

knew well—she had long made up her mind to the fact—that unless Bernard and she could be legally married, the relations between them must be kept strictly between their two selves. The world might guess as it chose—accuse as it chose, but not one confirmatory word must it get out of either of them. Out of her, certainly, it never should.

Therefore, she looked steadily up into her friend's face. "Yes; my little girl makes me very happy. You were right in once saying that a woman is only half a woman till she has a child. Of her own, you meant; but it is true even if not her own. I have found it to be so. I have almost forgotten I am not Rosie's real mother."

And then, aware of a keen inquisitiveness in Lady Dunsmore's look, Hannah blushed violently.

The countess dropped down again beside Noah's ark, and occupied herself, to Rosie's intense delight, in making a bridge over which all the animals could pass out, till the child and her new playfellow became the best of friends.

"Rosie is not much like her father, I think; and yet she has a look of him—his bright merry look, such as he had before his trouble came. Is he getting over it at all? It is now a good while since your poor sister died.

"Rosie's age tells it—nearly three years."

"That is a long time for a man to mourn now-a-days. But—" checking herself, "I always thought Mr. Rivers very faithful-hearted, constant in his friendships, and therefore in his loves; and knowing how forlorn a man is who has once been married, I, for one, should not blame him if he made a second choice."

Hannah was silent; then seeing Lady Dunsmore paused for some acquiescence, she gave it in one or two meaningless words.

"And meantime, I conclude, you remain at Easterham. Your brother-in-law evidently appreciates your society and the blessing you are to his little girl. He said as much to me. He told me he did not know what Rosie would have done without you, and that you and she are never to be parted. Is it so?"

He has promised me that I shall have her always."

"Even in case of his second marriage? But I beg your pardon, I really have no right to be curious about Mr. River's domestic arrangements—I know him too slightly; but yet I cannot help taking an interest in him, for his own sake as well as for yours."

She pressed the hand she held, but asked no further questions—made no attempt whatever to find out what Hannah did not choose to tell. That noble confidence which exists among women oftener than they are given credit for, when each knows quite well the other's secret, but never betrays either to her friend or a stranger the silent, mutual trust—was henceforward established between the two. The moment Lady Dunsmore had closed the door, after talking a good while of Dunsmore topics, of her daughters, her husband, and a journey she wanted to take, only was hindered by Lord Dunsmore's determination to wait and vote for a bill that he greatly desired to see pass the House of Lords—"the Bill concerning deceased wife's sisters, in which you know he was always so interested"—Hannah felt certain that this sharp-witted little lady guessed her whole posi-