A WISE LITTLE WOMAN.

Louisa Clare had gone out for a walk quite early that morning, and, as it was Saturday, she had lingered over her enjoyment of the beautiful day, the fresh, sweet air, and the cool breeze from the sea. Louisa was a school-teacher, and, I'm quite sure, not one of the noisy, wild young creatures whom she taught to guide in the paths of knowledge enjoyed the weekly holiday as she did.

But even Saturday was not all holiday—she had brought home some exercises to correct, and copy-books to look over, and she began to reflect that she could not afford to stay out much longer, even on holiday morning. She had sat down to rest—for her long walk had tired her—on a seat formed by an old tree-trunk that had lain long enough to be all green and moss-covered, and only a little way in front of her the sea washed up against the rough, shingly beach. Louisa still lingered, and flung little loose stones into the water, and as each skimmed the surface and disappeared, she thought, "Now, I must really go—this will be the last."

Then, with an effort, she rose, and turned resolutely toward home, and as she did so she became aware of the figure of a man at a little distance. He was walking rapidly toward her, and though she scarcely recognized him, she was conscious of a familiar look about his appearance—his figure, his walk—altogether he looked like some one she ought to remember, yet could not. As he came quite close, she uttered an exclamation which signified at once recognition and surprise, and she stood still, staring at him and wondering.

It was Mr. Glover—Glover the millionaire, as some people called him, but he was scarcely worth $1,000,000, although he was, past all doubt, the great man and the rich man of the place. Among other things he was a power in the school where Louisa taught, and in that way she had seen him occasionally, and had even exchanged words with him now and then. But never in all her experience had Louisa seen Mr. Glover—or any one else—look as that gentleman now looked. His face wore the pallor of the dead; his eyes were wild and haggard; his dress disordered, and his movements uncertain and shaky, like a drunken man's. He would have passed her by, unconscious of her presence, without a look; but Louisa stepped forward, laid her hand heavily on his arm and called him sharply by his name.

In long years after she often said that something told her she must do so.

Mr. Glover stopped and looked at her stupidly, as though the sound of his own name was strange to him, and he was trying to think what it had to do with him or why it was spoken to him.

Louisa was frightened at herself, as well as at him, and began to tremble; and then her eyes filled up with tears that presently rolled down over her cheeks.

"Oh, Mr. Glover," she sobbed, "what is the matter—what is the matter."

And then Mr. Glover—who was a good deal of a gentleman by nature—seeing a woman in tears, forgot his own trouble and looked at her attentively.

"Why, it is Miss Clare—little Miss Clare, the school-ma'am!" he said, as he recognized her. "And, what is the matter with you, my dear? Why do you cry, and who has been annoying you?"

"No one—oh, no indeed—and there's nothing the matter except that you seem to be in such deep trouble, sir, and—I was afraid."

"And that's why you are afraid—you cry for me?" asked Mr. Glover; "can it be possible?"

He sat down on the moss-covered tree-trunk where Louisa had been resting, and motioning to her to do so also he said:

"Sit down, Miss Clare, sit down."

Louisa obeyed instantly.

"Are you very unhappy, Miss Clare?" asked Mr. Glover.

"Unhappy, sir—about what?"

"Oh! nothing in particular. I mean merely in a general way."

"I am not unhappy at all, sir."

"Is it possible? And yet, your salary—let me think. I believe it is something about $300 a year that they give you?"

"Just $300 a year, sir."

"And yet you are not unhappy!"

"Very seldom. I am very happy, on the contrary. Ah! sir—it is not alone the possession of money that makes people happy."

And then, fearing that she had said something so personal it might be rude—for Mr. Glover was so rich and so evidently not happy—Louisa felt the color mount to her cheeks, and her eyes dropped before the intent gaze of her companion.

"Do you think a man might ever be happy, and yet quite poor?" asked Mr. Glover—"so poor that, compared with what he had been, his position would be one almost of poverty?"

"Oh! yes," said Louisa, with a gentle confidence in her own words; "I am quite sure of that; for what does the most extravagant wealth give more than one can enjoy simply by having enough? One can only eat or drink or sleep enough—at least one ought not to do so any more than enough," she added, with a smile; "and those who do are not happier for it."

Mr. Glover looked at her as though she had solved the great problem of existence.

"What a wise little woman!" he said; and then drawing a pistol from his pocket, he rose, took a few steps forward, and flung the weapon from him with such force that it went singing through the air and fell into the water beyond.

Louisa had started up with a scarcely repressed cry of fright, but as Mr. Glover returned and reseated himself, she sat down beside him.

"Miss Clare," he said, earnestly and gratefully, "you have saved me from committing a great crime. I came out here to kill myself with that pistol that you have seen me throw away; and but for your intervention, the tears in your gentle eyes, and the hopeful courage in your voice, I would have done it. I will tell you now—what all the world will know to-morrow—I am a ruined man. But I will not die like a coward; I will live and face the music, as they say. Good-bye, you wise little woman. You have saved a life—more, perhaps—you have saved an immortal soul this morning simply by being the brave, contented, hopeful being that you are. Good-bye! good-bye!"

He wrung her hand hard enough to bring the tears in her eyes, and turned away, while Louisa went home rather dizzy, her heart in a whirl, and altogether too much amazed by the scene just ended to think much about her own share in it.

When the state of Mr. Glover's money affairs become public, there was the usual nine days' wonder. He yielded everything to his creditors, and found that they were more nearly satisfied than he had hoped for; they even left him a little house which was once rented at a low rate to Louisa Clare's mother, and which Louisa, in her wildest dreams of future grandeur, had once or twice wished might some day become hers. Beyond that he had absolutely nothing; but he was still an able man. He had failed honorably, and people were willing to trust him. And after it was all over he went one day to see Louisa, and told her that he found she was right; his state of mind was far from desperate. Indeed, he was almost happy.

After that he went to see the little school-teacher quite often—indeed so often that he seriously interfered with her duties; and when she came to know him quite well she used to tell him so, with the sauciest toss of her head, and a faint blush on her pink cheeks.

"I can't help it, dear," said Mr. Glover—he often called her so, for he was many years older than Louisa, and she was such a child-like little creature. "You are my counsellor—my comforter—my all in the world! More than wealth, or houses or land—and though it looks as if I was going to be a rich man some time, Louisa, it will be nothing to me without the wisest little woman in the world to show me what to do with my money, and the best way to make it a real source of happiness to myself and others."

So it came to pass that Louisa said "Yes," being much entreated, and she went to live in the house she had vaguely dreamed of for years before.

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