

M A M M A

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tion, her voice was unsteady—"I want you to pick out the flowers you think are loveliest."

Drawing his hand from hers, he looked about him silently, as if he were considering what her motive could be.

"They are all lovely," he said at last, with a doubtful air.

"But some are lovelier than others," she argued gently. "For instance, don't you think these are finer than those—larger, whiter, purer? Look how their petals curve in."

"They are not so lumpy," he agreed.

She cut a handful and passed along.

"Those are fine," he exclaimed softly, for a moment betraying his enthusiasm.

"But they are not white; they must be white. How about those roses? Aren't they lovely? Could anything be more lovely? Let me lift you up so you can smell them."

"I smelt them yesterday," he returned, drawing back slightly.

"And aren't they lovely?"

"Yes," he agreed. He watched her cut a dozen blooms, his eyes sparkling with appreciation. "When I'm grown up I shall have a greenhouse ever so much bigger than this, full—simply full of roses."

It was one of the few occasions on which he had ever confided to her his thoughts of the future and she smiled down at him eagerly.

"I'm so glad you're fond of flowers, Clive," she said; "I am, too. We must find a place somewhere, and let you have a little garden to yourself."

"I think I should like that," he murmured vaguely. "I shall ask my father to let me."

She winced, but said nothing; and, taking him by the hand, led him back to the house.

They had lunch alone, Fullerton having gone away for a day's golfing—a fact which had had some influence in causing Lynda to take the step she was taking in the hope of finding a way to the child's heart. And immediately after lunch she had the dog-cart out and drove him to the station. She offered no explanation, and at first he asked for none, but on the way his mind evidently filled with wonder and misgiving. He grew pale and restless. She saw these signs, and guessed how his pride was battling with his fear and curiosity.

"Are you sending me away to school?" he inquired at length, as they drove into sight of the railway.

"No," she answered gently. "We shall be back in time for tea. We are going to Orchardstone."

"To Orchardstone?" he exclaimed.

"We used to live at Orchardstone."

"I know," she returned.

At Orchardstone Station he stared about him with the manifest interest of a returned wanderer, and he answered her when she spoke to him in a hushed voice of awe, as if he felt he was treading holy ground.

"Are you going to see the house where we lived?" he inquired, as she led him down a shady lane.

"Is this the way?" she asked.

"I don't remember—quite. I don't think so. It used to turn round by a big, 'normous pond. Hadn't you better ask the way?"

"We are not going there, Clive."

It became apparent to him almost immediately where they were going, for in a minute she stopped, and, opening a wicket gate, led the way into Orchardstone churchyard, where the white gravestones gleamed among the shadows of surrounding trees, and the music of the organ

rose and fell in the still summer air.

As she held the gate open for him he seemed to notice for the first time that she was carrying a parcel—a square, cumbersome parcel, like a costume-box. She saw he noticed it, and at once held it out to him.

"You can carry it now, Clive; it is yours," she said softly.

"Mine? Mine?" he muttered, taking it and finding it light. "What's in it?"

"Those flowers we cut this morning for your mother's grave, dear," she answered, with an effort to speak evenly.

"Oh," he said uncertainly. "I used to put flowers on her grave when I lived here. I am glad we came. It was over here."

He turned off the path, and, moving forward swiftly in and out of the graves, led the way in the direction of a sundial. There he stopped and, looking back, waited for her to reach him.

"That's it; I remember it," he said, nodding solemnly towards a simple marble cross, which bore the words:

SACRED TO THE MEMORY
OF
MARGARET FULLERTON

"It is, isn't it?" he asked.

She nodded silently, and ran her eyes over the rest of the inscription.

"Yes, dear," she said gently, and sat down slowly on the base of the sundial.

The child put the box down on the turf, and began to undo the string with trembling fingers. She bent forward and helped him, but allowed him to remove the paper wrapper and the lid of the box, unassisted.

"It is very kind of you to give me these flowers for poor mamma," he said, in a nervous, excited way, as he took out the wreath she had fashioned of the flowers, and laid it gently up against the foot of the cross. "I believe she would be very much obliged to you, for it is really very kind of you. She would think them lovely, for she was very fond of flowers; Sarah told me so. That's why I used to bring flowers and put here when we lived here. Do you think that looks nice? I think it looks very nice, an' it's a pity they won't always look nice. But they won't last, will they?"

"We must bring some more another day," she murmured, speaking with difficulty.

"I should like that. I think they look very nice, don't you? So—so white and lovely."

"Clive," she said softly, catching him by the hand, and drawing him to her, "were you so very, very fond of her?"

"I don't remember," he answered consideringly, and looked down at the flowers. "She was my mamma, you see," he added, as if in explanation.

"Dear boy!" she cried, tears starting from her eyes; and, catching him to her eagerly, she kissed him. "Dear, golden-hearted boy! I wish she could have heard that. Oh, I do!"

"Why?" he asked, in a subdued manner, drawing a little from her, but not breaking free.

"Because it would have made her so happy."

"You wouldn't mind her being happy, then?" he inquired perplexedly, and looked over his shoulder at the grave.

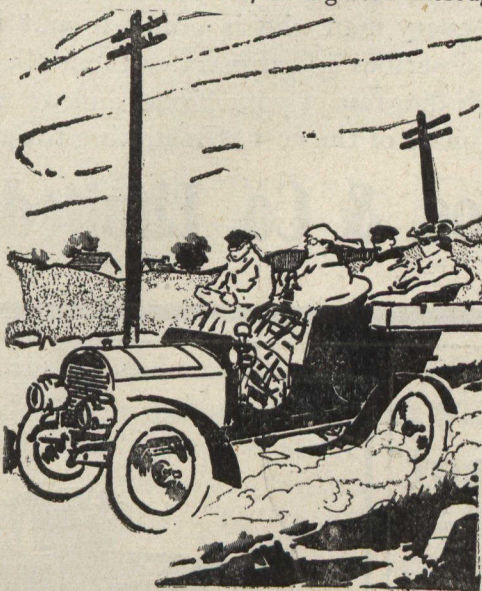
"Why should I wish anyone to be unhappy, Clive?"

"I don't know," he replied vaguely.

"D'you think she would wish me

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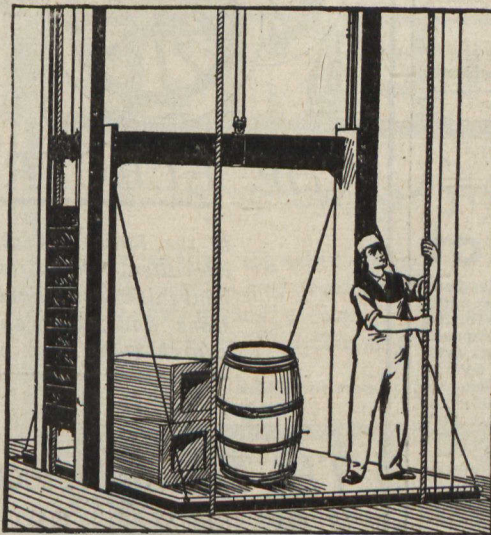
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