

CHAPTER FIVE THROUGH THE TRANSOM

As a child I listened to many things far beyond my tender years. No one intended it to be that way, but circumstances made it so. Nor was it true that Clem, my father, was insensitive to the sacredness of traditional ecclesiastical confidentiality. On the contrary, he prided himself in the trust that he had earned over the years.

Entirely innocent of any desire to eavesdrop, I heard things that stay~ with me for years to be vividly recalled to mind when I was older. Sometime: there was the inadvertent failure to notice that I was around. Other times there may have been the assumption that I was too young for it to matter anyway. Often when visitors were received in the parlor, I was left to play in the adjoining dining room, with the door gently closed in between, but with no one seeming to notice that the transom was left open above the door.

All reaches Of human tragedy and joy came within Clem's grasp in a lifetime of caring and sharing. He was father-confessor to a whole county, adjudicator and mediator, comforter and counselor, "reproving betimes with sharpness; and then showing forth afterwards an increase of love toward him reproved."

There was the bishop whose wife wouldn't support and sustain him in his calling, the spinster who had wicked dreams, the mother whose son needed to be called on a mission to reform him, the sweet young thing who received letters from her missionary sweetheart that filled her with unspeakable joy, but who was going to marry another because she couldn't wait for the missionary to finish his mission and return home. A middle-aged couple with no children of their own desired to provide the funds to support some worthy but needy young man on a mission for the church.