

THERE'S MANY A SLIP

"Just draw your chair round a little; I know there's a draught on that side. I did intend at one time to have it cured in some way, but it does not much matter now. I'll have a screen put round your corner to-morrow. Mine is comfortable enough."

This said to me one winter evening by my cousin John Elder, as we sat on each side of the fire in his particularly cozy dining-room, where the table, with its lamp, flowers, and desert, had been drawn up to an easy distance from our hands. John was sipping port, and I was cracking nuts, for which, in spite of my years, I have an abiding affection; and behind my chair was the door from which might, but did not, come the draught John was speaking of.

John is an elderly gentleman, a bachelor, very well off, very comfortable, and very popular, but still rather mysteriously a bachelor, because he has always liked and been liked by women. I am an elderly lady, a widow, and John and I have been warm friends all our lives. The reason why I was sitting beside John's dining-room fire was that I had come to pay him a visit, and, as there were no other guests in the house, it was much more sensible for me to stay and talk with him while he enjoyed his after-dinner ease than to go away by myself into the drawing-room.

"There is no draught," I said, "none at present, I am sure. But there may be when the wind is north, and a screen would make all safe."

"Yes," he answered, musingly, as he looked at the wine he had just poured out, "a screen would do, but I did think once of altering the door, making really a good job of it. I planned that with other alterations."

"And the plans were never carried out?" I asked, after I had waited a moment to see if he would say more. "Well, I suppose I know when they were made, but I never did quite understand why they came to nothing."

"No," he answered, "I don't think anybody knew but ourselves. It was my fault—certainly, it was all my fault."

He stopped, but I thought he was not disinclined to go on, and I was curious. Indeed, there had been an episode in John's life about which we had all been curious; and, though it was a good while past, I still felt I should like to know. So I said:

"I fancied it had been Miss Woodroffe's doing?"

"I said it was my fault," he answered. "I did not say it was my doing."

"Oh!" I answered rather blankly, and there was a silence.

Then John gave a little laugh, half ridicule of himself, I thought, and half ruefulness for the story that was in his mind.

"I may as well tell you all about it," he said. "You are not likely to tell it to any of the young ones, and it certainly was an odd way of losing one's promised wife. You'll see that she was to blame."

I saw now that I was in for the story, whatever it might be, the catastrophe of which had left John a bachelor; so I settled myself in my chair, put my feet more comfortably on my footstool, and laid down the nut crackers.

"Well," he said, "I daresay you remember that I have always been much fonder of seeing my friends in my own house than of going elsewhere for society. I don't suppose I've dined out ten times in the last ten years; and ten years ago I disliked doing it almost as much as I do now. Only I wasn't quite such an old fogey, and I believe I had some vague idea of marrying. The difficulty was that I had never seen exactly the right woman, and very naturally I wasn't naturally so keen about finding her as I had been twenty years before that. It is just ten years now since I met Miss Woodroffe."

"Yes," I said, "I remember it is about ten years since I heard of her."

"The only house where I ever cared to dine in those days was Joddrell's, and I used to go there about once for every four times they asked me. One evening in September I went there much against my will. Joddrell had promised me that I should meet some old friends, but when I arrived there was not one present but strangers, and nearly all the party were young people. Fancy asking me to meet a roomful of young people! It wasn't until dinner was announced that I saw the lady I was to take in; then Joddrell led me into a corner of the drawing-room, and introduced me to Miss Woodroffe, a friend of his wife's."

John stopped a little here, and I fancied he was trying to find words in which to describe Miss Woodroffe. If that were so, he did not succeed. After a minute he went on again, without attempting to give me any portrait of the heroine of his story.

"Upon my word, Mary, I can't tell how it happened. All I know is that she was the most charming woman I ever saw in my life. We talked a great deal during dinner, and we talked a great deal after dinner; and the more she talked, and the more I looked at her, the more I thought with disgust of my solitary existence. Somehow or other, before I got up next morning I had made up my mind that I would try to persuade her to become my wife. All this, of course, is very commonplace; plenty of men, I suppose, even some of fifty-five, must have had the same sort of experience. Now comes the part of the story which I think must belong to me alone. Do you remember how, years ago, I persuaded you to let me send some of your handwriting to a lady who professed to know all about the people whose writing she was allowed to examine? I sent yours and some others; do you remember?"

"Yes," I answered, "I remember very well; and we thought the characters sent back were wonderfully true."

"We did," said John emphatically, "and that was the mischief of it. Some time after that I had a housekeeper whom I suspected of cheating me, and I sent one of hers to Miss Harris by way of clearing up my opinion of her. Miss Harris wrote back that she was civil and plausible, but not to be trusted; and sure enough after a time I detected her in downright robbery. Upon my word, Mary, if I did believe in Miss Harris, I had good reason, and I'm not so very sure yet that she doesn't deserve to be believed in. Well, now, what do you think I did? I determined to get a note from Miss Woodroffe, and send it to Miss Harris, before I took another step in the affair."

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Miss Woodroffe, as it happened, was to stay at the Joddrells for two or three weeks; and before we were over I had managed to get a note of two or three lines from her. This I sent to Miss Harris, and I can show you the answer I received.

Here John took from his pocket a letter-case, or pocket-book, from which, after some turning over of the papers it contained, he drew out a much-worn letter, and handed it to me. It began: "The handwriting of the note, of which you have requested my opinion, is a very remarkable one; it expresses a noble and refined character. The writer has a clear brain, an affectionate heart, and great rectitude of mind; she talks well, and neither too much nor too little."

"There was a good deal more in the same style, describing such a paragon of our sex that I really felt an inch or two taller for the reading of it."

"It Miss Woodroffe was all that," I said, "I can't imagine how you ever let her go."

"She was," he answered, "at any rate, I have no reason to doubt it."

He put the paper back in its place, and went on:

"I think I may say that I lost no time after that. She was friendly from the beginning. About four weeks after our first meeting I asked her to marry me, and she said 'Yes.' Upon my word, Mary, I had been twenty-five instead of fifty-five. I don't think I could have been happier. She was just going away from the Joddrells, and before she went I told her all about Miss Harris, and what a thorough belief I had in her skill. Miss Woodroffe laughed at me, but unfortunately I was quite convinced that my belief was well founded, and quite determined to persuade her to think so too."

"She went away, and of course I wrote to her. In one of my first letters, I sent the one I have just shown you, and I begged her to send my handwriting also to Miss Harris for her own satisfaction. You see I felt quite safe in doing this, because the description of me which had been sent at the time, you remember, had been rather flattering. On that occasion Miss Harris had declared that I was of an amiable temper, liberal but trustworthy. I remember the words well, and I thought it could do me nothing but good if such a thorough belief I had in her skill. Miss Woodroffe laughed at me, but unfortunately I was quite convinced that my belief was well founded, and quite determined to persuade her to think so too."

"Well, no," I answered, "I really don't think I should have believed it—only you know, John, you shrewd men can be so dreadfully credulous. Why, I remember a friend of my husband's who doubted everything, and yet he believed in Madame Blavatsky."

John grinned. He did not seem to like the comparison, which was foolish of him, poor fellow.

"She said," he went on, "that she could trust her own judgment, and did not care anybody else's. That might have satisfied anybody, but it did not satisfy me. I wrote again, and begged her to do as I wished, telling her about the housekeeper. At last she wrote that she had done so for herself, and she said: 'I suppose you expect me to abide by whatever Miss Harris may say.'"

"Do you know that those words gave me a fright. I had never doubted till then that Miss Harris would give just the same character of me as she had done before, and also I had only thought of it as giving me more value to Miss Woodroffe. I got nervous after I heard she had really consulted the Sibyl, and two days later I received these."

He turned over his pocket-book again and handed me two papers, sinking back in his chair after he had done so with a gesture that said, "You have the catastrophe and its results before you."

I opened one of the papers, and literally I opened it with trembling fingers. There was something tragical in poor John's gesture, and in the emptiness and silence of the house. My eyes fell upon a sheet of paper, half covered with a neat, legible handwriting, the words of which were much as follows:

"This writing belongs to a person of singularly impulsive and eager temperament, easily carried away by the feeling of the moment, very uncertain and unreliable, sadly inconsistent, without fixed purpose or deliberate judgement; not wanting in ability, but only in the power to apply it usefully; careless of money, but scarcely to be called generous; not altogether free from vanity, his temper is very irritable."

There was more, but a sigh from John—poor John! the most faithful and generous of friends, and the most steady-going of mortals—made me drop the sheet and take up the other. This was a very short note:

DEAR MR. ELDER.—You insisted that I should consult Miss Harris, and try her verdict on your character rather than my own. What that is you will see by the enclosed, and I am sure you cannot wonder that I dare not marry the man described. I am sending back your presents and letters by next post. With most sincere wishes for your happiness.

Yours truly,
"LOUISA WOODROFFE."

"Oh, John!" I said, when I had read this, "but she could not have meant it."

"She meant it so thoroughly that when I got to her mother's house in London, the very evening of the day I received it, they were both gone abroad, and I have not so much as seen her from that day to this."

So that was why the dining-room door was never altered.—Annie L. Coghill in the Strand Magazine.

A Sorrowful Tree.

In India and South America there is a beautiful little tree which bears rough leaves and very sweet-scented flowers, that open in the evening and fall off at the break of day. This has caused the tree to be looked upon as the sign of mourning, and to be given the name of the "Sorrowful Tree." It seems very odd that the pretty sweet flowers should bloom only for a night, and should fall off before the day comes to show their beauty.

By Far the Richer.

Fred: "There seems to be a lot more fuss made of Miss A.'s singing than Miss K.'s, and I am sure Miss K. has by far the richer voice." Jack: "Ah, yes; but Miss A. has by far the richer father."—Tit Bits.

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THINGS OF VALUE.

Never ask anyone to give you his word of honor. If you are talking to an honest man it is superfluous; if to a rascal, useless.

Are you troubled with dizziness, emptiness, flatulency? Take K. D. C.—the King of Dyspepsia Cures. It is guaranteed to cure you.

The best people are those who have always lived without notoriety.

Are you troubled with flushings, fullness, general distress? Take K. D. C.—the King of Dyspepsia Cures. It is guaranteed to cure you.

The majority of society youth forget "not to over a man so with, that shall he also reap."

Are you troubled with "gnawing" sensation, "goneness" lost at stomach? Take K. D. C.—the King of Dyspepsia Cures. It is guaranteed to cure you.

Riches without appreciation of the stewardship never bring happiness.

Is your food like lead on your stomach? Take K. D. C. It acts like magic on the stomach, and is guaranteed to cure every form of indigestion or dyspepsia.

The pride of good ancestry cannot be appreciated by those who haven't any.

Do you know that K. D. C. will relieve and cure your indigestion more quickly and effectively than any other remedy on the market. Try K. D. C.

There are few who "do good by stealth and blush to find it fame."

ALL MIRACLES DO NOT OCCUR AT HAMILTON.

The whole town of Glamis, Ont., knows of a cure, by the application of MINARD'S LINIMENT, to a partially paralyzed arm, that equals anything that has transpired at Hamilton.

R. W. HARRISON.

Sorrow adds beauty to the character when taken in broken doses.

PELEE ISLAND CLARET for Dyspepsia is the same Grape Cure so famous in Europe. GLASGOW, 17th December, 1891.

FOURTH QUARTERLY REPORT FOR 1891 ON ROBERT BROWN'S "FOUR CROWN" BLEND OF SCOTCH WHISKY.

I have made a careful analysis of a sample of 10,000 gallons of Robert Brown's "Four Crown" Blend of Scotch Whisky, taken by myself on the 9th inst., from the Blending Vat in the bonded stores, and I find it is a pure Whisky of high quality and fine flavor, which has been well matured.

JOHN CLARK, Ph. D., F.C.S., F.I.C. Agent, E. G. SCOVILL, Teas and Wine, St. John, N. B.

There's no possibility of being witty without a little ill-nature; the malice of a good thing is the barb that makes it stick.

Other Cough Medicines have had their day, but Putnam's Emulsion has come to stay, because it is so nice and good.

Women under 20 and over 70 tell their age.

What Rev. J. W. Mcgregor writes K. D. C. Co.—"Dear Sirs:—You are welcome to make use of any words I have written to you in reference to K. D. C. The name of the remedies I have tried for dyspepsia during the past 15 years is legion, none helped me as K. D. C. There is a host of remedies before the public here for dyspepsia. But I feel convinced that it is the public were only acquainted with K. D. C. it would outstrip them all in favor."

J. W. Mcgregor, Stoneham, Mass.