

mind fighting difficulties, I mean sort of having to plan to get even with contrary things, that is just a game I like! But my trouble isn't that sort! I'd rather be hit and hit hard, Mrs. Cheston, than be sneered at, and set aside, and just ignored!"

"Please tell me everything," John Cheston's mother said earnestly; and urged so sympathetically Helen Ambrose opened her heart. She spoke of all with which she had to contend in her daily life; of Dick's wasted slovenly youth, of Silvia's increasing hatred: only once did she even suggest that the father was in any way to blame and that was when she said:

"You see, though they come of such grand folk way out in Italy they really have so little. There's no one but me to take care of them and I'm so ready to love them if only they'd let me do it."

A change had gradually come over Olivia Mary as she had sat looking at the other woman. The timidity, the nervousness, the hesitation, that kind of scared look which had faintly troubled Helen Ambrose gave way to an exquisite sympathy, and with this sympathy there was strength too.

Isabel would have hardly recognized her in that moment; for all that was childish and weak seemed to have fallen away from her: instead she looked a woman full of purpose and in the way her lips were compressed there was even a suggestion of hardness.

"You don't know how glad I am that you have spoken," she said. "Don't think it is I who am going to help you, you are doing a big thing for me. I am so glad to leave this cotton-wool existence if for only a few hours now and then, and I believe I