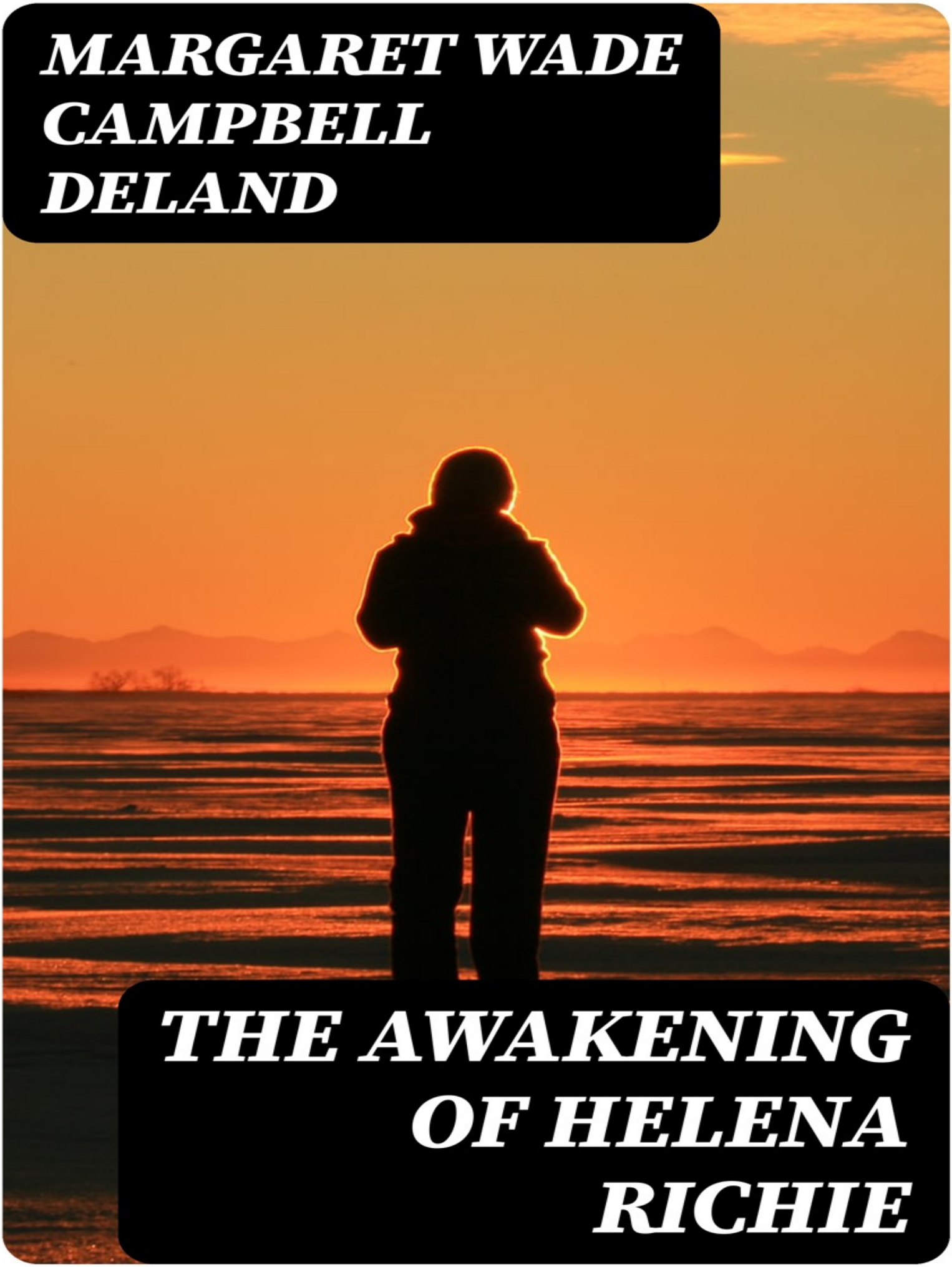
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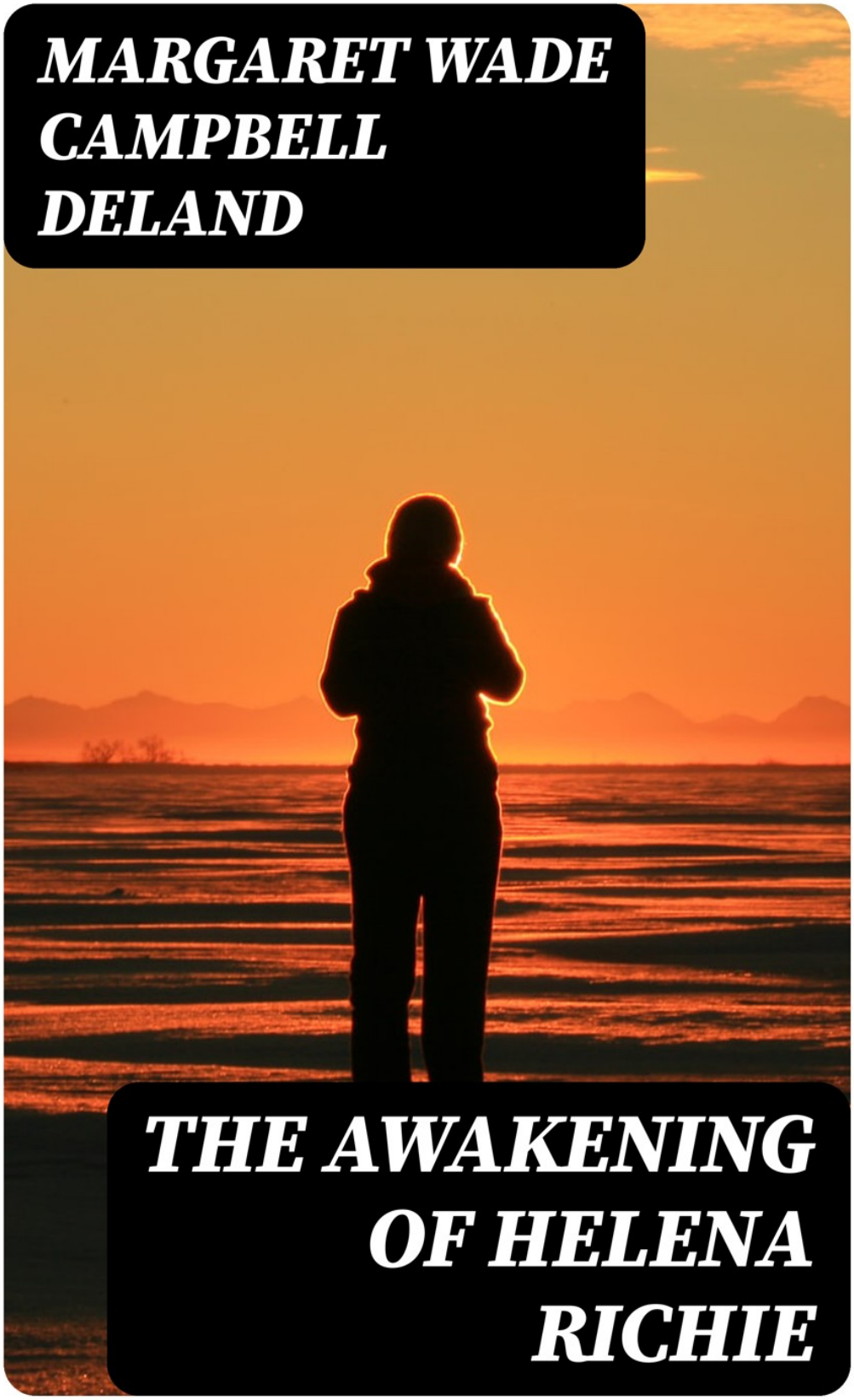
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Margaret Wade Campbell Deland

The Awakening of Helena Richie

EAN 8596547122104

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TO

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LORIN DELAND

MAY 12, 1906

CHAPTER I

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Dr. Lavendar and Goliath had toiled up the hill to call on old Mr. Benjamin Wright; when they jogged back in the late afternoon it was with the peculiar complacency which follows the doing of a disagreeable duty. Goliath had not liked climbing the hill, for a heavy rain in the morning had turned the clay to stiff mud, and Dr. Lavendar had not liked calling on Benjamin Wright.

"But, Daniel," said Dr. Lavendar, addressing a small old dog who took up a great deal more room on the seat of the buggy than he was entitled to, "Daniel, my boy, you don't consult your likings in pastoral calls." Then he looked out of the mud-spattered window of the buggy, at a house by the roadside—"The Stuffed Animal House," Old Chester children called it, because its previous owner had been a taxidermist of some little local renown. "That's another visit I ought to make," he reflected, "but it can wait until next week. G'long, Goliath!"

Goliath went along, and Mrs. Frederick Richie, who lived in the Stuffed Animal House, looking listlessly from an upper window, saw the hood of the buggy jogging by and smiled suddenly. "Thank Heaven!" she said.

Benjamin Wright had not thanked Heaven when Dr. Lavendar drove away. He had been as disagreeable as usual

to his visitor, but being a very lonely old man he enjoyed having a visitor to whom to be disagreeable. He lived on his hilltop a mile out of Old Chester, with his "nigger" Simmons, his canary-birds, and his temper. More than thirty years before he had quarrelled with his only son Samuel, and the two men had not spoken to each other since. Old Chester never knew what this quarrel had been about; Dr. Lavendar, speculating upon it as he and Goliath went squashing through the mud that April afternoon, wondered which was to blame. "Pot and kettle, probably," he decided. "Samuel's goodness is very irritating sometimes, and Benjamin's badness is—well, it's not as distressing as it should be. But what a forlorn old critter he is! And this Mrs. Richie is lonely too—a widow, with no children, poor woman! I must call next week. Goliath wouldn't like to turn round now and climb the hill again. Danny, I fear Goliath is very selfish."

Goliath's selfishness carried them home and landed Dr. Lavendar at his own fireside, rather tired and full of good intentions in regard to calls. He confided these intentions to Dr. William King who looked in after supper to inquire about his cold.

"Cold? I haven't any cold! You can't get a job here. Sit down and give me some advice. Hand me a match first; this ragamuffin Danny has gone to sleep with his head on my foot, and I can't budge."

The doctor produced the match; "I'll advise you not to go out in such weather. Promise me you won't go out to-morrow."

"To-morrow? Right after breakfast, sir! To make calls on the people I've neglected. Willy, how can I find a home for

an orphan child? A parson up in the mountains has asked me to see if I can place a little seven-year-old boy. The child's sister who took care of him has just died. Do you know anybody who might take him?"

"Well," said Willy King, "there's Mrs. Richie."

Dr. Lavendar looked at him over his spectacles. "Mrs. Frederick Richie?—though I understand she calls herself Mrs. Helena Richie. I don't like a young female to use her own name, William, even if she is a widow! Still, she may be a nice woman I suppose. Do you think a little boy would have a good home with her?"

"Well," the doctor demurred, "of course, we know very little about her. She has only been here six months. But I should think she was just the person to take him. She is mighty good-looking, isn't she?"

"Yes," Dr. Lavendar said, "she is. And other things being equal I prefer a good-looking woman. But I don't know that her looks are a guarantee that she can train up a child in the way he should go. Can't you think of anybody else?"

"I don't see why you don't like Mrs. Richie?"

"I never said I didn't like her," protested Dr. Lavendar; "but she's a widow."

"Unless she murdered the late Richie, that's not against her."

"Widows don't always stay widows, Willy."

"I don't believe she's the marrying kind," William said. "I have a sort of feeling that the deceased Richie was not the kind of husband who receives the compliment of a successor—"

"Hold on; you're mixing things up! It's the bad husband and the good wife that get compliments of that kind."

William laughed as he was expected to, but he stuck to his opinion that Mrs. Richie had had enough of husbands. "And anyway, she's devoted to her brother—though he doesn't come to see her very often."

"There's another point," objected Dr. Lavendar; "what kind of a man is this Mr. Pryor? Danny growled at him once, which prejudiced me against him."

"I don't take to him much myself," William King confessed; "though I must say he seems a decent man enough. He doesn't cultivate acquaintances in Old Chester, but that only shows bad taste."

"She says he is not very well," Dr. Lavendar explained; "she says he likes to keep quiet when he comes down here."

"I don't see anything wrong with him."

"Hasn't taken any of your pills? Maybe he doesn't believe in doctors. I don't myself."

"Thank you," said William King.

"There's too much fuss anyway over our precious carcasses! And you fellows encourage it," Dr. Lavendar grumbled. Then he said he wished he knew more about Mrs. Richie. "I ask you for information and all you say is that she's good-looking, and her brother doesn't take your pills."

William laughed.

"She doesn't come to church very regularly, and she never stops afterwards to talk," Dr. Lavendar ruminated.

"Well, she lives 'way up there on the hill road—"

"Yes, she does live pretty far out of town," Dr. Lavendar admitted, "but that's not a reason for not being neighborly

after church."

"She's shy," said William King, "that's all. Shyness isn't anything very wrong. And she's mighty pleasant when she does talk to you. I tell you Dr. Lavendar, pleasantness goes a good way in this world. I'd say it was better than goodness—only they are the same thing."

"No, they're not," said Dr. Lavendar.

"I grant she doesn't belong to the sewing society," William said grinning. "Martha says that some of the ladies say she doesn't show proper grief for her husband. She actually smiles sometimes! They say that if the Lord were to remove *their* beloved husbands, they would never smile again."

"William," said Dr. Lavendar chuckling, "I begin to like your widow."

"She's not my widow, thank you! But she's a nice woman, and she must be pretty lonely up there all by herself."

"Wish I had gone in to see her this afternoon," the old man said thoughtfully. "As you say she may be a suitable person to take this little boy. I wonder if she's going to stay in Old Chester?"

"Sam Wright says she has spoken to him of buying the house. That looks as if she meant to settle down. Did you know that Sam's Sam is casting sheep's eyes at her?"

"Why, she's old enough to be his mother!" said Dr. Lavendar.

"Oh, no. Sam's Sam is twenty-three, and one of my patients says that Mrs. Richie will never see forty-five again. Which leads me to conclude that she's about thirty."

"Of course she doesn't encourage him?" Dr. Lavendar said anxiously.

"She lets him come to see her, and she took him out once in that wicker-work vehicle she has—looks like a clothes-basket on wheels. And she provides the clothes to put into it. I'm told they're beautiful; but that no truly pious female would be willing to decorate poor flesh and blood with such finery. I'm told—"

"William! Is this the way I've brought you up? To pander to my besetting sin? Hold your tongue!" Dr. Lavendar rose chuckling, and stood in front of the fireplace, gathering the tails of his flowered cashmere dressing-gown under his arms. "But Willy I hope Sam isn't really smitten? You never can tell what that boy will do."

"Yes, he's a hair-trigger," the doctor agreed, "a hair-trigger! And his father understands him about as well as—as Danny there understands Hebrew! I think it's a case of Samuel and his father over again. Dr. Lavendar, do you suppose anybody will ever know what those two quarrelled about?"

"Probably not."

"I suppose," William King ruminated, "that you'd call Sam a genius?"

"No, I wouldn't; he has no patience. You can't have genius without patience. Sam hasn't a particle."

"Well," the doctor explained, "he hasn't the slightest sense of responsibility; and I notice that when people have no sense of responsibility, you call them either criminals or geniuses."

"I don't," said Dr. Lavendar dryly, "I call 'em poor critters, either way. But Willy, about this little boy; the great point is who needs him? I expect he'll be here on Saturday."

"What! This week? But you haven't found anybody to take him."

"Oh, he'll stay with me for a while, Mary'll look after him. And I'll play marbles with him. Got any white alleys? Gimme six, and I'll give you an agate."

"But Dr. Lavendar, that will be a nuisance to you," William King protested. "Let me take him. Or, at least—I'll ask Martha; she's house-cleaning now, and she says she's very tired; so I'm not sure—" William ended weakly.

"No, no; I want him myself," said the old minister.

"Well," Dr. King said with evident relief, "shall I speak to Mrs. Richie about him? I'm going up there to-morrow; she's got a sick cook, and she asked me to call. What's his name?"

"David Allison. You might sound her William, but don't be definite. Don't give her any chance to say yes or no. I want to know her a little better before I make up my mind. When the boy comes I'll happen along in my buggy with him, and then we'll see. And meantime Willy, keep your eye on Sam's Sam. He mustn't get too much interested up there. A little falling in love with an older woman doesn't hurt most boys; in fact, it's part of their growing up and likely as not it does 'em good. But Sam's Sam isn't like most boys."

"That's so," said William King, "he may not be a genius and he certainly isn't a criminal, but he has about as much stability as a sky-rocket."

CHAPTER II

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"You can't think of anybody who might like to take this little David Allison, can you, my dear?" William King asked his wife at breakfast the next morning.

"I certainly cannot," Martha said decidedly. "I think it's a very dangerous thing to take unknown children into your family. I suppose you think I ought to offer to do it? But in the first place, I'm very tired, and in the second place, I don't like boys. If it was a girl it might be different."

"No doubt we could find a girl," William began, but she interrupted him.

"Girls are a great expense. And then, as I said—unknown children!—they might turn into anything. They might have evil tendencies; they probably have. If the parents die early, it's a sign of weakness of some sort. I've no doubt this boy's father drank. I don't want to seem unkind, but I must say flatly and frankly that considering how hard it is for us to make both ends meet—as you keep up a sort of free practice—I don't think it's prudent to suggest any new responsibilities and expenses."

"Oh, I wasn't making suggestions," William King said. "I guess we're not the people to bring up a child. I'd spoil him, I've no doubt."

"I'm sure you would!" Martha said, greatly relieved. "It would be the worst possible thing for him. But Willy, there's that Mrs. Richie?"

"You think his evil tendencies wouldn't hurt her?" the doctor said dryly.

"I think she's a rich woman, so why shouldn't she do a thing like that? I'll go and see her if you want me to—though she never makes you feel welcome; and tell her about the boy?"

"You needn't bother; Dr. Lavendar will see her himself."

"I don't understand that woman," Mrs. King said. "She keeps herself to herself too much. It almost looks as if she didn't think we were good enough to associate with her!"

William made no reply.

"Willy, does she use perfumery?"

"How in the world should I know!"

"Well, there's a sort of fragrance about her. It isn't like cologne, it's like—well, orris-root."

William made no comment.

"It's a kind of sachet, I guess; I'd like to know what it is. Willy,
Sam Wright's Sam went out walking with her yesterday. I met them on the
River Road. I believe the boy is in love with her!"

"He's got eyes," William agreed.

"*Tck!*" said Martha, "the idea of calling her good-looking! And I don't think it speaks well for a woman of her age—she's forty if she's a day—to let a boy trail round after her like that. And to fix herself up with sachet-powders and things. And her Sarah told the Draytons' Jean that she had

her breakfast in bed every morning! I'd like to know how my housekeeping would go on if *I* had breakfast in bed, though dear knows I'm very tired and it would be pleasant enough. But there's one thing about me: I may not be perfect, but I don't do lazy things just because they are pleasant."

The doctor made no defence of Mrs. Richie. Instead he asked for another cup of coffee and when told that it would not be good for him, got up, then paused patiently, his hand on the door-knob, to hear his Martha out.

"William, what do you suppose is the last thing Sam Wright's Sam has done?"

The doctor confessed his ignorance.

"Well, his father sent him to Mercer on Monday to buy supplies for the bank. He gave him seventy-five dollars. Back comes my young gentleman with—what do you suppose? A lot of pictures of actors and actresses! And no supplies."

"What! you don't mean he spent the money on the pictures?"

"Every bit of it! His mother came in and told me about it last night. She said his father was frantic. She was dreadfully upset herself. As for Sam, he kept saying that the 'prints,' as he called them, were very valuable. Though I'm sure I can't see why; they were only of actor people, and they had all died sixty or seventy years ago."

"Actors!" the doctor said. "Poor Samuel! he hates the theatre. I do believe he'd rather have pictures of the devil."

"Oh, but wait. You haven't heard the rest of it. It appears that when the boy looked at 'em yesterday morning he found they weren't as valuable as he thought—I don't

understand that part of it," Martha acknowledged—"so what does he do but march downstairs, and put 'em all in the kitchen stove! What do you think of that?"

"I think," said William King, "that he has always gone off at half-cock ever since he was born. But Martha, the serious thing is his spending money that didn't belong to him."

"I should think it was serious! If he'd been some poor little clerk in the bank, instead of Mr. Samuel Wright's only son, he would have found it was serious! Willy, what do you make of him?"

"He is queer," William said; "queer as Dick's hatband; but that's all. Sam wouldn't do a mean thing, or a dirty thing, any more than a girl would."

"And now he thinks he's in love with this Richie woman," Martha went on—but William made his escape. He had to go and hitch up, he said.

Before he took Jinny out of her stall he went into the harness-room and hunted about on a shelf until, behind a rusty currycomb and two empty oil-bottles, he found a small mirror. It was misty and flecked with clear spots where the quicksilver had dropped away, but when he propped it against the cobwebbed window he could see himself fairly well. Staring into its dim depths he retied his necktie; then he backed the buggy out of the carriage-house. But after he had put his mare between the shafts he hesitated.... The buggy was very shabby; it sagged badly on the right side and there was a rent in the faded cushion. The doctor looked at his watch.... Then, hurriedly, led Jinny back to her stall, got a bucket of water and a sponge, and washed off the dashboard and wheels. After that he fumbled along a

dusty beam to find a bottle of oil with which he touched up the harness. But when all was done he shook his head. The buggy was hopeless. Nevertheless, when he climbed in and slapped Jinny's flank with the newly oiled rein he was careful to sit in the middle of the seat to make the springs truer, and he avoided the mud-puddles on the road up to the Stuffed Animal House. There were a good many puddles, for it had rained the day before. To-day the clouds had gathered up behind the hills into white domes, but the sky was that faint April blue that dims easily into warm mists. There was the smell of earth, the fainter scent of unopened buds, and from the garden borders of the Stuffed Animal House came the pungent odor of box.

Helena Richie, standing by a bed of crown-imperials, bareheaded, a trowel in her gloved hand, her smooth cheek flushed with the unwonted exertion of planting seeds, caught the exquisite breath of the box, and sighed; then, listlessly, she turned to walk back towards the house. Before she reached it the gate clicked and Dr. King came up the path. She saw him and looked hurriedly about, as if seeking a way of escape, but it was too late.

"Gardening?" he called to her.

"Yes," she said, and her smile like reluctant sunshine did not betray to the doctor that he was not welcome.

"Don't work too hard," he cautioned her. It seemed to William King, looking at her with wondering admiration, that she was too delicate a creature to handle a trowel. There was a certain soft indolence in the way she moved that was a delight to his eye. It occurred to him that he would ask his Martha why she didn't wear gardening-gloves. Mrs. Richie

wore them, and as she pulled one off he saw how soft and white her hand was....

"How's the patient?" he asked.

"Poor Maggie? Oh, she's pretty uncomfortable I'm afraid."

They had gone together to the front porch, and as she stood on the lower step looking up at him, the sunshine suddenly filled her eyes with limpid brown light. "Maggie is in her room in the ell—the first door on the left. Shall I show you the way?"

"I know the way," he said.

Mrs. Richie sat down on the porch step to wait for him. She had nothing else to do. She never had anything to do. She had tried to be interested in the garden, and bought a trowel and some seeds and wandered out into the borders; but a manufactured interest has no staying quality—especially if it involves any hard work. She was glad when William King came back and sat down beside her; sickness was not an agreeable topic, but it was a topic.

"Maggie will be all right in two or three days, but don't let her go into the kitchen before Monday. A bad throat pulls you down. And she's had a good deal of pain."

"Oh, poor Maggie!" she said wincing.

"A sore throat is nothing so very dreadful," William assured her with open amusement.

She drew a breath of relief. "Oh, I'm glad! I can't bear to think of pain." Then she looked at him anxiously. "Don't you think she can cook before Monday? I'm so tired of scrappy dinners.

"I'm afraid not," William King said. "I'm very sorry." But that his sorrow was not for Maggie was evident.

"Oh, dear!" said Mrs. Richie; and then her eyes crinkled with gayety at his concern. "I don't really mind, Dr. King."

"I shouldn't blame you if you did. Nobody likes scrappy dinners. I wish you would come down and have dinner with us?"

"Oh, thank you, no," she said. And the sudden shy retreat into her habitual reserve was followed by a silence that suggested departure to the doctor. As he got up he remembered Dr. Lavendar and the little boy, but he was at a loss how to introduce the subject. In his perplexity he frowned, and Mrs. Richie said quickly:

"Of course she sha'n't do any work. I'm not so bad-tempered as you think; I only meant that I don't like discomfort."

"*You* bad-tempered?" he said. "No, indeed! You're just the opposite. That's why I suggested you when I heard about this boy."

"What boy?"

"Why, a little fellow of seven—David his name is—that Dr. Lavendar is trying to find a home for. And I thought perhaps you—"

"—would take him?" cried Mrs. Richie in astonishment, and then she laughed. "*I!*"

"Why, it occurred to me that perhaps you might be lonely, and—"

Helena Richie stopped laughing; she pulled off her other glove and looked down at her white hands. "Well, yes, I'm lonely. But—I don't like children, Dr. King."

"You don't?" he said blankly, and in his surprise he sat down again. "Oh, I'm sure that's only because you don't

know them. If you had ever known a child—"

"I have," Mrs. Richie said, "one." Her voice was bleak; the gayety had dropped out of it; for an instant she looked old. William King understood.

"It died?"

She nodded. She began to pull her gloves on again, smoothing down each finger carefully and not looking at him.

"A little girl?"

"Boy." She turned her face away, but he saw her chin tremble. There was a moment's silence; then the doctor said with curious harshness.

"Well, anyhow, you know what it means to have owned your own."

"Better not have known!"

"I can't feel that. But perhaps I don't understand."

"You don't understand." Her head, with its two soft braids wound around it like a wreath, was bent so that he could not see her face. "Dr. King, his father—hurt him. Yes; hurt a little baby, eight months and twelve days old. He died seven weeks later."

William drew in his breath; he found no words.

"That was twelve years ago, but I can't seem to—to get over it," she said with a sort of gasp.

"But how—" Dr. King began.

"Oh, he was not himself. He was—happy, I believe you call it 'happy'?"

"How did you bear it!"

"I didn't bear it I suppose. I never have borne it!"

"Did he repent before he died?" William King said passionately.

"Before he—?" Her voice suddenly shook; she made elaborate pretence of calmness, fastening her gloves and looking at them critically; then she said: "Yes, Dr. King; he repented. He repented!"

"If there ever was excuse for divorce, you had it!"

"You don't think there ever is?" she asked absently.

"No," William said. "I suppose you'll think I'm very old-fashioned, but I don't, unless—" he stopped short; he could not have put his qualifying thought into words to any woman, especially not to this woman, so like a girl in spite of her thirty-odd years. "You see," he said, awkwardly, "it's such an unusual thing. It never happened in Old Chester; why, I don't believe I ever saw a—a divorced person in my life!"

"Well," she said, "anyhow, I didn't get a divorce."

"Mrs. Richie!" he said, blushing to his temples, "you didn't think I thought of such a thing?"

But it was plain that she regretted her confidence; she rose with the evident purpose of changing the subject. "I must go and put in some more seeds. Why doesn't Dr. Lavendar keep this little boy? After all, he's lonely himself."

"Well, he's an old man you know, and—"

"Dr. King," she broke in, "I don't mind having the child here for a week while Dr. Lavendar is looking for somebody to take him. Not longer. It wouldn't do. Really it wouldn't. But for a week, perhaps, or maybe two!"

"That would be a great help," William King said. "Then Dr. Lavendar can have plenty of time to find a home for him. I

would have been glad to take him myself, but just at present it happens that it is not—I should say, Mrs. King is very tired, and—"

"It is perfectly convenient for me," Mrs. Richie said, "if you'll only cure Maggie! You must cure Maggie, so that she can make cookies for him."

"I'll cure Maggie," the doctor assured her smiling, and went away much pleased with himself. But when he got into his shabby old buggy he sighed.

"Poor soul!" he said. "Poor soul!"

CHAPTER III

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William King reported the result of his call to Dr. Lavendar, and when he told the tragic story of the dead baby the old man blinked and shook his head.

"Do you wonder she doesn't call herself Mrs. *Frederick* Richie?"
William demanded. "I don't!"

"No; that's natural, that's natural," Dr. Lavendar admitted.

"I suppose it was a dreadful thing to say," said William, "but I just burst out and said that if ever there was an excuse for divorce, she had it!"

"What did she say?"

"Oh, of course, that she hadn't been divorced. I was ashamed of myself the next minute for speaking of such a thing."

"Poor child," said Dr. Lavendar, "living up there alone, and with such memories! I guess you're right; I guess she'd like to have little David, if only for company. But I think I'll keep him for a week or two myself, and let her get sort of acquainted with him under my eye. That will give me a chance to get acquainted with her. But to think I haven't known about that baby until now! It must be my fault that

she was not drawn to tell me. But I'm afraid I wasn't drawn to her just at first."

Yet Dr. Lavendar was not altogether at fault. This newcomer in Old Chester was still a stranger to everybody, except to Sam Wright's Sam and to William King. To be sure, as soon as she was settled in her house Old Chester had called and asked her to tea, and was confused and annoyed because its invitations were not accepted. Furthermore, she did not return the calls. She went to church, but not very regularly, and she never stopped to gossip in the vestibule or the church-yard. Even with Dr. Lavendar she was remote. The first time he went to see her he asked, with his usual directness, one or two questions: Did Mr. Pryor live in Mercer? No; he had business that brought him there occasionally. Where did he live? In Philadelphia. Had she any relatives in this part of the world—except her brother? No, none; none anywhere. Was Mr. Pryor married? Yes. Had he any family? One daughter; his wife was dead. "And you have lost your husband?" Dr. Lavendar said, gently. "This is a lonely life for you here, I am afraid."

But she said oh, no; not at all; she liked the quiet. Then, with faint impatience as if she did not care to talk about her own affairs, she added that she had always lived in the East; "but I find it very pleasant here," she ended vaguely.

Dr. Lavendar had gone away uneasy and puzzled. Why didn't she live with her brother? Family differences no doubt. Curious how families fall out! "You'd think they'd be glad to hang together," the solitary old man thought; "and they are not necessarily bad folk who quarrel. Look at Sam and his

boy. Both of 'em good as gold. But it's in the blood there," he said to himself sighing.

Sam and his son were not bad folk. The boy had nothing bad about him; nothing worse than an unexpectedness that had provided Old Chester with smiles for many years. "No; he is not bad; I have seen to *that*," his father used to say. "He's hardly been out of my sight twenty-four hours at a time. And I put my foot down on college with all its temptations. He's good—if he's nothing else!" And certainly Samuel Wright was good too. Everybody in Old Chester said so. He said so himself. "I, my dear Eliza, have nothing with which to reproach myself," he used to tell his wife ponderously in moments of conjugal unbending. "I have done my duty. I always do my duty; under all circumstances. I am doing my duty now by Sam."

This was when he and his son fell out on one point or another, as they had begun to do as soon as young Sam learned to talk; and all because the father insisted upon furnishing the boy with his own most excellent principles and theories, instead of letting the lad manufacture such things for himself. Now when Sam was twenty-three the falling-out had become chronic. No doubt it was in the blood, as Dr. Lavendar said. Some thirty years before, Sam senior, then a slim and dreamy youth, light-hearted and given to writing verses, had fallen out with his father, old Benjamin Wright; fallen out so finally that in all these years since, the two men, father and son, had not spoken one word to each other. If anybody might have been supposed to know the cause of that thirty-year-old feud it was Dr. Lavendar. He certainly saw the beginning of it....

One stormy March evening Samuel Wright, then twenty-four years old, knocked at the Rectory door; Dr. Lavendar, shielding his lamp from the wind with one hand, opened it himself.

"Why, Sam, my boy," he said and stopped abruptly. He led the way into his study and put the lamp down on the table. "Something is the matter?"

"Yes."

"What is it, Samuel?"

"I can't tell you, sir."

"Does your father know?"

"My father knows.... I will tell you this, Dr. Lavendar—that so help me God, I will never speak to my father again."

The young man lifted one hand; his face was dreadful to look upon. Then trying to speak in a natural voice he asked if he might stay at the Rectory for that night.

Dr. Lavendar took two turns about his study, then he said, "Of course you may, Samuel, but I shall feel it my duty to acquaint your father with the fact."

"Just as you please, sir."

"And Sam—I hope the night will bring wisdom."

Sam was silent.

"I shall see your father in the morning and try to clear this thing up."

"Just as you please, sir. I would like to go to my room now if you have no objection."

And that was all Dr. Lavendar got out of the son.

He lighted a lamp and silently preceded his guest up-stairs; then he went back to his study and wrote a line to the father. He sent it out to the Wright house and sat up

until midnight waiting for an answer. None came. "Well," said Dr. Lavendar at last trudging up to bed, "the boy comes by his obstinacy honestly." The next morning he went early to see Mr. Benjamin Wright. But as far as any straightening out of the trouble went or any enlightenment as to its cause, he might as well have stayed at home.

"Sam send you?"

"No; I came to see what I could do for you both. I take it for granted that Sam is at fault in some way? But he is a good boy, so I am sure he can be made to see his error."

"Did he tell you what was the trouble?"

"No; will you?"

"Let him come back and behave himself!" the older man said.

Dr. Lavendar thrust out his lower lip with a thoughtful frown. "It would expedite things, Wright, if you could tell me a little about the affair?"

Mr. Wright hesitated. He thrust his hand down into a blue ginger-jar for a piece of dried orange-skin and bit at it as if to steady his lips. "Sam can tell you if he wants to. He has perhaps informed you that he wishes to see the world? That he thinks life here very narrow? No? Well, I sha'n't quote him. All I shall say, is that I am doing my duty to him. I've always done my duty to him. If he sees fit to set up his own Ebenezer, and say he won't speak to me—I suppose he conveyed that filial sentiment to you?—he can do so. When he gets hungry he can speak. That's what other puppies do when they are hungry."

And that was all Dr. Lavendar got out of the father….

This was thirty-two years ago. Sain Wright may have been hungry, but he never spoke. Instead, he worked. Old Chester seethed with curiosity for a while—to see Benjamin Wright pass his son with a contemptuous stare, to see Sam pass his father without a glance was very exciting. But excitement ebbs in thirty-two years. For one thing, old Mr. Wright came less often into town—because he could not bear to meet his son, people said; and Samuel never took the hill road out of Old Chester for a corresponding reason. Furthermore, it was hard to connect Samuel with anything so irrational as a quarrel, for every year he grew in solemn common sense. Benjamin Wright's growth was all in the way of temper; at least so his boy Simmons, a freckled mulatto of sixty years, informed Old Chester.

"He 'ain't got no human feelin's, 'cept for them there canaries," Simmons used to say in an aggrieved voice; "he'll stand and look at 'em and chirp to 'em by the hour—an' 'en he'll turn round and swear at you 'nough to take your leg off," Simmons said, bitterly. Simmons did his best for the canaries which he detested, cleaning out the cages and scraping the perches and seeing that the seed-trays and bath-tubs were always full; he did his best conscientiously, and it was hard to be "swore at when you 'ain't done nothin'." Perhaps Benjamin Wright had some "human feelings" for his grandson, Sam; but certainly Simmons's opinion was justified by his treatment of his granddaughters. When by their father's orders the little girls came up to the lonely house on the hill, the old man used to pitch small coins to them and tell them to go and look at the canaries,—"and then clear out. Simmons, give 'em some

cake or something! Good-by. Good-by. Clear out." Long before he had settled into such dreary living, the son with whom he had quarrelled had made a life of his own. His slimness and gayety had disappeared as well as his dreaminess and versifying instincts. "Poetry?" he had been heard to say, "why, there isn't a poem that was ever written that I'd take five minutes out of my business to read!" It seemed as if the quarrel had wrenched him from the grooves, physical and spiritual, in which Nature had meant him to run and started him on lines of hard common sense. He was intensely positive; heavy and pompous and painfully literal; inclined to lay down the law to everybody; richer than most of us in Old Chester, and full of solemn responsibilities as burgess and senior warden and banker. His air of aggressive integrity used to make the honestest of us feel as if we had been picking pockets! Yes; a good man, as Old Chester said.

Years ago Dr. Lavendar had given up trying to reconcile the two Wrights; years ago Old Chester's speculations languished and died out. Once in a while some one remembered the quarrel and said, "What in the world could it have been about?" And once in a while Samuel's own children asked awkward questions. "Mother, what was father's row with grandfather?" And Mrs. Wright's answer was as direct as the question. "I don't know. He never told me."

When this reply was made to young Sam he dropped the subject. He had but faint interest in his father, and his grandfather with whom he took tea every Sunday night was