

"Whew," whistled George, opening his eyes comically, "here is a mix! My Anti-Masonic sister writing to a lodge, interceding with them to adopt a baby. What is the child, a boy?"

"No, a girl."

"Oh, you ease your conscience then that she can never be an active member. Why do you not write to Harrison, he will attend to everything for you with pleasure," he added with a sly twinkle in his eye.

"You are determined to be very disagreeable this morning," said his sister, haughtily, leaving the room.

"By jingo, but she will be in a mess if she does not look out. Rica, of all persons in the world to have gotten interested in a Mason's baby; when her Anti-Masonic views nipped in the bud her own happiness. Bah! Harrison was too quick, he is not so used as I am to her impulsively ferocious way of speaking out her mind, and she generally has a mind to speak. If he had let her cool down a little, she would have listened to reason and been won to his side, easy enough. All she needs is a little guiding, she will go just as you want her to if she feels that she holds the reins in her own hands. But it was not a case for my interference, however, it will not be a bad thing for him to know that she is interested in a Mason's baby." After this soliloquy over his cigar, George St. John wrote on a slip of paper, "Mount Zion Lodge, Boston. As good a one as I know of." "It is near and is the one Hugh Harrison belongs to," he reflected as he sent the slip of paper up to his sister, and then walked leisurely down to his office, once there, forgetting the whole affair.

Rica St. John was vexed enough to have anything to do in the matter. Mrs. Adams had enlisted her sympathies in behalf of the widow and child when they first came, and seeing them often had only made Rica more and more anxious to help them; indeed the little girl, a brown haired pet, had won Rica's heart completely, and its lisping "auntie" was very dear to her to hear. Martha Gray gave evidence of having belonged to a good English family. The history they gathered from her, little by little, was sad. On a sorrowful life from early childhood, the husband's death fell the crowning sorrow. The mother-love seemed to have been nearly crushed out, in the year of utter desolation and destitution, since he died, and, with a faith she had never had for herself, she gave her baby to Miss St. John, without a struggle, saying simply, "The Lord will provide for her."

"But the Lord leaves the providing for some one else to do," thought Rica a little bit wickedly, remembering the widow's last words, with the letter, she was having so much trouble to get written, in her hand. "I suppose we must be instruments," she added, a little more graciously, "but I wish He had picked out any other creature on the globe, to have been this special instrument. I can only hope Hugh will not hear of it, that is, my part." And the letter was sent.

Ten days passed, in which various communications had been received and answered by Rica from a gentleman, Mr. Gerard, by name. Everything so far was satisfactory, arrangements were all made for the public adoption of the child by the Mount Zion Lodge; its future provided for, nothing remained but to send for the child.

Rica re-read the postscript of the last letter, "Can a suitable nurse be provided at S—, or shall I bring one from Boston, when I come for her on Thursday?"

To this Rica replied, "A girl that the child knows will go with her for a few months, till she gets used to her strange home."

Two weeks from the day Martha Gray was laid to rest, an elderly gentleman knocked at Mrs. Adams' door, and asked for the Masonic baby.

Mrs. Adams a little flustered by her distinguished early call, and not daring to even show up her valuable baby to a stranger without Miss St. John's consent, sent covertly for that lady, while she kept her visitor in the front room, very much amused by her various pretexts, of the baby being asleep, etc. When at last she saw Rica coming down the street she said with a courtesy, "Miss St. John is coming sir, and I think the baby is awake now."

Baby had on her best "bib and tucker," and with rosy cheeks fresh from her morning nap, looked too sweet and innocent to be a Mason, Rica thought. Mr. Gerard's memories were of some little angel faces he had seen on canvass, and one little one, dearest of all hid away under the daisies. He took her kindly in his arms, and she, to give him a good hug, wound her fat arms around his neck, and lisped a very delightful babyish welcome.

"What is her name?" he asked, turning to Rica.

"She has none but Baby. Her mother gave her none; she expressly wished that she should never be called after her, for fear the curse over her life should continue with the name. She did not even wish her to keep the name of Gray. It was her fancy, and I suppose we ought to respect it now."