

and therefore when our Lord says not a sparrow falls to the ground without our Father, that, being a fact with regard to God, must be an essential fact—one, namely, without which He could be no God.' I understood him, I thought; but many a time since, when a fresh light has broken in upon me, I have thought I understood him then only for the first time. I told him so once, and he said he thought that would be the way for ever with all truth—we should never get to the bottom of any truth, because it was a vital portion of the all of truth, which is God."

I had never heard so much philosophy from my mother before. I believe she was led into it by her fear of the effect our anxiety about the child might have upon us; with what had quieted her heart in the old time she sought now to quiet ours, helping us to trust in the great love that never ceases to watch. And she did make us quiet. But the time glided so slowly past that it seemed immovable.

When twelve struck, we heard in the stillness every clock in the house, and it seemed as if they would never have done. My mother left the room and came back with three shawls, with which, having first laid Harry on the rug, she covered the boys, and Dora, who also was by this time fast asleep, curled up at Connie's feet.

Still the time went on, and there was no sound of horses, or anything to break the silence, except the faint murmur which now and then the trees will make in the quietest night, as if they were dreaming, and talked in their sleep; for the motion does not seem to pass beyond them, but to swell up and die again in the heart of them. This and the occasional cry of an owl was all that broke the silent flow of the undivided moments—glacier-like flowing none can tell how. We seldom spoke, and at length the house within seemed possessed by the silence from without; but we were all ear—one hungry ear, whose famine was silence—listening intently.

We were not so far from the high road but that on a night like this the penetrating sound of a horse's hoofs might reach us. Hence, when my mother, who was keener of hearing than any of her daughters, at length started up, saying, "I hear them! They're coming!" the doubt remained whether it might not be the sound of some night traveller hurrying along that high road that she had heard. But when *we* also heard the sound of horses we knew they must belong to our company; for except the riders were within the gates, their noises could not have come nearer to the house. My mother hurried down to the hall. I would have stayed with Connie, but she begged me to go too, and come back as soon as I knew the result; so I followed

my mother. As I descended the stairs, notwithstanding my anxiety, I could not help seeing what a picture lay before me, for I had learned already to regard things from the picturesque point of view—the dim light of the low-burning lamp on the forward-bent heads of the listening anxious group of women, my mother at the open door with the housekeeper and her maid, and the men servants visible through the door in the moonlight beyond.

The first news that reached me was my father's shout the moment he rounded the sweep that brought him in sight of the house.

"All right! Here she is!" he cried.

And ere I could reach the stair to run up to Connie, Wagtail was jumping upon me and barking furiously. He rushed up before me with the scramble of twenty feet, licked Connie's face all over in spite of her efforts at self-defence, then rushed at Dora and the boys one after the other, and woke them all up. He was satisfied enough with himself now; his tail was doing the wagging of forty; there was no tucking of it away now—no drooping of the head in mute confession of conscious worthlessness; he was a dog self-satisfied because his master was well pleased with him.

But here I am talking about the dog, and forgetting what was going on below.

My father cantered up to the door, followed by the two men. My mother hurried to meet him, and then only saw the little lost lamb asleep in his bosom. He gave her up, and my mother ran in with her, while he dismounted, and walked merrily but wearily up the stair after her. The first thing he did was to quiet the dog; the next, to sit down beside Connie; the third, to say, "Thank God!" and the next, "God bless Wagtail!" My mother was already undressing the little darling, and her maid was gone to fetch her night things. Tumbled hither and thither, she did not wake, but was carried off stone-sleeping to her crib.

Then my father—for whom some supper, of which he was in great need, had been brought—as soon as he had had a glass of wine and a mouthful or two of cold chicken, began to tell us the whole story.

(To be continued.)

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