

sun's size compresses itself into a room twenty-six feet by eighteen, sunworshippers naturally feel it hot and blinding and do not breathe comfortably. But he had a fanciful notion that, once out in the expansive air, this bright being's brightness was not so oppressive—that she had more room to shine without overwhelming—and so he marched along filling himself gratefully with her sunshine, entirely oblivious of the fact that, to the eye of the general public, it was not sunlight but darkly drifting clouds and death-dealing October winds that were in possession of the horizon. All happy moments are moments of silence. Words are but the strugglings through which they come or the sighs with which they go. This short, silent walk was a moment of beautiful felicity for young Rohan—felicity so reverent, so unearthly, it reminded him (be it without impiety said) of his feelings as an altar-boy when changing the flowers or lights about the Blessed Sacrament during the Forty Hours' Adoration.

As they passed the lodge-gate, with the stone catamountains grinning from the pillars overhead, the winds were prowling murderously among the branches of the great elm-tree avenue, and the killed and wounded autumn leaves were falling around them at every blast. Now and again, the moon managed to tear its way out of the clouds, as if to detect the night-winds at their deadly work; but the moment after it was thrust back behind the hurrying black clouds, as if by a brutal cordon of policemen in their dark great-coats. As they passed a point where the umbrageous shadows of the avenue were thickest, just where it opened into the wide sweep of the lawn and gravel before the Castle steps, Snipe, who had been caracolled nimbly after the shadows raised by the occasional bursts of moonlight, suddenly barked violently, and then fell back with a yell of pain. The two young people started. At the same moment a torn streak of moonlight shot across the avenue, and they saw a dark figure springing over the wire paling from the angry dog. It was the work of an instant. The figure was buried in a dense shrubbery, and all was still. It might have been some optical fancy, only that Snipe's deep growl was still breaking the silence.

"Who—what could it be?" she said in a tremulous whisper, catching him irresolutely by the arm.

"I suppose somebody about the Castle—perhaps some fellow with an eye upon the pheasants," he replied, not knowing particularly what he said. "Nobody that will harm you, Miss Westropp, anyway."

"I am such a wretched coward," she said, letting go his arm and walking steadily forward to the door. "Thank you, Mr. Rohan. Mrs. Keyes will teach me courage until Harry comes," she said, extending her hand, as he pulled at the housekeeper's bell. "I wonder has he come?" she added, almost to herself, looking round with a shudder at the mournful night and the dark screen of foliage in which the figure had disappeared; and she somehow slightly drew in her hand.

"Bless my soul, Miss, and isn't Master Harry with you?" exclaimed the old prim-capped housekeeper, who herself stood in the doorway.

"Then he is not in—nor Captain MacCarthy?"

"The Captain, you know, Miss, has his latch-key; but he hasn't been in to dinner—has not been in since morning."

"Is—is there anything to fear? Can anything have happened? Tell me—do!—do not be afraid to trust me!" she said, turning to her companion with a white, grave face.

"Not that I know, Miss Westropp—certainly not," he replied; but the news in the morning papers flashed back upon his mind, and no what he thought of it, the man who clambered over the fence was dragging something like a rifle with him. She noticed by the lamplight the spasm of doubt crossing his face, and he saw her own face grow whiter. "I will try if I can't beat up Harry and the Captain, or"—a thought suddenly struck him—"maybe Mrs. Keyes and yourself will allow me to stay with you till they come—it cannot be very long."

"God bless us! my darling child—how frightened you look!—as if you had seen something!" cried the old housekeeper, drawing the shrinking figure within her arms. "Yes, Mr. Rohan, certainly, you will stay," she said, decisively. "Something has frightened her."

"Only a man that the dog barked at in the plantation beyond—some poacher, I dare say, or somebody making a short cut home through the Park," said Ken Rohan, following the housekeeper through a shadowy, gaping corridor to the little snuggery Mabel had fitted up for her guests among the vast solitudes of the dreary mansion—like one of the little Arab cooking-fires you see nestling among the colossal pink-granite ruins of Memphis. Miss Westropp would have it that she was now all right; but the housekeeper would insist on dragging her off to her own little room to take off her things and douche her wrists and temples with eau-de-cologne. Ken took a turn or two up and down opposite the glowing hearth, on which a fire of pine-logs and peat was frisking and crackling merrily. Then something seemed to draw him towards the quaint trifoliated window, and he found himself again surveying the spot where the figure had started out of the darkness and as quickly returned to it. The moon had again obtained a momentary ascendancy over the rebellious clouds, and was flashing out and back with the warring fortunes of the moment. His eye suddenly rested on the penumbra of a man cast by the moonlight beyond the fringe of the deeper mass of shade made by the trees. The shadow paced up and down measuredly. It stopped, and a second shadow crept up from the gloom of the avenue, and the two seemed to hold ghostly communion together, after which both shadows shrank back into the mass of gloom. Again the moon got the worst of it in the elemental war, and all was darkness.

"I am afraid I have not distinguished myself," said a voice behind, and turning with a start he saw that Miss Westropp had re-entered the room. "I have made, oh! so many valiant resolutions, and then at the first shadow of danger—oh, that shadow!" she again broke down into a shuddering whisper, and sank into a chair. "I do wish that Harry would come!"

"Of course he will come. If you had seen as many shadows as Harry and I have seen together by moonlight lately, one wayfarer more or less after dark would not strike you as very odd," he replied with a cheery smile.

"You have not told me—I do want you to tell me—truly—is there trouble coming? and do you really, really think it is not madness for our poor unarmed peasant lads to think of coping with British regiments and artillery—heavy guns that would smash through this house as easily as if it were cardboard?" she asked, looking him earnestly in the face.

He started. It was the first time the question had ever presented itself to his own mind so pointedly. "It would be indeed impossible not to answer such a question as that truly," he said, his head involuntarily bending in homage to the sweet searching face that was fixed upon him. "My answer is that I do not know, and I have no right to ask. There are soldiers at the head of this movement—veterans of the greatest war of the century. Captain Mike is but one of thousands—one of tens of thousands who are dispersed through every parish in the country, or awaiting the signal to embark on ships that will bring them to this very Bay. The men who carried the Cemetery Heights at Gettysburg may be trusted to know their business. It is theirs to decide what is to be done. We of the rank-and-file have only to wait till the word is passed and do it. I have told you all I know, Miss Westropp, except this—that, upon my honor, I am not aware of any immediate peril pending in this locality."

"My poor Harry!" she said, bursting into tears.

How he seemed to envy Harry the danger, the death, that would make such tears flow for him! How reverently he would kiss the bullet that would entitle him to them! And oh! to think of kissing those tears away on a field of victory. He sat silent, as though a word would be sacrilegious.

"How you must despise me?" she said, looking up all at once with a sad smile breaking through glassy barriers. "Do you know, I have been schooling myself to this ever so long—persuading myself that, when the time comes, I should surrender Harry to his country like a heroine—and you see the result, the moment even a shadow seems to cross me!"

"I fancy," said Ken Rohan, "women bear the apprehension of danger worse than men, but meet the reality more bravely."

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