

"My God, I never thought of that! And the mother was ill—an added expense—and—oh, horrible!"

"Probably the whole thing is a fake."

"Do you think so—candidly?"

"Can't say off-hand. It must be looked into."

"You have no clue whatever?"

"None. It was done the slickest I ever saw. *If* that woman did it she's a wonder! And yet, if she'd been watching her chance—perhaps it was done easier than it looks. That nurse, she may have left the baby longer than she said, and babies are so much alike, and there are so many of them. A change of dress, and there you are!"

"Do you think any person would write like that for—*for a joke?*"

"Not unless the person were a fiend," promptly.

"Nor do I. And that is why I—— Oh, I—I believe it, Johnson!"

The detective turned away under pretence of re-examining the letter.

"If it's no fake," he said slowly, "it's probable that the one who wrote it is a little shy in the upper story. I've seen revenge letters like this before. They generally come from those who are hardly responsible. That would account, partly, for the cunning of the thing. Does—does Mrs. Torrance know?"

"I've told her that I have reason to fear that the child is dead."

The detective made no comment.

"She fainted. But on the whole, I think the strain is lessened. If our child is dead—at least, no harm can come to her. She is beyond harm now." His head sank into his hands again, but he aroused himself.

"Do all you can to find out the truth," he said, "and