

## CHAPTER XXVI

### THE ROAD TO UNDERSTANDING

It was on a gray morning early in February that Betty found her employer pacing the library from end to end like the proverbial caged lion. When he turned and spoke, she was startled at the look on his face — a worn, haggard look that told of sleeplessness — and of something else that she could not name.

He ignored her conventional morning greeting.

"Miss Darling, I want to speak to you."

"Yes, Mr. Denby."

"Will you come here to live — as my daughter?"

"Will I — what?" The amazement in Betty's face was obviously genuine.

"You are surprised, of course; and no wonder. I did n't exactly what you call 'break it gently,' did I? And I forgot that you have n't be thinking of this thing every minute for the last — month, as I have. Won't you sit down, please." With an abrupt gesture he motioned her to a chair, and dropped into one himself. "I can't, of course, beat about the bush now. I want you to come here to this house and be a daughter to me. Will you?"

"But, Mr. Denby!"

"'This is so sudden!' Yes, I know," smiled the man grimly. "That's what your face says, and no