

with a lady like yourself. So far as money goes I could afford to pay fifty pounds a year, and perhaps you might get a girl who could look after Aggie while you are busy."

"Fifty pounds a year!" Mrs. Walsham said, greatly surprised. "That is a large sum, a great deal too large a sum for you to pay for the care of such a little child. For half that there are scores of farmers' wives who would be happy to take her, and where she would be far more happy and comfortable than she would be with me."

"I know I could get plenty to take her," the soldier said, "but I have reasons, very particular reasons, why I wish to place her with a lady for two years. I cannot explain those reasons to you, but you may imagine they must be strong ones for me to be willing to pay fifty pounds a year for her. That money has been laid by from the day she was born, for that purpose. I have other reasons of my own for wishing that she should be at Sidmouth rather than at any other place; and I have another reason," and a slight smile stole across his face, "for preferring that she should be with you rather than any one else. All this must seem very strange to you, madam; but at the end of the two years, when you know what my reasons were, you will acknowledge that they were good ones."

"God knows," he went on, looking very grave, "what a wrench it will be for me to part with her. How lonely I shall be as I tramp the country without her pretty prattle to listen to; but I have got to do it sooner or later, and these two years, when I can see her sometimes, will be a break, and accustom me to do without her sweet face. Please, madam," he urged, "do not give me a final answer to-day. I shall not go till Monday, and will call again, if you will let me, that morning; and believe me, if I could tell you all, I could give you reasons which would, I think, induce you to change your mind."