

in this world, and I mean for him to have his rights. So — ”

“Very fine,” said Peter dryly. “But what’s the matter with Carstairs getting his rights for himself? Why does n’t he sneak up there and pull the thing off on his own?”

Varney laughed. “Evidently you don’t know Uncle Elbert, after all. He’s as temperamentally unfit to carry through a job of this sort as a hysterical old lady. Besides, even though they have n’t met for so long, I suppose his own daughter would recognize him, would n’t she? I never gave that idea a thought. Like his wife, he says he wants to have nothing whatever to do with it. In fact, I made him put that in the form of a promise — he’s to give me an absolutely free hand, subject to the conditions, and not interfere in any way. In return I ended by swearing a great iron-clad oath not only to go, but to bring the child back with me. The swear was Uncle Elbert’s idea, and I did n’t mind. Confound it! — this is getting rather intimate, but here is Mrs. Carstairs’s letter giving a partial consent to the thing. It just got in this afternoon; he sent for me the minute he’d read it, I believe, and I never saw a man more excited.”

He pulled a scrawled and crossed note-sheet from his pocket, and read in a guarded and slightly embarrassed voice:

HUNSTON, 25th of September.

MY DEAR ELBERT, — I hardly know how to answer you, though I have been over and over the whole subject on my knees. As you know, if I could send Mary to you,