

THE TRAITOR

white face resting on the baby hand, which lay outstretched on the coverlet.

Her face was turned towards him. Their eyes met. She made no sign.

He stepped silently to the side of the bed and looked long at the heated little face. The heavy breathing of the child told how deep was her sleep.

Presently, with a queer sense of choking, he turned to where his wife knelt, stood irresolute for a moment, and then, kneeling by her side, drew her tenderly to him. She saw his lips move, but no words came.

In his strong emotion he bowed his head till it rested on the bed.

Looking down at the dark, clustering hair, a great tenderness swept over her. In a silent, comforting way she laid her hand upon his head.

After a long, long time he spoke.

"She is very ill?" he whispered.

"Yes," she answered, in the same low tone. "The doctor will come again in the morning. It is scarlet fever."

"And this was the night I promised to stay with you!"

Her reply was a gentle caressing touch.

Again, for many minutes, the only sound heard was the child's deep breathing.

At last he rose, and lovingly putting his arm around her that her position might be less tiring, he said, as he pointed to the curtains, "I—I was there when baby insisted on the rhyme. It seems so strange that I should never have seen it in that light before."