

Our conversation ran into one groove consisting of an inexhaustable and pleasant topic. You will not be far wrong when you guess this topic to be a lover's future hopes and plans.

"Of course I am very happy," Angela said, in answer to some of my remarks, "but do you know, Med., our marriage will be a rare and exceptional one."

"If you mean its rarity to be the fit sequel of true love, when so many *marriages de convenances* are the order of the day now, I agree with you, dear."

"You hardly take my meaning," replied Angela. "My marriage will be exceptional because it will be a very quiet one, and instead of my husband taking me to *his new* home I shall take him to *my old* home. Not for a dozen husbands would I leave my helpless father. The only difference will be that Hector will have to share my ministering offices."

Under the present circumstances I admitted the wisdom of this arrangement.

In the meantime I was on the horns of a dilemma. As yet we had kept our visits a secret from my father. Was it right to be silent about Hector's engagement and forthcoming marriage? But how dare we do so in the face of his extraordinary prohibition. And I also quite deemed myself the culprit in the matter, as I felt myself responsible for any unforeseen trouble that might hereafter arise from the present state of affairs.

The day fixed for the marriage drew near. It was to be a strictly private wedding. My brother, for reasons already explained, would not make it public, and Mr. Vinesly was averse to all parade and show.

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The day arrived at last. For once in a way the London sun shone brilliantly, and a cloudless azure sky beamed upon our smoke-begrimmed street. I made excuses to my father that I intended to spend the day with a friend, as my brother and I resolved not to divulge our secret just yet to him. After his prohibition it was not at all likely that he would give his consent to the marriage, and why should the happiness of the new couple be troubled by an unjustifiable whim? Later on, when it was an affair of the past, we could tell him all.

The marriage took place at a neighbouring church. I remember the blind father giving his daughter away, the dashing air of Hector's best man, the bright contented look of Hector and the

ravishing appearance of the lovely bride.

It was all over, and we adjourned home to lunch. Then Hector drove off with his life partner for an outing in the country, promising to return to "Milford House" in time for dinner.

"Med will look after you, father, dear," said Angela, as she tenderly kissed him, though I still fancied there was a hidden reluctance to leave him,—even to accompanying her husband.

I promised faithfully not to leave Mr. Vinesly till his daughter's return and thus fortified with my promise Angela departed.

The hours wore on agreeably for both of us. The plans, projects and happiness of the bride and bridegroom formed the topics of our discourse that never seemed to tire either of us. Soon the dinner hour approached, and we were on the tiptoe of expectation. Mr. Vinesly, whose other senses, like all the blind, were painfully acute, would often pause in his speech as if he heard a sound, which an ordinary ear might not catch. I only noted at intervals the rumbling of distant vehicles, the hum of passing voices, or the tramp of passers-by. There was no sound of the welcome knock which was to delight us both.

It was now long past the dinner hour, and there was no sign of the approach of the happy pair. I began to grow uneasy. My anxiety was afterwards toned with alarm.

Had anything happened to them? If so, what was it? Soon all kinds of horrible conjectures passed through my brain. But I repressed all I felt in my endeavours to calm Mr. Vinesly, who was now becoming vaguely alarmed.

But the hours wearily passed, and still the wanderers did not appear.

A foreboding of some certain disaster now took possession of me. What else could have kept them away from us at this time and on this day?

At last there was a sharp knock at the door, which made my heart beat violently. There was a sound of voices below, and the servant entered the room and handed me a telegram. As I opened it hastily and feverishly, I felt the hot grasp of Mr. Vinesly's hand in mine. With my whole attention centered on the message I seemed to feel the tremor that agitated his frame. I read on till with a sigh of relief I said:

"They are both well but will not return to-day."