

*Francis* [for the first time showing signs of losing his equanimity; faintly]. Not to-night. Some other time.

*George.* Oh, come on!

*Francis* [holding back with all his strength]. George, I will not. The two great rules of my life are never to enter a sick-room, and never to handle babies. And you ask me to break them both at once.

*Helen.* Oh, stuff!

*May.* The man's shy, actually. Make him come, George.

*Francis* [appealingly]. No, no, George, I entreat. I once handled a baby.

*All Three.* Well?

*Francis.* I dropped it! [Consternation.]

*May.* Did it die?

*Francis.* No, I have sometimes wished it had.

*George.* Who was it?

*Francis.* It was you, George, and your mother fainted.

*George.* Oh! You dropped me, did you? Was I injured for life, maimed, crippled?

*Francis.* Happily not.

*George.* A jolly good thing for you. I'll teach you to drop me and make my mother faint. Come on now!

*Francis.* Excuse me, I pray you to excuse me. [To himself.] I'd give a good deal to be out of this.