

"Look THERE, mamma!"

I looked in the direction my darling pointed, and saw an old gentleman seated in one of the arm-chairs. He seemed about seventy; his head was slightly bowed, his hands clasped, and he was apparently absorbed in thought. I gazed earnestly at him, but could not recall his features; in fact, he was to me perfectly a stranger.

Some moments passed thus. I then thought he must be a friend of the former tenants of our new abode, and that it was time, if he had thought to find them there, to acquaint him with his mistake.

With this resolution I approached and addressed him. He, however, neither looked at me, nor appeared to have heard me speak. Thinking he might be deaf, I repeated my observation in a higher key.

All in vain; he did not raise his head or pay me the slightest attention. I tried again, but was equally unsuccessful.

I now thought that my visitor must have lost his senses, and recalled all I had heard of lunatics eluding the vigilance of their keepers, and entering the quite haven of a family unexpectedly. With this idea I took my child's hand, and we left the room.

We entered the dining-room, and I rang the bell.

"MacTavish," I asked, when the butler came in, "has any one called to-day to see me?"

"No, ma'am."

"Or to inquire for the last occupants of this house?"

"No, ma'am."

"You are quite certain?"

"Yes, ma'am."

"Will you inquire if any of the maids have opened the front door to any one?"

"I know they have not, ma'am, as I have been about here all the afternoon."

"I wish you to inquire," I said.

MacTavish went off with an injured air; but presently returned with ill-concealed triumph to say that no one except himself had opened the hall-door that day.

I returned to the drawing-room. Our unexpected visitor was still there. It was now about four o'clock. I did not expect my husband till five; but oh! how I wished some magnetic power could bring him home.

Presently I was struck with the recollection that I had neither seen nor heard the drawing-room door open; this determined me on watching for our guest's departure. With this view, I seated myself near the door, and beguiled the time with my crochet. In about an hour, however, just as I had done counting a few stitches, I glanced towards the armchair—it was unoccupied!

"How could he have gone?" was my first thought, when I began to think; for I was wonder-stricken at first.

He certainly could not have gone to the door, or I must have seen him. I hastened to ring the bell; but when MacTavish appeared, I hardly knew what to say, feeling reluctant to let him know the strange incident till I had told my husband, so I asked:

"Has your master returned?"

"No, ma'am."

"Did you not open the front door just now?"

"No, ma'am; no one has passed in or out since."

I was puzzled, but at that moment George knocked, and MacTavish hastened down stairs. I felt relieved on seeing my husband, and soon told him all that had happened.

When I saw his air of wonder, and I may say doubt, I felt sorry that, in my anxiety to avoid any foundation for exaggerated stories, I had not called one of the servants to witness the stranger's visit; for though George did not absolutely refuse to believe me, he asked so many questions, that I almost began to doubt the evidence of my eyes.

Next morning passed as usual; but in the afternoon, George insisted on remaining at home with me, but he did not do so with a good grace; on the contrary, he was most restless, paced up and down the room, took the books from their shelves, opened them, but instead of reading, threw them about, examined every little article

on the chiffoniers and tables as though he had never seen them before, and fidgeted as if he was expecting some one to keep an appointment.

I laughingly reminded him that our friend had made no promise. Evening closed in, and our party was not increased. Next morning, George went out early. The cold just at this season was so intense, I was kept a prisoner at home. In the afternoon he stayed with me; no old gentleman appeared, and George was as impatient as before.

Three or four days passed in like manner. At last George, seemingly convinced that Georgina and I had been mistaken, left us one afternoon for his customary walk.

About four o'clock that day, habit induced me to glance at the arm-chair. The uninvited guest was THERE!

Knowing that he had not entered the room in any ordinary way, I did not like to approach him this time. Georgina, perceiving him also, crept close to me, and we left the room. I rang the dining-room bell for MacTavish, and he called the other servants. I was first to enter the drawing-room, and was slowly followed by a wondering train. Our old visitor did not move even to raise his head; we stood about him in silence: then, dismissing the rest, I kept my own maid with me. MacTavish waited in the entrance-hall for the departure of the old gentleman; however, our watch was useless—he disappeared as suddenly as he had appeared.

When my husband returned, he found the household in great agitation: no one now doubted of an unearthly visitor. George, however, ridiculed that idea, laughed at my pale face, and said it would never do to encourage or even allow our servants to believe such nonsense, or we should become the laughing-stock of the neighbourhood. I begged him not to leave me of an afternoon till he was convinced that this was no illusion. He said he would sooner stay at home till the expiration of our lease than miss seeing the "old gentleman," who was now our "household word."

However, his patience was not long tried this time; for the following afternoon, we were all three in the drawing-room. I was working, Georgina seated at my feet, my husband pacing up and down the room, sweeping unconsciously the anti-macassars off the chairs and sofas, catching his foot occasionally in my dress, and stopping his promenade only to examine the books and china, and lay them down again, but either upside down or in the wrong place; however, the mischief was not irreparable. That inspection over, George walked to the window and whistled.

Meantime my nerves were becoming strung to their utmost. It was almost four o'clock. I watched the time-piece, and when it pointed to four, I glanced at the chair: there was our guest! George, however, appeared to have forgotten all about him, and kept his back to us while he gazed from the window. My child took my hand, but remained where she was; I dared not move, but counted the moments till George should turn. At last he did so. Words cannot describe the amazement pictured in his countenance: he seemed thunder-stricken; but, soon recovering his self-possession, he walked up to and addressed our visitor. He, however, was not more successful than I had been; for the old gentleman neither raised his head even to glance at him, nor made the slightest movement, but appeared, as usual, absorbed in thought.

MacTavish found some excuse to enter the room to see the result of his master's vigil; he approached also; the other servants in a short time followed, as if guessing something was wrong. An astonished circle formed round the chair, and an agreement was made in whispers that none should stir till its occupant should go.

But how that came to pass was incomprehensible. He disappeared with the eyes of all our circle still fixed on him. How can I describe it? I can only say he was and he was not. In order to certify himself of this absence, my husband was going to seat himself in the chair; but Georgina interposed and would not suffer it, evidently in the fear that the chair might sink through the lowest depths of the earth.

My husband's next proceeding was to call on Mr. Letts, the house-agent, who seemed so overwhelmed with astonishment, that more simple people might have believed, that he had never heard of such a thing before.

However, in the evening my maid went out, and in some of the shops near inquired about the house as if she had been a stranger to it; and heard that no one stayed very long in it; some of the less cautious of these usual gossip-retailers told of an old gentleman who had been seen in it for many years, but who never "did any harm."

Next morning I had a severe attack of neuralgia, an occasional tormentor, then brought on by the agitation of the preceding days. George fetched a doctor, and we related to him the extraordinary incident that had befallen us. He readily admitted that he had often heard the story, and strongly advised our breaking our lease, and added that I must have a complete change of air and scene. My husband called again on Mr. Letts, who, after much pressure, allowed that, because there were some rumours, which of course he did not believe, afloat about this house, he had let us have it as favourably for ourselves as possible, and sooner than have anything said about it, or, as he put it, have any disagreement, he would take it off our hands. We moved into an hotel till our packing was accomplished. My maid requested MacTavish's presence as a protection while she removed from the drawing-room all that I had placed in it. When all was ended, we sent our servants to our old home; and my husband, my child, and I came abroad to divert our minds, rather overstrained hitherto, and endeavour to forget our "uninvited guest of E."

PSYCHE.

SONNET I.

SHE sat on a low bank, where wild flowers wreathed
Their rich and varied blooms beneath her feet,
And the light zephyrs, fluttering o'er them, breathed
Upon her cheek, her lip, each stolen sweet—
On its gay painted wings, around her flies
Her beauteous emblem: now upon her head
It rests, and now like a winged flower lies
Amid her clustering hair—can she understand
The playful mute appeal—what doth she there,
Regardless of the flowers, the perfumed air,
And her bright playmate? All things round her make
An atmosphere of beauty. She the queen,
Where all is lovely; will she not awake
And be the fair and living spirit of the scene?

SONNET II.

PSYCHE TEMPTED TO OPEN PANDORA'S BOX.
She stirs not from her trance; her head aside
Is turned; her lips apart, as if she sought
To speak, yet feared to hear her uttered thought.
Why is her cheek with deeper blushes dyed?
Deeper yet varying; her hands enfold
A casket docketed with orient gems and gold;
Perhaps some spell to stay her lover's flight,
And bind the boy god in his own sweet chain;
Why (being such) doth she avert her sight,
Yet still with firmer clasp her prize retain?
Like the white feathers of the gentle dove
Stirred by the breeze, her trembling fingers move
Above the lid she fears, yet fain would lift—
Resist the impulse, Psyche, 'tis Pandora's gift!

SONNET III.

THE ESCAPE OF THE ILLS OF LIFE.
'Tis done; she faints; she falls in deathlike swoon—
Her nerveless hand resigns the fatal boon;
And whilst in blest unconsciousness she lies,
Forth from the opened lid dark forms arise
In vapour confusion; sorrow now
Takes from the day its brightness; woe shall bow
The frame and wring the heart; suspicion find
Her whispering voice; from disappointment's hand
The rose receives its thorn; contention's brand
Glow with undying flame; revenge shall bind
The murderer to his oath—but see there springs
From the dark mass a form with azure wings;
Roll o'er the earth, ye waves of woe and ill,
Revive, fair Psyche! Hope is left us still.

* The butterfly.

A. W. A.