

"Thank you, no," I answered, hardly knowing what my words were.

"Then good-night," she said, and, nodding kindly, turned and entered one of the houses.

We also turned in silence, and walked out of the court.

"Why didn't you go with her?" said Roger, as soon as we were in the street.

"I'm sorry I didn't, if you wanted to go, Roger; but——"

"I think you might have gone, seeing I was with you," he said.

"I don't think it would have been at all a proper thing to do, without knowing more about her," I answered, a little hurt. "You can't tell what sort of a place it may be."

"It's a good place wherever she is, or I am much mistaken," he returned.

"You may be much mistaken, Roger."

"True. I have been mistaken more than once in my life. I am not mistaken this time, though."

"I presume you would have gone if I hadn't been with you?"

"Certainly, if she had asked me, which is not very likely."

"And you lay the disappointment of missing a glimpse into the sweet privacy of such a home to my charge?"

It was a spiteful speech, and Roger's silence made me feel it was, which, with the rather patronising opinion I had of Roger, I found not a little galling. So I too kept silence, and nothing beyond a platitude had passed between us when I found myself at my own door, my shopping utterly forgotten, and something acid on my mind.

"Don't you mean to come in?" I said, for he held out his hand at the top of the stairs to bid me good-night. "My husband will be home soon, if he has not come already. You needn't be bored with my company—you can sit in the study."

"I think I had better not," he answered.

"I am very sorry, Roger, if I was rude to you," I said; "but how could you wish me to be hand-and-glove with a woman who visits people who she is well aware would not think of inviting her if they had a notion of her surroundings? That can't be right, I am certain. I protest I feel just as if I had been reading an ill-invented story—an unnatural fiction. I cannot get these things together in my mind at all, do what I will."

"There must be some way of accounting for it," said Roger.

"No doubt," I returned; "but who knows what that way may be?"

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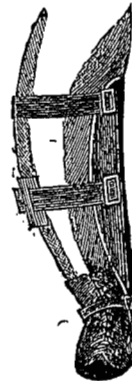
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