

extent of a drop, which spattered about in sparkling fragments as it fell, and froze upon the memory. His vocal efforts were periodical, like the performances of the skeleton and the twelve apostles operated by the tower-clock at Prague. They not only told the time of day with great precision, but they told it with jerks; and the jerks added an element of humour to what might otherwise have been a tame proceeding.

But Mr. Coates and Mrs. Coates got along together pretty well, considering how conscious each was of the imperfections of the other. She could do nothing with him, and he could do nothing with her; so, in a sort of despair of each other, they came to a tacit agreement to let each other alone, and permit their acquaintances to come to their own conclusions with regard to the respective merits and demerits of the pair. And their acquaintances did come to the conclusion that Mrs. Coates was good-natured, pretentious, insensitive, and amusing as a bore, and that Mr. Coates was a man of common sense, modesty, and a concentrated waggery that lost nothing of its humour by the impediments to its expression. In short, Mr. Coates, very much to the surprise of Mrs. Coates, was a popular man, who stood in the community for just what he was worth, and was very much beloved and respected.

When Nicholas and Glezen set off for the dinner party to which they had been invited, the former was in a good deal of nervous trepidation. He sympathized so profoundly with Miss Coates, and had so thorough a respect for her, that he dreaded the developments of the occasion on her account. He felt, too, that he could not quite trust his friend Glezen, for he knew that the temptation to chaff the old lady would be well-nigh irresistible. Still, he believed in the power of the young woman to hold him to propriety. She had certainly exercised that power upon himself, and he felt measurably sure of the same influence upon his friend. As for Glezen, he had heard so much about Miss Coates that he had determined to put himself upon his best behaviour at whatever pain of self-denial.

When the two young men entered Mrs. Coates's drawing-room, they discovered that the dinner was to be strictly *en famille*. It would have been impossible for Mrs. Coates to deprive Jenny of the chances offered by the possession for an evening of two eligible young men. As she took the hands of one after the other, she said:

"I thought it would be so nice to have you all to ourselves this evening! Not that I am selfish, for I'm not. Jenny has often said to me, 'Mother,' says she, 'whatever may be your short-comings, selfishness isn't one of them, no matter what appearances may be.' Says I, 'Jenny, there are joys with which the stranger intermeddled not, unless it's against my consent, and one of 'em is dining with dear friends