

which our duty to Miss Clare was, I will not say either forgotten or neglected, but unfulfilled.

One afternoon I was surprised by a visit from my father. He not unfrequently surprised us.

"Why didn't you let us know, papa?" I said.

"A surprise is very nice, but an expectation is much nicer, and lasts so much longer."

"I might have disappointed you."

"Even if you had, I should have already enjoyed the expectation. That would be safe."

"There's a good deal to be said in excuse of surprises," he rejoined, "but in the present case I have a special one to offer. I was taken with a sudden desire to see you. It was very foolish, no doubt, and you are quite right in wishing I weren't here, only going to come to-morrow."

"Don't be so cruel, papa. Scarcely a day passes in which I do not long to see you. My baby makes me think more about my home than ever."

"Then she's a very healthy baby, if one may judge by her influences. But you know, if I had to give you warning, I could not have been here before to-morrow; and surely you will acknowledge that, however nice expectation may be, presence is better."

"Yes, papa. We will make a compromise, if you please. Every time you think of coming to me, you must either come at once, or let me know you are coming. Do you agree to that?"

"I agree," he said.

So I have the pleasure of a constant expectation. Any day he may walk in unheralded; or by any post I may receive a letter with the news that he is coming at such a time.

As we sat at dinner that evening, he asked if we had lately seen Miss Clare.

"I've seen her only once, and Percivale not at all, since you were here last time, papa."

"How's that?" he asked again, a little surprised. "Haven't you got her address yet? I want very much to know more of her."

"So do we. I haven't got her address, but I know where she lives."

"What do you mean, Wynnie? Has she taken to dark sayings of late, Percivale?"

I told him the whole story of my adventure with Roger, and the reports Judy had prejudiced my judgment withal. He heard me through in silence, for it was a rule with him never to interrupt a narrator. He used to say, "You will generally get at more, and in a better fashion, if you let any narrative take its own devious course, without the interruption of requested explanations. By the time it is over, you will find the questions you wanted to ask mostly vanished."

"Describe the place to me, Wynnie," he said, when I had ended. "I must go and see her. I have a suspicion amounting almost to a conviction that she is one whose acquaintance ought to be cultivated at any cost. There is some grand explanation of all this contradictory strangeness."

"I don't think that I could describe the place to you so that you would find it. But if Percivale wouldn't mind my going with you instead of with him, I should be only too happy to accompany you. May I, Percivale?"

"Certainly. It will do just as well to go with your father as with me. I only stipulate that, if you are both satisfied, you will take Roger with you next time."

"Of course I will."

"Then we'll go to-morrow morning," said my father.

"I don't think she is likely to be at home in the morning," I said. "She goes out giving lessons, you know; and the probability is that at that time we should not find her."

"Then why not to-night?" he rejoined.

"Why not, if you wish it?"

"I do wish it, then."

"If you knew the place, though, I think you would prefer going a little earlier than we can to-night."

"Ah well, we will go to-morrow evening. We could dine early, couldn't we?"

So it was arranged. My father went about some business in the morning. We dined early, and set out about six o'clock.

My father was getting an old man, and if any protection had been required, he could not have been half so active as Roger; and yet I felt twice as safe with him. I am satisfied that the deepest sense of safety, even in respect of physical dangers, can spring only from moral causes; neither do you half so much fear evil happening to you, as fear evil happening which ought not to happen to you. I believe what made me so courageous was the undeveloped fore-feeling that if any evil should overtake me in my father's company I should not care; it would be all right then, anyhow. The repose was in my father himself, and neither in his strength nor his wisdom. The former might fail, the latter might mistake; but so long as I was with him in what I did, no harm worth counting harm could come to me—only such as I should neither lament nor feel. Scarcely a shadow of danger, however, showed itself.

It was a cold evening in the middle of November. The light, which had been scanty enough all day, had vanished in a thin, penetrating fog. Round every lamp in the street was a coloured

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