

shall be able to work with you; at least," she added with a very faint smile, "now the ice is broken between us and you know that you can come here whenever you like and tell me everything, perhaps this will help a little, for there is such wonderful relief in feeling that one can speak—dare speak plainly and freely."

Mrs. Ambrose put out her hand impulsively. A little while ago she had been inspired with Isabel Matheson's feeling of protective pity for this other woman: as she had looked from the pictures of that strong proud boy, to the delicate strangely young little creature sitting in the armchair, she had been struck by the helplessness and that note of exquisiteness of fragility which was always so clear to Isabel, but now it seemed to her as if they had changed places and that she was the weak nervous woman, and this little creature with her wonderful eyes and her pathetic loveliness could master her simply by force of will.

"I'll never be able to tell you how grateful I am to you, Mrs. Cheston," she said. "Sometimes I'll confess I have thought of you as one who might help me in a way, you see you are such a big person down here and—and I have felt that Silvia might benefit, if you were to take notice of her, for she needs just someone like you."

"Of course I shall do what I can. She appeals to me, however, through you in the first instance, and also because she is so young." Olivia Mary paused: "Youth can bring such misery on itself if it is allowed to run wild!" she said.

Her voice had a broken note in it: she got up and

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