

a very "queer man," according to his wife's opinion, and this fancy of his to have nasty, ugly fires all over the splendid mansion before the weather became cold enough, was one of his "eccentric freaks," Mrs. Mayberry called it, with a curl of her lip, a toss of the head and a smile, almost of contempt, directed at the hale, hearty, honest-faced old gentleman who had married her for her pretty face, ten years ago, when he was an immensely rich widower with his handsome half-grown son for a not undesirable incumbrance.

They were sitting around the handsome table discussing their seven o'clock dinner, with the solemn butler and his subordinate in silent, obsequious attention—these three Mayberrys, father, son, and the haughty, well-dressed lady who was wearing a decided frown of displeasure on her face—a frown she had barely power to restrain from degenerating into a verbal expression of anger while the servants were in waiting, and which, as the door finally closed on them, leaving the little party alone over the wine and nuts, burst forth impetuously:

"I declare, Mr. Mayberry, it is too bad! I have gone over the list of invitations you have made, and to think there is not one—no, not one—of our set among them, and such a horrid lot of people as you have named!"

Mr. Mayberry sipped his wine contentedly.

"I told you, didn't I, Marguerite, that it was my intention to give an old-fashioned dinner? And by that I meant, and mean, to whom it will, indeed, be cause for thankfulness. As to making a grand fuss, and seeing around our table only the people to whom a luxurious dinner is an everyday occurrence—I shall not do it. And as to the guests on my list being 'horrid' and 'common,' you are mistaken, my dear. None of them have a worse failing than poverty. There is not a 'common,' vulgar person among the ten names on that paper.

Mr. Mayberry's good old face lighted up warmly as he spoke, and Ernest Mayberry's handsome face reflected the satisfaction and pride he felt in his father's views.

Mrs. Mayberry flushed, but said nothing.

She knew from experience that, kind and indulgent as her husband was, there were times when he offered no appeal from his decision. And this was one of those times.

"We will have dinner ordered for twelve o'clock, as it used to be when I was a boy. We will have roast turkey, with cranberry sauce, and mashed potatoes and turnips, boiled onions and celery, and all on the table at once. For dessert, pie, cheese and cider, and nothing more. Marguerite, shall I give the order to Lorton, or will you attend to it?"

Mrs. Mayberry twisted her diamond rings almost roughly.

"Oh, don't ask me to give such an insane order to him! I have no wish to appear as a laughing-stock before my servants, Mr. Mayberry. It will be as severe a strain on my endurance as I am capable of to be forced to sit at a table with such people as the Hurds, and the Masons, and that Thyra Green and her lame brother, and that little old Wilmington and his granddaughter, and"—

Mr. Mayberry interrupted her gently—

"Old Mr. Wilmington was a friend of mine long before he went to India. Since he came home with his son's orphan daughter and lived in such obscurity—comfortable although plain, for Winnie earns enough as daily governess to support them cheaply—I regard him as more worthy than ever. Ernest, my boy, I shall depend upon you to help entertain our guests, and especially at table, for I shall have no servants about to scare them out of their appetites."

And Mr. Mayberry dismissed the subject by rising from the table.

"Would I like to go? Oh, grandpa, I should! Will you go, do you think?"

The little wizened old man looked fondly at her over his steel-rimmed glasses.

"So you'd like to accept Mr. Mayberry's invitation to dinner—oh, Winnie? You wouldn't be ashamed of your old-fashioned grandfather, eh, among the fine folk of the family? Remarkably fine folk, I hear, for all I can remember when Joe was a boy together with myself. Fine folk, Winnie, and you think we'd better go?"

"I would like to go, grandpa. I don't have many recreations—I don't want many, for I think contented

honest labour is the grandest thing in the world, and the best discipline—but, somehow, I can't tell why, but I want to go. I can wear my black cashmere, and you'll be so proud of me."

"Proud of you, indeed, my child, no matter what you wear. Yes, we'll go."

And thus it happened that among the ten guests that sat down at Josiah Mayberry's hospitable overflowing board that cold, blue-skied day, Winnie Wilmington and the little old man were two—and two to whom Ernest Mayberry paid more devoted attention than even his father had asked and expected.

Of course it was a grand success—all excepting the cold *hauteur* on Mrs. Mayberry's aristocratic face, and that was a failure, because no one took the least notice of it, so much more powerful were the influences of Mr. Mayberry's and Ernest's courteous, gentlemanly attentions.

"I only hope you are satisfied," Mrs. Josiah said, with what was meant to be withering sarcasm, after the last guest had gone, and she stood a moment before the fire; "I only hope you are satisfied—particularly with the attention Ernest paid to that young woman—very unnecessary attention, indeed."

Mr. Mayberry rubbed his hands together briskly.

"Satisfied? Yes, thankful to God I had it in my power to make them forget their poverty, if for only one little hour. Did you see little Jimmy Hurd's eyes glisten when Ernest gave him the second triangle of pie? Bless the youngsters' hearts, they won't want anything to eat for a week."

"I was speaking of the young woman who"—

Mrs. Mayberry was icily severe, but her husband cut it short.

"So you were—pretty little thing as ever I saw. A ladylike, graceful little girl, with beautiful eyes, enough to excuse the boy for admiring her."

"The boy! You seem to have forgotten your son is twenty-three—old enough to fall in love with, and marry, even a poor, unknown girl you were quixotic enough to invite to your table."

"Twenty-three? So he is. And if he wants to marry a beggar, and she is a good, virtuous girl—why not?"

A little gasp of horror and dismay was the only answer of which Mrs. Mayberry was capable.

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"Grandpa!"

Winnie's voice was so low that Mr. Wilmington only just heard it, and when he looked up he saw the girl's crimson cheeks and her lovely, drooping face.

"Yes, Winnie. You want to tell me something?"

"Grandpa, I want to tell you something."

She went up behind him, and leaning her hot cheek caressingly against his, her sweet, low voice whispering her answer—

"Grandpa, I want to tell you something. I—Mr. May—we—Ernest has asked—he wants me to—oh, grandpa, can't you tell me what it is?"

He felt her cheek grow hotter against his.

He reached up his hand and caressed the other one.

"Yes, I can tell, dear. Ernest has shown his uncommon good sense by wanting you for his wife. So this is what comes of that dinner—oh, Winnie?"

"And may I tell him you are willing, perfectly willing, grandpa? Because I do love him, you know."

"And you are sure it isn't his money you are after, eh?"

She did not take umbrage at the sharp question.

"I am at least sure that it is not my money he is after, grandpa," she returned, laughing and patting his cheek.

"Yes, you are at least sure of that; there, I hear the young man coming himself. Shall I go, Winnie?"

It was the "young man himself," Ernest Mayberry, with a shadow of deep trouble and distress on his face as he came straight up to Winnie and took her hand, and then turned to the old gentleman. He said:

"Until an hour ago I thought this would be the proudest, happiest hour of my life, sir, for I should have asked you to give me Winnie for my wife. Instead I must be content to only tell you how dearly I love her, and how patiently and hard I will work for her to give her the home which she deserves—because, Mr. Wilmington, this morning the house of Mayberry & Thurston failed, and both families are beggars."

His handsome face was pale, but his eyes were bright with a determination and braveness nothing could daunt.

Winnie smiled back upon him, her own cheeks paled.

"Never mind, Ernest, on my account. I can wait, too."

Old Mr. Wilmington's eyes were almost shut beneath the heavy, frowning forehead, and a quizzical look was on his shrewd old face as he listened.

"Gone up, eh? Well, that's too bad. You stay here and tell Winnie I am just as willing she shall be your wife when you want her, as if nothing had happened, because I believe you can earn bread and butter for both of you, and my Winnie is a contented little girl. I'll hobble up to the office and see your father; he and I were boys together; a word of sympathy won't come amiss from me."

And off he strode, leaving the lovers alone, getting over the distance in a remarkably short time, and presenting his wrinkled, weather-beaten old face in Mayberry & Thurston's private office, where Mr. Mayberry sat alone, with rigid face and keen, troubled eyes, that, nevertheless, lighted at the sight of his old friend.

"I'm glad to see you, Wilmington. Sit down. The sight of a man who has not come to reproach me is a comfort."

But Mr. Wilmington did not sit down.

He crossed the room to the table at which Mr. Mayberry sat among a hopeless array of papers.

"There is no use wasting words, Mayberry, at a time like this. Did you know your son has asked my Winnie to marry him?"

Mr. Mayberry's face lighted a second, then the gloom returned.

"If my son had a fortune at his command, as I thought he had yesterday at this time, I would say—'God speed you in your wooing of Winnie Wilmington.' As it is—for the girl's sake, I disapprove."

"So you haven't a pound over and above—eh, Mayberry?"

"There will be nothing—less than nothing. I don't know that I really care so much for myself, but Ernest—it is a terrible thing to happen to him at the very beginning of his career."

Mr. Wilmington smiled gleefully.

"Good. Neither do I care for myself, but for Winnie, my little Winnie. I tell you what, Mayberry; perhaps you will wonder if I am crazy, but I'll agree to settle a quarter of a million on Winnie the day she marries your boy. And I'll lend you as much more if it'll be any use, and I'll start the boy for himself, if you say so. Eh?"

Mr. Mayberry looked at him in speechless bewilderment.

Wilmington went on—

"I made a fortune out in India, and it's safe and sound in hard cash, in good hands—a couple of millions. I determined to bring my girl up to depend on herself, and to learn the value of money before she had the handling of her fortune. She has no idea she's an heiress—my heiress. Sounds like a story out of a book—oh, Mayberry? Well, will you shake hands on it, and call it a bargain?"

Mr. Mayberry took the little dried-up hand almost reverentially, his voice hoarse and thick with emotion.

"Wilmington, God will reward you for this. May He, a thousand-fold!"

Wilmington winked away a suspicious moisture on his eyelashes.

"You see it all comes of that dinner, old fellow. You acted like a charitable Christian gentleman, and between us we'll make the boy and Winnie as happy as they deserve—oh?"

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And even Mrs. Mayberry admits that it was a good thing that her husband gave that dinner, and when she expects to see Mrs. Ernest Mayberry an honoured guest at her board, she candidly feels that she owes every atom of her splendour and luxury to the violet-eyed, charming girl who wears her own honours with such sweet grace.

To act upon a determination made in anger is like embarking on a vessel during a storm.

THE domes of the great churches in St. Petersburg, Moscow, and some other Russian towns, are said to be plated with gold nearly a quarter of an inch thick. The church of the Saviour, in Moscow, represents a value of \$15,000,000, and the Isaac cathedral, in St. Petersburg, of \$45,000,000.