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Democratic Watchman

Bellefonte, Pa., January 16, 1903.

MY DAY'S A-COMING

I know my saying's common. But it's no less wrong for that. (It's like some other proverbs That we rattle off so pat.) It's not a healthy doctrine. For it brings too little cheer. Don't say, "My day's a-comin'!" Why, your day is always here!

ONE RESULT.

Beautiful Mrs. Haviland was dashing through the Park in her victoria, her six-year-old son by her side. The autumn breeze was blowing freshly, and the two exquisite rose tinted faces, one a smaller replica of the other, made a rare picture.

It was five o'clock when the victoria left the Park, and, rolling down the avenue, turned into the broad, substantially built street near the corner of which was the lady's home.

She went out to the head of the stairs, partly to meet Harry, but more to catch a glimpse of her idolized mother. Harry did not come up, however. Mrs. Haviland's maid was sent for downstairs to remove her wraps, and Ruth, peeping over the banisters, had a gratifying vision of her mother reflected in the long hall glass, as the lady stood before it while the maid deftly pinned back a lock escaped from the loose coil of her hair.

Ruth went slowly away from her post, therefore, knowing that Harry would not come up as long as the good time lasted. On her way to the school room she passed her father coming down from his study. He did not see her in the semi-darkness—nobody ever seemed to see Ruth unless there were a bright light—and she slipped silently by, not caring in the least that he had not seen her, nor that if he had he might not have noticed her save by a grave nod.

It was past the children's supper hour when Harry came dancing into the nursery, where he and Ruth took their meals. Mrs. Haviland, too, would soon be coming upstairs to dress for dinner. Ruth was meditating slipping out into the hall for another sight of her as she swept radiantly down the passage to her room, when—wonder of wonders!—the nursery door opened and she came in. It was only to give the nurse some directions about Harry's toilette for the next day's drive, but Ruth's heart beat with joy at the sight of her.

snatch at a charm hanging from the glittering chain about her neck, she actually stooped and kissed him. Ruth held her breath, marveling at Harry's stolidity. She knew well that at the bottom of his selfish, hard little heart Harry cared less for his mother than for the least precious of his countless toys; but the surprise of it hurt the little girl like a fresh wound at each manifestation of his indifference.

Late that evening the nurse called her from her bed to look at Mrs. Haviland as she passed through the corridor, arrayed for a ball in all her diamonds, looking like a dream of light. And when, attracted by the little group at the bedroom door, Mrs. Haviland glanced toward it, smiling the same lovely impersonal smile that she had bestowed on her acquaintances in the afternoon's drive, Ruth's heart beat even faster than before, and she crept back to bed in a silent rapture that kept her wide awake for some time.

The autumn passed and still Mrs. Haviland drove in the Park in her open victoria, while the handsome blonde gentleman reined in his bay by its side; and fewer and fewer people smiled as they bowed. Then came an afternoon in early December, when the sun was a glory and the earth seemed a heaven, and Mrs. Haviland went for her drive somewhat earlier than her wont. She went alone this time. Ruth, just returned from a demure little walk with Miss Murray, knelt at the school room window and breathlessly watched her as she drove away.

When the footman brought it in Mr. Haviland was in the hall putting on his overcoat to go for a walk up the avenue. He took the note, and as he read, his face turned to stone. He read it twice from beginning to end—it was not long. Then, quite quietly, he refolded the dainty sheet and returned it to its envelope, put it in his pocket, took off his overcoat and handed it to the waiting butler, all without a word, but still with that face of stone, and, turning, went slowly up the two long flights of stairs to his study, and there shut himself in.

An extraordinary stillness settled down all at once over the house. The servants, mysteriously sagacious, went noiselessly about their business as usual. Lighting all the lights in all the great empty rooms, and setting out the dining table with its customary elegance. But Mr. Haviland remained shut up in his study, and no dinner was served, and no orders were given, and Mrs. Haviland did not return. Miss Murray looked agitated and scared, and as if she would like to shrink into herself out of the way of an impending shower bath, and Ruth was sent to bed long before her hour.

The next morning Mrs. Haviland still had not come back, and the servants, with some expectancy, regarded the house like a noxious atmosphere. Ruth had no idea of what had happened. She knew only that her adored mother did not come, though she watched and watched all the day long, and could scarcely be gotten away from the window.

Some vague, miserable days went by, and the more dreaded than the last. Then, one morning Mr. Haviland summoned Miss Murray from the school room to his study, and she was gone some time. When she came back, her soft, young-old face had lost its delicate color, and she could hardly take the seat at her desk for a nervous tremor through her. But the children's wide eyed stare of curiosity forced her to pull herself together, and after a few moments she said to them quite simply, just as if she were stating a fact in physical geography, though with an uncontrollable twitching of her thin, ladylike lips, that Mr. Haviland wished them to know that their mother was never coming back at all, but was the same as dead to them, and that they must be obedient children and never so much as name her name in her hearing.

Harry did not mind a whit that his mother was gone away for always. He just opened his glorious eyes wider and asked: "Then who will take me out to drive when I have my good clothes on?" Ruth made no answer and asked no question. But the blackness of night descended upon her soul. An hour later their father came in. Harry gave a whoop of delight, dashing his slate to the floor, ran to him, temptuously shouting, "I want a nickel! Dad, give me a nickel!"

But Ruth did not understand the full import of the words, though their dimly apprehended scorn roused in her impotent fury, and she clenched her tiny hands under the table. No one ever guessed what of desolation it meant to the child when her beautiful mother disappeared so suddenly out of her life. But they all saw how listless and apathetic she grew, and how dully she went through her routine of small duties and pleasures, no one of which interested or aroused her in the least. The moment she was left to herself she always went directly to the school room window, and sat there with her arms folded on the sill and her chin resting upon them, motionless save for the restless, roving eyes that missed no figure that went by. But she never told any one for whom she was watching.

Her father came regularly now to the nursery, where he had been used to come only occasionally. It was, however, merely to ask perfunctory questions of the nurse or governess as to the welfare of his children, and he was so changed, so silent and stern, where formerly he had been only grave, that Ruth shrank from him. With her mother's going, a blank wall seemed to have risen between her and everything else on earth. Miss Murray said of her with solicitous discomfit that she was a singularly odd little girl. And so she was, since heart aches count for years.

her straight to her governess with a point-blank question.

"Please, Miss Murray, where in this city is my mother's new home?" Miss Murray was so taken aback and so flustered that all the little laces on her gown were set to quivering.

"Why, Ruthie—child—nowever—however did you find out that—that your mother was in the city at all?" she stammered. "Ellen said so. She was talking to Sophie. She said that the new marriage was no better than a mock marriage. She said that she was brazen faced to come back and take a house not ten squares away from us." The child's tones were fierce with uncomprehending resentment.

Miss Murray's gentle face wrinkled all over with perturbation. She laid a frightened, bloodless hand against Ruth's mouth. "Hush, dear, hush! Ellen must have meant some one else. Ellen had no idea what she was saying. Ellen never meant anything."

Ruth pushed aside Miss Murray's hand roughly. An obstinate determination was over all her face. "I want to see my mother. Where is my mother?" she said, doggedly. "The direct, insistent gaze was not to be avoided. Miss Murray's anxious brown eyes twinkled through a blur of tears as she looked at the child.

"Don't ask me, dear," she said, tremulously, vaguely conscious of some hitherto unperceived pang of pity. "I may not tell you. You'll know all soon enough, poor child! You are too young to be told now."

"I want to see her. I want to see her," Ruth repeated, stubbornly. "But the firmness of the gentle is not to be overcome, and Ruth received no more elucidating answer. The insistence went out of her face at last, and she returned to the window, sitting there in a submissive, patient way that lulled Miss Murray's disquiet to rest.

Shortly afterward Ellen disappeared, and Ruth rightly guessed that she had been dismissed as a warning to the household against further indiscretions. The child apparently took no notice, but despair seized upon her ever standing to feel a genuine liking for the reserved, odd child who thus singled her out for favor. And so Ruth craftily matured her plan.

"Aggie," she said one night, as the maid was putting her to bed in her lonely little room, "isn't tomorrow your evening out?" "Yes, Miss."

"Where are you going?" "I don't know, Miss. To see some friends, maybe."

Ruth looked at her with troubled, unchildlike eyes. "Do you know where the opera house is, Aggie?" "Certainly, Miss. 'Tisn't so far from here. I've passed it often."

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Two hours later they stood in the midst of a dense throng at the doors of the vast building. The evening was turned damp and chilly, and the wind blew in rude gusts down the avenue. But the scene was all that Ruth had depicted, and more, and Aggie became instantly an absorbed spectator.

"Nearer, Aggie! Nearer!" the child whispered, excitedly. "I must see them all. I mustn't miss any!" She tugged at the maid's sleeve, her eyes hunting hungrily through the crowd. What if she had not come!

The people streamed out. Aggie and her charge were pushed mercilessly to one side. The child's heart beat to suffocation. What if she were there, and she should miss seeing her! She gave a sobbing cry.

"I can't see, Aggie! Oh, I can't see!" It had begun to snow. The wind lifted the awnings, and the wet flakes blew in under. Ruth felt cold, moist touches on her face and neck. Her feet and hands were ice. She shivered, and big despairing tears welled over on her cheeks.

Then suddenly the crowd parted, and she saw her mother standing at the foot of the steps, waiting for a pair of thoroughbreds to prance their way to the curbstone. She was holding the arm of the tall blonde gentleman whom Ruth had once seen riding beside her carriage, and was talking gaily to a group of young men. An electric light blazed down upon her. The wind turned back the edges of her ermine cloak, disclosing the splendor of the gown beneath. Oh, how bewilderingly beautiful she was! How her smile flashed! How her jewels gleamed! How the white fur about her throat set off the face above—the fair, pure, lovely face that had in it no least trace of evil!

Ruth scarcely breathed. In her ecstasy the slow, long torture of the past months was as if it had never been. Her non-descript little face was transfigured. For the moment her ineffable love made her beautiful. But the brougham was drawing up to the sidewalk. The gentleman whom Ruth remembered was moving toward it. The light was bowing her adieu. Now her arched foot was upon the step. In another instant she would be gone—gone, lost forever!

"Mother! Mother! Come back!" The cry rang out, impetuous, passionate, agonized. The lady half turned, and threw a startled glance over her shoulder at the crowd. But the gentleman hurried her into the brougham and entered after her. She sank down on the cushions, her adorable face quite pale.

"I thought—I almost thought that was Ruth's voice," she said. "Nonsense," the gentleman answered lightly, "how could it be? Besides, it has never been Harry's voice, not Ruth's, if you had heard it. Home John."

The footman touched his hat, sprang to the box, and the brougham whirled away through the street. It was half past eight of the evening a week later. The same lady, still more charmingly dressed, still more ravishingly beautiful, sat in her new drawing room, an opera cloak about her, fan and flowers lying beside her on a table. The gentleman whom Ruth had recognized stood by the mantelpiece. He took out his watch.

"Patrik is late." The lady glanced up with her entrancing smile. "Yes, it is the second time. He should be dismissed."

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