A Child.

HANDSOME young fellow he was, with very black eyes and a rich, red spot on either cheek. His eyes seemed to have lost their sparkle, however, to-night, and looked strangely soft in the half light of the grate fire. Seated in an arm-chair opposite I listened attentively to the story of his disappointment, a story which I marveled at deeply. How Constance had happened to do it I could not understand. I had loved her in a brotherly way myself for a good many years, and had introduced little Bobby to her, imagining that nothing could be better for him. They had soon become close friends and finally, when Bobby told me of his love for her I believed I had good reasons for quieting him in any of his doubts, and telling him that if he loved her as hard as ever he might, I was sure that the love would be more than reciprocated. Of course she was older in many ways than he, but the protective, the maternal instinct in the woman seemed to have been stirred into active existence in the affection which she bore this boy. Therefore, when I had noticed in her during the last few weeks a fast-growing indifference toward him I was surprised beyond measure; and when I saw him receive the decided snub in the foyer of the theater from which she turned smiling to a big dark, Southern-looking fellow, I had gone home sick and sore at heart. To-night Bobby had spoken of his trouble for the first time, and although his manly young face looked sadly brave, his voice shook and trembled throughout the narration.

A long silence followed, in which his eyes watched the little blue jets of flame as they rose and fell among the darkly glowing coals in the grate.

Two weeks after our talk, was a dance, the great affair of the year at Bobby’s college, which had been anticipated and looked forward to for the year past. Bobby himself, as usher, came and went in the absent-minded, half stupid fashion with which his friends had been so annoyed for the past two weeks. After entering and being presented to the matrons I had taken my stand in a place not far from the door, being more interested in watching the different faces, all unobserved, than in running about from this group to that. Suddenly my attention was called to the door by hearing the attendant acting as butler say, “I beg your pardon; I did not get your card of admittance.” And the answer in a cool, well-bred voice, “I believe I overlooked bringing it.” “Certainly; only you will kindly give me your name, please?” There was no answer for a moment, and by stepping forward slightly I could see for the first time the faces; they were the tall Southerner and Constance. She was a little pale at this unusual attention. When the answer came it was quite low, and neither that nor the butler’s remark could I hear. Then I saw him look down the list which he held in his hand, and then quite distinctly heard him say, “It is very strange your name is not here.” Stepping closer he said something which I did not hear, to which the Southerner answered. The butler’s face took on rather a strange expression, but just as he was about to speak, I felt somebody brush by me and Bobby was at the door saying, “What do you mean, sir, by refusing admittance to these people who are first on my list of guests?”

I saw him an hour later, and then for the first time really comprehended what had happened. With colossal impudence Bobby’s rival had come there to parade his success before Bobby and his friends, and had come without an invitation. Unfortunately for his plans the attendant had been given a list of the invited guests, and told to admit no one without a card of admittance; the affair was a large one, and the chief reason of this had been to keep out any underclassmen who had not been especially invited.