

FRIENDSHIPS and ENMITIES

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knew your generosity so well that I felt sure you'd go."

"Is Lucy Barnes in the house still?"

"Yes. She's waiting to see what message she can take to her husband."

"Tell her," said Mr. Robertson, slipping his secators into his pocket, "that I shall be there in a quarter of an hour."

Annie kissed him, said that he was really noble, and ran off to convey the glad news to Lucy.

James Robertson was away from

the house for about an hour, and on his return he found Annie waiting for him in the hall. She drew him into the library.

"Tell me all about it," she said earnestly.

"I'm afraid," said James, in the same voice that he used when he read the lessons in church, "that there is very little to tell. It may be a matter of days, but I should be more inclined to think it is a matter of hours. The nurse who was there—they've got two—seemed inclined to take a hopeful view, but

I couldn't share it. He seemed terribly changed. Voice very weak."

"What did he say?"

"Very little. Something about letting bygones be bygones. And I said that was all right and we all make mistakes. And then I went downstairs to see Lucy. She seemed very grateful to me. I'm thinking that when I'm in the City to-morrow I'll get a pint of the real turtle and bring it back with me. He might fancy it if he's still here."

"I think you're too splendid and wonderful," said Annie.

"I could not have done less," said James. His face showed every sign of the great emotional strain

through which he had passed. Annie noticed it.

"James, will you do something just to please me? Don't ask what it is."

"I suppose I must if you put it like that."

"Very well, then. You will have a small bottle of champagne. You absolutely need it. I can see it."

He had the small bottle. Annie was particularly tactful in imploring her husband to do things which he would have done on his own initiative in any case.

"Yes," said James on his return from business the following day. "I got the turtle for poor old George, and I left it at his house. He was asleep—so I didn't go in. They say he had a fair night and has seemed a shade better to-day. That so often happens—a slight rally before the end comes."

He returned to the subject at dinner.

"I have to admit," he said—nobody had asked him to admit anything—"that poor George had his faults. When his mistakes were corrected it made him very touchy and quarrelsome. But which of us is perfect? Old friends are old friends. It will be a great wrench to me when we're parted."

And Annie, who tempered a sense of humour with discretion, abstained from pointing out that James had put up with the wrench for five years with complete equanimity and even cheerfulness.

Meanwhile the glad news had been brought to the invalid George that Mr. Robertson had called to inquire and had brought an offering of turtle-soup.

"Kind of him. I know where he got it. He can make blunders, but not about questions of the table. I suppose, nurse, I musn't touch it."

"Why not? If you feel like it, it would be very good for you."

"With just one glass of my very old Madeira?"

"I don't think it would hurt you."

"In that case I suppose we should countermand the grilled sole?"

"I don't say that Mr. Barnes. Have it cooked, and then see how you feel."

"Well, nurse, I'll be guided by you," said Mr. Barnes meekly.

But his voice was stronger this evening. It was the first time for many days that he had shown any interest in food. And the old-bottled Madeira had been opened three days before and was in consequence at its best.

Mr. Barnes had the turtle-soup, and the grilled sole, and just four glasses of the Maderia. He slept eight hours without a break that night. He was better and brighter next morning. The doctor was pleased with him. And from that point onwards he advanced rapidly towards complete recovery. In fact, in six weeks he was able to accept an invitation to a memorable dinner. "Memorable" was the word that Barnes himself used to describe it.

It was a dinner of only four people, the Robertsons entertaining Mr. and Mrs. Barnes in celebration of the recovery of Barnes and the restoration of complete amity. Mr.

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