

his presence could not ripple the waters of my deep rest. I gave him half a smile—I knew it was but half a smile, but I thought it would do—closed my eyes, and sank again—not into sleep, but into that same blessed repose. I remember wondering if I should feel anything like that for the first hour or two after I was dead. May there not one day be such repose for all—only the heavenly counterpart, coming of perfect activity instead of weary success?

This was but the beginning of endlessly varied pleasures. I dare say the mothers would let me go on for a good while in this direction; perhaps even some of the fathers could stand a little more of it; but I must remember that if anybody reads this at all, it will have multitudes of readers in whom the chord which could alone respond to such experiences hangs loose over the sounding-board of their being.

By slow degrees the daylight, the light of work, that is, began to penetrate me, or rather to rise in my being from its own hidden sun. First I began to wash and dress my baby myself. One who has not tried that kind of amusement cannot know what endless pleasure it affords. I do not doubt that to the paternal spectator it appears monotonous, unproductive, unprogressive; but then, he looking upon it from the outside, and regarding the process with a speculative compassion, and not with sympathy, cannot know the communion into which it brings you with the baby. I remember well enough what my father has written about it in the Seaboard Parish; but he is all wrong—I mean him to confess that before this is printed: if things were done as he proposes, the tenderness of mothers would be far less developed, and the moral training of children would be postponed to an indefinite period. There, papa! there's something in your own style!

Next I began to order the dinners; and the very day on which I first ordered the dinner, I took my place at the head of the table. A happier little party—well, of course, I saw it all through the rose-mists of my motherhood, but I am nevertheless bold to assert that my husband was happy, and that my mother was happy; and if there was one more guest at the table concerning whom I am not prepared to assert that he was happy, I can confidently affirm that he was merry, and gracious, and talkative, originating three parts of the laughter of the evening. To watch him with the baby was a pleasure even to the heart of a mother, anxious as she must be when any one, especially a gentleman, more especially a bachelor, and most especially a young bachelor, takes her precious little wax-doll in his arms, and pretends to know all about the management of

such. It was he indeed who introduced her to the dining-room; for, leaving the table during desert, he returned bearing her in his arms, to my astonishment, and even mild maternal indignation at the liberty. Resuming his seat, and pouring out for his charge, as he pretended, a glass of old port, he said in the soberest voice:—

“Charles Percivale, with all the solemnity suitable to the occasion, I, the old moon with the new moon in my arms, propose the health of Miss Percivale on her first visit to this boring bullet of a world. By the way, what a mercy it is that she carries her atmosphere with her!”

Here I, stupidly thinking he reflected on the atmosphere of baby, rose to take her from him with suppressed indignation—for why should a man who assumes a baby unbidden be so very much nicer than a woman who accepts her as given, and makes the best of it? But he declined giving her up.

“I’m not pinching her,” he said.

“No; but I am afraid you find her disagreeable.”

“On the contrary, she is the nicest of little ladies; for she lets you talk all the nonsense you like, and never takes the least offence.”

I sat down again directly.

“I propose her health,” he repeated, “coupled with that of her mother, to whom I, for one, am more obliged than I can explain—for at length convincing me that I belong no more to the youth of my country, but am an uncle with a homuncle in his arms.”

“Wife, your health! Baby, yours too!” said my husband; and the ladies drank the toast in silence.

It is time I explained who this fourth—or should I say fifth?—person in our family party was. He was the younger brother of my Percivale, by name Roger—still more unsuccessful than he; of similar trustworthiness, but less equanimity, for he was subject to sudden elevations and depressions of the inner barometer. I shall have more to tell about him by-and-by. Meantime it is enough to mention that my daughter—how grand I thought it when I first said *my daughter!*—now began her acquaintance with him. Before long he was her chief favourite next to her mother and—I am sorry I cannot conscientiously add *father*, for, at a certain early period of her history, the child showed a decided preference for her uncle over her father.

But it is time I put a stop to this ooze of maternal memories. Having thus introduced my baby and her uncle Roger, I close the chapter.

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