

him on business. As they parted, "you had best turn back, Stanley, with Mr. Miller," said his father—"it's getting late, and every minute will seem an hour to your mother, while we are both gone. I shall be back in time for her tea—if I am not, tell her not to wait for me."

Thus they parted, the father walking rapidly off in one direction, the son running in the other with the light heart and feet of childhood, neither father nor son feeling the slightest premonition of what awaited them—not one of those obscure anxieties that, arising spontaneously from the sadness of human experience, are afterwards interpreted into the shadows of coming events.

"Is my sister asleep?" asked Stanley, bursting into his mother's room.

"No," replied his mother, smiling at the dignified designation of the little morsel of humanity in her arms, "but where is your father?"

"In Cherry-street, I suppose. It was Cherry-street, was it not, he said he was going to? It was so late he sent me back, and I was so afraid of finding the baby asleep that I have run all the way, so he'll not be here this long while—my father said you must not wait tea for him. Mother, how long will it be before my sister will sit up at the table with us? then we shall have one for each side of the table, and I can sit opposite to her where I can always look at her—oh, mother! mother! I can't tell you how happy I am! I have got a sister, is the first thought when I wake in the morning, and the last at night; to tell you the truth, mother, if it were not for you and father, I would rather we were poor than rich, for if we were poor I could work for her day and night, and teach her and serve her, but now if father gets his great fortune, I can do nothing for her."

"Never fear, my dear boy, love is the spirit's food, and, rich or poor, your love will be your sister's best treasure." Stanley continued to pour out his full heart, and for a while the mother was absorbed in her children, but after a little time she began to wonder her husband did not return. The servant came twice unbidden to ask if he should bring the tea things, and Mrs. Gretton, remembering it was his holiday evening, told him to arrange the tea-service, and go; and there it remained untouched. The fond brother sat down by the nurse, and unsuspecting of any possible danger to his father, he laid his head on her knee and fell asleep with his cheek touching the baby's: thence he was removed, in most happy unconsciousness of impending evil, to bed. The tea-kettle con-

tinued its wearisome song till the last coal of the chafing-dish died away. The nurse having secured her own tea, remonstrated against Mrs. Gretton deferring hers, repeating the aphorism so satisfactory to the unanxious, and vexing to the fearful, "there's no use in worrying, ma'am, nothing can have happened; I wish ma'am knew some folks' husbands there's one of my ladies—I don't mention his name, for 't make it a principle never to tell secrets of families where I nurse—but ma'am can guess; it an't far off; he's never home till after 12 o'clock; and there's Mrs. Upham—that's a slip, I did not mean to mention his name—she never thinks of asking if her husband is at home or not; to be sure, it's a comfort to have a regular husband like Mr. Gretton, but then it makes one dreadful anxious, so it has its disadvantages." Nurse's buzzing, as may be supposed, had rather a tendency to increase Mrs. Gretton's restlessness, but never dreaming that possible, she continued: "Ma'am don't consider it's New-Year's night, and the city is full of parties; Mr. Gretton has run in to some friend's house, and time, as it were, runs away much faster with a husband abroad than with a wife sick at home."

Even this equivocal comfort Mrs. Gretton would gladly have received, if she could, as the evening wore on, and hour after hour struck Ten, eleven, twelve came, and the nurse insisted with professional authority on the poor lady composing herself. The candles were extinguished, the night-lamp lighted, and the attendant laid herself down and realized Sancho's description of sleep; for sleep and the blanket covered her at the same moment. But there was no sweet approach of sleep to the alarmed wife as she lay listening to the signal sounds of the wasting night; the quick tread of people hastening to their homes; the roll of carriages returning from parties; the loud voices of festive rioters dying away in the distance. To these succeeded the awful eloquent silence wraps the thronged city at the dead of night, interrupted only by the watchman's rattle suggesting the evil things that are prowling about the unconscious and defenceless.

Poor Mary Gretton! All the nerves in her body seemed resolved into the sense of hearing. Every three minutes she raised her head from the pillow, and laid it throbbing down. She drew her baby close to her bosom, and tried to calm herself with its soft breathings; the beating of its little heart, seemed rather to excite her nerves, and again she laid it from her; and though she had not put her foot