

tioned received a letter, forwarded from S—, from Mr. Gerard about May. The child was ill; had been for several weeks; they had taken her into the country where they were staying, hoping the change would be all she needed, but it was not, and he felt he must write Miss St. John without more delay. The child was grieving herself to death. She kept up, now that she was sick, a constant moan for "Auntie," and the physician said if they had the least idea who the child wanted, to send for her quickly, if they wished to keep her alive. He had Mrs. Adams come for a few days, thinking she might answer, and the first day, May brightened and seemed better, but the second, she went back to her plaintive moan, and he took the liberty of writing, knowing the interest Miss St. John had once in the little girl, and feeling sure she must be the one she cried for, to ask her if she would come to make them a visit for baby's sake, baby, who was now so dear to them all.

This was the sum of the letter Rica read.

"George," she said, a moment after, entering her brother's room, "I must go to Southport immediately. I have just received a letter from Mr. Gerard; the baby is sick and they want me. Will you find out about the trains, quick, please?"

"Southport—Gerard—baby—have you gone crazy Rica?"

"No," she answered, coolly, "you have doubtless forgotten all about the baby I sent to the Masons last Spring. I have not time to repeat the story now, so please act without knowledge, or, rather, I do not need to trouble you." She rang the bell sharply. The hall boy answered in an instant. "Go to the office, and ask when the first train leaves for Southport."

George scarcely had time to collect his wits, when the boy returned and snapped out, "5:15, due Southport, 11:55 P. M."

She had two hours, time enough to pack her trunk. When the express had whizzed out of the depot with Rica in it, George turned with a prolonged "Whew!" his favorite ejaculation, "I wonder if it was not all a trumped up story. Hugh Harrison is coming here to-morrow."

Mr. and Mrs. Gerard welcomed cordially Miss St. John. Baby May was asleep when she arrived at midnight, but early in the morning Rica heard the little weak voice calling, "Auntie," and wondered if it could really be herself the child meant, or if it were not rather the mother, and she had forgotten the mother-name; anyway she would hasten with her dressing and find out.

The child had changed so that Rica at first almost doubted if she was the once fat, rosy-cheeked May. Thin, white, with a sickly pallor, her eyes heavy and sunken, her whole form wasted, too weak even to hold her head up. "She looks like her dead mother," thought Rica, as, with tears in her eyes, she went towards her.

"Where is auntie's pet?" she asked in the old way, as near as she could with the pain she felt in her heart.

May smiled, a weak, sad, satisfied smile, and tried to put out her hands.

Rica took her in her arms, petting and kissing her, while May lay perfectly still and content.

When Mr. Gerard came into the room, she looked up and said prettily, "Auntie come, me kiss you; me good baby now; me naughty no more." And she was not naughty, but she was very, very sick. For days and nights she was not out of Rica's arms. For when little clinging hands are about your neck, and a little life rests on your care, you are not very apt to tear the hands away, or withhold your care, on the selfish plea of being physically tired yourself. Any way, Rica St. John was not one to do so. The perfect trust with which May rested in her love, made that love rise sufficient for all she must endure for her, and she kept her watch faithfully, and was rewarded at last by seeing the child grow a little better.

May was lying asleep on a pillow in Rica's lap one afternoon, when the nurse girl entered with a card in her hand. "Hugh Harrison," Rica read, and whispered, "Where is he?"

"Down stairs," whispered back.

"Tell him I can not see him. I am with a sick child."

"I told him so, but he says he must see you. If you can not come down, he will come up here."

"Tell him I cannot do the one, and he must not do the other."

"Perhaps we could lay her on the bed. He said he would only keep you a moment, and if you don't go down, I am sure he'll come up, he is awful determined looking."

They succeeded in getting the child on the bed without awakening her, and then Rica went down stairs. She never stopped to think of herself or realize her tired and exhausted state, till she entered the parlor to meet Hugh Harrison, the first time after their quarrel, which had broken an engagement between them, if it had not broken their hearts. She had laid her burden out of her arms for a moment, and it was as though everything had gone from her, even strength to hold herself up, to speak or to act.