

Mary put her hand up and took her mother's hand, which lay on her shoulder. For a moment the two women exchanged glances.

Mrs. Moreland bent down for the first time since Mary was a little girl, and kissed her.

"Now," she said, "I am going into the kitchen to make some hot biscuits for supper. Don't you move; be still and try to compose your mind as I do. What you need is a complete rest."

After her mother had left her and gone into the kitchen, Mary sat there quietly looking out of the window, and she saw — to go back, away back, quite far back into the history of Mary Moreland — she saw coming up the walk a messenger from a florist in New York bringing a box of flowers.

Mary met the man in the hall, took the box from him and sent him away. She was glad her mother was making biscuits — there would be other things to make — and Mary knew that she would have the little parlour for a short time completely to herself. She opened the box of flowers, lilies-of-the-valley, masses upon masses of them, and on the top a letter in a thick envelope addressed in a familiar hand-writing. Mary put the box of lilies down on the Wanamaker desk. Already the pungent, heavenly odour began to fill the room. She stood there, opened the letter and drew it out.

"Mary:

I am writing to you in one of the empty rooms of my empty house. It can never be home to me again unless a woman can make it so. I call it an empty house. Well, up-stairs there is one room that has an occupant — a motherless little child.

I have missed you every hour since the night you wouldn't love me and went away at Red Wing.