

died when Charley was a very little baby, and Margaret had ever since taken a mother's care of him. She did not, however, love him so very much as his father did. He could scarcely bear to have Charley out of his sight for a moment, when he was in the house. The boy seemed to be the only thing that comforted him after the loss of his dearly-loved wife. He had three affectionate girls; but he did not love them, all together, so much as he loved his idol Charley's little finger. They were not envious of their brother, for they, too, loved him. Who does not pet a pretty baby—especially a *motherless* baby?

The alabaster clock on the marble mantel-piece rung for twelve, just as two girls came skipping in, fresh from school. They peeped in upon their sister, and ran away to hang up their white sun-bonnets.

"Where's 'babby,' sister?" said the oldest one, who was about nine years old.

"Hush! you musn't make a noise, or you'll wake him up. He has just gone to sleep."

A quick, impatient ring at the door announced their father, who always came home from his store to an early dinner with his children.

"Where's Charley?" was his first question, too, when he came into the parlor.

"He is taking a little nap, father," said Margaret cheerfully.

"Whew! what did you let him go to sleep, just now, for? You know I always want him to frolic with, when I come in from my business! Is he sick?" he added, with a suddenly changed tone.

"Oh, no, father; he was only sleepy a little earlier than usual, and I thought I wouldn't try to keep him awake."

"I don't like it at all," said the father, throwing a discontented glance on his two little girls, who had drawn as near him as they dared, and were looking lovingly into his face.

"Go and get ready for dinner, children," he said, noticing that their curly heads were tumbled.

When he sat down at the dinner table, the sight of the little plate at his right hand, with a spoon in it, a mug before it, and a high chair behind it, seemed to take away all his appetite.

"Margaret, I'm going to wake up that boy!" he said, rising from his seat.

"Oh, why, father? I wouldn't!"

"It is nonsense to have him going to sleep this hour—the only one, between morning and night, in which I can see him! Besides I am afraid he is sick."

So the father went into the nursery, and Margaret followed him, half amused, half provoked, at what she thought his needless anxiety.

The blinds had been shut, so that the large room was almost dark. The father lifted up a lace fly-net, which fell in graceful folds around the crib, and looked at the child silently for a moment. He had not the roses on his cheeks that had been in bloom there an hour before; he lay, with one arm over his head, still and pale, with heavy, dark purple circles around his half-shut eyes.

"This child is sick, Margaret!" said her father tremulously.

"He was well half an hour ago," whispered Margaret, doubtfully.

"Charley, my darling! wake up!" said his father, gently kissing his hot forehead.

Charley did not move, nor open his eyes. He breathed quickly and strangely.

"Charley, my boy! Charley!" cried the father, shaking him, to arouse him.

The child just moved his eyelids, with a murmur of pain, and then settled back into that strange stupor of sleep.

"Send for Dr. H——, Margaret!" exclaimed the father, huskily, catching up the child in his arms.

Rose and Abby, the two little sisters, ran all the way to the office of Dr. H——, and told him as well as their crying would let them, to "*make haste, and come that minute, for sweet little brother was very sick!*"

Dr. H—— came immediately, and shook his head with sad surprise, when he saw the little sleeper.

"He has had some fall!" he said.

"He has never had a hard fall!" answered Margaret. "This morning, he just tripped his foot and fell over on the floor; *that* could not have hurt him, could it, doctor?"

"That is the cause!" said the doctor, seriously.

"But, doctor, he was at his play again in five minutes!"

"The fall has produced congestion of the brain, I fear," said the physician, in a low tone, as he turned, with a sigh, to the almost useless task of writing a prescription. He had known the dear child