

I severely blamed Hector for making this promise, and yet after a while, my interest in the romantic affair and the strong affection I had for my brother made me relent. For after all, it might only be an unreasonable whim on my father's part, whilst my own sympathies were entirely with Hector. Reasoning thus, I determined upon the visit.

"This is my sister Medora," said Hector introducing me to Miss Vinesly, who welcomed us very heartily. "Father, these are our neighbours, Mr. and Miss Arlford." Our fair hostess then introduced us to a tall, middle-aged man, whose air and bearing were distinguished by a certain stateliness, but whose manner nevertheless seemed abstracted and dreamy. As I gazed on him I discovered the cause of this; he was totally blind.

On hearing our names mentioned by his daughter, to my astonishment, a strange pallor crept over his face. Angela noticed it at once.

"Are you ill, father?" she said.

She immediately excused herself to us and led him out of the room.

On being left with my brother, I could not help whispering to him: "Is not this odd?" Evidently the same cause that had occasioned our father's prohibition to call at "Milford House" affected her father on hearing our names!

What mystery then had connected the lives of these two men in the past so as to so strangely affect their present relations? Sitting in the silence, waiting for our hostess, this questioning thought invaded both our minds. We did not discuss it; but it somehow already marred the pleasure of our visit.

As soon as Angela returned, we forgot all about it. Her bright *insouciance*, her vivacity and the inexpressible charm of her conversation dispelled unpleasant thought.

"You must come very often," she said, when we were about drawing our visit to a conclusion. "and you must not exact visit for visit—in fact, father never calls on anyone and I hardly ever go out without him."

This was pleasant assurance for us. At all events there was no danger of *their* calling on *our* father.

"No wonder you are in love with her," I said later on to Hector. "Why, I am in love with her myself."

The natural result of our first visit was a frequent renewal of them. At first I went for Hector's sake, afterwards I went

for my own. The charming companionship of Angela attracted me; and the affability and intellectual supremacy of her father fascinated me. No allusion was ever made to the strange effect which the mention of my name had occasioned him on my first interview.

I could see that his fondness for Angela and her solicitude for her father were beyond the reach of my description. The fact of his absolute dependence on her only seemed to spur her activities on his own account.

After a while, his regard for me increased, and altogether our acquaintance with the inmates of "Milford House" proved a source of real pleasure to us—despite the prohibition of our father.

To say that Hector made the most of his time and opportunities to create a favourable impression on his *inamorata*, would be a needless assertion on my part.

Unfortunately for him, his opportunities were not so favourable as they might have been; for as Angela seldom left her father, my brother's chances were few and far between. You will not wonder, then, that in my solicitude to serve my brother, I made the most of Mr. Vinesly's partiality for me by endeavouring to take Angela's place.

Accordingly, the course of true love ran smoother than one might have imagined, taking all circumstances into consideration. Reading Angela's nature by the light of my own, I could form a conclusive opinion upon her sentiments as far as Hector was concerned, and so I was not at all surprised when Hector one day informed me of the news I had anticipated.

"Med—good news for you. Angela has promised to be my wife." I have a vague impression now, at this distance of time, of the perfect delight which animated my brother's manner.

My congratulations for his future formed another and the concluding link to what was to follow.

IV.

Some days elapsed. It was summer time. The heat of the day had subsided, and slanting shadows fell upon South Audley street. The cool breath of the twilight hours came like a benison after the burden and heat of the day. I was sitting in the drawing room of "Milford House" with Angela. Her father had gone to take his afternoon nap. Hector was at home ready to make excuses for me in the event of any one enquiring for me.