

apparent light-heartedness in the pose of one was a worn, somewhat pathetic expression.

They were our lodgers last winter. Very good young ladies, but my, how hard they had to study ! ! The one dancing is a young widow, quite a lady, and her husband's people keep her two little boys and send them to a boarding school. But she's got to work for her own living, and the other one is a friend of hers. They always go about, the two of them together. They do like to stop with auntie. They say they can't never get clean rooms like these when they're touring about, as they call it, in the country. They've cried themselves to sleep many a night, they told auntie, because the only lodgings they could afford to pay for was so dirty. They say decent country folks don't care to let to stray play-actors as a rule."

"And who has their room now, Annie?"

"A lady who works in a big millinery and dressmaking business. They make costumes mostly for theatres. When a new piece is being put on, don't they have to work late hours. They're that busy now that they work late at night, and all day last Sunday even."

"But the inspectors stop that, I thought."

"They don't; not always. If they think he's a-coming, the lights is put out, and by-and-by they're at it again. Poor Mrs. Wilson, she's a widow, too, left with children. They're all in places now, but she's had a hard fight of it. One day when she'd been working late at night, and all Sunday, she came home and lay in bed next day, just coughing up bits of her liver like."

Mary turned, pained and shocked at the picture Annie's words called up. All that suffering and slavery to provide pleasure and smart clothing, and to amuse people who ought, half of them, to be in bed resting. So she thought in the common sense of her practical and unsophisticated mind, and she was not far wrong.

"There is one more room over this, Annie. Who is there?"

"A middle-aged lady who writes, miss. She keeps herself to herself, and has no visitors."

Of this lady, about whom Annie was least communicative, Mary was destined later to hear more and to know her better than any other inmate of the house. Her name was Seymour.