

So saying he made a military salute, took the child's hand in his, and was soon striding along toward the sea.

Mrs. Walsham was some time before she recovered from her surprise. This was, indeed, a mysterious affair. The earnestness with which the old soldier pleaded his cause had moved her strongly, and had almost persuaded her to accept the proposal which had at first seemed preposterous. Fifty pounds a year, too, was certainly a handsome sum. She could get a girl from the village for two or three shillings a week to look after the child and go out with her during school hours, and a hundred pounds would be a very handsome addition to the sum which she had begun, little by little, to lay by for Jim's preparation for the medical profession.

In the five years which would elapse before it would be time for him to enter upon his studies for it she could hardly hope to lay by more than that sum, and this would at a stroke double it. Certainly it was a tempting offer. She could not do justice to the child, could not give her the care and attention which she ought to have, and which she could have for such a sum elsewhere; but the sergeant knew exactly how she was placed, and if he was willing and anxious for her to assume the charge of the child why should she refuse this good offer? However, her pupils were waiting for her in the next room, and with an effort Mrs. Walsham put the matter aside, and went in to them. When James returned home to dinner his mother related to him the whole conversation. James was more amused than puzzled.

"It seems a rum idea, mother; but I don't see why you shouldn't take her. She is a sweet little thing, and will be a great amusement. Fifty pounds a year seems a tremendous sum for a man like that to pay; but I suppose he knows his own business, and it will be a great pull for you. You will be able to have all sorts of comforts. I