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"I haven't got any of my own," she sighed. "But I do believe they ought to be brought up the right way and made to do as they're told. Dear little one!" she nodded her grey head and clucked brightly at the baby on Francis's knee.

She talked more than any of us, mostly in little threads of reminiscence that seemed to be frail and white and easily broken, or maybe discoloured by snatches of gossip.

"I hope you don't let—somebody—" she tossed her head back towards the door. "Do as he likes. It's such a pity the way some of these young mothers say no to their children and then let them have yes."

"Oh, no. Paul doesn't have his own way—not now that Harry's home," Francis said.



"I'm very glad to hear it," Mrs. Caverley turned to smile at Harry.

"Children need a firm hand," Harry remarked.

"But you can be too hard on them," Francis smiled unhappily at Mrs. Caverley.

PROBABLY all this seems to have very little to do with whether Francis and Harry were happy together; and yet when you come to sum up the whole story you can see that Mrs. Caverley when she was talking to them brought out all their little points of difference. She said that she thought Francis might be right. She then asked how Francis liked the people in the street.

It wouldn't be so bad if they only had some fences, Francis told her. It'd be much nicer with them up. Some of the people were all right, like the Willdens next door, who had a baby that Francis had helped look after. And the people on the other side were not bad; Harry got on all right with the husband because they both worked in the garden. The wife, though, didn't know how to look after a baby. Francis could scream every time she saw the poor little thing running round without any napkins on. But she couldn't stand those people across on the corner. They had six children and the mother was always out dressed in a fur coat and the children were allowed to run about in all sorts of rags. And they were little rips, never played at home, but always on other people's front porches. And their father's politics were enough anyway. If the children were an example of what it meant to think that way, then Francis didn't want her children to grow up with the same ideas.

"But I can't see that a man's politics have anything to do with the way his children behave," Harry interrupted with a great air of tolerance that made me wonder if Mrs. Caverley could see it was put on especially for her benefit.

"Oh, you men always stick together!" Francis passed it off lightly by pretending to be angry. Her next remark showed that she was a little angry, too. "Thank goodness we won't be here any longer than we have to stay, anyway," she said.

"But it would be a pity to go just after getting settled," Mrs. Caverley was quite surprised. "This is such a haven after all you've been through."

Francis was getting tired of the way they seemed to be against her, and I said, "Oh well, you'll do what's best in the end, anyway, so it's not worth worrying about it, really."

And Francis brightened up quite a lot at that.

WHEN Mrs. Caverley had gone Harry called up outside to look at the way his potatoes were coming through the ridges again. Francis smiled half-resignedly and indulgently at me as we went out.

She leaned over the rail and looked down at her stocks while Harry was saying what a great crop it would be if it didn't rain too much. And she didn't seem to be listening to him; she was tapping her fingers on the rail. And then she moved suddenly, pointing down into the garden.

"Look at that!" she cried out, her voice high and quivering. "Look—one of my little rose cuttings is gone! And it was just coming into leaf, too."

"All right, don't tell the world," Harry said impatiently. "Where was it?"

"There, can't you see? Her face was colouring and she flashed a look at Harry that should have made him wither. "Those kids over the road, I'll bet. They were here this morning. Look at all the footprints on the garden."

"How do you know it was the kids from over the road?" Harry said. "It might have been Paul for all you know."

"It wasn't Paul!" Francis turned round on him quickly. "You're too fond of taking it out on Paul." And she hurried inside, her hair ruffled forward, half-covering her face.

It might easily have been Paul, too; boys are boys wherever they are. But the least Harry could do was to go in and say he was sorry for acting the way he did.

It was then, when I looked at him, that he said, sulkily, that his wife couldn't understand him.

For a few seconds he stared down at the potatoes, the corners of his mouth drawn down and an angry sort of sneer on his face. And suddenly, catching me unawares, he turned and looked straight at me and I couldn't meet his eyes. He seemed to have discovered something. And then he brushed past me and slammed the door as he went into the house. I heard him talking to Francis.

I haven't been up there again since, and I don't suppose I ever will again. It would be nice to see Francis again, I suppose. When a man suddenly becomes as hostile towards you as Harry did, though, you might just as well keep out of the way. And it's very difficult not to think of Harry; every street you go into you're reminded of him.

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