

MRS. MONTGOMERY. (*They look at each other. MRS. MONTGOMERY sees that she must start it.*) Er . . . your aunt tells me that you are interested in the hospital charities?

CATHERINE. (*Diffident.*) Yes, I am.

MRS. MONTGOMERY. As a doctor's daughter you must be very useful there.

CATHERINE. I—I hope so. (*Pause.*)

MRS. MONTGOMERY. My brother tells me that you have an aunt visiting you, Miss Sloper.

CATHERINE. Yes. My Aunt Penniman.

MRS. MONTGOMERY. It is delightful to have people to whom one can show New York. Does she like our city?

CATHERINE. Yes.

DR. SLOPER. Catherine, perhaps you will offer Mrs. Montgomery a glass of the Madeira?

CATHERINE. (*Rising instantly.*) Yes, indeed. Excuse me, ma'am. (*Halfway to door she turns.*) Father, may I ask Mrs. Montgomery to try my coriander cookies . . . ?

DR. SLOPER. Very well.

MRS. MONTGOMERY. I should like to very much, Miss Sloper.

CATHERINE. I think you will find them quite—delicate. (*She goes down hall to kitchen.*)

MRS. MONTGOMERY. (*After a pause.*) She is very shy.

DR. SLOPER. Yes, she is.

MRS. MONTGOMERY. Perhaps she is less shy with Morris?

DR. SLOPER. Has your brother listened only to the promptings of his heart?

MRS. MONTGOMERY. I cannot tell you that, Doctor.

DR. SLOPER. You said, love at first sight. Well, you were right about Catherine. Were you right about him?

MRS. MONTGOMERY. Well, I—I can only suppose that Morris is more mature in his feelings than I had thought. This time he has not sought out superficial charms, but has considered the gentle character underneath.

DR. SLOPER. Are you being honest, ma'am?

MRS. MONTGOMERY. I think I am.

DR. SLOPER. Well, I believe that her money is his prime attraction.

MRS. MONTGOMERY. What money?

DR. SLOPER. She is an heiress! Didn't your brother tell you that?

MRS. MONTGOMERY. No . . . he did not.

DR. SLOPER. She has ten thousand a year from her mother, and on my death she will have twice as much more.

MRS. MONTGOMERY. She will be immensely rich!

DR. SLOPER. Yes, she will. Of course, if she marries a man I don't approve, I shall leave my part to the Clinic.

MRS. MONTGOMERY. (Slowly.) But she has the ten now?

DR. SLOPER. Yes.

MRS. MONTGOMERY. That is still a great deal of money, Doctor.

DR. SLOPER. It is. And consider how he has behaved with money. He gratified his every wish! But did he help you with the children? No! He enlarged his capacities in Europe! (He picks up chamois gloves.) Look at his gloves . . . the finest chamois. Look at yours . . . (MRS. MONTGOMERY looks at gloves. A pause.)

MRS. MONTGOMERY. I don't know, Doctor. I don't know.

DR. SLOPER. Will he help you with this fortune he hopes to marry? I would stake my life that he would not. And he has a natural tie to you . . . a true affection.

MRS. MONTGOMERY. You must follow your own dictates, Doctor.

DR. SLOPER. (He tosses gloves on c. table.) Tell me she is not a victim of his avariciousness—tell me I'm wrong.

MRS. MONTGOMERY. (Rising.) I must go now.

DR. SLOPER. Mrs. Montgomery, she will believe you. Will you tell my daughter the truth about your brother's motives?

MRS. MONTGOMERY. I don't know the truth, Doctor. I don't know the truth of anyone's motives.

DR. SLOPER. I think his are clear . . . pitifully clear. He is in love with her money.

MRS. MONTGOMERY. You want me to tell her that?

DR. SLOPER. Yes.

MRS. MONTGOMERY. I won't!

DR. SLOPER. You see, you still protect him!

MRS. MONTGOMERY. No, it is the girl I protect! Am I to tell her that she is undesirable—that she is unloved! Why, it would break her heart! I would not say that to any girl! (She goes to archway.

DR. SLOPER follows and stops her.)

DR. SLOPER. (After a pause.) What am I to do?

MRS. MONTGOMERY. (Near door.) I don't know. (Then deliberately.) But if you are so opposed to this marriage, then as a father you must find a kinder way of stopping it. Good day, Doctor.