

MRS. ALMOND. Even so, Marian will like that.

DR. SLOPER. Are you entirely satisfied with the arrangement? (*Sits on love-seat.*)

MRS. ALMOND. (*Shrugs.*) She wanted him.

DR. SLOPER. Do you suppose that there is another Arthur somewhere in this great city of ours?

MRS. ALMOND. Oh, Catherine will find a husband!

DR. SLOPER. (*Amused.*) Do you think so?

MRS. ALMOND. (*Impatiently.*) She has the prospect of thirty thousand a year.

DR. SLOPER. (*Smiling.*) I see that you appreciate her.

MRS. ALMOND. I don't mean it's her only merit. You always have a way of alluding to her as an unmarried girl!

DR. SLOPER. You see what she is like with young men.

MRS. ALMOND. That is the trouble in New York; the men are too young. They marry at the age of innocence, before the age of calculation. If they only waited a little, Catherine would fare better.

DR. SLOPER. As a calculation? Thank you very much!

MRS. ALMOND. Of course, I didn't mean it that way!

DR. SLOPER. (*Shrugs.*) We need not deceive each other, my dear.

MRS. ALMOND. Austin, are you really as detached as you seem about Catherine?

DR. SLOPER. Detached? Why, that's the last thing I am! I am deeply interested in every phase of her life. Detached! Hah, I wish I were!

MRS. ALMOND. Why?

DR. SLOPER. Because I wish I could have confidence in her ability to manage herself, and her future, with some wisdom, or even some intelligence.

MRS. ALMOND. I see that you have none. I imagine that Catherine sees it, too.

DR. SLOPER. If you are reproaching me, Liz, you must be more specific. What would you like me to do for her that I have not done? Is there something that I have missed? She has gone to the best schools in the city. She has had the finest training I could get her in music and dancing. She has sat here with me evenings on end, and I have tried to make conversation with her, and give her some social adeptness. She has never been constrained in the spending of money, or in the directing of this household. I have

CATHERINE. I have no affection for you, Father.

DR. SLOPER. (*Shocked.*) Because I tried to protect you from Morris Townsend?

CATHERINE. No. I see why you acted as you did about him.

DR. SLOPER. Ah, then you admit I was right?

CATHERINE. No. You thought any handsome, clever man would be as bored with me as you were. And would love as little as you did. It was not love that made you protect me. It was contempt. Am I to thank you for that?

DR. SLOPER. Some day you will come to me and tell me that I did you a great service.

CATHERINE. I can tell you now what you have done: you have cheated me! If you could not love me, you should have let someone else try.

DR. SLOPER. Morris Townsend did not love you, Catherine.

CATHERINE. I know that, now, thanks to you.

DR. SLOPER. Better to know it now than twenty years hence.

CATHERINE. Why? I lived with you for twenty years before I found out that you didn't love me. I don't know that Morris would have hurt me or starved me for affection more than you did.

DR. SLOPER. You have found a tongue at last, Catherine. Is it only to say such terrible things to me?

CATHERINE. Yes. This is a field where you will not compare me to my mother.

DR. SLOPER. Catherine, Catherine. Should I have let him ruin your life? I think you are fortunate. You will meet some honest, decent man some day, and you will make him very happy. You have many fine qualities . . .

CATHERINE. (*Interrupting.*) And I will have thirty thousand a year.

DR. SLOPER. That should make it possible for you to choose with discretion.

CATHERINE. (*Rising.*) If I am to buy a man—I would prefer buying Morris!

DR. SLOPER. Don't say such things!

CATHERINE. Does it humiliate you?

DR. SLOPER. (*Violently.*) Catherine, promise me that you are done with him!

CATHERINE. No.

DR. SLOPER. Why not? You know him to be a scoundrel!

CATHERINE. I won't promise.

DR. SLOPER. Please explain then!

CATHERINE. I can't explain, and I won't promise!

DR. SLOPER. (*Angrily.*) Then I must alter my will!

CATHERINE. You should. You should do it immediately.

DR. SLOPER. I will do it when I please!

CATHERINE. That is very wrong of you. You should do it now while you can. (*She goes to small desk.*)

DR. SLOPER. I will attend to it tomorrow.

CATHERINE. You may not be well enough tomorrow. (*She gets writing materials.*)

DR. SLOPER. I—I spoke hastily. I want to consider more carefully.

CATHERINE. (*Coming back to him, she holds pen and a tablet of paper out to him.*) There is nothing to consider. Since I am unwilling to promise, I should not enjoy your fortune.

DR. SLOPER. (*Desperately.*) But I don't want to disinherit my only child!

CATHERINE. You want your money used for purposes you approve, don't you? I certainly should! If you leave it to the Clinic it will do what you wish it to do. If you leave it to me, you know in whose pocket it may end — (*She almost smiles.*)

DR. SLOPER. I am ill, and you are chivvying me!

CATHERINE. (*Sits down, prepares to write it herself.*) You had better tell me how you wish it worded.

DR. SLOPER. No!

CATHERINE. (*Writing and speaking the words.*) "I, Austin Sloper, Surgeon of 16 Washington Square, do hereby make my last Will and . . ."

DR. SLOPER. (*Sweeping paper off table.*) Catherine, this is an absurdity! You can't want me to do it, and I don't want to do it!

CATHERINE. (*Rising.*) I know that you don't. You want to think of me sitting in dignity in this handsome house, rich, respected, and unloved forever. That is what you think I deserve. But I may fool you, Father. I may take your money and chase after Morris, and squander it all on him! . . . Which do you think I will do?

DR. SLOPER. I don't know.

CATHERINE. Well, you must decide, and act accordingly.

DR. SLOPER. (*Rising with difficulty, goes toward archway.*) I can't I don't know!

CATHERINE. Perhaps you will in time.