

She ceased her rubbing and she straightened up and looked at me. Her eyes were large and shining.

"Oh," she said, "guess what I've done. Guess!"

The years dropped off. Suddenly she was young—a girl—a child.

"Not," I said, then hesitated for a second. "Not . . . surely——"

Instinctively she guessed. Into her cheeks there surged a wave of colour.

"Oh *no*," she said. "Not that."

She looked at me reproachfully.

"How *could* you think," she said, "I'd ever marry!"

I felt a positive criminal. And from that moment marriage and giving in marriage vanished as completely from my mind as if I had been one angel talking to another.

"Well, then," said I, "what is it?"

Her breath came quick.

"Guess what I've done," she said again.

"How can I guess?" I said—and then I laughed.

"Buying a chicken, perhaps——"

"No," said she, "buying a . . ."

She stopped again just on the brink. Again she straightened up and looked at me. The light fell on her moonlight hair, tinged at the temples now with delicate grey.

"Buying a *what*?" said I.

And then Tryphena said, "A baby!"

"A baby?" I said to her, thinking my ears had told me wrong.

"Yes," Tryphena said, "I've bought a baby. Think of it! A real—live—Baby! I've been