

Chris began to understand it all a little better, a few minutes later, as the boat was once again on its way downstream. He and Nicholas had moved to the bows of the wherry, and the girl and the old man sat alone in the stern.

They were all very silent at first; Chris leaned on his elbow and stared out at the sliding banks, the trees on this side and that, the great houses with their high roofs and towers behind, and their stone steps in front, the brilliant glare on the water, the hundreds of boats—great barges flashing jewels from their dozen blades, spidery wherries making this way and that; and his mind was busy weaving pictures. He saw it all now; there had been that in Beatrice's face during the moment he had looked at her, that was more than sympathy. In the shock of that great joy the veils had fallen, and her soul had looked out through her black tearful eyes.

There was little doubt now as to what would happen. It was not for their sake alone, or for Ralph's, that she had looked like that; she had not said one word, but he knew what was unspoken.

As they passed under London Bridge he turned a little and looked across the boatmen's shoulder at the two as they sat there in the stern, and what he saw confirmed him. The old man had flung an arm along the back of the seat, and was leaning a little forward, talking in a low voice, his face showing indeed the lines and wrinkles that had deepened more than ever during these last weeks, but irradiated with an extraordinary joy. And the girl was beside him, smiling with downcast eyes, turning a quick look now and again as she sat there. Chris could see her scarlet lips trembling, and her hands clasped on her knee, shifting a little now and again as she listened. It was a strange wooing; the father courting for the son, and the