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SIGNS OF THE TIMES.

"In court," said the card on the lawyer's "Back in 10 minutes" on many more. [door "Gone to the hospital," on the doctor's On another "Sit down and wait." [slate, "Gone to bank," on the notary's sign; "Arbitration," that young clerk of mine.

"Back soon," on the broker's book; "Collecting rents," on my agent's hook. They were all too busy, a matter quite new Very sorry was I, I had nothing to do, Then I hid me hence to the base ball ground, And every man on the grand stand found.

THROUGH WIND AND RAIN.

BY MARY CECIL HAY.

(Continued.)

But at other times he would loudly and fretfully silence me, ordering me from his presence. Yet—and this was sad even to me, because it so plainly betrayed his growing weakness—he would summon me again almost immediately, and presently would once more repeat the old assurance, which it was so plain to see he could not believe, repeat it as constantly as he might.

As the winter closed in, Captain Warder hardly left him. Perhaps even he could see now that the hard spirit was wearing out, as well as the thin bent form, and he feared more than ever to remove his influence. Day by day now my master clung more closely to his old servants, and he fretted so when I left him, that I got into the habit of bringing my work and my accounts to his room quite naturally; then of reading to him, as if it had always been a part of my day's work; and bringing messages from the tenants; and of getting somehow to make him feel it natural to listen to me while he rested. Then you may be sure I let him feel what his people would think if (I never made it when) they were to have, for their master and their landlord, a man whom they had honestly disliked, as they had always honestly disliked Captain Warder. But though in time this grew natural to us, the Squire would never let me utter two sentences together of Mr. Will's return, or of forgiveness for him and Miss Agnes. At last this day came—Mr. Will's birthday, and the last day of that year which had been so wretched for us all. The Squire had been so restless and ill the day before, that I had sat up in

his room all night, and I remember noticing with what a start he rose from his pillows when I let in the daylight, asking me sharply what day it was. Standing beside him—and I know I must have looked as anxious as I felt—I told him. And then I gently led him on to recall those happy birthday's Mr. Will had always spent at home; going back even to that one when he had taken his baby as a New Year's gift from Heaven. Quite silently he listened to me, but his weak white fingers were pressed upon his eyes.

"O, master," I cried, folding my hands just as if I cried to my master in Heaven, "forgive him, and bring him home once more."

Through all its pain, his face darkened with a great anger when I spoke, and he sent me from him as he had so often done before. But when I returned I found him sitting at the window in the feeble winter sunshine, looking himself more feeble than I had ever seen him look before, but with a gentleness in face and attitude which almost frightened me by its strong contrast to the passionate vehemence with which he had dismissed me an hour before.

"Hester," he said, calling me by the name he had been used to call me when I was a young girl about the house, learning from my mother how to take her place (the place I've filled for fifty years,) "Hester, perhaps he will come to-day."

I had the hardest work in the world to prevent doing something foolish in my joy of having only those few words. To think that at last he should of his own accord, and so gently, speak of Mr. Will's return! Ah, if it could but happen on that very day—that birthday which they had always spent together.

"No, no," said the Squire, sharply, guessing at my motive, when I, in trembling anxiety, asked if he knew where Mr. Will would be this day. "No, no; and if I knew a hundred times you should not send."

But afterwards, as he sat quietly beside the window, he spoke to me quite gently now and then, as if he had read my thoughts while I sat working opposite him.

"Yes; he may come to-day—by his own wish. If not—never mind—never mind."

Then as time went on: "Wardor was right; he never meant to return. He

was glad to break the old ties—irksome ties; and he and Agnes tired of them. Never mind—never mind."

"Perhaps," said I with a sudden boldness, as unexpected by myself as by my master, "Mr. Will is too poor to travel now."

The Squire started forward on his chair, looking into my face with a new anguish; but the next moment he had sunk back again, and was murmuring softly to himself once more, "Pooh, pooh! Warder knew he borrowed money; he had no difficulty in doing that. My old age and failing health made it easy for my heir to borrow. No; he had no difficulty. Wardor heard of it all. Those men do not guess of my new will, though. Well, they deserve to suffer, for lending money to a rebellious son—a disobedient son. It is a just will, and Warder has promised that, in my place, he will do all that—my son has left undone. Yes it is a just will."

Yet for all the reiterated words, it was plain to see that that will lay heavily upon my poor master's heart.

"Hester," said he at once, looking wistfully at me in the waving afternoon light, "if he comes—to-day. If—loving the old times—he comes to me upon his birthday, to begin the new year with his hand in mine, I shall burn the will I made in my anger. If he does not. I shall know that is best as it is."

Can any words describe the eagerness with which I watched that line of road across the heath, sitting motionless in my intense anxiety, and praying silently from my heart? But the daylight waned, and neither a carriage nor a solitary figure broke that line of bleak road that ended on the horizon.

"Leave them," said the Squire, almost roughly staying my hand, as I attempted to close the shutters when the world was all in darkness, "leave them until this day—and this old year—are dead."

The physician, who came every day from Exeter, tried his best to woo my master from the gloom, saying when he found all other attempts fail, that he wanted to dine with him beside the fire. But no my master only shook his head gravely, and said he had a fancy for that seat to-night; and that his eyes were tired, and he did not need the light. So at last the physician went away, seeing he was useless, but he said he would return again early in the morning, for he himself had been alarmed by the change this one day had made in Mr. Capleton, though he evidently saw no immediate danger. He thought it a pity that Captain Warder should happen to be away for that night, and I did not of course tell him how glad I was.

When I returned to my master's

room, the firelight showed me his chair empty at the uncurtained window; and I was looking round in real alarm when he entered from the library. As he came forward, I saw that he carried a sealed packet, and my heart beat with joy when with it in his hand, he came towards the fire.

"Oh, master yes," I cried involuntarily, when he paused, burn it to-night."

He closed his long weak fingers over it. "If he comes," he whispered, huskily, "I shall burn it. That will be my birth-day gift to my repentant boy. If not—it is a just will—quite just, and it shall stand."

I saw it would be best to say no other word. His own longings to destroy the will was as strong as any persuasions could be, and I saw that there was no power which could urge him to it except his son's return—my poor, poor master.

So again we sat and watched, looking out into the darkness; and when the faintest sound broke the stillness, I could see, in the firelight, how my master started in his chair, his great hope hurrying his breath. Strange to say, as the darkness deepened, his confidence seemed to grow only the stronger and more steadfast, until at last, by its very simplicity, as well as force, it had inspired in me a confidence just as strong.

The weather had been fine all day, though the wind was high; and there had been fitful gleams of sunshine falling upon my master's old, worn face like the angel-touchees falling upon his heart. But after the sun had set, the weather changed, and each gust of wind sent noisy splashes of rain against the uncovered window panes. But, through all the dreariness of the night and the rain and the darkness, we sat on; watching without seeing, and listening intently for one sound which yet never could have been heard above the roar of the wind.

Once, during that long watch, I was summoned downstairs. I stood for a few minutes in the brightly-lighted kitchen, giving the usual orders which the servants needed, and after that the darkness of the Squire's room struck heavily upon my heart; but saddest of all was it to see the new attitude of eager expectancy in which I found him now. He was leaning forward on the arms of his chair, and he did not turn his face from the window even while he spoke to me in a low, hurried voice: "The moon has risen. Come quickly, Hester. When this cloud has passed we shall see the road across the heath. Wait! wait! It lay just now almost as clear as in daylight. The clouds are heavy, but after each passes we shall see. There! there!"

To be continued.