

the string, lying on the ledge of the bookcase near his chair, she was careful to seem unconscious of its existence. If she spoke of it, where would be the surprise? To-morrow morning, on the breakfast-table, the parcel would be lying by her plate. Then would be the moment of surprise: but not now.

To-day, however, she had forgotten it was the 14th of November.

"You and Stone," said Mr Burgoyne, "should go for a good spin on your wheels this afternoon. The roads must be in fine condition after these winds. You must have a good long ride."

"But what will *you* do?"

"Oh, I shall amuse myself very well. I think I will take a little stroll before tea. I will ask Effie to go with me."

"No, I'll come with you. Effie shall go for the ride, and I'll go for the walk with you. Effie will enjoy the ride, and I would rather——"

"Effie will not mind going with me just for once," and Mr Burgoyne smiled, and his blue eyes twinkled with an almost roguish enjoyment of the deception he was practising. "In fact I have asked Effie, and she does not mind."

Then Mrs Burgoyne remembered that it was the 14th of November, and meekly submitted to be dismissed for the afternoon. Of course he wanted Effie to assist him in selecting the surprise.

After luncheon Mr Burgoyne, with his fellow-conspirator, waited until the bicyclists had been safely despatched on their journey, and then, hastily putting on his loose cape, he was at once eager to sally forth.

Behind the house the ground dropped sharply and there was a sheltered hollow where trees grew well. On the other side of this snug little valley the chalk cliff rose again in curious terraces, with intermediate grass slopes, until the flat down or tableland of open country was reached. On the crest of this inner cliff stood the first of the windmills which, like a line of sentineis, guarded the hedgeless fields and the five or six miles of broad high road as it crossed the down.