

"What a strange place is this world, of which people think so little! Things occur in it that make one lean towards fatalism. Take, for instance, both our lives. How I was striving, almost despairing here, when all the while fate was bringing towards me one who was to banish despair for ever before hope."

"It is very strange, considering that your name was Warno," laughed Elaine. "A reason that, had you been related to a certain Ambrose Warno, would have made us rather your enemies than friends."

"Why?"

He smiled.

"Because he is our uncle; and a cruel, selfish miser."

"Indeed!"

Thinking, as matters stood, he might know our history, I told him. When I ended, Gerald said, laughing:

"I look like the relation or friend of a wealthy man, do I not?" and he glanced at his shabby attire.

So the days went by, happy days too. Winter came, by which time Gerald and Elaine were engaged.

It was one evening after this that I sat waiting for her return. The tea was ready, but I never began until she came. The weather had set in with exceeding severity. There had been a heavy snowfall, a partial thaw, then frost, rendering the streets like glass.

That made me nervous when Elaine's usual hour passed, and she did not appear. A dozen times in twenty minutes I looked at the clock, and walked from the table to the window.

The darkness was coming on rapidly. Few people passed; those who did walked wearily. One or two fell, but there was no sign of Elaine. Half an hour later! This had never occurred before. The state of the weather made me anxious. At last I went up to Gerald's room to tell him.

"Your sister not returned!" he exclaimed, springing up.

"No; she has never been out so late, and the streets are like glass," I said, "It makes me nervous."

"Do not be that; I'll soon see," he replied. "I'll go to Mr. Morrison's."

Already he had taken his hat; now, as anxious as I, he ran downstairs and from the house, when I returned to my window to watch. Suddenly I cried, starting to my feet, and clasping my hands.

"Oh, it's true! There has been an accident!"

A brougham had driven up and stopped at the door. A moment I had seen Elaine's white face inside, then an old gentleman got out and knocked. I flew to the door and opened it.

"Oh, what has happened?" I cried

"There—there," said the old gentleman, harshly, "don't go making a fuss! Your sister didn't, and she had more cause—you're Miss Warno, I suppose? Well, your sister slipped down and sprained her ankle; there were a lot of roughs about, so I just asked her name, where she lived, and brought her home. Now, if you are as sensible a young woman as she appears to be, you'll just come and assist her into the house."

I followed him at once to the brougham, and together we helped Elaine, who declared it was nothing but a sprain, into our room, and made her lie on the couch.

Then we thanked the stranger, who had so well played the Samaritan.

"No thanks—no thanks," he interrupted. "She was not quite a stranger to me. I've seen her often—wet or shine going to her work. You call it work, eh, or are you too proud?"

"Too proud to call things by their right names!" I smiled. "No indeed. We are only proud of having honest work to do."

"I like that," he said, looking into my face. "If all people were of your sort the world would get on better. I'm sorry I didn't know you before. I shall know you better now. I shall call again."

He took his hat, looked around the room, protruded and pursed up his lips, then said abruptly:

"I may as well tell you the truth at once. I've been watching you. I liked that independent letter you wrote. I like you—I'm your uncle Ambrose Warno."

"Uncle Ambrose!" we cried, in amazement.

"Yes; I'm going to adopt both of you," curtly. "I've a son I've turned out of doors because he is idiot enough to prefer art to commerce—starvation to a good joint."

At this instant Gerald entered breathlessly.

"Miss Warno, I can find no trace of Elaine," he began; then he started back, exclaiming, "Good Heavens! Father!"

"What—you here—you scamp!" ejaculated the old man.

"Oh, sir!" exclaimed Elaine, reaching his hand and clasping it, "is he your son? then if you forgive us you must forgive him. One day, believe me, he will make us all proud of the name we bear."

"Will he!" cried uncle Ambrose. "When he does that, I'll forgive him."

"Then, father," said Gerald, extending his hand, "I ask neither money nor help. Only let it be a friendly truce until that happy time arrives."

Uncle Ambrose hesitated, but finally took his son's hand.

And what was the result? This: The next year all London was speaking of Gerald's picture hung in one of the Academies. A month later he went to study at Rome, taking his wife with him, while I was uncle Ambrose's housekeeper, until—until—well, somebody else wanted me to be his.

So, to our dark cloud you see, uncle Ambrose, after all, was—THE SILVER LINING.

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