

the air of a man of the world whom experience enabled to come at once to a decision, said—

"Depend upon it, Wynnie, there is falsehood there somewhere. You will always be nearer the truth if you believe nothing, than if you believe the half of what you hear."

"That's very much what papa says," I answered. "He affirms that he never searched into an injurious report in his own parish without finding it so nearly false as to deprive it of all right to go about."

"Besides," said Roger, "look at that face! How I should like to model it! She's a good woman that, depend upon it!"

I was delighted with his enthusiasm.

"I wish you would ask her again, as soon as you can," said Percivale, who always tended to embody his conclusions in acts rather than in words. "Your Cousin Judy is a jolly good creature, but from your father's description of her as a girl, she must have grown a good deal more worldly since her marriage. Respectability is an awful snare."

"Yes," said Roger; "one ought to be very thankful to be a Bohemian and have nothing expected of him, for respectability is a most fruitful mother of stupidity and injustice."

I could not help thinking that *he* might, however, have a little more and be none the worse.

"I should be very glad to do as you desire, husband," I said, "but how can I? I haven't yet learned where she lives. It was asking Judy for her address once more that brought it all out. I certainly didn't insist, as I might have done, notwithstanding what she told me; but if she didn't remember it before, you may be sure she could not have given it me then."

"It's very odd," said Roger, stroking his long moustache, the sole ornament of the kind he wore—"It's very odd," he repeated thoughtfully, and then paused again.

"What's so very odd, Roger?" asked Percivale.

"The other evening," answered Roger, after yet a short pause, "happening to be in Tottenham Court Road, I walked for some distance behind a young woman carrying a brown beer-jug in her hand—for I sometimes amuse myself in the street by walking persistently behind some one, devising the unseen face in my mind, until the recognition of the same step following causes the person to look round at me, and gives me the opportunity of comparing the two—I mean the one I had devised and the real one. When the

young woman at length turned her head, it was only my astonishment that kept me from addressing her as Miss Clare. My surprise, however, gave me time to see how absurd it would have been. Presently she turned down a yard and disappeared."

"Don't tell my Cousin Judy," I said. "She would believe it *was* Miss Clare."

"There isn't much danger," he returned. "Even if I knew your cousin, I should not be likely to mention such an incident in her hearing." "Could it have been she?" said Percivale thoughtfully.

"Absurd," said Roger. "Miss Clare is a lady, wherever she may live."

"I don't know," said his brother, still thoughtfully; "who can tell? It mightn't have been beer she was carrying."

"I didn't say it was beer," returned Roger. "I only said it was a beer-jug—one of those brown, squat, stone jugs—the best for beer that I know, after all—brown, you know, with a dash of grey."

"Brown jug or not, I wish I could get a few sittings from her. She would make a lovely St. Cecilia," said my husband.

"Brown jug and all?" asked Roger.

"If only she were a little taller," I objected.

"And had an aureole," said my husband. "But I might succeed in omitting the jug as well as in adding the aureole and another half foot of stature, if only I could get that lovely countenance on the canvas—so full of life and yet of repose."

"Don't you think it a little hard?" I ventured to say.

"I think so," said Roger.

"I don't," said my husband. "I know what in it looks like hardness; but I think it comes of the repression of feeling."

"You have studied her well for your opportunities," I said.

"I have; and I am sure, whatever Mrs. Morley may say, that, if there be any truth at all in those reports, there is some satisfactory explanation of whatever has given rise to them. I wish we knew anybody else that knew her. Do try to find some one that does, Wynnie."

"I don't know how to set about it," I said. "I should be only too glad."

"I will try," said Roger. "Does she sing?"

"I have heard Judy say she sang divinely; but the only occasion on which I met her—at this house, that time you couldn't go, Percivale—she was never asked to sing."

"I suspect," remarked Roger, "it will turn out to be only that she's something of a Bohemian like ourselves."

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