

CHAPTER XLIV

GERRY had always been quiet but during the long drive from the station to The Firs, his silence amounted to a penetrating stillness. Alix felt it but it did not depress her; she knew herself to be in the presence of a communion. Gerry was devoting the hour of his return to the scenes of his boyhood to a silent consecration. These cool valleys and hollows; the Low Road, with its purling accompaniment of hidden waters; the embowered still nave of Long Lane, were as the ancestral halls of the Lansings. It was right that he should do homage to the memories they evoked.

To his mother Gerry made no explanations. He knew that to her it was enough that her boy had come back. When Mrs. Lansing released him, Alix caught his hand and led him up to the nursery. Together they looked down upon their sleeping child.

Gerry, Junior, was fat to the verge of a split. His curly tow head was tousled and on his brow a slight perspiration testified to the labor of sound sleep. His arms were outstretched. His legs had kinks at the knees, they were so chubby. His petulant little mouth was half open, disclosing tiny teeth.

"Is n't he a beauty?" asked Alix a little loudly, wishing he would awaken.