

doubtedly this nutting party detained by the storm had accepted the invitation of the Schuylers to spend the night, and take an early morning ride. It would have been a perfectly reasonable thing to do, because they probably feared another storm, and besides, they would naturally dislike to disturb several families by coming home at a late hour. In fact the more he thought about it, the more certain he was that there was no occasion for anxiety; her daughter was undoubtedly sleeping quietly.

Then Mrs. Edmonds rose up and reached for her lamp, and her voice had a dignified tinge :

"I beg your pardon, Mr. Maxwell, I ought not to have disturbed you; of course you cannot be expected to understand. I am sure you mean to comfort me, but my daughter would not for one moment have consented to spending the night away from home, and leaving me in suspense and anxiety concerning her. Even if she had not promised, she would not have done such a thing; but her last words to me were that she should be at home before ten. I knew the storm must detain them, however, and rested quietly until near midnight; but the sky has been entirely clear since a little before ten. There is no conceivable reason except by accident which could have kept my daughter from me; but of course you do not understand."

He intercepted her hand and took charge of the little lamp again.