

back to a consciousness of utter bereavement and insupportable anguish—anguish written in such awful characters upon his pallid and writhen brow, that Beatrice and her uncle exchanged glances of wonder and alarm.

But Ishmael, in his fixed agony, did not perceive the look of anxiety they turned towards him—did not even perceive the passage of time or space, until they arrived at home again, and the wedding guests began to alight from the carriages.

The party temporarily separated in the hall, the ladies dispersing each to her own chamber to make some trifling change in her toilet before appearing in the drawing-room.

'Ishmael, come here, my dear lad,' said the judge, as soon as they were left alone.

Ishmael mechanically followed him to the little breakfast parlour of the family, where on the sideboard sat decanters of brandy and wine, and pitchers of water, and glasses of all shapes and sizes.

He poured out two glasses of brandy—one for himself and one for Ishmael.

'Let us drink the health of the newly-married couple,' he said, pushing one glass towards Ishmael, and raising the other towards his own lips.

But Ishmael hesitated, and poured out a tumbler of pure water, saying, in a faint voice:

'I will drink her health in this!'

'Nonsense! put it down. You are chilled enough without drinking that to throw you into an ague! Drink something warm and strong, boy! Drink something warm and strong! I tell you, I, for one, cannot get through this day without some such support as this,' said the judge, authoritatively, as he took from the young man's nerveless hand the harmless glass of water, and put into it the perilous glass of brandy.

For ah! good men do wicked things sometimes, and wise men foolish ones.

Still Ishmael hesitated; for even in the midst of his great trouble he heard the 'still, small voice' of some good angel—it might have been his mother's spirit—whispering him to dash from his lips the circean draught, that would indeed allay his sense of suffering for a few minutes, but might endanger his character through all his life and his soul through all eternity. The voice that whispered him, as I said, was a 'still, small voice,' speaking softly within him. But the voice of the judge was blunt and hearty, and he stood there, a visible presence, enforcing his advice with strength of action.

And Ishmael, scarcely well assured of what he did, put the glass to his lips and quaffed the contents, and felt at once falsely exhilarated.

'Come, now! We will go into the drawing-room! I dare say they are all down by this time,' said the judge. And in they went.

He was right in his conjecture; the wedding guests were assembled there.

And soon after his entrance the sliding doors between the drawing-room and the dining-room were pushed back, and Devine, who was the presiding genius of the wedding feast, appeared and announced that breakfast was served.

The company filed in—the bride and bridegroom walking together, and followed by the bridesmaids and the gentlemen of the party.

Ishmael gave his arm to Beatrice. Mr. Brudenell conducted Mrs. Middleton, and the judge led one of the lady guests.

The scene they entered upon was one of splendour, beauty, and luxury, never surpassed even by the great Versailles and Devine themselves! Painting, gilding and flowers had not been spared. The walls were covered with frescoes of Venus, Psyche, Cupid, the graces and the muses, seen among the rosy bowers and shady groves of Arcadia. The ceiling was covered with celestial scenery, in the midst of which was seen the cloudy court of Jupiter and Juno and their attendant gods and goddesses; the pillars were covered with gilding and wined with flowers, and long wreaths of flowers connected one pillar with another, and festooned the doorways and windows and the corners of the room.

The breakfast table was a marvel of art—blazing with gold plate, blooming with beautiful and fragrant exotics, and intoxicating with the aroma of the richest and rarest viands.

At the upper end of the room a temporary raised and gilded balcony wreathed with roses was occupied by Durand's celebrated band, who, as the company came in, struck up an inspiring march composed expressly for the occasion.

The wedding party took their seats at the table and the feasting began. The viands were carved and served and praised. The bride's cake was out and the slices distributed. The ring fell to one of the bridesmaids and provoked the usual badinage. The wine circulated freely.

Mr. Middleton arose and in a neat little speech proposed the fair bride's health.

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