grandfather' won't take him," the old man said, with a grunt of amusement; "it is 'Mr. Smith' who is going to do that."

"'Mr. Smith' can't."

Her caller turned and stared at her blankly.

"His 'grandfather' can have him," said Miss Lydia.

"*What!*"

"His relations can have Johnny."

"But I—"

"If you are a relation," Miss Lydia said—her voice was only a little whisper—"you can have him."

They stood there in the hall, the big man, and the small, battling gambler of a woman, who was staking her most precious possession—a disowned child—on the chance that the pride of the man would outweigh his desire for ownership. Their eyes—misty, frightened blue, and flashing black—seemed to meet and clash. "He won't dare," she was saying to herself, her heart pounding in her throat. And Johnny's grandfather was saying to himself, very softly, "The devil!" He bent a little, as an elephant might stoop to scrutinize a grasshopper which was trying to block his way, and looked at her. Then he roared with laughter.

"Well, upon my word!" he said. He put his cane under his arm, fumbled for his handkerchief, and wiped his eyes. "Miss Sampson," he said, "you are a bully. And you would be a highly successful blackmailer. But you are no coward; I'll say that for you. You are a damned game little party! I'll see to you, ma'am, I'll see to you!—*and I'll get the child*. But I like you. Damned if I don't!"

CHAPTER III

THE gambler went on her trembling legs back to her cluttered parlor and sat down, panting and pallid. The throw of the dice had been in her favor!

It was curious that she had no misgiving as to what she was doing in thus closing the door of opportunity to Johnny—for of course, the new Mr. Smith's protection would mean every sort of material opportunity for him! If it had been his "grandfather's" protection which had been offered, perhaps she might have hesitated, for that would have meant material opportunity plus a love great enough to tell the truth; and Miss Lydia's own love—which was but a spiritual opportunity—could not compete with that! As it was, she tested opportunities by saying, "His *grandfather* can have him."

Of course it was just her old method of choosing the better part. . . . All her life this gallant, timid woman had weighed values. She had weighed the reputation of being a jilt as against marriage to a man she did not respect—and she found the temporary notoriety of the first lighter than the lifelong burden of the second. She weighed values again, when she put her hundred dollars' worth of generosity on one side of the scales, and William's meanness on the other—and when generosity kicked the beam she was glad to be jilted. She had even weighed the painful unrealities of concealed poverty as against open shabbiness, and she saw that a dress she couldn't afford was a greater load to carry than the consciousness of the spot on her old skirt—especially as the spot was glorified by the memory of a friend's hospitality!

So now, when the new Mr. Smith considered adopting her boy, this simple soul weighed values for Johnny: Mr. Smith—or Johnny's grandfather? Pride—or love? And pride outweighed love. Miss Lydia put her hands over her face and prayed aloud: "God, keep him proud, so I can keep Johnny!"

Apparently God did, for it was only "Mr. Smith" who made further efforts to get her child. They were very determined efforts. Miss Lydia's landlord saw her again, and urged. She met what he had to say with a speechless obstinacy which made him extremely angry. When he saw her a third time he offered her an extraordinary increase in the honorarium—for which he had the grace five minutes later to apologize. He saw her once more, and threatened he would "take" Johnny, anyhow!

"How?" said poor, shaking Miss Lydia. Then, as a last resort, he sent his lawyer to her, which scared her almost to death. But the interview produced, for Mr. Smith, nothing except legal assurance that he could doubtless secure the person of his grandson by appealing to the courts *in the character of a grandfather*—for Miss Lydia had never taken out papers for adoption.

"The lady has nine-tenths of the law," said Mr. Smith's legal adviser, who had been consulted, first, as to a hypothetical case, and then told the facts. "The other one-tenth won't secure a child whom you don't claim as a relative. And the law means publicity."

"The hussy!" said Mr. Smith. "She's put a spoke in my wheel."

"She has," said the lawyer, and grinned behind his hand.

Mr. Smith glared at him. "That little wet hen!"

Well! after one or two more efforts, he swallowed his defeat, and, though for nearly a year he would not recognize Miss Lydia when he met her in the street, he made fast friends with the freckled, very pugnacious boy at his gates. He used to stop and speak to him and tell him to say his multiplication table, and then give him a quarter and walk off, greatly diverted. Sometimes when he saw his daughter in Philadelphia, he would tell her, sardonically, that "that child" had more brains than his father and mother put together!

"Not than his father," poor, cowering Mary would protest. And her father, looking at her with unforgiving eyes, would say, "I wish I owned him." ("I like to scare 'em!" he added to himself.) He certainly scared Mary. Scared her, and made her feel a strange anger, because he had something which did not belong to him; "after all, the boy is *ours*," she told her husband. She always went to bed with a headache after one of Mr. Smith's visits. As for Carl, his face would grow crimson with helpless mortification under the gibes of his father-in-law as Mary repeated them to him.

Once, when she told him that her father had "taken the boy home to supper with him," he swore under his breath, and she agreed, hurriedly:

"Father was simply mad to notice him! People will guess—"

But Carl broke in: "Oh, I didn't mean *that*. No one would ever suspect anything. I meant, what right has *he* to get fond of—the boy?"

"Not the slightest!" Mary said. And they neither of them knew that they were beginning to be jealous.

The occasion of Mr. Smith's "madness" was one winter afternoon when, meeting Johnny in the road, he took him into his carriage, then sent word to Miss Lydia that he was keeping the child to supper. He put him in a big chair at the other end of the table and baited him with questions, and roared with laughter and pride at his replies. Also, he gave him good advice, as a grandfather should:

"I hear you are a bad boy and get into fights. Never fight, sir, never fight! But if you do fight, lick your man."

"Yes, sir," said Johnny.

"And don't be afraid to tackle a bigger man than yourself. Only cowards are afraid to do that!"

"Yes, sir," said Johnny.

"But of course I don't approve of fighting. Only bad boys fight. Remember that!"

"Yes, sir," said Johnny, and scraped his plate loudly to attract the attention of old Alfred, his grandfather's man, who, familiar and friendly from thirty years' service, said, as he brought the desired flannel cakes, "The little man holds his fork just as you do, sir!" At which Mr. Smith stopped laughing, and said:

"Miss Sampson ought to teach him better manners."

He did not invite Johnny to supper again, which would have been a relief to Mary if she had known it; and was just as well, anyhow, for Miss Lydia, quaking at her own supper table (while Johnny was "holding his fork" in his grandfather's fashion!) had said to herself, "I'll tell him to say, 'No, thank you, sir,' if Mr. Smith ever asks him again."

It was about this time that Miss Lydia's landlord softened toward her sufficiently to bow to her as he passed her house. Once he even stopped her in the street to ask the particulars of one of Johnny's escapades: It appeared that a boy—one of the Mack boys, as it happened, who was always in hot water in Old Chester—got the credit of a smashed sash in Mr. Steele's greenhouse, which was really Johnny's doing; and in spite of sniffling denials, the (for once) innocent Mack boy was just about to get what the irate owner of the sash called a walloping, when Johnny Smith, breathless, and mad as a hatter, rushed into the greenhouse to say, "It was me done it!"—upon which the richly deserved walloping was handed over to the real culprit. Later, for some private grudge, Johnny paid it all back to young Mack, but for the moment—"I take my medicine," said Johnny, showing his teeth. "I don't hide behind another feller. But you bet I'll smash Andy Steele's hotbed sashes every chance I get!" Poor little

Miss Lydia was frightened to death at such a wicked remark, and prayed that God would please forgive Johnny; and she was very bewildered to have Mr. Smith, listening to this dreadful story, chuckle with delight: "He'll come to a bad end, the scoundrel! Tell him I say I expect he'll be hanged. I'll give him a quarter for every pane he broke." After this interview Mr. Smith used to call on Miss Lydia occasionally just to inquire what was Johnny's latest crime, and once he invited his tenant to supper, "with your young scamp," his invitation ran. She went, and wore her blue silk, and sat on the edge of her chair, watching the grandfather and grandson, while the vein on her thin temple throbbed with fright. But it took another year of longing for his own flesh and blood before the new Mr. Smith reached an amazing, though temporary, decision.

"I'll have him," he said to himself; "I *will* have him! I'll swallow the wet hen, if I can't get him any other way. I'll—I'll marry the woman." . . . But he hesitated for still another month or two, for, though he wanted his grandson, he did not hanker to make a fool of himself; and a rich man in the late seventies who marries an impecunious spinster in the fifties looks rather like a fool.

But when he finally reached the point of swallowing Miss Lydia he lost no time in walking out from his iron gates one fine afternoon and banging on her front door with his stick. When she opened it he announced that he had something he wanted to say. In his own mind, the words he proposed to speak were to this effect: "I'm going to marry you—to get the boy." To be sure, he would not express it just that way—one has to go round Robin Hood's barn in talking to females! So he began:

"I have been planning more comfortable quarters for you, ma'am, than this house. More suitable quarters for my—for the boy; and I—" Then he stopped. Somehow or other, looking at Miss Lydia, sitting there so small and frightened and brave, he was suddenly ashamed.

He could not offer this gallant soul the indignity of a bribe! "If I can't get the boy by fair means, I won't by foul," he told himself; so instead of offering himself, he talked about the weather; "and—and I want you to know that Johnny shall be put down for something handsome in my will. It won't be suspicious. Everybody in Old Chester knows that I like him—living here at my gates; though he has the devil of a temper! Bad thing. Very bad thing. He should control it. I've always controlled mine."

Miss Lydia felt a sudden wave of pity; he was so helpless, and she was so powerful—and so lucky! All she said, in her breathless voice, was that he "was very kind—about the will."

Johnny's grandfather, looking into her sweet, blue eyes, suddenly said—and with no thought whatever of Johnny—"I wish I was twenty years younger!" The wistful genuineness of that was the nearest he came to asking her to marry him. He went home feeling, as he walked up to his great, empty house, very old and forlorn, and yet relieved that he had not offered an affront to Miss Lydia nor, incidentally, made a fool of himself. Then he thought with the old, hot anger, of Carl Robertson, and with a dreary impatience of his daughter; it was their doing that he couldn't own his own grandson! "Well, the boy shall have his grandfather's money," he said to himself, stumbling a little as he went up the flight of granite steps to his front door. "Every bit of it! I don't care whether people think things or not. Damn 'em, let them think! What difference does it make? Robertson can go to hell." He was so dulled that, for the moment, he forgot that if Robertson went to hell Mary would have to go, too. Later that night his tired mind cleared, and he knew it wouldn't do to let Johnny have his "grandfather's" money, and that even Mr. Smith's money must be bestowed with caution.

"I'll leave a bequest that won't compromise Mary, but she and Robertson must somehow do the rest. I'll send for her next week and

tell her what to do; and then I'll fix up a codicil."

But next week he said *next* week; and after that he thought, listlessly, that he wasn't equal to seeing her. "She's fond of Robertson—I can't stand that! I never forgive."

So he didn't send for his daughter. But a week later William King did. . . .

"I suppose I've got to go?" Mary told her husband, looking up from the doctor's telegram with scared eyes.

"It wouldn't be decent not to," he said.

"But *he* is right there, by the gate! I might see him. Oh—I don't dare!"

"Women are queer," Johnny's father ruminated. "I should think you'd like to see him. I guess all this mother-love talk is a fairy tale"; then, before she could retort, he put his arms around her. "I didn't mean it, dear! Forgive me. Only, Mary, I get to thinking about him, and I feel as if I'd like to see the little beggar!"

"But how can I 'love' him?" she defended herself, in a smothered voice; "I don't know him."

"Stop and speak to him while you're at your father's," he urged; "and then you will know him."

"Oh, I couldn't—I couldn't! I'd be afraid to."

"But why? Nobody could possibly suppose—"

"Because," she said, "if I saw him once *I might want to see him again*."

Carl frowned with bewilderment, but Johnny's mother began to

pace up and down, back and forth—then suddenly flew out of the room and upstairs, to fall, crying, upon her bed.

However, she obeyed Doctor King's summons. The day the stage went jogging and creaking past Miss Lydia's door the lady inside looked straight ahead of her, and some one who saw her said she was very pale—"anxious about her father," Old Chester said, sympathetically. Then Old Chester wondered whether Carl was so unchristian as to refuse to come and see his father-in-law—"on his deathbed!"—or whether old Mr. Smith "on his death bed" was so unchristian as to refuse to see his son-in-law. "What *did* they quarrel about!" Old Chester said. "Certainly Mr. Smith seemed friendly enough to the young man before Mary married him."

When Mary—she was in the early thirties now, and Johnny was thirteen—came into her father's room and sat down beside him, the old man opened his eyes and looked at her.

"Pleasant journey?" he said, thickly.

"Yes, father. I hope you are feeling better?"

His eyes closed and he seemed to forget her. Later, looking up at her from the pillows of his great carved rosewood bed—the headboard

looked like the Gothic doors of a cathedral—he said, "Tell your husband"—he lifted his upper lip and showed his teeth—"to educate him."

"IF I SAW HIM ONCE I MIGHT WANT TO SEE HIM AGAIN"

Mary said, "Who?"—then could have bitten her tongue out, for of course there was only one "him" for these three people! She gave a frightened glance about the room, but there was no one to hear that betraying pronoun. She said, faintly: "Yes, father. Now try to rest and don't talk. You'll feel better in the morning."

"He hates a coward as much as I do," Mr. Smith mumbled. "And he has brains; doesn't get 'em from you two. Guess he gets 'em from me."

"Father! Please—*please!*" she said, in a terrified whisper. "Somebody might hear."

"They're welcome. Mary . . . he handed me back my own quarter for my own apples. No fool." He gave a grunt of laughter. "He said, 'Twelve times twelve' like lightning—when he was only ten! . . . Last year he took his own licking, though the Mack boy was in for it. . . . I'm going to give him a pony."

After that he seemed to forget her and slept for a while. A day or two later he forgot everything, even Johnny. The last person he remembered, curiously enough, was Miss Lydia Sampson.

It was when he was dying that he said, suddenly opening those marvelous eyes and smiling faintly: "Little wet hen! Damned game little party. Stood right up to me. . . . Wish I'd married her thirteen years ago. Then there'd have been no fuss about my grandson."

"*Grandson?*" said Doctor King, in a whisper to Mrs. Robertson. And she whispered back, "He is wandering."

When Mary's husband arrived for the funeral and for the reading of the will (in which there was nothing "handsome" for Johnny!) the doctor told him of the new Mr. Smith's last words; and Mr. Robertson said, hurriedly, "Delirious, of course."

"I suppose so," said Doctor King.

But when he walked home with Doctor Lavendar, after the funeral, he said, "Have you any idea who Johnny Smith belongs to, Doctor Lavendar?"

"Miss Lydia," said Doctor Lavendar, promptly.

To which William King replied, admiringly, "I have never understood how anybody *could* look as innocent as you, and yet be so chock-full of other people's sins! Wonder if his mother will ever claim him?"

"Wonder if Miss Lydia would give him up if she did?" Doctor Lavendar said.

"She'd have to," William said.

"On the principle that a 'mother is a mother still, the holiest thing alive'?" Doctor Lavendar quoted.

"On the principle of ownership," said William King. "As to a mother being a 'holy thing,' I have never noticed that the mere process of child-bearing produces sanctity."

"William," said Doctor Lavendar, "Mrs. Drayton would say you were indelicate. Also, I believe you know that two and two make four?"

"I have a pretty good head for arithmetic," said William King, "but I only added things up a day or two ago."

CHAPTER IV

AFTER Mr. Smith's death the Robertsons stayed on in Old Chester to close the house. Mary hardly left it, even to walk in the garden behind the circling brick wall. But she sent her husband on innumerable errands into Old Chester, and when he came back she would say, "Did you see—*him?*"

And sometimes Johnny's father would say, "Yes."

"You didn't speak to him?" she would ask, in a panic.

"Of course not! But he's an attractive boy." Once he added, "Why don't you go and call on Miss Lydia—and see him yourself?"

She caught her soft hands together in terror. "Go to Miss Lydia's? I? Oh, I couldn't! Oh, Carl, don't you see—*I might like him!*"

"You couldn't help it if you saw him."

"That's just it! I don't want to like him. Nothing would induce me to see him."

Yet there came a moment when the urge of maternity was greater than the instinct of secrecy, greater even than the fear of awakening in herself that "liking" which would inevitably mean pain. She and Johnny's father were to leave Old Chester the next day; for a week she had been counting the hours until they would start, and she could turn her back on this gnawing temptation! But when that last day came, she vacillated: "I'll just walk down and look at Miss Lydia's; he might be going in or coming out. . . . No! I won't; he might see me, and think— . . . I must—I must. . . . Oh, I *can't*, I won't!" Yet in the late afternoon she slipped out of the house and went stealthily down the

carriage road, and, standing in the shadow of one of the great stone gateposts, stared over at Miss Lydia's open door. As she stood there she heard a sound. Her heart leaped—and fell, shuddering. Just once in her life had she felt that elemental pang; it was when another sound, the little, thin cry of birth pierced her ears. Now the sound was of laughter, the shrill, cracking laughter of an adolescent boy. She crept back to the big house, so exhausted that she said to old Alfred, "Tell Mr. Robertson that I have a headache, and am lying down."

Later, when her husband, full of concern at her discomfort, came upstairs to sit on the edge of her bed and ask her how she felt, she told him what had happened.

"I wouldn't see him for anything," she said, gasping; "even his voice just about killed me! Oh, Carl, suppose I were to like him? Oh, what shall I do?—*I don't want to like him.*"

"Why, my dear, it would be all right if you did," he tried to reassure her. "There's no reason why you shouldn't see him once in a while—and like him, too. *I* like him, though I haven't spoken to him. But I'm going to."

"Oh, Carl, don't—" she besought him.

But he said: "Don't worry. You know I would never do anything rash."

And the next day he stopped boldly at Miss Lydia's door, and talked about the weather, and gave Johnny a dollar.

"Go downstreet and buy something," he said.

And Johnny said, "Thank you, sir!" and went off, whistling.

"He's a promising boy," Mr. Robertson said, in a low voice.

Miss Lydia was extremely nervous during this five minutes. She

had been nervous during the weeks that Mary and Carl were up there in the big house. Suppose they should see just how "promising" Johnny was—and want him?—and say they would take him? Then she would reassure herself: "They can only take their son—and they don't want *him!*" Yet she was infinitely relieved when, the next day, the Smith house was finally closed and the "For Sale or To Let" sign put up on the iron gates that shut the graveled driveway from Old Chester's highroad.

"They'll sell the house and never come back," she told herself. And indeed Johnny was a year older, a year more plucky and high-tempered and affectionate, before Miss Lydia had any further cause for uneasiness.

Then, suddenly, Mr. Carl Robertson appeared in town; he came, he said, to make sure that the still unsold Smith house was not getting dilapidated. While he was looking it over he took occasion to tell several people that that boy who lived with the old lady in the house by the gate was an attractive youngster.

"I suppose," said Mr. Robertson, "Mary ought to sell that house to settle the estate, but she says she won't turn the old lady out. The little beggar she takes care of seems a nice little chap." Then he said, casually, "Who were his father and mother?"

"That's what nobody knows," some one said; then added, significantly, "Lydia is very secretive." And some one else said, "There *is* a suspicion that the child is her own."

"Her *own?*" Carl Robertson gaped, open-mouthed. And when he turned his back on this particular gossip his face was darkly red. "Somebody in this town needs a horse-whipping!" he told himself; "God forbid that Miss Sampson knows there are such fools in the world!" He was so angry and ashamed that his half-formed wish to do

something for the child crystallized into purpose. But before he made any effort to carry his purpose out he discounted public opinion. "Nothing like truth to throw people off the track," he reflected. So, with the frankness which may be such a perfect screen for lack of candor, he put everybody he met off the track by saying he was going to give Miss Lydia a hand in bringing up that boy of hers.

"Very generous," said Mrs. Barkley, and told Old Chester that the fat Mr. Robertson was an agreeable person, and she did wonder why his father-in-law had not got along with him!

"The reason I spoke of it to Mrs. Barkley," Carl Robertson told Miss Lydia, "was that I knew she'd inform everybody in town. So that if, later on, I want to see the—the boy, once in a while, it won't set people gossiping."

It was the night before he was leaving Old Chester that he said this. They were in Miss Lydia's parlor; the door was closed, for Johnny was in the dining room, doing his examples, one leg around the leg of his chair, his tongue out, and breathing heavily: "Farmer Jones sold ten bushels of wheat at—"

"I do want to see more of him," Mr. Robertson said; "and I want Mary to."

"Do you?" said Miss Lydia.

"Well, he's ours, and—"

"He's his father's and mother's," she conceded; "they would naturally want to see him."

"Yes," Carl Robertson said; "but of course we could never do more than that. We could never have him."

Miss Lydia felt her legs trembling, and she put her hands under her

black silk apron lest they might tremble, too. "No," she agreed, "I suppose you couldn't."

He nodded. "It would be impossible; people must never suspect —" He stopped through sheer shame at the thought of all the years he had hidden behind this small, scared-looking woman, who had had no place to hide from a ridiculous but pursuing suspicion.

When he got back to Philadelphia and told his wife about the boy, he said, "Some of those old cats in Old Chester actually thought he was—her own child."

"What!"

"Fools. But, Mary, she never betrayed us—that little old woman! She never told the truth."

"She never knew it was said."

"God knows, I hope she didn't. . . . We ought to have kept him."

"Carl! You know we couldn't; it would have been impossible!"

"Well, we cared more for our reputations than for our—son," he said.

For a moment that poignant word startled Mary into silence; then she said, breathlessly: "But, Carl, that isn't common sense! What about—the boy himself? Would it have been a good thing for him that people should know?"

"It might have been a good thing for us," he said; "and it couldn't be any worse for him than it is. Everybody thinks he's illegitimate." He paused, and then he said a really profound thing—for a fat, selfish man. "Mary, I believe there isn't any *real* welfare that's built on a lie. If it was to do over again I'd stand up to my own cussed folly."

"You don't seem to consider me!" she said, bitterly.

But he only said, slowly, "He's the finest little chap you ever saw."

"Pretty?" she said, forgetting her bitterness.

"Oh, he's a boy, a real boy. Freckled. And when he's mad he shows his teeth, just as your father used to; I saw him in a fight. No; of course he's not 'pretty.'"

"I'd like to see him—if I wasn't afraid to," she said. She was thirty-four now, a sad, idle, rich woman, with only three interests in life: eating and shopping and keeping the Secret which made her cringe whenever she thought of it, which, since the night she heard Johnny laugh, was pretty much all the time. It was the shopping interest that by and by united with the interest of the Secret; it occurred to her that she might give "him" something. She would buy him a pair of skates! "But you must send them to him, Carl."

"Why don't you do it yourself?"

"It would look queer. People might—think."

"Well, they 'thought' about that poor little woman."

"Idiots! She's a hundred years old!" Mary said, jealously.

"She wasn't when he was born," her husband said, wearily. He probably loved his wife, but since that day when she had flung away the lure of mystery, her mind had ceased to interest him. This was cruel and unjust, but it was male human nature.

"Why don't you get acquainted with the youngster?" Carl said, yawning.

"*Carl!* You know it wouldn't do. Besides, how could I?"

"We could take the house ourselves next summer. There's some furniture in it still. It would come about naturally enough. And he would be at our gates."

"Oh no—*no!* Maybe he looks like me."

"No, he doesn't. Didn't I tell you he isn't particularly good-looking?"

"Maybe he looks like you?" she objected, simply.

And he laughed, and said, "Thank you, my dear!"

But Mary didn't laugh. She got up and stood staring out of the window into the rainy street; "You send him the skates," she said; "you've seen him, so it wouldn't seem queer."

The skates were sent, and Johnny's mother was eager to see Johnny's smudgy and laborious letter acknowledging "Mr. Robertson's kind present."

"That's a very nice little letter!" she said; "he must be clever, like you. I'll buy some books for him."

That was in January. By April Johnny and his books and his multiplication table and his freckles were almost constantly in her mind. It was about the middle of April that she said to her husband:

"If you haven't a tenant, I suppose we might open father's house for a month? Perhaps being there would be better than—giving presents? If I saw him just once I shouldn't want to give him things."

"I'm afraid you'd want to more than ever," he demurred, which, of course, made her protest:

"Oh no, I shouldn't! Do let's do it!"

"Well," he conceded, in triumphant reluctance—for it was what he

had wanted her to say—"if you insist. But I don't believe you'll like it."

So that was how it happened that the weatherworn "For Sale or To Let" sign was taken down, and the rusty iron gates were opened, and the weedy graveled driveway made clean and tidy as it used to be in Johnny's grandfather's time. Johnny himself was immensely interested in all that went on in the way of renovation, and in the beautiful horses that came down before Mr. and Mrs. Robertson arrived.

"Aunty, they must be pretty rich," he said.

"They are," said Miss Lydia.

"I guess if they had a boy they'd give him a pony," Johnny said, sighing.

"Very likely," Miss Lydia told him. And she, too, watched the opening up of the big house with her frightened blue eyes.

"Lydia, you're losing flesh," Mrs. Barkley said in an anxious bass. Indeed, all Old Chester was anxious about Miss Sampson's looks that summer. "What *is* the matter?" said Old Chester.

But Miss Lydia, although she really did grow thin, never said what was the matter.

"I do dislike secretiveness!" said Mrs. Drayton; "I call it vulgar."

"I wonder what she calls curiosity?" Doctor Lavendar said when this remark was repeated to him.

Miss Lydia may have been vulgar, but her vulgarity did not save her from terror. When Mary drove past the little house, the Grasshopper's heart was in her mouth! Would Johnny's mother stop?—or would Mrs. Robertson go by? There came, of course, the inevitable day when the mother stopped. . . . It was in June, a day of

white clouds racing in a blue sky, and tree tops bending and swaying and locust blossoms showering on the grass. Johnny was engaged in trying to lure his cat out of a pear tree, into which a dog had chased her.

"Stop!" Mary Robertson called to the coachman; then, leaning forward, she tried to speak. Her breath came with a gasp. "Are you the—the boy who lives with Miss Sampson?"

"Yes'm," Johnny said. "Kitty, Kitty!" Then he called: "Say, Aunty! Let's try her with milk!"

Miss Lydia, coming to the door with a saucer of milk, stood for a paralyzed moment, then she said, "How do you do, Mary?"

"You haven't forgotten me?" Mrs. Robertson said.

"Well, no," said Miss Lydia.

"Lovely day," Mary said, breathing quickly; then she waved a trembling hand. "Good-by! Go on, Charles." Charles flicked his whip and off she rumbled in the very same old victoria in which her father had rolled by Miss Lydia's door in the September dusk some fifteen years before.

That night Johnny's mother said to her husband, almost in a whisper, "I—spoke to him."

He put a kindly arm around her. "Isn't he as fine a boy as you ever saw?"

After that Mrs. Robertson spoke to Johnny Smith frequently and Miss Lydia continued to lose flesh. The month that Mr. and Mrs. Robertson were to spend in Old Chester lengthened into two—into three. And while they were there wonderful things happened to Johnny in the way of presents—a lathe, a velocipede, a little engine

to turn a wheel in the run at the foot of old Mr. Smith's pasture. Also, he and his aunt Lydia were invited to take supper with Mr. and Mrs. Robertson. "We'll have to ask *her*," Johnny's mother had said to Johnny's father, "because it would look queer to have him come by himself. Oh, Carl, I am beginning to hate her!"

"You mustn't, dear; she's good to him."

"*I* want to be good to him!"

However, Miss Lydia, in her once-turned and twice-made-over blue silk, came and sat at the big table in the new Mr. Smith's dining room. She hardly spoke, but just sat there, the vein on her temple throbbing with fright, and listened to Johnny's mother pouring herself out in fatuous but pathetic flattery and in promises of all sorts of delights.

"Mary, my *dear!*" Carl Robertson protested, but he felt the pain of the poor, child-hungry woman at the other end of the table.

When Miss Lydia and Johnny walked home together in the darkness her boy said: "A fellow'd be lucky with a mother like that, wouldn't he? She'd give him everything he wanted. She'd give him a pony," Johnny said, wistfully.

"Yes," said Miss Lydia, faintly.

"Wish I had a mother who'd gimme a pony," Johnny said, with the brutal honesty of his sex and years.

And Miss Lydia said again, "Yes."

"Maybe Mrs. Robertson'll gimme one," Johnny said, hopefully; "she's always giving me things!"

However, though Johnny's gratitude consisted of a lively hope of

benefits to come, he had some opinions of his own.

"She kisses me," he said to Miss Lydia, wrinkling up his nose. "I don't like kissing ladies."

Poor Mary couldn't help kissing him. The fresh, honest, ugly young face had become more wonderful to her than anything else on earth! But sometimes she looked at him and then at his father, and said to herself, "His eyes are not like Carl's, but his mouth is as Carl's used to be before he wore a beard; but nobody would know it now."

Mr. Robertson looked pleased when she told him, anxiously, that "it *was* showing—the likeness. He has your mouth. And people might —"

"I wish to God I could own him," said Carl Robertson.

"Carl, he wants a pony! Buy one for him."

But Johnny didn't get his pony, because when Mr. Robertson told Miss Lydia he was thinking of buying a horse for his boy, she said:

"No; it isn't good for him, please, to have so many things."

"The idea of her interfering!" Mary told her husband.

CHAPTER V

"I'M going to invite him to visit us next winter," Mary said.

This was at the end of the summer, and the prospect of saying good-by to Johnny for almost a year was more than she could bear.

"My dear!" her husband protested, "if you got him under your own roof you wouldn't be able to hold on to yourself! I could, but you couldn't. You'd tell him."

"I wouldn't! Why, I *couldn't*. Of course he can never know. . . . But I'm going to see—that woman, and tell her that I shall have him visit us."

"She'll not permit it."

"'Permit'!" Mary said. "Upon my word! My own child not '*permitted*'!"

"It's hard," Carl said, briefly.

"You want him, too," she said, eagerly; "I can see you do! Think of having him with us for a week! I could go into his room and—and pick up his clothes when he drops them round on the floor, the way boys do." She was breathless at the thought of such happiness. "I'll tell her I'm going to have him come in the Christmas vacation. Oh, Carl"—her black, heavy eyes suddenly glittered with tears—"I want my baby," she said.

The words stabbed him; for a moment he felt that there was no price too great to pay for comfort for her. "We'll try it," he said, "but we'll have to handle Miss Lydia just right to get her to consent to it."

"'Consent'?" she said, fiercely. "Carl, I just hate her!" The long-smothered instinct of maternity leaped up and scorched her like a flame; she put her dimpled hands over her face and cried.

He tried to tell her that she wasn't just. "After all, dear, we disowned him. Naturally, she feels that he belongs to her."

But she could not be just: "He belongs to us! And she prejudices him against us. I know she does. I said to him yesterday that her clothes weren't very fashionable. I just said it for fun; and he said, 'You shut up!'"

"*What!*" Johnny's father said, amused and horrified.

"I believe she likes him to be rude to me," Mary said.

Her jealousy of Miss Lydia had taken the form of suspicion; if Johnny was impertinent, if that shabby Miss Lydia meant more to him than she did—the rich, beneficent, adoring Mrs. Robertson!—it must be because Miss Lydia "influenced" him. It was to counteract that influence that she planned the Christmas visit; if she could have him to herself, even for a week, with all the enjoyments she would give him, she was sure she could rout "that woman" from her place in his heart!

"I sha'n't ask for what is my own," she told Carl; "I'll just say I'm going to take him for the Christmas holidays. She won't dare to say he can't come!"

Yet when she went to tell Miss Lydia that Johnny was coming, her certainty that the shabby woman wouldn't "dare," faded.

Miss Lydia was in the kitchen, making cookies for her boy, and she could not instantly leave her rolling-pin when his mother knocked at the front door. Mary had not been at that door since the September night when she had crouched, sobbing, on the steps. And now again

it was September, and again the evening primroses were opening in the dusk. . . . As she knocked, a breath of their subtle perfume brought back that other dusk, and for an instant she was engulfed in a surge of memory. She felt faint and leaned against the door, waiting for Miss Lydia's little running step in the hall. She could hardly speak when the door opened. "Good—good evening," she said, in a whisper.

Miss Lydia, her frightened eyes peering at her caller from under that black frizette, could hardly speak herself. Mary was the one to get herself in hand first. "May I come in, Miss Sampson?"

"Why, yes—" said Miss Lydia, doubtfully, and dusted her floury hands together.

"I came to say," Mary began, following her back to the kitchen, "I came—"

"I'm making cookies for Johnny," Miss Lydia said, briskly, and Mary's soft hands clenched. Why shouldn't *she* be making cookies for Johnny!

"I've got a pan in the oven," said Miss Lydia, "and I've got to watch 'em."

Mary was silent; she sat down by the table, her breath catching in her throat. Miss Lydia did not, apparently, notice the agitation; she bustled about and brought her a cooky on a cracked plate—and watched her.

"I want—" Mary said, in a trembling voice, and crumbling the cooky with nervous fingers—"I mean, I am going to have Johnny visit me this winter."

"Oh," said Miss Lydia, and sat down.

"I'll have him during the holidays."

"No."

"Why not?" Mary said, angrily.

"He'd guess."

"You needn't be afraid of *that!*"

Miss Lydia silently shook her head; instantly Mary's anger turned to fright.

"Oh, Miss Lydia—please! I promise you he shall never have the dimmest idea—why, he *couldn't* have! It wouldn't do, you know. But I want him just to—to look at."

Miss Lydia was pale. She may have been a born gambler, but never had she taken such a chance as this—to give Johnny back, even for a week, to the people who once had thrown him away, but who now were ready to do everything for him, give him anything he wanted!—and a boy wants so many things! "No," she said, "no."

Mary gave a starved cry, then dropped on her knees, clutched at the small, rough, floury hand and tried to kiss it.

"A mother has a claim," she said, passionately.

Miss Lydia, pulling her hand away, nodded. "Yes, a mother has."

"Then let him come. Oh, let him come!"

"*Are you his mother?*"

Mary fell back, half sitting on the floor, half kneeling at Miss Lydia's feet. "What do you mean? You know—"

"Sometimes," said Miss Lydia, "I think *I'm* his mother."

Mary started. "She's crazy!" she thought, scared.

"He is mine," Miss Lydia said, proudly; "some foolish people have even thought he was mine in—in your way."

"Absurd!" Mary said, with a gasp.

"You have never understood love, Mary," Miss Lydia said; "never, from the very beginning." And even as Johnny's mother recoiled at that sword-thrust, she added, her face very white: "But I'll chance it. Yes, if he wants to visit you I'll let him. But I hope you won't hurt him."

"Hurt him? Hurt my own child? He shall have everything!"

"That's what I mean. It may hurt him. He may get to be like you," Miss Lydia said. . . . "Oh, my cookies! They are burning!" She pushed Johnny's mother aside—she wanted to push her over! to trample on her! to tear her! But she only pressed her gently aside and ran and opened the oven door, and then said, "Oh *my!*" and raised a window to let the smoke out. . . . "I'll let him go," she said. But when Mary tried to put her arms around her, and say brokenly how grateful she was, Miss Lydia shrank away and said, harshly, "*Don't!*"

"I couldn't bear to have her touch me," she told herself afterward; "she didn't love him when he was a baby."

However, it was arranged, and the visit was made. It was a great experience for Johnny! The stage to Mercer, the railroad journey across the mountains, the handsome house, the good times every minute of every day! Barnum's! Candy shops! New clothes (and old ones dropped about on the floor for Mrs. Robertson to pick up!) And five five-dollar bills to carry back to Old Chester! Then the week ended. . . . Mrs. Robertson, running to bring him his hat and make sure he had a clean handkerchief, and patting the collar of his coat with plump fingers, cried when she said good-by; and Johnny sighed,

and said he had a stomach ache, and he hated to go home. His mother glanced triumphantly at his father.

"(Do you hear that?) Do you love me, Johnny?" she demanded.

"Yes'm," Johnny said, scowling.

"As much as Miss Lydia?"

Johnny stared at her. "Course not."

"She doesn't give you so many presents as I do."

"*Mary!*" Johnny's father protested.

But Johnny was equal to the occasion.

"I'd just as leaves," said he, "give you one of my five dollars to pay for 'em"—which made even his mother laugh. "Goo'-by," said Johnny. "I guess I've eaten too much. I've had a fine time. Much obliged. No, I do' want any more candy. O-o-o-h!" said Johnny, "I wish I hadn't eaten so much! I hate going home."

But he went—bearing his sheaves with him, his presents and his five five-dollar bills and his stomach ache. And he said he wished he could go right straight back to Philadelphia!

"Do you?" said Miss Lydia, faintly.

"But she's—funny, Aunt Lydia."

"How 'funny'?"

"Well," said Johnny, scrubbing the back of his hand across his cheeks, "she's always kissing me and talking about my liking her. Oh—I don't really mind her, much. She's nice enough. But I *don't* like kissing ladies. But I like visiting her," he added, candidly; "she takes me to lots of places and gives me things. I like presents," said

Johnny. "I hope she'll gimme a gun." . . .

That night, the kissing lady, pacing up and down like a caged creature in her handsome parlor, which seemed so empty and orderly now, said suddenly to her husband, "Why don't we adopt him?"

"H-s-s-h!" he cautioned her; then, in a low voice, "I've thought of that."

At which she instantly retreated. "It is out of the question! People would—think."

CHAPTER VI

JOHNNY would have had his gun right off, and many other things, too, if Miss Lydia hadn't interfered. "Please don't send him so many presents," she wrote Mrs. Robertson in her scared, determined way. And Mary, reading that letter, fed her bitterness with the memory of something which had happened during the visit.

"It's just what I said," she told Johnny's father; "she influences him against us by not letting us give him presents! I know that from the way he talks. I told him, after I bought the stereopticon for him, that I could give him nicer things than she could, and—"

"Mary! You mustn't say things like that!"

"And—and—" Mary said, crying, "he said, 'I like Aunty without any presents.' You see? Influence! The idea of her daring to say we mustn't give him a gun. He's *ours!*"

"No, he's hers," Johnny's father said, sadly; "she has the whip hand, Mary—unless we tell the truth."

"Of course we can't do that," she said, sobbing.

But after that Philadelphia experience Miss Lydia—a fragile creature now, who lived and breathed for her boy—was obliged every winter to let Johnny visit these people who had disowned him, cast him off, deserted him!—that was the way she put it to herself. She had to let him go because she couldn't think of any excuse for saying he couldn't go. She even asked Doctor Lavendar for a reason for refusing invitations, which the appreciative and frankly acquisitive Johnny was anxious to accept. With a present of a bunch of lamplighters in her hand she went to the rectory, offering, as an explanation of her call, the fact that Johnny had got into a fight with the youngest Mack boy and rubbed his nose in the gutter, and Mrs. Mack was very angry, and said her boy's nose would never be handsome again; and she, Miss Lydia, didn't know what to do because Johnny

wouldn't tell her what the fight was about and wouldn't apologize.

"Johnny's fifteen and the Mack boy is seventeen; and a boy doesn't need a handsome nose," said Doctor Lavendar. "I'd not interfere, if I were you."

Then she got the real question out: Didn't Doctor Lavendar think it might be bad for Johnny to visit Mr. and Mrs. Robertson? "They're very rich, you know," Miss Lydia warned him, piteously.

"They've taken a fancy to him, have they?" Doctor Lavendar asked. She nodded. The old man meditated. "Lydia," he said at last, "you are so rich, and they're so poor, I'd be charitable, if I were you."

So she was charitable. And for the next three or four years Johnny went away for his good times, and old Miss Lydia stayed at home and had very bad times for fear that Mr. and Mrs. Robertson might suddenly turn into Johnny's father and mother! Then the father and mother would come to Old Chester in the summer and have their bad times, for fear that Miss Lydia would "influence" Johnny against Mr. and Mrs. Robertson. (We got to quite like the Robertsons, though we didn't see much of them. "Pity they had no children," said Old Chester; "all that Smith money going begging!")

The Smith money certainly went begging, so far as Johnny was concerned. Every time his father and mother tried to spend it on him Miss Lydia put her little frightened will between the boy and his grandfather's fortune. "Boys can't accept presents, Johnny, except from relations, you know," she would tell him; "it isn't nice." And Johnny, thinking of the gun or the pony or what not, would stick out his lips and sigh and say no, he "s'posed not." As a result of such remarks he developed as healthy a pride as one could hope for in a lad, and by the time he was eighteen he was hot with embarrassment when Mrs. Robertson tried to force things upon him.

"No, ma'am," he would say, awkwardly. "I—I can't take any presents."

"Why not?" she would demand, deeply hurt.

"Well, you know, you are not a relation," Johnny would say; and his mother would rush up to her room and pace up and down, up and down, and cry until she could hardly see.

"She's robbed us of our own child!" she used to tell her husband.

As for Johnny, he told Miss Lydia once that Mrs. Robertson was kind, and all that, but she was a nuisance.

"Oh, Johnny, I wouldn't say *that*, dear. She's been nice to you."

"What makes her?" said Johnny, curiously. "Why is she always gushing round?"

"Well, she likes you, Johnny."

Johnny grinned. "I don't see why. I'm afraid I'm not awfully polite to her. She was telling me she'd give me anything on earth I wanted; made me feel like a fool!" said Johnny, "and I said, 'Aunty gives me everything I want, thank you'; and she said, 'She doesn't love you as much as I do.' And I said (all this love talk makes me kind of sick!) I said, 'Oh yes, she does; she loved me when I was a squealing baby! You didn't know me then.'"

"What did she say?" Miss Lydia asked, breathlessly.

"Oh, she sort of cried," said Johnny, with a bored look.

But his perplexity about Mrs. Robertson's gush lingered in his mind, and a year or two later, on his twentieth birthday, as it happened, he asked Miss Lydia again what on earth it meant? . . . The Robertsons had braved the raw Old Chester winter and come

down to the old house to be near their son on that day. They came like the Greeks, bearing gifts, which, it being Johnny's birthday, they knew could not be refused—and old Miss Lydia, unlike the priest of Apollo, had no spear to thrust at them except the forbidden spear of Truth! So her heart was in her mouth when Johnny, who had gone to supper with his father and mother, came home at nearly midnight and told her how good they were to him. But he was preoccupied as he talked, and once or twice he frowned. Then suddenly he burst out:

"Aunty, why does Mr. Robertson bother about me?"

"Does he?" Miss Lydia said.

"Well, yes; he says he wants me to go into his firm when I leave college. He says he'll give me mighty good pay. But—but he wants me to take his name."

"*Oh!*" said Miss Lydia. She looked so little and pretty, lying there in her bed, with her soft white hair—the frizette had vanished some years ago—parted over her delicate furrowed brow, and her blue eyes wide and frightened, like a child's, that Johnny suddenly hugged her.

"As for the name part of it," he said, "I said my name was Smith. Not handsome or distinguished, but my own. I said I had no desire to change it, but if I ever did it would be to Sampson."

A meager tear stood in the corner of Miss Lydia's eye. "That was very nice of you, Johnny," she said, quaveringly.

"I'd like the business part of it all right," said Johnny. . . . "Say, Aunt Lydia—what *is* all the milk in the coconut about me? Course I'm not grown up for nothing; I know I'm—queer. I got on to that when I was fifteen—I put the date on Eddy Mack's nose! But I'd like to know, really, who I am?"

"You're my boy," said Miss Lydia.

"You bet I am!" said Johnny; "but who were my father and mother?"

"They lived out West, and—"

"I know all that fairy tale, Aunty. Let's have the facts."

Miss Lydia was silent; her poor old eyes blinked; then she said: "They—deserted you, Johnny. But you mustn't mind."

The young man's face reddened sharply. "They weren't married, I suppose, when I was born?" he said, in a husky voice.

"They—got married before you were born."

He frowned, but he was obviously relieved; then he looked puzzled. "Yet they deserted me? Were they too poor to take care of me?"

"Well, no," Miss Lydia confessed.

"Not poor, yet they dumped me onto your doorstep?" he repeated, bewildered, but with a slow anger growing in his face. "Well, I guess I'm well rid of 'em if they were that kind of people! Cowards. I'd rather have murderers 'round, than cowards!"

"Oh, my dear, you mustn't be unjust. They gave me money for your support."

"Money!" he said. "They paid you to take me off their hands?" He paused; "Aunt Lydia," he said—and as he spoke his upper lip lifted and she saw his teeth—"Aunt Lydia, I'll never ask you about them again. I have no interest in them. They are nothing to me, just as I was nothing to them. But tell me one thing, is Smith my name?"

"Yes," said Miss Lydia (it's his *middle* name, she assured herself truthfully).

But Johnny laughed: "I guess you just called me Smith. Well, that's all right, though I'd rather you'd made it Sampson. But Smith will do. I said so to Mrs. Robertson. I said that my name was the same as her father's, and I thought he was the finest old man I'd ever known, and, though I was no relation, I hoped my Smith name would be as dignified as his."

"What did she say?" said Miss Lydia.

"Oh, she got weepy," said Johnny, good-naturedly; "she's always either crying or kissing. But she's kind. Look at those!" he said, displaying some sleeve links that his mother's soft, adoring fingers had fastened into his cuffs. "Well, I don't take a berth with a new name tacked on to it, at Robertson & Carey's. He'll have to get some other fellow to swap names for him!"

He went off to his room, his face still dark with the deep, elemental anger which that word "deserted" had stirred in him, but whistling as if to declare his entire indifference to the deserters. Old Miss Lydia, alone, trembled very much. "Take their name! *What will they do next?*" she said to herself.

The Robertsons were asking each other the same question, "What can we do now to get him?" The lure of a business opportunity had not moved the boy at all, and what he had said about being called Sampson had been like a knife-thrust in their hearts. It made Mary Robertson so angry that she sprang at a fierce retaliation: "She *couldn't* keep him—he wouldn't stay with her—if we told him the truth!" she said to Johnny's father.

"But we never can tell him," Carl reminded her.

"Sometimes I think she'll drive me to it!" said Mary.

"No," Robertson said, shortly.

"No one would know it but the boy himself. And if he knew it he'd let us adopt him. And that would mean taking his own name."

"No!" Carl broke out, "it won't do! You see, I—don't want him to know." He paused, then seemed to pull the words out with a jerk: "I won't let him have any disrespect for his mother, and—" He got up and tramped about the room. "Damn it! *I* don't want to lose his good opinion, myself."

Her face turned darkly red. "Oh," she cried, passionately, "'opinion'! What difference does his 'opinion' make to me? A mother is a mother. And I love him! Oh, I love him so, I could just *die!* If he would put his arms around me the way he does to that terrible Miss Lydia, and kiss me, and say"—she clenched her hands and closed her eyes, and whispered the word she hungered to hear—"'*Mother! Mother!*' If I could hear him say *that*," she said, "I could just lie down and die! Couldn't you?—to hear him say 'Father'?"

Robertson set his teeth. "And what kind of an idea would he have of his 'father'? No, I won't consent to it!"

"We can't get him in any other way," she urged.

"Then we'll never get him. I can't face it."

"You don't love him as much as I do!"

"I love him enough not to want to risk losing his respect."

But this sentiment was beyond Johnny's mother; all she thought of was her aching hunger for the careless, good-humored, but bored young man. The hunger for him grew and grew; it gnawed at her day

and night. She urged Carl to take a house in Princeton while Johnny was in college, and only Johnny's father's common sense kept this project from being carried out. "You're afraid!" she taunted him.

"Dear," he said, kindly, "I'm afraid of being an ass. If he saw us tagging after him he'd hate us both. He's a man!" Carl said, proudly. "No, I've no fancy for losing the regard of"—he paused—"my son," he said, very quietly.

His wife put her hand over her mouth and stared at him; the word was too great for her; it was her baby she thought of, not her son.

In Johnny's first vacation, when she had rushed to Old Chester in June to open the house, she was met by the information that he was going off for the summer on a geological expedition.

Mary's disappointment made her feel a little sick. "What *shall* I do without you!"

"Oh, if Aunty can do without me, I guess outsiders can," said Johnny, with clumsy amiability.

"We'll be here when you get back in September," she said.

He yawned, and said, "All right." Then he strolled off, and she went upstairs and cried.

Johnny, walking home after this embarrassing interview, striking at the roadside brambles with a switch and whistling loudly, said to himself: "How on earth did Mr. Robertson fall in love with her? *He's* got brains." A day or two later he went off for his geological summer, leaving in his mother's heart that rankling word, "outsiders." As the weeks dragged along and she counted the days until he would be back, she brooded and brooded over it. It festered so deeply that she could not speak of it to Johnny's father. But once she said: "He's ungrateful! See all we've done for him!"—and Carl realized that

bitterness toward Miss Lydia, who had "robbed" her, was extending to the boy himself. And again—it was in August, and Johnny was to be at home in a fortnight—she said, "He ought to be *made* to come to us!"

Her husband looked at her in surprise. "You can't 'make' anybody love you, Mary. We are just outsiders to him."

She cried out so sharply that he was frightened, not knowing that he had turned a dagger-word in the wound.

Perhaps it was the intolerable pain of knowing that she was helpless that drove her one day, without Carl's knowledge, to the rectory. "I'll put it to Doctor Lavendar as—as somebody else's story—the trouble of a 'friend,' and maybe he can tell me how I can make Johnny feel that we are *not* outsiders! Oh, he owes it to us to do what we want! I'll tell Doctor Lavendar that the father and mother lived out West and are friends of mine. . . . He'll never put two and two together."

She walked past the rectory twice before she could get her courage to the point of knocking. When she did, it was Willy King who opened the door.

"Oh—is Doctor Lavendar ill?" she said. And Doctor King answered, dryly, that when you are eighty-two you are not particularly well.

"I thought I'd just drop in and ask his advice on something—nothing important," said Johnny's mother, breathlessly. "I'll go away, and come some other time."

Upon which, from the open window overhead, came a voice: "I won't be wrapped up in cotton batting! Send Mary Robertson upstairs."

"Haven't I any rights?" Willy called back, good-naturedly, and Doctor Lavendar retorted:

"Maybe you have, but I have many wrongs. Come along, Mary."

She went up, saying to herself: "I'll not speak of it. I'll just say I've come to see him." She was so nervous when she entered the room that her breath caught in her throat and she could hardly say, "How do you do?"

The old man was in bed with a copy of *Robinson Crusoe* on the table beside him. He held out a veined and trembling hand:

"William's keeping me alive so he can charge me for two calls a day. Well, my dear, what can I do for you?"

Mrs. Robertson sat down in a big armchair and said, panting, that —that it was terribly hot.

Doctor Lavendar watched her from under his heavy, drooping eyelids.

"There was something I was going to ask you about," she said, "but it's no matter. Doctor King says you are sick."

"Don't believe all Doctor King tells you."

"I just wanted to get advice for—for somebody else. But it's no matter."

"Let's hear about the 'somebody else.'"

"They are not Old Chester people—so you won't mind if I don't name names?"

"Not in the least," said Doctor Lavendar, genially. "Call 'em Smith; that's a somewhat general title."

"Oh—no, that's not their name," she said, panic-stricken—then saw that he had meant it as a joke, and said, trying to smile, yes, there *were* a good many Smiths in the world! Then suddenly her misery rose like a wave, and swept her into words: "These people are terribly unhappy, at least the mother is, because—" She paused, stammered, felt she had gone too far, and stumbled into contradictions which could not have misled anyone, certainly not Doctor Lavendar. "They, these people, had let their child be adopted—oh, a great many years ago, because they—they were not so situated that they could bring him—it—up. But they could, now. And they wanted him, they wanted him—her, I mean," said Mary; "I believe it was a little girl. But the little girl didn't want to come back to them. And the person who had taken her influenced her against her parents, who had done *everything* for her!—given her everything a child could want. It's cruel," said Mary. "Cruel! I know the parents, and—"

"Mary," said Doctor Lavendar, gently, "so do I."

She recoiled as if from a blow. "No—oh no! You are mistaken, sir. You couldn't know them. His—his relatives don't live here. They live in another city. You couldn't possibly know them!"

She was white with terror. What would Carl say? Oh, she must lie her way out of it! How mad she had been to come here and hint at things!

"I have known Johnny Smith's parentage for several years, Mary."

"I didn't say the child was Johnny Smith!"

"*I* said so."

"I don't know what you're talking about! The father and mother lived out West, but *I* don't know the child. He is nothing to me."

"I wonder," said Doctor Lavendar, half to himself, "do we all deny love thrice?—for you do love him, Mary, my dear; I know you do."

She tried, in panic denial, to meet his quiet eyes—then gave a little moan and bent over and hid her face on her knees.

"Oh, I do love him—I do," she said in a whisper. "But he doesn't love me. . . . And yet he is *mine*—Carl's and mine." Then anger flared up again: "Who told you? Oh, it was Miss Lydia, and she promised she wouldn't! How wicked in her!"

"No one told me." There was a moment's silence, then Doctor Lavendar said, "There were people in Old Chester who thought he was Miss Lydia's."

"Fools! fools!" she said, passionately.

"No one came forward to deny it."

She did not notice this; the flood of despair and longing broke into entreaty; how could she get her child—her own child—who considered her just an outsider! "That's Miss Lydia's influence!" she said.

Doctor Lavendar listened, asked a question or two, and then was silent.

"I am dying for him!" she said; "oh, I am in agony for him!"

The old man looked at her with pitying keenness. Was this agony a spiritual birth or was it just the old selfishness which had never brooked denial? And if indeed it was a travail of the spirit, would not the soul be stillborn if her son's love should fail to sustain it? Yet why should Johnny love her? . . . Mary was talking and trying not to cry; her words were a fury of pain and protest:

"Miss Lydia won't give him up to people who haven't any claim

upon him,—I mean any claim that is known. Of course we have a claim—the greatest! But Johnny doesn't know, so he won't consent to take our name—though it is our *right!* He doesn't know any reason for it. You see?"

"I see."

"I suppose if we told him the truth we could get him. But I'm afraid to tell him. Yet without telling him I can't make him love me! He said I was an 'outsider.' *I!* his mother! But if he knew there was a reason—"

Doctor Lavendar looked out of the window into the yellowing leaves of the old jargonelle-pear tree, and shook his head. "Hearts don't come when Reason whistles to 'em," he said.

"Oh, if I could just hear him say 'mother'!"

"Why should he say 'mother'? You haven't been a mother to him."

"I've given him everything!"

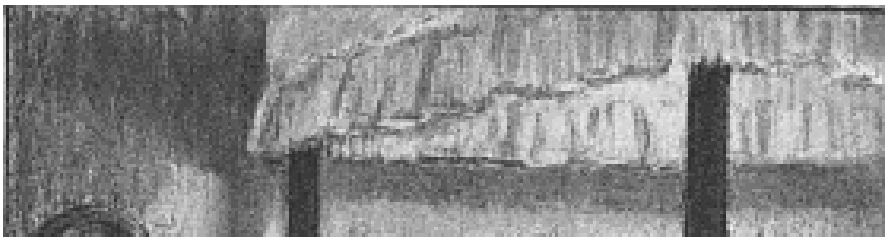
Doctor Lavendar was silent.

"He *ought* to come to us. He is ours; and he owes us—"

"Just what you've earned, Mary, just what you've earned. That's what children 'owe' their parents."

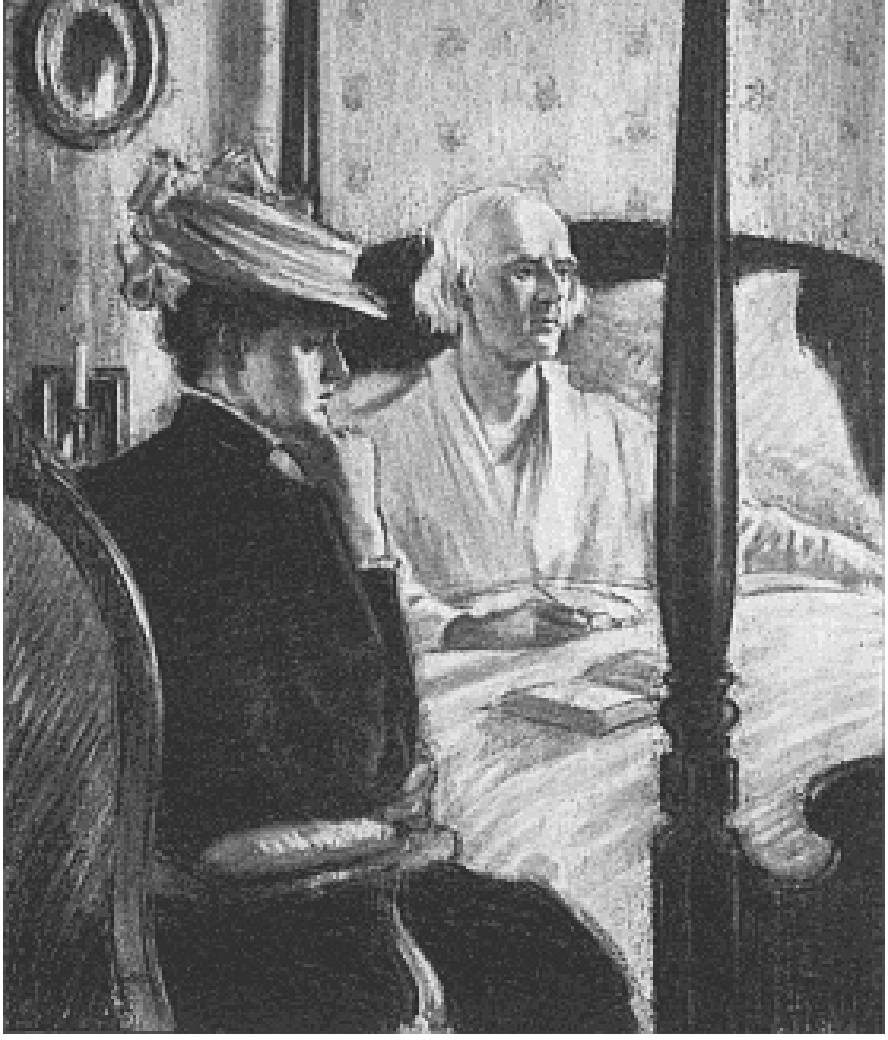
"Oh, what am I to do? What am I to do?"

"How much do you want him, Mary?"



She was stammering with sobs. "It's all I want—it's my life—"

"*Perhaps* publicity



"HEARTS DON'T ANSWER WHEN REASON WHISTLES TO THEM," HE SAID.

would win him. He has a great respect for courage. So perhaps—"

She cringed. "But that couldn't be! It couldn't be. Don't you understand?"

"Poor Mary!" said Doctor Lavendar. "Poor girl!"

"Doctor Lavendar, make him come to us. *You* can do it. You can do anything!"

"Mary, neither you nor I nor anybody else can 'make' a harvest anything but the seed which has been sowed. My child, you sowed vanity and selfishness." . . . By and by he put his hand on hers and said: "Mary, wait. Wait till you love him more and yourself less."

It was dark when she went away.

When Doctor King came in in the evening he said to himself that Mary Robertson and the whole caboodle of 'em weren't worth the weariness in the wise old face.

"William," said Doctor Lavendar, "I hope there won't be any conundrums in heaven; I don't seem able to answer them any more." Then the whimsical fatigue vanished and he smiled. "Lately I've just said, 'Wait: God knows.' And stopped guessing."

But he didn't stop thinking.

CHAPTER VII

AS for Johnny's mother, she kept on thinking, too, but she yielded, for the moment, to the inevitableness of her harvest. And of course the devotion, and the invitations to Philadelphia, and the summers in Old Chester continued. Johnny's bored good humor accepted them all patiently enough; "for she is kind," he reminded himself. "And I like *him*," he used to tell his aunt Lydia. Once he confided his feelings on this subject to William King:

"They are queer folks, the Robertsons," Johnny said. "Why do they vegetate down here in Old Chester? They don't seem to know anybody but Aunt Lydia."

William and the big fellow were jogging along in the doctor's shabby buggy out toward Miss Lydia's; she was very frail that summer and Johnny had insisted that William King should come to see her. "The Robertsons know *you*, apparently," the doctor said.

"Well, yes," John said, "and they've been nice to me ever since I can remember."

"G'on!" Doctor King told his mare, and slapped a rein down on Jinny's back.

"But, Doctor King, they *are* queer," Johnny insisted. "What's the milk in the coconut about 'em?"

"Maybe a thunderstorm soured it."

Johnny grinned, then he looked at Jinny's ears, coughed, and said, "I'd like to ask you a question, sir."

"Go ahead."

"When people are kind to you—just what do you owe 'em? I didn't ask them to be kind to me—I mean the Robertsons—but, holy Peter!" said Johnny, "they've given me presents ever since I was a child. They even had a wild idea of getting me to take their name! I said, 'No, thank you!' Why should I take their name? . . . Mrs. Robertson always seems sort of critical of Aunty. Think of that! Course she never says anything; she'd better not! If she did I'd raise Cain. But I *feel* it," Johnny said, frowning. "Well, what I want to know is, what do you owe people who do you favors? Mind you, *I* don't want their favors!"

"Well," William ruminated, "I should say that we owe people who do us favors, the truth of how we feel about them. If the truth wouldn't be agreeable to them, don't accept the favors!"

"Well, the 'truth' is that I get mad when Mrs. Robertson looks down on Aunty! Think of what she's stood for me!" the boy said, suddenly very red in the face. "When I was fifteen one of the fellows told me I was—was her son. I rubbed his nose in the mud."

"Oh, that was how Mack got his broken nose, was it?" Doctor King inquired, much interested. "Well, I'm glad you did it. I guess it cured him of being *one* kind of a fool. There was a time when I wanted to rub one or two female noses in the mud. However, they are really not worth thinking of, Johnny."

"No," John agreed, "but anybody who looks cross-eyed in my presence at Aunt Lydia will get his head punched."

"Amen," said William King, and drew Jinny in at Miss Lydia's gate.

It cannot be said that William King's opinion as to what we owe people who do us favors was very illuminating to Johnny. "I like 'em—and I don't like 'em," he told Miss Lydia, with a bothered look. "But I

wish to Heaven she'd let up on presents!"

On the whole he liked them more than he failed to like them; perhaps because they were, to a big, joyous, somewhat conceited youngster, rather pitiful in the way in which they seemed to hang upon him. He said as much once to his aunt Lydia; Mrs. Robertson had asked him to come to supper, but had not asked Miss Lydia. "I suppose I've got to go," he said, scowling, "but they needn't think I'd rather have supper with them than with you! I just go because I'm sorry for 'em."

"I am, too, Johnny," she said. She had ceased to be afraid of them by this time. Yet she might have been just a little afraid if she had known all that this special invitation involved. . . .

Mary Robertson no longer shared her longing for her son with her husband. She had not even told him of that day when her misery had welled up and overflowed in frantic words to Doctor Lavendar. But she had never resigned herself to reaping what she had sowed. She was still determined, *somehow*, to get possession of her boy. Occasionally she spoke of this determination to Doctor Lavendar, just because it was a relief to put it into words; but he never gave her much encouragement. He could only counsel a choice of two things: secrecy—and fortitude; or truth—and doubtful hope.

Little by little hope gained, and truth seemed more possible. And by and by a plan grew in her mind: she would get Doctor Lavendar to help her to tell Johnny the truth, and then, supported by religion (as she thought of it), she would tell her son that it was his duty to live with her;—"nobody will know *why!* And he can't say 'no,' if Doctor Lavendar says, 'honor thy father and thy mother'!" That Doctor Lavendar would say this, she had no doubt whatever, for was he not a minister, and ministers always counseled people to obey the Commandments. "But when I get him here, with Johnny, we must be

by ourselves," she thought; "I won't speak before *her!*"

So that was why Miss Lydia was not invited to supper when Johnny was—Johnny and Doctor Lavendar! Mary Robertson was so tense all that September day when her two guests were expected that her husband noticed it.

"You're not well, Mary?" he said.

"Oh yes, yes!" she said—she was pacing up and down, up and down, like a caged creature. "Carl, Doctor Lavendar is coming this evening."

"My dear, I think that is about the tenth time you have mentioned it! I should not call the old gentleman a very exciting guest."

"And Johnny is coming."

"Well, what of it? I hope Doctor Lavendar won't ask him to say his catechism!"

As it happened, Johnny came first, and his mother was so eager to see him and touch him that, hearing his step, she ran to help him off with his coat—to his great embarrassment; then she came into the library clinging to his arm. Father and son greeted each other with, "Hello, youngster!" and, "Hello, sir!" and Johnny added that it was beginning to rain like blazes.

"I sent the carriage for Doctor Lavendar," Mrs. Robertson said.

"He coming?" Johnny asked.

"Yes," she said; "he's very, very good, Johnny, and"—she paused, then said, breathlessly, "*you must do whatever he wants you to do*."

The young man looked faintly interested. "What's she up to now?" he asked himself; then began to talk to his father. But remembering

his aunt Lydia's parting injunction, "Now, Johnny, be nice to Mrs. Robertson," he was careful to speak to his mother once in a while. Happening to catch the twinkle of her rings, he tried to be especially "nice."

"When I get rich I'm going to buy Aunty a diamond ring like yours, Mrs. Robertson."

"I'll give you one of mine, if you'll wear it," she said, eagerly.

Johnny's guffaw of laughter ended in a droll look at his father, who said:

"My dear Mary! This *cub*, and a diamond ring?"

She was too absorbed in loving her child to be hurt by his bad manners, and, besides, at that moment Doctor Lavendar arrived, and she ran out into the hall to welcome him; as she took his hand she whispered:

"Doctor Lavendar, you will help me with Johnny? *I am going to tell him.* I'm going to tell him to-night!—and I depend on you to make him come to us."

The old man's face grew very grave; he looked closely at Mary, standing there, clasping and unclasping her hands, but he did not answer her. Later, when they went out to the dining room, he was still silent, just watching Mary and listening to Johnny,—who laughed and talked (and was "nice" to his mother), and ate enormously, and who looked, sitting there at his grandfather's old table, as much like the new Mr. Smith as twenty-three can look like seventy-eight.

"Well," the young fellow said, friendly and confidential to the company at large, "what do you suppose? It's settled—my 'career'!"

"I hope that means Robertson and Carey?" Mr. Robertson said.

He glanced over at his son with a sort of aching pride in his strength and carelessness. "I've offered this youngster a place in my firm," he explained to Doctor Lavendar, who said:

"Have you, indeed?"

"No," Johnny said, "it doesn't mean Carey and Robertson, though you're mighty kind, Mr. Robertson. But you see I can't leave Old Chester. It would pull Aunt Lydia up by the roots to go away. And of course I couldn't go without her."

Mary's plump hand, with its shining rings, clenched sharply on the tablecloth; she drew in her breath, but she said nothing.

"Well, what are you going to do?" Carl said, not daring to meet his wife's eyes.

"Aunt Lydia got a job for me in Mr. Dilworth's hardware store."

His mother cried out—then checked herself. "Miss Lydia ought not to have thought of such a thing!" she tried to speak quietly, but she had to bite her lip to keep it steady.

"Mary!" her husband warned her.

John's face darkened. "Aunty ought always to do whatever she does do," he said.

"Of course," his father agreed, soothingly.

"I only meant," Mary explained, in a frightened voice, "that a hardware store isn't much of a chance for a man like you."

"It means staying in Old Chester with Aunty," he explained; "she's not very well now, Mrs. Robertson," he said, and sighed; "it would be too much for her, to move. She's not equal to it." His strong, rather harsh face softened and sobered. "And as for a hardware store not

being a chance for *me*—I mean to make Rome howl with a Mercer branch! You see, Aunty bought a half-interest for me. The Lord knows where she got the money! Saved it out of her food all these years, I guess."

"She didn't, apparently, save it out of your food," Doctor Lavendar said, dryly; "I believe you weigh two hundred, Johnny."

"Only a hundred and eighty-four," the young man assured him.

Mary, listening, was tingling all over; she had planned a very cautious approach to the truth which was to give her son back to her. She meant first to hint, and then to admit, and then to declare her *right* to his love. But that Miss Lydia, without consulting Johnny's father and mother, should have put him into such a business—"*my son* in a hardware store!" Mary thought;—that Miss Lydia should have dared! "He's mine—he's mine—he's mine! . . . Of course," she was saying to herself as they went back to the library after dinner—"of course, he'll give it up the minute he knows who he is. But I hate her!"

The room, in the September dusk, was lighted only by a lamp on the big desk; the windows opening on the garden were raised, for it was hot after the rain, and the air blew in, fragrant with wet leaves and the scent of some late roses. Johnny's father, sinking down in a great leather chair, watched the young, vigorous figure standing in front of the mantelpiece, smoking and, after the fashion of his years, laying down the law for the improvement of the world. Doctor Lavendar did not look at Johnny, but at his mother, who stood clutching the corner of the big desk—that desk at which, one September night twenty-three years ago, Johnny's grandfather had been sitting when Miss Lydia came into the library. . . .

"Mary, my dear, aren't you going to sit down?" said Doctor Lavendar.

She did not seem to hear him. "Look here," she said, harshly; "I can't stand it—I won't stand it—"

Carl sprang up and laid his hand on her arm. "Mary!" he said, under his breath. "*Please*," he besought her; "for God's sake don't—don't—"

"Johnny, you belong to me," Mary said.

John Smith, his cigar halfway to his lips, paused, bewildered and alarmed. "Isn't she well?" he said, in a low voice to Doctor Lavendar.

"I'm perfectly well. But I'm going to speak. Doctor Lavendar will tell you I have a right to speak! Tell him so, Doctor Lavendar."

"She has the right to speak," the old man said.

"You hear that?" said the mother. "He says I have a right to you!"

"I didn't say that," said Doctor Lavendar.

"Mary," her husband protested, "I will not allow"—but she did not hear him:

"Miss Lydia sha'n't have you any longer. You are *mine*, Johnny—*mine*. I want you, and I'm going to have you!"

John Smith's face went white; he put his cigar down on the mantelpiece, went across the long room, closed the door into the hall, then came back and looked at his mother. No one spoke. Doctor Lavendar had bent his head and shut his eyes; he would not watch the three struggling souls before him. Johnny slowly turned his eyes toward Mr. Robertson.

"And you—?"

"Yes," his father said. "John, you'll make the best of us, won't you?"

Silence tingled between them.

Then, unsteadily, and looking always at his father, John began to speak. "Of course it makes no difference to me. Aunt Lydia and I have our own life. But—I'm sorry, sir." He put his shaking hands into his pockets. "You and Mrs. Robertson—"

"Oh, say 'mother'! Say 'mother'!" she cried out.

"—have been very kind to me, always,"—he paused, in a sudden, realizing adjustment: their "kindness," then, had not been the flattery he had supposed? It was just—love? "Awfully kind," he said, huskily. "Once I did wonder . . . then I thought it couldn't be, because—because, you see, I've always liked you, sir," he ended, awkwardly.

Carl Robertson was dumb.

"I've told you," his mother said, trembling—her fingers, catching at the sheet of blotting paper on desk, tore off a scrap of it, rolled it, twisted it, then pull off another scrap—"I've told you, because you are to come to us. You are to take our name—your name." She paused, swallowing hard, and struggling to keep the tears back. "You are *ours*, not hers. People thought you were hers, and it just about killed me."

Instantly the blood rushed into John Smith's face; his eyes blazed. "What!" he stammered; "what! You knew that?" . . . His upper lip slowly lifted, and Doctor Lavendar saw his set teeth. "You *knew* that some damned fools thought *that*, of my aunt Lydia? Are you my mother, and yet you could allow another woman— My God!" he said, softly.

She did not realize what she had done; she began to reassure him

frantically.

"No one shall ever know! No one will ever guess—"

Doctor Lavendar shook his head. "Mary," he warned her, "we must be known, even as also we know, before we enter the Kingdom of Heaven."

They did not listen to him.

"You mean," John said, "that you won't let it be known that you are —my mother?"

"No, never! never! It couldn't be known—I promise you."

"Thank you," said John Smith, sardonically,—and Doctor Lavendar held up protesting hands. But no one looked at him.

"It would only be supposed," Carl said, "that, being childless people, we would make you our son. Nothing, as your mother says, would need be known."

"How could you 'make me your son' and not have it known?"

"I mean by law," his father explained.

"There was a 'law' that made me your son twenty-three years ago. That's the only law that counts. You broke it when I was born. Can I be born again?"

"Yes," said Doctor Lavendar.

"You deserted me," Johnny said, "and Aunt Lydia took me. Shall I be like you, and desert her? Little Aunt Lydia!" He gave a furious sob. "I'm not *your* sort!" he said. The words were like a blow in Mary's face.

"Doctor Lavendar, tell him—tell him, 'honor thy father and thy

mother'!"

"'Honor'?" her son said. "Did I understand you to use the word '*honor*'?"

Again Doctor Lavendar raised an admonishing hand. "Careful, John."

"He means," Carl said to his wife, quietly, though his face was gray—"he means he wants us to acknowledge him. Mary, I'm willing. Are you?"

Doctor Lavendar lifted his bowed head, and his old eyes were suddenly eager with hope. Johnny's mother stood looking at her child, her face twisted with tears.

"*Must* I, to get him?" she gasped.

"No," Johnny said; "it is quite unnecessary." He smiled, so cruelly that his father's hands clenched; but Mary only said, in passionate relief, "Oh, you are good!" And the hope in Doctor Lavendar's eyes flickered out.

"Nothing will ever be known?" her son repeated, still smiling. "Well, then, Mrs. Robertson, I thank you for 'nothing.'"

Doctor Lavendar frowned, and Mary recoiled, with a sort of moan. Carl Robertson cried out:

"Stop! You shall not speak so to your mother! I'm ashamed of you, sir!"

But the mother ran forward and caught at her son's arm. "Oh, but I will make it known! I will say who you are! I'll say you are mine! I will—I will—"

"You can't, for I'm not," he said.

She was clinging to him, but he looked over her head, eye to eye with his father. "How can I be her son, when she let people here in Old Chester believe that Aunt Lydia—"

"Johnny," said Doctor Lavendar, "it didn't make the slightest difference to Miss Lydia."

The young man turned upon him. "Doctor Lavendar, these two people didn't own me, even when a pack of fools believed—" He choked over what the fools believed. "They let them think *that* of Aunt Lydia! As for this—this lady being my 'mother'— What's 'mother' but a word? Aunt Lydia may not be my mother, but I am her son. Yes—yes—I am."

"You are," Doctor Lavendar agreed.

John turned and looked at his father. "I'm sorry for *him*," he said to Doctor Lavendar.

"We will acknowledge you to-morrow," Carl Robertson said.

"I won't acknowledge you," his son flung back at him. "All these years you have hidden behind Aunty. Stay hidden. I won't betray you."

Mary had dropped down into her father's chair; her face was covered by her hands on the desk. They heard her sob. Her husband bent over her and put his arms about her.

"Mary," he said, in a whisper, "forgive me; I brought it on you—my poor Mary!" Then he stood up and looked at his son in suffering silence. "I don't blame you," he said, simply.

At that, suddenly, John Smith broke. The pain of it all had begun to penetrate his passionate loyalty. For a moment there was silence, except for Mary's sobs. Then Johnny said, hoarsely, "Mr. Robertson, I'm—sorry. But . . . there isn't anything to do about it. I—I guess I'll go

home."

"John," said Doctor Lavendar, "your aunt Lydia would want you to be kind."

Carl Robertson shook his head. "We don't want kindness, Doctor Lavendar. I guess we don't want anything he can give. Good-by, boy," he said.

His son, passing him, caught at his hand and wrung it. "Goo'-by," he said, roughly. There were tears in his eyes.

Then, without a look at his mother, he walked quickly down the room, and out into the hall. They could hear him putting on his hat and coat. . . . Carl Robertson pressed his clenched hand against his lips, and turned his back to the other two. Mary was silent. Doctor Lavendar covered his eyes for a moment; then, just as Johnny's hand was on the knob of the front door he called out:

"John, wait a minute, will you? Give me an arm; I'm going to walk home."

The young man, out in the hall, frowned, and set his jaw.

"All right," he called back, briefly. There was no detaining word or cry from the library while Doctor Lavendar shuffled silently into his coat,—and a minute later the door of the new Mr. Smith's house closed upon his grandson and the old minister.

It had begun to rain again, and the driveway was very dark—darker even than on that September night when Johnny's mother had cringed back from Miss Lydia's little leading hand and they had hurried along under the big trees. It was her son who hurried now. . . .

"Not so fast, Johnny," said Doctor Lavendar.

"Excuse me, sir." He fell into step with the old man, but he was

tense with the effort to walk slowly. . . . They were nearly at the gate before there was any speech between them. Then Johnny said, violently:

"There's no use saying anything to me, Doctor Lavendar! Not a particle of use!"

"I haven't said anything, John."

"They got you here to—to influence me! I saw through it the minute—she began. But I never forgive," Johnny said; "I want you to understand that!" He was hurrying again. The old man pressed a little on his arm.

"I'm sorry to be so slow, Johnny."

"Oh—excuse me, sir; I didn't realize. . . . She threw me away. I've thrown her away. There's no use talking to me!"

Doctor Lavendar was silent.

"I tell you, I won't have anything to do with them—with her, I mean. He's not so bad. I—I like him—in spite of—of everything. But she deserted me when I was born."

"It is certainly cruel to desert a newborn thing," said Doctor Lavendar.

John Smith agreed, furiously—and his upper lip lifted.

"I think," said Doctor Lavendar, "something has been born to-night—" He was very much out of breath.

"I'm walking too fast again? I beg your pardon, sir," the boy said.

"Suppose we stand still for a minute," said Doctor Lavendar.

They stood still; the rain fell heavily on Doctor Lavendar's

shoulders and dripped from the brim of his old felt hat. "She deserted me," John said. "There is nothing to be said in excuse. Nothing."

"No, desertion can never be excused," the old man agreed; "and, as you say, when your body was born, she left it. To-night her soul has been born. Do you mean to desert it, John?"

"Even a dog doesn't leave her pups!" John said.

("His grandfather over again!" Doctor Lavendar thought.) Yet it was to that inherited brutality that he made his appeal:

"No; a mother has to be higher than an animal, to desert her young," Doctor Lavendar said.

The young man's violent agreement broke off in the middle: —"What do you mean by that?"

"Shame is a strange thing," said Doctor Lavendar; "it can lift us up to heaven or push us down to hell; it gives us courage or it makes us cowards. An animal doesn't know shame."

"You mean that—that woman—?"

"I mean your mother was ashamed, John—" The young man was silent. "She tried to get away from shame by getting away from you. Now she knows that only by staying with you could she really get away from it."

"I will *never* call her 'mother'!" Johnny burst out.

"Miss Lydia didn't stop to consider what she was going to call you; she just took care of you. Yet you weren't as helpless as that poor woman back there in that empty house. Johnny, her little weak soul, just born to-night, will die unless you take care of it."

The young man stood still, his hands clenched. Doctor Lavendar

took off his soaking wet hat, shook it, put it on again, and waited. There was only the sound of the rain and the drip-drip from the big trees along the driveway. Then the boy said:

"You said desertion could not be excused. I am ashamed to be known as belonging to her!"

"That's just how she felt about you—*so she deserted you*."

Silence, except for John Smith's panting breath. Down the road, through the lilac bushes, came the twinkle of a lamp in Miss Lydia's window.

"John," said Doctor Lavendar, "go to your mother. If you don't, you will be doing just what she did. Be kind to her helpless soul, as Miss Lydia was kind to your helpless body."

Still silence. Then suddenly Mary's son flung Doctor Lavendar's hand from his arm, and turned back, almost running, to vanish in the shadows of his grandfather's driveway. But as he ran, he threw over his shoulder some broken, passionate words that sounded like—"I *won't* be like her—"

Doctor Lavendar stood still for a minute; then he drew a great breath of relief and plodded on slowly into the rainy darkness.

THE END

Transcriber's Notes:

The repeated book title before chapter one was deleted to avoid redundancy.

Obvious punctuation errors repaired.

The remaining correction made is indicated by a dotted line under the correction. Scroll the mouse over the word and the original text will appear.

and accept all the terms of this license and intellectual property (trademark/copyright) agreement. If you do not agree to abide by all the terms of this agreement, you must cease using and return or destroy all copies of Project Gutenberg-tm electronic works in your possession. If you paid a fee for obtaining a copy of or access to a Project Gutenberg-tm electronic work and you do not agree to be bound by the terms of this agreement, you may obtain a refund from the person or entity to whom you paid the fee as set forth in paragraph 1.E.8.

1.B. "Project Gutenberg" is a registered trademark. It may only be used on or associated in any way with an electronic work by people who agree to be bound by the terms of this agreement. There are a few things that you can do with most Project Gutenberg-tm electronic works even without complying with the full terms of this agreement. See paragraph 1.C below. There are a lot of things you can do with Project Gutenberg-tm electronic works if you follow the terms of this agreement and help preserve free future access to Project Gutenberg-tm electronic works. See paragraph 1.E below.

1.C. The Project Gutenberg Literary Archive Foundation ("the Foundation" or PGLAF), owns a compilation copyright in the collection of Project Gutenberg-tm electronic works. Nearly all the individual works in the collection are in the public domain in the United States. If an individual work is in the public domain in the United States and you are located in the United States, we do not claim a right to prevent you from copying, distributing, performing, displaying or creating derivative works based on the work as long as all references to Project Gutenberg are removed. Of course, we hope that you will support the Project Gutenberg-tm mission of promoting free access to electronic works

by
freely sharing Project Gutenberg-tm works in compliance with the terms of
this agreement for keeping the Project Gutenberg-tm name associated with
the work. You can easily comply with the terms of this agreement by
keeping this work in the same format with its attached full Project
Gutenberg-tm License when you share it without charge with others.

1.D. The copyright laws of the place where you are located also govern
what you can do with this work. Copyright laws in most countries are in
a constant state of change. If you are outside the United States, check
the laws of your country in addition to the terms of this agreement
before downloading, copying, displaying, performing, distributing or
creating derivative works based on this work or any other Project
Gutenberg-tm work. The Foundation makes no representations concerning
the copyright status of any work in any country outside the United
States.

1.E. Unless you have removed all references to Project Gutenberg:

1.E.1. The following sentence, with active links to, or other immediate
access to, the full Project Gutenberg-tm License must appear prominently
whenever any copy of a Project Gutenberg-tm work (any work on which the
phrase "Project Gutenberg" appears, or with which the phrase "Project
Gutenberg" is associated) is accessed, displayed, performed, viewed,
copied or distributed:

This eBook is for the use of anyone anywhere at no cost and with
almost no restrictions whatsoever. You may copy it, give it away or
re-use it under the terms of the Project Gutenberg License included
with this eBook or online at www.gutenberg.net

1.E.2. If an individual Project Gutenberg-tm electronic work is derived

from the public domain (does not contain a notice indicating that it is
posted with permission of the copyright holder), the work can be copied
and distributed to anyone in the United States without paying any fees
or charges. If you are redistributing or providing access to a work
with the phrase "Project Gutenberg" associated with or appearing on the
work, you must comply either with the requirements of paragraphs 1.E.1
through 1.E.7 or obtain permission for the use of the work and the
Project Gutenberg-tm trademark as set forth in paragraphs 1.E.8 or
1.E.9.

1.E.3. If an individual Project Gutenberg-tm electronic work is posted
with the permission of the copyright holder, your use and distribution
must comply with both paragraphs 1.E.1 through 1.E.7 and any additional
terms imposed by the copyright holder. Additional terms will be linked
to the Project Gutenberg-tm License for all works posted with the
permission of the copyright holder found at the beginning of this work.

1.E.4. Do not unlink or detach or remove the full Project Gutenberg-tm
License terms from this work, or any files containing a part of this
work or any other work associated with Project Gutenberg-tm.

1.E.5. Do not copy, display, perform, distribute or redistribute this
electronic work, or any part of this electronic work, without
prominently displaying the sentence set forth in paragraph 1.E.1 with
active links or immediate access to the full terms of the Project
Gutenberg-tm License.

1.E.6. You may convert to and distribute this work in any binary,
compressed, marked up, nonproprietary or proprietary form, including any
word processing or hypertext form. However, if you provide access

to or
distribute copies of a Project Gutenberg-tm work in a format other
than
"Plain Vanilla ASCII" or other format used in the official version
posted on the official Project Gutenberg-tm web site
(www.gutenberg.net),
you must, at no additional cost, fee or expense to the user,
provide a
copy, a means of exporting a copy, or a means of obtaining a copy
upon
request, of the work in its original "Plain Vanilla ASCII" or other
form. Any alternate format must include the full Project Gutenberg-
tm
License as specified in paragraph 1.E.1.

1.E.7. Do not charge a fee for access to, viewing, displaying,
performing, copying or distributing any Project Gutenberg-tm works
unless you comply with paragraph 1.E.8 or 1.E.9.

1.E.8. You may charge a reasonable fee for copies of or providing
access to or distributing Project Gutenberg-tm electronic works
provided
that

- You pay a royalty fee of 20% of the gross profits you derive from
the use of Project Gutenberg-tm works calculated using the method
you already use to calculate your applicable taxes. The fee is
owed to the owner of the Project Gutenberg-tm trademark, but he
has agreed to donate royalties under this paragraph to the
Project Gutenberg Literary Archive Foundation. Royalty payments
must be paid within 60 days following each date on which you
prepare (or are legally required to prepare) your periodic tax
returns. Royalty payments should be clearly marked as such and
sent to the Project Gutenberg Literary Archive Foundation at the
address specified in Section 4, "Information about donations to
the Project Gutenberg Literary Archive Foundation."

- You provide a full refund of any money paid by a user who
notifies
you in writing (or by e-mail) within 30 days of receipt that s/he
does not agree to the terms of the full Project Gutenberg-tm
License. You must require such a user to return or
destroy all copies of the works possessed in a physical medium
and discontinue all use of and all access to other copies of
Project Gutenberg-tm works.

- You provide, in accordance with paragraph 1.F.3, a full refund of any money paid for a work or a replacement copy, if a defect in the electronic work is discovered and reported to you within 90 days of receipt of the work.

- You comply with all other terms of this agreement for free distribution of Project Gutenberg-tm works.

1.E.9. If you wish to charge a fee or distribute a Project Gutenberg-tm electronic work or group of works on different terms than are set forth in this agreement, you must obtain permission in writing from both the Project Gutenberg Literary Archive Foundation and Michael Hart, the owner of the Project Gutenberg-tm trademark. Contact the Foundation as set forth in Section 3 below.

1.F.

1.F.1. Project Gutenberg volunteers and employees expend considerable effort to identify, do copyright research on, transcribe and proofread public domain works in creating the Project Gutenberg-tm collection. Despite these efforts, Project Gutenberg-tm electronic works, and the medium on which they may be stored, may contain "Defects," such as, but not limited to, incomplete, inaccurate or corrupt data, transcription errors, a copyright or other intellectual property infringement, a defective or damaged disk or other medium, a computer virus, or computer codes that damage or cannot be read by your equipment.

1.F.2. LIMITED WARRANTY, DISCLAIMER OF DAMAGES - Except for the "Right of Replacement or Refund" described in paragraph 1.F.3, the Project Gutenberg Literary Archive Foundation, the owner of the Project Gutenberg-tm trademark, and any other party distributing a Project Gutenberg-tm electronic work under this agreement, disclaim all liability to you for damages, costs and expenses, including legal fees. YOU AGREE THAT YOU HAVE NO REMEDIES FOR NEGLIGENCE, STRICT LIABILITY, BREACH OF WARRANTY OR BREACH OF CONTRACT EXCEPT THOSE PROVIDED IN PARAGRAPH F3. YOU AGREE THAT THE FOUNDATION, THE

TRADEMARK OWNER, AND ANY DISTRIBUTOR UNDER THIS AGREEMENT WILL NOT BE
LIABLE TO YOU FOR ACTUAL, DIRECT, INDIRECT, CONSEQUENTIAL, PUNITIVE OR
INCIDENTAL DAMAGES EVEN IF YOU GIVE NOTICE OF THE POSSIBILITY OF SUCH
DAMAGE.

1.F.3. LIMITED RIGHT OF REPLACEMENT OR REFUND - If you discover a defect in this electronic work within 90 days of receiving it, you can
receive a refund of the money (if any) you paid for it by sending a written explanation to the person you received the work from. If you
received the work on a physical medium, you must return the medium with
your written explanation. The person or entity that provided you with
the defective work may elect to provide a replacement copy in lieu of a
refund. If you received the work electronically, the person or entity
providing it to you may choose to give you a second opportunity to receive the work electronically in lieu of a refund. If the second copy
is also defective, you may demand a refund in writing without further
opportunities to fix the problem.

1.F.4. Except for the limited right of replacement or refund set forth
in paragraph 1.F.3, this work is provided to you 'AS-IS' WITH NO OTHER
WARRANTIES OF ANY KIND, EXPRESS OR IMPLIED, INCLUDING BUT NOT LIMITED TO
WARRANTIES OF MERCHANTIBILITY OR FITNESS FOR ANY PURPOSE.

1.F.5. Some states do not allow disclaimers of certain implied warranties or the exclusion or limitation of certain types of damages.
If any disclaimer or limitation set forth in this agreement violates the
law of the state applicable to this agreement, the agreement shall be
interpreted to make the maximum disclaimer or limitation permitted

by
the applicable state law. The invalidity or unenforceability of any provision of this agreement shall not void the remaining provisions.

1.F.6. INDEMNITY - You agree to indemnify and hold the Foundation, the
trademark owner, any agent or employee of the Foundation, anyone providing copies of Project Gutenberg-tm electronic works in accordance
with this agreement, and any volunteers associated with the production,
promotion and distribution of Project Gutenberg-tm electronic works,
harmless from all liability, costs and expenses, including legal fees,
that arise directly or indirectly from any of the following which you do
or cause to occur: (a) distribution of this or any Project Gutenberg-tm
work, (b) alteration, modification, or additions or deletions to any
Project Gutenberg-tm work, and (c) any Defect you cause.

Section 2. Information about the Mission of Project Gutenberg-tm

Project Gutenberg-tm is synonymous with the free distribution of electronic works in formats readable by the widest variety of computers
including obsolete, old, middle-aged and new computers. It exists because of the efforts of hundreds of volunteers and donations from people in all walks of life.

Volunteers and financial support to provide volunteers with the assistance they need are critical to reaching Project Gutenberg-tm's
goals and ensuring that the Project Gutenberg-tm collection will remain freely available for generations to come. In 2001, the Project
Gutenberg Literary Archive Foundation was created to provide a secure
and permanent future for Project Gutenberg-tm and future generations.
To learn more about the Project Gutenberg Literary Archive

Foundation
and how your efforts and donations can help, see Sections 3 and 4 and the Foundation web page at http://www.pglaf.org.

Section 3. Information about the Project Gutenberg Literary Archive Foundation

The Project Gutenberg Literary Archive Foundation is a non profit 501(c)(3) educational corporation organized under the laws of the state of Mississippi and granted tax exempt status by the Internal Revenue Service. The Foundation's EIN or federal tax identification number is 64-6221541. Its 501(c)(3) letter is posted at http://pglaf.org/fundraising. Contributions to the Project Gutenberg
Literary Archive Foundation are tax deductible to the full extent permitted by U.S. federal laws and your state's laws.

The Foundation's principal office is located at 4557 Melan Dr. S. Fairbanks, AK, 99712., but its volunteers and employees are scattered
throughout numerous locations. Its business office is located at 809 North 1500 West, Salt Lake City, UT 84116, (801) 596-1887, email
business@pglaf.org. Email contact links and up to date contact information can be found at the Foundation's web site and official page at http://pglaf.org

For additional contact information:
Dr. Gregory B. Newby
Chief Executive and Director
gbnewby@pglaf.org

Section 4. Information about Donations to the Project Gutenberg Literary Archive Foundation

Project Gutenberg-tm depends upon and cannot survive without wide spread public support and donations to carry out its mission of increasing the number of public domain and licensed works that can be
freely distributed in machine readable form accessible by the widest
array of equipment including outdated equipment. Many small donations

($1 to $5,000) are particularly important to maintaining tax exempt status with the IRS.

The Foundation is committed to complying with the laws regulating charities and charitable donations in all 50 states of the United States. Compliance requirements are not uniform and it takes a considerable effort, much paperwork and many fees to meet and keep up
with these requirements. We do not solicit donations in locations where we have not received written confirmation of compliance. To SEND DONATIONS or determine the status of compliance for any particular state visit http://pglaf.org

While we cannot and do not solicit contributions from states where we
have not met the solicitation requirements, we know of no prohibition
against accepting unsolicited donations from donors in such states who
approach us with offers to donate.

International donations are gratefully accepted, but we cannot make any statements concerning tax treatment of donations received from outside the United States. U.S. laws alone swamp our small staff.

Please check the Project Gutenberg Web pages for current donation methods and addresses. Donations are accepted in a number of other ways including including checks, online payments and credit card donations. To donate, please visit: http://pglaf.org/donate

Section 5. General Information About Project Gutenberg-tm electronic
works.

Professor Michael S. Hart is the originator of the Project Gutenberg-tm
concept of a library of electronic works that could be freely shared
with anyone. For thirty years, he produced and distributed Project Gutenberg-tm eBooks with only a loose network of volunteer support.

Project Gutenberg-tm eBooks are often created from several printed editions, all of which are confirmed as Public Domain in the U.S.