

# STORIES FROM THE DIARY OF A DOCTOR VOL.1

by L.T. Meade and Clifford Halifax

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Das Titelbild gibt eine Abbildung zu der Geschichte “The Horror of Studley Grange” auf S. 2 des STRAND MAGAZINE VII (Januar–Juni, 1894) wieder. Sie stammt von Alfred Pearce, der auch zahlreiche weitere Illustrationen zu den Erzählungen in diesem Band beigesteuert hat.



**L.T. Meade**, eigentlich *Elizabeth Thomasina Meade Smith* (1844–1914), war eine irische Schriftstellerin, die im Verlauf ihres Lebens zahlreiche Erzählungen für Kinder sowie Kriminalromane verfasste. Sie gilt als die erste englischsprachige Autorin, in deren Kriminalromanen medizinische Aspekte und/oder Forensik eine wesentliche Rolle spielen. Um medizinische Sachverhalte richtig darzustellen, arbeitete sie unter anderem mit Clifford Halifax und Robert Eustace zusammen (s. u.).

Meade wurde 1844 (nach anderen Angaben 1854) im südwestirischen County Cork als Tochter eines Pfarrers geboren. Sie heiratete im September 1879 Alfred Toulmin Smith und verbrachte den größten Teil ihres Lebens in London. Meade begann mit 17 Jahren zu schreiben und verfasste insgesamt über 300 Romane. Sie hinterließ ein so großes Werk, dass nach ihrem Tode elf weitere Romane erstmals veröffentlicht wurden. Bekannt ist sie heute noch für ihre Jugendbücher, von denen das bekannteste das 1886 veröffentlichte »*A World of Girls*« war. Daneben verfasste sie aber sowohl Liebesromane als auch Sensationsgeschichten, historische Romane, Abenteuergeschichten und letztlich auch Kriminalromane. Beim Schreiben von Kriminalromanen kooperierte sie mit anderen Autoren oder versicherte sich der Hilfe von Experten. Sie arbeitete ab 1893 zunächst mit Dr. Clifford Halifax zusammen. Aus dieser Zusammenarbeit stammen sechs Sammlungen von Kriminalgeschichten. Ein Jahr später begann sie die Zusammenarbeit mit Robert Eustace, mit dem sie gemeinsam weitere zahlreiche Kriminalerzählungen verfasste.

*Quelle:* Deutsche Wikipedia-Seite (weitere Details auf dem englischsprachigen Pendant)

**Clifford Halifax** war ein Pseudonym des britischen Arztes *Edgar Beaumont* (1860–1921), das dieser ausschließlich für seine Zusammenarbeit mit L.T. Meade benutzte. Dieser entstammen u.a. die Anthologien *This Troublesome World* (drei Bde., 1893), *Stories from the Diary of a Doctor* (zwei Bde., 1894

und 1895) und *Adventures of a Man of Science* (1896–1897), sowie der Roman *Dr. Rumsey's Patient: A Very Strange Story* (1896).

*Quelle:* Englische Wikisource-Seite.

*These stories are written in collaboration with a medical man of large experience. Many are founded on fact, and all are in the region of practical medical science. Those stories which may convey an idea of the impossible are only a forecast of an early realization.*



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# My First Patient

**B**y a strange coincidence I was busily engaged studying a chapter on neurotic poisons in Taylor's "*Practice of Medical jurisprudence*," when a knock came to my door, and my landlady's daughter entered and handed me a note.

"The messenger is waiting, sir," she said. "He has just come over from the hospital, and he wants to know if there is any answer."

I had just completed my year as house physician at St. Saviour's Hospital, East London, and was now occupying lodgings not two minutes off.

I opened the note hastily it contained a few words:

*My dear Halifax,*

*come over at once, if you can. You will find me in B Ward. I have just heard of something which I think will suit you exactly.*

*Yours,*

*John Ray.*

"Tell the messenger I will attend to this immediately," I said to the girl. She withdrew, and putting the note into my pocket I quickly slipped into my great-coat, for the night was a bitterly cold one, and ran across to St. Saviour's.

Ray was the resident surgeon. During my time at the hospital we had always been special friends. I found him, -as usual, at his post. He was in the surgical ward, busily engaged setting a broken leg, when I put in an appearance.

"I'll speak to you in one moment, Halifax," he said; "just hand me that bandage, there's a good fellow. Now then, my dear boy," he continued, bending over his patient, a lad of fourteen, "you will soon be much easier. Where is the nurse? Nurse, I shall look in again later, and inject

a little morphia before we settle him for the night. Now then, Halifax, come into the corridor with me."

"What do you want me for?" I asked, as I stood by his side in the long corridor which ran from east to west across the great hospital, and into which all the wards on the first floor opened. "Why this sudden message; what can I do to help you, Ray?"

"You have not made up your mind as to your future?" answered Ray.

"Not quite," I replied. "I may buy a practice, or try to work my way up as a specialist—I have a leaning towards the latter course; but there is no special hurry anyway."

"You are not averse to a job in the meantime, I presume?"

"That depends upon what it is," I answered.

"Well, see here. I have just had a frantic telegram from a man in the country. His name is Ogilvie—I used to know him years ago, but have lost sight of him lately. His telegram recalls him to my memory—he is a clever fellow, and bought himself a large practice at a place called Saltmarsh. He has wired to ask if I can send him a *locum tenens* in a great hurry. This is what he says."

Ray began to read from the telegram:—

WIFE ILL—CAN'T ATTEND TO PRACTICE. SEND SOMEONE WITH BRAINS  
IN HIS HEAD DOWN TO-NIGHT, IF POSSIBLE.

"There, Halifax. Put this in your pocket if you mean to attend to it. You have nothing special to do just now. Will you go?"

"How far off is Saltmarsh?" I asked.

"I have an 'A.B.C.' in my room; come and we'll look the place up."

Ray pulled me along with him. We entered his rooms at the corner of the wing, and the next moment had ascertained that it would be possible to reach Saltmarsh by the Great Eastern line in two hours and a half.

"Will you go?" he asked, "it may be an opening for you. In your state of indecision, it is well to take any chance of seeing medical life. Ogilvie will probably only require your services for two or three days, and—in short—"

"It would oblige you if I went?" I interrupted. "That settles the matter."

"No, no. You must not labour under a false impression. Ogilvie was never a friend of mine; I just knew him in the ordinary course, and never took to him in any special way. Will you go, Halifax, just for the chance of seeing life, and helping some poor beggars in the country? If

you say no, I must cudgel my brains for someone else, and there is no time to be lost."

I looked at the telegram again.

"Yes, I will go," I said. "I can catch the nine train from Liverpool Street without difficulty. This will bring me to Saltmarsh at 11.45. Will you wire to Ogilvie, or shall I do so, Ray?"

"I'll take that trouble off your hands, my dear fellow. I am awfully obliged. Now then, good night, and good luck. Look me up when you return."

Ray rushed back to his ward, and I went to my lodgings to pack my portmanteau and get ready for my sudden journey. I caught the train in comfortable time, and all in due course, without hitch. or hindrance of any kind, arrived at Saltmarsh, not more than five minutes after the time mentioned in the time-table.

A servant in livery was standing on the platform. The moment he saw me he came up and touched his hat.

"Are you for Dr. Ogilvie's, sir?" he asked. "Are you the doctor who is expected from London?"

"Yes," I replied.

"My master's brougham is outside," continued the man. "Will you come this way, sir?"

I followed him at once, seated myself in the brougham, which was drawn by a pair of horses, and ten minutes later had alighted from the comfortable carriage and found myself standing in a wide, handsomely furnished and brightly lighted hall. A man-servant opened the door to me.

"The doctor from London?" he queried, even before I had time to speak.

"Yes," I answered, "I am Dr. Halifax; have the goodness to take this card to your master."

"Come this way, sir. Oh, good Lord," he muttered under his breath, "ain't this a relief!"

There was a sort of terrified expression about the man's face which I had already perceived faintly reflected on the countenance of the servant who had met me at the station.

"I'll let my master know you've come, sir," he said, and then he noiselessly shut the door and left me to myself.

I found myself standing in a room which any London physician would have considered palatial. It was lofty and very large. The floor was almost covered with the softest of Turkey carpets; the walls were hung

with good pictures; and the furniture was handsome, modern, and in excellent taste.

I went and stood with my back to the glowing fire. I could not quite account for my own sensations, but the words I had heard the servant utter gave me a distinct sense of nervousness. I knew that a doctor ought to know nothing of such feelings, and I was ashamed of myself for owning to them, and made a great effort to pull myself together.

The next moment the door of the room was opened, and a gentlemanly man with silver hair and a soft, long beard entered.

"Mr. Halifax," he said, bowing to me, "I must introduce myself as Dr. Roper. I am an old resident of Saltmarsh, and have known the Ogilvies for many years. Mrs. Ogilvie is seriously ill—seriously!—alarmingly, I ought to add, and I am attending her."

"Is Dr. Ogilvie at home?" I asked.

"Pray sit down, Mr. Halifax, Dr. Ogilvie is out at the present moment. He expected you, and sent the carriage to the station. He was most anxious for your arrival, and will, I am sure, be in directly. In the meantime will you allow me to do all I can for your comfort? You would like to come to your room; let me show you the way."

"I think I should prefer to wait for Dr. Ogilvie," I said. "You are much occupied with your patient, and I must not trespass upon a moment of your time. I am very comfortable here, and can wait for my host if he is not long. I understood from his telegram that he wants someone to look after his patients."

"He does—he has an immense practice, quite the largest in Saltmarsh. His wife's sudden illness has upset him frightfully, and he cannot collect his thoughts. I suggested to him to wire to Ray, and I am truly glad that you have been able to respond so quickly."

"Thank you," I replied; "please do not trouble yourself about me. I am sorry to learn that Mrs. Ogilvie is so ill."

"She is very ill, indeed; it is a strange seizure. She is a young woman, and up to the present has always been healthy. She is suffering from embolism. This is a strange disease to attack the brain of a young woman. Well, I must return to her; I will send the servant to attend to you and get you refreshment."

He went out of the room, closing the door as noiselessly as he had entered. The man-servant who had admitted me to the house came into the consulting-room bearing a tray which contained a plentiful cold supper.

"My master will, I am sure, be back in a moment," he said; "he was a good deal flurried over the missis's sudden illness, and has gone for a ride on the mare. We expect him back each minute, for he knew the train you'd arrive by.

"When he comes in, tell him that I am here," I answered.

"Yes, sir, I won't fail to."

The man looked at me intently—his face had not the wooden expression which characteristics most of his class, it showed marked agitation and uneasiness—he opened his lips as if about to make a confidence, then, thinking better of it, closed them again and withdrew.

I ate some supper and then, sinking back in a comfortable chair, took up a book and tried to read.

Perhaps I had sunk into a doze unawares. I cannot tell. I only know that I suddenly found myself standing up; that I knew the nervous sensations of the earlier part of the evening had returned with greater force than ever; that the little clock on the mantelpiece was chiming in a silvery note the hour of one, and the fire was burning low on the hearth. "Good heavens!" I said to myself, "I must have had a sleep. Has that man not returned yet from his ride? One o'clock—I wonder if the servants have forgotten me and gone to bed."

I pressed the button of an electric bell in the wall, and waited for the result. The answer came quickly. The man-servant, looking more disturbed and uneasy than ever, entered the room.

"I'm sorry to say, sir," he began, not waiting for me to speak, "that my master has not yet returned. We can't none of us account for his absence."

"You don't fear an accident?" I asked.

"Oh, no, sir, that's scarcely likely. Dr. Ogilvie is the best rider in the country round, and though the mare is a bit skittish, she's like a lamb always when he sits on her. Dr. Ogilvie may have ridden over as far as Tewbury, which is a matter of eighteen miles from here; he has patients there, I knew, and he may be detained for the night."

"Scarcely likely," I said, "with Mrs. Ogilvie so ill."

"She is that, sir; she's mortal bad, and we all think—" He stopped and forced back some words. "I can't tell you why my master isn't home, Dr. Halifax; but as there has been no call from any special patients this evening, perhaps you'd like me to take you to your room, sir."

"There does not seem any use in staying up longer," I said. "If you are going to sit up for Dr. Ogilvie, you can tell him that I am here, and can be disturbed at any moment if necessary. Now I will follow you upstairs."

I was shown into a comfortable room, furnished as handsomely as all the rest of the spacious house. A fire, newly made up, burned on the hearth, and several tall candles helped to make the apartment cheerful. I was dead tired, and did not take long tumbling into bed. I had scarcely laid my head on my pillow before I sank into a profound and dreamless sleep.

It seemed only to last a moment, although in reality I must have been in bed a couple of hours, when I was awakened by someone shaking me and flashing a light in my eyes.

"I wish you would get up, Mr. Halifax, and come with me," said Dr. Roper. "I cannot account for Dr. Ogilvie's prolonged absence. He has not yet returned, and Mrs. Ogilvie's condition is so unsatisfactory that I should like you to see her."

"I will come at once," I replied.

I was not three minutes getting into my clothes, and an instant later found me in the sick chamber. It did not bear the ordinary appearance of a room of illness—the darkness and the enforced quiet of such chambers were both absent.

A merry fire burned on the hearth; candles were shedding cheerful rays over the room. A young woman who wore a nurse's cap and apron leant over the rail at the feet of the bed; a middle-aged woman, with a somewhat unpleasant face, was standing by the fire and occasionally bending forward to watch the contents of a saucepan which was heating on the flames. There was a strong smell of coffee in the apartment, and I did not doubt that the nurse and the attendant were going to prepare themselves cups of this beverage.

On entering the room my attention was primarily attracted by these two women, but when I turned to the bed I forgot all about them.

Seated upright on the bed was a little boy of from four to five years of age. He had a quantity of tumbled hair of a light shade, which glistened in the candlelight. His eyes were preternaturally wide open; his lips were shut, so as to make a small straight line.

He glanced up at me not in alarm but in defiance, and stretching out one dimpled hand, laid it with a caressing motion on the head of the sick woman.

"That child ought to go to bed," I said to Dr. Roper.

"Oh, no, never mind him," he replied, quickly. "He is perfectly happy here, and determined to stay. He will make a noise if you disturb him."

I said nothing further, but bending over the bed prepared to examine the patient.

She was a young woman of not more than two or three and twenty. Her hair was abundant and of the same colour as the child's. Her eyes were partly closed—her face had a grey and ghastly appearance. In health she may have been pretty, but there was a look about her now which gave me again that nervous sensation which I had experienced once or twice before during the evening.

I proceeded at once to make the usual examinations. I found the skin of the patient warm and bathed in perspiration—the breathing was low and had a stertorous sound. The pulse was very slow.

I raised the lids of the eyes and looked into them. The pupils, as I expected, were considerably contracted. I took up a candle and passed it backwards and forwards before the face of the patient. She was, as I knew beforehand, absolutely insensible to light.

Dr. Roper began to speak to me in a hurried, anxious way.

"I heartily wish her husband were home," he said. "I have done all that is possible to arouse her, but in vain; each hour, each moment, the heavy stupor in which she is lying increases—in short, I have every reason to apprehend the worst consequences."

While the doctor was speaking, Taylor's opinions with regard to neurotic poisons kept flashing before my mind.

"I should like to speak to you in another room," I said; "come with me at once."

We went into the dressing-room.

Dr. Roper saw by my manner that I was disturbed, and his own uneasiness became more manifest.

"It is an awful responsibility to have a woman in this condition, and her husband unaccountably absent," he repeated.

"Never mind about her husband now," I said. "The thing is to restore her, and there is not an instant to lose."

"What do you mean; what more can we do?"

"You believe her to be suffering from embolism?" I said.

"Undoubtedly, all the symptoms point to it. There is a clot of blood in one of the arteries of the brain."

"Nothing of the kind," I said. "Your patient is suffering from the effects of an overdose of opium—not the faintest doubt on the subject."

To say that Dr. Roper turned pale is to give but a very faint idea of his appearance when I pronounced my verdict.

"Nonsense, nonsense," he said, with a sort of gasp; "who would give Mrs. Ogilvie opium? She was a perfectly strong woman—she suffered

no pain of any sort. There was nothing to tempt her to administer it to herself; and as to her husband, he is devoted to her. For goodness' sake, young sir, don't come down to a quiet place like this and set such scandal afloat."

"I don't want to set any scandal going," I replied. "It is nothing to me what anyone thinks. You have called me in to see the patient. I pronounce the case one of opium poisoning, and I insist on immediately using restoratives. We must make use of the stomach-pump and see what electricity will do."

My manner was so firm, and I carried my convictions so plainly written on my face, that Dr. Roper began to be convinced against his will.

"There is not a moment to lose," I said. "Is there an electric battery in the house? I suppose Dr. Ogilvie has everything necessary for our purpose in his surgery."

Dr. Roper interrupted me.

"I wish to say," he began, in a hesitating voice, "that my friend, Ogilvie, and I consulted together over this case. Our opinions are absolutely unanimous. All the symptoms pointed to a cerebral clot."

"Excuse me," I said. "The state of the pupils of the eyes, the warmth of the patient's skin, the slow and yet stertorous breathing, can all be accounted for by an overdose of opium. If nothing is done to restore that young woman she will certainly die, and if she dies in my presence I shall think it my duty to see that some investigations take place. It will then rest with the *post-mortem* examination to prove the truth of my diagnosis or not."

"I wish Dr. Ogilvie were home," murmured the old physician, perspiration breaking out on his brow, and his eyes growing troubled. "But, on my soul, I believe you are right with regard to one point, and that poor young creature, so full of life and beauty only twenty-four hours ago, is really drifting into the other world. In that case it cannot be wrong to use any means for her restoration. I will fetch what you require, Mr. Halifax, and join you in the sick room in a moment."

He ran downstairs and I quickly returned to my patient.

I was relieved to find that the beautiful child was no longer seated on the bed; his anxious vigil had probably proved too much for his tender years, and he was now doubtless calmly asleep in his cot in another room. I bent over my patient—I felt she was my patient now—and I determined not to leave a stone unturned to bring her back to life. I wanted to discover if there were any odour of opium on her breathing.



I could not find any, but the more I looked at her, the more sure I was that this illness was an unnatural one, and that the poor young woman who lay before me had been poisoned by either accident or design.

I felt myself growing hot with indignation. What kind of man was Dr. Ogilvie? Why was he absent at such a critical moment? Why did the servants look so queer and troubled; and last, but not least, why was I myself for the first time in all my medical experience actually suffering from an attack of nerves?

I felt through and through my being that something horrible had been done in this room, and I much wondered whether the strong restoratives which I meant to employ would be in time to be of the least use.

Dr. Roper entered the room, and we began our task. The first thing was to remove what portion of the poison still remained in the patient's stomach. The electric battery was then brought into force and artificial respiration resorted to. For a long time we worked without any apparent result.

One glance at the contents of the stomach-pump had caused Dr. Roper to turn so white that I thought he would have to be helped out of the room, but he speedily recovered himself and assisted me with a will and determination which showed that his opinion now fully coincided with my own.

The two nurses were like trained automatons in our hands.

There was a strange silence about our doings. We made little or no noise as we fought through the long hours of the night that awful fight with Death.

Towards morning a noise in the silent street caused Dr. Roper to utter a hurried, thankful exclamation, and to my unbounded delight had an effect on my patient.

She opened her eyes, gave a faint smile, looked full at the old doctor, and murmuring her husband's name, closed them again.

"Ogilvie has returned," said Dr. Roper, glancing at me. "Thank Heaven! Whatever detained him can now be explained. Those were his horse's footsteps which you heard just now clattering up to the door."

"And Mrs. Ogilvie is better," I said. "I have every hope that she will do now. I dare not leave her for a little, but you might go down and acquaint Dr. Ogilvie with what has occurred during his absence."

"With what we have found?" began Dr. Roper. "No, no, he is an old friend—that must be another man's task."

"Hush," I said, "Mrs. Ogilvie is becoming more conscious each minute. We must be careful; she is very weak." I looked towards the bed as I spoke.

My patient now lay with her eyes wide open. They were still dim from the effect of the drug, but the unnatural ghastly colour had left her cheeks, and her breathing was quicker and more regular.

"Stay with her," I whispered to the old doctor. "You have but to administer restoratives at short intervals; I will see Dr. Ogilvie myself, and quickly return."

I left the room. I expected to see my host mounting the stairs, and hurrying with what speed he could to his wife's sick room.

Instead of that there was commotion and alarm. Alarm on the faces of some maid-servants who, with hot haste, were hurrying downstairs. Voices raised to a shrill pitch of terror and distress sounded from the hall. There were hurrying steps, the confusion caused by doors being opened hastily and banged again regardless of sound. Dr. Ogilvie was nowhere to be seen. What was he doing? Why had he remained absent so long and at such a critical time, and, above all things, why had he returned now to turn the quiet house into noise and confusion?

Mrs. Ogilvie was better, certainly, but her heart had undergone a severe strain, and any undue agitation might undo all our night's work, and cause the feeble, fluttering breath to cease.

I ran downstairs quickly.

"Hush! hush!" I said. "I must beg of you all to be quiet! Where is Dr. Ogilvie? I must speak to him immediately."

The servant who had let me into the house the day before now came forward. He was only half-dressed, and his hair stood up wildly on his head.

"Will you step into this room, Mr. Halifax?" he said. "An awful thing has happened, sir. The mare has come home: riderless!"

"Dr. Ogilvie's mare?" I exclaimed.

"Yes, sir. There's no sign of my poor master, and we all fear an awful accident. The brute was that trembling as never was when it got to the door. Here's the groom—he'll tell you himself the state we found the mare in, all in a lather, and shivering from head to foot. You step in, Williams, and talk to the gentleman."

"It's true what he says," remarked Williams, who had been listening to our conversation from the open doorway. "I never see a critter in such a taking as that mare. She shook like a leaf, and whinnied like a baby. I can't think as the mare 'ud throw the doctor, for though she is

a skittish piece, she was always like a lamb when he rode her. It's an awful business, and I can't make head nor tail of it. Perhaps he get off to see someone and tied her up as he do, and then she made off. But then her bridle would have broken, and it isn't. Well, well, George and me, we don't know what to do."

"What would you advise, sir?" asked the footman, who went by the name of George. "I suppose we must start a search party; but how we are to get them together, and it still dark night, is more than I can make out."

"Does the coachman live on the premises?" I asked.

"No, sir; his house is at the other end of the town."

"You had better go and wake him," I said. "You, of course, know two or three men who will help you in an emergency of this sort. By the way, is there not snow on the ground?"

"Yes, sir," replied George; "a light sprinkling. The snow has been falling for an hour or so, and is now resting."

"The snow will help you," I said. "The day is already beginning to break, and you will be easily able to trace the mare's footsteps over the fresh snow. We none of us can tell what has happened, but the probabilities point to Dr. Ogilvie having been thrown from his horse. I must go back at once to your mistress, who is better, but not out of danger."

"Thank the Lord she is better!" ejaculated George, while a look of relief swept over the groom's face.

"She is better," I replied; "and now I trust to you, George, and to you, Williams, to start a search party with the least possible delay."

"Thank you, sir," the two men said. "There ain't no doubt that we'll do our very best."

They looked relieved, as people always do when they get definite and explicit directions. The men left the house immediately. I found it necessary, on re-entering the hall, to say a few words to the agitated women-servants.

"Get the house lighted up and well warmed," I said, "and do this with the least possible delay. Dr. Ogilvie is most probably hurt, and may be brought home before long. It will be well to get a bed made up in one of the downstairs rooms in case he is too much injured to be carried upstairs."

The maids were also pleased at being given work to do, and having restored a certain amount of order, I returned to my patient.

The moment I entered the room and looked at her, my heart gave a thankful bound. Whatever had happened, whatever dark cloud was

hanging over the house, her young life was saved. The natural look of faintly returning health was reviving more and more each moment on her face. She turned her head when I entered the room and asked me a question

"Is my husband in the house?" she asked.

"No," I replied, using that latitude with regard to truth which I considered in her case absolutely necessary. "He has been called out suddenly."

"I wonder he did not come to see me first," she answered, gently.

"He had not a moment—the case was urgent. It will be nice for him to find you so much better."

"Oh, yes, I am nearly well," she said, with a smile, and then she closed her eyes peacefully and sank into a natural sleep.

I motioned Dr. Ruper out of the room, and told him as well as I could what had occurred.

The circumstances of the night, the appalling discovery we had made with regard to Mrs. Ogilvie's illness, had unmanned him a good deal, and now the grave fears which we were forced to share with regard to Dr. Ogilvie's fate completely prostrated the poor old man.

"I feel dazed, Halifax," he said. "I cannot realize what all this means. There isn't a better fellow living than Ogilvie; he is devoted to his wife; and she—well, pretty dear, I have known her from a baby. Who could have given her that opium?"

"The thing now is to find Dr. Ogilvie," I said. "We will assume that he has been thrown from his horse."

"Why do you say we will assume it? Of course the mare threw him—nasty thing she always was. I often warned him about her. Why do you say we will assume that Dr. Ogilvie has met with an accident, Halifax?"

I made no reply, but the old doctor read my thoughts in my face.

"No, no," he said, "it isn't that; it can't be that. Well, I'll go myself and help to look for him."

He went downstairs, trembling and tottering.

"I will take care of Mrs. Ogilvie," I said, calling after him as he reached the lower landing. "Make your mind easy on that score, and have some wine before you start."

I then went back to the sick room. The patient still slept, and the nurses were softly moving about, putting the chamber in order, and removing all traces of the disorder which had reigned there while Death and the doctors were having their fight.

I sat down in an easy chair and, being very weary, dropped into a doze. I am sure I did not sleep long. When I awoke I observed that Mrs. Ogilvie was looking at me with a puzzled but gentle expression.

"I wish I knew your name," she said. "I have seen you in my dreams all night, but I don't know who you are."

"My name is Halifax" I said.

"Halifax," she repeated; "we don't know anyone called Halifax."

"You are unlikely to know me: I am a doctor from London; I have come down to help your husband with his patients, and as you were very ill last night and Dr. Ogilvie was away, I helped to look after you."

"Was I very ill?" she repeated. "I don't seem to remember anything, only that I was drowsy and hated to be disturbed. I had bad neuralgia yesterday morning, and my husband gave me something to drink. Soon afterwards the pain went, and I felt very sleepy, nothing more. How could I have been ill if I felt no pain?"

"People are often ill without suffering pain," I replied. "Be thankful that you are much better this morning. I am going to order some breakfast for you now." Here I raised my voice. "Nurse," I said, "will you, please, get some strong tea for Mrs. Ogilvie!"

The hospital nurse left the room, but the older woman still sat keeping guard by the fire; her face was very black and ominous.

"Are you there, Jenkins?" called Mrs. Ogilvie.

"Yes, my dear," she replied, then she came over to the bedside, bent suddenly over the young wife and kissed her.

I was amazed at the change in her face when she did this. The sullenness gave place to a hungry sort of tenderness, as if a partly starved heart had been suddenly fed.

"You'll excuse me, sir," she said, turning to me, and I noticed that her eyes were full of tears; "but I have nursed Mrs. Ogilvie since she was a baby, and she's not twenty-three yet, poor dear."

She suddenly left the room, and I noticed for the first time how child-like, how younger even than her years, were the outlines of my patient's pretty face.

She was getting better each moment. but I dreaded her making inquiries about her husband.

The nurse came back with the tea, and I was leaving the room to go to my own to have a wash and dress, when one of the maid-servants came up to me and spoke hastily.

"If you please, sir," she said, "there's a woman downstairs. She has asked for Dr. Ogilvie. She says she's one of his patients, and won't believe me when I say that he's not in and not likely to be. I showed her into the consulting-room, and I thought maybe you'd come down and see her, sir,"

"Yes," I said, "I will be down immediately."

I rushed into my room, made a hasty toilet, and went downstairs. The daylight was now shedding a sickly gleam over everything, but the large consulting-room had a neglected appearance, for the shutters were only partly removed from the windows, and the ashes of last night's fire were still grey and cheerless on the hearth.

Standing in the middle of the room was a tall, middle-aged woman with a florid face. She had a defiant sort of manner, and a habit of tossing her head, which accompanied more or less all her actions. She did not look like an invalid, and my heart gave a fresh beat of alarm as though I knew, even before she spoke, that a fresh leaf in the Book of Tragedy was about to be turned.

"Sit down," I said; "I am sorry Dr. Ogilvie is out."

"Oh, yes," she replied, "as if I'm likely to believe that little game! He don't want to see me; but you tell him, young man, that Flora's mother is here, and that here Flora's mother will stay until he comes to her."

"I don't understand you," I said. "Dr. Ogilvie has been absent all night—we are all terribly anxious about him; we fear that his horse has thrown him, as it came back riderless this morning. If you will go away now and come later I may have tidings for you."

There was a vague hope in my mind that the woman might be a lunatic; the best thing was to get her quietly out of the house and warn the servants on no account to re-admit her.

"Dr. Ogilvie is out," I repeated; "I have no object in keeping the truth from you."

She looked startled for a moment when I spoke of a possible accident, but soon the old toss of the head re-asserted itself.

"Oh," she said, "you nearly took me in, but I'm too old to be gulled. I'll wait here for Dr. Ogilvie until he comes back. I gave him forty-eight hours, and the time's up: he was expecting me this morning. You send someone in to light the fire, young man, and I wouldn't object to a bit of breakfast."

There was nothing whatever for it but to humour the woman. Whether mad or sane she would not leave the house without making a disturb-

ance. She was strong enough to fight, and she certainly seemed to have sufficient nerve to offer physical resistance if necessary.

"Very well," I said, after a pause, "if you won't go I will leave you here."

I went back into the hall, where one of the maid-servants was hovering restlessly about.

"Do you think you can get her to leave, sir!" she asked.

"No," I replied; "she insists upon waiting to see your master."

"She hints very queer things, sir," continued the servant.

"I don't want to hear them," I answered, impatiently. "It is more than probable that the woman is deranged. Has she been here before?"

"Two days ago, sir, and just about this hour, too. She was shut up with my master in his consulting-room for a long time. We all noticed how changed Dr. Ogilvie looked after that. He seemed to turn old all of a sudden. We all saw it."

"Well," I said, "you had better take the woman some breakfast. And please don't listen to a word she says, for I do not think she is accountable."

These remarks had scarcely passed my lips, and the servant had not attempted to obey my directions, before a sound of heavy footsteps in the street caused us both to turn pale. I rushed to the hall door and opened it.

Several men hearing a burden on a shutter were ascending the steps. A motionless figure, covered with a sheet, lay on the shutter. The men, without uttering a word, brought it straight into the house.

Dr. Roper accompanied them.

"Come here," he said, and they carried their burden into the spacious dining-room and laid it on the centre table.

"Make no noise," whispered the doctor hoarsely to them; "go quietly away."

Then he turned to me.

"Come into this room with me, Halifax," he said.

He pointed to a little conservatory which opened out of the dining-room. His manner had altered; it was now composed and quiet. I perceived that the shock he had received had the strange effect of absolutely steadying his nerves for the time.

"We found him," he began at once—"we found him several miles from home. The mare's footsteps were distinctly visible in the snow, and we had no difficulty in tracing them to the spot on the borders of a wood where the act was committed."

"He killed himself, then," I whispered.

"Yes, yes; my friend! my poor, poor friend! I found him myself, Halifax—"

Dr. Roper took out a handkerchief and wiped the damp from his brow as he spoke.

"I found him quite stiff and cold. The bottle that had contained the poison which he had swallowed was tightly clutched in his right hand. Poor, poor Ogilvie—oh, my God, that I should live to see this day!"

"Can you account for it?" I asked.

"Oh, yes, Halifax—yes—I can account for it—yes—that accounts for it."

He took a letter out of his pocket and thrust it into my hand.

"Read it," he said. "It is right you should know the truth. I found it in his breast pocket—it was addressed to me."

Dr. Roper turned to leave the conservatory—I opened the letter.

The words it contained were concise and calm. No trace of emotion was allowed to appear.

*"My dear Roper," began the unfortunate doctor, "When you receive this I shall have died by my own hand. Life has become intolerable to me—I will tell you why.*

*"Two days ago there were few happier men than I. I had all, and more than I ever dreamed I could possess of happiness and the good things of life. Above and over all else, I was the husband of the sweetest wife in the world. I don't believe any two people were more devoted to each other than Maggie and I. Two days ago the storm which wrecks us both broke. I often told you that I had spent the early years of my medical life in Australia. But I never mentioned either to you or to Maggie that I was married when there. I married a handsome girl who turned out to be a virago—one of the cruellest, the most heartless, the wickedest women who ever polluted God's earth.*

*"After two years of absolute misery, which no words of mine can possibly describe, my wretched wife died suddenly when I was engaged on business up the country. I was given the certificate of her death, and, relieved beyond measure, I returned to England, bought a practice here, and fell in love with my sweet Maggie and married her. We have been husband and wife for nearly six years; we have one beautiful child; no people could have been happier than we were.*



*“Two days ago a woman called to see me. To my horror I quickly recognised her as my first wife’s mother. She told me at once that her daughter had never died. She gave reasons, which I need not enter into here, for the trick which had been played upon me. Since then tidings of my prosperity had reached the wretched pair, and they came to England determined to make me acknowledge my real wife and reinstate her in the place occupied by my beloved Maggie.*

*“Of course, I offered money, but all in vain—my real wife must have her rights or nothing. If I did not immediately reinstate her she would denounce me for bigamy. Finally, I asked for two days’ grace to decide what steps to take. This was unwillingly conceded to. During twenty-four hours I thought the whole thing over. One does not take long to make up one’s mind when one is in despair.*

*“I resolved not to bribe the women, not to argue with them, but by one fell stroke to cut the ground under their cruel feet. Roper, I resolved to kill both myself and Maggie. My Maggie, my darling, should never live to hear of the disgrace which would more than break her heart. Maggie should go first, by easy and painless steps, into the other world. There I would quickly meet her. I made my resolve, and this morning began to carry it into effect. I gave my dear and only true wife a portion of a certain drug which resembles morphia in its effects, but leaves no smell, and might easily make those not really acquainted with its peculiar power suppose the victim to be suffering from embolism. I heard of this drug in Australia, and had a small quantity with me. I do not know its name, but it is much used by the Australian aborigines. When taken in certain quantities it causes slow and painless death.*

*“I have watched Maggie during the whole of this awful day; there is now no chance of her recovering for a life of misery. I am going out on the mare; I shall ride a considerable distance, and then send the horse home. I have a large dose of the same poison in my pocket. It will kill me, Roper—I am a good riddance. Farewell.”*

I had scarcely finished reading this miserable letter before Dr. Roper, his eyes blazing with excitement, rushed into the conservatory.

“For God’s sake, Halifax, come at once,” he gasped. “That awful woman has found her way into the room where the body is. Her nerves have given way completely at sight of it. She has confessed that her whole abominable story is a lie—that her daughter, poor Ogilvie’s first wife,

has really been dead for years, and that she only invented her horrible fiction for purposes of blackmail.”

“Then—then,” I said with a sudden shout, which I could not repress, “we’ll have a try for it.”

“A try for what? Are you mad?”

“Why, Roper, don’t you see?” I exclaimed. “Don’t you see that if that woman’s story is false, Ogilvie has nothing to die for? The drug he has taken is slow in its effects. He may be only in a state of stupor. We saved his wife—we’ll have a try for his recovery, too.”

I ran from the room, and Roper, looking as if his senses had deserted him, followed me. We turned everyone out of the dining-room and locked the door. I flung the cloth off the dead man’s face, and, seizing a looking-glass, held it to his lips.

“Thank God!” I exclaimed, turning to the old doctor and pointing to a faint dimness on its polished surface.

That is the story, for of course we did save Ogilvie. We had a harder fight than even that of the night before, but in the end the grim King of Terrors withdrew, and we, the humble instruments, we had brought back life almost to the dead, fell on our knees in thankfulness. And Ogilvie’s wife was never told the real story of that night.

## My Hypnotic Patient

**V**ery well," I said, "I will call to-morrow at the asylum, and you will show me round."

I was talking to a doctor, an old chum of mine. He had the charge of a branch hospital in connection with the County Asylum, and had asked me to take his post for a few days. His name was Poynter—he was a shrewd, clever fellow, with a keen love for his profession, and a heart by no means callous to the sufferings of his fellow-beings. In short, he was a good fellow all round, and it often puzzled me why he should take up this somewhat dismal and discouraging branch of the profession.

Poynter had been working hard, and looked, notwithstanding his apparent sang-froid, as if his nerves had been somewhat shaken.

When he begged of me to take his post, and so to secure him a few days' holiday, I could not refuse.

"But I have no practical knowledge of the insane," I said. "Of course, I have studied mental diseases generally; but practical acquaintance with mad people I have none."

"Oh, that is nothing," answered Poynter, in his brisk voice; "there are no very violent cases in the asylum at present. If anything unforeseen occurs, you have but to consult my assistant, Symonds. What with him and the keepers and the nurses, all we really want you for is to satisfy the requirements of the authorities."

"I am abundantly willing to come," I replied. "All the ills that flesh is heir to, whether mental or physical, are of interest to me. What hour shall I arrive to-morrow?"

"Be here at ten to-morrow morning, and I will take you round with me. You will find some of my patients not only interesting from a medical point of view, but agreeable and even brilliant men and women of the world. We keep a mixed company, I assure you, Halifax, and when you

have been present at some of our 'evenings,' you will be able to testify to the fact that, whatever we fail in, we are anything but dull."

This statement was somewhat difficult to believe, but as I should soon be in a position to test its truth, I refrained from comment.

The next morning I arrived at Norfolk House at the hour specified, and accompanied Poynter on his rounds.

We visited the different rooms, and exchanged a word or two with almost every inmate of the great establishment. The padded room was not occupied at present, but patients exhibiting all phases of mental disease were not wanting to form a graphic and very terrible picture in my mind's eye.

I was new to this class of disease, and almost regretted the impulse which had prompted me to give Poynter a holiday.

I felt sure that I could never attain to his coolness. His nerve, the fearless expression in his eyes, gave him instant control over even the most refractory subjects. He said a brief word or two to one and all, introduced me to the nurse or keeper, as the case might be, and finally, taking my arm, drew me into the open air.

"You have seen the worst we can offer at present," he said; "now let us turn to the brighter picture. The people whom you will meet in the grounds are harmless, and except on the one mad point, are many of them full of intelligence. Do you see that pretty girl walking in the shrubbery?"

"Yes," I said, "she looks as sane as you or I."

"Ah, I wish she was. Poor girl, she imagines that she has committed every crime under the sun. Her's is just one of the cases which are most hopeless. But come and let us talk to Mr. Jephson: he is my pet patient, and the life of our social evenings. I have considerable hopes of his recovery, although it is not safe to talk of giving him his liberty yet. Come, I will introduce you to him. He must sing for you when you come here. To listen to that man's voice is to fancy oneself enjoying the harmonies of Heaven."

We walked down a broad grass path, and found ourselves face to face with a gentlemanly man of middle age. He had grey hair closely cropped, an olive-tinted face, good eyes, and a fine, genial, intelligent expression.

"How do you do?" said Poynter. "Pray let me introduce you to my friend, Dr. Halifax. Dr. Halifax, Mr. Jephson. I am glad to be able to tell you," continued Poynter, addressing himself to Jephson, "that I have just made arrangements with Halifax to take my place here for a week

or so. You will be interested, for you have kindly wished me a holiday. I start on my pleasure trip to-night."

"I am delighted," responded Jephson, in a genial tone. "If ever a man deserves a holiday, you do, doctor. Your patience, your zeal, your courage, fill me with amazement at times. But such a life must be wearing, and a complete change will do you a world of good."

"You will do what you can for my friend here," said Poynter. "At first, of course, he will be a stranger, but if I place him under your wing, Jephson, I have no fear for the result."

Jephson laughed. The sound of his laugh was heart-whole. His full, dark eyes were fixed on me intently for an instant.

"I'll do what I can for you, Dr. Halifax," he said. "Come to me if you are in any difficulty. Poynter will assure you that I have a certain influence at Norfolk House. There are few of its unhappy inmates who do not come to me for advice in short, who do not count me among their friends."

At this moment Poynter was called away to speak to someone.

"Yes, I'll do what I can to make your stay amongst us pleasant," continued Jephson. "But, dear, dear, at the best it's a sad life, and those who come under its influence must at times be troubled by melancholic reflections. When all is said and done, Dr. Halifax, what are we but a set of prisoners? Banished from those we love, and who love us I. If there is a class of human beings whom I truly pity, it is the insane."

"Mr. Jephson, will you come and talk to Miss Whittaker for a minute?" said the shrill voice of a quaintly-dressed lady, who I was told afterwards imagined herself to be Bathsheba.

He turned at once, bowing courteously to me as he did so.

Poynter returned and took my arm.

"Well, what do you think of him?" he inquired.

My reply came without hesitation.

"He is one of the handsomest and most intelligent men I have ever spoken to. Why is he here, Poynter? He is no more insane than you or I."

"In one sense you are right, but he has his mad, his very mad, point. He imagines that he is the richest man in the world. Acting on this delusion he has done all kinds of eccentric things—written out cheques for sums which never existed, misled no end of people, until at last his friends found it necessary to confine him here. But I have hopes of him—he is better, much better, than he was. Let us take this path to the left, and we will come upon him again. I see he is talking just now to poor Miss

Whittaker. Introduce the subject of money to him while I have a chat with Miss Whittaker, and note his reply."

We very quickly came up to the pair. Mr. Jephson was holding an earnest conversation with a very pretty, very sad-looking, young girl. He was evidently trying to cheer her, and his fine face was full of sympathy. "How do you do, Miss Whittaker?" said Poynter, as we came up to them. "Allow me to introduce my friend, Dr. Halifax. Jephson, I am sorry to interrupt your chat, but as I am going away to-night, I want to have a word with Miss Whittaker. Will you come this way, Miss Whittaker? I shall not detain you for an instant."

The doctor and the girl turned down one of the many shady paths. Jephson sighed as he looked after them.

"Poor, poor girl," he said; "hers is one of the saddest cases in the whole of this unhappy place."

"And yet she looks perfectly sane," I replied.

"She is sane, I am perfectly convinced on that point. Ask our doctor to tell you her story. Would that it were in my power to help her!"

His eyes sparkled as he spoke, and a smile of profound pity lingered round his lips.

I felt almost sure that the man himself was sane, but to make doubly certain I must press my finger on the weak point.

"Allow me to remark," I said, "that to be confined here must be a great deprivation to a man of your wealth."

When I said this a quick change came over Jephson's face. He came close to me, looked fixedly into my eyes, and said, with sudden, grave emphasis: "My dear sir, your remark is more than just. A man of my exceptional wealth must feel this confinement acutely. I do feel it for more reasons than one—you will understand this when I tell you that my income is a million a minute. Fact, I assure you. I have often thought seriously of buying up the whole of England."

He spoke with great emphasis, but also with great quietness, and his eyes still looked sane and calm. I knew, however, that Poynter was right, and hastened to change the subject.

We followed Miss Whittaker and Poynter at a respectful distance. They came to a part of the grounds where several paths met. Here they paused to wait for us. Miss Whittaker raised her eyes as we approached, and fixed them, with an eager, questioning gaze, on my face.

The moment I met her eyes, I felt a thrill of quick sympathy going through me. She was certainly a very pretty girl, and her dark grey

eyes, well open and set rather wide apart, were full of the pleading expression I had only seen hitherto in a dog's. Her lips were beautifully curved, her abundant soft brown hair shaded as gentle and intelligent a face as I had ever seen. There is a peculiar look in the eyes of most mad people, but if ever eyes were sane, Miss Whittaker's were as they looked pleadingly at me.

"I will say good-bye for the present, Dr. Poynter," she said, holding out her hand to my friend, "for if you have nothing more to say, I must go into the house to give Tommy his reading lesson."

Her voice was as sweet as her face.

"Who is Tommy?" I asked of Poynter after she had left us.

"An idiot boy whom Miss Whittaker is more than kind to," he replied, "and whom she is developing in the most marvellous manner."

"Look here, Poynter," interrupted Jephson, "be sure you give Halifax a right impression of that poor girl."

He turned away as he spoke. I immediately raised eyes of inquiry to my friend.

"Why is Miss Whittaker here?" I asked at once. "I seldom saw a more beautiful face or a more intelligent-looking girl. When I look at her, I feel inclined to say, 'If she is insane, God help the rest of the world.'"

"And yet," said Poynter, speaking in a low voice which thrilled me with the horror of its import, "that gentle-looking girl is so insane that she was guilty of murder. In short, she is under confinement in a lunatic asylum during the Queen's pleasure, which of course may mean for life."

Just then some people came up, and I had not a moment to ask Poynter for any further particulars. I had to catch the next train to town, but I arrived at Norfolk House again that evening prepared to stay there during the week of my friend's absence.

This happened to be one of the social evenings, and immediately after dinner I had to put in an appearance in the immense drawing-room which ran right across the front of the house. There were from seventy to eighty people present. Most of them were nice looking. Some of the girls were really pretty, some of the men handsome. They all wore evening dress, and dancing, music, and song were the order of the hour. My quick eyes at once singled out Jephson's fine figure. He looked more striking than ever in his evening dress, and when he sang, as he did twice during the evening, the quality of his tenor voice was so rich and sweet that I abundantly endorsed Poynter's verdict with regard to it.

There was a sudden hush in the rooms when Jephson sang. Restless people became quiet and talkative ones silent. A pleasant melancholy stole over some faces—a gentle peace over others. On the last of these occasions Miss Whittaker approached close to the piano and fixed her beautiful, sad eyes on the singer's face. If ever eyes told a tragic story, hers did.

"Poynter says that this girl has been accused of murder," I muttered to myself. "There must be a mistake—if Jephson knows her story he will probably tell it to me, but I wish I had had time to ask Poynter to give me full particulars."

During that first evening I had no opportunity to say any special word to the young girl, but her image followed me when I retired at last to my own room, and I saw her sad, pale face again in my dreams.

I am not a coward, but I took care to lock and draw the bolts of my door. To say the least of it, a lunatic asylum is an eccentric sort of place, and I felt that I had better prepare against the vagaries of my immediate neighbours.

I fell asleep almost the moment my head touched the pillow. In my sleep I dreamt of Miss Whittaker. At first my dream was of the tranquil order; but gradually, I cannot tell how, my visions of the night became troubled, and I awoke at last to find myself bathed in cold perspiration, and also to the fact that the noises which had mingled with my dreams were real, and very piercing and terrible.

Shrieks of agonized human beings, the quick, hurrying tread of many feet—and then a rushing sound as of a body of water, smote upon my ears.

I sprang to my feet, struck a light, dressed in a moment, and hurried down the corridor in the direction from where the noises came. Lights were flashing, bells were ringing, and terrified faces were peeping round doors in all directions.

"Keep back, keep back!" I exclaimed to one and all. "There has been an accident of some sort. Stay in your rooms, good people. I will promise to come back presently and tell you what it is about."

A few of my patients had the courage and self-control to obey me, but others seemed completely to lose their heads, and laughed and shrieked as the case might be, as they followed me in the direction from where the noise came.

I found myself at last in a large room which was evidently used as a sort of general store-room, for there was a huge linen press occupying



nearly the whole of one side, while the other was taken up with big cupboards filled with different stores.

My eyes took in these details in a flash. I remembered them distinctly by-and-by, but now all my thoughts were occupied with the scene of confusion which arrested my attention in the middle of the floor. Several nurses, keepers, and attendants were bending over the prostrate figure of a woman who lay stretched in an unconscious state on the floor. Another poor creature was jabbering and talking in a distant corner. I looked quickly at him and saw that he was a boy. He was shaking and sobbing, and pointed his finger at the woman.

"This is Tommy, sir," exclaimed one of the attendants; "he's our idiot boy, and is quiet most times, but sometimes he takes a contrary sort of fit, and once or twice before now we thought he meant mischief. He took a wonderful fancy to her," pointing to the unconscious woman, "and she seemed to be doing him a power of good; but to-night he broke loose, and crept about setting places on fire. That's his craze, and he's always locked up at night. How he got loose to-night there's no telling; but, there—he's more sly and cunning nor a fox. He escaped, and might have had the whole building in flames but that she saw him, or smelt something, or found out. We can't say what did happen, for when I and my mate Jones rushed in here, we found her on the floor all unconscious as you see her, and dripping wet as if she was deluged with water; and here's Tommy—Tommy won't utter a word for the next twenty-four hours, so there ain't no use trying to pump him."

"How do you know there has been a fire?" I asked.

"You look here, sir—this wood is all charred, and we found a box of matches in Tommy's pocket. "Oh, and here's her dress burnt too, poor thing. I expect she turned on the water tap and then lost her senses. She gets very nervous at times. Dear, dear—it was brave of her to tackle the fire alone, and Tommy in one of his mad fits."

"Stand aside now, please," I said. "I must see what can be done for this lady; I am afraid she is seriously hurt."

The attendants made way for me at once, and I knelt on the floor, to discover that the pale, unconscious face over which I bent belonged to the pretty girl whom I had admired so much in the drawing-room that evening.

With the assistance of a couple of men, and a kind-looking elderly nurse of the name of Hooper, I had Miss Whittaker conveyed back to her bedroom, and in a very short time we had her wet things removed, and she was lying in bed.

As I feared, she was very badly burnt about her left arm and side. Her right hand, too, was swollen and cut, and one of her fingers was dislocated.

"It must have been with this hand she held Tommy," exclaimed Mrs. Hooper. "Well, she is brave, poor thing; everybody likes her, she's that obliging and tractable. Do you think she is much hurt, sir?"

"We must get her round before I can say," I replied. "I don't like the look of this continued unconsciousness."

The nurse helped me with a will, and in about an hour's time a deep breath from the patient showed that her spirit was slowly returning to a world of suffering. The breath was followed by one or two heavily-drawn sighs or groans of pain, and then the dark grey eyes were opened wide.

They had a glassy look about them, and it was evident that she could not at first recall where she was or what had happened to her.

"I think I have fully surrendered my will," she said, in a slow voice. "Yes, fully and absolutely. Yes—the pains are better. There is comfort in resting on you. Yes, I submit my will to you. I obey you—absolutely."

"What are you talking about?" I said in a cheerful tone. "I don't want you to submit your will to mine, except to the extent of allowing me to dress this bad burn. Will you move a little more round on your right side? Ah, that is better."

She submitted at once. A faint blush came into her cheeks, and she said in a tone of apology: "I beg your pardon. I thought you were my friend, Dr. Walter Anderson."

I made no reply to this, but having made the poor thing as comfortable as I could, I administered an opiate, and, telling Hooper to sit up with her, went away to see after Tommy and to quiet the rest of the excited household.

There was very little more sleep for me that night, for the event which had just taken place had aroused more than one refractory patient to a state bordering on frenzy. I found I had to use my soothing powers to the best advantage.

Early in the morning I went to Miss Whittaker's room to inquire after her. I found her in an alarming state, highly feverish, and inclined to be delirious.

"Pore thing, it's partly her madness, no doubt," remarked Nurse Hooper; "but she do talk queer. It's all about giving up her will—as if anyone wanted to take it from her, pore lamb, and that she'd like to see Dr. Anderson."

"Do you know who he is?" I inquired.

"No, sir, I never heard his name before."

I looked again at my patient, and then beckoned the nurse to the door of the room.

"Look here," I said, "I see by your manner that you are anxious to be kind to that poor young girl."

"Kind? Who wouldn't be kind?" exclaimed Hooper. "She's the nicest young lady, and the least selfish, as I ever come across."

"But you know what she is here for?"

"Yes." Nurse Hooper tossed her head disdainfully. "I'm aware of what they say. You don't catch me believing of 'em. Why, that young lady, she wouldn't hurt a fly, let alone kill a man. No, no, I know the good kind when I see 'em, and she's one."

"I will sit with her for a little," I said. "You can go and have some breakfast."

While the nurse was away Miss Whittaker opened her eyes. She looked full at me, and I saw that she was quite conscious again.

"You are the new doctor?" she said.

"Yes," I replied, "Dr. Halifax."

"I can't quite remember, but I think you were very kind to me last night?" she said again, and her sad eyes scrutinized me anxiously.

"I naturally did all I could for you," I replied. "It was very brave of you to put out the fire: you saved us all. I was bound to help you."

"I remember about Tommy now," she said, with a little shudder. "Tommy was awful last night. I cannot soon forget his face."

"Try not to think of it," I said. "Shut your eyes and let your imagination wander to pleasant things."

She gave a long shiver.

"What pleasant things are there in an asylum?" she answered. "And I am, you know I am, shut up here for life. I am only twenty-three, and I am shut up here for life!"

There was not a scrap of excitement in her manner. She never even raised her voice, but the dull despair of her tone gave me a sort of mental shiver.

"Forgive me for forgetting," I said. "Some time, perhaps, you will be well enough to tell me something of your story. In the mean time, believe in my sympathy. Now I must attend to your physical condition. Are your burns very painful?"

"Not for the last hour, but I feel weak and as if I were drifting away somewhere, and it seems to me that my life must be nearly over."

"Don't say that," I replied. "At your age, life is little more than really begun."

Then I added, driven by an impulse which I could not resist, "It is my earnest wish and desire to help you. I have a strong feeling that there is some terrible mistake here. I would do anything to prove your innocence, and your sanity."

"Thank you," she answered. Her eyes grew dim for a moment—she turned her head away. "Thank you," she repeated again, more faintly.

Nurse Hooper came into the room, and I hurried downstairs.

After breakfast I spoke to Jephson.

"Did you ever happen to hear of a man of the name of Walter Anderson, a doctor?" I inquired.

"Only from Miss Whittaker," he replied. "We all know, of course, that he is her greatest friend."

"I should wish to know more about him," I answered.

Jephson fixed his fine eyes on my face.

"I am glad you are going to be kind to that poor girl," he said.

"I am not only going to be kind to her, but I mean to get her out of this place," I answered, stoutly. Jephson laughed.

"The kind of speech you have just made is often heard at Norfolk House," he replied. "For at Norfolk House nothing is impossible to anyone—no feat is too daring, no exploit too vast. But you will pardon me for laughing, for this is the very first time I have heard the doctor of the establishment go into heroics. You are, of course, aware under what conditions Miss Whittaker is confined here?"

"You know the story, don't you?" I retorted.

"Yes, I know the story."

"Can you tell it to me in a very few words?"

"In as few or as many as you please."

"The fewer words the better. I simply want to be in possession of facts."

"Then I can give them to you very briefly. Miss Whittaker has come here from London. Her story can be told in half-a-dozen sentences. She was a gentle, modest, rather nervous, very highly-strung girl. One day she went to the house of a man with whom she had little in common, who had, as far as we can make out, never in any way injured her, for whom she had no apparent dislike, to whom she bore no apparent grudge, and forcing her way into his private sitting-room, deliberately fired at him."

"She killed him?" I exclaimed.

"She fired at his head; he died at once—and Miss Whittaker is here for life. It is a short story—none shorter—none sadder, in the whole of this terrible place."

"You believe that she did it?" I said.

"Yes, I believe that she did it—the papers gave full accounts of it—there were witnesses to prove it. Miss Whittaker was brought to trial. As there was no motive whatever for the act, it was put down to dangerous homicidal insanity, and she was sent first of all to the criminal asylum, afterwards, through the influence of friends, here."

"I cannot make head or tail of it," I exclaimed. "You believe that pretty, sweet-looking young girl to be guilty of a horrible deed, and yet you don't think her insane?"

"I think she is as sane as you are, sir."

"Believing this, you tolerate her—you can bear to be friends with her!"

"I tolerate her—I like her much. The fact is, Mr. Halifax, the solution of this story has not yet been arrived at. My firm belief is this, that when it comes it will not only clear Miss Whittaker of any responsibility in the crime she has committed, but also re-establish her sanity."

"Nonsense, nonsense," I said. "If she did this deed, she is either insane or wicked. You say you are convinced that she did fire at the man?"

"She undoubtedly fired at a man of the name of Frederick Willoughby with intent to take his life. She fulfilled her purpose, for the man died; still I believe her to be sane, and I believe that there is something to be found out which will establish her innocence."

"You talk in riddles," I answered, almost angrily. I turned on my heel and walked away.

The whole episode worried and distressed me. I found that I could scarcely attend to my other duties. Jephson's words and manner kept recurring to me again and again. He stoutly declared that Miss Whittaker was both innocent and sane, and yet she had killed a man!

"Why should I bother myself over this matter?" I murmured once or twice during that morning's work, "Jephson is mad himself. His ideas are surely not worth regarding. Of course, Miss Whittaker is one of those unfortunate people subject to homicidal mania. She is best here, and yet—poor girl, it is a sad, sad, terrible lot. I told her, too, that I would try to clear her. Well, of course, that was before I knew her story."

As I busied myself, however, with my other patients, the look in the gentle young girl's grey eyes, the expression of her voice when she said "Thank you—thank you," kept recurring to me again and again.

Try as I would, I found I could not force her story out of my mind. Towards evening I went to see her again. Nurse Hooper told me that my patient had passed a restless and feverish day, but she was calmer now.

I found her half sitting up in bed, her soft hair pushed back from her forehead, her face very pale—its expression wonderfully sweet and patient. The moment I looked at her I became again firmly convinced that there was some mistake somewhere—so refined and intelligent a young girl could never have attempted senseless murder.

"I am glad you are easier," I said, sitting down by her side.

When she heard my voice a faint, pink colour came to her cheeks, and her eyes grew a shade brighter.

"I am almost out of pain," she answered, looking at me gratefully. "I feel weak—very weak; but I am almost out of pain."

"Your nervous system got a severe shock last night," I replied; "you cannot expect to be yourself for a day or two. You will be glad to hear, however, that Tommy is better. He asked for you about an hour ago, and told me to give you his love."

"Poor Tommy," replied Miss Whittaker—then she shuddered, and grew very pale—"but oh!" she added, "his face last night was terrible—his stealthy movements were more terrible. I cannot forget what he has done."

"How did you first discover him?" I asked.

"I was going to sleep, when I heard a slight noise in my room. I looked up, and there was Tommy—he had hidden in that cupboard. He was trying to set the bed on fire. When he saw me, he laughed, and ran away. I followed him as far as the store-room—I don't think I remember any more."

"You must try to forget what you do remember," I replied, in a soothing tone. "Tommy had a mad fit on. When people are mad they are not accountable for their actions." I looked at her fixedly as I spoke. "I suppose that is true," she answered, returning my gaze.

"It is perfectly true," I replied. "Even a gentle girl like you may do terrible things in a moment of insanity."

"They tell me that I once did something dreadful," she replied. "It comes over me now and then as if it were a dream, but I cannot distinctly recall it. Perhaps I am mad. I must have been if I did. anything dreadful, for I hate, oh, I hate dreadful things! I shudder at crime and at cruelty. You said you believed in me, Dr. Halifax."

"I earnestly desire to help you," I said.

"I have learned patience," she continued, falling back upon her pillows and clasping her hands. "I lost all—all, when I came here. I have nothing more to fear, and nothing more to lose; but I do wish to say one thing, and that is this: If I am insane, I don't feel it. Except for that one Clark dream which I cannot distinctly recall, I have none of the symptoms which attack other members of this unhappy establishment. It is my own impression that if I was insane for a moment I am sane again. Dr. Halifax, it is terrible, terrible, to be locked up for all your life with mad people when you are not mad."

"It is too awful to contemplate," I answered, carried out of myself by her pathos and her words. "I wonder you kept your reason, I wonder you did not become really mad when you came here."

"For the first week I thought I should do so," she replied; "but now I am more accustomed to the people here, and to the sights which I see, and the terrible sounds which come to me. For the first week I was rebellious, fearfully rebellious; but now, now, I am patient, I submit—I submit to the will of God."

"Pardon me," I interrupted. "Your speaking of submitting your will reminds me of an expression you made use of when you were recovering consciousness last night; you spoke then of submitting your will to—to a certain human being. Is that the case?"

"Don't! don't!" she implored.

Her eyes grew bright as stars, her face became crimson.

"You must not speak of him. To speak of him excites me beyond reason."

"Tell me his name, and I won't say any more," I replied.

She looked fearfully round her. The emotion in her face was most painful to witness. She was evidently frightened, distressed, worried; but gazing at her intently, I could not see, even now, that there was anything in her actions or attitude which might not be consistent with perfect sanity.

"I wish you would not try to get his name from me," she said; "and yet, and yet, you are good. Why should not I tell you? He is my friend. Dr. Walter Anderson is my dearest friend, and I shall never, never see him again."

"You would like to see him again?" I retorted.

"Like it!" she replied. She clasped her hands. "Oh, it would be life from the dead," she answered.

"Then I will find him and bring him to you. You must give me his address."

"But he won't like to come here; I dare not displease him. You understand, don't you, Dr. Halifax, that where we—we revere, we—we love, we never care to displease?"

"Yes, yes," I replied, "but if Dr. Anderson is worth your friendship, he will come to see you when he knows that you are in sore trouble and need him badly."

"You can't understand," she replied. "My feelings for Dr. Anderson are—are not what you imagine. He is a physician, a great physician—a great healer of men. He soothes and strengthens and helps one, when all other people fail. He did much for me, for I was his patient, and he my physician. I love him as a patient loves a physician, not—not in the way you think. I am only one patient to him. It is not to be expected that he would give up his time to come to me here."

"Let me have his address, and I will try if he will come," I answered.

When I said this, Miss Whittaker was much perturbed. It was more than evident that I presented to her a strong temptation, which she struggled to resist. The struggle, however, was brief, for she was weak both in mind, and body at that moment.

"You tempt me too much," she said, in a faltering voice. "The address is in that note-book. Turn to the first page and you will see it. But, oh, remember, if he fails to come after you have gone to him, I shall die!"

"He will not fail to come," I replied. "Keep up your heart. I promise to bring him to see you."

I spent some time arranging matters that night in order to make myself free to attend to Miss Whittaker's affairs on the morrow. After my interview with her I was quite resolved to take up her case; nay, more, I was resolved to see it out to the bitter end.

There was a mystery somewhere, and I meant to fathom it. Queer, excitable, nervous, this young girl undoubtedly was, but mad she was not. She had killed a man, yet she was neither mad nor cruel.

With Dr. Walter Anderson's address in my pocket-book I started for town on the following morning. I told my assistant doctor to expect me back in the middle of the day at latest.

"Attend to all the patients," I said when I was leaving, "and in particular, visit Miss Whittaker. Tell her she is not to get up till I see her."

Symonds promised faithfully to do what I wished, and I stepped into my train. I arrived at Charing Cross a little before ten o'clock, and drove straight to the address which Miss Whittaker had given me.



Just before I reached my destination, a sudden thought occurred to me. This Dr. Anderson, whose name was quite unknown to me, was doubtless in his own way a celebrity. Miss Whittaker had spoken of him with reverence as well as affection. She had used the expressions which we employ when we speak of those who are far above us. She had alluded to him as a great physician, a wonderful healer of men. Now, I, a brother physician, had never heard the name, and the address to which I was driving was in a poor part of Fulham. It would help me much in my coming interview if I knew something of the man beforehand.

I pushed my umbrella through the window of the hansom, and desired the driver to stop at the nearest chemist's.

I went in, and asked to be directed to the house of Dr. Anderson.

"Do you mean Dr. Walter or Dr. Henry Anderson?" asked the chemist.

"Dr. Walter," I said. "Do you know him?"

"Well, yes—not that we dispense many of his medicines." Then the man looked me keenly in the face, and I looked back at him. He was young and intelligent, and I thought I might trust him, and that perhaps he would be willing to help me.

I took out my card and gave it to him.

"If you can tell me anything with regard to Dr. Walter Anderson, I shall be very much indebted," I said.

"Do you mean with regard to his special line?" asked the chemist.

"Yes, that and anything else you like to tell me. I am about to see him on behalf of a patient, and as I do not know him at all, anything you can say will be of use."

"Certainly, Mr. Halifax," said the chemist, reading my name off my card as he spoke. "Well, the fact is, Dr. Walter Anderson is a gentleman with whom we haven't much to do. He is not, so to speak, recognised by the faculty. Now, Dr. Henry—"

"Yes, yes," I interrupted, "but my business is with Dr. Walter. Is his practice anything out of the common?"

"Well, sir, I'll tell you what I know, but that isn't much. Dr. Walter Anderson went in for family practice when first I settled in these parts. He did fairly well, although he never placed, in my opinion, enough dependence on drugs. One winter he was unfortunate. There was a lot of illness about, and he lost several patients. Then all of a sudden he changed his mode of treatment. He went in for what you in the profession call fads, and Dr. Henry Anderson and other doctors who have large practices round here would have nothing more to do with

him. I cannot but say I agree with them, although my wife holds by Dr. Walter, and says he did her neuralgia a world of good."

"What are his fads?" I inquired.

"He has taken up what we used to call mesmerism, but what is now known as hypnotism. Lots of women swear by him, and my wife is one. I shouldn't suppose you'd place much faith in such quackery, sir?"

"Hypnotism can scarcely be termed quackery," I answered. "It is a dangerous remedy with small advantages attached to it, and possibilities of much evil. Thank you for your information," I added.

I took my leave immediately afterwards, and five minutes later had rung the bell at Dr. Walter Anderson's modest door.

"So he is a hypnotist!" I muttered under my breath. "That accounts for poor Miss Whittaker's surrender of her will. I must say I don't like the complexion of things at all. The hypnotist is one of the most dangerous productions of modern times."

I sent in my card, and was shortly admitted to Dr. Anderson's Sanctum.

I was greeted by a tall man, with silvery white hair, an olive-tinted face and brown eyes, which gave me at once a mingled sensation of attraction and repulsion. They were the kind of eyes which a woman would consider beautiful. They were soft like brown velvet, and, when they looked full at you, you had the uncomfortable, and yet somewhat flattered, sense of being not only read through but understood and appreciated. The eyes had a queer way of conveying a message without the lips speaking.

When I entered the room they gave me a direct glance, but something in my answering expression caused them to become veiled—the hypnotist saw even before I opened my lips that I was not going to become one of his victims.

"I must apologize for taking up some of your time," I said; "but I have come on behalf of a lady who is ill, and who is very anxious to see you."

Dr. Anderson motioned me to seat myself, and took a chair at a little distance himself.

"I have not had the pleasure of your acquaintance until now," he said. "Is the lady known to me?"

"Yes, she is a great friend of yours—she tells me that you know her well. Her name is Miss Whittaker."

Dr. Anderson turned hastily to ring an electric bell at his side. A servant immediately answered his summons.

"If any patients call, Macpherson, say that I am not at home."

Having given these instructions he turned to me.

"Now, sir," he said, "I am ready to give you my best attention. I knew Miss Whittaker; hers is one of the saddest cases I have ever come across. I shall be glad to hear of her, poor soul, again. Are you her physician at the asylum where she is confined?"

"I am her physician *pro tem*. I am interested in her, because I do not believe her to be insane."

Here I paused. Dr. Anderson was looking down at the carpet. His face appeared to be full of a gentle meditation.

"She was always a very nervous girl," he said, after a pause; "she was easily influenced by those whom she respected. I took an interest in Miss Whittaker: she was my patient for some months. My treatment was highly beneficial to her, and the outburst which occurred was the last thing to be anticipated. When you speak of doubting her insanity, you forget—"

"No, I forget nothing," I said, speaking with some impatience, for I did not like the man. "After all, Dr. Anderson, my opinion on this point is quite wide of the object of this visit. Miss Whittaker is ill, and wants to see you. She has a bodily illness, which may or may not terminate fatally. She wants to see you with great earnestness, and I have promised to do all in my power to bring you to her sick bed."

Dr. Anderson raised his eyes and looked full at me. There was a steady reproach in them, but his lips smiled, and his words were gentle.

"I don't know you," he said, "and I am quite sure you don't know me. I am more than anxious on all occasions to obey the call of suffering. I will go to see Miss Whittaker with pleasure."

"When can you come?" I asked.

"When do you want me to come?"

"Now—if it will at all suit your convenience."

"Miss Whittaker's convenience is the one to be considered. You heard me give orders a moment ago to have my patients dismissed. That means that I am at your service. If you will excuse me for five minutes, I will be ready to accompany you."

He went out of the room in a dignified fashion, and I sat and looked round me. No one could have been kinder or more prompt in attending to what must have been an inconvenient summons; yet I could not get over my prejudice against him. I tried to account for this by saying over and over to myself: "He practises hypnotism, and my natural instincts as a doctor are therefore in arms against him."

But when he returned to the room prepared to accompany me, I found that my instinctive dislike was more to the man than to his practices.

We had a very uneventful journey together, and arrived at Norfolk House early in the afternoon. I was met by Symonds in the avenue. I introduced him at once to Dr. Anderson.

"I am glad you have come," he said, looking at the doctor and then at me. "Miss Whittaker is worse. She is very weak. She has fainted two or three times."

I was startled at the effect of these words on my companion—he turned white, even to the lips—his expressive eyes showed the sort of suffering which one has sometimes seen in a tortured animal. He turned his head aside, as if he knew that I witnessed his emotion and disliked me to see it.

"This is too much for her, poor child," he muttered. "My God, who could—who could have foreseen?"

"I will just go up and tell my patient that you are here," I said to him. "She longed so for you that doubtless you will have a reviving effect upon her immediately."

"You need not prepare her," he said; "she knows I am here already. You are perhaps aware, or perhaps you do not know, that I study a science as yet in its infancy. I am a hypnotist by profession. Over Miss Whittaker I had immense influence. She knows that I am here, so you need not prepare her."

"Well, come with me," I said.

I took him upstairs and down a long, white corridor which led to the young girl's room.

It was a pretty room looking out on the lovely garden. The western sun was shedding slanting rays through the open window.

Miss Whittaker was lying flat in bed, her arms and white hands were lying outside the counterpane; her eyes, bright, restless, and expectant, were fixed on the door.

The moment she saw Dr. Anderson they became full of a sudden intense and most lovely joy. I never saw such a look of beatitude in any eyes. He came forward at once, took her two little hot hands in one of his, and sat down by her side. I followed him into the room, but neither he nor she saw me. The physician and the patient were altogether absorbed with one another.

I went away, closing the door behind me.

I did not like Miss Whittaker's look. I had already found she was suffering from a critical heart condition owing to the repeated strains and shocks which her delicate temperament had undergone.

I could not attend to my other patients, but moved restlessly about, wondering how long Dr. Anderson would remain with her.

He came out of the room much sooner than I expected.

The look of real trouble and distress was still most apparent on his face.

"She is asleep now," he said, coming up to me.

"You have mesmerized her, then?" I answered.

"Only very, very little, just sufficient to give her repose. She is extremely weak, and I am anxious about her. I should like to talk over her case with you, if- you will allow me."

"With pleasure," I replied. "Come with me to my consulting-room."

We went there. I motioned the doctor to an easy chair, but he would not seat himself.

"You do not like me," he said, looking full at me. "You distrust me; I am an enigma to you."

"I do not understand you, certainly," I replied, nettled by his tone.

"That is evident," he retorted. "Notwithstanding, I am going to put implicit confidence in you. I am a man in a great strait. Since Miss Whittaker's arrest, and since the severe sentence pronounced against her, I have been one of the most unhappy men on God's earth. There was one light and straight course before me, and day after day I shrank from taking it. All the same, I knew that a day would come when I should have to take it. When you called on me this morning and mentioned Miss Whittaker's name, I knew that the day and hour had arrived. That was why I desired my servant to dismiss my patients—that was why I, a very busy man, leaping into popularity day by day, gave up my time at once to you."

Here he paused. I did not interrupt him by a single word. I looked full at him, as he restlessly paced up and down the room.

"My opinion of Miss Whittaker is this," he said, stopping abruptly and fixing me with his dark, curious eyes. "My opinion is this, that if she stays here much longer, she will die. Do you agree with me?"

"I have not studied her case as carefully as you have," I replied. "Nevertheless, my opinion coincides with yours. Miss Whittaker is not strong—she is more than usually nervous. The sights she cannot help seeing in this place, the sounds she must hear, and the people she must associate with, cannot but be injurious to her health. Even if she lives, which I doubt, she is extremely likely to become mad herself."

"That is true," he retorted. "She is quite sane now, but she cannot with impunity live day and night, for ever, with the insane. She will die or go mad unless she is liberated."

"She cannot be liberated," I replied. "She was tried for murder, and is here during the Queen's pleasure."

He was quite silent when I said this. After a brief pause in his restless pacing up and down, he turned on his heels and walked to the window. He looked fixedly out for a moment, then turned full upon me.

"You must listen to an extraordinary confession," he said. "In very deed, if justice were done, I ought to be now in Miss Whittaker's place."

"You!" I answered, jumping from my seat.

"Yes—I repeat that I ought to be in her place. Mr. Halifax, you don't believe in hypnotism?"

"I believe it to be a little known science full of dangerous capabilities," I answered.

"Yes, yes; you have not studied it, I can see. You talk from an outsider's point of view. I believe in hypnotism, and I have acquired the powers of a hypnotist. I can exercise great power over certain people—in short, I can hypnotize them. As a physician I was somewhat of a failure; as a hypnotist, I have been an enormous success. I have cured mind troubles, I have made drunkards sober, I have comforted folks who were in trouble, and I have removed by my influence the desire of evil from many hearts. Some of my patients speak of me as little short of an angel from Heaven. I have an extraordinary gift of looking right down into the souls of men; I can read motives, and I can absolutely subdue the wills of those over whom I have influence to my own will.

"This is a great power, and except in the case of Miss Whittaker, I can conscientiously say that I have only used it for good. She was the patient over whom I had the most complete influence. She was the most extraordinary medium I ever came in contact with. Circumstances arose which tempted me to use my power over her in an evil way. The man Willoughby, whom she killed, happened to have been an enemy of mine. It is unnecessary to go into particulars—I hated the fellow for years—he did me untold mischief—married the girl I had already wooed and was engaged to, amongst other trifles.

"Miss Whittaker came completely under my influence. Her health improved rapidly, and I found that by my will I could make her do anything that I pleased.

"It so happened that by an accident Miss Whittaker and Willoughby met together in my presence. She had never seen the man before. I

observed that when he came into the room she shuddered, trembled, grew very pale, and turned her head away. I guessed at once that my will was influencing her, and that because I hated him she did the same.

"Instantly the desire came to strengthen her dislike. I willed her to hate him more and more, and so great was my power over her, that she made an excuse to leave the room, being unable to remain in his presence. The next time I met her, she said to me impulsively, 'I cannot get over the terrible horror I feel of the man whom I met when I was last in your house.

"I made no reply whatever, but hastened to turn the subject.

"She had not the faintest idea that I had any cause to detest him.

"Willoughby had come to live near me—we were friends outwardly, but his hateful presence came between me and all peace. The temptation grew greater and greater to exercise my will over Miss Whittaker in this matter—at last, with the result you have heard. It is true that I did not go to the length of willing her to kill him. This was but, however, the natural result of the hate I had inculcated. On a certain morning, this innocent, gentle, affectionate girl went to the man's rooms, and because I hated him, and because I willed her to hate him too, she took his life.

"That is the story of Miss Whittaker's insanity."

When Dr. Anderson had finished speaking, he sat down and wiped the moisture from his brow.

"I am willing to tell this story again in open court, if necessary," he said. "My agony of mind since Miss Whittaker was arrested baffles any powers of mine to describe. I am abundantly willing now to make her all reparation. Do you think there is a chance of her being saved?—in short, is there any hope of the sentence against her being reversed?"

"It is impossible for me to say," I replied. "Had you given the evidence you have now favoured me with in open court at the time of the trial, the result might have been very different. May I ask you, Dr. Anderson, why your remorse did not lead you to make this reparation to your unhappy victim at the only time when it was likely to help her?"

"I can give you a plain answer to that question. At the time of the trial I had not the moral courage to deliberately ruin myself by making the confession which I now make to you. You can, or perhaps you cannot, understand what it is to struggle with remorse—what it is daily and hourly to bid your conscience be quiet. In my case, it would not obey me; it would keep calling loudly on me to repair the awful mischief I had done. I have spoken to you to-day—I have reposed full confidence

in you. The question now is this: Can Miss Whittaker be liberated, and, if so, how soon?"

"You will stand to the confession you have just made me, even though it lands you in the prisoner's dock?" I answered.

A queer smile crept into his face.

"That will not be my punishment," he retorted. "I shall lose my patients and my chance of success in life, but there are no laws at present to punish hypnotists. Even if there were, however, I think I think now that I should be willing to abide the issue."

"In that case we must draw up an appeal to the Home Secretary," I began; "your statement must be taken down in writing—"

I was interrupted by an imperative knock at the door. Even before I could reply it was pushed open and Nurse Hooper, very pale and frightened-looking, put her head in.

"Will you come at once to Miss Whittaker?" she said; "She's in a very queer state."

"Let me come with you," said Anderson, springing to his feet.

We rushed up the stairs and entered the sick girl's room.

Dr. Anderson had left her sleeping quietly, but she was not asleep now. She was sitting up in bed, gazing straight before her and speaking aloud with great rapidity. From the look in her eyes, it was evident she was gazing intently at a vision we could not see.

"I gave up my will," she said. "I gave it up when first you asked me. It is yours to do whatever you like with. I have heard you telling me day and night to hate him. To hate him! I do hate him. Now you tell me to kill him. Please don't tell me that. Please stop before you ask that. I'll have to do it if you insist, but don't insist. Don't lay this awful, awful command on me. Did you say you must? Did you say you would have to lay it on me? Then I'll do it! I'll borrow my father's pistol, it is over his mantelpiece. I can get it easily. No one will suspect me of hating that man, so I can easily, easily kill him. I know, of course, where this will lead—to prison first, and then to death. But if you ask me, I'll go even there for your sake. Yes, I'll go even there." Her words were low, intensely horrible to listen to, her face was deadly white. The fierceness, the hungry glare of a tiger gleamed in the eyes which were generally so sweet in their glance.

"This is the house," she went on, in a hoarse voice. "I am knocking at the door. It is opened. I see the servant's face. Yes, he is at home. I am going in. That is his room to the left. Oh, how dreadful, how dreadful



is the thing I have got to do! Dr. Anderson, I submit my will to yours. I obey the voice which tells me to—”

“Stop hold!” cried Dr. Anderson, suddenly. “Take back your will. See, I give it back to you.”

He took her hands and forcibly laid her back on the bed. She stared up at him fixedly, and he gazed intently into her wide-open eyes.

“Take back your will, Ursula,” he repeated in an imperative voice. “Here it is—I return it to you. Be the gentle—the loving Ursula of old once again.”

His words acted as magic. The hungry, angry light died out of the beautiful eyes—they grew soft—then they filled with tears.

“I had a bad dream,” she said, speaking as if she were a child. “It is over—I am glad to be awake again.”

“I’ll stay with you until you are better,” he answered—“until you fall into a gentle, healing sleep.”


But, strange to say, when Anderson gave Miss Whittaker back her will, his power over her had vanished. Try as he would, he could not soothe her to sleep; by the evening she was more feverish than ever, and her condition was highly critical.

She lay in a state of delirium all through the night, but she did not talk of any more horrors. Her troubled spirit had evidently entered into a happier and more peaceful phase of memory. Her conversation was all of her mother who was dead, and of her own life as a light-hearted schoolgirl.

When the sun rose the next day, Miss Whittaker died.

I have not seen Dr. Anderson since. It is my belief that he will never again try hypnotism, either for good or evil.

## Very Far West

 was a rather young-looking man until the incident which I am about to relate took place. I will frankly confess that it aged me, telling for a time on my nerves, and rendering my right hand so shaky that I was unfit to perform operations of a critical and delicate character. I had just got back to town after my summer holiday when the circumstance occurred which sends strange thrills of horror through me even now.

It was a fine night towards the end of September. I had not many patients at this time, and felt a sudden desire to go to the theatre. Hailing a hansom, I ordered the man to drive me to the ›Criterion.‹ I was in evening dress, and wore a diamond ring of remarkable value on my finger. This ring had been the present of a rich nabob, one of my patients, who had taken a fancy to me, and had shown his preference in this manner. I dislike jewellery as a rule, and never wear it; but to-night I slipped the ring on my finger, more from a sudden whim than for any other reason. I secured a good seat in the front row of the dress circle, and prepared for an evening's amusement.

The play was nothing in particular, and the time of year was a slack one with regard to the audience. Soon the curtain was raised, and the players began their performance. They acted without much spirit, the regular company being away on tour.

I was beginning to regret I had come, when my attention was arrested by the late arrival of a couple, who seated themselves in the chairs next to my own. One of them was a man of striking appearance, the other a very young and lovely girl. The man was old. He had silvery white hair, which was cut rather close to his head—dark eyes, a dark complexion, and a clean-shaven face. His lips were firm, and when shut looked like a straight line—his eyes were somewhat close to his very handsome, aquiline nose. He was a tall man, with broad shoulders, and held himself erect as if only twenty-five instead of sixty years had gone over his head.

His companion was also tall—very slender and willowy in appearance, with a quantity of soft blonde hair, a fair face, and eyes which I afterwards discovered were something the colour of violets. I am not a judge of dress, and cannot exactly describe what the girl wore—I think she was in black lace, but am not certain. I remember, however, quite distinctly that her opera-cloak was lined with soft white fur; I also know that she held in her hand a very large white feather fan, which she used assiduously during the performance.

The girl sat next to me. She had an opera-glass, and immediately on her arrival began to use it for purposes of criticism. I guessed, by her manner and by her gently uttered remarks to her companion, that she was an habitual playgoer, and I surmised, perhaps correctly—I cannot say—that she knew something by actual experience of amateur acting.

Bad as the play undoubtedly was, it seemed to interest this beautiful girl. Between the intervals, which she occupied examining the actors, she made eager remarks to the gentleman by her side. I noticed that he replied to her shortly. I further noticed that not the slightest movement on his part was unperceived by her. I felt sure that they were father and daughter, and was further convinced that they were intensely attached to each other.

I have never considered myself an impressionable character, but there is not the least doubt that this girl—I think I may say this couple—interested me far more than the play I had come to see. The girl was beautiful enough to rouse a man's admiration, but I am certain that the feeling in my breast was not wholly that. I believe now that from the first moment I saw her she threw a sort of spell over me, and that my better judgment, my cool reason, and natural powers of observation were brought into abeyance by a certain power which she must have possessed.

She dropped her fan with some awkwardness. As a matter of course, I stooped to pick it up. In doing so my hand inadvertently touched hers, and I encountered the full gaze of her dark blue eyes. When the first act came to an end, the invariable attendant with ices put in an appearance.

"You will have an ice?" said the girl, turning eagerly to the gentleman by her side. He shook his head, but motioning to the woman to approach, bought one and gave it to his young companion.

"This will refresh you, Leonora," he said. "My dear, I wish you to eat it." She smiled at him, and, leaning back comfortably in her chair, partook with evident gratification of the slight refreshment.

I was careful not to appear to watch her, but as I turned for the apparent purpose of looking at a distant part of the audience, I was startled by

the fixed gaze of the man who sat by her side. His closely-set dark eyes were fixed on me. He seemed to look me all over. There was a sinister expression in the thin lines of his closely-shut lips. The moment I glanced at him he turned away. I felt a sudden sense of repulsion. I have had something of the same feeling when I looked full into the eyes of a snake.

The curtain rose, and the play went on. The girl once more had recourse to her opera-glasses, and once more her full attention was arrested by the common-place performance. About the middle of the act, her elderly companion bent over and whispered something to her. Her hand trembled, the opera-glass slid down unnoticed on her lap. She looked at him anxiously, and said something which I could not hear.

"I shall be better outside," I heard him whisper in response. "Don't be anxious; I'll come back as soon as ever I am better."

He rose and made his way towards the nearest entrance.

As he did so, I turned and looked after him.

"Is he ill?" I whispered to myself. "He does not look it. How anxious that poor girl is. Her hand is trembling even now."

When the man got as far as the entrance door he turned and looked at the girl, and for an instant his cat-like eyes gave me a second swift glance. Again I felt a sensation of dislike, but again the feeling quickly passed.

I wish to repeat here, that I think my judgment was a little in abeyance that evening. I felt more attracted than ever by my next-door neighbour, and yet I am certain, positively certain, that the feeling which actuated me was not wholly admiration.

The play went on, but the girl no longer looked through her opera-glasses. She sat listlessly back in her chair. Now and then she turned impatiently towards the door, and then, with a quick sigh, glanced at her programme, or used her large feather fan with unnecessary force.

The minutes went on, but the old gentleman did not return. Once the girl half rose from her seat, pulling her opera-cloak about her as she did so; but then again she sat quietly back, with a sort of enforced calm. I was careful not to appear to watch her, but once her eyes met mine, and the unspeakable anxiety in them forced me, involuntarily, to bend forward and make my first remark to her.

"Can I do anything for you?" I whispered. "Are you anxious about your companion?"

"Oh, thank you," she replied, with a long-drawn sigh. "The gentleman is my father. I am very anxious about him. I fear he is ill."

"Would you like me to go and see why he has not returned?" I asked.

"If you would be so kind," she answered, eagerly.

I rose, and went out into the lobbies. I went quickly to the gentlemen's cloakroom, and put some questions to the attendant.

"Is there an elderly gentleman here?" I asked—"tall, with white hair and a somewhat dark complexion. He left the theatre half an hour ago, and his daughter is afraid that he has been taken ill."

The man who had charge of the room knew nothing about him, but another attendant who was standing near suddenly remarked: "I think I know the gentleman you mean. He is not ill."

"How can you tell?" I replied.

"Well, about half an hour ago a man answering exactly to your description came out of the theatre. He came from the dress circle. He asked for a cigar, and lighted it. I lost sight of him immediately afterwards, but I think he went out."

I returned to give this information to the anxious girl. To my surprise it did not at all comfort her.

"He must be ill," she replied. "He would not leave me alone if he were not ill. I noticed that an attack was coming on. He is subject to attacks of a serious character. They are of the nature of fits, and they are dangerous, very dangerous."

"If he were ill," I replied, "he would have sent you word in here, and have got you to go to him. He may merely have gone out to get a little air, which relieves him."

"I do not know. Perhaps," she replied.

"And when he is at home," I continued, "if he really has gone home without you, he will naturally send at once for a doctor."

She shook her head when I made this last remark.

"My father will never see a doctor," she said; "he hates the medical profession. He does not believe in doctors. He has such a prejudice against them, that he would rather die than consult one."

"That is a pity," I answered, "for in cases like his, I have no doubt that there is much alleviation to be obtained from men who really understand the science of medicine."

She looked fixedly at me when I said this. Her face was quite piteous in its anxiety. I could see that she was very young, but her features looked small and drawn now, and her eyes almost too large for her little face.

"I am very anxious," she said, with a sigh. "My father is the only relation I possess; I am his only child. He is ill—I know he is very ill. I am most anxious."

She pulled her opera-cloak once more tightly about her, and looked with lack-lustre eyes on the stage. Our conversation had been so low that no one had been disturbed by it; we were obliged to keep our heads close together as we conversed, and once, I am sure, her golden hair must have touched my cheek.

"I cannot stand this any longer," she exclaimed, suddenly. "I must go out—I won't wait for the end of the play."

She rose as she spoke, and I followed her, as a matter of course. We found the lobbies almost deserted, and here I suddenly faced her and tried to use argument.

"You are unnecessarily sensitive and alarmed," I said. "I assure you that I speak with knowledge, as I am a member of the medical profession, against which your father has such a prejudice. A man as ill as you describe your father to be would not stop to light a cigar. I took the liberty of having a good look at your father when he was leaving the theatre, and he did not appear ill. A medical man sees tokens of illness before anyone else. Please rest assured that there is nothing much the matter."

"Do you think," she answered, flashing an angry glance at me, "that if there is nothing the matter, my father would leave me here alone? Do you think he cares so little about me that he would not return to take me home?"

I had no reply to make to this. Of course, it was scarcely likely that any father would leave so beautiful a young girl unprotected in a theatre at night.

"And," she continued, "how do you know that the gentleman who asked for a cigar was my father? There may have been somebody else here with white hair."

I felt convinced that the man who lit a cigar and the father of this young girl were identical, but again I had no answer to make.

"I must go home," she said. "I am terribly anxious—my father may be dead when I get home—he may not have gone home at all. Oh, what shall I do? He is all the world to me; if he dies, I shall die or go mad."

"I am sure your fears are exaggerated," I began, "but perhaps the best thing you can do is to go home. Have you a carriage—shall I see if it has arrived?"

"My father and I have a private hansom," she answered. "It may not have come yet, but perhaps it has. I will go with you, if you will allow me. You wouldn't recognise the hansom."

"Then take my arm," I said.

I led her downstairs. I am not impressionable, but the feel of her little fingers on my coat-sleeve was, to say the least of it, sympathetic. I earnestly wished to help her, and her exaggerated fears did not seem unnatural to me.

The private hansom was waiting just round the corner. It had arrived on the scene in good time, for the play would not be over for nearly another hour. I helped the young lady in. She was trembling very much, and her face, lit up by the gaslight, looked pale.

"Would you like me to see you home?" I asked. "I will, with pleasure."

"Oh, if you would be so kind!" she answered. "And did not you say that you are a medical man? If my father is ill, it might be possible for you to prescribe for him."

"He will not allow it, I fear," I answered. "You say he has no faith in doctors."

"No more he has, but when he gets these strange, these terrible seizures, he is often unconscious for a long, long time. Oh, do please see me home, Dr.—"

"Halifax," I answered.

"Thank you, so much. My name is Whitby—Leonora Whitby. Please, Dr. Halifax, come home with me, and prescribe for my father if you possibly can."

"I will come with you with pleasure," I answered. I stepped into the hansom as I spoke.

She made way for me to seat myself by her side. The sweep of her long black lace dress fell partly over my legs. The hansom driver opened the little window in the roof for directions.

"What address am I to give?" I said to Leonora Whitby.

"Tell him to go back," she answered, quickly.

"Go back," I shouted to the man.

He slapped down the little window and we started forward at a brisk pace. It was not until long afterwards that I remembered that I was going away with a strange girl, to a place I knew nothing about, the address even of which was unknown to me.

It was a splendid starlight night; the air was very balmy. It blew into our faces as we travelled westward. First of all we dashed down Piccadilly. We passed Hyde Park Corner, and turned in the direction of those innumerable squares and fashionable houses which lie west of St. George's Hospital. Leonora talked as we drove together. She seemed to be almost in good spirits. Once she said to me very earnestly: "I do not know how to thank you. It is impossible for me to tell you how deeply indebted I am to you."

"Don't mention it," I answered.

"But I must," she replied. "I cannot be merely conventional, when I am treated so unconventionally. Another man would not have noticed a girl's anxiety, nor a girl's distress. Another man would not have lost half the play to help an anxious girl. Another man would not have put complete faith in a stranger as you have done, Dr. Halifax."

"I do not know that I have done anything more than a man in my profession ought to be ready to do at all times," I answered. "You know, or perhaps you do not know, that at doctor who really loves his profession puts it before everything else. When ever it calls him, he is bound to go. You have asked me to visit a sick man with you—how is it possible for me to refuse?"

"You are the first doctor who has ever come to our house," she answered. A great blaze of gaslight from a large central lamp fell on her face as she spoke. I could not help remarking its pallor. Her eyes were full of trouble. Her lips were tremulous.

"You are the first doctor who has ever come to our house," she repeated. "I almost wish I had not asked you to come."

"Why so? Do you think your father will resent my visit—that he will regard it as an intrusion?"

"Oh, it isn't that," she answered. Then she seemed to pull herself together as with a great effort.

"You are coming, and there's an end of it," she said; "well, I shall always be grateful to you for your kindness."

"I hope I may be able to assist your father."

When I said this her face grew brighter.

"I am sure you will," she said, eagerly. "You look clever. The moment I saw your face, I knew you were clever. The moment I looked at your hands, I saw capabilities in them. You have got the hands of a good surgeon."

"What can you know about it?" I answered, with a laugh.



"Oh," she said, with an answering laugh, "there are few things I do not know something about. You would be an encyclopedia of all kinds of strange knowledge if you led my life."

"Well," I said, "I, of course, know nothing about you, but will you answer one pardonable question? Where are we going? I do not quite recognise this part of town, and yet I have lived in London the greater part of my days. Are we going east, west, north, or south? I have lost my bearings. What is your address?"

"We are going west," she replied, in a perfectly cold, calm voice.

Then, before I could interrupt her, she pushed her long feather fan through the window.

"Take the short cut, Andrews," she called to the driver. "Don't go the round. We are in a great hurry; trike the short cut."

"Yes, miss," he shouted back to her.

We were driving down a fairly broad thoroughfare at the time, but now we turned abruptly and entered the veriest slums I had ever seen. Shouting children, drunken men and women filled the streets. A bad smell rose on the night air.

Was it possible that this beautiful, refined-looking girl lived in so repulsive a neighbourhood? But no, it was only as she expressed it, a short cut. The horse was a fleet one, and we soon found ourselves in a lonely and deserted square. We pulled up at a house which had not a light showing anywhere. I got out first and helped Miss Whitby to descend from the hansom.

"Will you kindly inquire if your father has returned?" I asked her; "for if not, there does not seem much use in my coming in."

"Oh! come in, in any case for a moment," she answered in a cheerful tone. "I can see that the servants have all gone to bed, so I must let myself in with this latch-key, but I shall find out in a moment if father has returned. Just come in and wait in the hall until I find out."

She raised her beautiful face to mine as she spoke. Her opera-cloak fell away from her slim shoulders. One white slender hand was raised to push back a refractory lock of golden hair. There was a solitary gas lamp at the corner, and it lit up her willowy figure. I looked at her with a sense of admiration which I could scarcely disguise. We entered the house.

"By the way, can you tell me if there is a cab-stand anywhere near?" I asked, suddenly, "as when I have done with your father, I should like to hasten home, and I have not the least idea what part of the world I am in."

“West,” she answered, “very much west. When you leave this house, all you have to do is to take the first turning on your right, and you will find a cab-stand. There are night cabs always on the stand, so it will be perfectly easy for you to get home whenever your duties here are ended.”

We were now standing inside the house. The heavy hall door suddenly slammed behind us. We were in pitch darkness.

“What a worry the servants are,” exclaimed Miss Whitby’s voice. “I always desire them to leave matches and a candle on the hall table. They have neglected my orders. Do you mind staying for a moment in the dark, Dr. Halifax?”

“Not at all,” I replied.

She rushed away. I heard her footsteps getting fainter and fainter as she ascended the stairs. She was evidently going to seek matches up several stories. I was alone in the strange house. Silent as the grave was the dark hall. I turned my head to see if any stray beams of gaslight were coming through the fan-light. I found that there was no fan-light. In short, the darkness was of the Egyptian order—it might be felt.

The moments passed. Miss Whitby was a long time coming back. As I stood and waited for her, the darkness seemed to me to become more than ever Egyptian. I heard a faint sound beneath me. Where did it come from? Did the servants, who kept such early hours, sleep in the cellars? I sprang in the direction of the hall door. Could I have found the lock I would certainly have opened it, if for no other reason than to let in a little light.

Fumble as I would, however, I could not discover any hasp, handle, or bolt. The next instant a glimmer of light from above streamed gratefully down, and I heard the swish of Leonora’s evening dress.

“I beg a thousand pardons,” she exclaimed, as she joined me. “What must you think of my leaving you so long in that dark, dismal hall? But the fact is, I could not resist the temptation of finding out whether my father had returned. He has; he is still in his bedroom. Now, will you come upstairs with me?”

She ran on in front, and I obediently followed. On the first landing we entered a sitting-room, which was gaily lighted with a couple of lamps covered with soft gold shades, and on the centre table of which a meal was spread.

“Sit down for a moment,” said Miss Whitby; “you must have some refreshment. What can I give you? I am always stupid about opening

champagne bottles; but perhaps you can do it for yourself. This is *Jules Mumm*. If my father were here I am sure he would recommend it."

"I don't care for anything," I replied. "If your father is ill, I should like to see him. Have you told him that I am here?"

"No. Do you think I would dare? Did not I tell you how he hated doctors?"

"Then perhaps he is not ill enough to need one," I said, rising to my feet. "In that case I will wish you good evening."

"Now you are angry with me," said Miss Whitby; "I am sure I am not surprised, for I have taken a most unwarrantable liberty with you. But if you only would have patience! I want you to see him, of course, but we must manage it."

She sank down on a sofa, and pressed her hand to her brow. She was wonderfully beautiful I can frankly state that I had never seen anyone so lovely before. A strange sensation of admiration mixed with repulsion came over me, as I stood by the hearth and watched her.

"Look here," I said, suddenly, "I have come to this house for the express purpose of seeing your father, who is supposed to be ill. If you do not take me to him immediately, I must say good-night."

She laughed when I said this.

"It's so easy to *say* good-night," she replied. Then, of a sudden, her manner changed. "Why do I tease you," she said, "when you have been more than kind to me? In truth, there never was a girl in all London who had less cause for laughter than I have now. There is one being in the world whom I love. My fears about my father have been verified, Dr. Halifax. He has just gone through one of those strange and terrible seizures. When he left the theatre I knew he would have it, for I am so well acquainted with the signs. I hoped we should have returned in time to see him in the unconscious stage. He has recovered consciousness, and I am a little anxious about the effect on him of your presence in the room. Of course, beyond anything, I want you to see him. But what do you advise me to do?"

Her manner was so impressive, and the sorrow on her young face so genuine, that once more I was the doctor, with all my professional instincts alive and strong.

"The best thing to do is this," I said. "You will take me to your father's room, and introduce me quite quietly as Dr. Halifax. The chances are a hundred to one that when he sees the real doctor, his prejudices against the imaginary ones will melt into air. One thing at least I can promise—he shall not blame you."

Miss Whitby appeared to ponder over my advice for a moment.

"All right," she said, suddenly. "What you suggest is a risk, but it is perhaps the best thing to do. We will go upstairs at once. Will you follow me?"

The house was well furnished, but very dark. There was a strange and unusual absence of gas. Miss Whitby held a lighted candle in her hand as she flitted upstairs.

We paused on the next landing. She turned abruptly to her right, and we entered a room which must have been over the sitting-room where the supper was laid. This room was large and lofty. It was furnished in the old-fashioned style. The four-post bedstead was made of dark mahogany. The wardrobe and chairs were of the same. When we entered the room was in darkness, and the little flicker of the candle did not do much to light it up.

Leonora laid it down on a table, and walked directly up to the bed. A man was lying there stretched out flat with his arms to his sides. He was in evening dress, and it did not take me an instant to recognise him as the old man who had accompanied the girl to the theatre. His eyes were shut now, and he looked strikingly handsome. His whole face was so pale, that it might have been cut in marble. He did not move an eyelid nor stir a finger when I approached and bent over him.

"Father," said Miss Whitby.

He made her no answer.

"He is unconscious again—he is worse," she exclaimed, clasping her hands, and looking at me with terror.

"No, no," I answered. "There is nothing to be alarmed about."

I said this in confidence, for I had taken hold of my patient's wrist, and found that the pulse was full and steady. I bent a little closer over the man, and it instantly flashed through my mind with a sensation of amazement that his unconscious condition was only feigned.

I remembered again the sinister expression of his eyes as he left the theatre, and the thought which flashed then through my brain returned to me.

"He does not look ill."

I put his hand back on the bed, but not too quietly, and asking Miss Whitby to bring the candle near, deliberately lifted first one eye-lid and then the other. If the man were feigning unconsciousness he did it well. The eyes had a glassy, fixed appearance, but when I passed the candle backwards and forwards across the pupils, they acted naturally. Raising

an eye-lid I pressed the tip of one finger on the eye-ball. He flinched then—it was enough.

“There is no immediate cause for anxiety,” I said, aloud. “I will prepare a medicine for your father. When he has had a good sleep he will be much as usual. Have you anyone who will go to the nearest chemist’s?”

“I will go, if necessary,” she replied. “The servants have gone to bed.”

“Surely one of them could be awakened,” I answered. “In a case of this kind, you must not be too regardful of their comforts. I will sit with Mr. Whitby, while you run and rouse one of your servants.”

“Very well,” she said, after a pause; “I will do so.”

“Won’t you take the candle?” I asked.

“No,” she replied, “I can find my way in the dark.”

She left the room, closing the door behind her. The moment she had done so, the patient on the bed moved, opened his eyes, and sat up, He looked full at me.

“May I ask your name?” he inquired.

“Dr. Halifax—I have been asked to prescribe for you by your daughter.”

“You sat near us at the ›Criterion‹?”

“I did.”

“Did my daughter ask you to come home with her?”

“Not exactly—I offered to do so—she seemed in distress about you.”

“Poor Leonora,” he said—and then he glanced towards the door.

“Did she tell you that I place no faith in your profession?” he asked again, after a pause.

“She did, and that being the case, now that you are really better, I will leave you.”

“No, don’t do so. As you have come in one sense uninvited, I will put you to the test—you shall prescribe for me!”

“Willingly,” I replied; “and now, as it is necessary for a doctor and his patient to clearly understand each other, I may as well tell you at once that, the moment I saw you, I knew that you were not unconscious.”

“You are right, I was perfectly conscious.”

“Why did you feign to be otherwise?” I asked.

“For Leonora’s sake, and—my God, I cannot stand this any longer!” He started upright, then fell back with a groan.

“Lock the door,” he said; “don’t let her in. I am in agony, in frightful agony. I suffer from *angina pectoris*.”

“Leonora knows nothing of this,” he gasped. “I conceal it from her. I let her imagine that I suffer from a sort of epileptic fit. Nothing of the

kind. This hell fire visits me, and I keep it from Leonora. Now that you have come, give me something, quick, quick!"

"I would, if I had the necessary remedy by me," I replied. "If you will allow me, I will write a prescription for your servant. I can get what is necessary at the nearest chemist's. If you prefer it, I will go myself to fetch what is required."

"No, no—stay—not in this room, but downstairs. Leonora will take your message. I hear her now at the door. Let her in—keep your own counsel. Do not betray me."

"I can let her in, in a moment," I answered; "but first let me say that I think you are doing very wrong. Miss Whitby has, I am convinced, presence of mind and strength of character. She would bear to know the true state of things. Sooner or later she must find out. If you give me permission, I will tell her. It is best for me to tell her."

"What I suffer from will kill me in the end, will it not?" inquired Whitby.

"What you suffer from, I need not tell you, is a serious malady. I have not, of course, gone carefully into your case, and it is impossible to do so until the paroxysm of pain is over. In the meantime, trinitrin will give you immediate relief"

"Let me in, please," called Leonora's voice through the keyhole.

"In one moment," I answered. Then I turned to the sick man.

"Shall I tell your daughter, Mr. Whitby? She must have heard us talking. She will know that you have at least returned to consciousness."

"You can tell her that I am in some pain," he replied, "that I have recovered consciousness, and that you are going to administer trinitrin; now go. Promise me that you will reveal nothing further to-night."

He groaned as he spoke, clutched the bedclothes, and writhed in agony.

"I will promise to do as you wish," I said, pity in my tone.

I unlocked the door, and stood before Miss Whitby.

"My father is better; he has recovered consciousness," she exclaimed at once.

"He wishes to be alone and quiet," I replied. "Darkness will be good for him. We will take the candle and go downstairs."

I lifted it from the table as I spoke, and we descended together to the sitting-room.

"Is your servant coming for the message?" I inquired.

"Yes," she answered. "He will be dressed in a moment."

"Then, if you will give me a sheet of paper and a pen and ink, I will write my prescription," I said.

She fetched me some paper at once; a pen and ink, and a blotting-pad. "Write," she said. "After you have written your prescription, and the servant has gone to fetch the medicine, you must tell me the truth."

I made no reply at all to this. I wrote for a certain preparation (trinitrin) and a hypodermic syringe. I handed the paper to Miss Whitby. She stood for a moment with it in her hand, then she left the room.

"The servant is a long time coming down," she said when she returned. "How slow, how unsympathetic servants are, and yet we are good to ours. We treat them with vast and exceptional consideration."

"You certainly do," I replied. "There are few houses of this kind where all the servants go to bed when their master and mistress happen to be out. There are few houses where the servants retire to rest when the master happens to be dangerously ill."

"Oh, not dangerously, don't say that," she answered.

"I may be wrong to apply the word 'danger' just now," I replied; "but in any case, it is important that your father should get relief as soon as possible. I wish you would let me go to the chemist myself."

"No, the servant is coming," she answered. Heavy footsteps were heard descending the stairs, and I saw through the partly open door the outline of a man's figure. Leonora gave him the paper, with directions to hurry, and he went downstairs.

"Now, that is better," she said, returning to the room. "While we wait you will eat something, will you not?"

"No, thank you," I replied.

The food on the table was appetizing. There were piles of fresh sandwiches, a lobster salad, and other dainties; but something in the air of the place, something in the desolation of the dark house, for this was the only well-lighted room, something in the forlorn attitude of the young girl who stood before me, suspense in her eyes, anxiety round her lips, took away the faintest desire to eat.

If what the man upstairs said was true, his tortures must be fiendish. Leonora asked me again to eat—again I refused.

"Will you open one of those bottles of champagne?" she said, suddenly. "I am faint, I must have a glass."

I did her bidding, of course. She drank off about half a glass of the sparkling wine, and then turned to me with a little additional colour.

"You are a good man," she said, suddenly. "I am sorry that we have so troubled you."

"That is nothing," I replied, "if I can be of benefit to your father. I should like to come here to-morrow and go carefully into his case."

"And then you will tell me the truth, which you are concealing now?" she answered.

"If he gives me permission," I replied.

"Oh, I knew there was something which he would not tell," she retorted; "he tries to deceive me. Won't you sit down? You must be tired standing."

I seated myself on the first chair, and looked round the room.

"This is a queer, old-fashioned sort of place," I said. "Have you lived here long?"

"Since my birth," she answered. "I am seventeen. I have lived here for seventeen years. Dr. Halifax?"

"Yes, what is it?"

"Do you mind my leaving you alone? I feel so restless, impatient, and nervous; I will go to my father until the messenger returns."

"Certainly," I replied; "and if he gets worse call to me, and I will come to you immediately; he ought not to be left long alone. I am anxious to give him relief as speedily as possible. This injection of trinitrin will immediately do so. I hope your messenger will soon return from the chemist's."

"He will be back presently. The chemist we employ happens to live at a little distance. I will go upstairs now."

"Very well," I replied, "make use of me when you want me."

She smiled, gave me a long glance with an expression on her face which I could not fathom, and softly closed the door behind her. It was a padded door, and made no sound as it closed.

I sat down in an easy chair; a very comfortable one, with a deep seat. I shut my eyes, for I was really beginning to feel tired, and the hour was now past midnight. I sincerely hoped the servant would soon return with the medicine. I was interested in my strange patient, and anxious to put him out of his worst tortures as soon as possible. I saw, as in a picture, the relief which would sweep over Leonora Whitby's face when she saw her father sink into a natural slumber.

She was evidently much attached to him, and yet he had treated her badly. His conduct in leaving her alone at the theatre, whatever his sufferings might have been, was scarcely what one would expect from a father to so young and lovely a girl. He had deliberately exposed his own child to the chances of insult. Why had he done this? Why,



also, had he only feigned unconsciousness? How very unconventional, to say the least, was his mode of treating his child. He gave her to understand that he suffered from epileptic fits, whereas in reality his malady was *angina pectoris*.

Here I started and uttered a sudden loud exclamation.

"My God!" I said to myself. "The man cannot suffer from *angina pectoris*, his symptoms do not point to it. What is the matter with him? Did he feign the agony as well as the unconsciousness? He must have a monomania."

I could scarcely believe that this was possible. I felt almost certain that his tortures were not assumed. That writhing at least was natural, and that death-like pallor could scarcely be put on at will. The case began to interest me in the strangest way. I heartily wished the servant to return in order to see some more of my most peculiar patient.

After a time in my restlessness I began to pace up and down the room. It was large, lofty, and covered from ceiling to floor with book-cases, which were all filled with bright, neat-looking volumes. Books generally give a cheerful aspect, but, for some reason which I could not account for at the time, these did not.

I might look at one, however, to pass away the time, and I went up to a goodly edition of Dickens's works, intending to take down a volume of "Martin Chuzzlewit" to read. I put my hand on the book, and tried to draw it out of the case. To my amazement, I found that this book and all its companions were merely dummies. In short, the room which looked so full of the best literature, was empty of even one line of respectable print.

I sat down again in my chair. The supper on the table did not in the least tempt my appetite—the champagne could not allure me. There was a box of cigars lying temptingly near on the mantelpiece, but I was not disposed to smoke.

I made up my mind that, if the servant delayed his return much longer, I would open the door, call to Miss Whitby, tell her that I would go myself to the chemist's, and bring the medicine which was necessary for my patient's relief. I felt that movement was becoming indispensable to me, for the gloom of the house, the queerness of the whole of this adventure, were beginning at last to tell on my nerves.

Suddenly, as I sat back in the depths of the easy chair, I became conscious of a very queer and peculiar smell. I started to my feet in alarm, and rushing to the nearest window, tried to open it. I discovered that it was a solid frame from bottom to top, and was not meant to move.

In short, it was a window which could not open. I tried the other with similar results. Meanwhile, the smell got worse—it rose to my head, and rendered me giddy.

What was the matter? Had I been entrapped into this place? Was my life in danger? Was there a fire in one of the rooms underneath? Yes, this was probably the solution of the enigma—a room had caught fire in the old house, and Leonora Whitby and her father knew nothing of it. I felt a passing sense of relief as this idea occurred to me, and staggered rather than walked to the door. The smell which affected me resembled the smell of fire, and yet there was a subtle difference. It was not caused by ordinary fire.

I reached the door and turned the handle. I was gasping for breath now, and felt that I had not a moment to lose in getting into purer air. I turned the ivory handle of the door frantically. It moved in my grasp—moved round and round, but did not open. In short, I was locked in—I was becoming asphyxiated. I felt my heart throbbing and my chest bound as by iron.

At this desperate instant I saw, to my relief, an unexpected sight. There was another door to the room. This door was evidently not meant to be noticed, for it was completely made up of the false books, and when shut could not be detected. I noticed it now, for it was slightly, very slightly, ajar. I rushed to it, flung it open, and entered another room. Then, indeed, my agony reached its climax. A man in evening dress was lying full length on the floor, absolutely unconscious, and probably dead. I staggered towards him, and remembered nothing more.

— *Meade & Halifax* —

I came to myself, I do not know when—I do not know how. I was in a hansom. I was being driven rapidly through streets which were now almost deserted, in some direction, I knew not where. I could not recall at first what had occurred, but memory quickly returned to me. I saw the face of the dead man as he lay stretched on the floor. I saw once again that dreadful room, with its false book-s, its mockery of supper, its mockery of comfort. Above all things, I smelt once again that most horrible, suffocating odour.

“Charcoal,” I muttered to myself. “There must have been a charcoal furnace under the room. I was duped into that den. Leonora Whitby, beautiful as she appeared, was in league with her father to rob me and take my life; but how have I escaped? Where am I now—where am I going? How, in the name of all that is wonderful, have I got into this hansom?”

There was a brisk breeze blowing, and each moment my brain was becoming clearer. The fumes of the charcoal were leaving me. I was vigorous and well—quite well, and with a keen memory of the past once again. I pushed my hand through the little window, and shouted to the driver to stop.

“Where are you taking me?” I asked. “How is it that I am here?”

He pulled up immediately, and drew his horse towards the pavement. The street was very quiet—it was a large thoroughfare—but the hour must have been nearly two in the morning.

“Where are you taking me?” I repeated.

“Home, sir, of course,” replied the man. “I have your address, and it’s all right. You sit quiet, sir.”

“No, I won’t, until you tell me where you are taking me,” I answered. “How did I get into thisansom? You cannot drive me home, for you do not know my address.”

“Ain’t it St. John’s Wood Avenue?” replied the man. “The gent, he said so. He gave me your card—Mr. George Cobb, 19, St. John’s Wood Avenue.”

“Nothing of the kind,” I called back, in indignation. “My name is not Mr. George Cobb. Show me the card.”

The man fumbled in his breast-pocket, and presently pushed a dirty piece of paste-board through the window. I thrust it into my pocket.

“And now tell me,” I said, “how I got into this cab.”

“Well, sir,” he replied, after a brief moment of hesitation, “I am glad you’re better—lor’, it isn’t anything to fret about—it happens to many and many a gent. You was dead drunk, and stretched on the pavement, sir, and an old gentleman with white ’air he come up and he looks at yer, and he shouts to me:—

“‘Cabby,’ says he, ‘are you good for a job?’

“‘Yes, sir,’ I answers.

“‘Well, then,’ says he, ‘you take this young gentleman ’ome. He’s drunk, and ef the police see him, they’ll lock him up—but ef you get down and give me a ’and, we’ll get”im into your ’ansom—and this is where he lives—at least, I suppose so, for this card was found on ’im.’

“‘Right you air,’ I says to the old gent, and between us we got you into the cab, and ’ere we are now a—driving back to St. John’s Wood Avenue.”

“Cabby, I have been the victim of the most awful plot, and—and,” I continued, feeling in my pockets excitedly, “I have been robbed—I only wonder I have not been murdered.”

As I spoke I felt for my watch and chain—they had vanished. My valuable diamond ring, the motive, probably, of the whole horrible conspiracy, had been removed from my finger. My studs were gone, and what money I possessed—amounting, I am glad to say, to not more than £ 2 or £3—was no longer in my possession. The only wonder was why my life had been spared.

“Drive to the nearest police-station. I must give information without a moment’s delay,” I said to the cabman.

But that is the end of the adventure. Strange, incomprehensible as it may seem, from that day to this I have never solved the enigma of that dark house in that solitary square. West, very far west, it lies, truly; so far that the police, whom I instantly put on the alert, could never from that day to now obtain the slightest clue to its where-about.

For aught that I can tell, Leonora Whitby and her father may be still pursuing their deadly work.

When I read in the papers of sudden and mysterious disappearances I invariably think of them, and wonder if the experiences of the victim who has vanished from all his familiar haunts have been anything like mine—if he has waited, as I waited, in that terrible lethal chamber, with its false books and its padded doors—if he has tasted the tortures of asphyxia and stared death in the face, but unlike me has never returned from the Vale of the Shadow.

## The Heir of Chartelpool

**A** doctor in full practice in London often loses sight of his early home. This was not my case. I had spent all my young days in a small village in Yorkshire, and, as my practice increased and my leisure time grew rarer and rarer, I was still glad to spend a fortnight in each year in the old sequestered hamlet which had known me as child and boy.

The thing which happens to all flesh came also into my life. The friends who knew me of old knew me no more, for the simple reason that they no longer knew anybody else on earth—they were lying in the Churchyard. But one friend of about my own age always welcomed me with enthusiasm and heartiness when I could run down from London to spend a few days at Chartelpool.

Stanhope was the squire of the village. He occupied the Old Manor House, and was the only man of wealth in the neighbourhood. He inherited not only a goodly share of old ancestral acres, but his grandfather and father before him had largely added to their means by coal mines, which were worked successfully, and which, in consequence, made Harold Stanhope one of the richest men of my acquaintance.

When I first knew him he was a dark-eyed, sallow-faced schoolboy. We spent a great deal of time riding and fishing together, and when we both went up to the University, we found ourselves men of the same college. Harold was reserved and silent—a little shy and difficult to get on with—at least, so Strangers said, but I always thought him the best fellow on earth. The fact is, I had at quite an early age plumbed the depths of his nature, and knew what he was really worth.

He was a man of few words, but of sterling merit—honourable and upright as the day. His manners were somewhat cold and reserved, but he had a warm heart and the constancy of a Jacob. Harold, or Hal, as his more intimate friends generally called him, fell in love at an early age with a beautiful girl whom he happened to meet during his last term

at Oxford. Kitty Clive was her name. She was of Irish extraction, and possessed all the charms, the impetuosity, and the fire of her country-women.

Hal fell head over ears in love with her, but for a long time he was a great deal too shy and too diffident of himself to tell her the fact. It was impossible for him to believe that beautiful Kitty could love so dull a fellow. This was his way of putting it. I was in his confidence from the first, and at last, I am glad to say, I induced him to put his fortunes to the test. He did so falteringly, and was amazed to find that Kitty adored him.

They were married soon after, and took up their abode at the old Manor House at Chartelpool, to be the delight and solace of the old Squire's life. He was an old man and a widower, and Hal was his only child. He survived the marriage exactly ten years, and then he died. I was present at his death-bed, for it was one of Hal's failings, or perhaps one of his weaknesses, to regard me as the best medical man of the day.

On this occasion, however, I was powerless to stay the hand of death. The Squire breathed his last in my presence, and I accompanied Harold when he laid his father in the family vault. On the night of the funeral I noticed a troubled expression on my friend's brow. I inferred, and rightly, that it was not only caused by sorrow at the loss he had sustained.

"What is it, Hal?" I said, suddenly. "You had better unburden yourself, old fellow."

"I mean to," said Harold, "although, perhaps, I oughtn't to bother you."

"What concerns you never bothers me," I retorted.

"Well, it's just this: my father on his death-bed spoke with great regret, and even bitterness, about the fact of our having no heirs to carry on the property. To tell the truth, I never bothered myself about the fact of our having no children. Kitty and I are all-sufficient to each other, and it was not until my father said something about the entail, and about the nature of the man who will inherit Chartelpool Manor whenever I die, that I saw the thing in a serious light. Kitty and I are married ten years now. We have no children, and are never likely to have any. Whenever I go, the place and the property descend to a man whose character and antecedents are as bad as bad can be. You have heard of Charles Stanhope, have you not, Halifax?"

"Rather!" I replied. "You don't mean to tell me that dissolute fellow is the next heir?"

"It is true; 'pon my word I never realized the fact till my father spoke to me, and until his death and the reading of the will to-day put the whole thing in a clear and forcible light. Well, well, this is the sort of matter that no man can cure, and I only wish that I had not bothered you about it, Halifax."

I was silent for a moment, for in truth there was nothing to say. Then I uttered a few common places, and presently the conversation was turned.

I went to Town the next morning, and Stanhope and his affairs passed more or less out of sight in my own busy life. Judge, therefore, of my pleasure and astonishment when, about eighteen months afterwards, I received a telegram with the Chartelpool mark on it. It contained these words:

WIFE DOING WELL. FINE BOY ARRIVED THIS MORNING.

The next day I got a long letter from my delighted friend, and was in due course asked to the christening.

I was too busy at the time to attend the ceremony, but as Hal also insisted on my standing sponsor, I told him that he must get a proxy to take my place, and sent down the handsomest silver-gilt mug I could purchase, to the heir of Chartelpool.

Months and even years passed by, and in the increasing duties and increasing interests which came in my way, I forgot Hal Stanhope and his joys and sorrows.

I had just taken a small house in Harley Street, was comfortably established there, and was looking forward to the possibility of extensive changes in my own *ménage*, when, entering the house late one winter's evening, I was suddenly confronted by the gaunt face and tall figure of my old friend Stanhope. My consulting-room was brightly lit up, and Hal's travel-stained face and intensely anxious expression seemed quite out of keeping with the neat room.

He rushed up to me when I appeared, and wrung one of my hands frantically.

"Thank God, you've come at last," he said, in a broken and hoarse voice. "I took the liberty to ask your servant to put up a few things in a bag for you. If we start immediately we shall be in time to catch the 6.30 train to the north. Come along, Guy, old man—I'll carry the bag, and we can walk down to the nearest cab-stand."

"No, no-what does this mean?" I exclaimed. "Are you out of your senses, Harold? We can't possibly rush off in this frantic way. You must have something to eat before we start."

Harold seemed to swallow hard for a moment.

"Food would choke me," he said, with a gasp. "The boy—the boy is ill, Halifax. He met with an accident, fell downstairs. The local doctor, Eliot—Tom Eliot is his name, a right good fellow—he thinks badly of him. I have come for you; and we had better ask Parsons to follow by the next train. The boy is in danger. You see for yourself there is not one instant to lose."

My poor friend's manner was agitated and broken down to the last degree. As he uttered his disjointed sentences his voice shook. When he had finished speaking, he flung himself into a chair and pushed back his somewhat shaggy hair with a gesture which indicated mental anguish. His words awoke in me a corresponding throb of the deepest sympathy. I was not only to be the doctor who was called to attend a case of extreme peril, but I was to save at any cost the only child of my dearest friend.

I pulled out my watch and looked at it hastily.

"It is not yet six o'clock," I said—"your train leaves at 6.30. We shall not take more than a quarter of an hour driving from here to King's Cross. We have two or three minutes, therefore, to discuss matters before leaving London. Try and tell me, as quietly and as quickly as you can, the nature of the injuries which the child has sustained."

"I don't know that I can. It's all confusion to me. The boy fell from a height down the stone stairs. It is a miracle that he was not killed on the spot."

"When did it happen?"

"This time yesterday."

"Who has attended him since the accident?"

"Our local doctor, Tom Eliot."

"You must be able to tell me, Harold, how the boy is affected."

"I can't—I couldn't look at him. He has scarcely stirred or moved since the fall. Something wrong in the spine or brain, I believe. Oh! my God, he will die—I know he will die! Kitty says—"

"Yes?"

"I can't tell you—I feel all dazed."

Stanhope stood up as he spoke.

"Don't you think we'll better be starting?" he said.



"I have ordered a hansom," I replied, "and my servant has run round to see if Parsons is in, for it would greatly expedite matters if he could come down with us. And now you must have a glass of wine."

"I couldn't swallow it. If the hansom is at the door we had better drive to King's Cross. I wouldn't miss this train for the universe."

"You shan't miss it, my poor fellow. There! I hear a hansom stopping at the door; get into it, if it makes you happier. I must pack a few instruments which I may require. I'll join you in a twinkling."

Hal strode straight through the hall, looking like a man who was half dazed and blind. He opened the hall-door, walked down the steps and entered the hansom. I hurried about, packed my case of surgical instruments, filled a flask with sherry and another with brandy, and was just going down my own steps when a servant ran up with a scrawl from Parsons.

I opened it, and read the following words by the lamplight:—

*Meet you at King's Cross Station in time for 6.30 for the north.*

*J. Parsons.*

I uttered an exclamation of relief, for I had secured the services of a man I considered one of the best surgeons of the day. I sprang into the hansom. "To King's Cross, as quick as you can," I shouted to the driver. The fleet horse bounded forward, and I turned to the distracted father by my side.

"Cheer up," I said, touching his hand for an instant; "Parsons will come north with us. The best surgical skill in the world will be at your boy's service."

Stanhope made no reply. I doubt very much if he even heard me. All the time that we were driving to Kings Cross he kept bending forward and muttering half to himself, half for my benefit, "We'll be late: that brute of a horse is broken-winded. My God, we'll be late, we'll be late!"

"No," I said, suddenly. "There's a clock right in front of you. See for yourself what the hour is—scarcely ten minutes past six."

Stanhope glanced up in the direction to which I pointed. I noticed that his deep-set eyes were bloodshot, and had a wild gleam in them.

"Good heavens!" I murmured under my breath, "if the child dies, my poor friend is extremely likely to lose his reason."

A few minutes later we drew up at the great station for the north. Hal immediately took my arm and dragged me forward to the ticket office.

He had a return ticket for himself, and after purchasing a first-class for me, he again seized my arm and rushed on in the direction of the train.

"You are forgetting your change," I said.

"Confound the change!" he retorted. I waited for an instant, detached myself from him, ran back, secured the change out of a £ 10 note, and was once more at his side. To my immense relief I saw Parsons's well-known figure waiting for us on the platform.

"Now, Stanhope," I said, as sternly as I could speak, "pull yourself together. There is no good whatever to be gained by the Excitement you are showing."

"I can't help it, Guy, old boy. If you had seen Kitty's face!"

"My dear chap, I can realize a little of your feeling; but do try and calm yourself, for the sake of your Kitty and your boy. Now let us speak to Parsons. He is standing just opposite to us, with a porter holding his bag. Let him see that you have the courage to keep quiet."

My words had a salutary effect. Hal became less wild and *distract*, and the great assurance and the intense calm of Parsons's manner did much to Steady his nerves. Out train was waiting for us; we took our seats. I tipped the guard to give us a compartment to ourselves, and a few moments later we were speeding away to the north. We arrived at Chartelpool station between ten and eleven that night. A close carriage had been sent for us, and we drove quickly in the direction of the Manor. It was a somewhat long drive and all up-hill, but Stanhope's restlessness, I was glad to see, had completely vanished. He now sat in absolute silence, with his back to the horses, and never once attempted to join in the conversation which Parsons and I kept up together.

As we were driving quickly through the hamlet of Chartelpool, the red glow of a blacksmith's forge shone out across the road. It was a late hour for the blacksmith to be busy, but the sound of his ponderous hammer was distinctly heard. His brawny arms flashed into view, and a shower of living sparks surrounded him. A man was leaning up against the door of the shed, and a horse was tied by a halter close by. The moment he saw us the man started forward, and put an ugly face up to the carriage window.

"Halloa, Squire!" he shouted, addressing Stanhope. "How's the kid this evening, eh? Better?"

Stanhope made no reply, but a look of intense repulsion passed over his features. He knew the man, and so did I. In case the little boy died he was the heir to Chartelpool Manor. We drove out of sight, and Hal broke

the silence by saying suddenly: "You recognised that fellow, didn't you, Guy?"

"Yes," I answered. "Has he come to live here?"

"Yes, he has taken the tumble-down old Grange, a place at my very gates, as you know. He lives here now, with a brood of sons as disreputable as himself. They have changed the whole aspect of the place. My God, my God, how I hate the fellow!"

Hal covered his face and groaned. Parsons looked at me significantly. A few minutes later we had arrived at our destination, and were taken immediately to Stanhope's study, where Eliot, the local practitioner who had charge of the case, awaited us. He gave us a brief account of the accident and described the child's present condition.

"We will go up to see him now," said Parsons, in his brief, concise voice. We went upstairs and entered the splendid and spacious nurseries occupied by the sick child.

He was in the inner nursery, lying on a little white bed, which had been drawn almost into the centre of the room. His mother stood at the head of the bed, with her hands clasped. and along, white dressing-gown covering her from her throat to her feet. Her face was as white as her dress. She came forward to greet both Parsons and myself, offering us both a hand, but not uttering a syllable.

"Will you leave us for a little?" I said to the mother. "We will come to you as soon as we have made our examination and formed our verdict."

"I would rather stay with the child," she said.

I glanced round at Stanhope. It would be difficult to force the mother to leave her apparently dying child, and yet we could not conduct our examination to the best advantage in her presence. He understood me, strode forward and touched his wife on her arm.

"Come, Kitty," he said. "You can come back as soon as ever the doctors have given their verdict. It is but fair now to leave them alone with the child."

She did not utter another word of remonstrance, but placed her hand with a touching sort of submission in Stanhope's. He led her immediately from the room.

It was not until she was gone that I ventured to take a long look at the little heir of Chartelpool. He had evidently scarcely moved or shown the faintest signs of life since the moment of the accident. His lovely cherub face looked as if it were carved in marble; his round arms and small hands were bare. An aureole of bright hair surrounded his forehead.

He was a noble looking child—sturdy of limb and of great size for his age.

Eliot began to describe the nature of the accident. Parsons listened attentively, and then the work of examination began. We turned the child very tenderly on his face and hands, the spine was carefully felt by the sensitive fingers of the surgeon. The little head was tapped here and there. Then the child was laid once more on his back, and Persons, sitting down, motioned to us to do likewise.

“There is evidently severe injury to the brain,” he began. “I should say there is a fracture of the base of the skull, accompanied with hemorrhage.”

He paused here. His next words came out slowly.

“And yet, serious as all this is,” he continued, “I think the child may survive if the hemorrhage is not progressing. I have seen similar cases recover, but the worst of it is that in children there is a great fear that the recovery will be with impaired intellect, more or less complete. Were the hemorrhage over the vault of the cranium, and one had any indication as to its region, I would trephine and relieve the pressure, but I fear there is no doubt the serious injury is beyond our reach. There is nothing whatever for it but simply to wait and see; but I feel that I must say, though there is a distinct hope of the child’s slow recovery to life, the condition of his intellect will be permanently impaired. Such has always been my experience. At the present moment, as you must both know well, the child is in a most precarious condition, and it is impossible to say anything very definite as to the outcome one way or another. Anyhow, there is nothing whatever to be done but to wait events.”

“I cannot agree with you,” I interrupted, eagerly. “I am of opinion that the injury is to the upper surface of the brain. That is the cause of the serious mischief, though I admit there is probably shock and concussion at the base.”

I then described the symptoms which led me to this conclusion, and strongly advocated a trephining operation, even if only with a view to exploring in search of the impaired spot.

“No,” replied Parsons; “the injury is, I am certain, to the base of the brain, and surgical interference would be worse than useless. It would not only be of no avail as far as relief is concerned, but would positively add to the danger already existing. Of course, I have every hope that the boy may partially recover. His intellect will never be the same, however.”

"Good heavens!" I could not help exclaiming. "Is the boy to become an idiot? An idiot, and heir to all these estates; an idiot, and the son of Harold and Kitty Stanhope! Death would be better. I wish you would consider the possibility of trephining, Parsons."

"I cannot counsel it," he answered. "The risk would be too great. Were there any definite ground to go on, and did I know the exact spot where the injury has taken place, I might dare to try it, but even then not without the parents' complete sanction. You must remember that this operation cannot be performed on the part of the brain which I believe to be affected."

"I have performed the operation on the dead," I said, "but not yet, it is true, on a living subject."

"Well, it would be useless in this case," said the surgeon, with a little heat. He rose as he spoke. "Nothing can be done," he said, in a decided tone, "but to wait events, Now we had better see the poor parents."

We went downstairs. I shall never forget the scene that followed; it is absolutely impossible for me to describe it. The silent anguish of the mother—her perfect self-control, her attitude, the way she looked at Stanhope, the way she approached his chair and laid her hand on one of his shoulders.

As for him, poor fellow, he was completely overcome, and when Parsons had to break the cruel tidings that even at the best the noble boy must live with an impaired intellect, and that there was a strong possibility of his not surviving the accident, Stanhope covered his face with his big hands and absolutely sobbed aloud.

As long as I live, I shall never forget the sound of that awful weeping, wrung from a strong man in his agony. Even Parsons, who looked as if he were made of iron, was visibly affected. He turned his head aside and muttered into my ear: "My God! I can't stand any more of this—I shall return to Town by the next train."

I felt incapable of saying a word to induce him to delay his departure. At that moment I felt more than annoyed with him. He showed, in my opinion, a cautiousness which amounted almost to cowardice. Under the circumstances, a rasher man would have ventured to perform the operation which alone could give little Hal Stanhope back his reason. I remembered now, when too late, that Parsons was always remarkable for his overcarefulness, and regretted that I had not brought Fieldman down to see the child.

Eliot and I accompanied the surgeon into the hall, we had a few last words together, and then the sounds of the carriage wheels were heard

as they bore him away in time to catch the midnight train to town.

I went back to the room where we had left the father and mother, and Eliot went upstairs to watch by the sick child's bed. Stanhope was now the sole occupant of the large dining-room, and I guessed that his wife had returned to the child. He had partly recovered from the intense emotion which he had exhibited in Parsons's presence, and was now walking restlessly up and down in front of the hearth.

"Sit down and have some supper, Guy," he said to me. "Help yourself, old fellow."

"You will eat with me?" I queried.

"I could not swallow food; don't ask me," he said, with a shake of his head.

I saw it was useless to press him at that moment, and seating myself at the table I made a short meal. I can truly say that the food tasted like ashes in my mouth. When I had finished eating, Hal sat down by me and to my surprise began to ask me questions with regard to the boy.

"Tell me exactly what Parsons said over again," he remarked. "I heard the words, of course, at the time, but they were so mixed up with a singing in my ears, and a drumming round the region of my heart, that I could listen to nothing distinctly. I am quieter now and can hear what you say. Tell me the truth, Guy."

"The truth is simply this," I answered; "the child suffers from serious injuries of the brain and spine. These are causing insensibility and paralysis. The paralysis is of a nature which is not necessarily fatal, and the possibilities are that after a time a certain amount of consciousness will return, and by-and-by he will be able to use his limbs again."

"The brain will be all right, of course?" queried Hal. "I've a confused idea that Parsons said something dreadful about the future condition of the brain; but perhaps I made a mistake. With the sort of shock which I was suffering from at the time such a mistake is highly probable—eh, Guy, eh?"

He looked at me with such intense eagerness, I thought the cruellest moment in my life had come when I was obliged to shake my head.

"You heard correctly, my poor fellow," I said. "The injury to the brain is so extensive that even should the paralysis and insensibility pass off gradually, the higher centres are some of them sure to be affected; and, as Parsons said, more or less of mental impairment is, I fear, certain."

"My God!" said Hal. "In other words, that means that the boy will be an idiot."

"It may not be quite so bad as that," I said, in a faint voice.

"Yes, yes, Guy—I know better. I saw the truth in the surgeon's eyes—I read it now in your face. The heir of Chartelpool will be an idiot. God help us! God help his mother and me!"

I was silent—I had not a word to say. It would have been cruel to attempt even a word of sympathy.

"Still, he'll be heir of Chartelpool," continued Hal.

"That is true," I answered, wondering that he could turn to such a fact for consolation.

"And that brute of a Charles Stanhope and his sons are cut out," he continued. "*That* is a comfort—it is more than a comfort."

He went up to the supper-table as he spoke, poured out a large glass of brandy, added a very little water to it, and gulped it down.

"And Parsons can do nothing for the child?" he said, facing round on me.

"He says there is nothing to be done," I retorted. "I almost wish now that I had brought Fieldman to see the child."

"In the name of Heaven, why? Is not Parsons the first man in his profession?"

"Undoubtedly one of the first, but he is cautious. In my opinion he is too cautious."

"What do you mean?"

"There is an operation which might be performed on the child, which, if successful, would restore him to perfect health."

"Then, in Heaven's name, why isn't it done?"

"Parsons thinks the risk too great."

"What risk?"

"The risk to life."

"Is the operation so critical?"

"It is; if it failed—and Parsons considers that in this case it would be sure to fail—the boy would die."

"Ah, and Charlie Stanhope would be heir! That settles the point. We must not run the risk."

"If the boy were mine, I should perform the operation," I said.

"What do you mean?"

"It is my conviction that he would stand it. But I must not urge you. The risk is too momentous."

"It is, Guy, it is. The operation must not be thought of. There is no gainsaying an opinion like Parsons's."

"I believe Fieldman would have attempted it. If the case were mine, I should counsel Fieldman being telegraphed for even now."

"No, no, better not," interrupted Hal. "Life at any cost—life at any cost must be preserved. The risk is too tremendous. Let us abide by Parsons's verdict."

At this moment Mrs. Stanhope entered the room. She overheard her husband's last words, and came up to him at once. The deathly pallor of her face was almost startling. Her patient eyes were hard in their glassy brightness.

"What are you talking about?" she asked, leaning her hand as she spoke on Stanhope's shoulder.

He was seated by the table. He turned back and slipped his arm round her waist.

"We are talking about the boy, of course," he said. "Halifax has been repeating Parsons's opinion to me over again."

"It is impossible to believe that opinion," said the mother. "Our noble boy an idiot! Great surgeons are often wrong, and this one will be proved to have made a frightful error, I am firmly convinced."

"No, no, Kitty," said Stanhope. "Men like Parsons never make mistakes."

"That is not true," she said, turning to me. "You have known of such cases, have you not, Dr. Halifax?"

"I have," I answered, emphatically.

She gave her husband a swift glance of the saddest triumph it was possible to witness.

"Has Mr. Parsons gone?" she asked, after a moment's pause.

"Yes," replied Stanhope; "he could do no possible good by remaining."

"I am sorry he came down," she said, with sudden passion. "We did not want our boy's doom pronounced and nothing, nothing at all, done for his recovery."

"But it is a comfort, it is a sort of comfort at least to know that the child may live, Kitty," said Stanhope. "At least that brute of a Charlie Stanhope will be cut out."

"Who cares about that?" she said, stamping her foot. "Mr. Parsons has gone, having done nothing. Dr. Halifax, have you no measures to propose for the child's relief?"

"There is an operation which Fieldman might perform," I began at once.

"Fieldman!" she interrupted, "I have heard of him. He is a very great surgeon, indeed." Her eyes began to blaze with renewed hope. "You would like Mr. Fieldman to be sent for, Dr. Halifax?"



"Yes," I replied; "but Hal here thinks otherwise."

Stanhope suddenly stood up. He put one arm round his wife and drew her to his side.

"This is the state of the case, Kitty," he said. "Parsons has pronounced the boy fairly safe as far as life is concerned; his intellect will be impaired, of course, but we cannot go into that point at the present moment. The main and most important fact is that the boy will live. Now, Halifax knows of an operation, which, if successful, would save his intellect."

"Ah! then it must be done," said Kitty Stanhope.

"Listen to me, my darling," said her husband. "Parsons thinks the operation will kill the boy. He does not wish it to be attempted. We must not risk it, my love."

"We must," she repeated. "There are no two questions in the matter. The operation must be attempted."

"Not at the risk of the boy's life. What can you be dreaming about, Kitty?"

"Do you call the existence you have just spoken of life?" she retorted, with sudden passion. "I love the child. He is my only one. He is my treasure beyond price. But I don't care to bestow such a life as Mr. Parsons spoke of on him. Better, far better, let him die. We will risk the operation."

"Kitty, you forget that brute Charlie Stanhope."

"I do," she answered, promptly. "He is nothing to me. As far as I am concerned he does not exist. Chartelpool is nothing to me. The boy—the boy with his bright spirit unclouded, either here or with the angels, that is everything. Hal, I beg of you to allow the operation to be performed,"

"Kitty, my darling, I cannot. The risk is too tremendous. I cannot consent to its being run."

Stanhope was making a great effort to speak quietly; but there was a suppressed fire in his manner which I had never before witnessed.

"Leave us for a little, Dr. Halifax," said Mrs. Stanhope, flashing a quick glance at me.

I went out of the room and upstairs to the child's nursery. Eliot was seated by the bed. The beautiful little marble figure lay there stretched out, flat and still, motionless as though he were his own effigy on a tombstone.

"I wish to God," I said, as I glanced at him, "that I had brought Fieldman down! I am sure Fieldman would have attempted to trephine, and so

relieve the pressure. I am certain Parsons is wrong with regard to the spot where the injury exists. As it is, Harold Stanhope has taken fright and will not permit any risk to be run."

"It would be highly dangerous, I have no doubt," said Eliot.

"I agree with the mother," I retorted. "The mother would risk the operation. I admire her pluck beyond words."

I had a little further conversation with Eliot and then left the room. I was standing in the outer nursery when Mrs. Stanhope entered and passed me swiftly by without even bestowing a glance upon me. The intense marble calm of her face was broken. It was now disfigured by the marks of tears. I saw that she had been crying bitterly. She re-entered the boy's room and I went downstairs.

Neither Hal nor I thought of going to bed, although, after a time, he lay down on the sofa and slept heavily until the morning. I shall never forget the leaden weight, the awful tedium of the day which followed. I had promised to remain with Stanhope until that miserable apology for life which Parsons anticipated returned to the child.

There was no change whatever—no touch of returning consciousness during the long hours of this day. The deep insensibility in which the little fellow lay was absolutely unbroken. To an inexperienced eye it must almost have seemed as if the boy's spirit had already fled. All day long Mrs. Stanhope remained by his side. What little she ate or drank was taken there. She had completely recovered her still composure. Her calm was marvellous, although now and then I noticed that her lips moved as if she were praying about something. Once, towards evening, she followed me out of the nursery.

"Do you think the child worse?" she asked.

"No," I answered; "he is in precisely the same condition he was in when we arrived yesterday."

"You think he will recover?" she continued, fixing her eyes on me.

"There are certain signs which lead me to think he will not die," I replied, somewhat evasively.

"But I am praying very earnestly that he may die," she answered. "I don't wish him to retain the sort of death in life which Mr. Parsons has prophesied for him."

"It may not be so bad as you fear," I answered.

She shook her head, gave me a broken-hearted glance, and returned immediately to the sick room. I now knew why her lips moved so often—she was praying for the child's death.

Soon afterwards, unable to endure the awful tedium of the house, I went out for a stroll. I walked through the village, and regretted very much that I had done so, when on my way home I was met by that disreputable person, Charles Stanhope, who immediately insisted on joining me.

He was half tipsy, and any shadow of compunction which he might possibly feel in addressing the Squire of Chartelpool was naturally absent from his manner when he merely spoke to the doctor.

"Hooray!" he began. "So I'm to be heir after all! The kid hasn't a leg to stand on. I believe if you told me the truth, doctor, that his death is expected each moment."

"Nothing of the kind," I answered, promptly. (For the first time I felt quite inclined to endorse Stanhope's views that this wretch must be kept out of possession at any cost.)

"The boy will not die," I repeated; "you can take a doctor's word for that."

I strode quickly away, and heard the brute hurling curses after me as I went down the avenue. I said nothing to Hal of my interview with his enemy, and as we were both tired out, and there was nothing whatever to be done for the child but simply to wait the issue of events, we both retired at an early hour to our rooms.

While I remained downstairs I had been the victim of the most overpowering drowsiness. There come such moments in the lives of all people. There come hours when the simple desire for natural sleep triumphs over sorrow, over anxiety, over mental pain. The physical is stronger at such a time than the mental. The body is worn out—rest it must. Thus criminals sleep on the eve of execution.

The desire for slumber had visited me in this overwhelming manner while I remained downstairs. I scarcely heard Stanhope while he conversed. The pathetic figure of the child who lay in living death became blurred and indistinct to my mental view.

I went gladly upstairs, entered my room, shut the door, and prepared for slumber. Strange! Incomprehensible! At this moment I became wide awake. All wish for sleep left me. I was intensely, painfully wakeful.

I sat down in an armchair and waited for sleep to visit me. I perceived that it had no intention of doing so; there was, therefore, not the least use in my going to bed. In my present wakeful state I must think of something, and what more natural than for me to turn my thoughts to the operation which might be performed on little Hal Stanhope, and which would, if successful, save his life in that full sense which makes it a pleasure to live?

I had performed the operation of trephining in every possible region of the head, but only on the dead body. I had seen it done in hospital, however, and it had occupied my thoughts long ago as a possible means of relieving pressure even near the base of the brain.

As I thought it all over I felt more and more convinced that Parsons was wrong, and that the injury was in a region where trephining could be successfully performed. I felt almost daring enough to attempt it. I had brought all the necessary instruments with me in my surgical case. The operation could be performed at this very hour, and the boy might be safe in the morning.

So strong was the impulse which came over me to risk everything, that I felt almost inclined to rush off to Stanhope and wring a consent from him. I knew the mother would give hers without the least difficulty. Impelled by an almost uncontrollable impulse, I rose from my chair—then again I sat down. Parsons's words, uttered with such conviction and solemnity, returned to me. The operation might be performed truly, and the boy might be dead in the morning. Then my old friend would curse me, and I should feel like a murderer to my dying day. No, I must not risk the performance of so critical an operation unaided. If Fieldman were here the case would be different.

Before I lay down to rest I looked carefully through my case of instruments. They were all bright and ready for use. I left them on the table, laid my head on the pillow, and found that, when I was not particularly thinking about it, sleep visited me. In a few moments I was wrapped in the deepest repose.

After a time, I don't know when, I began to dream. My dream was distinct, direct, and vivid. Most dreams have a certain confusion about them. This had not any.

I dreamt that a great impelling Power visited me: a Presence unseen but most surely felt. The Power or Presence gave implicit directions, which I implicitly obeyed. Under its guidance, I rose from my bed, dressed myself completely, opened the door of my room and went out. I went into the sick room, where I knew I should find Eliot. The mother was lying on a sofa in the room. She was in a dead sleep, and looked completely worn out. The child was still nothing more than a marble effigy.

"Eliot," I said, in my dream, "I am going to perform the operation of trephining immediately, and I want your assistance."

"You must be mad," replied Eliot.

"No, I am not mad," I answered. "I am perfectly sane. Come into the next room—I must speak to you."

Eliot followed me. Dissatisfaction and incredulity were written very plainly on his face. I made use of words to him which struck me at the time as not in the least like my own. Then I felt that the invisible Power was speaking through me, and I knew that Eliot must yield to the influence which was completely overmastering me.

I saw that his face became animated and even enthusiastic. He seized me by my hand and wrung it.

"Get the mother's leave, and I will help you," he said. "I believe in you, by Jove I do. Get the mother to consent, and I will help you with all my might and main."

In my dream I saw him return to the sick child's nursery. In a moment he returned, accompanied by Mrs. Stanhope.

"I want you to consent to my performing an operation on the child," I said. "I am certain I shall be successful Will you allow me to try?"

She looked at me with wide-open, almost dazed eyes. All of a sudden I saw life and hope spring back to them.

"Yes, yes," she said; "I trust you—I believe in you. I consent—be the consequences what they may."

She rushed back to the nursery and began to make preparations. I went to fetch my instruments and Eliot got the chloroform.

With Eliot's aid, then, and with the assistance of the mother—who, with pale face and compressed lips, and with the nerve of a surgical nurse, rendered me all necessary help—I felt myself performing the operation. My hands were as cool and firm as iron. I had not a tremor; not a moment's hesitation. The trephining was performed successfully, and the clot which produced pressure on the vault of the brain (I was right after all as to the locality) successfully removed. The child sighed once or twice during the operation. I felt sure that he would do well. Then in my dream I saw myself returning to my bed, and worn out, I sank into the repose which I had duly earned.

I had no more dreams, and when I awoke at a late hour the following morning it was to see the winter's daylight struggling into the room. The instant I opened my eyes I remembered my dream, and wished heartily that it was true. I made a fervent resolve, even in the moment of awakening, to speak to Stanhope on the subject, and with his permission to telegraph for Fieldman without an hour's delay. Just then a voice spoke to me—I turned on my pillow with a start of surprise, for Eliot was standing by my bedside.

"Am I wanted?" I said. "Have I overslept myself? Is the child worse?"

"I came to tell you that the child is decidedly better," he replied, "and Mrs. Stanhope is most anxious that you should not get up until you are really rested. I never saw a man, in all my life, look so worn out as you did when you went to bed."

"Well, you see, I had no sleep the night before," I answered, but Eliot's words surprised me—I thought them exaggerated, and hastened to add: "At any rate, I am perfectly rested now."

"Well, don't hurry up," he replied. "We'll send for you if there is the least occasion."

"What do you mean by the child being better?" I asked. "If so, if there is the least return of consciousness, I ought to be with the little fellow at once."

I sprang up in bed.

"Has the miserable life foretold by Parsons begun to return to the boy?" I asked. "In that case the improvement will be very, very gradual."

"What are you talking about, Halifax?" exclaimed Eliot. "The child is better, because, in my opinion, the operation has been a success."

For a moment I could find no words to speak. Then I gasped out in an incredulous, weak sort of voice, "What operation?"

"Surely, Halifax, you must have taken leave of your senses," replied Eliot, staring at me in astonishment, as well he might. "Don't you remember what you did last night?"

"I slept last night," I said, "I slept—and my God, I dreamed! But what of that?"

"Don't you know what you did between the hours of two and four?"

Eliot looked at me now with undisguised alarm.

"It must have been about then I had my dream," I said, sinking back in a state of tremor on my pillow.

"What in the world are you thinking of, man?" said Eliot, almost angrily. "Wake at least now and listen to me. You must know perfectly well what you did—how you occupied the time between the hours of two and four. You had no dream, Halifax; you were as wide awake, as cool, as collected as man could be. I never admired anyone in the whole course of my life as I admired you last night. You will be the first surgeon of your day. I never saw a surgeon, in hospital or out, with the skill, precision, and nerve that you have exhibited."

"I am speaking the truth, I assure you," I answered, "when I tell you that I am only conscious of having had a very vivid dream during the night. Kindly put me out of suspense and tell me what I really did."

Eliot's look of admiration was now changed to one of pity. "Poor fellow!" I heard him mutter, "no wonder his brain should be a little dazed this morning. But to forget all about it; that is most extraordinary. I hope to goodness there is nothing seriously wrong with him!"

"For Heaven's sake, speak!" I cried. "What, in the name of all that is extraordinary, have I done?"

"You performed the operation which Parsons would not attempt on little Harold Stanhope."

"Never!" I exclaimed, springing to my feet.

"Fact, I assure you."

"Tell me about it," I asked, almost feebly.

"Well, this is a most extraordinary case," began Eliot.

"Tell me about it," I repeated, clutching him by the arm. "If you don't want me to go stark, staring mad--tell me the whole story, without a moment's delay."

"I will do so. Keep cool, try and keep cool," repeated Eliot.

He then began, in a matter-of-fact voice, which it was extremely difficult to doubt, to speak as follows: "The clock had just struck two—I was sitting in the nursery and matching the boy. You came in, looking particularly resolute. You said briefly and firmly, 'I am going to perform the operation, and you must help me.' I was staggered, and asked you if you were mad.

"For reply, you took me by the arm and seemed to sweep me with you into the next room.

"‘I am convinced the operation will be a success,’ you said. ‘I have thought over this case ever since I came down, and I am now convinced that the injury is within comparatively easy reach. Certain symptoms have given me a clue to the spot, and I reach it there must be relief. I can see it in my mind's eye, and it will be an easy matter. As surely as I stand before you, Eliot, the child will recover perfectly if the operation is performed.’"

"‘We can do nothing without at least one of the parents' consent,’ I replied.

"Then get the mother's," you answered. 'She is lying down in the next room. Wake her and bring her here. She is a sane woman and a brave one. She will consent, not the least doubt of it. Go; be quick; each moment is precious.'

"I rushed away. I awakened Mrs. Stanhope. She tottered to her feet. I supported her into the room where you stood, looking inspired. The

forcible words you had used to me you repeated to the mother. Your look, your manner, your tone impressed us both. In short, you carried us away on the wings of your enthusiasm. You felt inspired yourself; you inspired us both with such hope that we forgot fear. Before you had done speaking I turned to Mrs. Stanhope and begged of her to consent. I had no need to do so. Her eyes told me that she had consented already.

“There is the boy’s father,” I said, but I uttered the words feebly.

“I take the responsibility on myself,” said the mother. “When the danger is past, he will thank me when he thanks you, Dr. Halifax.”

“There is not a moment to lose,” you repeated, as though you scarcely heard her words.

“I will make ready, and I will stand by you and help you all the time,” she replied.

“She went back to the night nursery, and you rushed away to fetch your instruments. When you came back she had placed a table, lights, and all things necessary for your use quite handy. While you were performing the operation she stood without flinching by your side, and acted like a trained assistant. From the beginning to the end it occupied exactly one hour. I never saw anything done more neatly, more thoroughly. Towards the end the child moved his right hand and sighed twice heavily.

“When all was over, and when, under ordinary circumstances, you would have sat down to watch the patient, you seemed suddenly to collapse. You told me, I will confess something to my surprise at the moment, that you wished to go back to your room. I looked into your face, and saw that you were done—there is no other word for it. You staggered rather than walked to the door. I never saw anyone look so worn out.”

“No wonder!” I ejaculated. “Eliot, I performed that operation in my sleep!”

“No, no,” he answered, in agitation. “You can’t get me to believe that: you were wide awake. I never saw anyone with more complete control of his faculties.”

“I was fast asleep,” I answered; “I dreamt it all. I remember each thing you have told me. I dreamt it all. My God! I evidently did more than dream. Can this be true? But, no, you must be mocking me.”

“Not I; here are your instruments not yet cleaned. Look at them, and then come and see the child. The child is much better.”

“For God’s sake, leave me to myself for a little,” I said. “If this is not all a dream, it is the most marvellous case of somnambulism that has



ever yet been recorded. Leave me alone for a little, Eliot. I'll get dressed somehow and join you in the sick room; that is, if I don't go mad in the meantime."

"Not you," said Eliot. "If you were really asleep, you may congratulate yourself on having done a more successful operation than I ever saw performed by waking man. Keep cool, Halifax. I can only say that, awake or asleep, Providence must have guided your movements last night."

Eliot left the room, and I sat for a moment with my head pressed against my hands. I did not believe the story—and yet a glance at the instruments on the table could not fail to convince me.

Then I dressed with frantic speed, plunged my head into cold water two or three times, and, tolerably collected at last, but feeling as if I were half-a-dozen years older, I went into the sick room. There lay the little fellow with his pretty eyes open—a faint dawning smile round his lips, and a slight colour coming back to his cheeks.

There sat the mother, bending over him as if she were worshipping him; and there stood Hal, with his face all disfigured as if he had just had a great crying bout. When I appeared, he made two strides towards me, put a big hand on each shoulder and pushed me towards the dressing-room.

"Good God! Halifax," he said. "What craze came over you, old chap?"

"It's all right now," I said. "But—just for my own satisfaction, for the boy is quite out of danger—I should like you to send for Fieldman. I want to tell him the whole story, and to give him my reasons for differing from Parsons."

"I'll send for all the surgeons in London, if you wish it."

"No, Hal," I said, trying to speak steadily and to recover myself, for I was really in a frightful state of maze. "But the fact is, I have done a most extraordinary thing, and I want Fieldman to see my work and to hear my story. I performed the operation in my sleep, Hal, old fellow."

"So they tell me. What care I whether you did it awake or asleep? You saved the boy—I don't care how you did it, Halifax. You're the best fellow on earth—bar none!"

"Well, I should like to see Fieldman," I answered, sinking into a chair.

We telegraphed for the great surgeon, who arrived that evening. To him I confided the whole extraordinary story. He heard me to the end, refused to commit himself with regard to Parsons, but looked anxiously at me, felt my pulse, and looked into my eyes.

“You must take a month’s holiday, or your nerves will be going wrong,” he said. “Fact, I assure you. You must go away at once.”

“Before I stir a step,” I answered, “you must give me your opinion of the boy.”

“All right, stay where you are; I’ll come back to you.”

He was absent a little over half an hour.

“The operation is absolutely successful,” he said. “The boy will recover perfectly. He will be as well as ever he was. All he needs now is quiet and rest. By Jove, you did an extraordinary thing, Halifax. A most unaccountable and successful thing. Only listen to me. In the name of science, don’t repeat it!”

## A Death Certificate

**F**ew things in my busy life gave me more pleasure than the engagement of my friend, Will Raymond. He was a man of a peculiar temperament, and, from time to time, his friends had experienced some slight anxiety about him. He was a hermit, and eschewed society. Women in especial were detestable to him, and although those who knew him well could speak much in his favour, he made few friends and lived a solitary life on his large and beautiful estate in Berkshire.

When Raymond fell in love, however—over head and ears in love is quite the correct phrase on this occasion, and the girl of his choice turned out to be all that the most fastidious could desire—there was rejoicing among his acquaintances, and the wedding-day was hailed with anticipations of pleasure.

“Raymond Towers” was refurnished for the coming of the bride, and Raymond suddenly blossomed out in a new character—he was friendly to everyone, he laughed at girls’ jokes, and was jolly to the many men whom he met; in short, he was a transformed being. All this change was due to the sunny influence of pretty Margaret Travers, or Maggie, as her lover called her.

She was a slight little creature, with fair hair and dark grey eyes. She did not look particularly strong, but she must have had some latent strength of mind to subdue the rough and morose nature of the man who had wooed and won her.

The pair were married in the winter, and were attended to the altar by a numerous company of friends. I happened to be one of them, for Will would not hear of the knot being tied except in my presence. I was too busy to do anything more than attend the pair to the altar. It was then I first noticed a peculiar luck in Mrs. Raymond’s beautiful eyes. They were large, of a very dark grey, with such thick lashes that at a little distance the eyes themselves looked black. These eyes, set in the

midst of a fair lace, with soft, light curling hair, would in themselves attract attention. But it was something about the pupils which arrested my observation at this moment. They were not only rather more dilated than usual, but there was an indescribable expression about them which gave me a sort of uneasiness. I had felt very happy about my friend Will ever since I knew of the engagement. Now a sudden sense of depression swept over me, and I wondered if the shy visitor, Happiness, would long remain his guest.

In at busy doctor's life, however, such thoughts have little room to grow. They were soon banished by the pressure of more immediate interests. I had forgotten Will, his bride, and his new-found happiness, when one afternoon a telegram was handed to me.

"The answer is prepaid, sir. The boy is waiting."

I tore the telegram open and read as follows:—

PLEASE COME AS QUICKLY AS YOU CAN TO LLANMORDAFF, NORTH WALES.  
MAGGIE NOT WELL.—WILL RAYMOND.

"Now, what is up?" I said to myself. "Of course I must go; but it is precious inconvenient. What am I to do?"

Here the memory of several cases of importance darted through my brain. I hastily scribbled a reply to the telegram:—

*Starting by midnight train. Meet me to-morrow morning."*

This dispatched, I turned to my servant.

"I am going to North Wales," I said, "and shall start by the train which leaves Paddington Station about midnight. Look up the exact hour in the A.B.C. Pack all I require, and tell Roberts to bring the carriage round immediately."

"Won't you take some dinner, sir?" asked the man.

"Yes, yes; have it served, and be sure you send Roberts round without delay."

My servant withdrew.

I was fond of attending my patients at this hour in a private hansom, and this conveyance was ready for me in a few minutes.

I drove to the house of a brother physician, arranged with him to take my patients for the next day or two if necessary, and brought him back with me to give him names and addresses, and what further particulars he would require. Then I spent the remaining hours until it was time

to catch my train, visiting one sick person after another, and assuring them of the complete confidence which I put in Denbigh's skill.

At last the time came when I must start on my long journey, and, with a feeling of natural irritation at the inconvenience of leaving my work, I entered my hansom once more, and desired the man to drive me to Paddington Station.

I caught my train and, establishing myself as comfortably as I could in a first-class carriage, tried to sleep. It has often been my lot to make hurried night journeys, and I can generally while away the long hours in almost unbroken slumber, but on this night I found that sleep would not come. My brain felt particularly active. I thought over many things—Raymond and his pretty wife in particular. I wondered why my thoughts would linger so pertinaciously around Will and his pretty, delicate-looking wife. I saw her again in her soft bridal dress—I met again the full-satisfied, absolutely contented look on her almost childish face—but what really worried me was the remembrance which came again, and again, and yet again of the expression in her large grey eyes—the strange look which was not caused by anything mental, but was due to some peculiar physical organization.

I had made hysteria, in its many forms, my study, and I had a sort of conviction that Mrs. Raymond's temperament must be closely allied to this strange, mysterious, and over-powering disorder which comes in so many guises and wrecks so many lives.

Towards morning I fell asleep, and about nine o'clock arrived at Llanmordaff, a very out-of-the-way little place, to which a small local train bore me during the last eight miles of my journey.

I expected Will to meet me on the platform, but to my surprise he was not there. He had only given me the address, "Llanmordaff, North Wales," on his telegram. I concluded, therefore, that he must be putting up at the inn, and went there at once to inquire for him.

I was right in this conjecture. Immediately on my arrival I was informed that the Raymonds were occupying the best rooms in the establishment. I sent up my card, and a moment later found myself in a nondescript sort of apartment—between a dining-room and a drawing-room—and shaking hands with Will.

He was always a haggard-looking fellow, not the least handsome, with rugged features, deep-set eyes, a wide mouth, and a lean, brown face. There was something manly about him, however; his figure was splendid; he was tall without a scrap of superfluous flesh, and very muscular. He came up to me at once and wrung my hand, hard.

"This is good of you," he said. "I might have known you would not fail me. Now, sit down and have some breakfast."

He strode across the room as he spoke, and gave a violent jerk to the bell. It sounded with a clanging noise in the distance, and in a moment a waiter, not too clean in his appearance, answered it.

"What will you have, Halifax—tea or coffee?" inquired Raymond.

"Strong coffee," I answered.

"Coffee at once, and anything cold you have in the house," said Raymond to the man.

He withdrew, and we found ourselves alone.

I looked round for Mrs. Raymond.

"How about my patient?" I said. "How is she? I trust your wife is better, my dear fellow."

"No, she is very unwell," replied Raymond. "I do not suppose it is really anything serious, but she is in a very queer, nervous state—it has all been caused by that railway accident."

"What in the world do you mean?" I exclaimed.

"Didn't you see the account in the papers? Surely you must have done so. Two days after our wedding we were jogging along in one of these atrocious little local trains, when an express ran into us. Fortunately no one was killed, but Maggie got a shake, and she was knocked about a good bit. She made wonderfully little of it at the time. In fact, I never saw anyone so plucky, but that night she fainted off, and was unconscious for over an hour. Since then she has been very poorly and shaken: and—and—I don't want to conceal the truth from you, Halifax—she is completely changed; she is an absolutely different woman. She is morose, and even suspicious; one moment full of tenderness and devotion to me, in short, quite the old Maggie whom I loved and married; then, again, she treats me with suspicion. Often for hours she will not allow me to come near her room. Of course, the whole thing is caused by that beastly shock, but still I thought you had better see her."

"Yes, this nervous condition is undoubtedly caused by the shock," I answered, as cheerfully as I could. "Your wife will probably have to rest for some little time, and then she will be quite herself again. Shall I see her now, or would you like to prepare her for my visit?"

"No, I won't prepare her. She hates the most remote idea of seeing a doctor; and although, of course, you are an old friend, I doubt if I prepared her for your visit if she would admit you to her presence. No, you have your breakfast first, and then we'll go together to her room."

The waiter appeared at this moment with the coffee, a cold game pie, and other preparations for breakfast. He placed them on the table, looked round to see if everything was all right, and then withdrew, closing the door noiselessly behind him.

The moment my hasty meal was over Will put his hand through my arm and, walking towards the door, we crossed a wide landing and entered his wife's room. It was a large room, nearly as big as the drawing-room. There was a great, old-fashioned four-post bedstead occupying a considerable part of one wall. It was hung with dark red velvet and looked unpleasant and funereal, as for some intangible reason these sort of bedsteads always do.

Mrs. Raymond was sitting up in bed. Her abundant tresses of soft, light hair were falling all over her shoulders—they curled naturally—and she was occupying herself winding one of the tendrils round and round her fingers, and stroking it with the other hand, when we entered the room. She looked up at her husband, and then I saw how greatly changed she was. All the pretty colour which had added to her beauty on her wedding-day had given place to a grey sort of pallor—her childish mouth was drawn, her lips looked thin and parched. Her eyes were intensely bright, lovely still in shape and colour, but unnatural and strained in expression.

Will smiled at her and spoke in a confident, hearty voice.

"Well, my darling," he said, "I have brought an old friend to see you—you will give Halifax a welcome, won't you, Maggie?"

She did not smile when her husband spoke; on the contrary, after giving him a quick, flashing glance, she once more resumed her occupation of stroking her soft hair. Her attitude, her manner, her occupation belonged to childhood—I did not like the aspect of things at all.

Will cast a glance at me. I read despair in his eyes. I-Ie evidently thought his wife even worse than she was, but I had often seen the effect of shock on peculiar nervous temperaments, and although I was anything but pleased at the aspect of affairs, still I thought it likely that Mrs. Raymond would recover perfectly, if she were carefully attended to.

I went up to the bed, therefore, and spoke to her, just as if it were the most natural thing in the world that I should drop into breakfast at the little inn in Llanmordaff. I asked her several questions, none of them of a medical character, and presently she roused herself, looked at me attentively, and ceased to play with her hair. With both hands she pushed it back impatiently from her face, and let it fall in long,

lovely waves of light over her shoulders. Forcing herself to give me an attentive glance, she spoke: "Why have you come?"

Before I could reply Will came up to her, and passed his big hand caressingly over her brow.

"Halifax has come to see you, Maggie, because you are not quite well."

"Yes, I am perfectly well," she retorted. "I wish you would not touch me, Will; I hate being touched."

She pulled herself petulantly away.

"You have got a shock," I said. Will looked at me in despair, but I knew that in order to get to the bottom of her malady it was absolutely necessary to rouse her. "You were in a railway accident and you got a shock."

"I don't remember anything about it," she said. "Oh, no, I have not been in a railway accident—you make a mistake. Will was in one, but I was not there." She laughed lightly. Her laugh was terrible to hear.

Will walked across the room and stood by one of the windows.

"Go away, Will," said his wife. "I want to speak to Dr. Halifax alone."

He obeyed, closing the door gently after him.

When he had gone, the expression of her face altered, it became much more intelligent, but there was something intensely painful about it. The intelligence which now animated the eyes and filled the face was not of the gentle and gracious order which used to characterize pretty Margaret Travers. There was a sort of cunning about it, which allied it to that of the animal.

"Look here," she said, almost in a whisper. "I don't want Will to know it, but I have made a discovery."

"I would not keep things from my husband, Mrs. Raymond, if I were you," I answered. "Never mind your discovery, now. I want to ask you a few questions about your health."

"How strange of you," she replied. "I am perfectly well."

"If you were perfectly well you would not stay in bed."

"I like to stay in bed," she replied. "When I am up I am obliged to be with Will all day; now he goes for long walks, and I can be alone. The discovery which I have made, and which I wish to confide to you is this: I have broken my marriage now!"

"What do you mean?" I said, starting back in momentary horror.

"Yes," she replied, with a light laugh. "I said in church that I would love, honour, and obey Will. I don't love him; I don't honour him; and I don't mean to obey him."



She laughed again as she said this, gave me a fixed, long gaze, and looking towards the door said, in an eager voice: "You have always been a kind friend to me. You were very glad when I was engaged."

"Certainly I was," I replied, with some indignation. "Your husband is about the best fellow in the world."

"Oh, no," she replied. "He is not good at all."

I knew she was in no state to argue with, so I continued: "We won't discuss this subject just at present. You are not very well, and I am going to prescribe certain medicines for you. It is sometimes quite possible for people to be ill without being aware of it themselves. That is your case at the present moment. You are ill, and you must remain quiet, and you must take the necessary medicines which I am going to prescribe. If you are very good, and do exactly what I tell you, you will soon find all that now troubles and perplexes you vanish away, and you will be the happy girl who stood in church and promised to obey, to love, and honour the kindest of husbands."

There was something in my voice which seemed to rouse her. She tried to look at me steadily, and her eyes filled with tears.

"I don't want to feel as I do," she said, suddenly. "I should like to get back my old self; only I cannot, in the least, remember what it was like. My present self worries me, and yet I do not know why it should."

"Oh, it is quite accountable," I replied. "You are suffering from a sort of physical shock, which causes you to forget many things. Now keep perfectly quiet; I want to examine your heart."

I did so. I found the action of the heart decidedly weak and irregular. I then looked into my patient's eyes. The pupils were not working properly. Altogether her condition was the reverse of satisfactory. She was very weak, and there was not the least doubt that for the time the brain was affected.

I soothed and cheered her as well as I could, and then returned to her husband.

"Well," he said. "What do you think of her?"

"She is in a queer condition," I replied. "There is no use mincing matters, Will—just at present your wife is not accountable for her actions."

"You don't mean to tell me that she is out of her mind?" he asked, in a strained voice.

"I feel convinced," I replied, "that the present condition of things is only temporary. Mrs. Raymond will soon recover her mental equilibrium; at least, I fondly hope so. In the meantime we must have a nurse for her."

"We cannot get a nurse in these parts."

"Very well, I will telegraph to town and have one sent down immediately."

"No, I won't let you do that," replied Raymond. "Maggie is very peculiar and fastidious. She won't have *any* nurse. You must choose one in all particulars fitted to her case, and until she arrives, I am more than ready and willing to attend to her myself."

"No," I answered. "You cannot do that. In your wife's present condition your presence only excites her."

Will looked startled for a moment, and I saw gloom gathering on his brow.

"Very well," he said, after a pause. "I must not gainsay the doctor, but in any case I insist on your personally selecting Maggie's nurse."

"As you please," I answered. "I will stay with you until to-night; then if Mrs. Raymond continues to remain much as she is at present, and no fresh symptoms of a grave character appear, I must return to my patients in town; for many of them are in a critical condition. But I will promise to send you down the best and most suitable nurse I can possibly find, by the first train in the morning."

"Thanks," replied Raymond. He looked depressed, as well he might. He began to walk restlessly up and down in front of the fire.

"I wish you could stay yourself," he said, suddenly.

"So do I, my dear fellow; but that is impossible."

"If it is a case of money, I can make it worth your while," he continued. I interrupted hastily.

"No," I answered, "money does not come into the question at all. I go, because I am absolutely wanted in Town, and because I can do Mrs. Raymond no good—no good whatever—by remaining."

Raymond was silent. His rugged face looked old. His brow had heavy lines across it. He pushed his hair, already slightly grizzled, with an impatient movement, off his forehead.

"You don't know what Maggie is to me," he said, abruptly.

He sank into a chair as he spoke, and bent eagerly forward. His voice was full of nervous tension.

"You have known me for years," he continued. "You have known what I used to be before I met her. I was an inhospitable, selfish, egotistical hermit. I hated women, and I only tolerated men. I had an insane desire to shut myself away from the world. I am rich, but it never occurred to me to have to give an account of my stewardship. My agent looked after my property, and I did not care two pins whether my tenants lived,

or died, were happy or miserable. Then I met Margaret—Maggie, as I call her. She was different from other girls. Her refined, half shy, and yet bright face stole into my heart before I was aware. I fell in love with her, and immediately the world changed. We had a short engagement, and now we are married a week. During the days which followed our wedding, up to that fatal Thursday when the railway accident occurred, I tasted Paradise. I felt my whole moral nature growing and expanding. Oh, pshaw! why should I go on with this? The old cloud is on me again, and my wife—my wife I Halifax, old fellow, will my wife ever be better?” “Assuredly,” I replied, cheerfully. “I see nothing whatever to cause serious alarm. Mrs. Raymond has got a shock which, instead of producing ordinary concussion of the brain, has affected some of the higher centres in a somewhat unexpected manner. She will not, I fear, recover speedily, but that you will have her the old Maggie, in three months’ time at the farthest, I feel convinced.”

Raymond sighed heavily.

“Well, I must go to her now,” he said. “She hates to have me in the room, and yet she must not be left alone.”

“Yes, leave her alone,” I replied. “I shall stay near her most of the day. I will endeavour to find someone, some nurse, even if not a trained one, to look after her for the night. You only weaken her tired-out nerve centres by going to her at present. Don’t let her see you. I am giving you painful advice, I know, Raymond, but I am sure I am acting for the best.”

“What in the world has she taken a dislike to me for?” answered the poor fellow, turning his head aside.

“Oh, that is very often the case. In brain conditions like hers, people are known to turn from their nearest and dearest.”

“I have heard of it, in the insane. But, good God! Maggie is not so bad as that?”

“Her condition is temporary,” I replied, as evasively as I could; and now I should like to see the local doctor.”

“I don’t know anything about him.”

“Well,” I answered, “there is sure to be a medical man in the place. I had better see him and put Mrs. Raymond into his charge. I’ll just go downstairs and inquire his name.”

“One moment first, Halifax. Can I move her from this beastly hole?”

“Certainly not,” I replied. “You are fixed here for a week or a fortnight at the very least.”

"You don't say so? We meant to go home on the Saturday of this week. We intended to finish our honeymoon at home. Unconventional, of course, but just what we wished for. The tenants were getting up no end of demonstrations. I have just received a letter from my steward, Berring."

"You must postpone everything for the present," I replied, and then I ran down-stairs to get the address of the doctor. His name was Grey—he was a middle-aged man, and lived in a small side street not far away. I called, found him at home, and gave him full particulars with regard to Mrs. Raymond's case. I was not predisposed in his favour. He seemed narrow-minded and old-fashioned. It was necessary, however, that some medical man should take charge of my patient, and as Grey alone represented the faculty in this little, out-of-the-world town, I was forced to make the best of circumstances. I took him to see Mrs. Raymond; marked out very carefully a certain line of treatment, which he promised to adopt, and finally was able, through his assistance, to secure the services of a fairly capable nurse, who would remain with the patient until I could send down a professional nurse from Town.

During the day that followed there was no change whatever in the condition of the young wife. She still sat up in bed, and played with her hair, and seemed feebly and childishly happy. She laughed with pleasure when she saw the nurse, clapped her hands as if she were a child of six, and whispered to her to be sure to keep Raymond out of the room. I shall never forget the expression on my poor friend's face when he witnessed this action; and when the nurse was forced to tell him what the poor girl had said, he turned away with a groan, and clutching my arm with his strong hand, said, half to himself: "It's all up, then. That dream of happiness is shattered."

He saw me into the train, and I returned to Town much disturbed and more fearful as to the results than I cared to own. I arrived in London at an early hour the next morning, and going straight to Hanover Square, saw the matron of the excellent establishment for trained nurses which is to be found there. I described the case, and chose a bright-looking young woman who I was sure had tact as well as experience. Making hasty arrangements that she should start at once, I wired what I had done to Will.

My own duties were sufficiently arduous to occupy every moment of my time and every atom of my thoughts during the rest of that day. I returned home, fagged out, at a late hour that evening, and had just desired my servant to bring up supper, of which I stood much in need,

when, instead, he handed me a telegram on a salver.

"When did this come?" I asked, looking at it suspiciously, and my thoughts instantly darting away to poor Will Raymond and his unhappy little wife.

"The telegram came half an hour ago, sir," replied the servant.

I tore it open and uttered a groan. I was not prepared for the news which it contained.

MRS. RAYMOND DIED AT THREE O'CLOCK THIS AFTERNOON.—GREY.

The pink slip of paper fluttered out of my hand, and I sat in an almost dazed condition for several minutes. I had not time, however, for any long meditation. There came a sharp peal to my front door, and another telegram was brought to me.

This was from Will. It contained the sort of news which I might have expected:—

FOR GOD'S SAKE, COME TO ME, HALIFAX. COME TO-NIGHT.

Alas, it was impossible for me to comply. I had a case to attend to which by no possibility could I depute to another. I telegraphed to Will telling him that I could not leave for Wales until the following evening, but that then nothing should hinder my joining him.

I have nothing special to say about the time which intervened. I had the satisfaction of knowing that I had pulled my patient through a severe illness, and, weary but thankful, I stepped into the midnight train which was to take me to Wales.

Once again I arrived there in the morning, but this time Grey was waiting for me on the platform. He came forward to meet me with much eagerness, shook my hand and looked into my face. His manner was disturbed, and his somewhat phlegmatic nature evidently stirred to its depths.

"I am more than glad you have come," he said. "Raymond is in a very queer way. I thought his wife insane before her death; I now think that unless something is immediately done for his relief, his brain will go."

"Nonsense, nonsense," I retorted. "Raymond has as steady a brain as any fellow I know."

But then I stopped abruptly. Certain peculiarities with regard to his past history occurred to me, and I was silent. Raymond was undoubtedly my friend, but I knew nothing of the psychological history of his house. I made up my mind to treat the doctor's fears lightly, and proceeded

in a steady and cheerful voice: "You must make full allowance for the terrible shock my poor friend has sustained."

"Yes, yes," said Grey; "of course, anyone would make allowance for grief and even violent distress, but the man's conduct is more than eccentric. Do you know what he has done?"

"No," I said. "What?"

"He is going to take that poor dead young woman home to Berkshire. I am given to understand that there were no end of demonstrations getting ready at his place for the return of the bride and bridegroom. He and Mrs. Raymond seem to have talked over this home-Coming a good deal, and he says she shall cross the threshold of his house dead or living. He has given orders that a coffin is to be made for her out of some of the oak at ›Raymond Towers‹, and, in the meantime, she has been put into a hastily improvised shell, and the miserable funeral procession is to start from here at five o'clock to-morrow morning."

"So soon?" I inquired.

"Yes, there has been an awful hurry about everything. All arrangements are now, however, complete. Raymond has engaged a special train, and the line is to be cleared along the entire route; of course, at enormous expense. He has asked me to accompany him, but now that you have arrived, that will scarcely be necessary."

"Probably not," I answered.

We had by this time entered the house, and Grey took me upstairs to the wretched apology for a drawing-room where I had sat with Raymond a couple of days ago. He was not present; I looked around for him anxiously.

"He is in the room with his poor wife," said Grey, noticing my perturbed glance; "he spends almost all his time there. The worst place in the world for him, I should say, in his present state of nervous excitement."

"Well, I must go and find him," I said; "but before I do so I shall be glad if you will give me any particulars in your power with regard to Mrs. Raymond's last moments. When I left Llanmordaff two nights ago, I had not the slightest fears for the poor girl's life. I was anxious, of course, with regard to her state, but my anxiety pointed altogether to her mental condition. When did a change for the worst take place, and why was I not telegraphed for immediately?"

"There was no time. We none of us thought her dying until she was dead. I visited her twice the night you left, and found her quiet and inclined to sleep. She seemed to like the woman I had sent in to nurse her *pro tem*, and asked her to sit by her and hold her hand. The following

morning she was very quiet and still sleeping. I visited her at about ten o'clock, took her temperature, which was normal, and felt her pulse. It was slow and fairly regular. I noticed, however, a very grey hue over her face, and wondered what her complexion was in health."

"She had a bright complexion," I answered, hastily.

"Well, she looked grey, but there were no other symptoms to indicate any danger, and thought her desire for sleep a good sign, and begged of the nurse to encourage it as much as possible. I spoke to Raymond hopefully, poor fellow, and promised to call again at noon.

"I was hindered coming until nearly one o'clock. I then saw her again; she was asleep, breathing easily and with a happy smile on her face. About a quarter past three, I was just about to leave my house to see a patient at a little distance, when the woman I had engaged as nurse rushed in frantically and informed me, with a burst of tears, that Mrs. Raymond was dead.

"She died in her sleep," said the woman, "without never a sigh or a groan. She just stopped breathing, that was all."

"I went over at once to the hotel to see her, but Raymond had locked the door and would not allow anyone into the room. I even tried to force an entrance, but he did not listen to me or reply to my repeated knocks. I heard him muttering and moaning to himself, and in a couple of hours he came out of the room with a wild expression in his eyes. The moment he saw me he told me I was a 'confounded fool,' and used some more strong expressions which I do not care to repeat. I asked to see the dead woman. With a great oath he swore that not a soul should look at her now again except himself."

"Then you did not see her after death?" I interrupted.

"No—there was no use in worrying the poor fellow."

"And now she is in her coffin?" I continued.

"Yes, fastened up: all ready for her last long journey."

I said nothing further, and in a few moments was in Will's presence.

I must draw a veil over the scene which followed. Will's excitement was all too real. He could not keep still for a moment. His eyes were bright and glassy, his hair unkempt; he had not shaved for a day or two. The moment he saw me he poured out a volley of eager words. Then he burst into the most heart-rending groans I had ever listened to. The next moment his manner altered: he laughed and told me with an awful kind of glee of the arrangements he had made for the funeral.

"I have ordered them to light bonfires," he exclaimed. "just the same as if Maggie were alive. We have often talked of those bonfires: and nothing

pleased her more than to hear of the reception we should receive on our home-coming. She shall have her coming-home all the same, Halifax. I myself will help to bear her across the threshold of her house and mine. She shall sleep for at least one night under its roof before she goes to join the other wives of our house in the family vault. That will please her—yes, that will please her, poor darling.”

“But she won’t know anything about it,” I replied.

Will fixed me with his bright eyes.

“How can you tell?” he retorted. “Do you think her spirit has gone far from mine? No, no: you won’t get me to believe that. We are twin spirits, and it is impossible to part us. There was a cloud over the sweet soul during the last few days of her life; but Death has lifted it, she is mine again now.”

He paused abruptly here, locked his hands together tightly and gazed into the fire as if he were looking at something. After a pause he said, with another laugh: “I have an impression, Halifax, that in the future a spirit will haunt ‘Raymond Towers.’ Nothing will induce Maggie to stay in her grave when I am living close to her. Do you believe in ghosts?”

I retorted briefly. There was nothing whatever for it but to soothe the poor fellow. If he were not insane at present, he was evidently on the borderland.

When he became a little more reasonable I tried to show him how more than absurd his different arrangements were.

“You think you are showing respect for your poor wife’s memory by all this sort of thing,” I said. “But you are greatly mistaken—people will pity her and think that grief for her loss has turned your brain.”

“It has not done that,” he said, with a sort of jerk of his shoulders. “I am all right as far as my brain is concerned, and if you think, Halifax, that I care *that*”—snapping his fingers with a loud click as he spoke—“for what anyone thinks of me, you are finely mistaken. Maggie is dead, but her spirit lives. All the future of my life will be devoted to pleasing that poor wandering ghost, until—until I meet her and clasp her again.”

There was an exalted sort of look about his face. I saw it was hopeless to argue with him. There was nothing whatever for it but to humour him and let this ghastly travesty of woe take its course.

Once again that night I saw Grey. He was sitting in the drawing-room of the inn, filling in the death certificate.

The usual details were rapidly entered, but when he came to the clause which obliged him to certify the fact of death having taken place, he



had recourse to words provided in the certificate for medical men who had not seen the dead body.

"I regret beyond words," I said, "that you did not see Mrs. Raymond after death. You are unable to state as an eye-witness that you saw her. For my part I should be glad to see the present law altered. I would make it compulsory that no doctor should sign a death certificate without having first seen the dead body."

"That would be well in most cases," answered Grey, "but there are exceptions, and legitimate ones, as in this case. You may remember that I did express a wish to see the body, but was prevented by Mr. Raymond's extraordinary behaviour."

"Well, it cannot be helped now," I said. "Poor Mrs. Raymond undoubtedly died from syncope or shock—the said syncope or shock was caused by the railway accident which occurred a few days ago. Were this known a coroner's inquest would have been necessary. We must be careful to say nothing about it, however, for it would give her husband intense pain, which is for every reason to be avoided."

"Certainly," said Grey.

"By the way," I asked, "did the nurse, who must have arrived from London yesterday morning, see the body?"

"No; Raymond would not allow her near the room. Of course, Mrs. McAllister, the nurse from here, was obliged to perform the last duties to the dead, and the undertaker's men had to measure her for the coffin, or rather shell; but no one else has seen her, Halifax, except her wretched husband. I am told that he put her into the coffin himself and screwed the lid down with his own hands."

I turned away. I had nothing further to add, and soon afterwards retired to my room. I had scarcely dropped asleep, or so it seemed to me, before I was awakened by strange sounds in the room next to my own. I started and listened attentively. I suddenly remembered that Mrs. Raymond was lying in her coffin in this room.

Pretty, bright Maggie Raymond! I recalled her face as it was when I first saw it. A more innocent and a happier face it would have been difficult to find, but even then I was attracted by something peculiar in her eyes—they were beautiful; but it was not their beauty which arrested my professional interest. Two days ago I saw her for the last time—she sat up in bed and played with her soft hair. Then the mystery which dwelt in her lovely eyes was solved. It was latent insanity which gave her that peculiar expression. This insanity had been rudely awakened into active life by the shock of the railway accident.

Well, now, all was over. A short life had come to an abrupt termination. There was no use worrying about Maggie—she had gone to join the majority. Nothing of life could affect her again. My real anxiety now, my real regret, was for poor Raymond. Through the long hours of the night I heard him walking up and down the room which contained his wife's coffin. Now and then I heard his groans, and once, good God! I listened to his laughter. That laugh sent a thrill of horror through me. Was his case similar to his wife's? Was he, too, fast becoming insane? I turned over in my mind several plans for helping him, and in the midst of my meditations fell asleep again.

At a very early hour we were all stirring, and at five o'clock on this winter's morning, in the midst of drizzling rain and fog, we steamed slowly out of the little station, carrying all that was mortal of poor Mrs. Raymond back to her husband's home.

I do not think in my whole life I ever experienced anything longer or more utterly dreary than this journey. We had a saloon carriage to ourselves, in one corner of which the coffin was placed.

I was glad to find that the excitement which had rendered Raymond's conduct so strange the night before was now greatly subdued. He was very quiet, scarcely speaking a word, but now and then laying his big hand with a caressing movement on the lid of the coffin, and now and then looking out of the window and smiling.

I did not like the smile, nor the sort of satisfied expression on his face. Had he been plunged in the deepest woe, I could have understood him. He looked almost happy, however. I saw plainly that he was as much in a world apart from mine as was the dead woman who lay in her coffin. I wondered how all this was going to end, and my fears with regard to Raymond's mental condition were considerable.

The longest journey come at last to an end, however, and in the darkness of evening we arrived at a little wayside station three miles distant from "Raymond Towers." Here the station-master and several gentlemen from the neighbourhood met us. They were all dressed in mourning, and I saw that this fact roused poor Raymond's indignation at once. "I don't want this to be a mournful procession," he said, in a testy tone, to a neighbour who came and with deep feeling shook the poor fellow by the hand. "I am not conventional, and I don't wish anything conventional to be done. Where is my steward? Where is Betting?"

"Here, sir," answered the man, taking off his hat.

"Berring, have you attended to all my orders—bonfires, and all that sort of thing?"

Berring muttered something which no one could quite distinguish. There was a hustle on the platform owing to the removal of the coffin, which was placed on a bier covered with a white velvet cloth. At this moment a touching thing happened—six young girls came forward and laid wreaths of white flowers on the coffin. They were daughters of neighbouring squires. This token of respect touched Raymond, who went up and shook hands with one of them, and fortunately forgot to ask anything more about the bonfires.

I saw the gentlemen who had come to meet him and to offer their hearty sympathy and condolences looking at one another in a very significant manner, and I also saw that the moment had come for me to interfere. I went up and took my friend firmly by the arm.

“Hands off,” he said, pushing me from him with some violence. But I would not notice this.

“Come,” I said, “your carriage is waiting. Don’t make yourself remarkable, I beg of you, Raymond. I am going with you in the carriage. See, they are already moving forward with—”

“My wife—my bride!” said Raymond. “How often we talked of this home-coming! Halifax, my dear fellow, I feel dazed. What has come to me?”

“You are tired and worn out,” I answered, soothingly. “Come.” I took his arm, and he entered the brougham, which was waiting for him, without another word. I shall never forget that journey. The slow pace of the mourning carriages, the solemn look of the hearse on in front. It was a moon-lit and fine night, and the whole ghastly procession was, I could see, viewed the entire way by lines of spectators. Fortunately there were no bonfires, and more fortunately still, Raymond never noticed the fact.

We entered the winding and splendid avenue which led to the Towers, and after a time drew up at the principal entrance, in the centre of the pile of buildings.

“This door is never opened except for a bridal, a funeral, or a christening,” said Raymond, in a light tone. “Heigh-ho!” he continued, “what a home-coming for the bonny bride.”

He sprang out of the carriage and went up to the hearse. The bearers came forward to lift the coffin out. He pushed two of them roughly aside, and himself helped to carry his dead wife across the threshold of her home.

The coffin was placed on a raised dais in the great central hall. This dais was completely covered with flowers. Raymond, having helped to

put the coffin in its place, turned round, and began to make a speech to the assembled visitors. Fortunately, this ghastly performance was more than he had strength for. He suddenly gave way, covered his face with his big hands, and rushed from the scene.

I immediately asked the friendly neighbours to leave us.

They did so, evidently in the greatest consternation, and I felt a slight sense of satisfaction as I closed the wide doors on the last of them.

An old, white-headed butler was standing in the hall. His face was perfectly scared.

"Good God!" he exclaimed. "May I ask, sir, if you're a doctor?"

"Yes," I replied.

"Can you tell me what's the matter with my poor master?"

"He is out of his mind for the time being," I answered, promptly.

"Then God help us all," replied the man.

"What is your name?" I inquired of him.

"Jasper, sir. I have served the family for close on thirty years. I was in the house when Mr. William was born. He was never quite like other lads, more shy like and morose a bit—but, oh, the change in him when he got engaged to Miss Travers! Oh, dear, oh, dear, why did she die, poor young lady?"

"It was very sudden," I replied. "I will tell you about it later on. I don't mind saying now that your master's condition fills me with anxiety, but the best thing all the rest of us can do is to keep our heads. What is the name of the steward?"

"Berring, Mr. Berring."

"I will see him by-and-by. Have all preparations been made for the funeral ceremony to-morrow?"

"I believe so, doctor—the oak coffin was sent in to-day."

"Tell Mr. Berring that I want to see him before he leaves for the night."

"He will sleep here to-night, sir."

"That is good," I replied. "I am going to your master now. Bring food and wine to the study, and be in readiness to come to me, should I ring."

"Yes, doctor."

The man retired, casting a pitying glance on the white coffin, which was now almost covered with flowers.

I looked at it, too, and could not help uttering a sigh as I thought of all the tragedy which it contained. I then went to find my poor friend. He was sitting in his study, warming his hands by a blazing fire. He had

quite recovered from his temporary break-down, and once again I saw that awful smile hovering round his lips.

"Come in," he said to me when he saw me at the door; "not that we want you—we are very happy here together; I knew that we should be."

I had no need to ask what he meant. I knew too well that this was a further development of his insanity. He thought, poor fellow, that his wife was really bearing him company. After a moment's hesitation, I determined to speak in a cheerful tone.

"Come, come," I said, "even though you are happy you must not turn out an old friend." I drew a chair forward as I spoke.

A frown crept over his face.

"She goes away when you come in," he said. "I wish you would leave us."

"I will presently," I answered. "I want some supper, and so do you. Ah, and here it comes. Lay it on that table, please, jasper; thanks, that will do nicely."

The man withdrew noiselessly. I went to the table and insisted on Raymond's eating. I was relieved to find that he was hungry, and ate a good meal. I noticed that as he ate his face became less exalted and more natural in expression.

"She's dead," he said, suddenly. "I can't quite realize it."

"Have a glass of sherry," I interrupted.

He took it from my hand and tossed it off.

"She's dead," he continued, "although her spirit has come to me, as I knew it would. Hers was the first dead body I ever saw. She looked beautiful in her last sleep."

"I am sure she did," I answered. "I should like to have seen her."

"I always thought that dead People were cold," he continued; "but she was warm—after death she was very warm. The next day she was cold, but not icy—not as books describe the dead."

"She died suddenly and was young," I answered. "Sometimes chemical changes account for warmth after death. Now, Raymond, I am gang to see you to your room; you must go to bed at once."

"No, I shall stay here."

"Just as you please," I answered. "There is a sofa here, a comfortable one. You must lie down and go to sleep."

"My dear fellow," he answered, "I have not slept since Maggie died."

"You will to-night, for I am going to give you a sleeping draught."

"I don't think I'll take it. Should she visit me again, she would think my conduct heartless."

"No, she won't;—she sleeps well, and so must you. Come, lie down. You need not even undress; all I want you to do is a rest." He was a bigger man than I, but I forced him to obey me. He lay down obediently on the sofa. I put a rug over him, and then going to my bag which lay on the floor, I took out a small medicine chest, mixed a certain draught, and gave it to him. In five minutes he was soundly asleep, and I could leave the room.

Berring was waiting to speak to me. Old Jasper hovered about in the passages. Barring assured me that all was ready for the morrow's ceremony. I said I wished it to be as quiet as possible, and to take place early in the day. Berring said this should be done, and proposed that Mr. Herbert, the vicar, who was to officiate, should come and see me that evening.

"I will see him to-morrow," I said. "It is too late now."

Then the men began to question me with regard to Raymond.

"Was he really insane? Had Mrs. Raymond gone out of her mind before she died?"

"I am sorry that I am unable to answer you," I replied. "Mrs. Raymond died from the effects of shock, caused by a railway-accident, and her husband's mind is at present in a very disturbed condition. If great care is exercised, however, and he is spared all undue excitement, I trust soon to see an improvement in him. I am now going to sit in his room, and will wish you good-night."

The men retired, and I went softly back to the shaded study, and sat clown in a chair by the fire. Raymond was sound asleep. I knew that by his tranquil and regular breathing. I also thought it extremely unlikely that he would wake before the morning. The bromidia I had given him would produce deeper and deeper slumber as the hours went by. There was a possibility also that he might awake calm, self-possessed, and in his right mind once more.

I sat on by the fire, and my thoughts wandered back to the tragic events of the last few days. The house was intensely quiet, but a bright light burnt in the hall, where the coffin on its dais of flowers lay, the central object of attraction. There lay the bride, and here was I taking care of the bridegroom.

All of a sudden I felt an intense desire to look once again on the face of the dead girl. I felt almost a sense of shock as this wish came over me.

Why should I disturb the peaceful dead? Why not respect poor Raymond's desire that no eyes should look on his wife after death but his? I banished the thought almost as soon as it came, but not effectually, for it returned again, again, and yet again. Then, to add force to my wish, I recalled Raymond's words.

"After death she was warm—she grew cold later on, but was never icy." "Good God!" I said to myself, springing to my feet in my agitation, "and no medical man, not even a professional nurse, saw this poor soul after death. No one expected her death. When I saw her last she was hysterical, nervous, over-wrought.

"There was no doubt that she was either partly or wholly insane. She was suffering from shock, and shock might lead to—to—*catalepsy*! How do I know that she is dead? I will not rest until I find out for myself whether the spirit has really left this body." I felt painfully excited; but with the excitement came also an accompanying coolness and steadiness of nerve.

"What an ass Grey was not to see Mrs. Raymond," I said to myself. "Certainly death certificates ought to be altered—no medical man ought to be allowed to give one unless he has first seen the body, and testified with his own eyes to the presence of death. In this case, no one capable of judging saw that poor girl. Her husband lost his self-control—his mind was overbalanced—he became possessed with a desire, which was absolute insanity, to bring her here without a moment's delay. She was put into her coffin far too soon. Why did not I see her when I arrived at Llanmordaff late yesterday evening? God grant she has not died from suffocation. Anyhow, there is no peace for me until I solve this question."

I went softly into the hall and, ringing a bell, summoned Jasper on the scene.

For every reason it was well I should have a witness of my actions, and also someone to render me assistance if necessary. I much wondered, however, if the old man had nerve to witness my performance. Thank God, at least Raymond was sleeping. Suppose, however, that he awakened suddenly, that he came into the hall? I turned my mind resolutely from this contingency. Jasper was standing before me with the scared look still very manifest on his white old face. For some reason I preferred his assistance to that of Berring, the steward.

"Fetch me a screwdriver," I said, when the old man appeared. I spoke as sharply and incisively as I could. "Be quick about it," I continued, "don't make any noise."

Jasper potted away in some bewilderment. He returned with the necessary instrument in the course of a few minutes.

"Now," I said, "I want you to do something for me."

"Certainly, doctor."

"I want you, whatever happens, to keep your nerve. I am anxious, for reasons which I need not explain to you, to open the coffin."

"Good Lord!" cried the man, falling back.

"Keep quiet," I said, sternly; "you can control yourself if you wish. I intend to open the shell in which Mrs. Raymond has been placed. It so happens that no medical man has seen her since her death. This, in my opinion, ought never to be allowed—there are cases on record where inexperienced people have mistaken a disease called catalepsy for actual death. In order to satisfy my own mind, I mean now to look at the body. In case, however—as, alas, is most probable—Mrs. Raymond is really dead, I do not wish your master to know anything of this, either now or at any time in the future. Can I trust you with so grave a secret?"

"You can, doctor, you can."

"Thank you," I answered. "I felt sure that your courage would rise to the occasion. Remember, too, that I am your master's friend as well as his medical adviser."

"Be you Dr. Halifax, sir?"

"Yes."

A look of relief passed over the man's face.

"That's all right, then," he said. "We all know what Mr. Raymond thinks of you, sir. I'll do anything you want me to do, Dr. Halifax, only it isn't necessary for me to see the poor missus too, sir?"

"Certainly not. I wish you to stand by that study door with your hand on the key. The moment you hear the least movement within, turn the key quietly in the lock. That is all. Whatever happens, under no emergency are you to utter a sound. Now this will be quickly over, and you can turn your back on me if you like."

I swept the many wreaths of white flowers aside, and began to unscrew the shell which contained the body. My great fear that the unfortunate girl might have been suffocated in her coffin was immediately relieved by the fact that the badly and hastily made shell was anything but air-proof—the lid did not fit—and although the white velvet covering gave the coffin a fairly respectable appearance, it was evidently the work of an unaccustomed hand. I quickly unscrewed it, and, lifting the lid, looked down at the fair face of the dead. Mrs. Raymond looked beautiful in her last sleep. Her hands were folded in conventional fashion on her



breast—her head drooped slightly to one side, her lips were parted, and there was a faint, a very faint, tinge of colour on her cheeks. I eagerly seized one of the hands, and felt for the pulse in the wrist. After a long time I fancied that I distinguished a throb. The hands were limp. There was no rigidity apparent anywhere.

“Merciful heavens!” I exclaimed, under my breath. “How could any but a madman have thought this sleeping girl dead?”

I took some strong smelling salts out of my pocket, and applied them to the nostrils. There was a very faint movement. That was enough.

“Jasper,” I said, speaking as steadily as I could, “come here.”

The man obeyed, shuddering and faltering. I went up to him and took his hands. I verily believe that tears were dimming my eyes.

“Thank God,” I muttered under my breath. Aloud I said: “There has been an awful mistake made—but I am in time to put it right. Now, Jasper, on your self-control at this moment everything depends. Mrs. Raymond **is not dead**; but we must get her out of her coffin before she comes to consciousness, or the shock may really kill her.”

The poor old man turned so white that I thought he would fall. I held the smelling salts to his nose.

“Keep up,” I said, “if you love your master. Think and wonder afterwards as much as you like. Just obey me now. Tell me, is there a bedroom quite ready to receive Mrs. Raymond?”

“Yes, sir; the room that has been newly got ready for my master and his bride. It is all fully prepared, fire burning there, and everything.”

“Is it a cheerful room?”

“Beautiful, doctor; furnished new by liberty.”

“That’s all right. Is there a woman of any kind in this house?”

“Of course, Dr. Halifax.”

“A woman with a head on her shoulders, I mean—someone who can act promptly and show self-control? “

“There’s Mrs. Adams, the housekeeper. Shall I fetch her?”

“If you think she won’t scream. If you think she will behave just as admirably as you are doing at the present moment, she can go into the bedroom and get it ready. Go to her as quickly as you can, Jasper, and bring me down a hot blanket. Now, be quick. We have not an instant to lose.”

My nerve inspired the old man. He rushed away eagerly, and I hovered in a fever of impatience between the study door and the open coffin. All

would be lost, indeed, if Raymond awoke now. He did not stir, however, and I owned to myself that my fears made me unduly anxious.

After a time, which seemed an eternity, Jasper returned with the blanket. I wrapped it tenderly round the sleeping girl's slender form, lifted her in my arms, and carried her upstairs. She was placed in a warm bed, restoratives of different kinds were immediately applied, and in about a quarter of an hour she opened her eyes and smiled at me. She recognised me immediately, and asked where she was.

"In bed," I said. "You are going to have this cup of beef-tea, and then you are to have another sleep. You have been ill, but are much better."

"I don't remember anything," she said, in a drowsy tone; "but I want Will. Where is he?"

"He shall come to you very soon; now go to sleep."

I sat by her until she fell into a gentle, natural slumber, then, motioning Mrs. Adams to take my place by her side, I went downstairs.

Jasper and Berring, whom he had summoned, were both standing by the open coffin. Both men looked dazed, as well they might. Jasper rubbed his hand several times across his eyes.

"Now, look here," I said to them both. "You are immediately to get rid of all that. Every trace of it must be taken away, flowers and all, and the hall restored to its normal condition. Do you hear me? This must be done before Mr. Raymond awakes, and what is more, as you value your master's life and reason, you two men are never to mention the subject of this night to him, or to anyone else in the place. I myself will see Mr. Herbert, the clergyman, in the morning, and you, Berring, can go round and stop all funeral proceedings immediately."

The men promised to do everything that I wished, and I spent the rest of the night between the two rooms where the husband and wife each slept unconscious of the other.

The grey dawn was breaking when Will opened his eyes. He stretched himself at first, looked round him drowsily, and stared at me in some astonishment.

"Why, Halifax, old man," he began.

Then memory returned to him. The poor fellow turned ghastly pale, and put his hand to his brow.

"I forgot for a moment," he began.

"What did you forget?" I answered, cheerfully. "Come up to your wife. She is rather tired after her journey, but is awake now, and has been asking for you incessantly for over an hour."

"But, Halifax, you forget—you must have taken leave of your senses—Maggie is dead—this is the day of her funeral."

"That is not the case, I answered, speaking on purpose in as matter-of-fact a tone as possible. "The state of things is this: Mrs. Raymond's death was assumed far too quickly. You behaved in a very extraordinary way when you allowed no doctor to see her. As matters turned out, she was only having a long sleep. I opened her coffin last night—for goodness' sake, keep quiet, man—don't excite yourself—it is all right—I opened her coffin, and found that she was beginning to awake. She is now in bed, doing well, taking nourishment, and asking for you."

Poor Raymond's face was a picture—he staggered for a moment, clutching my shoulder with a grip of iron, but presently he recovered himself. The news was too good not to restore his mental equilibrium.

"Now, look here," I said, "you are all right, and joy need never kill anyone; but remember that your wife knows nothing of this, and if you wish her to keep her reason, *she must never know*. Do you understand me?"

"Yes, yes, of course I do. But I am stunned. I can't take the thing in. Has my wife really got her reason back?"

"Perfectly."

"Then she doesn't dislike me now?"

"Good heavens, no—she's longing for you to go to her."

"My God, how can I thank Thee?" said poor Raymond. "Halifax, old man, let me pass."

"You are not to go to your wife in that state. Have a bath and a shave, change your things—go quietly into the room, sit by her side and talk common places. There is not the least hurry. She is very calm at the present moment, and you must on no account excite her."


"I'll do anything in the world you tell me, Halifax—how can I thank you?"

"By doing what I say."

— *Meade & Halifax* —

These things happened two years ago. Raymond and his wife are the happiest people of my acquaintance. Neither of them have shown a trace of insanity from that day to this, and Mrs. Raymond never knows, nor will, I think, anyone ever tell her, how she came home as a bride to "Raymond Towers."

## The Wrong Prescription

 am generally far too busy to leave Town for Christmas, but one December comes vividly now before my memory, when, feeling the need of change and partial rest, I was induced to spend a week with my friends, the Onslows, at their beautiful country seat in Hampshire.

The house was full of guests, several of whom I knew already. My host was an old college friend; his wife was a distant relation of my own. For the first day or two of my visit I almost forgot that I was a doctor, and enjoyed the merry season as thoroughly as the youngest present.

There were three guests in the house who from the very first aroused my strong interest. One of these was a bright-looking young fellow of the name of Oliver; the others were two young girls, one of eighteen, the other a child of ten.

The open secret quickly reached my ears that Oliver and Frances Wilton were engaged to be married. They were a devoted couple—at least, that was my first impression; I had reason afterwards to fancy that the devotion was mostly on the part of the lover, and that the young lady, beautiful as she was to look at, had that callous nature to which strong feeling was impossible.

Miss Wilton was a contrast to her little sister, who was a perfect whirlwind of impetuosity, high spirits, laughter, and noise. The little girl, whose name was Rosamond, was a favourite with everyone in the house, and as she happened to be the only child of the party, all kinds of liberties were permitted to her.

On the morning of my third day at Holmwood, I was strolling through the shrubberies after breakfast when I came face to face with my host, Jack Onslow, in earnest conversation with Captain Oliver.

“Look here,” said Jack, the moment he met me, “you are the very man I want. Here’s Oliver in a dreadful state of mind. I tell him he cannot do

better than consult you. You will quickly show him that he is merely suffering from an attack of the nerves."

"But you have noticed it yourself—confess that you have," said Oliver, turning and looking full at his host.

"Oh, I confess nothing," said Jack. "You had better confide in Halifax. Have a cigar, Halifax? Now I will leave you and Jim to have your conference together."

Whether Oliver would have confided in me at that moment I cannot say, but before I could accept Onslow's cigar or make any suitable reply, a shrill little voice was heard calling to us, and the next instant Rosamond Wilton, her hair streaming behind her and her eyes bright from excitement, rushed up.

"Jim, Jim," she exclaimed, addressing Oliver, "Frances wants you to do something for her. Oh, you needn't go to the house," as he was preparing to start off. "She wants you to go to the chemist at Market Lea at once. Take this note with you. The chemist will give you some medicine that you are to bring back. Please go at once, Jim."

"Is Frances ill?" asked Oliver.

"I don't know—I don't think she is quite well. Anyhow, she wants you to go at once—will you?"

"That I will, of course," said Oliver, his face brightening. "Tell her so, Rosamond."

Rosamond darted away, and I turned to the young man.

"I should like a walk," I said; "may I come with you?"

"With pleasure," he replied.

We started immediately, cutting across an open common as the nearest way to the little town.

When I saw Oliver talking to Onslow, he seemed undoubtedly depressed, but now he had recovered his usual spirits. He was a handsome young man of about five-and-twenty, with bright eyes, a resolute face, and an upright bearing. He was a captain in a crack regiment, and I understood that he was rich. I was at least ten years his senior. He represented the happy boy to me, and certainly gave me no hint of any possible cause for melancholy during our brisk walk.

We reached the chemist's. I waited outside while Oliver went in to execute his commission. After about a moment's absence he joined me, perturbation now very evident on his face.

"Look here, Dr. Halifax," he said, "I wonder if you can help me."

"With pleasure, if I can," I replied.

"Well, I wish you would come into the shop and speak to this stupid chemist. He refuses to give me the medicine which Miss Wilton has written for. He says he cannot supply it without a prescription, and that I must go back and get one. Frances evidently wants it very badly, and will be vexed at this delay. As you are a doctor, perhaps you can manage the matter."

I entered the shop immediately, and went up to the chemist. He was holding Miss Wilton's open letter in his hand.

"This gentleman is a doctor," said Oliver. "He'll make it all right. You had better let me have the medicine at once, as I know the lady wants it."

"Perhaps the doctor will write a prescription," said the chemist.

"I cannot do so, unless I know what is required," I said. "What medicine has Miss Wilton written for?"

"Are you her medical attendant, sir?"

"No."

"Then please pardon me, I am not permitted to tell you. This note is confidential."

As he spoke he tore it into several pieces and flung the fragments beneath the counter.

"I am sorry to disoblige," he said, "but the contents of Miss Wilton's note are strictly private. If you, sir, as a doctor will see the lady, I have no doubt everything will be put right."

"You did well not to betray a confidence," I said, briefly, to the man, and then I hurried Oliver out of the shop.

All his good humour and high spirits had left him. He showed more disturbance than I thought the occasion warranted.

"Don't be distressed," I said to him, soothingly. "If Miss Wilton will allow me, I'll see her as soon as ever we get back to Holmwood, and will supply her with a proper prescription for anything she may require. There is nothing to alarm yourself about in the chemist refusing to supply a certain medicine without a prescription. A chemist lays himself open to a large penalty if he does so. Miss Wilton is probably suffering from toothache, and has sent for Chloroform or something of that nature."

"Oh, it is not this alone," answered the poor fellow. "It's this and a hundred other things added on to it."

Here he paused and gave me a quick glance of interrogation. After a moment he said, with a certain reluctance: "Onslow says that you are awfully good-natured, Dr. Halifax."

"I should be a brute if I took up the medical profession and were not good-natured to people in trouble," I replied.

"Well, that's just what I am: I'm in an awful state of perplexity. Onslow laughs at me; but, then, he's not a doctor. I'm convinced this is a case for a medical man. May I state it to you?"

"I shall be delighted to give you any advice in my power," I replied.

"It isn't about myself. It's about Frances. You know, of course, that we are engaged to be married? You have seen her—I think you sat next her last evening at dinner. Do you mind giving me your candid opinion about her?"

"She is a very pretty girl," I replied.

"Oh, yes, yes—I don't mean her appearance. If you were asked about her—her health, mental and physical, what would you say?"

"Nothing; for I know nothing."

"I always thought doctors could see farther than most men," answered Oliver, almost with irritation. "I tell you what it is: Frances, to all intents and purposes, is a dead woman, a statue cut in marble. She can move, she can speak, she can look lovely, she can eat—a little, not much—but she can no more love, she can no more feel than if she were really the marble I have likened her to. We have been engaged for six months; I have been away for over four. When I parted with her last she was Rosamond grown up. Think of Rosamond with her fire, her overflowing spirits, her vivacity. Is Frances like Rosamond now?"

"No," I said. "I have noticed the two sisters and observed the great contrast between them. The little one has a great deal of colour and her eyes are bright. Miss Wilton is deadly pale, and pretty as her eyes are, their expression is dull."

"They usen't to have a dull expression," said Oliver. "Six months ago they had plenty of sparkle and life in them, and her cheeks were just like roses. But," continued the poor fellow, "it is not the physical change that cuts me to the heart, it's the—the absence of all life; all—all affection; all interest in me and everything else. We are to be married in two months' time; Frances has not the least idea of breaking off our engagement. There's not a scrap of the flirt about her; but I might as well make a bride of a doll, or a bit of marble, for all the real interest she takes."

"Was she excitable and affectionate when first you were engaged?" I inquired.

"Yes—yes—*rather*!" He coloured as he spoke.

"Did you ever ask her if she felt ill?"

"Often. She says that she is in perfect health; but, oh! the apathy in her eyes! Sometimes, Dr. Halifax, I am inclined to fear that her mind is deranged."

"I don't think there is the least occasion for you to alarm yourself on that score," I said. "Do you think Miss Wilton will see me as a medical man?"

"I am sure she won't. Nothing makes her so much annoyed as the faintest hint that she is not in perfect health."

"She cannot maintain the position that she is in perfect health when she sends you off in a hurry for a certain medicine to the chemist. Look here, Captain Oliver, I'll take it upon myself to see her as soon as ever I go home. You may trust me to respect your confidence, and if there is anything really wrong, I think I can soon discover it."

I had scarcely said these last words before the sound of hurrying feet caused us both to look up. Little Rosamond Wilton had come up the road to meet us.

"I came for the medicine," she panted. "Give it to me, Jim."

"Unfortunately, I haven't got it," said Oliver.

"Not got it? What will poor Frances do?"

"I am ever so sorry, but it is her own fault. She forgot to send the prescription."

"No, she didn't forget; she hadn't got the prescription. Collins has it. Oh, what an awful worry this is! What a stupid, stupid chemist! Frances wrote to him, and told him exactly what she wanted. He might have sent the medicine to her. Poor darling, she is nearly wild with misery now; and what will she do if there is any further delay? What a cruel chemist!"

"No, Rosamond, he is not cruel," I said. "The law forbids chemists to give certain drugs without proper prescriptions. The chemist could not have acted otherwise."

"Then Frances will die!" exclaimed the child, stamping her little foot on the ground, and tears filling her bright brown eyes. "Frances will die. She can't go on suffering like this, it is quite impossible. You don't know. You can't guess. It is dreadful!"

"I can soon put your sister right," I said, in a confident tone. "Take me to her immediately."

"You are a doctor, aren't you?" she inquired.

"Yes; the right person to see your sister if she is suffering."

"But she won't have any doctor except Collins."



"Who is Collins?"

"A nurse. She was with Frances once when she was ill. And now she always sends for her if she feels the least bit of anything the matter with her."

"Well," I said, after a pause, "we are wasting time. Your sister is in pain. Collins is not here, and I am. Take me to her immediately."

"Yes, Rosamond, do as you are told," said Oliver.

"She'll be angry; but I can't help it," murmured the child under her breath.

She took my hand, and we went quickly to the house.

In another moment I found myself in Miss Wilton's presence. I gave one glance at her face, and then told Rosamond to leave us. I knew what was the matter. The young girl was in the complete state of prostration caused by acute neurosthenia. Her respiration was hurried—she scarcely noticed me when I came into the room. She was lying on a sofa. I took her hand in mine and felt her pulse. It was beating one hundred and fifty times to the minute. Miss Wilton was very ill, and it was not difficult for me to ascertain the cause of this complete nervous prostration. I pushed up her sleeve and saw certain marks on her slightly wasted arm, which told me but too plainly that she was the victim of morphonism. The whole situation was now perfectly plain. Miss Wilton had suddenly come to the end of her supply of morphia, and was at present going through the awful storm of abstinence.

I thought for a moment, and then made up my mind that, whatever the future consequences, there was only one thing to be done at present. I went to the bell and rang it sharply.

A servant appeared in answer to my summons.

"Can you tell me if Mrs. Onslow is at home?" I asked.

"I don't know, sir; I'll inquire."

"If she is in any of the sitting-rooms or about the grounds, send a footman to ask her to come to me immediately, to Miss Wilton's room."

The servant withdrew, and in about ten minutes' time Mildred Onslow hastily appeared.

"What do you want with me?" she asked.

Then as her eyes fell on Miss Wilton's prostrate form, she uttered a startled exclamation.

"What is the matter with poor, dear Frances? How frightfully ill she looks!"

"She is very ill," I replied, "but I think I can soon relieve her. She is suffering from at most acute nervous attack, and I intend to inject a little morphia under the skin. That will quickly restore her to a more normal condition. Please stay with her, Mildred, while I fetch my bag of drugs and instruments."

I rushed away, fetched a bottle of morphia and a hypodermic syringe, and quickly injected a dose which contained one grain<sup>1</sup> of morphine.

The relief was almost instantaneous. Miss Wilton opened her eyes, gave a sigh of intense pleasure, and presently sat up. She was still bewildered, however, and scarcely recognised who were present.

"She is much better," I said to Mrs. Onslow, "but I should like her to keep very quiet for the rest of the day. Please send some soup or some other strong nourishment to her here. She will do best to stay in this room for to-day. Perhaps you will come and sit with her for a little in the afternoon. Now I want to have a short talk with my patient by herself."

When I said this I noticed an uneasy glance in Miss Wilton's eyes, which showed me how rapidly she was returning to a convalescent stage.

"Need Mildred go away?" she asked. "I am much better now. You must have given me something to relieve that horrible, horrible pain."

"Yes, I gave you a dose of morphia," I said.

"Ah, then, of course I am better," she remarked, with a sigh of relief.

"Yes," I said, "you may be able to have a nice sleep by-and-by, but there are one or two points I should like to talk over with you first. I shall not take up more than a moment or two of your time."

Mildred left the room, and Miss Wilton seated herself with her back to the light.

"I may as well state frankly," I said at once, "that when I came into the room just now, your condition filled me with alarm. You were terribly weak, your respiration was hurried, your pulse quick. You had symptoms also of spinal exhaustion. I came to tell you that Captain Oliver had failed to get the medicine which you sent for."

"Why failed?" she asked, in a quick, nervous voice.

"Because you had not sent a prescription. Chemists are forbidden by law to supply certain poisonous drugs without written instructions from a medical man. No such instructions accompanied your letter; therefore the medicine was not supplied."

"Did you go with Jim to see the chemist?"

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<sup>1</sup> 1 englisches Grain  $\approx$  64,79891 mg; umgekehrt entspricht 1 g 15,43236 englischen Grain.

"I walked with him to Market Lea."

"And the—the—" Miss Wilton half rose from her chair, "the chemist showed you my letter?"

"No, the chemist was quite faithful to the trust you reposed in him."

She sank back again on her seat, while an expression of intense relief swept over her young but worn face.

"Your little sister met us on our return home, and told us that you were in a state of suffering," I continued, "so I hastened to the rescue."

"You are very kind," she replied, "and you have relieved my suffering for the time."

She shuddered slightly as she spoke. She knew but too well how evanescent the small dose of morphia I had injected would be in its effects.

"It is tiresome about that prescription," she continued. "Nothing relieves me like that special medicine."

"Then you are subject to these attacks?"

"Occasionally." This word came out with great reluctance.

"Perhaps I could write you a prescription somewhat similar to the one you have lost?"

She looked at me with intense eagerness. Then her eyes fell.

"No, thank you," she said. "My medicine partakes of the nature of a—a quack medicine. It suits me better than anything else. I think I'll send for a nurse who has often been of use to me. Her name is Collins. I should like to telegraph for her. That can be managed, can it not?"

"Certainly," I answered; "where does she live?"

"In London."

"She cannot get to you before the evening," I answered. "And in the meantime you may have another attack. Of course, I am not prepared to say what causes them." Here I looked hard at her. She trembled and shrank from me. "I am not prepared to say what causes your attacks," I repeated; "but I have seen precisely similar ones occasioned by the abstinence from morphia in the victims of morphonism. A small dose of the poison invariably gives relief, as it did in your case. Only that it is quite impossible to imagine that you can be the victim of such a pernicious habit, I should say that you took morphia secretly."

"As if that were likely," she stammered; "I—I hope—I should not do anything wicked of that sort."

"It certainly is a very wicked habit," I replied, "and leads to the most disastrous results: the wreck of life in its fullest sense, the destruction of all the moral qualities. For instance, the morphia-maniac thinks nothing

of telling lies, however truthful he may have been before he became the victim of this habit. Well, I will leave you now, as you look inclined to sleep, and sleep will be beneficial to you. If you feel a return of the painful symptoms which prostrated you this morning, send for me, and I will inject a little more morphia."

"Oh, thank you," she answered, with a look of gratitude. And now she prepared to settle herself comfortably on the sofa.

"You won't forget to telegraph for Collins?" she said, as I was leaving the room.

"You must give me her address," I answered.

She supplied me with it, and I left her. I must confess that I felt much puzzled how to act. Miss Wilton was a morphia-maniac. Her flimsy half denial of the fact was but in keeping with her disease. Should I tell the truth to poor Oliver?

I thought over the circumstances of the case briefly, and then resolved to take Mildred Onslow into my confidence. I saw her alone immediately after lunch, and told her what I had discovered.

"How dreadful!" she exclaimed, when I had finished my short story. "It seems almost impossible to believe that Frances, of all people, could be addicted to such a vice, and yet you said you saw the marks on her arm?"

"I did, but even without that evidence all the other symptoms point to the same conclusion."

"But what can be her motive?" said Mildred. "Six months ago there could not have been a brighter, dearer girl in existence. She was so happy in her engagement too; in short, she was the very personification of perfect health, happiness, and all the graces which adorn young womanhood."

"You cannot say that she is the personification of these things now," I replied.

"No; she is much changed—Jim notices it—he is very unhappy. Oh, poor Frances! Is there any chance of her being cured?"

"Yes, if she will help herself. She is particularly weak, however. I seldom saw anyone as young so completely under the influence of the drug. I could not counsel complete abstinence from it at the present moment, and I intend to inject morphia again to-night. We have now, however, to decide immediately on two things: is the nurse Collins to be telegraphed for, and is Captain Oliver to be told?"

Before Mildred could reply, the door of the room where we were talking was abruptly opened and Oliver himself, looking perturbed and heated, came in.

"I saw you two talking through the window," he said, "and could not restrain my impatience. I know you are discussing Frances's condition, and perhaps you are intending to conceal some particulars from me. Now, I insist upon knowing the truth immediately."

Mildred coloured and hesitated.

"Dr. Halifax and I were just wondering whether we ought to send for a nurse of the name of Collins," she began.

"Collins," repeated Oliver, abruptly. He laughed in a somewhat harsh manner. "Rosamond and I telegraphed for Collins half an hour ago," he said. "What is the use of hesitating about a natural wish of that sort? I suppose a sick girl may be at liberty to send for the nurse she fancies?" "Certainly," I replied.

"And now I want the truth," he continued. "What is the matter with Frances?"

Before I could reply, Mildred came suddenly up to me. There was an imploring look on her face. She did not speak, however, and the next moment hastily left the room.

I looked at Oliver. He was startlingly white round his eyes and lips.

"You know what ails Miss Wilton," he began. "For God's sake, whatever it is, don't make a mystery of it. I can bear the truth, whatever it is. Is she dying?"

"Almost as bad," I murmured to myself.

Aloud I said, "Nothing of the sort. You want the truth, so you must have it. I warn you in advance that it is startling and painful. Miss Wilton is a confirmed morphia-maniac."

"Nonsense," said Oliver. He looked as if he would much like to knock me down. I walked to the window before I replied.

"I told you that the truth would be painful. That is it. That simple fact accounts for the change which you spoke to me of. I have seen such things before, but never, never, in one so young, so apparently healthy and happy. I had my suspicions even while you were speaking to me, but when I saw the young lady, all doubts were solved immediately."

"What were her symptoms?"

"Those which invariably arise when the unhappy victim is from any cause deprived of the accustomed stimulant. The larger the quantity of morphia taken, the greater is the distress when it is done without.

When I came to Miss Wilton, she was almost *in extremis*. This fact shows that she has been accustomed to injecting large doses."

"Injecting!"

"Yes, with a hypodermic syringe. There are many marks on her arm."

"Did you do anything for her relief?"

"Yes, the only thing. I gave her more morphia."

"Why?"

"I will tell you why presently. The thing immediately to decide on now is: what is to be done when this nurse arrives? I must say plainly I am sorry you telegraphed for her."

Oliver was about to reply when I interrupted him.

"I suspect the nurse," I continued, "but forewarned is forearmed. As soon as ever she comes, I shall have an interview with her, and tax her with what I feel is the truth. In the meantime, I shall consider Miss Wilton my patient, and as I have begun to prescribe for her will go on doing so. And now, Captain Oliver, your part is to look cheerful and to pretend to know nothing. I want you to go and sit with Miss Wilton for a short time this afternoon. If she confides in you, well and good. She may possibly do so, for she has had a good fright, I can assure you; but if she does not, you must treat her as if you knew nothing. Remember."

"Oh, yes, I'll remember," said Oliver. His face worked. I saw that he was struggling with emotion, and left him.

At six o'clock that evening Collins arrived. I saw her before she was admitted to Miss Wilton's presence; she was a thin, refined-looking woman, neatly dressed, and with an almost lady-like manner and appearance. Her face was sharp and pale; she had light, thin, auburn hair, and very pale-blue eyes with white eyelashes. I took a dislike to her on the spot.

"I wish to see you," I began, "to tell you I have discovered what ails Miss Wilton. She is a morphia-maniac of a most confirmed type."

The nurse started when I said this. I saw denial on her lips, but she quickly took her cue, and spoke in a deprecating tone.

"Ah!" she said, "that fact is no news to me. Poor dear! How often have I begged of her not to get under the influence of this pernicious drug."

"Your entreaties have been quite without effect," I replied. "I am glad, however, that you are fully awake to the danger Miss Wilton runs. The victims of morphonism go through many phases—Miss Wilton is rapidly approaching that of direct poisoning, and if the drug is freely administered now, she will undoubtedly *die*. I say this to warn you, on no

account whatever, to inject morphia. I am her medical man, and I will give it her myself when necessary. Have you a hypodermic syringe and morphia with you?"

My question was so direct that the woman coloured and stammered.

"I always carry these things about with me," she said, more truthfully than I expected. "No one can ever tell, in a profession like mine, when they may be required."

"That is quite true," I replied; "but under the present circumstances I should be glad if you would give both the morphia and the syringe to me. Thus, if your patient begs of you to administer the drug, it will be out of your power to yield to her entreaties."

She looked at me hard when I said this, and then, opening a hand-bag, she gave me a small bottle containing some of the dangerous fluid, and a little case which held the syringe.

After putting a few more questions, during which I elicited the information that Nurse Collins had been trained at Guy's Hospital, I took her myself to Miss Wilton's room.

There was no mistaking the look of relief which spread itself over the young girl's face when she saw her.

"Oh, nurse, you have come!" she exclaimed, and, tottering forward, she flung herself into the woman's arms.

I closed the door softly behind me. I felt more uneasy than I cared to own. It is true I had secured the syringe and the morphia, but the nurse might find means of supplying herself with more morphia, and, of course, Frances must have a syringe of her own.

I had administered my first dose of morphia to Miss Wilton at noon. As I expected, she sent for me to ask for another injection between four and five. This was shortly before the nurse arrived. If Nurse Collins had really no morphia in her possession, my services would be probably required between ten and eleven that night. I little guessed, however, what was really to occur.

A large party of friends were coming to dine at Holmwood that evening. The dinner was to be followed by a dance, to which all the young people of the neighbourhood were invited. I, as one of the guests staying in the house, had, of course, to be present. I held myself in readiness, however, to go to my patient whenever the summons came.

Little Rosamond had begged hard to be allowed to sit up for the dance.

"I don't want to stay with Frances now that horrid Collins has come," was her frank remark.

Miss Rosamond was sufficiently spoiled to have her way, and Jim in particular took her under his special patronage.

I was standing near one of the doorways watching these two as they threaded the giddy mazes of the waltz. I was inwardly feeling a good deal of uneasiness at not being summoned to Miss Wilton, for the hour was now long past that when she ought to require a fresh dose of her stimulant, when I was suddenly attracted by a look of astonishment on Rosamond's bright face. She was gazing past me towards another door further down the ball-room.

I turned in the direction of her glance, and saw to my amazement Frances, beautifully dressed, the flash of diamonds in her hair and round her white throat, advancing into the room.

I went up to her at once. She looked slightly, but only slightly, annoyed when she saw me.

"I'm all right now," she said, in a cheerful tone. "I have quite recovered. I told you, Dr. Halifax, that I only needed my own special quack medicine and Collins's aid to restore me."

I could scarcely reply to her. She swept past me to speak to an acquaintance. She looked brilliant, and was unquestionably the most beautiful girl in the room. Her fine dark eyes, generally so dull in expression, were now bright and sparkling. There was not the least doubt that she was under the influence of a powerful dose of the poison.

I hastily left the ball-room and went upstairs to find Nurse Collins.

She was not in Miss Wilton's sitting-room. I rang a bell, and asked the servant to send her to me.

"Do you mean the nurse from London, sir?" inquired the maid. "She isn't here. Miss Wilton ordered a carriage for her, and she went away about an hour ago."

I felt too astonished to speak for a moment.

"I was not aware of this," I said, after a pause.

I quickly returned to the ball-room.

Frances was now dancing with Oliver, who looked in the highest spirits, and Rosamond ran up to my side.

"Do waltz with me, Dr. Halifax," she asked.

I took her little hand and led her into the midst of the dancers.

As we were revolving round and round, I asked her a few questions.

"Do you know, Rosamond, that your *bête noir*, Collins, has gone?"



"No," she replied, in a tone that did not express much surprise. "But she doesn't often stay long. I suppose she has filled up all Frances's bottles with the quack medicine."

"But that quack medicine is very bad for your sister."

"I don't think so. She can't live without it. Doesn't she look lovely? Isn't she a beautiful girl?"

"Yes," I replied, briefly.

"And don't her diamonds flash? Don't you love diamonds, Dr. Halifax?"

"Yes, but not on such young girls as your sister."

"Frances always likes to wear diamonds; she doesn't mind whether her taste is peculiar or not. Let's come a little nearer to her, I want to be sure of something. Yes, just as I thought. She hasn't on her pendant. I suppose that has gone now."

"What do you mean, Rosamond?"

"Oh, nothing, nothing at all. I shouldn't have said it. I'm tired of dancing ... I'd like to go to bed ... Please let us stop ... Goodnight, Dr. Halifax. Good-night."

She rushed away before I could question her by another word.

Miss Wilton was the life and soul of the ball-room. The gay party did not break up until the early morning, and it was late the next day when the visitors who were staying at Holmwood met again round the breakfast-table.

As soon as ever I appeared, I was greeted with an extraordinary piece of information. Frances Wilton and her sister had left Holmwood by an early train.

This was simply stated with little or no comment at the breakfast table, but immediately afterwards my host and hostess took me aside. Mildred put a small note into my hand.

"Read it," she said, "and try and solve the mystery, if you can."

The note was from Rosamond, a childish production, and very short.

*"Dear Dr. Halifax," she wrote, "I'm awfully unhappy, so I must just send you this letter. Frances has quarrelled with Collins, who won't do what she wants. We are both going away, and no one is to know where we are going to. I don't know myself, so I can't tell you. Frances says that you are a horrid man; she says you have accused her of doing dreadful, wicked things. I don't believe you are a horrid man. I like you very much, and I am very unhappy about going away.—Rosamond."*

After reading the little note I gave it to Mildred. She glanced her eyes quickly over it, then threw it, with a gesture of despair, on the table.

"Now, what is to be done?" she exclaimed. "Frances and Rosamond have disappeared. No one knows where they have gone. Frances was very ill yesterday. If what you say is true, it is extremely unsafe for her to be left to her own devices."

"It is more than unsafe," I replied. "Miss Wilton is in a condition when she ought not to be left for a single moment without a responsible person to look after her. Surely it can't be difficult to trace the sisters? Surely they can be followed at once?"

"Of course they can," said Onslow. "You always go to the fair about things, my love," he continued, turning to his wife. "A pair of children like Frances and Rosamond cannot lose themselves in these nineteenth century days. We can soon track them, and if we have a doctor's authority for taking such a step, it shall be done immediately."

"Ought not Oliver to be consulted?" I said.

"I'll go and fetch him," said Onslow.

He left the room and returned in a few moments, accompanied by Jim Oliver. The young soldier was quite alive to the difficulties of our position. The nervous distress, which yesterday so completely overpowered him, had now vanished.

He was intensely anxious, but he did not show undue agitation. We had a brief consultation, and then it was arranged that I should go back immediately to London and try to learn everything there was to be known about Nurse Collins. I had elicited one apparent fact from her yesterday, viz., that she had been trained as a nurse at Guy's Hospital. Accordingly, on the afternoon of that same day, I went to the hospital and set inquiries on foot with regard to her. The books were searched, and it was soon abundantly proved that no nurse of the name of Collins had ever been trained at that hospital.

"Then," I exclaimed, "the woman is not even a medical nurse. If she is really still with that poor girl, her wretched victim may be dead before we can rescue her."

The matron to whom I was speaking became interested, and presently asked me to describe the supposed nurse's appearance.

I did so, minutely.

"Light auburn hair," quoted the matron, "very light blue eyes and white eyelashes—a thin face. How old should you say the woman was, Dr. Halifax?"

"From five-and-twenty to thirty," I replied.

"About the middle height?",

"Yes, a slight person."

"Did she walk with the faintest suspicion of a limp—so very slight that it might be passed over without comment?"

Now it so happened that Nurse Collins did walk with a sort of swing, which had arrested my attention when I took her to my patient the evening before.

"I could scarcely call it a limp," I said, "but it is certainly true that the nurse's walk was a little peculiar."

"Then I know who she is," said the matron; "that description could scarcely fit two people. She was trained here, but not under the name of Collins. See—I will show you her name in the book. Nurse Cray—twenty-three years of age—auburn hair, light blue eyes, very slight limp. That nurse, Dr. Halifax, stayed with us exactly a year. She was an admirable and clever nurse. She left at the end of that time under peculiar circumstances."

"Do you mind telling me what they were?"

The matron hesitated.

"I don't wish to injure anyone," she said, after a pause; "but in this case it is right for you to have all possible information. Nurse Cray left here on suspicion of theft. A large sum of money had been left in her charge by a lady patient. This is quite an exceptional thing to do. When the lady was leaving, the money was not forthcoming. Nurse declared it had been stolen from her. The lady was not willing to prosecute, and the matter was dropped. But Cray left the next week, and we have not heard anything of her since. I believe her to be a dangerous woman, and I should be sorry to have any girl in her power."

This information I imparted in due course to my friends at Holmwood. In the meantime Onslow and Captain Oliver were leaving not a stone unturned to trace the two girls. The end of the second day arrived, however, without our having obtained the slightest clue to their whereabouts.

Poor Oliver was nearly wild with anxiety, and my own fears were very grave. I could not get Frances Wilton's face out of my mind. I saw it in my mind's eye, wherever I turned, or whatever I did. I wondered what the wretched girl's ultimate fate would be. There was little doubt that she was quickly reaching that stage when direct morphia poisoning begins. If she were really still in Collins's power, her days on earth were numbered.

Sitting by my fireside on the evening of the second day I thought of her with increased uneasiness. It was almost impossible to believe that two rather remarkable looking girls like Frances and Rosamond could disappear as it were bodily from the earth. Onslow and Oliver were both clever and keen-sighted men. We were employing the best private detective we knew to assist us, and yet up to the present we had not got the slightest clue to the whereabouts of the girls. I felt so anxious as I pondered over these things that I felt inclined to run down to Holmwood by the last train that evening. Before this thought, however, had taken the form of a resolution, there came a ring to my hall door, and the next moment my servant told me that a woman was waiting to see me.

"What is her name?" I asked.

"She refuses to give it, sir," replied the man. "She says she will not keep you long, but she earnestly begs of you to let her see you without delay."

"Show her into the consulting-room," I said.

I went there a moment later, and to my amazement found myself face to face with Nurse Collins.

"Now, what do you want?" I said in a stern voice, which could scarcely conceal my inward rejoicing.

"To confess—to confess," she said, in a broken, highly-strung, nervous tone. "Oh, Dr. Halifax, I have only just made the discovery. Pray do not lose a moment in going to Miss Wilton. If you see her at once there is just a possibility of her being saved."

"What is the matter?" I asked. "Tell me your story briefly."

"Oh, it is this," she exclaimed, clasping and unclasping her thin hands. "Poor, poor young lady, I have given her the wrong prescription! I only found this out an hour ago."

"Sit down," I said. "You must tell me the whole story in as few words as you can."

"I don't want to be a murderer," she began. "I—I draw the line at that. I—I don't mind most things, but I draw the line at murder."

"You will be a murderer," I said, "unless you can collect your thoughts sufficiently to tell me at once what is the matter."

"And you will use your knowledge against me, sir?"

"That I cannot say."

"Well, I don't much care whether you do or not," she continued. "If only Miss Wilton's life is saved, nothing else matters. This is my story. I was called in to nurse Miss Wilton six months ago. She was suffering very

terribly at the time from the effects of a feverish attack. Her nerves were much disordered; she was sleepless, and she used to undergo agonies of pain from neuralgia. Dr. Johnson, of Queen Anne's Street, was attending her. He prescribed small doses of morphia, which I was to inject in the usual way with a hypodermic syringe. The morphia gave her both relief and pleasure. By-and-by she got stronger, the pain disappeared, and Dr. Johnson ordered me to cease administering the morphia. I think I should have done so, but for Miss Wilton herself. She had already acquired a certain liking for the drug, she could not sleep well without it, and she begged me very hard to repeat the doses. I refused. She said she would pay me if I gave her relief. I was in debt, and I wanted money badly. I do not pretend to be scrupulous, and I quickly yielded to temptation, I stayed on with Miss Wilton: I repeated the morphia doses, and in an incredibly short space of time, I had her in my power. She could not live without the drug, and was willing to pay me anything to obtain it. She had plenty of money, and was the possessor of many valuable jewels. One by one these jewels were handed over to me in exchange for morphia. I was obliged to leave her at last, but I supplied her with a syringe and a couple of bottles of the medicine; I also gave her minute directions how much to inject at a time. When she sent for me three days ago, her supply had unexpectedly run out. I obeyed her summons at once, and would have remained with her, but for my interview with you. You frightened me with regard to her state; I saw that you suspected me. If it were known that I had played thus, almost with the life of a patient, I should have been ruined. I did not dare to run the risk of discovery. I injected as large a dose of morphia as I could with safety into my patient's arm, and then told her that I must leave her. Before I went away I gave her a small supply of morphia, enough to last her for a day. I also gave her, or thought I did, the prescription which Dr. Johnson had given me for her six months ago. She paid me, of course, for my services. I helped her to dress for the ball, and then I left."

"Miss Wilton paid you with her diamond pendant," I interrupted.

The nurse's eyes flashed an angry, frightened fire.

"How can you tell?" she exclaimed.

"No matter—proceed, please."

"I have not much more to tell," continued Nurse Collins; "my story is nearly over. I have only now to reveal to you my awful discovery. An hour ago, I was looking through some prescriptions, when I suddenly discovered that I had not given Miss Wilton the one which contained

morphia. On the contrary, I had given her another prescription, which in her case would probably lead to fatal results.”

“What was in it?” I asked.

“Strychnine, Dr. Halifax. Strychnine in a form for hypodermic injection. This prescription had been given to me a year ago by a physician for a male patient who was suffering from paralysis. Now, sir, you know why I apply to you. Don’t mind me. I promise not to hide if I’m wanted. Go at once to Miss Wilton. She may not have been able to have the prescription made up. Go to her and save her.”

“Where am I to go?” I asked.

“What do you mean?” she answered. “Go to Holmwood, of course. It’s my only comfort to know that Miss Wilton is in a country place, where medicines are not easily obtainable.”

“She is not there,” I replied. “She left Holmwood, with her little sister, the morning after you left. We have been two days moving Heaven and earth to find her, but in vain. Nurse Collins,” I continued, “if anyone knows where Miss Wilton is hiding, you must be that person. Tell me at once, or I shall have you arrested.”

“You needn’t threaten me with *that*,” she answered, stepping back in some scorn; “I would tell you only too gladly if I knew, but I don’t. Oh, merciful God! I don’t know where the wretched girl is. If she is not found she will die. Oh, if her death is laid to my door I shall go mad!”

I saw the woman was becoming hysterical, and was about to quiet her in as peremptory a manner as I could, when the consulting-room door was suddenly and noiselessly opened—there came the quick patter of young feet across the carpet, and Rosamond Wilton rushed to my side and clasped one of my hands in both of hers.

“Come at once!” she said, excitedly. “Frances says I may bring you. Don’t delay a second. Never mind *her*,” with a look of anger in the direction where the woman was standing. “Come, Dr. Halifax, come. Oh, she’s not dead, but she’s very nearly dead. Do come and save her.”

“Where are you staying?” I asked.

“At the ›Métropole.‹ Oh, we’ve been there all the time. Frances said it was safest of all to go to a great big hotel like that. She wouldn’t let me tell you until to-day, and now she craves for nothing so much in all the world as for you to come to her. Do, do come at once!”

“Of course I will,” I replied. “Sit down, Rosamond. You are a very good child to have come for me. Nurse Collins, you can go now. I do not wish you to have anything further to do with my patient.”

“For God’s sake, sir, save her life!”

The wretched woman fell on her knees.

"Get up," I said, in some disgust; "you don't suppose I need your entreaties to make me do my utmost for this unfortunate girl. Now Rosamond, come."

I rang the bell as I passed, and desired my servant to show the nurse out. Then Rosamond and I got into a hansom, and in a few minutes we arrived at the Métropole. We went up in the lift to the third story, where Frances's luxurious bedroom was.

"Here he is, Frances," said little Rosamond, in her bright tones, pulling my hand as she entered the room. "He's come, Frances; now you'll be all right."

I looked at the patient, who was lying perfectly still on the bed, and then motioned to the child to leave us. She turned away with a little sob in her throat, and a look of dog-like entreaty to me in her pretty eyes.

"Dear little mite," I said to myself, "I will do all that man can do to help her." I went up to the bed and began to make a careful examination of the patient. When last I saw Miss Wilton, she was brilliant in her ball-dress. Her eyes were bright, as bright as the jewels that flashed in her hair and round her neck. Now she was in so complete a state of collapse that I could scarcely have recognised her as the same girl. Her face was so worn and thin, that for the time it had lost all its youth and comeliness. Her long hands lay motionless on the coverlet. Her sunken eyes were closed. She was scarcely breathing, and looked almost like a dead woman of forty. I bent over her and tried to rouse her. It was more than evident that she had done without morphia now for several hours. She was in a state of acute nervous disturbance—in short, she was completely prostrated. My first business was to rouse her. I put my hand under her head and raised her up. To my relief she opened her eyes and gave a perceptible start of pleasure when she saw me.

"**You** can save me," she said, in a weak and very thin voice. "You know what is the matter. You know what I've done. You said it the other day."

"You are a morphia-maniac," I said.

"Yes, yes—I don't care who knows now."

She suddenly pressed her hands to both her sides, and began to roll about in anguish.

"I am cramped, I am dying," she gasped.

I watched her until the paroxysm of pain was over, then I began to question her.

"Why did you send for me?"

"Because I am dying."

"Have you been taking much morphia?"

"Oh, yes, a good deal. I had a prescription. It was made up, and I injected the quantity which always gave me relief. Dr. Halifax, an awful thing has happened: the morphia no longer relieves me; it—it fills me with **horror**, with sickness, and cramp. I am in agonies. I dare not take any more. Each dose makes me worse."

Again she pressed her hands to her sides and writhed in torture.

I walked to the table, hoping to find the prescription. It was not there. Miss Wilton was past speaking now. I went to the door of the bedroom and called Rosamond.

"I want the prescription," I said, "of your sister's last medicine. You went out to have it made up, did you not?"

"I did—here it is. Is Frances very ill?"

"She is ill. How often has she injected this medicine?"

"Oh, several times last night, but scarcely at all to-day. She says it makes her worse, much worse. She is afraid of it. She has been in awful pain all day, and at last she called to me to fetch you. Can you—can you save her?"

"Oh, yes, dear, I hope so," I replied.

I went back to the room and studied the prescription. Then I gave a sudden start of pleasure. It was a prescription for strychnine, certainly, but it could not have been the one which Nurse Collins imagined she had given Miss Wilton. The doses ordered to be injected were too small to cause death, although they would doubtless, if administered frequently, give rise to disagreeable and painful sensations. I thought hard for a moment, and then a sudden idea occurred to me. I went back to my patient and carefully noted every symptom. She had been now quite twenty-four hours without morphia; she had therefore arrived at the very height of that terrible time when the abstinence storm is worst. Every fibre, every cell in her body ought now to be crying out for its accustomed solace. The functions of the brain ought to be exhausted. Her respiration ought to be terribly hurried; her pulse almost past counting. She was ill, and in frightful suffering, without a doubt; she was also in a state of extreme prostration, but her pulse was fairly steady and was not beating more than a hundred and twenty times to the minute. When I had examined her at Holmwood two days ago, after a very much shorter period of abstinence, her pulse had beat a hundred and fifty times to the minute. The idea therefore which occurred to me was this: Nurse Collins, without the least intending it, had found



*a cure for my patient.* If I went on administering the strychnine in very small quantities, it would undoubtedly act as a tonic, ward off the extreme weakness of the heart, which was to be dreaded, and in short enable Miss Wilton to weather the awful abstinence storm. I did not take long in making up my mind, then going into the next room, rang the electric bell. A servant answered my summons, to whom I gave a note desiring it to be sent to its destination by a special messenger without a moment's loss of time.

In consequence of this note, an hour later, a staid and respectable nurse, in whom I had every confidence, was installed in Miss Wilton's room. I gave her a brief history of the case and took her into my confidence with regard to treatment.

"I mean to continue the strychnine," I said, "and I wish the patient to be under the impression that she is still having morphia injections. Her nerves will then be less strained than if she thinks she is doing without her accustomed sedative, and the chances of cure will be greater."

The nurse promised to obey all my directions implicitly. She was to inject minute doses of the strychnine at certain intervals, and was also to feed up the patient with milk, strong chicken broth, and champagne. I then went out and telegraphed to Onslow and Oliver, and finally returned to spend the night with my patient.

I shall never forget the fortnight which followed. Notwithstanding the strength which the carefully injected doses of strychnine gave the poor girl, her sufferings were terrible. I shall not quickly forget the look of despair in her eyes nor the agonized expression on her young face. I knew she was going through agonies of torture. The first five days were the worst, then gradually and slowly there came longer and longer intervals of comparative relief, until at last there arrived an hour when I had the pleasure of seeing Miss Wilton fall into a long and perfectly natural sleep.

When she awoke, refreshed and calm, and with an altogether new look on her face, I was standing by her bedside.

"Oh, I am better," she said, with a sigh. "I have had a heavenly sleep. How thankful I am that the morphia is beginning to take effect again."

"How do you know that morphia produced that sleep?" I asked.

"How can I doubt it?" she replied. "Nurse injected some into my arm just before I dropped off to sleep."

I looked at the nurse, who smiled and turned away. I motioned to her to leave the room. I thought the time had come when I might tell Frances Wilton something.

"You are wonderfully better," I said, sitting down by her. "I have every reason to believe that you will soon be perfectly well."

"You have great faith," she answered, with a blush and something like tears in her eyes; "but what is the use of holding out hope to me? I can never do without morphia. I am its slave. I shall try and take it in smaller quantities in the future, but I can never do without it as long as I live. The agonies I suffered during the fortnight when it ceased to have any effect, can only be understood by those who have gone through them. Dr. Halifax, I must confess the truth; I cannot live without morphia."

"Think of your lover, Miss Wilton," I said. "Think what this means to Captain Oliver."

"I do think of him," she replied. "For his sake I would do much. But I can't break myself of this awful habit even for him. It is useless for me to try—I am too weak."

"Not a bit of it," I said. "Now listen to me. I have some good news for you."

"What is that? What good news can there possibly be for so miserable and wicked a girl?"

"You think the refreshing sleep you have just enjoyed was due to the injection of morphia?"

"Of course it was—nurse injected it."

"She did nothing of the kind—she injected water with a very little strychnine."


"Strychnine! What do you mean?"

"What I say, Miss Wilton. You may rejoice, for you have already conquered that miserable habit. It is a whole fortnight now since any morphia was injected. What you thought was morphia was strychnine injected in very minute quantities, to act as a tonic. You have, indeed, gone through a frightful time; but the worst is over, has been over for days. That refreshing and natural sleep proves you to be not only convalescent, but in short—**cured!**"

"May we come in?" said a cheerful voice at the door.

"Yes, certainly," I answered, and Mrs. Onslow and Oliver entered the room. I saw Frances Wilton sit up and look rapturously at her lover. I noted the light of love and hope in her eyes.

## The Horror of Studley Grange

 was in my consulting-room one morning, and had just said good-bye to the last of my patients, when my servant came in and told me that a lady had called who pressed very earnestly for an interview with me.

“I told her that you were just going out, sir,” said the man, “and she saw the carriage at the door; but she begged to see you, if only for two minutes. This is her card.”

I read the words, “Lady Studley”.

“Show her in,” I said, hastily, and the next moment a tall, slightly-made, fair-haired girl entered the room.

She looked very young, scarcely more than twenty, and I could hardly believe that she was, what her card indicated, a married woman.

The colour rushed into her cheeks as she held out her hand to me. I motioned her to a chair, and then asked her what I could do for her.

“Oh, you can help me,” she said, clasping her hands and speaking in a slightly theatrical manner. “My husband, Sir Henry Studley, is very unwell, and I want you to come to see him—can you?—will you?”

“With pleasure,” I replied. “Where do you live?”

“At Studley Grange, in Wiltshire. Don’t you know our place?”

“I dare say I ought to know it,” I replied, “although at the present moment I can’t recall the name. You want me to come to see your husband. I presume you wish me to have a consultation with his medical attendant?”

“No, no, not at all. The fact is, Sir Henry has not got a medical attendant. He dislikes doctors, and won’t see one. I want you to come and stay with us for a week or so. I have heard of you through mutual friends—the Onslows. I know you can effect remarkable cures, and you have a great deal of tact. But you can’t possibly do anything for my husband unless you are willing to stay in the house and to notice his symptoms.”

Lady Studley spoke with great emphasis and earnestness. Her long, slender hands were clasped tightly together. She had drawn off her gloves and was bending forward in her Chair. Her big, childish, and somewhat restless blue eyes were fixed imploringly on my face.

"I love my husband," she said, tears suddenly filling them—"and it is dreadful, dreadful, to see him suffer as he does. He will die unless someone comes to his aid. Oh, I know I am asking an immense thing, when I beg of you to leave all your patients and come to the country. But we can pay. Money is no object whatever to us. We can, we will, gladly pay you for your services."

"I must think the matter over," I said. "You flatter me by wishing for me, and by believing that I can render you assistance, but I cannot take a step of this kind in a hurry. I will write to you by to-night's post if you will give me your address. In the meantime, kindly tell me some of the symptoms of Sir Henry's malady."

"I fear it is a malady of the mind," she answered immediately, "but it is of so vivid and so startling a character, that unless relief is soon obtained, the body must give way under the strain. You see that I am very young, Dr. Halifax. Perhaps I look younger than I am—my age is twenty-two. My husband is twenty years my senior. He would, however, be considered by most people still a young man. He is a great scholar, and has always had more or less the habits of a recluse. He is fond of living in his library, and likes nothing better than to be surrounded by books of all sorts. Every modern book worth reading is forwarded to him by its publisher. He is a very interesting man and a brilliant conversationalist. Perhaps I ought to put all this in the past tense, for now he scarcely ever speaks—he reads next to nothing—it is difficult to persuade him to eat—he will not leave the house—he used to have a rather ruddy complexion—he is now deadly pale and terribly emaciated. He sighs in the most heart-rending manner, and seems to be in a state of extreme nervous tension. In short, he is very ill, and yet he seems to have no bodily disease. His eyes have a terribly startled expression in them—his hand trembles so that he can scarcely raise a cup of tea to his lips. In short, he looks like a man who has seen a ghost."

"When did these symptoms begin to appear?" I asked.

"It is mid-winter now," said Lady Studley. "The queer symptoms began to show themselves in my husband in October. They have been growing worse and worse. In short, I can stand them no longer," she continued, giving way to a short, hysterical sob. "I felt I must come to someone—I have heard of you. Do, do come and save us. Do come and find out

what is the matter with my wretched husband.”

“I will write to you to-night,” I said, in as kind a voice as I could muster, for the pretty, anxious wife interested me already. “It may not be possible for me to stay at Studley Grange for a week, but in any case I can promise to come and see the patient. One visit will probably be sufficient—what your husband wants is, no doubt, complete change.”

“Oh, yes, yes,” she replied, standing up now. “I have said so scores of times, but Sir Henry won’t stir from Studley—nothing will induce him to go away. He won’t even leave his own special bedroom, although I expect he has dreadful nights.” Two hectic spots burnt in her cheeks as she spoke. I looked at her attentively.

“You will forgive me for speaking,” I said, “but you do not look at all well yourself. I should like to prescribe for you as well as your husband.”

“Thank you,” she answered, “I am not very strong. I never have been, but that is nothing—I mean that my health is not a thing of consequence at present. Well, I must not take up any more of your time. I shall expect to get a letter from you to-morrow morning. Please address it to Lady Studley, Grosvenor Hotel, Victoria.”

She touched my hand with fingers that burnt like a living coal and left the room.

I thought her very ill, and was sure that if I could see my way to spending a week at Studley Grange, I should have two patients instead of one. It is always difficult for a busy doctor to leave home, but after carefully thinking matters over, I resolved to comply with Lady Studley’s request. Accordingly, two days later saw me on my way to Wiltshire, and to Studley Grange. A brougham with two smart horses was waiting at the station. To my surprise I saw that Lady Studley had come herself to fetch me.

“I don’t know how to thank you,” she said, giving me a feverish clasp of her hand. “Your visit fills me with hope—I believe that you will discover what is really wrong. Home!” she said, giving a quick, imperious direction to the footman who appeared at the window of the carriage.

We bowled forward at a rapid pace, and she continued: “I came to meet you to-day to tell you that I have used a little guile with regard to your visit. I have not told Sir Henry that you are coming here in the capacity of a doctor.”

Here she paused and gave me one of her restless glances.

“Do you mind?” she asked.

“What have you said about me to Sir Henry?” I inquired.

"That you are a great friend of the Onslows, and that I have asked you here for a week's change," she answered immediately. "As a guest my husband will be polite and delightful to you—as a doctor, he would treat you with scant civility, and would probably give you little or none of his confidence."

I was quite silent for a moment after Lady Studley had told me this. Then I said: "Had I known that I was not to come to your house in the capacity of a medical man, I might have re-considered my earnest desire to help you."

She turned very pale when I said this, and tears filled her eyes.

"Never mind," I said now, for I could not but be touched by her extremely pathetic and suffering face, by the look of great illness which was manifested in every glance. "Never mind now; I am glad you have told me exactly the terms on which you wish me to approach your husband; but I think that I can so put matters to Sir Henry that he will be glad to consult me in my medical capacity."

"Oh, but he does not even know that I suspect his illness. It would never do for him to know. I suspect! I see! I fear! but I say nothing. Sir Henry would be much more miserable than he is now, if he thought that I guessed that there is anything wrong with him."

"It is impossible for me to come to the Grunge except as a medical man," I answered, firmly. "I will tell Sir Henry that you have seen some changes in him, and have asked me to visit him as a doctor. Please trust me. Nothing will be said to your husband that can make matters at all uncomfortable for you."

Lady Studley did not venture any further remonstrance, and we now approached the old Grange. It was an irregular pile, built evidently according to the wants of the different families who had lived in it. The building was long and rambling, with rows of windows filled up with panes of latticed glass. In front of the house was a sweeping lawn, which, even at this time of the year, presented a velvety and well-kept appearance. We drove rapidly round to the entrance door, and a moment later I found myself in the presence of my host and patient. Sir Henry Studley was a tall man with a very slight stoop, and an aquiline and rather noble face. His eyes were dark, and his forehead inclined to be bald. There was a courtly, old-world sort of look about him. He greeted me with extreme friendliness, and we went into the hall, a very large and lofty apartment, to tea.

Lady Studley was vivacious and likely in the extreme. While she talked, the hectic spots came out again on her cheeks. My uneasiness about her

increased as I noticed these symptoms. I felt certain that she was not only consumptive, but in all probability she was even now the victim of an advanced stage of phthisis<sup>2</sup>. I felt far more anxious about her than about her husband, who appeared to me at that moment to be nothing more than a somewhat nervous and hypochondrical person. This state of things seemed easy to account for in a scholar and a man of sedentary habits.

I remarked about the age of the house, and my host became interested, and told me one or two stories of the old inhabitants of the Grange. He said that to-morrow he would have much pleasure in taking me over the building.

"Have you a ghost here?" I asked, with a laugh.

I don't know what prompted me to ask the question. The moment I did so, Sir Henry turned white to his lips, and Lady Studley held up a warning finger to me to intimate that I was on dangerous ground. I felt that I was, and hastened to divert the conversation into safer channels. Inadvertently I had touched on a sore spot. I scarcely regretted having done so, as the flash in the baronet's troubled eyes, and the extreme agitation of his face, showed me plainly that Lady Studley was right when she spoke of his nerves being in a very irritable condition. Of course, I did not believe in ghosts, and wonclered that a man of Sir Henry's calibre could be at all under the influence of this old-world fear.

"I am sorry that we have no one to meet you," he said, after a few remarks of a common-place character had divided us from the ghost question. "But to-morrow several friends are coming, and we hope you will have a pleasant time. Are you fond of hunting?"

I answered that I used to be in the old days, before medicine and patients occupied all my thoughts.

"If this open weather continues, I can probably give you some of your favourite pastime," rejoined Sir Henry; "and now perhaps you would like to be shown to your room."

My bedroom was in a modern wing of the house. and looked as cheerful and as unghostlike as it was possible for a room to be. I did not rejoin my host and hostess until dinner-time. We had a sociable little meal, at which nothing of any importance occurred, and shortly after the servants withdrew, Lady Studley left Sir Henry and me to ourselves. She gave me another warning glance as she left the room. I had already

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<sup>2</sup> Tuberkulose.

quite made up my mind, however, to tell Sir Henry the motive of my visit.

The moment the door closed behind his wife, he started up and asked me if I would mind coming with him into his library.

"The fact is," he said, "I am particularly glad you have come down. I want to have a talk with you about my wife. She is extremely unwell."

I signified my willingness to listen to anything Sir Henry might say, and in a few minutes we found ourselves comfortably established in a splendid old room, completely clothed with books from ceiling to floor.

"These are my treasures," said the baronet, waving his hand in the direction of an old bookcase, which contained, I saw at a glance, some very rare and precious first editions.

"These are my friends, the companions of my hours of solitude. Now sit down, Dr. Halifax; make yourself at home. You have come here as a guest, but I have heard of you before, and am inclined to confide in you. I must frankly say that I hate your profession as a rule. I can't believe in the omniscience of medical men, but moments come in the lives of all men when it is necessary to unburden the mind to another. May I give you my confidence?"

"One moment first," I said. "I can't deceive you, Sir Henry. I have come here, not in the capacity of a guest, but as your wife's medical man. She has been anxious about you, and she begged of me to come and stay here for a few days in order to render you any medical assistance within my power. I only knew, on my way here to-day, that she had not acquainted you with the nature of my visit."

While I was speaking, Sir Henry's face became extremely watchful, eager, and tense.

"This is remarkable," he said. "So Lucilla is anxious about me? I was not aware that I ever gave her the least clue to the fact that I am not—in perfect health. This is very strange—it troubles me."

He looked agitated. He placed one long, thin hand on the little table which stood near, and pouring out a glass of wine, drank it off. I noticed as he did so the nervous trembling of his hand. I glanced at his face, and saw that it was thin to emaciation.

"Well," he said, "I am obliged to you for being perfectly frank with me. My wife scarcely did well to conceal the object of your visit. But now that you have come, I shall make use of you both for myself and for her."

"Then you are not well?" I asked.



"Well!" he answered, with almost a shout. "Good God, no! I think that I am going mad. I know—I know that unless relief soon comes I shall die or become a raving maniac."

"No, nothing of the kind," I answered, soothingly; "you probably want change. This is a fine old house, but dull, no doubt, in winter. Why don't you go away?—to the Riviera, or some other place where there is plenty of sunshine? Why do you stay here? The air of this place is too damp to be good for either you or your wife."

Sir Henry sat silent for a moment, then he said, in a terse voice: "Perhaps you will advise me what to do after you know the nature of the malady which afflicts me. First of all, however, I wish to speak of my wife."

"I am ready to listen," I replied.

"You see," he continued, "that she is very delicate?"

"Yes," I replied; "to be frank with you, I should say that Lady Studley was consumptive."

He started when I said this, and pressed his lips firmly together. After a moment he spoke.

"You are right," he replied. "I had her examined by a medical man—Sir Joseph Dunbar—when I was last in London; he said her lungs were considerably affected, and that, in short, she was far from well."

"Did he not order you to winter abroad?"

"He did, but Lady Studley opposed the idea so strenuously that I was obliged to yield to her entreaties. Consumption does not seem to take quite the ordinary form with her. She is restless, she longs for cool air, she goes out on quite cold days, in a closed carriage, it is true. Still, except at night, she does not regard herself in any sense as an invalid. She has immense spirit—I think she will keep up until she dies."

"You speak of her being an invalid at night," I replied. "What are her symptoms?"

Sir Henry shuddered quite visibly.

"Oh, those awful nights!" he answered. "How happy would many poor mortals be but for the terrible time of darkness. Lady Studley has had dreadful nights for some time: perspirations, cough, restlessness, bad dreams, and all the rest of it. But I must hasten to tell you my story quite briefly. In the beginning of October we saw Sir Joseph Dunbar. I should then, by his advice, have taken Lady Studley to the Riviera, but she opposed the idea with such passion and distress, that I abandoned it."

Sir Henry paused here, and I looked at him attentively. I remembered at that moment what Lady Studley had said about her husband refusing to leave the Grange under any circumstances. What a strange game of cross-purposes these two were playing. How was it possible for me to get at the truth?

"At my wife's earnest request," continued Sir Henry, "we returned to the Grange. She declared her firm intention of remaining here until she died.

"Soon after our return she suggested that we should occupy separate rooms at night, reminding me, when she made the request, of the infectious nature of consumption. I complied with her wish on condition that I slept in the room next hers, and that on the smallest emergency I should be summoned to her aid. This arrangement was made, and her room opens into mine. I have sometimes heard her moving about at night—I have often heard her cough, and I have often heard her sigh. But she has never once sent for me, or given me to understand that she required my aid. She does not think herself very ill, and nothing worries her more than to have her malady spoken about. That is the part of the story which relates to my wife."

"She is very ill," I said. "But I will speak of that presently. Now will you favour me with an account of your own symptoms, Sir Henry?"

He started again when I said this, and going across the room, locked the door and put the key in his pocket.

"Perhaps you will laugh at me," he said, "but it is no laughing matter, I assure you. The most terrible, the most awful affliction has come to me. In short, I am visited nightly by an appalling apparition. You don't believe in ghosts, I judge that by your face. Few scientific men do."

"Frankly, I do not," I replied "So-called ghosts can generally be accounted for. At the most they are only the figments of an over-excited or diseased brain."

"Be that as it may," said Sir Henry, "the diseased brain can give such torture to its victim that death is preferable. All my life I have been what I consider a healthy minded man. I have plenty of money, and have never been troubled with the cares which torture men of commerce, or of small means. When I married, three years ago, I considered myself the most lucky and the happiest of mortals."

"Forgive a personal question," I interrupted. "Has your marriage disappointed you?"

"No, no; far from it," he replied with fervour. "I love my dear wife better and more deeply even than the day when I took her as a bride to my

arms. It is true that I am weighed down with sorrow about her, but that is entirely owing to the state of her health."

"It is strange," I said, "that she should be weighed down with sorrow about you for the same cause. Have you told her of the thing which terrifies you?"

"Never, never. I have never spoken of it to mortal. It is remarkable that my wife should have told you that I looked like a man who has seen a ghost. Alas! alas! But let me tell you the cause of my shattered nerves, my agony, and failing health."

"Pray do, I shall listen attentively," I replied.

"Oh, doctor, that I could make you feel the horror of it!" said Sir Henry, bending forward and looking into my eyes. "Three months ago I no more believed in visitations, in apparitions, in so-called ghosts, than you do. Were you tried as I am, your scepticism would receive a severe shock. Now let me tell you what occurs. Night after night Lady Studley and I retire to rest at the same hour. We say good-night, and lay our heads on our separate pillows. The door of communication between us is shut. She has a night-light in her room—I prefer darkness. I close my eyes and prepare for slumber. As a rule I fall asleep. My sleep is of short duration. I awake with beads of perspiration standing on my forehead, with my heart thumping heavily and with every nerve wide awake, and waiting for the horror which will come. Sometimes I wait half an hour—sometimes longer. Then I know by a faint, ticking sound in the darkness that the thing, for I can clothe it with no name, is about to visit me. In a certain spot of the room, always in the same spot, a bright light suddenly flashes; out of its midst there gleams a preternaturally large eye, which looks fixedly at me with a diabolical expression. As time goes, it does not remain long; but as agony counts, it seems to take years of my life away with it. It fades as suddenly into grey mist and nothingness as it comes, and, wet with perspiration, and struggling to keep back screams of mad terror, I bury my head in the bed-clothes."

"But have you never tried to investigate this thing?" I said.

"I did at first. The first night I saw it, I rushed out of bed and made for the spot. It disappeared at once. I struck a light—there was nothing whatever in the room."

"Why do you sleep in that room?"

"I must not go away from Lady Studley. My terror is that she should know anything of this—my greater terror is that the apparition, failing me, may visit her. I daresay you think I'm a fool, Halifax; but the fact is, this thing is killing me, brave man as I consider myself."

"Do you see it every night?" I asked.

"Not quite every night, but sometimes on the same night it comes twice. Sometimes it will not come at all for two nights, or even three. It is the most ghastly, the most horrible form of torture that could hurry a sane man into his grave or into a mad-house."

"I have not the least shadow of doubt," I said, after a pause, "that the thing can be accounted for."

Sir Henry shook his head.

"No, no," he replied, "it is either as you suggest, a figment of my own diseased brain, and therefore just as horrible as a real apparition; or it is a supernatural visitation. Whether it exists or not, it is reality to me and in no way a dream. The full horror of it is present with me in my waking moments."

"Do you think anyone is playing an awful practical joke?" I suggested. "Certainly not. What object can anyone have in scaring me to death? Besides, there is no one in the room, that I can swear. My outer door is locked, Lady Studley's outer door is locked. It is impossible that there can be any trickery in the matter."

I said nothing for a moment I no more believed in ghosts than I ever did, but I felt certain that there was grave mischief at work. Sir Henry must be the victim of a hallucination. This might only be caused by functional disturbance of the brain, but it was quite serious enough to call for immediate attention. The first thing to do was to find out whether the apparition could be accounted for in any material way, or if it were due to the state of Sir Henry's nerves. I began to ask him certain questions, going fully into the case in all its bearings. I then examined his eyes with the ophthalmoscope. The result of all this was to assure me beyond doubt that Sir Henry Studley was in a highly nervous condition, although I could detect no trace of brain disease.

"Do you mind taking me to your room?" I said.

"Not to-night," he answered. "It is late, and Lady Studley might express surprise. The object of my life is to conceal this horror from her. When she is out to-morrow you shall come to the room and judge for yourself."

"Well," I said, "I shall have an interview with your wife to-morrow, and urge her most strongly to consent to leave the Grange and go away with you."

Shortly afterwards we retired to rest, or what went by the name of rest in that sad house, with its troubled inmates. I must confess that, comfortable as my room was, I slept very little. Sir Henry's story stayed with me all through the hours of darkness. I am neither nervous nor

imaginative, but I could not help seeing that terrible eye, even in my dreams.

I met my host and hostess at an early breakfast. Sir Henry proposed that as the day was warm and fine, I should ride to a neighbouring meet. I was not in the humour for this, however, and said frankly that I should prefer remaining at the Grange. One glance into the faces of my host and hostess told me only too plainly that I had two very serious patients on my hands. Lady Studley looked terribly weak and excited—the hectic spots on her cheeks, the gleaming glitter of her eyes, the parched lips, the long, white, emaciated hands, all showed only too plainly the strides the malady under which she was suffering was making.

“After all, I cannot urge that poor girl to go abroad,” I said to myself. “She is hastening rapidly to her grave, and no power on earth can save her. She looks as if there were extensive disease of the lungs. How restless her eyes are, too! I would much rather testify to Sir Henry’s sanity than to hers.”

Sir Henry Studley also bore traces of a sleepless night—his face was bloodless; he averted his eyes from mine; he ate next to nothing.

Immediately after breakfast, I followed Lady Studley into her morning-room. I had already made up my mind how to act. Her husband should have my full confidence—she only my partial view of the situation.

“Well,” I said, “I have seen your husband and talked to him. I hope he will soon be better. I don’t think you need be seriously alarmed about him. Now for yourself, Lady Studley. I am anxious to examine your lungs. Will you allow me to do so?”

“I suppose Henry has told you I am consumptive?”

“He says you are not well,” I answered. “I don’t need his word to assure me of that fact—I can see it with my own eyes. Please let me examine your chest with my stethoscope.”

She hesitated for a moment, looking something like a wild creature brought to bay. Then she sank into a chair, and with trembling fingers unfastened her dress. Poor soul, she was almost a walking skeleton—her beautiful face was all that was beautiful about her. A brief examination told me that she was in the last stage of phthisis—in short, that her days were numbered.

“What do you think of me?” she asked, when the brief examination was over.

“You are ill,” I replied.

“How soon shall I die?”

“God only knows that, my dear lady,” I answered.

"Oh, you needn't hide your thoughts," she said. "I know that my days are very few. Oh, if only, if only my husband could come with me! I am so afraid to go alone, and I am fond of him, very fond of him."

I soothed her as well as I could.

"You ought to have someone to sleep in your room at night," I said. "You ought not to be left by yourself."

"Henry is near me—in the next room," she replied. "I would not have a nurse for the world—I hate and detest nurses."

Soon afterwards she left me. She was very erratic, and before she left the room she had quite got over her depression. The sun shone out, and with the gleam of brightness her volatile spirits rose.

"I am going for a drive," she said. "Will you come with me?"

"Not this morning," I replied. "If you ask me to-morrow, I shall be pleased to accompany you."

"Well, go to Henry," she answered. "Talk to him—find out what ails him, order tonics for him. Cheer him in every way in your power. You say he is not ill—not seriously ill—I know better. My impression is that if my days are numbered, so are his."

She went away, and I sought her husband. As soon as the wheels of her brougham were heard bowling away over the gravel sweep, we went up together to his room.

"That eye came twice last night," he said in an awestruck whisper to me. "I am a doomed man—a doomed man. I cannot bear this any longer."

We were standing in the room as he said the words. Even in broad daylight, I could see that he glanced round him with apprehension. He was shaking quite visibly. The room was decidedly old-fashioned, but the greater part of the furniture was modern. The bed was an Albert one with a spring mattress, and light, cheerful dimity hangings. The windows were French—they were wide open, and let in the soft, pleasant air, for the day was truly a spring one in winter. The paper on the walls was light.

"This is a quaint old wardrobe," I said. "It looks out of place with the rest of the furniture. Why don't you have it removed?"

"Hush," he said, with a gasp. "Don't go near it—I dread it, I have locked it. It is always in that direction that the apparition appears. The apparition seems to grow out of the glass of the wardrobe. It always appears in that one spot."

"I see," I answered. "The wardrobe is built into the wall. That is the reason it cannot be removed. Have you got the key about you?"

He fumbled in his pocket, and presently produced a bunch of keys.

"I wish you wouldn't open the wardrobe," he said. "I frankly admit that I dislike having it touched."

"All right," I replied. "I will not examine it while you are in the room. You will perhaps allow me to keep the key?"

"Certainly! You can take it from the bunch, if you wish. This is it. I shall be only too glad to have it well out of my own keeping."

"We will go downstairs," I said.

We returned to Sir Henry's library. It was my turn now to lock the door.

"Why do you do that?" he asked.

"Because I wish to be quite certain that no one overhears our conversation."

"What have you got to say?"

"I have a plan to propose to you."

"What is it?"

"I want you to change bedrooms with me to-night."

"What can you mean?—what will Lady Studley say?"

"Lady Studley must know nothing whatever about the arrangement. I think it very likely that the apparition which troubles you will be discovered to have a material foundation. In short, I am determined to get to the bottom of this horror. You have seen it often, and your nerves are much shattered. I have never seen it, and my nerves are, I think, in tolerable order. If I sleep in your room to-night—"

"It may not visit you."

"It may not, but on the other hand it may. I have a curiosity to lie on that bed and to face that wardrobe in the wall. You must yield to my wishes, Sir Henry."

"But how can the knowledge of this arrangement be kept from my wife?"

Lady Studley returned from her drive just as our arrangements were fully made. I had not a moment during all the day to examine the interior of the wardrobe. The sick woman's restlessness grew greater as the hours advanced. She did not care to leave her husband's side. She sat with him as he examined his books. She followed him from room to room. In the afternoon, to the relief of everyone, some fresh guests arrived. In consequence we had a cheerful evening. Lady Studley came down to dinner in white from top to toe. Her dress was ethereal in texture and largely composed of lace. I cannot describe woman's dress, but with her shadowy figure and worn, but still lovely face, she looked

spiritual. The gleam in her large blue eyes was pathetic. Her love for her husband was touching to behold. How soon, how very soon, they must part from each other! Only I as a doctor knew how impossible it was to keep the lamp of life much longer burning in the poor girl's frame.

We retired as usual to rest. Sir Henry bade me a cheerful good-night. Lady Studley nodded to me as she left the room.

"Sleep well," she said, in a gay voice.

It was late the next morning when we all met round the breakfast table. Sir Henry looked better, but Lady Studley many degrees worse, than the night before. I wondered at her Courage in retaining her post at the head of her table. The visitors, who came in at intervals and took their seats at the table, looked at her with wonder and compassion.

"Surely my hostess is very ill?" said a guest who sat next my side.

"Yes, but take no notice of it," I answered.

Soon after breakfast I sought Sir Henry.

"Well—well?" he said, as he grasped my hand. "Halifax, you have seen it. I know you have by the expression of your face."

"Yes," I replied, "I have."

"How quietly you speak. Has not the horror of the thing seized you?"

"No," I said, with a brief laugh. "I told you yesterday that my nerves were in tolerable order. I think my surmise was correct, and that the apparition has tangible form and can be traced to its foundation."

An unbelieving look swept over Sir Henry's face.

"Ah," he said, "doctors are very hard to convince. Everything must be brought down to a cold material level to satisfy them; but several nights in that room would shatter even your nerves, my friend."

"You are quite right," I answered. "I should be very sorry to spend several nights in that room. Now I will tell you briefly what occurred."

We were standing in the library. Sir Henry went to the door, locked it, and put the key in his pocket.

"Can I come in?" said a voice outside.

The voice was Lady Studley's.

"In a minute, my darling," answered her husband. "I am engaged with Halifax just at present."

"Medically, I suppose?" she answered.

"Yes, medically," he responded.

She went away at once, and Sir Henry returned to my side.



"Now speak," he said. "Be quick. She is sure to return, and I don't like her to fancy that we are talking secrets."

"This is my story," I said. "I went into your room, put out all the lights, and sat on the edge of the bed."

"You did not get into bed, then?"

"No, I preferred to be up and to be ready for immediate action should the apparition, the horror, or whatever you call it, appear."

"Good God, it is a horror, Halifax!"

"It is, Sir Henry. A more diabolical contrivance for frightening a man into his grave could scarcely have been contrived. I can comfort you on one point, however. The terrible thing you saw is not a figment of your brain. There is no likelihood of a lunatic asylum in your case. Someone is playing you a trick."

"I cannot agree with you—but proceed," said the baronet, impatiently.

"I sat for about an hour on the edge of the bed," I continued. "When I entered the room it was twelve o'clock—one had sounded before there was the least stir or appearance of anything, then the ticking noise you have described was distinctly audible. This was followed by a sudden bright light, which seemed to proceed out of the recesses of the wardrobe."

"What did you feel when you saw that light?"

"Too excited to be nervous," I answered briefly. "Out of the circle of light the horrible eye looked at me."

"What did you do then? Did you faint?"

"No, I went noiselessly across the carpet up to the door of the wardrobe and looked in."

"Heavens! you are daring. I wonder you are alive to tell this tale."

"I saw a shadowy form," I replied—"dark and tall—the one brilliant eye kept on looking past me, straight into the room. I made a very slight noise; it immediately disappeared. I waited for some time—nothing more happened. I got into your bed, Sir Henry, and slept. I can't say that I had a comfortable night, but I slept, and was not disturbed by anything extraordinary for the remaining hours of the night."

"Now what do you mean to do? You say you can trace this thing to its foundation. It seems to me that all you have seen only supports my firm belief that a horrible apparition visits that room."

"A material one," I responded. "The shadowy form had substance, of that I am convinced. Sir Henry, I intend to sleep in that room again to-night."

"Lady Studley will find out."

"She will not. I sleep in the haunted room again to-night, and during the day you must so contrive matters that I have plenty of time to examine the wardrobe. I did not do so yesterday because I had not an opportunity. You must contrive to get Lady Studley out of the way, either this morning or afternoon, and so manage matters for me that I can be some little time alone in your room."

"Henry, Henry, how awestruck you look!" said a gay voice at the window. Lady Studley had come out, had come round to the library window, and, holding up her long, dark-blue velvet dress, was looking at us with a peculiar smile.

"Well, my love," replied the baronet.

He went to the window and flung it open.

"Lucilla," he exclaimed, "you are mad to stand on the damp grass."

"Oh, no, not mad," she answered. "I have come to that stage when nothing matters. Is not that so, Dr. Halifax?"

"You are very imprudent," I replied.

She shook her finger at me playfully, and turned to her husband.

"Henry," she said, "have you taken my keys? I cannot find them anywhere."

"I will go up and look for them," said Sir Henry. He left the room, and Lady Studley entered the library through one of the French windows.

"What do you think of my husband this morning?" she asked.

"He is a little better," I replied "I am confident that he will soon be quite well again."

She gave a deep sigh when I said this, her lips trembled, and she turned away. I thought my news would make her happy, and her depression surprised me.

At this moment Sir Henry came into the room.

"Here are your keys," he said to his wife.

He gave her the same bunch he had given me the night before. I hoped she would not notice that the key of the wardrobe was missing.

"And now I want you to come for a drive with me," said Sir Henry.

He did not often accompany her, and the pleasure of this unlooked-for indulgence evidently tempted her.

"Very well," she answered. "Is Dr. Halifax coming?"

"No, he wants to have a ride."

"If he rides, can he not follow the carriage?"

"Will you do that, Halifax?" asked my host.

"No, thank you," I answered; "I must write some letters before I go anywhere. I will ride to the nearest town and post them presently, if I may." I left the room as I spoke.

Shortly afterwards I saw from a window Sir Henry and his wife drive away. They drove in a large open landau, and two girls who were staying in the house accompanied them. My hour had come, and I went up at once to Sir Henry's bedroom. Lady Studley's room opened directly into that of her husband, but both rooms had separate entrances.

I locked the two outer doors now, and then began my investigations. I had the key of the wardrobe in my pocket.

It was troublesome to unlock, because the key was a little rusty, and it was more than evident that the heavy doors had not been opened for some time. Both these doors were made of glass. When shut they resembled in shape and appearance an ordinary old-fashioned window. The glass was set in deep mullions. It was thick, was of a peculiar shade of light blue, and was evidently of great antiquity. I opened the doors and went inside. The wardrobe was so roomy that I could stand upright with perfect comfort. It was empty, and was lined through and through with solid oak. I struck a light and began to examine the interior with care. After a great deal of patient investigation I came across a notch in the wood. I pressed my finger on this, and immediately a little panel slid back, which revealed underneath a small button. I turned the button and a door at the back of the wardrobe flew open. A flood of sunlight poured in, and stepping out, I found myself in another room. I looked around me in astonishment. This was a lady's chamber. Good heavens! what had happened? I was in Lady Studley's room. Shutting the mysterious door of the wardrobe very carefully, I found that all trace of its existence immediately vanished.

There was no furniture against this part of the wall. It looked absolutely bare and smooth. No picture ornamented it. The light paper which covered it gave the appearance of a perfectly unbroken pattern. Of course, there must be a concealed spring somewhere, and I lost no time in feeling for it. I pressed my hand and the tips of my fingers in every direction along the wall. Try as I would, however, I could not find the spring, and I had at last to leave Lady Studley's room and go back to the one occupied by her husband, by the ordinary door.

Once more I re-entered the wardrobe and deliberately broke off the button which opened the secret door from within. Anyone who now entered the wardrobe by this door, and shut it behind him, would find it impossible to retreat. The apparition, if it had material foundation,

would thus find itself trapped in its own net.

What could this thing portend?

I had already convinced myself that if Sir Henry were the subject of a hallucination, I also shared it. As this was impossible, I felt certain that the apparition had a material foundation. Who was the person who glided night after night into Lady Studley's room, who knew the trick of the secret spring in the wall, who entered the old wardrobe, and performed this ghastly, this appalling trick on Sir Henry Studley? I resolved that I would say nothing to Sir Henry of my fresh discovery until after I had spent another night in the haunted room.

Accordingly, I slipped the key of the wardrobe once more into my pocket and went downstairs.

I had my way again that night. Once more I found myself the sole occupant of the haunted room. I put out the light, sat on the edge of the bed, and waited the issue of events. At first there was silence and complete darkness, but soon after one o'clock I heard the very slight but unmistakable tick-tick, which told me that the apparition was about to appear. The ticking noise resembled the quaint sound made by the death spider. There was no other noise of any sort, but a quickening of my pulses, a sensation which I could not call fear, but which was exciting to the point of pain, braced me up for an unusual and horrible sight. The light appeared in the dim recess of the wardrobe. It grew clear and steady, and quickly resolved itself into one intensely bright circle. Out of this circle the eye looked at me. The eye was unnaturally large—it was clear, almost transparent, its expression was full of menace and warning. Into the circle of light presently a shadowy and ethereal hand intruded itself. The fingers beckoned me to approach, while the eye looked fixedly at me. I sat motionless on the side of the bed. I am stoical by nature and my nerves are well seasoned, but I am not ashamed to say that I should be very sorry to be often subjected to that menace and that invitation. The look in that eye, the beckoning power in those long, shadowy fingers would soon work havoc even in the stoutest nerves. My heart beat uncomfortably fast, and I had to say over and over to myself, "This is nothing more than a ghastly trick." I had also to remind myself that I in my turn had prepared a trap for the apparition. The time while the eye looked and the hand beckoned might in reality have been counted by seconds; to me it seemed like eternity. I felt the cold dew on my forehead before the rapidly waning light assured me that the apparition was about to vanish. Making an effort I now left the bed and approached the wardrobe. I listened intently. For a moment

there was perfect silence. Then a fumbling noise was distinctly audible. It was followed by a muffled cry, a crash, and a heavy fall. I struck a light instantly, and taking the key of the wardrobe from my pocket, opened it. Never shall I forget the sight that met my gaze.

There, huddled up on the floor, lay the prostrate and unconscious form of Lady Studley. A black cloak in which she had wrapped herself partly covered her face, but I knew her by her long, fair hair. I pulled back the cloak, and saw that the unhappy girl had broken a blood-vessel, and even as I lifted her up I knew that she was in a dying condition.

I carried her at once into her own room and laid her on the bed. I then returned and shut the wardrobe door, and slipped the key into my pocket. My next deed was to summon Sir Henry.

"What is it?" he asked, springing upright in bed.

"Come at once," I said, "your wife is very ill."

"Dying?" he asked, in an agonized whisper.

I nodded my head. I could not speak.

My one effort now was to keep the knowledge of the ghastly discovery I had made from the unhappy husband.

He followed me to his wife's room. He forgot even to question me about the apparition, so horrified was he at the sight which met his view.

I administered restoratives to the dying woman, and did what I could to check the hemorrhage. After a time Lady Studley opened her dim eyes.

"Oh, Henry!" she said, stretching out a feeble hand to him, "come with me, come with me. I am afraid to go alone."

"My poor Lucilla," he said. He smoothed her cold forehead, and tried to comfort her by every means in his power.

After a time he left the room. When he did so she beckoned me to approach.

"I have failed," she said, in the most thrilling voice of horror I have ever listened to. "I must go alone. He will not come with me."

"What do you mean?" I asked.

She could scarcely speak, but at intervals the following words dropped slowly from her lips: "I was the apparition. I did not want my husband to live after me. Perhaps I was a little insane. I cannot quite say. When I was told by Sir Joseph Dunbar that there was no hope of my life, a most appalling and frightful jealousy took possession of me. I pictured my husband with another wife. Stoop down."

Her voice was very faint. I could scarcely hear her muttered words. Her eyes were glazing fast, death was claiming her, and yet hatred against some unknown person thrilled in her feeble voice.

"Before my husband married me, he loved another woman," she continued. "That woman is now a widow. I felt certain that immediately after my death he would seek her out and marry her. I could not bear the thought—it possessed me day and night. That, and the terror of dying alone, worked such a havoc within me that I believe I was scarcely responsible for my own actions. A mad desire took possession of me to take my husband with me, and so to keep him from her, and also to have his company when I passed the barriers of life. I told you that my brother was a doctor. In his medical-student days the sort of trick I have been playing on Sir Henry was enacted by some of his fellow-students for his benefit, and almost scared him into fever. One day my brother described the trick to me, and I asked him to show me how it was done. I used a small electric lamp and a very strong reflector."

"How did you find out the secret door of the wardrobe?" I asked.

"Quite by chance." I was putting some dresses into the wardrobe one day and accidentally touched the secret panel. I saw at once that here was my opportunity."

"You must have been alarmed at your success," I said, after a pause. "And now I have one more question to ask: Why did you summon me to the Grange?"

She made a faint, impatient movement.

"I wanted to be certain that my husband was really very ill," she said. "I wanted you to talk to him—I guessed he would confide in you; I thought it most probable that you would tell him that he was a victim of brain hallucinations. This would frighten him and would suit my purpose exactly. I also sent for you as a blind. I felt sure that under these circumstances neither you nor my husband could possibly suspect me."

She was silent again, panting from exhaustion.

"I have failed," she said, after a long pause. "You have discovered the truth. It never occurred to me for a moment that you would go into the room. He will recover now."

She paused; a fresh attack of hemorrhage came on. Her breath came quickly. Her end was very near. Her dim eyes could scarcely see.

Groping feebly with her hand she took mine.

"Dr. Halifax—promise."

"What?" I asked.

"I have failed, but let me keep his love, what little love he has for me, before he marries that other woman. Promise that you will never tell him."

"Rest easy," I answered, "I will never tell him."

Sir Henry entered the room.

I made way for him to kneel by his wife's side.

As the grey morning broke Lady Studley died.

Before my departure from the Grange I avoided Sir Henry as much as possible. Once he spoke of the apparition and asked if I had seen it.

"Yes," I replied.

Before I could say anything further, he continued: "I know now why it came; it was to warn me of my unhappy wife's death." He said no more. I could not enlighten him, and he is unlikely now ever to learn the truth.

The following day I left Studley Grange. I took with me, without asking leave of anyone, a certain long black cloak, a small electric lamp, and a magnifying glass of considerable power.


It may be of interest to explain how Lady Studley in her unhealthy condition of mind and body performed the extraordinary trick by which she hoped to undermine her husband's health, and ultimately cause his death.

I experimented with the materials which I carried away with me, and succeeded, so my friends told me, in producing a most ghastly effect.

I did it in this way. I attached the mirror of a laryngoscope to my forehead in such a manner as to enable it to throw a strong reflection into one of my eyes. In the centre of the bright side of the laryngoscope a small electric lamp was fitted. This was connected with a battery which I carried in my hand. The battery was similar to those used by the ballet girls in Drury Lane Theatre, and could be brought into force by a touch and extinguished by the removal of the pressure. The eye which was thus brilliantly illumined looked through a lens of some power. All the rest of the face and figure was completely covered by the black cloak. Thus the brightest possible light was thrown on the magnified eye, while there was corresponding increased gloom around.

When last I heard of Studley Grange it was let for a term of years and Sir Henry had gone abroad. I have not heard that he has married again, but he probably will, sooner or later.

## Ten Year's Oblivion

 In the spring of 1890 I was asked to see a patient at Croydon with another doctor in consultation. In this stage of the illness it was only an ordinary case of somewhat severe typhoid fever, but the interest lies in the succeeding stages, when complete recovery seems to have taken place. I have noticed this remarkable illness in my case-book as an instance of perhaps the most extraordinary psychological condition which has occurred in my practice, or I might say in that of any other man.

The patient was a young barrister; he had a wife and three children. The wife was a pretty, rather nervous-looking woman. On the day when I went to see her husband, in consultation with the family doctor, I could not help noticing the intensely anxious expression of her face, and how her lips moved silently as she followed my words. The illness was severe, but I did not consider it as specially dangerous, and had, therefore, only encouraging opinions to give her.

I saw Mainwaring again at the end of the week. He was then much better, and I was able to communicate the cheerful tidings to his wife that he was practically out of danger. He was a man of about three-and-thirty years of age, tall, and rather gaunt in appearance, with deep-set grey eyes, and a big, massive brow. I have often noticed his peculiar style of face and head as belonging to the legal profession. I could quite believe that he was an astute and clever special pleader. Abbott, the family doctor, told me that he was a common-law barrister, and I could well understand his using eloquent words when he pleaded the case of an unfortunate client.

I did not visit him again, but Abbott wrote to tell me that he had made an excellent recovery without bitch or relapse. Under these circumstances his ease had almost passed from my memory, when the following startling incident occurred.

I came home one evening prepared to hurry out again to see a sick



patient, when my servant informed me that a lady was waiting in the consulting-room to see me.

"Did not you tell her that I am not in the habit of seeing patients at this hour?" I asked.

"I did, sir," replied the man, "but she would not leave. She says she will wait your convenience; but, whatever happens, she must have an interview with you to-night."

"I had better go and see her, and find out what she wants," I murmured to myself.

I crossed the hall with some impatience, for I had several most anxious cases on hand, and entered my consulting-room. A slight, girlish figure was seated partly with her back to me. She sprang up when the door opened, and I was confronted by the anxious and pleading face of Mrs. Mainwaring.

"You have come at last," she said, with a deep sigh. "That is a blessed relief. I have waited for you here because I want to ask your advice. I am in terrible anxiety about my husband."

"Your husband?" I replied. "But I understood Dr. Abbott to say that he had recovered perfectly. He said he had ordered him for a month to the seaside, and then hoped that he might resume his professional work."

"It was so," she replied. "My husband had a quick recovery. I am told that most typhoid fever patients take a long time to regain their strength, but in his case this was not so. After the worst was over, he seemed to get better by strides and bounds. A fortnight ago Dr. Abbott ordered him to the seaside. I had a fancy for Dover, and thought of going there. I had even written about lodgings, when my husband suddenly told me that he did not wish to go to the seaside, and would prefer spending a fortnight amongst his old haunts at Cambridge. We went there. We—we were very happy. I left the children at home. It seemed something like our honeymoon over again. Yesterday morning I received a letter telling me that my eldest child was not well. I hurried back to Croydon to see her, telling my husband that I would rejoin him to-day. My child's illness turned out to be a trivial one, and I went back to Cambridge by an early train this morning."

Here Mrs. Mainwaring paused and pressed her hand to her heart. Her face, excessively pale before, now turned almost ghastly. She had seated herself; she now stood. up, the further to emphasize her words.

"When I reached our lodgings," she said, "my landlady met me with the astounding intelligence that Mr. Mainwaring had packed up all his

belongings and had left Cambridge for London by the express train that morning.

"This news surprised me, but at first I heard it calmly enough. I believed that Edward had grown weary of his own society, was anxious about our little Nancy, and had hurried home. My landlady, however, looked so mysterious that I felt certain she had something further to say.

"Come in, madam, do come in,' she said. 'Perhaps you think your good gentleman has gone home.'

"I am sure he has,' I said. 'Can you get me a messenger? I will send a telegram at once and find out. If Mr. Mainwaring has gone home, he ought to have arrived by now.'

"My landlady was quite silent for a minute, then she said, gravely: 'Perhaps I ought to tell you that Mr. Mainwaring behaved in a very singular way before he left my house.'

"There was something in the woman's manner which impressed me even more than her words. I felt my heart beginning to sink. I followed her into the little sitting-room where my husband and I had spent some happy hours, and begged of her to explain herself.

"She did so without a moment's hesitation.

"It all happened early this morning,' she said. 'I brought up breakfast as usual. Mr. Mainwaring was standing by one of the open windows.'

"«I am going to town,» he said, »by the express. I shall pack my things immediately. Bring me my bill.«

"I was leaving the room to prepare it, when he shouted to me.

"«How is it those things have got into the room?» he said. »Take them away.«

"«What things do you mean, sir?»

"«Those woman's things,» he said, very crossly. »That work-basket, and that white shawl.«

"«Why, sir,» I said, staring at him, »those things belong to your good lady.«

"He looked me full in the face and then burst out laughing.'

"«You must be mad,» he said; »I dislike unseasonable jokes.«

"He then went into his bedroom and slammed the door noisily behind him. Half an hour later he had paid the bill, ordered a cab, and gone off with his luggage. He left all your things behind him, madam. Mr. Mainwaring was collected and quiet enough, and seemed quite the gentleman except when he spoke of you; still I don't like the look of affairs at all."

"I listened to my landlady," continued poor Mrs. Mainwaring, "while she told me this strange and most perplexing story. Then I glanced round the room for confirmation of her words. Yes, my husband and all his belongings had vanished, but my work-basket, my new hat, my mantle, my writing-case, and one or two little garments which I was making for the children, were still scattered about the drawing-room.

"I went into the bedroom and saw the clothes I had left behind me, flung into a heap in at corner of the room.

"While I was looking at them in a state of mind almost impossible to describe, my landlady tapped at the door and brought me a note.

"‘Under the circumstances, madam,’ she said, ‘you may like to see this letter. I have just found it, stamped and directed as you see, on the day-enport in the drawing-room. I think it is in Mr. Mainwaring’s writing.’

"I took it from her and looked at it eagerly. It was addressed in my husband’s writing to a Don of the college (Trinity) where he had taken his degree. I did not hesitate to open it. Here it is, Dr. Halifax; you may like to read it. It may possibly help you to throw some light on this awful mystery."

Mrs. Mainwaring gave me the note as she spoke. It contained the following words:—

*My dear sir,*

*I much regret having missed you when I called yesterday afternoon to say good-bye. I must take the present opportunity of thanking you for your kindness to me during the whole of my University Career. I leave Cambridge by an early train this morning, or would call again to say farewell in person. I hope to call to see you on the first occasion when I revisit Cambridge.*

*Yours sincerely,*

*Ed. Mainwaring.*

I read the letter twice, and then returned it without comment to the wife.

"Will you redirect it and post it?" I said, after a pause.

She answered me almost in a whisper.

"The strange thing about that letter is this," she said. "It is addressed to a dead person. Mr. Grainger, Edward’s old tutor, has been dead for many years. My husband felt his death keenly when it occurred. He has many times told me of the personal interest Mr. Grainger took in him. Have you no comment to make with regard to this letter, Dr. Halifax?"

"I shall have plenty to say in a moment," I answered. "That letter will give us a very important clue to our future actions, but now to proceed: Have you nothing further to tell me?"

"Yes; after reading the letter, I rushed to the nearest telegraph office and sent a telegram with a prepaid reply to my home. I waited with what patience I could for the answer, which came within an hour and a half. My husband had not returned to Stanley Villa. I then took the next train to Town. and went back to Croydon on the chance of his having arrived there during the day. He had not done so. Dr. Abbott happens to be away, so I have come to you. Can you give me advice? Will you help me in any way?"

"Yes, of course, I will help you," I said. "Pray sit down." She had been standing with her hands clasped tightly together during the greater part of our interview. "Your story is a very strange one," I continued, "and I will give it and you my best attention in a moment. I must run away first, however, to give some instructions with regard to one of my patients, then I shall be at your service."

She sank into a chair when I told her to sit down. She was trembling all over. Her nerves were strung to a high pitch. I went into the hall, thought for a moment, then, putting on my hat, went out. As I was leaving the house, I told my servant to take a tray with wine and other refreshments into the consulting-room; Then I went a few doors off to see a brother physician. I told him I had a peculiar case to attend to, and asked him to see after my patients until the following day. I then went back to Mrs. Mainwaring; she had not touched the wine nor the biscuits which the servant had brought her.

"Come," I said, "this will never do. You must have this glass of wine immediately and one or two of these biscuits. You will be able to think much better and, consequently, to find your husband sooner if you take some necessary nourishment. Come, that is better."

I poured out a glass of port wine and gave it to her. She took it in her small, trembling hand and raised it to her lips, spilling the wine terribly as she did so.

"You will do better now," I said.

"Oh, it doesn't matter about me," she exclaimed, with impatience; "you have not told me what you think of my story. What possible reason can there be to account for my husband's most strange conduct?"

"I cannot give you a reason yet," I said. "My impression is that Mr. Mainwaring's mind is not quite right for the time being. Remember, I say for the time being. Typhoid is a very grave and terrible disease. Your

husband suffered from an exceptionally serious attack. His apparently rapid recovery may have induced him to do more than he really had strength to undertake. If this were so, many strange symptoms might exhibit themselves. I can tell you more particulars with regard to the exact nature of his malady after I have seen him. The thing now is to try and find him. Before we begin our search, however, I should like to ask you a few questions of a practical nature. How old is your husband?"

"Nearly thirty-three."

"He took his degree at Cambridge, did he not?"

"Yes—just ten years ago. We talked much of it during the happy fortnight we spent there. We visited all his old haunts. He was a Trinity man, and loved his college with an enthusiasm I have seen in few. I never saw anyone happier than he was during the last fortnight. His spirits were gay. He seemed scarcely to know fatigue. He was always hunting up old friends."

"Were there many of the men of his time at Cambridge?"

"No—that was the sad thing. He has been unfortunate with regard to his friends. He made many, for he was popular and had a sympathetic manner which attracted people, but some had gone abroad and several had died. There was a Mr. Leigh in particular. He had been much attached to him in the old days. But he only heard of his death when we went to Cambridge, for he had completely lost sight of him for a long time. This news saddened him for—a little."

"When did he hear of Leigh's death?"

"The day before yesterday. The Dean of his college told him. He was visibly affected for the time, and talked of him to me all the evening. He told me several incidents with regard to a foreign tour they had taken together."

"Indeed! And he seemed depressed while he spoke?"

"Only just for a time."

"When did your husband and Mr. Leigh go abroad?"

Mrs. Mainwaring thought for a moment.

"It was just after Edward had taken his degree," she said. "He mentioned that fact also when he talked over matters the evening before last."

"From what part of England did Mr. Mainwaring and Mr. Leigh start on their foreign tour?"

"I think it must have been from Dover. Yes, I remember now; Edward said that Mr. Leigh arranged to meet him at Dover. He failed to keep his first appointment, and Edward had to remain at Dover waiting for him for twenty-four hours."

I thought over this piece of information for some time. The story was altogether puzzling; the queer thing about it being not so much the fact of Mainwaring's brain having gone wrong as the strange form his aberration seemed to have taken. It was too evidently the fact that he was either possessed by an active dislike to his wife, or had forgotten her existence.

After some anxious thought I asked Mrs. Mainwaring one or two more questions.

"Did you notice anything peculiar in your husband the last evening and night you spent together?"

"Nothing whatever," she replied. "My dear husband was just his old self. His depression about Walter Leigh soon passed away, and he spoke cheerfully about his own prospects and said how exceptionally lucky he considered himself to be able to resume his professional work so soon after such a severe illness. The evening post, too, brought him a letter, which cheered him a good deal. It was from a solicitor in large practice, offering him the brief of a very important case which was to come on in the criminal courts. Edward was highly delighted at the thought of this work, which meant large fees, badly needed by us just at present. Early the next morning the post brought us the news about Nancy's illness. My husband wished to go with me to Croydon, but I dissuaded him. I did not consider him strong enough, notwithstanding his boasted return to health, for this fatigue. He saw me off at the station, however, and promised to meet me there the following morning, if the child were well enough for me to return."

"Were you surprised when you did not see him?"

"I was, for he is the sort of man who always keeps any engagement he makes."

"A few more questions, Mrs. Mainwaring; and first, how long have you been married?"

"Six years," she said, looking up with a faint blush on her white face, "and Nancy will be five in a week."

"You never happened to meet this Walter Leigh?"

"Never."

"Did your husband ever speak of him to you until two days ago?"

"It is strange, but he never did. He is, as a rule, a very busy man-much occupied with a growing practice."

"Did you happen to know any of his college friends?"

"No."

"You were not in any way connected with that part of his life?"

"No; we never met until, at least, three years after my husband left Cambridge."

"Thank you," I said. "I do not think I have anything further to ask you."

"But what do you mean to do?" she asked. "We can't sit here quietly and allow my unhappy husband to roam the country. He *must* be found, and, at once. He—he may have—" Her lips trembled, she lowered her eyes.

"No," I said. "He has not committed suicide. Rest easy on that point. From what you tell me of your husband I feel inclined to think—of course, I may be wrong—but I feel strongly inclined to think that he is at Dover at the present moment."

"What can you possibly mean?"

"What I say. It is quite within the region of probability that he may be at Dover, waiting for his friend Walter Leigh to join him."

When I said this Mrs. Mainwaring looked at me as if she thought I, too, had taken leave of my senses. I took no notice of her expressive face.

"I am prepared to go with you to Dover," I said. "Shall we start at once?" She looked dubious and terribly anxious.

"It seems waste of time," she said, after a pause.

"I do not think so," I answered. "Your husband was in a weak state, notwithstanding his boasted strength. From what you tell me, he evidently exerted himself more than was wise while at Cambridge. By doing so, he strained a weakened frame. The brain forms the highest part of that frame, Mrs. Mainwaring, the highest and also the most easily put out of order. Your husband exerted his body too much, and excited his brain by old memories and the regrets which must come to a man when he visits the scene of vanished friendships. You say that Mr. Mainwaring was visibly affected when he heard of his great friend's death?"

"He was, he was. He turned white when the Dean told him. The death was tragic, too. Walter Leigh was killed on an Alpine expedition. The marvellous thing was how the news never reached my husband before. This can only be accounted for by the fact that he spent the year of Mr. Leigh's death in America."

"All this confirms my theory," I continued, "that your husband's brain, long weakened by serious illness, suddenly gave way. Brain derangement, as we know, takes all kinds of unexpected forms. I believe that the form it has taken in Mainwaring's case is this. He has forgotten the recent years of his life and has gone back again to his old college days.

His letter to the Don of Trinity College who has so long been dead confirms this theory. His strange conduct with regard to you, Mrs. Mainwaring, further strengthens it. I feel almost certain that I am right in these impressions. They are sufficiently strong to make me anxious to visit Dover immediately. Now, shall I go alone, or will you come with me?"

"Of course I'll come with you," she answered.

She rose and began to draw on her gloves.

It was late June now, and the day had been a hot one. The twilight had faded into night when I assisted Mrs. Mainwaring into a hansom and directed the driver to take us to Victoria Station.

We caught our train by a minute or two, and in process of time found ourselves at Dover. During the journey Mrs. Mainwaring scarcely uttered a word. She had drawn her veil over her face and sat huddled up in a corner of the carriage, as if she were turned into stone. I saw that she was partly stunned by the shock, and I felt anxious about her, as well as her husband.

When we arrived at Dover, she drew up her veil and said, impulsively: "What do you mean to do?"

"Before I do anything I must ask you another question," I replied. "Have you any idea what your husband's habits were ten years ago? Was he extravagant or careful? For instance, on arriving at Dover, would he be likely to go to a good hotel?"

"He would go to the best," she answered. "He is not careful of money now, and I am sure he never could have been in the past."

"Then, if my surmise is correct," I said, "we are most likely to find him at the ›Lord Warden Hotel,‹ which is, of course, the best in the town. Anyhow, it is worth while to go there first to make inquiries about him."

"Very well," she replied, in a submissive, hopeless kind of voice.

She had yielded herself up to my directions, but up to the present moment I had failed to inspire her with any faith in the success of my mission. She was evidently oppressed with the fear that Mainwaring had committed suicide, and seemed to think my conjecture about him impossible.

As we were walking to the hotel, she said, suddenly: "If my husband is really out of his mind, we are ruined from a worldly point of view."

"I am sorry to hear that," I replied. "Have you no private means?"

"No," she answered. "My husband had his profession, and he was doing good work as a barrister. But there is no profession in the world



which requires greater brain power than his. We have nothing to live on except what my husband earns."

"In case Mr. Mainwaring cannot earn money for a time, have you no relations who will help you?" I asked.

She shook her head.

"We have no relations who will help us," she said. "It is true that my husband's father is still living—he is an old man, a clergyman. He has a small parish, and with difficulty makes both ends meet. It would be impossible to expect assistance from him."

She sighed heavily as she spoke. Then she continued, with a naïveté which touched me: "Even at this terrible moment I cannot help thinking of the children, and of how they will suffer if our worst fears are fulfilled."

"Well," I said, in a cheerful tone, "we must hope for the best. The first thing is to find your husband. After that we must consider what is best to be done for him."

"Oh, can anything be done?" she asked, in a tone of supplication.

"We will see," I replied.

We arrived at the hotel and made inquiries. The name of Mainwaring was not in the visitors' book.

"That is nothing," I said, turning to Mrs. Mainwaring; "will you please describe your husband to the manager?"

She did so, entering into a minute and faithful description.

"A tall gentleman, broadly made, with a slight stoop," repeated the manager after her. "He wears glasses, does he not, madam?"

"Sometimes, not always," she replied.

"Has he a *pince-nez* which he puts on whenever he wants to ask a question?" continued the manager.

Mrs. Mainwaring turned crimson.

"Yes, yes," she exclaimed, "then he is here! Dr. Halifax, you are right."

The manager asked further questions.

"A great many gentlemen wear glasses," he said. "I should like to be quite certain that madam's husband is really one of the visitors before I disturb any of them. The hour is late too, close on eleven o'clock, and a good many of the guests have gone to their rooms. About what age is the gentleman whom you want to find, madam?"

"He looks nearly forty," she replied at once, "although he is not in reality nearly so old. His hair is dark and slightly tinged with grey."

The manager called one of the waiters and spoke a few words to him. He then returned to us.

"I think," he said, "that there is a gentleman here who answers to madam's description, but I cannot find his name. Through an oversight it has not been entered in the visitors' book. The hotel is very full this evening. The gentleman who answers to your description," he continued, looking at Mrs. Mainwaring, "is occupying No. 39. Do you think you would know him by his boots?"

"Certainly," she replied.

"Then they are probably at this moment outside his door. I will have them fetched, and you can look at them. Will you have the goodness to step inside the office, Mrs. Mainwaring, and you too, please, sir?"

I gave the manager my card, and told him that I was Mrs. Mainwaring's medical adviser. He motioned us to chairs, and in a short time a waiter appeared with a pair of boots on a tray.

"I have just taken these from outside the door of No. 39," he said, holding them up for inspection.

A glance told me that they belonged to a large, but well-shaped foot. Mrs. Mainwaring rushed forward, gave utterance to a rejoicing cry, and picked them up.

"These are undoubtedly Edwards boots," she exclaimed. "Yes, he is here. Thank the merciful God we have found him!"

"The gentleman has been in his room for some little time," exclaimed a waiter who had now come upon the scene. "Would madam like me to announce her arrival?"

"No," she said, turning very pale. "I will go to him without being announced. Will you come with me, Dr. Halifax?"

We went upstairs, and the chambermaid conducted us to the door of No. 39. We knocked. The door was locked from within, but our summons was immediately answered by the approach of a manly step. The door was flung open and Mainwaring, with a Baedeker's guide in his hand, stood before us.

Mrs. Mainwaring rushed to him and impulsively endeavoured to throw her arms round his neck. He started back in astonishment which was not feigned.

"May I ask?" he said, looking at me, his eyes darkening with anger, "to what I am indebted for this—this most extraordinary intrusion?"

"Don't you know me, Edward?" sobbed the poor girl. "I am your wife."

"You must be mad," he said. He looked at her with a blank stare of undisguised astonishment and even disgust. "I have not the pleasure of this lady's acquaintance," he said, addressing me in an icy tone.

"You don't know me?" she panted. "Oh, surely that must be impossible. I am your wife, Edward. Look at me again, and you will remember me. I am Nancy's mother—pretty Nancy, with her curling hair; you know how fond you are of Nancy. Don't you remember Nancy, and Bob, and baby?—I am their mother. Dear, dear Edward, look at me again and you will know me. Look at me hard—I am your wife—your own most loving wife."

Notwithstanding her agitation, Mrs. Mainwaring had been quiet and self-restrained up to this moment. The intensity of her passion now seemed to transform her. She flung aside her travelling hat and jacket. She was desperate, and despair gave to her sudden beauty.

In all my experience of the sad things of life, I seldom saw more terrible pathos than that which now shone out of the eyes and trembled round the lips of this poor young woman. She was so absorbed in trying to get her husband to recognise her that she forgot my presence and that of the amazed Chambermaid who, devoured with curiosity, lingered near. "Edward," she said again, going up to her husband, "it is impossible that you can have forgotten me. I am your wife. I have been your wife for six years."

"Good Lord, madam I" he exclaimed, bursting into a terrible laugh. "If you were my wife six years ago, I must have married you when I was a boy. I had not left school six years ago. I am only twenty-three at the present moment. Do you mean to maintain that I married you when I was a lad of seventeen?"

"Edward, dear Edward, don't you know me?" she kept on pleading.

Tears streamed down her cheeks. She dropped suddenly on her knees, and taking one of her husband's hands tried to raise it to her lips. Her manner, her words, her attitude, pathetic to us who stood by as witnesses, had a most irritating effect upon Mainwaring.

"Get up," he said. "This is all a plant. But however long you choose to carry this game on, you won't get anything out of me. I must ask you, madam, to leave my room immediately. I do not even know your name. I never saw you before. Will you, sir," he added, turning fiercely to me, "have the goodness to remove this lady immediately from my bedroom?"

Mrs. Mainwaring staggered to her feet. The cold sarcasm of the words of denial stung her to the quick. She approached the door, but before she

could reach it she turned faint and would have fallen had I not caught her and placed her in a chair.

"This is all some diabolical scheme to ruin a respectable man," said Mainwaring. "Will you favour me with your name, sir?" he added, turning to me.

"Halifax," I answered. "I am a doctor. I attended you as a consulting physician in your late severe illness."

"Heavens, what next?" he exclaimed. "I never had a day of serious illness in my life."

"I think, Mrs. Mainwaring, we had better leave him for the present," I said. "I will speak to the manager—"

Before I could add another word Mainwaring interrupted me hotly.

"Let it be clearly understood," he said, "that I forbid that woman to be called by my name. I will see this matter through myself. I have known of such things before. This is a scheme to ruin the character of an honourable man. But I shall take immediate care to nip it in the bud. Is that a chambermaid in the passage? Come here, please. Have the goodness to ask the manager to come to this room immediately. Do not go, madam, nor you either, sir, until I speak to the manager."

Mainwaring flung the Baedeker which he had been studying on a table. We heard some doors opened and some feet hurrying in our direction. Doubtless the chambermaid who had disappeared on Mainwaring's errand had already spread the news of our extraordinary story. When I heard people approaching I took the liberty to close the door of the room.

"What are you doing that for, sir?" exclaimed Mainwaring, whose face was now almost purple with excitement.

"Pray don't speak so loud," I replied, putting as much force and command into my voice as I possibly could. "I presume you do not wish the servants of the hotel to become acquainted with your private affairs."

He glanced at me savagely, but did not say anything further. A moment later the manager's knock was heard. I opened the door to him. He came in, looking anxious and disturbed, and asked why he had been sent for.

Mainwaring began to speak in an excited voice.

"I have sent for you," he said, "to ask you to see that this man and woman leave the hotel immediately. They have forced their way into my room and have endeavoured to perpetrate a most disgraceful hoax upon me. This lady, whom I never saw before, has had the audacity to claim me as her Husband. I wish you to understand clearly that both these people

are impostors. They must leave this hotel immediately if you wish it to retain its character for respectability."

The manager looked puzzled, as well he might. Mainwaring, although he showed symptoms of strong excitement, must have appeared perfectly sane to an ordinary observer. Poor Mrs. Mainwaring, white and trembling, stood up and looked at me to defend her.

"This is a very extraordinary story," I said to the manager. "I will give you my version of it in another room."

"Come," I said, turning to Mrs. Mainwaring. She put her hand into mine and I led her into the passage.

The instant we left the room Mainwaring shut and locked the door.

"That unfortunate gentleman is insane," I said to the manager of the hotel. "He must be watched, and on no account allowed to leave his bedroom without being followed."

"That is all very well, sir," replied the man, "but I must have very good evidence of the truth of your statements before I can allow any pressure to be put on the gentleman who occupies No. 39. This is a very queer story, and Mr. Mainwaring showed no signs of insanity before you came. But, insane or not, it isn't to be supposed that he wouldn't know his own wife."

"Take us into a private room and let me explain matters to you," I said. The man did so.

"On your peril," I continued, "I must request you to set someone to watch that door. I am a medical man, and you cannot trifle with my requests with impunity. That gentleman is in dangerous state, and he must be closely watched."

"Very well, sir," replied the manager, in more civil tone, "I'll tell the night porter to keep an eye on the door."

He left us for a moment, but quickly returned.

"Now, sir," he said. "I hope you'll have the goodness to explain matters a little, for, to say the least, it's a queer story."

"It is," I replied, "a very tragic one—the only explanation possible is that the unfortunate gentleman whom we have just left has become insane. I am a medical man. You can see my name in the 'Medical Directory' if you look for it. I am well known in the profession. The gentleman in No. 39 has just recovered from severe attack of typhoid fever. Until this morning he was apparently on the road to recovery. A fortnight ago he went with his wife to Cambridge to pay a short visit. They left their children at Croydon. Yesterday morning Mrs. Mainwaring heard of the illness of her eldest child and went to Croydon to see her,

leaving her husband behind her at Cambridge. When she returned to Cambridge this morning he had vanished, leaving no trace behind him. We conjectured that he had come to Dover, and followed him here."

"I remember the gentleman now quite well," said the manager. "He came here quite early to-day and asked for a good bedroom, which he said he might want for a night or even two, as he was obliged to stay here until a friend joined him."

"Did he happen to tell you the name of the friend?" I inquired.

"Yes, sir, I remember the name quite well. Mr. Mainwaring said that Mr. Leigh might arrive at any moment, and that when he did he was to be shown immediately to his room."

When the manager mentioned Leigh's name Mrs. Mainwaring broke the silence which she had maintained until now.

"Walter Leigh is dead," she exclaimed.

"Good Lord, dead!" cried the manager. "Was it sudden, madam? Does the—does Mr. Mainwaring know?"

"Walter Leigh is dead," she continued. "He has been dead for many years. But ten years ago my husband stayed at this hotel and waited for Walter Leigh to join him. He had to wait here for twenty-four hours. At the end of that time Mr. Leigh arrived, and they took the next boat to Calais."

"Have you the books of the hotel of ten years back?" I asked.

"Certainly, sir."

"Would you mind looking them up? It is important for all our sakes to substantiate the truth of this lady's words. Have you any idea, Mrs. Mainwaring, about what month your husband and Mr. Leigh went to the Continent?"

"Just after their degree examination," she replied. "They took their degrees together—that would be about this time of year."

"June ten years back," commented the manager. He seemed much impressed now, and his manner showed me how greatly he was interested.

"I will go downstairs immediately and examine the books," he said.

He returned in about ten minutes with a bewildered face.

"You are right, madam," he exclaimed; "but the good Lord only knows what it all means. I hunted up the visitors' book of ten years back, and there were the two names entered in the book as plain as you please: Edward Mainwaring, Walter Leigh. Mr. Leigh occupied No. 25 and Mr. Mainwaring the room next to it, No. 26. Now, what does all this mean?"

"That Mr. Mainwaring has forgotten ten years of his life," I answered, promptly. "He must be carefully watched during the night. Can you give Mrs. Mainwaring a bedroom? I shall also sleep at the hotel."

The manager was now only too anxious to attend to our requirements. Mrs. Mainwaring was conducted to a room on the next floor and I occupied the bedroom next Mainwaring's, which happened to be empty. Nothing occurred during the night, which was spent by me in anxious and wakeful conjecture.

At an early hour the next morning I joined Mrs. Mainwaring. One glance at her face showed me through what terrible suffering she had been passing. I told her without preamble what I considered the best and only thing to do.

"I have thought carefully over your husband's case," I said. "There is to my mind not the least doubt what has occurred. For some extraordinary reason Mr. Mainwaring has forgotten ten years of his life. His memory doubtless carries him accurately up to the date of his Cambridge degree. He remembers going to Dover, and is now under the impression that he is waiting for his friend, Mr. Leigh, to join him at this hotel. Whether he will ever recover the ten years which he has lost is impossible at the present moment to say. What I should advise now is this: Let someone whom Mr. Mainwaring knew intimately ten years ago come and see him, and tell him as simply and as forcibly as possible what has occurred. He may or may not believe this person's statement. I am inclined to hope, however, that he will bring his common sense to bear on the matter, and will not doubt what he is told; but of course I may be wrong. Anyhow, this, in my opinion, is the only thing to try. Has your husband any intimate friend whom he knew well ten years back?"

"There is his father," she replied at once.

"Good. He could not possibly see a person more likely to influence him. I think you said that his father was a clergyman—better and better—he is probably an excellent man, in whose word his son would place unbounded confidence. Does he live far away?"

"It so happens," she answered, a faint smile filling her eyes, "that my father-in-law's rectory is not far from here. His parish is close to Canterbury."

"Give me the address, and I will telegraph immediately," I said.

She supplied me with it, and I quickly prepared a telegram, which was to bring the elder Mainwaring to his son's assistance. I was writing my telegram in the hall of the hotel when Mainwaring came downstairs. He looked full at his wife and me, but did not vouchsafe us the smallest

sign of recognition. He entered the coffee-room, and I saw him sit down at a small table and order breakfast.

I whispered to the wife to take no notice. The poor woman's eyes were full of tears and she was trembling excessively, but she had the courage to do what I told her.

She and I entered the coffee-room a few moments later. We had breakfast together. Mrs. Mainwaring sat with her back to her husband, but I faced him and watched him anxiously while I ate. He had called for a daily paper and began to read it. I watched his face and saw that the contents of the paper puzzled him a good deal. He passed his hand across his forehead, took off his *pince-nez* and rubbed it, finally flung the paper on the ground and strode out of the room.

At this moment a waiter brought me a telegram. I opened it. It was not in reply to the one I had sent to Mainwaring's father, but was from a patient in town. Its character was so urgent and unexpected that I was forced to attend to it at once. It was necessary for me to catch the next train to London. I told Mrs. Mainwaring what had occurred, expressed great regret at being forced to leave her under such trying circumstances, assured her that I did not anticipate any fresh development of Mainwaring's illness, begged of her to keep out of his ways much as possible, and to wait as patiently as she could for her father-in-law's arrival. I then gave some hasty directions to the manager of the hotel and left for London. I promised to return to Dover, if possible, that evening.

My patient in town, however, was far too ill to make it advisable for me to leave him. I could not go to Dover again that day. In the evening I received a telegram from Mrs. Mainwaring to say that her father-in-law had arrived, that her husband had received him with affection, but that otherwise his condition remained absolutely unaltered.

I wired back naming an early hour on the following day for my visit to Dover, and then tried to put these anxious circumstances out of my head.

I had just breakfasted on the following day and was preparing to start on my journey, when my servant brought me a card. I took it up and read the name with amazement: Edward Mainwaring.

"Where is the gentleman?" I asked of the servant.

"I have shown him into the consulting-room, sir."

"Did not you say that I was just going out?"

"Yes," replied the man, "but he said he was sure when you saw his card that you would see him at once."



"What aged person is he?" I asked. "Middle-aged, I should say, sir. He is a tall gentleman, with a slight stoop. When he looked at me he put on his *pince-nez*"

A startled exclamation passed my lips. What strange new development of Mainwaring's disease had brought him to seek advice voluntarily from me?

I rose at once and went to the consulting-room. My patient was standing by one of the windows, but when he heard my step he turned and walked towards me.

"I have come, Dr. Halifax," he said, "to apologize for my rude behaviour towards you last night. Under the strange circumstances, I hope you will forgive me."

"I forgive you a thousand times," I replied in a hearty voice. "I cannot tell you with what inexpressible relief I see that you have already recovered your memory. Pray accept my warmest congratulations."

"Congratulations!" repeated the poor fellow, with a grim smile, "for what? I have not recovered my memory. At the present moment I am an instance of the man who lives by faith."

"What can you mean?" I said, much puzzled in my turn by his words.

"What I say," he replied. "I live by faith. My father, whom I have always revered and loved as the best of men, has made a strange statement to me—his statement confirms the story you and—" here he hesitated slightly—"and the lady you brought with you the other evening told me. I believe my father—therefore I believe you. This is a very strong act of faith. Were I asked to describe what I alone know about myself, I should say that I am at the present moment twenty-three years of age, that I have just finished a successful academic career at Trinity College, Cambridge; I mean to become a barrister and am about to read for the law, but before entering on a somewhat severe course of study I propose to go abroad with my special friend, Walter Leigh. This is exactly how matters appear to me at the present moment. With regard to my past, I can give you chapter and verse for almost every event which has occurred to me since I was a young child. My boyhood, my school days, in especial my recent life at Cambridge, are accurately remembered by me to the smallest detail. That, as far as I can tell, is my history. I am a young man with bright prospects just beginning life. I am told, however, by one whose word I cannot doubt, that I have a further history of grave importance. I am married—I have a wife and three children. I have a house at Croydon, where I have lived for over six years. I am a common-law barrister, and am rising in my profession. I have just

recovered from a severe attack of typhoid fever, during which time you visited me twice in consultation with another doctor. My father tells me of all these things, and because he is my father I believe him; but, as a matter of fact, I remember nothing whatever of this important period of my existence. That poor girl whom I treated so harshly in your presence is in reality my wife. My father says so, and I believe his word, but I have not the most remote remembrance of ever seeing my wife before. When did I woo her? When did I marry her? What was her name before she took mine? I remember nothing. All is an absolute and complete blank. In short, ten years, the most important ten years of a man's life, have been wiped out of mine. Am I insane?"

"Not in the ordinary sense," I replied; "but there is no doubt that something has gone wrong with a certain portion of your brain."

Mainwaring sank into a chair while I was speaking; now he sprang up and walked across the room.

"Merciful heavens!" he exclaimed, turning abruptly and facing me. "Then it is true. What reason is left to me almost reels before the astounding fact. It is absolutely true that my youth is over. As far as I am aware I never spent it. I never used it, but it is gone. I have a wife whom I do not love. I have children whom I care nothing whatever about. I have a profession about which I know nothing. I cannot give legal advice. I cannot accept briefs.

"My father tells me that I am a married man and a barrister. You tell me the same. I am bound to believe you both. I do believe you. All that you say is doubtless true. I am surely in the most horrible position that man ever found himself in. I am a husband, a father, a professional man. I do not remember my wife. I should not recognise my own children; and what is perhaps worst of all, from a practical point of view, I have completely lost all knowledge of my profession—I cannot therefore earn a single penny for the support of my family. I have come here to-day, Dr. Halifax, to ask you if anything can be done *to give me back my ten years!* Can you do anything for my relief? I am willing to undergo any risk. I am willing to submit to any suffering which can give me back the time that has slipped into oblivion."

"I must think carefully over your case," I said. "I need not say that it is of the deepest interest. I cannot tell you how glad I am that you have come to me as you have done. If you had chosen to doubt your father's word, it would have been absolutely impossible for me to have helped you. As it is—"

"I live by faith, as I said just now," repeated Mainwaring. "What is your

thought with regard to my condition?"

"Your condition is strange indeed," I replied. "I cannot explain it better than by comparing the brain to the cylinder of a phonograph. The nerve cells, which can be counted by thousands of millions, represent the cylinder. When certain sensations are conveyed to these cells they are imprinted on them like the impressions made by the needle on the cylinder of the phonograph. Even years afterwards the same series of events or sounds are thus reproduced. ***You have lost your cylinder for ten years.*** What I have to do is to try by some means to give it back to you again. But before I say anything further, let me ask you a question or two. You say you feel like a young man of twenty-three about to enjoy a well-earned holiday. This is equivalent to announcing the fact that you feel in perfect health."

"I certainly feel perfectly well in body," replied Mainwaring. "My mind is naturally much disturbed and upset, but I have neither ache nor pain, except—" Here he paused.

"The word 'except' points to some slight discomfort, surely?" I replied, with eagerness. "Pray tell me exactly what you feel. Any clue, however slight, is most important."

"I have a certain numbness of my right fore-arm and hand, but this is really not worth mentioning. I am absolutely strong and well. I ***feel*** twenty-three." He sighed heavily as he spoke, and sinking into a chair, looked fixedly at me. "What do you consider the cause of my extraordinary condition?" he asked, abruptly.

"The cause," I replied, "is either the plugging of an artery or the rupture of a small vessel in your brain. Thanks to the valuable researches of eminent men who have made the localization of cerebral functions the work of their lives, I am able to tell pretty readily in what portion of your brain the mischief lies."

"How?" asked Mainwaring, starting forward in his chair and gazing at me with eyes of devouring interest.

"You yourself have given me the clue," I answered, with a smile. "You tell me you have a distinct feeling of numbness in your right fore-arm and hand. We know that some of the highest cerebral centres are closely connected with the centres of the nerves of that limb. I can picture to myself—though, of course, I may be wrong—the exact spot where this lesion has taken place. It is certainly most important that something definite should be done to restore your memory and all it entails."

"Then you will do that something?" exclaimed Mainwaring. "You cannot hesitate. You will not lose a moment in giving me the relief which

I earnestly crave for.”

“I should like to consult Dr. Oliphant, the great brain specialist,” I replied.

Mainwaring sprang again to his feet.

“No,” he said, “that I cannot permit. He may say nothing can be done, and then you may have scruples with regard to the right of exposing my life to a certain risk. I will permit no consultation. If you know what is the matter with me, you can give me relief without seeking for further assistance. Do you think I value life under existing circumstances? Not that!” He flipped some imaginary substance away from him as he spoke with his finger and thumb. “I put myself absolutely into your hands, Dr. Halifax,” he said, making an effort to restrain himself. “You say that an artery is plugged in my brain, or that there is the rupture of a small blood-vessel. You can surely do something to remove the obstruction?”

“Yes,” I said, “I can perform a certain operation, which I will shortly explain to you. I know you are a brave man; I do not, therefore, hesitate to tell you that the operation is of a very serious nature, also that there is a possibility of my being wrong with regard to the localization of the injury.”

“There is also a possibility of your being right,” retorted Mainwaring. “I will accept the risk. I wish the operation to be performed.”

“I should certainly like to consult Dr. Oliphant,” I repeated.

“You cannot do so against my express wish. I insist on the operation being performed, even at the risk of life—can I say more?”

“You certainly cannot,” I answered. I looked fixedly at him. He was a fine fellow. Intelligence, resolve, endurance, were manifest in his expressive eyes and strong, masculine features.

“I am inclined to believe that I shall be successful,” I said, rising and speaking with enthusiasm. “I will agree to do what you wish, and we will leave the results in the Highest Hands. The operation is doubtless a very grave one, but you are a man temperate in all things. You have also abundantly proved that you have a good constitution. With extreme care your life may not be even endangered. In that case you will be, at the worst, only as you are now. At the best you will be yourself once again. If what I think is the case, I can, by the operation which I propose, remove the obstruction which now cuts off from a portion of your brain the necessary life blood which alone can assure its working. In short, I can restore your brain to its normal state. I propose to open the cranial cavity at the exact spot where I think the mischief is.”

"Good," replied Mainwaring; "I leave myself in your hands. How soon can you put me right?"

"I must see your wife and your father."

"Will you return with me now to Dover?"

"No," I answered. "You are so far yourself that you do not need me to accompany you. Take the next train to Dover. Tell your father and wife what you have resolved to do. I will take lodgings for you in a quiet street near this, and will perform the operation to-morrow."

A moment or two later Mainwaring left me.

The die was practically now cast. I was going to experiment, and in a daring manner. It was possible that the result might lead to fatal consequences. I knew this possibility; nevertheless, I scarcely feared that it would arise. I had explained everything clearly to Mainwaring—he was willing to accept the risk. If his wife and father were also willing, I would perform the operation on the following day.

That afternoon I took comfortable rooms for my patient in a street adjoining that in which I lived. I also engaged an excellent surgical nurse, in whom I could place perfect confidence. There was then nothing more to do except to await the arrival of the Mainwarings.

Mrs. Mainwaring and her father-in-law arrived at the rooms which I had taken for them, late that evening. They sent me a message at once to say they would be glad to see me, and I hurried to pay them a visit. Mrs. Mainwaring looked pale—her face was haggard—her eyes disturbed and restless. She came impulsively to meet me, and clasped one of my hands in both of hers.

"Edward has told me what you propose to do," she exclaimed, "and I am willing—I am abundantly willing that he should run this great risk."

Her words almost surprised me. I looked from her to her father-in-law, who now held out his hand.

"I have often heard of you, Dr. Halifax," he said, with a courteous, old-fashioned gesture. "I think you know some special friends of mine. I may say that I place absolute confidence in your skill, and am willing to put my son's life in your hands."

I looked attentively from one face to the other.

"I am glad you both give your consent," I replied. "I should not perform the operation, which I trust will relieve Mr. Mainwaring, without your mutual sanction. I must tell you plainly, however, that although I am willing to do it, it is accompanied by grave risk, and I do not believe another doctor in London would attempt it."

"You mean that Edward may die?" said the wife in a low voice.

I looked her full in the eyes.

"There is a possibility," I said.

"But I do not think he will," she said, a wonderful light leaping into her face. "I am a woman—a woman does not always reason, but she strongly believes in instincts—my instinct tells me that you will save my husband, and in short give him back to me as he was before. At the worst, even at the worst—" here she turned ghastly pale, "he would **know** me in another world. I could endure to be parted with him on those conditions. I cannot—I cannot endure the present state of things." Her composure suddenly gave way, she sobbed aloud.

"There is nothing more to be said," I remarked, after a brief pause. "I have all your consents, and have made full arrangements to perform the operation to-morrow morning. A clever surgeon, whom I know well, will assist me, and an excellent trained nurse will arrive at an early hour to get the patient ready for our visit. By the way, where is your husband, Mrs. Mainwarming?"

She had dried her eyes by this time.

"He is in the house," she said, "but he does not wish to see you again until the moment when you can give him relief."

I said a few more words, and soon afterwards took my leave.

Early the next morning, accompanied by a surgeon and an anaesthetist on whose assistance I could depend, I arrived at Queen Anne's Street. We were shown at once to the room where my patient waited for me. He was sitting in a chair near the window. The nurse was standing in the background, having made all necessary preparations.

"Here you are," he said, rising and greeting me with a cheerful smile, "and here am I, and there is a Providence over us. Now, the sooner you put things right the better."

His courage delighted me. I was also much relieved to find that neither his wife nor father was present.

"With the help of God, I believe I shall put you right," I said, in a tone of assurance, which I absolutely felt.

An hour and a half later I went into the sitting-room, where Mainwaring's father and wife were anxiously waiting for my verdict.

"The operation is well over," I exclaimed, "and my patient is at present sound asleep. When he awakens the moment will have arrived when we must prove whether I have done anything for him or not. Will you have the courage to come into the room with me, Mrs. Mainwaring? I should like him to see you when he opens his eyes. If he recognises you, I shall know that I have been successful."

To my surprise she shrank back.

"No," she said, "the ordeal is too terrible. Failure means too much agony. I cannot endure it; I am not strong enough."

"Then what is to be done?" I asked.

"In any case, Mainwaring will know his father. His knowledge of you is the test which I require to tell me whether I have succeeded or failed."

She smiled faintly and left the room. In a moment she returned, holding by the hand a beautiful little girl of five years of age. She had a wealth of red-gold hair falling almost to her waist; her large eyes were like sapphires.

"This is Nancy," said the mother, "her father's pet and idol. I sent for her this morning. When my husband awakens, take her into the room—she is not shy. If her father recognises her, all is well."

"Very well," I replied.

All that day I watched by Mainwaring; in the evening I came for Nancy. "Come," I said. The child looked at me with her grave eyes—she was perfectly calm and self-possessed. I lifted her in my arms and left the room with her.

I entered the bedroom where my patient lay. The child's arms encircled my neck. My heart was beating quickly, anxiously. Little Nancy looked at me in surprise.

"Is father ill?" she asked.

Mainwaring's eyes were open. I put the child on the floor.

"Go and speak to him," I said.

She ran up to the bed.

"Are you ill, dad?" she repeated, in a clear, high voice.


"Halloa, Nan!" he said, smiling at her.

He stretched out one of his hands. The child caught it and covered it with kisses.

"Send your mother to me, my sweet Nan," he said, after a pause.

Then I knew that Mainwaring had got back his ten years.

## An Oak Coffin

 On a certain cold morning in early spring, I was visited by two ladies, mother and daughter. The mother was dressed as a widow. She was a tall, striking-looking woman, with full, wide-open dark eyes, and a mass of rich hair turned back from a white and noble brow. Her lips were firm, her features well formed. She seemed to have plenty of character, but the deep lines of sadness under her eyes and round her lips were very remarkable. The daughter was a girl of fourteen, slim to weediness. Her eyes were dark, like her mother's, and she had an abundance of tawny brown and very handsome hair. It hung down her back below her waist, and floated over her shoulders. She was dressed, like her mother, in heavy mourning, and round her young mouth and dark, deep eyes there lingered the same inexpressible sadness.

I motioned my visitors to chairs, and waited as usual to learn the reason of their favouring me with a call.

"My name is Heathcote," said the elder lady. "I have lately lost my husband. I have come to you on account of my daughter—she is not well."

I glanced again more attentively at the young girl. I saw that she looked over-strained and nervous. Her restlessness, too, was so apparent that she could scarcely sit still, and catching up a paper-knife which stood on the table near, she began twirling it rapidly between her finger and thumb.

"It does me good to fidget with something," she said, glancing apologetically at her mother.

"What are your daughter's symptoms?" I asked.

Mrs. Heathcote began to describe them in the vague way which characterizes a certain class of patient. I gathered at last from her words that Gabrielle would not eat—she slept badly—she was weak and depressed—she took no interest in anything.

"How old is Miss Gabrielle?" I asked.



"She will be fifteen her next birthday," replied her mother.

All the while Mrs. Heathcote was speaking, the young daughter kept her eyes fixed on the carpet—she still twirled the paper-knife, and once or twice she yawned profoundly.

I asked her to prepare for the usual medical examination. She complied without any alacrity, and with a look on her face which said plainly, "Young as I am, I know how useless all this fuss is—I only submit because I must."

I felt her pulse and sounded her heart and lungs. The action of the heart was a little weak, but the lungs were perfectly healthy. In short, beyond a general physical and mental debility, I could find nothing whatever the matter with the girl.

After a time, I rang the bell to desire my servant to take Miss Heathcote into another room, in order that I might speak to her mother alone.

The young lady went away very unwillingly. The sceptical expression on her face was more apparent than ever.

"You will be sure to tell me the exact truth?" said Mrs. Heathcote, as soon as we were alone.

"I have very little to tell," I replied. "I have examined your daughter carefully. She is suffering from no disease to which a name can be attached. She is below par, certainly; there is weakness and general depression, but a tonic ought to set all these matters right."

"I have tried tonics without avail," said Mrs. Heathcote.

"Has not your family physician seen Miss Heathcote?"

"Not lately." The widow's manner became decidedly hesitating. "The fact is, we have not consulted him since—since Mr. Heathcote's death," she said.

"When did that take place?"

"Six months ago."

Here she spoke with infinite sadness, and her face, already very pale, turned perceptibly paler.

"Is there nothing you can tell me to give me a clue to your daughter's condition? Is there anything, for instance, preying on her mind?"

"Nothing whatever."

"The expression of her face is very sad for so young a girl."

"You must remember," said Mrs. Heathcote, "that she has lately lost her father."

"Even so," I replied; "that would scarcely account for her nervous condition. A healthy-minded child will not be overcome with grief to the

serious detriment of health after an interval of six months. At least," I added, "that is my experience in ordinary cases."

"I am grieved to hear it," said Mrs. Heathcote.

She looked very much troubled. Her agitation was apparent in her trembling hands and quivering lips.

"Your daughter is in a nervous condition," I said, rising. "She has no disease at present, but a little extra strain might develop real disease, or might affect her nerves, already overstrung, to a dangerous degree. I should recommend complete change of air and scene immediately."

Mrs. Heathcote sighed heavily.

"You don't look very well yourself," I said, giving her a keen glance.

She flushed crimson.

"I have felt my sorrow acutely," she replied.

I made a few more general remarks, wrote a prescription for the daughter, and bade Mrs. Heathcote good-bye.

About the same hour on the following morning I was astonished when my servant brought me a card on which was scribbled in pencil the name *Gabrielle Heathcote*, and underneath, in the same upright, but unformed hand, the words, "*I want to see you most urgently.*"

A few moments later, Miss Gabrielle was standing in my consulting-room. Her appearance was much the same as yesterday, except that now her face was eager, watchful, and all awake.

"How do you do?" she said, holding out her hand, and blushing. "I have ventured to come alone, and I haven't brought a fee. Does that matter?"

"Not in the least," I replied. "Pray sit down and tell me what you want."

"I would rather stand," she answered; "I feel too restless and excited to sit still. I stole away from home without letting mother know. I liked your look yesterday and determined to see you again. Now, may I confide in you?"

"You certainly may," I replied.

My interest in this queer child was a good deal aroused. I felt certain that I was right in my conjectures of yesterday, and that this young creature was really burdened with some secret which was gravely undermining her health.

"I am willing to listen to you," I continued. "You must be brief, of course, for I am a very busy man, but anything you can say which will throw light on your own condition, and so help me to cure you, will, of course, be welcome."

"You think me very nervous?" said Miss Gabrielle.

"Your nerves are out of order," I replied.

"You know that I don't sleep at night?"

"Yes."

Miss Gabrielle looked towards the door.

"Is it shut?" she asked, excitedly.

"Of course it is."

She came close to me, her voice dropped to a hoarse whisper, her face turned not only white but grey.

"I can stand it no longer," she said. "I'll tell you the truth. You wouldn't sleep either if you were me. My father isn't dead!"

"Nonsense," I replied. "You must control such imaginings, Miss Gabrielle, or you will really get into a very unhealthy condition of mind."

"That's what mother says when I speak to her," replied the child. "But I tell you, this thing is true. My father is not dead. I know it."

"How can you possibly know it?" I asked.

"I have seen him—there!"

"You have seen your father!—but he died six months ago?"

"Yes. He died—and was buried, and I went to his funeral. But all the same he is not dead now."

"My dear young lady," I said, in as soothing a tone as I could assume, "you are the victim of what is called a hallucination. You have felt your father's death very acutely."

"I have. I loved him beyond words. He was so kind, so affectionate, so good to me. It almost broke my heart when he died. I thought I could never be happy again. Mother was as wretched as myself. There weren't two more miserable people in the wide world. It seemed impossible to either of us to smile or be cheerful again. I began to sleep badly, for I cried so much, and my eyes ached, and I did not care for lessons any more."

"All these feelings will pass," I replied; "they are natural, but time will abate their violence."

"You think so?" said the girl, with a strange smile. "Now let me go on with my story: It was at Christmas time I first saw my father. We live in an old house at Brixton. It has a walled-in garden. I was standing by my window about midnight. I had been in bed for an hour or more, but I could not sleep. The house was perfectly quiet. I got out of bed and went to the window and drew up the blind. I stood by the window and looked out into the garden, which was covered with snow. There, standing under the window, with his arms folded, was father. He stood

perfectly still, and turned his head slowly, first in the direction of my room and then in that of mother's. He stood there for quite five minutes, and then walked across the grass into the shelter of the shrubbery. I put a cloak on and rushed downstairs. I unbolted the front door and went into the garden. I shouted my father's name and ran into the shrubbery to look for him, but he wasn't there, and I—I think I fainted. When I came to myself I was in bed and mother was bending over me. Her face was all blistered as if she had been crying terribly. I told her that I had just seen father, and she said it was a dream."

"So it was," I replied.

Miss Gabrielle's dark brows were knit in some pain.

"I did not think you would take that common-place view," she responded.

"I am sorry I have offended you," I answered. "Girls like you do have bad dreams when they are in trouble, and those dreams are often so vivid, that they mistake them for realities."

"Very well, then, I have had more of those vivid dreams. I have seen my father again. The last time I saw him he was in the house. It was about a month ago. As usual, I could not sleep, and I went downstairs quite late to get the second volume of a novel which interested me. There was father walking across the passage. His back was to me. He opened the study door and went in. He shut it behind him. I rushed to it in order to open it and follow him. It was locked, and though I screamed through the key-hole, no one replied to me. Mother found me kneeling by the study door and shouting through the key-hole to father. She was up and dressed, which seemed strange at so late an hour. She took me upstairs and put me to bed, and pretended to be angry with me, but when I told her that I had seen father she burst into the most awful bitter tears and said: 'Oh, Gabrielle, he is dead—dead—quite dead!'

"Then he comes here from the dead,' I said. 'No, he is not dead. I have just seen him.'

"My poor child,' said mother, 'I must take you to a good doctor without delay. You must not get this thing on your brain.'

"Very well,' I replied; 'I am quite willing to see Dr. Mackenzie.'"

I interrupted the narrative to inquire who Dr. Mackenzie was.

"He is our family physician," replied the young lady. "He has attended us for years."

"And what did your mother say when you proposed to see him?"

"She shivered violently, and said: 'No, I won't have him in the house.' After a time she decided to bring me to you."

"And have you had that hallucination again?" I inquired.

"It was not a hallucination," she answered, pouting her lips.

"I will humour you," I answered. "Have you seen your father again?"

"No, and I am not likely to."

"Why do you think that?"

"I cannot quite tell you—I think mother is in it. Mother is very unhappy about something, and she looks at me at times as if she were afraid of me." Here Miss Heathcote rose. "You said I was not to stay long," she remarked. "Now I have told you everything. You see that it is absolutely impossible for ordinary medicines to cure me, any more than ordinary medicines can cure mother of her awful dreams."

"I did not know that your mother dreamt badly," I said.

"She does—but she doesn't wish it spoken of. She dreams so badly, she cries out so terribly in her sleep, that she has moved from her old bedroom next to mine, to one in a distant wing of the house. Poor mother, I am sorry for her, but I am glad at least that I have had courage to tell you what I have seen. You will make it your business to find out the truth now, won't you?"

"What do you mean?" I asked.

"Why, of course, my father is alive," she retorted. "You have got to prove that he is, and to give him back to me again. I leave the matter in your hands. I know you are wise and very clever. Good-bye, good-bye!"

The queer girl left me, tears rolling down her cheeks. I was obliged to attend to other patients, but it was impossible for me to get Miss Heathcote's story out of my head. There was no doubt whatever that she was telling me what she firmly believed to be the truth. She had either seen her father once more in the flesh, or she was the victim of a very strong hallucination. In all probability the latter supposition was the correct one. A man could not die and have a funeral and yet still be alive; but, then, on the other hand, when Mrs. Heathcote brought Gabrielle to see me yesterday, why had she not mentioned this central and principal feature of her malady? Mrs. Heathcote had said nothing whatever with regard to Gabrielle's delusions. Then why was the mother so nervous? Why did she say nothing about her own bad dreams, dreams so disturbing, that she was obliged to change her bedroom in order that her daughter should not hear her scream?

"I leave the matter in your hands!" Miss Heathcote had said. Poor child, she had done so with a vengeance. I could not get the story out of my thoughts, and so uncomfortable did the whole thing make me that I determined to pay Dr. Mackenzie a visit.

MacIntenzie was a physician in very large practice at Brixton. His name was already familiar to me—on one or two occasions I had met him in consultation. I looked up his address in the Medical Directory, and that very evening took a hansom to his house. He happened to be at home. I sent in my card and was admitted at once.

Mackenzie received me in his consulting-room, and I was not long in explaining the motive of my visit. After a few preliminary remarks, I said that I would be glad if he would favour me with full particulars with regard to Heathcote's death.

"I can easily do so," said Mackenzie. "The case was a perfectly straightforward one—my patient was consumptive, had been so for years, and died at last of hæmoptysis."

"What aged man was he?" I asked.

"Not old—a little past forty—a tall, slight, good-looking man, with a somewhat emaciated face. In short, his was an ordinary case of consumption."

I told Mackenzie all about the visit which I had received from Mrs. Heathcote, and gave him a faithful version of the strange story which Miss Gabrielle Heathcote had told me that day.

"Miss Gabrielle is an excitable girl," replied the doctor. "I have had a good deal to do with her for many years, and always thought her nerves highly strung. She is evidently the victim of a delusion, caused by the effect of grief on a somewhat delicate organism. She probably inherits her father's disease. Mrs. Heathcote should take her from home immediately."

"Mrs. Heathcote looks as if she needed change almost as badly as her daughter," I answered; "but now you will forgive me if I ask you a few more questions. Will you oblige me by describing Heathcote's death as faithfully as you can?"

"Certainly," replied the physician.

He sank down into a chair at the opposite side of the hearth as he spoke.

"The death, when it came," he continued, "was, I must confess, unexpected. I had sounded Heathcote's lungs about three months previous to the time of his death seizure. Phthisis was present, but not to an advanced degree. I recommended his wintering abroad. He was a solicitor by profession, and had a good practice. I remember his asking me, with a comical rise of his brows, how he was to carry on his profession so many miles from Chancery Lane. But to come to his death. It took place six months ago, in the beginning of September. It had been a hot season, and I had just returned from my holiday. My portmanteau and

Gladstone bag had been placed in the hall, and I was paying the cabman his fare, when a servant from the Heathcotes arrived, and begged of me to go immediately to her master, who was, she said, dying.

"I hurried off to the house without a moment's delay. It is a stone's throw from here. In fact, you can see the walls of the garden from the windows of this room in the daytime. I reached the house. Gabrielle was standing in the hall. I am an old friend of hers. Her face was quite white and had a stunned expression. When she saw me she rushed to me, clasped one of my hands in both of hers, and burst into tears.

"Go and save him!" she gasped, her voice choking with sobs, which were almost hysterical.

"A lady who happened to be staying in the house came and drew the girl away into one of the sitting-rooms, and I went upstairs. I found Heathcote in his own room. He was lying on the bed—he was a ghastly sight. His face wore the sick hue of death itself; the sheet, his hair, and even his face were all covered with blood. His wife was standing over him, wiping away the blood, which oozed from his lips. I saw, of course, immediately what was the matter. Hemoptysis had set in, and I felt that his hours were numbered.

"He has broken a blood vessel," exclaimed Mrs. Heathcote. "He was standing here, preparing to go down to dinner, when he coughed violently—the blood began to pour from his mouth; I got him on the bed and sent for you. The hemorrhage seems to be a little less violent now."

"I examined my patient carefully, feeling his pulse, which was very weak and low; I cautioned him not to speak a single word, and asked Mrs. Heathcote to send for some ice immediately. She did so. I packed him in ice and gave him a dose of ergotine. He seemed easier, and I left him, promising to return again in an hour or two. Miss

Gabrielle met me in the hall as I went out.

"Is he any better? Is there any hope at all?" she asked, as I left the house.

"Your father is easier now," I replied; "the hemorrhage has been arrested. I am coming back soon. You must be a good girl and try to comfort your mother in every way in your power."

"Then there is no hope?" she answered, looking me full in the face.

"I could not truthfully say that there was. I knew poor Heathcote's days were numbered, although I scarcely thought the end would come so quickly."

"What do you mean?" I inquired.

"Why this," he replied. "Less than an hour after I got home, I received a brief note from Mrs. Heathcote. In it she stated that fresh and very violent hemorrhage had set in almost immediately after I left, and that her husband was dead."

"And—" I continued.

"Well, that is the story. Poor Heathcote had died of hemoptysis."

"Did you see the body after death?" I inquired, after a pause.

"No—it was absolutely unnecessary—the cause of death was so evident. I attended the funeral, though. Heathcote was buried at Kensal Green."

I made no comment for a moment or two.

"I am sorry you did not see the body after death," I said, after a pause.

My remark seemed to irritate Mackenzie. He looked at me with raised brows.

"Would you have thought it necessary to do so?" he asked. "A man known to be consumptive dies of violent hemorrhage of the lungs. The family are in great trouble—there is much besides to think of. Would you under the circumstances have considered it necessary to refuse to give a certificate without seeing the body?"

I thought for a moment.

"I make a rule of always seeing the body," I replied; "but, of course, you were justified, as the law stands. Well, then, there is no doubt Heathcote is really dead?"

"Really dead?" retorted Mackenzie. "Don't you understand that he has been in his grave for six months?—That I practically saw him die?—That I attended his funeral? By what possible chance can the man be alive?"

"None," I replied. "He is dead, of course. I am sorry for the poor girl. She ought to leave home immediately."

"Girls of her age often have delusions," said Mackenzie. "I doubt not this will pass in time. I am surprised, however, that the Heathcotes allowed the thing to go on so long. I remember now that I have never been near the house since the funeral. I cannot understand their not calling me in."

"That fact puzzles me also," I said. "They came to me, a total stranger, instead of consulting their family physician, and Mrs. Heathcote carefully concealed the most important part of her daughter's malady. It is strange altogether; and, although I can give no explanation whatever, I am convinced there is one if we could only get at it. One more question before I go, Mackenzie. You spoke of Heathcote as a solicitor: has he left his family well off?"



"They are not rich," replied Mackenzie; "but as far as I can tell, they don't seem to want for money. I believe their house, Ivy Hall is its name, belongs to them. They live there very quietly, with a couple of maid-servants. I should say they belonged to the well-to-do middle classes."

"Then money troubles cannot explain the mystery?" I replied.

"Believe me, there is no mystery," answered Mackenzie, in an annoyed voice.

I held out my hand to wish him good-bye, when a loud peal at the front door startled us both. If ever there was frantic haste in anything, there was in that ringing peal.

"Someone wants you in a hurry," I said to the doctor.

He was about to reply, when the door of the consulting-room was flung wide open, and Gabrielle Heathcote rushed into the room.

"Mother is very ill," she exclaimed. "I think she is out of her mind. Come to her at once."

She took Mackenzie's hand in hers.

"There isn't a minute to lose," she said, "she may kill herself. She came to me with a carving-knife in her hand; I rushed away at once for you. The two servants are with her now, and they are doing all they can; but, oh I pray, do be quick."

At this moment Gabrielle's eyes rested on me. A look of relief and almost ecstasy passed over her poor, thin little face.

"You are here!" she exclaimed. "You will come, too? Oh, how glad I am."

"If Dr. Mackenzie will permit me," I replied, "I shall be only too pleased to accompany him."

"By all means come, you may be of the greatest use," he answered.

We started at once. As soon as we left the house Gabrielle rushed from us.

"I am going to have the front door open for you both when you arrive," she exclaimed.

She disappeared as if on the wings of the wind.

"That is a good girl," I said, turning to the other doctor.

"She has always been deeply attached to both her parents," he answered.

We did not either of us say another word until we got to Ivy Hall. It was a rambling old house, with numerous low rooms and a big entrance-hall. I could fancy that in the summer it was cheerful enough, with its

large, walled-in garden. The night was a dark one, but there would be a moon presently.

Gabrielle was waiting in the hall to receive us.

"I will take you to the door of mother's room," she exclaimed.

Her words came out tremblingly, her face was like death. She was shaking all over. She ran up the stairs before us, and then down a long passage which led to a room a little apart from the rest of the house.

"I told you mother wished to sleep in a room as far away from me as possible," she said, flashing a glance into my face as she spoke.

I nodded in reply. We opened the door and went in. The sight which met our eyes was one with which most medical men are familiar.

The patient was lying on the bed in a state of violent delirium. Two maid-servants were bending over her, and evidently much exciting her feelings in their efforts to hold her down. I spoke at once with authority.

"You can leave the room now," I said—only remain within call in case you are wanted."

They obeyed instantly, looking at me with surprised glances, and at Mackenzie with manifest relief.

I shut the door after them and approached the bed. One glance showed that Mrs. Heathcote was not mad in the ordinary sense, but that she was suffering at the moment from acute delirium. I put my hand on her forehead: it burned with fever. Her pulse was rapid and uneven. Mackenzie took her temperature, which was very nearly a hundred and four degrees. While we were examining her she remained quiet, but presently, as we stood together and watched her, she began to rave again.

"What is it, Gabrielle? No, no, he is quite dead, child. I tell you I saw the men screw his coffin down. He's dead—quite dead. Oh, God! oh, God! yes, dead, dead!"

She sat up in bed and stared straight before her.

"You mustn't come here so often," she said, looking past us into the centre of the room, and addressing someone whom she seemed to see with distinctness, "I tell you it isn't safe. Gabrielle suspects. Don't come so often—I'll manage some other way. Trust me. Do trust me. You know I won't let you starve. Oh, go away, go away."

She flung herself back on the bed and pressed her hands frantically to her burning eyes.

"Your father has been dead six months now, Gabrielle," she said, presently, in a changed voice. "No one was ever more dead. I tell you I saw him die; he was buried, and you went to, his funeral."

Here again her voice altered. She sat upright and motioned with her hand. "Will you bring the coffin in here, please, into this room? Yes; it seems a nice coffin—well finished. The coffin is made of oak. That is right. Oak lasts. I can't bear coffins that crumble away very quickly. This is a good one—you have taken pains with it—I am pleased. Lay him in gently. He is not very heavy, is he? You see how worn he is. Consumption!—yes, consumption. He had been a long time dying, but at the end it was sudden. Hemorrhage of the lungs. We did it to save Gabrielle, and to keep away—what, what, what did we want to keep away?—Oh, yes, dishonour! The—the—" Here she burst into a loud laugh.

"You don't suppose, you undertaker's men, that I'm going to tell you what we did it for? Dr. Mackenzie was there—he saw him just at the end. Now you have placed him nicely in his coffin, and you can go. Thank you, you can go now. I don't want you to see his face. A dead face is too sacred. You must not look on it. He is peaceful, only pale, very pale. All dead people look pale. Is he as pale as most dead people? Oh, I forgot—you can't see him. And as cold? Oh, yes, I think so, quite. You want to screw the coffin down, of course, of course—I was forgetting. Now, be quick about it. Why, do you know, I was very nearly having him buried with the coffin open! Screw away now, screw away. Ah, how that noise grates on my nerves. I shall go mad if you are not quick. Do be quick—be **quick**, and leave me alone with my dead. Oh, God, with my dead, my dead!"

The wretched woman's voice sank to a hoarse whisper. She struggled on to her knees, and folding her hands, began to pray. "God in Heaven have mercy upon me and upon my dead," she moaned. "Now, now, now! where's the screwdriver? Oh, heavens, it's lost, it's lost! We are undone! My God, what is the matter with me? My brain reels. Oh, my God, my God!"

She moaned fearfully. We laid her back on the bed. Her mutterings became more rapid and indistinct. Presently she slept.

"She must not be left in this condition," said Mackenzie to me. "It would be very bad for Gabrielle to be with her mother now. And those young servants are not to be trusted. I will go and send in a nurse as soon as possible. Can you do me the inestimable favour of remaining here until a nurse arrives?"

"I was going to propose that I should, in any case, spend the night here," I replied.

"That is more than good of you," said the doctor.

"Not at all," I answered; "the case interests me extremely."

A moment or two later Mackenzie left the house. During his absence Mrs. Heathcote slept, and I sat and watched her. The fever raged very high—she muttered constantly in her terrible dreams, but said nothing coherent. I felt very anxious about her. She had evidently been subjected to a most frightful strain, and now all her nature was giving way. I dared not think what her words implied. My mission was at present to do what I could for her relief.

The nurse arrived about midnight. She was a sensible, middle-aged woman, very strong too, and evidently accustomed to fever patients. I gave her some directions, desired her to ring a certain bell if she required my assistance, and left the room. As I went slowly downstairs I noticed the moon had risen. The house was perfectly still—the sick woman's moans could not be heard beyond the distant wing of the house where she slept. As I went downstairs I remembered Gabrielle's story about the moonlit garden and her father's figure standing there. I felt a momentary curiosity to see what the garden was like, and, moving aside a blind, which concealed one of the lobby windows, looked out. I gave one hurried glance and started back. Was I, too, the victim of illusion? Standing in the garden was the tall figure of a man with folded arms. He was looking away from me, but the light fell on his face: it was cadaverous and ghastly white; his hat was off; he moved into a deep shadow. It was all done in an instant—he came and went like a flash.

I pursued my way softly downstairs. This man's appearance seemed exactly to coincide with Mackenzie's description of Heathcote; but was it possible, in any of the wonderful possibilities of this earth, that a man could rise from his coffin and walk the earth again? Gabrielle was waiting for me in the cheerful drawing-room. A bright fire burned in the grate, there were candles on brackets, and one or two shaded lamps placed on small tables. On one table, a little larger than the rest, a white cloth was spread. It also contained a tray with glasses, some claret and sherry in decanters, and a plate of sandwiches.

"You must be tired," said Gabrielle. "Please have a glass of wine, and please eat something. I know those sandwiches are good—I made them myself."

She pressed me to eat and drink. In truth, I needed refreshment. The scene in the sick room had told even on my iron nerves, and the sight from the lobby window had almost taken my breath away.

Gabrielle attended on me as if she were my daughter. I was touched by her solicitude, and by the really noble way in which she tried to put self

out of sight. At last she said, in a voice which shook with emotion: "I know, Dr. Halifax, that you think badly of mother."

"Your mother is very ill indeed," I answered.

"It is good of you to come and help her. You are a great doctor, are you not?"

I smiled at the child's question.

"I want you to tell me something about the beginning of your mother's illness," I said, after a pause. "When I saw her two days ago, she scarcely considered herself ill at all—in fact, you were supposed to be the patient."

Gabrielle dropped into the nearest chair.

"There is a mystery somewhere," she said, "but I cannot make it out. When I came back, after seeing you today, mother seemed very restless and troubled. I thought she would have questioned me about being so long away, and ask me at least what I had done with myself. Instead of that, she asked me to tread softly. She said she had such an intolerable headache that she could not endure the least sound. I saw she had been out, for she had her walking boots on, and they were covered with mud. I tried to coax her to eat something, but she would not, and as I saw she really wished to be alone, I left her.

"At teatime, our parlour-maid, Peters, told me that mother had gone to bed and had given directions that she was on no account to be disturbed. I had tea alone, and then came in here and made the place as bright and comfortable as I could. Once or twice before, since my father's death, mother has suffered from acute headaches, and has gone to bed, but when they got better, she has dressed and come downstairs again. I thought she might like to do so to-night, and that she would be pleased to see a bright room and everything cheerful about her.

"I got a story-book and tried to read, but my thoughts were with mother, and I felt dreadfully puzzled and anxious. The time seemed very long too, and I heartily wished that the night were over. I went upstairs about eight o'clock, and listened outside mother's door. She was moaning and talking to herself. It seemed to me that she was saying dreadful things. I quite shuddered as I listened. I knocked at the door, but there was no answer. Then I turned the handle and tried to enter, but the door was locked. I went downstairs again, and Peters came to ask me if I would like supper. She was still in the room, and I had not made up my mind whether I could eat anything or not, when I heard her give a short scream, and turning round, I saw mother standing in the room in her nightdress. She had the carving-knife in her hand.

“‘Gabrielle,’ she said, in a quiet voice, but with an awful look in her eyes, ‘I want you to tell me the truth. Is there any blood on my hands?’

“‘No, no, mother,’ I answered.

“She gave a deep sigh, and looked at them as if she were Lady Macbeth.

“‘Gabrielle,’ she said again, ‘I can’t live any longer without your father. I have made this knife sharp, and it won’t take long.’

“Then she turned and left the room. Peters ran for cook, and they went upstairs after her, and I rushed for Dr. Mackenzie.”

“It was a fearful ordeal for you,” I said, “and you behaved very bravely; but you must not think too much about your mother’s condition, nor about any words which she happened to say. She is highly feverish at present, and is not accountable for her actions. Sit down now, please, and take a glass of wine yourself.”

“No, thank you—I never take wine.”

“I’m glad to hear you say so, for in that case a glass of this good claret will do wonders for you. Here, I’m going to pour one out—now drink it off at once.”

She obeyed me with a patient sort of smile. She was very pale, but the wine brought some colour into her cheeks.

“I am interested in your story,” I said, after a pause. “Particularly in what you told me about your poor father. He must have been an interesting man, for you to treasure his memory so deeply. Do you mind describing him to me?”

She flushed up when I spoke. I saw that tears were very near her eyes, and she bit her lips to keep back emotion.

“My father was like no one else,” she said. “It is impossible for me to make a picture of him for one who has not seen him.”

“But you can at least tell me if he were tall or short, dark or fair, old or young?”

“No, I can’t,” she said, after another pause. “He was just father. When you love your father, he has a kind of eternal youth to you, and you don’t discriminate his features. If you are his only child, his is just the one face in all the world to you. I find it impossible to describe the face, although it fills my mind’s eye, waking and sleeping. But, stay, I have a picture of him. I don’t show it to many, but you shall see it.”

She rushed out of the room, returning in a moment with a morocco case. She opened it, and brought over a candle at the same time so that the light should fall on the picture within. It represented a tall, slight man, with deep-set eyes and a very thin face. The eyes were somewhat

piercing in their glance; the lips were closely set and firm; the chin was cleft. The face showed determination. I gave it a quick glance, and, closing the case, returned it to Gabrielle.

The face was the face of the man I had seen in the garden.

— *Meade & Halifax* —

My patient passed a dreadful night. She was no better the next morning. Her temperature was rather higher, her pulse quicker, her respiration more hurried. Her ravings had now become almost incoherent. Mackenzie and I had an anxious consultation over her. When he left the house I accompanied him.

"I am going to make a strange request of you," I said. "I wish for your assistance, and am sure you will not refuse to give it to me. In short, I want to take immediate steps to have Heathcote's coffin opened."

I am quite sure Mackenzie thought that I was mad. He looked at me, opened his lips as if to speak, but then waited to hear my next words.

"I want to have Heathcote's body exhumed," I said. "If you will listen to me, I will tell you why."

I then gave him a graphic account of the man I had seen in the garden. "There is foul play somewhere," I said, in conclusion. "I have been dragged into this thing almost against my will, and now I am determined to see it through."

Mackenzie flung up his hands.

"I don't pretend to doubt your wisdom," he said; "but to ask me gravely to assist you to exhume the body of a man who died of consumption six months ago, is enough to take my breath away. What reason can you possibly give to the authorities for such an action?"

"That I have strong grounds for believing that the death never took place at all," I replied. "Now, will you co-operate with me in this matter, or not?"

"Oh, of course, I'll co-operate with you," he answered. "But I don't pretend to say that I like the business."

We walked together to his house, talking over the necessary steps which must be taken to get an order for exhumation. Mackenzie promised to telegraph to me as soon as ever this was obtained, and I was obliged to hurry off to attend to my own duties. As I was stepping into my hansom I turned to ask the doctor one more question.

"Have you any reason to suppose that Heathcote was heavily insured?" I asked.

"No; I don't know anything about it," he answered.

"You are quite sure there were no money troubles anywhere?"

"I do not know of any; but that fact amounts to nothing, for I was not really intimate with the family, and, as I said yesterday evening, never entered the house until last night from the day of the funeral. I have never heard of money troubles; but, of course, they might have existed."

"As soon as ever I hear from you, I will make an arrangement to meet you at Kensal Green," I replied, and then I jumped into the hansom and drove away.

In the course of the day I got a telegram acquainting me with Mrs. Heathcote's condition. It still remained absolutely unchanged, and there was, in Mackenzie's opinion, no necessity for me to pay her another visit. Early the next morning, the required order came from the coroner. Mackenzie wired to apprise me of the fact, and I telegraphed back, making an appointment to meet him at Kensal Green on the following morning.

I shall not soon forget that day. It was one of those blustering and intensely cold days which come oftener in March than any other time of the year. The cemetery looked as dismal as such a place would on the occasion. The few wreaths of flowers which were scattered here and there on newly-made graves were sodden and deprived of all their frail beauty. The wind blew in great gusts, which were about every ten minutes accompanied by showers of sleet. There was a hollow moaning noise distinctly audible in the intervals of the storm.

I found, on my arrival, that Mackenzie was there before me. He was accompanied by one of the coroner's men and a police-constable. Two men who worked in the cemetery also came forward to assist. No one expressed the least surprise at our strange errand. Around Mackenzie's lips, alone, I read an expression of disapproval.

Kensal Green is one of the oldest cemeteries which surround our vast Metropolis, and the Heathcotes' burying-place was quite in the oldest portion of this God's acre. It was one of the hideous, ancient, rapidly-going-out-of-date vaults. A huge brick erection was placed over it, at one side of which was the door of entrance.

The earth was removed, the door of the vault opened, and some of the men went down the steps, one of them holding a torch, in order to identify the coffin. In a couple of minutes' time it was borne into the light of day. When I saw it I remembered poor Mrs. Heathcote's wild ravings.

"A good, strong oak coffin, which wears well," she had exclaimed.



Mackenzie and I, accompanied by the police-constable and the coroner's man, followed the bearers of the coffin to the mortuary.

As we were going there, I turned to ask Mackenzie how his patient was. He shook his head as he answered me.

"I fear the worst," he replied. "Mrs. Heathcote is very ill indeed. The fever rages high and is like a consuming fire. Her temperature was a hundred and five this morning."

"I should recommend packing her in sheets wrung out of cold water," I answered. "Poor Woman!—how do you account for this sudden illness, Mackenzie?"

He shrugged his shoulders.

"Shock of some sort," he answered. Then he continued: "If she really knew of this day's work, it would kill her off pretty quickly. Poor soul," he added, "I hope it may never reach her ears."

We had now reached the mortuary. The men who had borne the coffin on their shoulders lowered it on to a pair of trestles. They then took turn-screws out of their pockets, and in a business-like and callous manner unscrewed the lid. After doing this they left the mortuary, closing the door behind them.

The moment we found ourselves alone, I said a word to the police-constable, and then going quickly up to the coffin, lifted the lid. Under ordinary circumstances, such a proceeding would be followed by appalling results, which need not here be described. Mackenzie, whose face was very white, stood near me. I looked at him for a moment, and then flung aside the pail which was meant to conceal the face of the dead.

The dead truly! Here was death, which had never, in any sense, known life like ours. Mackenzie uttered a loud exclamation. The constable and the coroner's man came close. I lifted a bag of flour out of the coffin!

There were many similar bags there. It had been closely packed, and evidently with a view to counterfeit the exact weight of the dead man.

Poor Mackenzie was absolutely speechless. The coroner's man began to take copious notes; the police-constable gravely did the same.

Mackenzie at last found his tongue.

"I never felt more stunned in my life," he said. "In very truth, I all but saw the man die. Where is he? In the name of Heaven, what has become of him? This is the most monstrous thing I have ever heard of in the whole course of my life, and—and I attended the funeral of those *bags of flour*! No wonder that woman never cared to see me inside the

house again. But what puzzles me," he continued, "is the motive—what can the motive be?"

"Perhaps one of the insurance companies can tell us that," said the police-officer. "It is my duty to report this thing, sir," he continued, turning to me. "I have not the least doubt that the Crown will prosecute."

"I cannot at all prevent your taking what steps you think proper," I replied, "only pray understand that the poor lady who is the principal perpetrator in this fraud lies at the present moment at death's door."

"We must get the man himself," murmured the police-officer. "If he is alive we shall soon find him."

Half an hour later, Mackenzie and I had left the dismal cemetery.

I had to hurry back to Harley Street to attend to some important duties, but I arranged to meet Mackenzie that evening at the Heathcotes' house. I need not say that my thoughts were much occupied with Mrs. Heathcote and her miserable story. What a life that wretched Heathcote must have led during the last six months. No wonder he looked cadaverous as the moonlight fell over his gaunt figure. No ghost truly was he, but a man of like flesh and blood to ourselves—a man who was supposed to be buried in Kensal Green, but who yet walked the earth.

It was about eight o'clock when I reached the Heathcotes' house. Mackenzie had already arrived—he came into the hall to meet me.

"Where is Miss Gabrielle?" I asked at once.

"Poor child," he replied; "I have begged of her to stay in her room. She knows nothing of what took place this morning, but is in a terrible state of grief about her mother. That unfortunate woman's hours are numbered. She is sinking fast. Will you come to her at once, Halifax—she has asked for you several times."

Accompanied by Mackenzie, I mounted the stairs and entered the sick room. One glance at the patient's face showed me all too plainly that I was in the chamber of death. Mrs. Heathcote lay perfectly motionless. Her bright hair, still the hair of quite a young woman, was flung back over the pillow. Her pale face was wet with perspiration. Her eyes, solemn, dark, and awful in expression, turned and fixed themselves on me as I approached the bedside. Something like the ghost of a smile quivered round her lips. She made an effort to stretch out a shadowy hand to grasp mine.

"Don't stir," I said to her. "Perhaps you want to say something? I will stoop down to listen to you. I have very good hearing, so you can speak as low as you please."

She smiled again with a sort of pleasure at my understanding her.

"I have something to confess," she said, in a hollow whisper. "Send the nurse and—and Dr. Mackenzie out of the room."

I was obliged to explain the dying woman's wishes to my brother physician. He called to the nurse to follow him, and they immediately left the room.

As soon as they had done so, I bent my head and took one of Mrs. Heathcote's hands in mine.

"Now," I said, "take comfort—God can forgive sin. You have sinned?"

"Oh, yes, yes; but how can you possibly know?"

"Never mind. I am a good judge of character. If telling me will relieve your conscience, speak."

"My husband is alive," she murmured.

"Yes," I said, "I guessed as much."

"He had insured his life," she continued, "for—for about fifteen thousand pounds. The money was wanted to—to save us from dishonour. We managed to counterfeit death."

She stopped, as if unable to proceed any further. "A week ago," she continued, "I—I saw the man who is supposed to be dead. He is really dying now. The strain of knowing that I could do nothing for him—nothing to comfort his last moments—was too horrible. I felt that I could not live without him. On the day of my illness I took—poison, a preparation of Indian hemp. I meant to kill myself. I did not know that my object would be effected in so terrible a manner."

Here she looked towards the door. A great change came over her face. Her eyes shone with sudden brightness. A look of awful joy filled them. She made a frantic effort to raise herself in bed.

I followed the direction of her eyes, and then, indeed, a startled exclamation passed my lips.

Gabrielle, with her cheeks crimson, her lips tremulous, her hair tossed wildly about her head and shoulders, was advancing into the room, leading a cadaverous, ghastly-looking man by the hand. In other words, Heathcote himself in the flesh had come into his wife's dying chamber.

"Oh, Horace!" she exclaimed; "Horace—to die in your arms—to know that you will soon join me. This is too much bliss—this is too great joy!"

The man knelt by her, put his dying arms round her, and she laid her head on his worn breast.

"We will leave them together," I said to Gabrielle.

I took the poor little girl's hand and led her from the room.

She was in a frantic state of excitement.

"I said he was not dead," she repeated—"I always said it. I was sitting by my window a few minutes ago, and I saw him in the garden. This time I was determined that he should not escape me. I rushed downstairs. He knew nothing until he saw me at his side. I caught his hand in mine. It was hot and thin. It was like a skeleton's hand—only it burned with living fire. 'Mother is dying—come to her at once,' I said to him, and then I brought him into the house."

"You did well—you acted very bravely," I replied to her.

I took her away to a distant part of the house.

An hour later, Mrs. Heathcote died. I was not with her when she breathed her last. My one object now was to do what I could for poor little Gabrielle. In consequence, therefore, I made arrangements to have an interview with Heathcote. It was no longer possible for the wretched man to remain in hiding. His own hours were plainly numbered, and it was more than evident that he had only anticipated his real death by some months.

I saw him the next day, and he told me in a few brief words the story of his supposed death and burial.

"I am being severely punished now," he said, "for the one great sin of my life. I am a solicitor by profession, and when a young man was tempted to appropriate some trust funds—hoping, like many another has done before me, to replace the money before the loss was discovered. I married, and had a happy home. My wife and I were devotedly attached to each other. I was not strong, and more than one physician told me that I was threatened with a serious pulmonary affection. About eight months ago, the blow which I never looked for fell. I need not enter into particulars. Suffice it to say that I was expected to deliver over twelve thousand pounds, the amount of certain trusts committed to me, to their rightful owners within three months' time. If I failed to realize this money, imprisonment, dishonour, ruin, would be mine. My wife and child would also be reduced to beggary. I had effected an insurance on my life for fifteen thousand pounds. If this sum could be realized, it would cover the deficit in the trust, and also leave a small overplus for the use of my wife and daughter. I knew that my days were practically numbered, and it did not strike me as a particularly heinous crime to forestall my death by a few months. I talked the matter over with my wife, and at last got her to consent to help me. We managed everything cleverly, and not a soul suspected the fraud which was practised on the world. Our old servants, who had lived with us for years, were sent away on a holiday. We had no servant in the house except a charwo-

man, who came in for a certain number of hours daily.”

“You managed your supposed dying condition with great skill,” I answered. “That hemorrhage, the ghastly expression of your face, were sufficiently real to deceive even a keen and clever man like Mackenzie.” Heathcote smiled grimly.

“After all,” he said, “the fraud was simple enough. I took an emetic, which I knew would produce the cadaverous hue of approaching death, and the supposed hemorrhage was managed with some bullock’s blood. I got it from a distant butcher, telling him that I wanted it to mix with meat to feed my dogs with.”

“And how did you deceive the undertaker’s men?” I asked.

“My wife insisted on keeping my face covered, and I managed to simulate rigidity. As to the necessary coldness, I was cold enough lying with only a sheet over me. After I was placed in the coffin my wife would not allow anyone to enter the room but herself; she brought me food, of course. We bored holes, too, in the coffin lid. Still, I shall never forget the awful five minutes during which I was screwed down.

“It was all managed with great expedition. As soon as ever the undertaker’s men could be got out of the way, my wife unscrewed the coffin and released me. We then filled it with bags of flour, which we had already secured and hidden for the purpose. My supposed funeral took place with due honours. I left the house that night, intending to ship to America. Had I done this, the appalling consequences which have now ended in the death of my wife might never have taken place, but, at the eleventh hour, my courage failed me. I could do much to shield my wife and child, but I could not endure the thought of never seeing them again. Contrary to all my wife’s entreaties, I insisted on coming into the garden, for the selfish pleasure of catching even a glimpse of Gabrielle’s little figure, as she moved about her bedroom. She saw me once, but I escaped through the shrubbery and by a door which we kept on purpose unlocked, before she reached me. I thought I would never again transgress, but once more the temptation assailed me, and I was not proof against it. My health failed rapidly. I was really dying, and on the morning when my wife’s illness began, had suffered from a genuine and very sharp attack of hemorrhage. She found me in the wretched lodging where I was hiding in a state of complete misery, and almost destitution. Something in my appearance seemed suddenly to make her lose all self-control.

“‘Horace,’ she exclaimed, ‘I cannot stand this. When you die, I will die. We will carry our shame and our sorrow and our unhappy love into the


grave, where no man can follow us. When you die, I will die. Oh, to see you like this drives me mad!’

“She left me. She told me when I saw her during those last few moments yesterday, that she had hastened her end by a powerful dose of Indian hemp. That is the story. I know that I have laid myself open to criminal prosecution of the gravest character, but I do not think I shall live to go through it.”

Heathcote was right. He passed away that evening quite quietly in his sleep.

Poor little Gabrielle! I saw her once since her parents’ death, but it is now a couple of years since I have heard anything about her. Will she ever get over the severe shock to which she was subjected? What does the future hold in store for her? I cannot answer these questions. Time alone can do that.

## Without Witnesses

 In the October of 1890 I went to pay a short visit to my friends, the Brabazons, of Penporran, in Cornwall. I could only spare a week out of Town, and looked forward to my visit with the pleasure which a busy man must feel when he can relax his labours for a short time.

Brabazon was an old college friend, and on the first evening of my stay we had many memories to revive and many friends to talk over. We sat until the small hours in his smoking-room, and it was early morning before we retired to bed. Just as I was leaving the room, he said to me: "By the way, you will find some disturbing elements at work here. I know you are fond of attributing everything to some psychological cause. I wonder what you will say to the love affairs of Randall, Carleton, and Miss Farnham."

I naturally asked what my host meant.

"Randall and Carleton are both desperately in love with the same girl," he replied. "Did you not notice the state of affairs this evening at dinner?"

"I naturally noticed Miss Farnham," I answered at once. "It would be difficult not to be attracted by so striking a personality."

"Barbara Farnham is, without exception, the most dangerous girl of my acquaintance," replied Brabazon, with a slight laugh. "Before her advent on the scene, Randall and Carleton were the best possible friends. Now they are at daggers drawn."

"I confess I did not particularly observe them," I answered.

"Oh, they are just ordinary good young fellows," replied Brabazon. "I am sorry for Carleton, of course, for I don't think he has the ghost of a chance with Miss Farnham. He is not particularly good looking, and he has the misfortune to be poor. Randall is a handsome lad, and has considerable expectations. His father is Lord Hartmore-but the fact is, I

don't think the girl means to marry either of them—she is simply playing one against the other for her own ends. She is a handsome witch, and a dangerous one. She plays as carelessly with edged tools as carelessly and unconcernedly as a baby would with its rattle.”

I said nothing further. Brahazon conducted me to my room, and wished me good-night. I sat down by the fire, and thought in an idle manner over the events of the evening. There was a large house party at Penporran. Shooting was going on vigorously, and cub-hunting had begun. Some of the guests were acquaintances of mine. In short, I looked forward to a pleasant week in this genial house. As I laid my head on my pillow I thought again, but without any specially keen interest, of Brabazon's story about the disturbing elements which were now agitating the air of this otherwise peaceful mansion.

Two young men were in love with the same girl. Surely the situation was a very ordinary one. Such a complication happened daily.

I wondered why Brabazon should have troubled himself to mention such an ordinary event, but as I was dropping off to sleep, I saw rising up before me, in my mind's eye, the proud, beautiful face of Barbara Farnham, and a kind of intuition told me that these common-place incidents might assume the form of tragedy in her cruel and careless hands.

I dreamt of Miss Farnham that night, and came down to breakfast the next morning with my curiosity considerably aroused about her.

She was in the room when I entered, and was idly helping herself to a cup of coffee, which she carried to a distant window where a small table was also laid for breakfast. She sat down, and, sipping it leisurely, looked around her with a careless glance. Her eyes fell on me—she smiled and motioned to me to approach.

“Pray bring your breakfast to this table,” she said, in a light tone. “I was immensely interested in you when I heard you were coming. I adore doctors, particularly if they are clever. Are you going to ride this morning?”

I answered in the affirmative, and asked her if she was fond of horses. “Fond?” she replied, a flash of added warmth lighting up her peculiar red-brown eyes. “I am going to whisper a secret to you—I never could compare horses and human beings. I consider the horse the infinitely nobler creature of the two.”

I laughed, and we entered into an animated conversation.

While we were talking, Carleton came into the room. He was a squarely built young man, with deeply set dark eyes, and a determined chin and



mouth. His figure was slightly above the middle height; he was extremely spare, but had good shoulders and was well set up. As soon as ever he appeared in sight, Miss Farnham, by an almost imperceptible movement, slightly turned her back to him and her talk with me became even more animated and full of wit than before. Her gay, light laugh must have reached Carleton, who came straight across the room to her side.

"You are in your favourite seat," he said.

"Yes," she replied, "and Dr. Halifax is having breakfast with me."

Then she turned to continue her conversation with me, while Carleton stood perfectly erect and silent by her side.

"Why don't you eat something?" she said to him, presently.

"There is time enough," he answered.

Finding he would not go away she tried to draw him into conversation, but he was evidently not in the humour to make himself agreeable. His answers were confined to monosyllables, and to some of Miss Farnham's remarks he did not reply at all. I confess that I began to think him an unmitigated bore.

A change was, however, quickly to take place in the situation—Randall, the other lover, appeared on the scene, and his coming acted like a flash of sunshine. He was a gay, handsome, debonair-looking young fellow. He had good teeth, good eyes, a genial smile, a hearty manner. His voice was musical, and he knew well how to use it. He nodded carelessly to one or two acquaintances when he entered the room, and then came straight to Miss Farnham's table.

She shook hands with him, and he nodded a cheerful good morning to Carleton and me.

"That is right," he said, smiling brightly at the handsome girl; "you promised to reserve a seat for me at this table, and I see you have kept your word. Have you done breakfast, Carleton?"

"I had something an hour ago," replied Carleton.

Randall went to a sideboard to help himself to a generous portion of a dish which was being kept hot with a spirit lamp. On his return our conversation became gayer and more lively than ever.

I must confess that I saw nothing to object to in Miss Farnham's manners. I could not imagine why Brabazon spoke of her as a dangerous witch. She tried to be polite to both men—or rather, she was polite without effort, but there was not a trace of the flippant in her manner or bearing. Her beauty was undoubtedly of a remarkable order. Her eyes were her most striking characteristic. There was a great deal

of red in their brown, which was further accentuated by the red-brown of her long eyelashes. The eyes were capable of every shade of expression, and could be at times as eloquent and as full of meaning as those of that bewitching creature, the collie. Her eyebrows were dark and delicately pencilled. Her hair was tawny in shade—she had quantities of it, and she wore it picturesquely round her stately, statuesque head. In some lights that brilliantly coloured hair looked as if a sunbeam had been imprisoned in it. Her complexion was of a warm, creamy whiteness. Her figure was slight and graceful. But for her eyes she might have been simply remarked as a handsome girl; but those eyes made her beautiful, and lifted her completely out of the common place.

We had nearly finished breakfast, when I was startled by seeing Randall suddenly press his hand to his eyes, and turn so white that I thought he was going to lose consciousness. He recovered himself almost immediately, however, and so completely, that no one else remarked the circumstance. Miss Farnham rose from the breakfast-table.

“I am going to ride with you, Dr. Halifax,” she said, nodding brightly to me. “I shall come downstairs in my habit in half an hour.” She was crossing the room to speak to some of the other guests when Carleton came up to her.

“I want to say something to you,” he said—“can we go to some room where we shall be quite undisturbed?”

His words were distinctly audible, not only to me, but to several other people in the room.

Randall in particular heard them, and I could see that he was waiting anxiously for the reply.

“I want to ride this morning—I have no time for private confidences,” replied Miss Farnham, in a distinctly vexed tone.

“I won’t keep you long,” replied Carleton—“what I have to say is of great importance, at least to me.”

“I will give you ten minutes after lunch; will that suffice?”

“Five minutes now will do better. I am very much in earnest when I make this request.”

“Very well,” said Miss Farnham, in a light tone; “importunate people generally have their way. Come into the conservatory—there is a rose there on which I have set my heart; it is too high for me to reach.”

She left the room as she spoke, and Carleton quickly followed her. As they disappeared, I noticed more than one guest looking significantly after them. Carleton’s pluck was distinctly approved of I could see that by the expression on some of the ladies’ faces—and one, as she passed

close to Randall's side, was heard to murmur, audibly: "Faint heart never won fair lady."

Randall came up to me and asked me to join him in a smoke on the balcony. As we walked up and down, he talked cheerfully, and, whatever anxiety he may inwardly have felt, was careful not to betray a trace of it.

In less than half an hour Miss Farnham joined us. She was in a dark brown riding-habit, which toned perfectly with her rich and peculiar colouring. Her spirits were gay, not to say wild, and the warm, creamy whiteness of her face seemed to glow now as if with hidden fire.

"Are you not ready for your ride?" she said, looking at me with a certain reproach. "The horses will be round in less than ten minutes. It is a splendid morning for a gallop. You are coming, too?" she added, turning suddenly to Randall.

"I only waited for you to invite me," he said. "Of course I shall come, with pleasure. But I thought," he added, in a low tone, coming close to her side as he spoke, "that you arranged to ride with Ronald Carleton this morning?"

"That is off," she replied, in a light tone. "Mr. Carleton has, I believe, another engagement."

The balcony on which we were walking led round to one of the entrances to the house; at this moment a groom was seen leading a smart mare up to the door, and at the same instant Carleton ran down the steps, and sprang lightly into the saddle.

"Where are you off to?" exclaimed Randall, bending out of the balcony to speak to him. "Miss Farnham, Dr. Halifax, and I are all going out immediately. Won't you join us?"

"Not this morning, I think," said Carleton, constraint in his tone. He gathered up the reins, and the mare began to prance about.

"You are holding her too much on the curb," exclaimed Randall.

"Thanks, I think I know what I'm about," replied Carleton, with evident temper.

"Quiet, you brute, quiet," he continued, vainly endeavouring to restrain the movements of the impatient animal.

"I tell you, that mare won't stand the curb," shouted Randall. "Give her her head, and she'll do anything you ask her. I know, for I've often ridden her."

"When I require a riding lesson from you, I'll inform you of the fact," answered Carleton, in a sulky voice, which was rendered almost ridiculous by the frantic movements of the mare, now thoroughly upset.

Miss Farnham, who had been standing in the background, came up at this juncture, and took her place conspicuously by Randall's side.

"Mr. Randall is right and you are wrong," she exclaimed. "It is absolutely cruel to ride that mare on the curb."

Carleton looked up with a scowl, which anything but improved him. He would not even glance at Miss Farnham, but his eyes flashed an angry fire at his more fortunate rival.

"Of course, Randall is right," he exclaimed. "All the odds are in his favour."

"Nonsense," retorted Randall, with heat.

"Come, come, gentlemen, pray don't quarrel on this lovely morning," said Miss Farnham. "Mr. Carleton, I wish you a pleasant ride."

She left the balcony as she spoke, and Randall and I immediately followed her example.

We had a splendid ride over an extensive moorland country, and returned to lunch in excellent spirits and in high good humour with each other. Carleton had not yet come back, but his absence did not seem to depress anyone, certainly not Miss Farnham, whose bright eyes and gay, animated manner made her the life of the party. Randall was radiant in the sunshine of her presence. She was confidential and almost affectionate in her manner to him; and he undoubtedly looked, and was, at his best.

I could not help cordially liking him and thinking that the pair were well matched. Notwithstanding Brabazon's words of the night before, I had no doubt that Miss Farnham was sincerely attached to Randall, and would tell him so presently.

I spent the greater part of the afternoon alone with my host, and did not see the rest of the guests until we met at dinner. Carleton had then returned. He sat between a red-haired girl and a very fat old lady, and looked as *distrained* and bored as man well could. Randall, on the other hand, was in his best form. His clothes sat well on him. He was, undoubtedly a handsome, striking-looking man.

I cannot describe Miss Farnham's dress. It was ethereal in texture and suited her well. She was not seated in the neighbourhood of either Randall or Carleton, but once or twice I noticed that her eyes wandered down to their part of the table. For some reason, she was not in such high spirits as she had been in the early part of the day. My neighbour, a quiet, middle-aged spinster, began suddenly to talk to me about her.

"I see you are interested in Barbara Farnham," she began. "I am not the least surprised—you but follow the example of all the other men who know her."

"Miss Farnham is a very beautiful girl," I replied.

Miss Derrick gave a short sigh.

"Yes," she replied, "Barbara has a beautiful face. She is a fine creature too, although of course terribly spoilt."

"Have you known her long?" I asked.

"Yes; since she was a child. Of course you must notice, Dr. Halifax, the state of matters. Barbara's conduct is more or less the talk of the whole house. I presume from his manner that poor Mr. Carleton's chances of success are quite over, and for my part I am sorry. He is not rich, but he is a good fellow—he is devotedly attached to Barbara, and his abilities are quite above the average. Yes, I am sorry for Mr. Carleton. Barbara might have done worse than return his affection."

I did not feel inclined to pursue the subject any further with this somewhat garrulous lady. After a pause, I remarked: "Miss Farnham looks tired, and does not seem in her usual spirits."

Miss Derrick shrugged her thin shoulders.

"What else can you expect?" she answered. "Barbara is a creature of moods, She was quite *exaltée* all the morning; now she will be correspondingly dull, until a fresh wave of excitement raises her spirits."

At this moment the signal for the ladies to withdraw was given. After their departure, Carleton and Randall found themselves sitting close together. I noticed that neither man spoke to the other, and also observed that after a time Carleton deliberately changed his seat for one at a distant part of the table.

We did not sit long over wine, and when we came into the drawing-room a lady was playing some classical music with precision and sufficient brilliancy to attract several musical men to the vicinity of the piano. Her place was quickly taken by the droll man of the party, who entertained the company with comic songs. The evening dragged on in the usual manner. For some unaccountable reason no one seemed quite in good spirits. As for me, I found myself constantly looking in the direction of the door. I heartily wished that either Carleton or Randall would come in—I acknowledged to myself that the presence of one at least of these gentlemen in the room would give me relief.

An hour and more passed away, however, and neither of them appeared. I glanced towards Miss Farnham. She was standing near the piano, idly

playing with a large feather fan. I thought I read both solicitude and expectation in her eyes.

The funny man was trolling out a sea-song to which a lively chorus was attached. Brabazon came up and touched my arm.

"When that is over," he said, in a low voice, "I will ask Barbara Farnham to sing."

"Can she sing?" I asked.

"Can she!" he reiterated. "Yes, she sings," he replied, emphatically.

"Wait—you will hear her in a moment. Her voice is the most absolutely sympathetic I have ever listened to."

Soon afterwards Miss Farnham went to the piano. She played her own accompaniment. One grand sweep her hands seemed to take of the instrument, as if they meant to embrace it, and then a voice, high, full, sweet, magnificent in its volume of melody, rose on the air and seemed to fill the room.

Brabazon was right. Barbara Farnham could sing. As the words fell from her lips, there was no other sound in the listening room.

I jotted those words down afterwards from memory—they seemed to me to be a fit prelude to the scene which was immediately to follow:—

*Thou hast filled me a golden cup  
With a drink divine that glows,  
With the bloom that is flowing up  
From the heart of the folded rose.  
The grapes in their amber glow,  
And the strength of the blood-red wine  
All mingle and change and flow  
In this golden cup of thine  
With the scent of the curling wine,  
With the balm of the rose's breath—  
For the voice of lore is thine,  
And thine is the Song of Death!*

The voice of the singer sank low as she approached the end of her song. The final words were in a minor key. I looked full at Miss Farnham, and her dark eyes met mine. They were full of apprehension. A kind of premonition of coming sorrow might well have filled her breast from the look in their depths.

There was a noise and sense of confusion in the outer drawing-room. People stood back to make way for someone, and hurrying steps came quickly towards the piano.

Miss Farnham sprang to her feet, the last notes of the song arrested on her lips.

Carleton, an overcoat covering his evening dress, his hair dishevelled, his eyes wild, had come hastily to her side.

"You will think that I have killed him, Barbara; but, before God, it is not true!" he said in a hoarse whisper—then he grasped my arm.

"Come, I want you," he said, and he dragged me, as if he were a young fury, out of the room.

"What, in the name of Heaven, is the matter?" I asked of him when we found ourselves in the hall.

"Randall has fallen over the cliff down by Porran's field," he gasped. "I have found the—the body. Oh! no, no, what am I saying? Not the body yet—not a body when I left it—it breathed—it just breathed when I left. I tried to drag it up here, but it was too heavy. Come at once, for the love of Heaven."

Other people had followed us out of the drawing-room. I encountered a glance of fire from Miss Farnham's dark eyes—her face was like death itself. Brabazon, in a tone full of authority, as befitted the host, began to speak.

"Come!" he said. "Accident or no, there is not a moment to be lost in trying to help the poor fellow. You will lead us to the spot at once, Carleton. Come, Halifax; what a blessing that you happen to be on the spot!"

"Get some brandy and something which we can improvise into a litter or shutter," I exclaimed. "I am going to my room to fetch my surgical case."

I ran upstairs. A moment or two later we were on our way to the scene of the accident. Every man of the party accompanied us, and several of the ladies. The foremost of the group was Miss Farnham herself. She had hastily flung a shawl over her head, and the train of her rich dinner dress was slung across her arm. She looked at Carleton, and with a peremptory gesture seemed to invite him to come to her side. He did so, and they rushed on—too quickly for many of the rest of the party to keep up with them.

It was a bright, moonlight night, and we had scarcely any need of the lantern which Brabazon was thoughtful enough to bring with him. We had to go some distance to reach the spot where poor Randall was lying, but by-and-by we found him stretched partly on his back, partly rolled over on his left side, on a little strip of sand which gleamed cold in the moonlight.

"Yes, it was here I left him," exclaimed Carleton. He fell on his knees as he spoke and looked intently into the poor lad's face.

"Thank God!" he exclaimed, looking up at me, "he can't be dead. I dragged him as far as this, and then left him lying on his back. See, he has moved—he is partly on his side now!"

I motioned to Carleton to make way for me to approach. I felt for the pulse in the limp and powerless wrist. I laid my hand on the head—then I gently raised the head, and felt along the region of the skull.

"You will give him a little brandy," exclaimed Brabazon; "here is the flask."

Miss Farnham took it out of Brabazon's hands, unscrewed it, and began to pour some into the cup. As she did so, she knelt also on the sand. I looked at her and felt that she would probably need the stimulant which could avail nothing now to the dead.

"It is all over," I said; "he is dead, poor fellow!"

As I spoke, I stretched out my hand and took the brandy flask from Miss Farnham. She looked wildly round, glanced at Carleton, gave a piercing cry, and fell forward over Randall's body. She had completely lost consciousness. I laid her flat on the sand, and, applying some restoratives, she quickly came to her senses.

The body of the dead man was lifted up and laid on some boards which we had brought with us, and we returned slowly to the house. Brabazon gave his arm to Miss Farnham, who truly needed it, for she staggered as she walked. I looked round for Carleton. There was a wild expression in his eyes, which made me anxious about him. I saw, too, that he wished to linger behind the others.

"Come," I said, going up to him, "this has given you a terrible shock; why, you are just as much overcome as Miss Farnham."

I dragged his hand through my arm, and we followed in the rear of the sad procession. All the way up to the house he did not speak, nor did I trouble him with questions. I saw that his misery had made him dumb for the time being—in short, he was in a stunned condition. I dreaded, however, the return tide of strong emotion which must inevitably follow this apparent calm. I guessed that Carleton was a man of strong sensibilities. I could read character well—most men in my profession have much practice in this art. The human eye tells a doctor a good deal. The lips may falter out certain utterances, which the eyes will belie. I read truth and sincerity in the honest eyes of this young man. He was intensely reserved—he was jealous to a morbid degree—he in all probability possessed anything but a good temper; nevertheless, his



eyes were honest, and I felt certain that he had nothing whatever to do with poor Randall's death. Nevertheless, I knew well that appearances were strongly against him.

When we got to the house I turned to him and said, abruptly: "I should like to see you in Brabazon's smoking-room in about half an hour."

He raised sullen eyes to my face.

"Come," I said, laying my hand on his shoulder, "I tell you at once I do not believe that you killed that poor fellow, but we must talk the matter over. I am anxious to be your friend. It is absolutely necessary that you should confide in someone. I am as unbiased in my views of the whole situation as man can be. Come and talk to me in half an hour in the smoking-room."

He did not say a word, but I knew by the way in which he suddenly grasped my hand that he would come.

The dead man was carried into the library, where he was laid reverently on a table. Brabazon then had a consultation with me as to the best means of breaking the news to Lord and Lady Hartmore. Poor Randall was their only son; it was a terrible business altogether, and Brabazon was naturally greatly distressed.

I asked after Miss Farnham. He told me that she had gone straight to her room. His tone was scarcely sympathetic, and I looked at him in wonder.

"I have no patience with her," he exclaimed. "She has behaved very badly—this awful thing would not have occurred but for her. She has driven poor Carleton—"

I put up my hand to arrest the words.

"Hush!" I exclaimed. "You surely don't—?"

He laughed aloud in his agitation.

"I surely do," he began. "There, Halifax, we won't give the thing a name to-night. Of course, there must be a coroner's inquest."

"Yes," I replied.

"It is a terrible thing altogether," continued Brabazon; "and to think of its happening here. And to Randall, of all people—a man with his expectations. Well, it is a lesson which Miss Farnham may well lay to heart."

We were standing together in the library—the hour was now nearly midnight. The body of the dead man lay on the centre table covered with a white sheet. There came a knock at the door, and to my dismay and astonishment I saw Carleton enter the room.

"I heard voices, and guessed you would be here," he exclaimed. "I have recovered my nerves to a certain extent, and wish to tell you, sir," looking at his host, "and you also, Dr. Halifax, exactly what has occurred."

"Come into the smoking-room," said Brabazon, not unkindly.

"No," answered the poor lad. "If you will allow me, I will tell my story here. There is not much to tell, but what there is had best be told in the presence of—" his lip trembled—he could not get further words out. He sank suddenly into a chair, and covered his white face with his shaking hands.

"We must humour him," I said, turning and speaking in a whisper to Brabazon—"and before God," I continued, impulsively, "I believe he is as innocent as I am."

I drew forward a chair for myself as I spoke, but Brabazon stood by the hearth. Carleton began to speak almost directly—his emotion was quickly mastered.

"I have loved Barbara Farnham for two years. At intervals she has given me great encouragement, and I had fair hopes of winning her until she met Randall in this house a fortnight ago. This morning I felt desperate, and resolved to put my fortunes to the test. I asked her to give me an interview after breakfast, as you doubtless noticed." He paused, and looked at me—I nodded my head, and he continued: "We went into the conservatory, and I—I spoke to her. I told her the naked truth, perhaps a little too bluntly. I asked her if she really meant to—no, I must not say what I did ask her. It is unfair—unfair to her. From her manner and her words I plainly gathered that she preferred Randall to me, and that I had no chance whatever of winning her. Perhaps I lost my temper—anyhow, it was unmanly of me to say what I did. I accused her of valuing Randall's position. I told her plainly that if Randall and I could change places, I should be the favoured one. We had a disagreement; our interview was full of pain, at least to me. When I left Miss Farnham the Evil One seemed to enter into me, and I hated Randall as I never knew before that I could hate anyone. I would not ride with the others, but went away by myself, and the whole day has been a long agony to me.

"My hatred to Randall grew worse and worse, until its vehemence half frightened me. We used to be good friends, too. After dinner I felt that I could not bear a couple of conventional hours in the drawing-room, and went out to nurse my misery in the open air. I had no idea that Randall was also out. I went along by the shore, but mounted to the higher cliffs on my way back. I intended to leave Penporran early to-morrow, and

felt impatient for the hour when I could get away from the loathsome sight of my successful rival.

“As I was walking along by the edge of the cliffs, and had just entered Porran’s field, I felt my heart jump into my mouth, for Randall was coming to meet me. He was about a hundred yards away when I first saw him. He is a taller man than I, and he seemed to stand out sharply between me and the sky. I knew by his attitude that he was smoking a cigar. I stood still for a moment. I did not want to pass him. My heart was full of torment, and I hated to meet him out there, with not a soul to stand between us. You know that part of the cliff, Mr. Brabazon? Randall had just come to that portion of it which is railed in to keep the cattle from tumbling over. I don’t know what possessed him to take the outside path, which is very narrow and slippery. He did so, however; and now, for the first time, he must have noticed me. I was within fifty yards of him, Coming also along the edge of the cliff. He stood stock still, as if something or somebody had shot him. I thought he was about to shout to me, but instead of doing so, he threw up one hand and clutched his brow. The next instant he began to sway from side to side, and before I could approach him. he had fallen over the cliff, sheer down that awful height!

“My absolute surprise stunned me for a moment—then I ran up to the spot where he had fallen, and throwing myself on my face and hands, looked over the cliff, in the hopes that he might have clung on to something. The moon was bright, but I could not see him. Looking down from that height made me dizzy, and I saw there was nothing for it but to retrace my steps as fast as possible to the shore. I ran quickly, and was breathless when I got up to him. He was lying on his back, with his arms stretched out—some blood was oozing from his mouth. I wiped it away and called to him, and putting my arms under his head, tried to lift him: He moaned and moved faintly. I felt his limbs—they seemed all right. I had a wild hope that he was only stunned, and tried to drag him along the shore. He was too heavy for me, however, and I feared that I was only injuring him in my attempt to get him back to the house. I laid him as easily as I could on a piece of sand above high-water mark, and then ran back to Penporran. It was on my way back that the awful idea first occurred to me that Barbara would think I had killed him. I seemed to see all the circumstances of his terrible death with preternatural clearness, and I felt sure that the gravest suspicion would attach to me. I have come to this room now to tell you both, before Heaven, and in the presence of the dead man, the solemn truth. Of course, I cannot compel you to believe me.”

Carleton stood up as he uttered these last words. His attitude was very manly, and the look on his face was at once straightforward and quiet. I liked him better than I thought I ever could have liked him. I felt deep sympathy for him, and looked at Brabazon, expecting him to share my sentiments. To my surprise, however. I saw by the expression round his lips that he was not favourably impressed by Carleton, and that his feelings towards him were the reverse of sympathetic. Carleton looked full at him, expecting him to speak. When he did not, the poor fellow repeated his last remark, a faint quaver perceptible in his voice: "Of course, I cannot compel you to believe me."

"Thank you for coming to see us," said Brabazon then; "you have been the first to give name to a suspicion which will, doubtless, be harboured by more than one person who has known all the circumstances of this unhappy case. I sincerely pity you, Carleton, but I prefer to keep my judgment in abeyance for the time being. Halifax will tell you that a coroner's inquest will be necessary. At the inquest the whole matter will be gone carefully into. You may be certain that all possible justice will be done you."

"Justice!" exclaimed Carleton, a faint smile playing for an instant round his lips. "Justice, when there were no witnesses! Oh, that the dead could speak!" He turned abruptly and prepared to leave the room. Brabazon called after him.

"You must give me your word of honour that you will not attempt to leave Penporran before the inquest."

"You may rest assured on that point," said Carleton.

He left the room. The restraint he was putting upon himself gave a dignity to his whole bearing which impressed me much.

"I fully believe in that poor fellow's innocence," I said, as soon as the door had closed behind him. Brabazon gave me a keen glance.

"You are a good judge of character," he said, after a pause; "still, I prefer to keep my judgment in abeyance."

Shortly afterwards he bade me good-night, and I retired to my own room. I closed the door and stood by the hearth, where the ashes of the fire, which had been lit some hours previous and had long ago burnt itself out, were to be seen.

I felt too restless to go to bed, and wished the morning would come. I was standing so, thinking over all the circumstances which had turned our gay party into one of mourning, when I heard a footfall outside my door. I thought it might possibly be Carleton, and going across the room, I opened the door and went out into the corridor. To my

astonishment, Miss Farnham, still wearing her gay evening dress, stood before me.

"I was thinking of knocking at your door," she said, "but had scarcely courage to do so. I want to speak to you."

"I will see you in the morning," I said.

"It is morning already," she replied. "This is no time for conventionality, Dr. Halifax; I wish to speak to you now. You cannot sleep, and no more can I. Please follow me to Mrs. Brabazon's sitting-room, where a fire and a lamp are still burning."

She led the way, and I obeyed her without a word.

"Now tell me the truth," she said, the moment we found ourselves in the room. "Will Mr. Carleton be accused of having murdered poor Arthur Randall?"

"There is no doubt that grave suspicion will attach to him," I answered, without hesitation.

"But you think him innocent?" she queried.

"I think him innocent. As innocent as you or I."

"Oh, don't speak of me," she said, sinking suddenly on the sofa. "Pray don't mention my innocence. But for me this tragedy would never have happened."

I looked long at her before I replied.

"In one sense you may be right," I answered; "it is quite possible that but for you Carleton would not have witnessed Randall's death. Still, you must not be unfair to yourself you are not accountable for the sudden brain seizure which must have caused Randall to reel and fall over the cliff."

"What do you mean?" she demanded.

"Carleton has just described the accident to Brabazon and me," I answered. "He saw Randall sway and fall over the cliff. I believe his story, although I fear few people will agree with me."

"I don't know the story," she said, faintly. "Pray tell it to me."

I did so in a few words.

"You believe all this?" she said, with intense eagerness, when I had done speaking.

"Yes."

"How do you account for Mr. Randall's death?"

I could not help sighing deeply.

"You allude now to the difficulty of the position," I said. "At the present moment I cannot account for Randall's death. A man in perfect health

is not often attacked with such violent vertigo as to cause him to lose the power of keeping himself upright." Then I paused—I was thinking deeply.

"Undoubtedly there have been such cases," I said, "but they are rare."

I remembered, as I spoke, Randall's change of colour and the sudden pressure of his hand to his head that morning at breakfast.

"You have seen a good deal of the poor fellow," I said. "Did he ever at any time complain of peculiar symptoms to you? Did you ever notice anything about him which would lead you not to suppose him in perfect health?"

"Never," she said at once, emphatically. "He always seemed to me to be the perfect embodiment of the rudest health and strength."

"The death is very mysterious," I said; "and while I personally believe poor Carleton's story, I fear matters will go hard with him."

I was about to leave the room, as I did not imagine Miss Farnham could have anything further to say to me, when she exclaimed, impulsively, her eyes filled with the most terrible anguish, her face turning white as death: "If, indeed, this thing is true, and if Ronald Carleton has to suffer in consequence of Mr. Randall's death, I shall put an end to my own life."

"Nonsense!" I said, sharply. "You must not speak in that wild way. You know you don't mean a word that you say."

"You mistake me," she replied. "I exaggerate nothing. I state a simple fact when I tell you that if Ronald Carleton suffers for this, my remorse will be greater than I can bear. I have behaved badly to him."

"Yes, God knows you have!" I interrupted. I felt angry with her, and did not want to spare her at that moment. "You have behaved badly to as honest and true-hearted a man as ever breathed. When will beautiful women like you learn that men's hearts are not mere balls to be kicked here and there?"

"Oh, yes, you are right to abuse me," she said. "Go on, go on. I am so unhappy that nothing you can say will add to my pain. My cup of misery is full. I have mined the man I love."

"The man you love?" I queried, looking at her in astonishment. "Nay, you must not be too hard on yourself. You surely are not accountable for Randall's tragic end. If Carleton's story is true, he died from sudden vertigo. You were kind to him while he lived—you have nothing to reproach yourself with on that score."

"Yes, I have," she answered, with sudden passion. "I deceived him. I made him think that I loved him; in reality, he was nothing to me. It is Ronald Carleton whom I love."

"Then, in the name of the Evil One—" I began.

"Yes, you may well quote the Evil One," she retorted. "I think he has been about the house all day. I think he entered into me this morning when poor Ronald spoke to me. The Evil One held me back then from telling him what I really thought. I gave him to understand that I—I hated him, and all the time I loved him—I loved him then—I love him now—I shall love him for ever—! The dead man is nothing to me: less than nothing!"

She began to walk up and down the room; fever spots burnt on her cheeks; her eyes looked wild; she clenched her right hand.

"What can I do for you?" I asked, after a pause. "You have been good enough to confide in me: you must have done so for a reason."

She stopped her restless walk and came close to me.

"I have heard of you before, Dr. Halifax," she said. "This is not the first time you have been asked to help people in trouble. I want you to help me—will you help me?"

"With all my power, if I can."

"You can. Find out what killed Mr. Randall. Save Ronald Carleton."

"I wish I could," I said, reflectively.

"Oh, it won't be difficult," she replied.

I looked at her in surprise.

"What can you mean?" I asked.

To my amazement, she flung herself on her knees at my feet.

"You can invent something," she said, Claspings my hand and pressing it frantically between both her own. "Oh, it would not be a crime—and it would save a life—two lives. Say you saw symptoms of apoplexy. Say—oh, you will know what to say—and you are a great doctor, and you will be believed."

"Get up," I said, sternly; "I will forgive your wild words, for circumstances have excited you so much that you do not quite know what you are saying. Believe me that nothing would give me more sincere satisfaction than to be able to discover the real cause of poor Randall's death. But you mistake your man utterly when you make the suggestion you do. Now I must leave you. It is almost morning, and I have promised to meet Brabazon downstairs at an early hour."

I went back to my own room, where I sat in anxious thought until the time which Brabazon had appointed for us to meet arrived. I then went down to the smoking-room, where I found him.

He looked harassed and ill—no wonder. The subject we had met to discuss was how best the news of their only son's death was to be broken to Lord and Lady Hartmore. The Hartmores' place was situated about a hundred miles away. Brabazon said that there was nothing whatever for it but to telegraph the unhappy circumstance to them.

"And I fear doing so very much," he added, "for Hartmore is not strong: he has a rather dangerous heart affection."

"Don't telegraph," I said, impulsively; "I will go and see them."

"You!" exclaimed Brabazon. "That would be an immense relief. You will know how to break the news in the least startling way. I should recommend you to see Lady Hartmore if possible first—she is a strong-minded woman, and has a fine character. But, at best, the shock will be terrible—it is good of you, Halifax, to undertake so fearful a mission."

"Not at all," I replied. "Will you come with me?"

"I fear I cannot. My wife is very much shaken, and I ought not to leave her with a house full of people."

"I suppose most of your guests will leave to-day?"

"Probably; still, for the time being, they are here. Then there is the inquest, which will most likely take place to-day."

"I was going to propose," I said, "that a *post-mortem* examination should precede the inquest."

Brabazon raised his brows—he looked annoyed.

"Is that necessary?" he asked—"a *post-mortem* examination will only add needlessly to the sufferings of the unfortunate parents. In this case, surely, the cause of death is clearly defined—fracture of the skull?"

"The cause of death is clearly defined," I answered, "but not the cause of the sudden vertigo."

"The sudden vertigo, according to Carleton's account," corrected Brabazon.

He did not say anything further for a moment—nor did I. After a pause, he continued: "As you are good enough to say you will go to Tregunnel, I will ask you to take poor Randall's last letter with you. I went into his room yesterday evening, and found one directed to his mother on the writing-table. She will prize it, of course. Now I had better look up your train."



He did so, and half an hour afterwards I was driving as fast as a pair of horses could take me to the nearest railway station. I caught an early train to Tregunnel, and arrived there between nine and ten that morning. A cab conveyed me to the castle, which stood on a little eminence above the sleepy-looking town.

My errand was, in truth, a gloomy one. During the journey I had made up my mind for every reason to see Lady Hartmore first. When the servant opened the door, I asked for her, and giving the man my card, told him that I wished to see his mistress alone on a matter of urgent importance. I was shown into a morning-room, and in a very short time Lady Hartmore came in. She was a tall, fine-looking woman, with a likeness to her dead son about her kindly, well-opened eyes and pleasant mouth. My name and the message I had sent to her by the servant naturally startled her. She gave me a keen glance when she entered the room, which I returned with interest. I saw at once that her heart was strong enough, her nature brave enough, to stand the full weight of the terrible calamity without breaking down.

"I have come to see you on a most painful matter," I began at once. "I am just now visiting the Brabazons at Penporran."

"Then it is something about my son," she exclaimed, instantly. Her face grew very pale; she pressed her hand to her left side, and looked hurriedly towards the door.

"Lord Hartmore may come in, if you are not quick," she said. "He was in the breakfast-room when the servant brought me your card and message. Please tell what you have got to say at once—I can bear a shock, but he cannot."

Poor wife! poor mother! Her eyes looked at me with dumb entreaty, while her lips uttered the words of courage.

"Women like you, Lady Hartmore," I could not help uttering, impulsively, "are always brave. It is my terrible mission to inflict a great blow upon you—your son has met with an accident."

"Is he dead?" she asked. She came close to me as she spoke, her voice had sunk to a hoarse whisper.

"He is dead," I replied, instantly; "sit down."

I motioned her to a chair—she obeyed me.

"Lock the door," she said; "Lord Hartmore must not—must not know of this—quite yet."

I did what she asked me, and then went and stood with my back to her in one of the windows.

As I did so I felt in my pocket for the letter which Brabazon was to have given me. It was not there. I then remembered that in the excitement of my getting off in time to catch the train we must both have forgotten it.

After a time Lady Hartmore's voice, sounding hollow and low, reached my ears.

"Tell me the particulars," she said.

I did so. I sat down near her and told them as briefly as possible. She listened attentively. When I had finished she said, in a puzzled tone: "I cannot account for the sudden giddiness. Arthur always had excellent health."

Then she looked me full in the face. "Do you believe the story, Dr. Halifax?"

I thought for a moment, then I said, emphatically: "Yes, I believe it."

She did not speak at all for the best part of a moment. Then she gave a heavy sigh.

"After all," she said, "the thing that affects us is the death. He is dead. The inevitable has overtaken him. It scarcely matters how it happened—at least not now—not to me."

"Pardon me," I interrupted, "it matters a great deal how it happened. The cause of your son's death will be a question of anxious investigation—of the gravest and most searching inquiries. I fully believe the story which Carleton told us last night, but there are others who will—who must—suspect him of foul play. Is it possible, Lady Hartmore—is it in any way within the province of woman, so completely to forget herself in this moment of terrible anguish, as to live for another? You can do nothing now for the dead, but you can do much, very much, for the living."

"You mean for my husband?" she inquired.

"Not alone for your husband—not even principally for him. You can do much for the man who will be accused of the crime of having murdered your son. I can only repeat my firm conviction of his innocence, but the grounds for my belief, at present, go for nothing; circumstances prove a grave case against him. Your son, to all appearance, was much attached to the girl whom Carleton loved and loves. Yesterday morning Carleton received what he considered a final rejection from Miss Farnham. She spent the day with your son; she gave him every encouragement. Carleton was morose, gloomy, jealous. His jealousy and gloom were noticed by every member of our party. Carleton and your son both absented themselves from the drawing-room after dinner. It was during that time that the accident, which deprived your son of his life, took

place. There will, of course, be a coroner's inquest. At the inquest the circumstances which I have just alluded to will come out, and there is no question but that Carleton will be arrested on suspicion and sent to trial—unless, indeed, you will help me.”

“How can I help you?” she asked “What am I to do? You ask me to share your belief, which seems to me to be based on nothing. Suppose I cannot share it?”

I was silent for a moment.

“I will tell you what I want you to do,” I said then. “I want you to join me in insisting on having a *post-mortem* examination.”

She gave me a glance of horror.

“Why?” she asked. “Why must the sleep of the dead be disturbed?”

Before I could answer her, Lord Hartmore's voice was heard at the door. She was a brave woman, but at the sound of her husband's voice her courage for a moment deserted her.

“How-how can I break it to him?” she gasped. “Oh, please, don't leave me.”

“No,” I said, “I will stay with you.”

I unlocked the door myself, and a white-headed, feeble-looking man came querulously into the room.

His wife rose to meet him. She put her arms round him and some way, somehow, conveyed the terrible tidings to his mind. I need scarcely linger over the hour that followed. At the end of that time I was accompanying the Hartmores back to Penporran. During the journey my companions were almost completely silent. Lady Hartmore kept her veil down, and, I felt sure, wished to avoid speaking to me. The old lord was completely prostrated with grief. Not by word or hint had either parent given me the slightest clue by which I could insist on a *post-mortem* examination. Their son had evidently enjoyed perfect health during his brief life. I saw that circumstances were very black against Carleton.

It was evening when we reached Penporran. Lord and Lady Hartmore went at once to a private suite of rooms which had been got ready for their reception. As soon as I could I sought an interview with Brabazon. “Most of our visitors have left us,” he said. “But Miss Farnham and, of course, Carleton, remain. The inquest is to take place in the library at an early hour to-morrow.”

I was silent for a moment, then I said, abruptly: “Even at the risk of annoying you, Brabazon, I must repeat my strong desire that a *post-mortem* should precede the coroner's inquest.”

"Have you spoken to the Hartmores on the subject?" inquired Brabazon.

I told him that I had mentioned my wish to Lady Hartmore.

"And what did she say?" he asked.

"She shrank from the idea with horror," I was obliged to confess.

"You can scarcely blame her," said Brabazon. "Why should the poor fellow's body be unnecessarily disturbed? The fact is, I have the greatest faith in your judgment, Halifax, but I think in the present instance you carry your sympathy for Ronald Carleton too far. The cause of death in the case of poor Randall was so absolutely apparent, that I do not think you will get the coroner to consent to a *post-mortem*."

"There is one thing that occurred to me," I said: "if Randall met his death by violence, there would be some traces of a struggle at the spot where he fell over. Randall would not tamely submit to murder—he was a big man and muscular. Has the path along the cliff been carefully searched?"

"Yes," replied Brabazon, "and there is no trace anywhere of a struggle. A little blood has been discovered on a sharp point of rock just where Carleton described the fall to have taken place. The marks of a heavy body being dragged along the sands above high-water mark have also been seen. All these evidences are, of course, I am bound to say, quite consistent with Carleton's story. The blood on the rock indicates also the exact spot of the accident."

"That was where the vault of the skull was broken," I said. "By the way, you forgot to give me poor Randall's letter to his mother. Doubtless Lady Hartmore would like to have it without a moment's delay."

Brabazon started, and put his hand in his pocket.

"I put the letter here," he said, "intending to give it to you as you were starting; of course, I forgot it. Here it is: no, though, there is nothing in my pocket. Surely I can't have dropped it anywhere. I know, I put it here this morning. I rushed up to the poor fellow's room to fetch it just when the brougham was coming round."

"You did not give it to me," I said; "that letter ought to be found: it may be of the utmost importance. Was that the coat you wore this morning?"

"Yes, I have not been out of it all day; you don't know what a rush and confusion the whole place has been in."

"You will look for the letter, won't you, Brabazon? I cannot quite tell you why, but it will give me a sense of relief to know that it has been found before the inquest takes place to-morrow morning."

Soon afterwards we parted. I went into one of the morning-rooms, where I found Mrs. Brabazon. I made inquiries with regard to Carleton and Miss Farnham.

"I have not seen either of them," replied my hostess. "I believe Mr. Carleton has spent the day in his room, and a servant told me that Barbara Farnham was not well. I hear she has not risen at all to-day."

"Poor girl!" I ejaculated.

Mrs. Brabazon looked at me with languid interest—she was a very lethargic person.

"Yes," she ejaculated, after a pause—"this tragedy will be a sad blow to Barbara. She is as ambitious as she is handsome. She would have made a regal-looking Lady Hartmore."

I said nothing further—I could not betray the poor girl's secret, nor let Mrs. Brabazon know what a small place high position and greatness occupied just now in Miss Farnham's thoughts.

Just before the inquest the next morning, I asked Brabazon if the missing letter had been found.

"No," he said—"I cannot tell you how vexed I am about it. Every conceivable hole and corner both in the house and out has been searched, but no trace of the letter has been discovered. What I fear is that when I was down on the shore yesterday making investigations, it may have dropped out of my pocket and been washed away with the incoming tide. I cannot think of any other cause for its absolute disappearance. I beg of you, Halifax, not to say anything to Lady Hartmore about it for the present."

"Of course not," I answered, in some surprise at the request.

I then ran upstairs. I must, of course, be present at the inquest, but I had still a moment at my disposal. I went boldly to Miss Farnham's door and knocked. After a very brief pause she opened it herself and stood before me. She was fully dressed. Her face was of a dead white—all the beautiful warmth of colour had fled.

"I am told I must be present at the inquest," she said. "Is it time for me to go downstairs? Have you come to fetch me?"

She shuddered visibly as she spoke.

"I have come to ask you to help me," I said, eagerly. "I will manage to account for your absence in the library. Put on your hat; I want you to go out at once."

"What do you mean?" she asked, in astonishment.

"I will tell you," I said. "On the day of his death Randall wrote a letter to his mother. That letter has been lost. Brabazon had it in his pocket

and has dropped it—no one knows where. There is no saying, Miss Farnham, what important evidence that letter may contain. I am sure it is not in the house. Brabazon believes that he dropped it when exploring the coast yesterday. Will you go at once and look for it? The moment you discover it, bring it to the library. Now, be as quick as ever you can.”

“Yes,” she replied, the soul in her eyes leaping up with a sudden renewed joy. She turned, pinned a hat on her head, wrapped a shawl round her, and ran downstairs. Her woman’s wit grasped the whole situation at a glance. I went to the library, feeling assured that if poor Randall’s letter were still in existence, Miss Farnham would find it.

There were present at the inquest Lady Hartmore, Brabazon and his wife, Carleton, and two gentlemen who had not yet left the house. Also, of course, the coroner and the jury. The moment I entered the room I glanced at the coroner; I had not seen him before. He was a little old gentleman, with a somewhat irascible expression of face, and a testy manner. I looked from him to poor Carleton, whom I had not seen since the time when he told his story in this room. The body of the dead man had been placed in a shell, and still occupied the central table of the library. Lady Hartmore sat near it. A sheet covered the face of the dead. Once I saw her raise her hand and touch the sheet reverently. She had the attitude of one who was protecting the body from intended violence. Her position and the look on her face reminded me of Rizpah<sup>3</sup>. I looked again from her to Carleton. It was necessary for me to glance at the poor fellow, and to notice the despair on his face, to enable me to go up to the coroner, and urge upon him the necessity of a *post-mortem* preceding the inquest. He did not take my suggestion kindly.

“The cause of death is abundantly evident,” he said, with irritation. “I cannot counsel a *post-mortem* examination.”

“And I will not hear of it,” said Lady Hartmore, looking at me with eyes full of reproach.

“Pray say nothing more about it,” exclaimed Carleton.

I bowed, and sat down.

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<sup>3</sup> Geläufiger ist heute “Rizpah” (dt. Rizpa), Gestalt aus dem Alten Testament, eine Nebenfrau König Sauls. Unter den sieben Söhnen Sauls, die David wegen Sauls Blutschuld an den Gibeonitern an diese ausliefert, sind auch zwei Söhne der Rizpa, Armoni und Mefi-Boschet. Sie werden hingerichtet, die Leichname bleiben unbestattet. Rizpa trauert, auf ihrem Trauergewand auf einem Felsen bei den Leichnamen sitzend, vom Beginn der Ernte bis zur Regenzeit (etwa April bis Oktober) und schützt sie so vor Vögeln und wilden Tieren (2. Sam 21,1–14).

The inquest was conducted with extreme care, but soon Miss Farnham's presence was found necessary, and her absence commented upon. I saw Carleton start when her name was mentioned, and a look of extreme distress filled his eyes.

"I will go and find her," said Mrs. Brabazon, leaving the room.

She returned in a moment to say that Miss Farnham was not in her room, and that no one seemed to know anything about her.

"I have sent several servants into the grounds to look for her," she said.

As Miss Farnham was an important witness, having spent almost the entire day previous to his death with poor Randall, proceedings were delayed during her absence. The case, however, seemed as black as could be against Carleton, and I had not the least doubt that the coroner would order a warrant to be issued for his arrest on suspicion.

My one last hope now hung on Miss Farnham's being able to find the missing letter, and then on the letter containing evidence which would give a medical cause for poor Randall's extraordinary death.

I seldom found myself in a more torturing position than during the time of this inquest. Relief, however, was at hand. I heard the sound of light and quickly moving feet in the hall. The door of the library was opened, not softly and with reverent hush, but with the eager, impetuous movement of someone in hot haste. Miss Farnham came into the room with a wild colour in her cheeks and a wild, bright light in her eyes. Her skirts were draggled and wet, her hair was loosened and fell over her shoulders—she had cast away the hat and shawl.

"There," she said, going straight up to Lady Hartmore; "there's your letter—the last letter your son ever wrote to you. It was lost, or supposed to be lost, but I found it. I walked along the cliff, close to the edge very close. There is a part where the cliff is undermined. I lay on my face and hands and looked over. I saw, far below me, a tiny ledge of rock: there was a bush growing there, and, sticking in the bush, something white—it might be a useless rag or a piece of torn paper, or it might be a letter of importance. The tide was coming in fast; still, I thought that I had time. I put wings to my feet and rushed down a narrow path which led to the beach below. The tide had already come up and was wetting the base of the rock above which the bush which contained the white paper stood.

"I waded through the water and climbed the cliff and got the paper. I scrambled down again. When I came back the water was up to my knees. I crossed it safely, and mounted to the higher cliff again. Then, for the first time, I examined my prize. Yes, it was a letter—it was open.

I don't know what had become of its covering. I sat on the grass and I read it—yes, I read every word. Here it is now, and you can read it. Read it aloud, please, for it is important—it explains—it saves! Ronald, it saves you!"

Here the excited girl paused in her eager narrative and turned her full gaze upon Carleton, who was bending forward to listen to her.

"It saves you," she repeated; "it exonerates you completely!"

The commotion and interest which Miss Farnham's words and manner excited can be better felt than described. Lady Hartmore stood up and confronted the breathless girl. She held out her hand and clutched the letter, which was torn and dirty from its long exposure to wind and weather. She held it close and looked at it. It was in the beloved writing of the dead. The dead man was her only son—the letter was addressed to her, his mother. It contained its last message from the brain now silent—from the heart now still.

Tears filled her eyes.

"I must read this letter in private," she faltered. "This last letter of my boy's is too sacred for anyone but his mother to hear—I must read it alone."

"No," interrupted Miss Farnham, "it contains important information. I will call upon the coroner to insist on its being read aloud. I risked my life to get it. Another life hangs upon the information it contains. Dr. Halifax, you are a medical man—will you insist on this letter being read aloud?"

I went up to Lady Hartmore and said something to her in a low voice. She listened attentively—she considered my words. After a pause she put the letter into my hands.

"If it must be, it must," she said. "This is the last drop in the bitterness of my cup."

She sat down, and flinging out her two arms, stretched them over the body of the dead man. Once more her attitude and manner reminded me of Rispah.

Miss Farnham stood close to Lady Hartmore. She forgot her dishevelled hair, her disordered appearance. All her soul filled the eyes which she raised expectantly to my face.

I glanced hurriedly through the letter—then I spoke.

"There is a good deal in this sheet of paper which is strictly private," I said, "and need not be read for the benefit of the coroner and the jury; but there are some sentences referring to the state of Mr. Randall's



health which are, as Miss Farnham remarked, of the utmost importance. I will now proceed to read that portion of the letter."

I did so in a loud, clear voice.

These were poor Randall's words:—

*As far as I can tell, I am in perfect health, but for the last week or so, I have been suffering at intervals from a strange form of giddiness. I feel as though I were made to turn round and round, or against my will impelled to go forwards, or backwards, or to one side. Sometimes the giddiness takes another form—I fancy that objects are revolving round me. I am perfectly conscious all the time, but the giddiness is generally accompanied by a distinct sensation of nausea. Very often the act of closing my eyes removes the vertigo completely for the time being. When the attack goes off I feel perfectly well, only I fancy I am suffering from continued deafness in my right ear. I don't know why I am impelled to tell you this—it is not worth making a fuss over. If I were to consult a medical man, he would probably set it down to a form of indigestion. I had a slight attack this morning at breakfast. If it continues or gets worse, I will take the opportunity of consulting a London doctor who happens to be in the house.*

I did not read any more, but folding up the letter returned it to Lady Hartmore. Both Carleton and Miss Farnham had approached each other in their excitement.

I looked beyond them to the coroner.

"I am sure," I said, "that I now express Lady Hartmore's sentiments as well as my own, when I demand that this inquest be adjourned until a *post-mortem* examination has been made on the body of the dead man. The symptoms which he describes in the letter which I have just read aloud distinctly point to a disease of the inner ear, well known to the medical faculty, although not of common occurrence. I will ask the coroner to take immediate steps to get the services of two independent doctors to conduct the *post-mortem*, at which I should wish to be present."

My words were followed by a slight pause—the coroner then agreed to my wishes, and the inquest was adjourned.

The *post-mortem* took place on the afternoon of that same day, and the results amply accounted for the strange symptoms which poor Randall had so faithfully described in his last letter to his mother. On the right side of that portion of the base of the skull which contains the delicate

organs of hearing, we found a small, bony excrescence growing down into the labyrinth or inner ear. This, though small, was undoubtedly the cause of the terrible attacks of vertigo which the poor fellow complained of, and in one of which he met with his tragic death.

The coroner's inquest was resumed on the following day, and, of course, Carleton was abundantly exonerated.

It was two years afterwards, however, before I accidentally saw in the TIMES the announcement of his marriage with Miss Farnham.

# Trapped



On a certain evening in the winter of the year before last, I was sent for in a hurry to see a young man at a private hotel in the vicinity of Harley Street. I found my patient to be suffering from a violent attack of *delirium tremens*. He was very ill, and for a day or two his life was in danger. I engaged good nurses to attend him, and sat up with him myself for the greater part of two nights. The terrible malady took a favourable turn, the well-known painful symptoms abated. I persevered with the usual remedies to insure sleep, and saw that he was given plenty of nourishment, and about a week after his seizure Tollemache was fairly convalescent. I went to visit him one evening before he left his room. He was seated in a great armchair before the fire, his pipe was near him on the mantelpiece, and a number of HARPER'S MAGAZINE<sup>4</sup> lay open, and face downwards, on a table by his side. He had not yet parted with his nurse, but the man left the room when I appeared.

"I wish you'd give me the pleasure of your company for half an hour or so," said Tollemache, in a wistful sort of voice. I found I could spare the time, and sat down willingly in a chair at the side of the hearth. He looked at me with a faint dawning of pleasure in his sunken eyes.

"What can I order for you?" he asked. "Brandy-and-soda and cigars? I'll join you in a weed, if you like."

I declined either to smoke or drink, and tried to draw the young man into a light conversation.

As I did so, finding my efforts, I must confess, but poorly responded to, I watched my patient closely. Hitherto he had merely been my patient. My mission had been to drag him back by cart-ropes if necessary from the edge of the valley of death. He was now completely out of

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<sup>4</sup> Einer der Konkurrenten des STRAND MAGAZINE, in dem diese Geschichte erstmals veröffentlicht worden ist.

danger, and although indulgence in the vice to which he was addicted would undoubtedly cause a repetition of the attack, there was at present nothing to render me medically anxious about him. For the first time, therefore, I gave Wilfred Tollemache the critical attention which it was my wont to bestow on those who were to be my friends.

He was not more than twenty-three or twenty-four years of age—a big, rather bony fellow, loosely built. He had heavy brows, his eyes were deeply set, his lips were a little tremulous and wanting in firmness, his skin was flabby. He had a very sweet and pleasant smile, however, and notwithstanding the weakness caused by his terrible infirmity, I saw at once that there were enough good points in him to make it worth any man's while to try to set him on his legs once more.

I drew the conversation round to his personal history, and found that he was willing enough to confide in me.

He was an American by birth, but had spent so much time in Europe, and in England in particular, that no very strong traces of his nationality were apparent in his bearing and manner. He was an only son, and had unlimited wealth at his command.

"How old are you?" I asked.

"Twenty-three, my last birthday."

"In short," I said, rising as I spoke, standing before the hearth, and looking down at him, "no man has brighter prospects than you—you have youth, money, and I doubt not, from the build of your head, an abundant supply of brains. In short, you can do anything you like with your life."

He gave a hollow sort of laugh, and poking the ashes out of his pipe, prepared to fill it again.

"I wouldn't talk cant, if I were you," he said.

"What do you mean?" I asked.

"Well, that sort of speech of yours would befit a parson."

"Pardon me," I rejoined, "I but express the sentiments of any man who values moral worth, and looks upon life as a great responsibility to be accounted for."

He fidgeted uneasily in his chair. He was in no mood for any further advice, and I prepared to leave him.

"You will be well enough to go out to-morrow," I said, as I bade him good-bye.

He scarcely replied to me. I saw that he was in the depths of that depression which generally follows attacks like his. I said a word or two to the nurse at leaving, and went away.

It seemed unlikely that I should see much more of Tollemache; he would be well in a few days and able to go where he pleased; one more visit would probably be the last I should be obliged to make to him. He evidently did not respond to my overtures in the direction of moral suasion, and, much occupied with other matters, I had almost passed him from my mind. Two days after that evening, however, I received a short note from him; it ran as follows:—

*Will you come and see me as a friend? I'm like the bear with a sore head, but I promise not to be uncivil.*

*Yours sincerely,*

*Wilfred Tollemache.*

I sent a reply by my man to say that I would have much pleasure in visiting him about nine o'clock that evening. I arrived at ›Mercer's Hotel‹ at the hour named. Tollemache received me in a private sitting-room. Bottles containing wines and liqueurs were on the table. There was a box of cigars and pipes.

"You have not begun that again?" I could not help saying, glancing significantly at the spirits as I spoke.

"No," he said, with a grim sort of smile. "I have no craving at present—if I had. I should indulge. These refreshments are at your service. At present I drink nothing stronger or more harmful than soda-water."

"That is. right," I said, heartily. Then I seated myself in a chair and lit a cigar, while Tollemache filled a pipe.

"It is very good of you to give up some of your valuable time to a worthless chap like me," he said.

There was a strange mingling of gratitude and despair in the words which aroused my sympathy.

"It was good of you to send for me," I rejoined. "Frankly, I take an interest in you, but I thought I had scared you the other night. Well, I promise not to transgress again."

"But I want you to transgress again," said Tollemache. "The fact is, I have sent for you to-night to give you my confidence. You know the condition you found me in?"

I nodded.

"I was in a bad way, wasn't I?"

"Very bad."

"Near death-eh?"

"Yes."

"The next attack will prove fatal most likely?"

"Most likely."

Tollemache applied a match to his pipe—he leant back in his chair and inhaled the narcotic deeply—a thin curl of blue smoke ascended into the air. He suddenly removed the pipe from his mouth.

"Twenty-three years of age" he said, aloud, "the only son of a millionaire—a dipsomaniac! Craving comes on about every three to four months. Have had *delirium tremens* twice—doctor says third attack will kill. A gloomy prospect mine, eh, Halifax?"

"You must not sentimentalize over it," I said; "you have got to face it and trample on the enemy. No man of twenty-three with a frame like yours and a brain like yours need to be conquered by a vice."

"You know nothing about it," he responded, roughly. "When it comes on me it has the strength of a demon. It shakes my life to the foundations. My strength goes. I am like Samson shorn of his locks."

"There is not the least doubt," I replied, "that the next time the attack comes on, you will have to make a desperate fight to conquer it. You must be helped from outside, for the fearful craving for drink which men like you possess is a form of disease, and is closely allied to insanity. How often do you say the craving seizes you?"

"From three to four times a year—in the intervals I don't care if I never touch a drop of strong drink."

"You ought never to touch wine, or strong drink of any kind; your frame does not need it, and with your peculiar bins it only acts as fuel to the hidden fire."

"You want me to be a teetotaler?" responded Tollemache. "I never will. I'll take no obligatory vow. Fifty vows would not keep me from rushing over the precipice when the demon is on me."

"I don't want you to take a vow against drink," I said, "as you say you would break it when the attack comes on. But if you are willing to fight the thing next time, I wish to say that all the medical skill I possess is at your service. I have a spare room in my house. Will you be my guest shortly before the time comes? You are warned of its approach, surely, by certain symptoms?"

"Yes, I have bad dreams; I am restless and nervous; I am consumed by thirst. These are but the preliminary symptoms. The full passion, as a rule, wakens up suddenly, and I am, in short, as a man possessed."

Tollemache looked deeply excited as he spoke. He had forgotten his pipe, which lay on the table near. Now he sprang to his feet.

"Halifax," he said; "I am the wretched victim of a demon—I often wish that I were dead!"

"You must fight the thing next time," I said. "It will be an awful struggle, I don't pretend to deny that; but I believe that you and I together will be a match for the enemy."

"It's awfully good of you to take me up—'pon my word it is."

"Well, is it a bargain?" I said.

"If you'll have it so."

"You must consider yourself my patient," I continued, "and obey me implicitly from this moment. It is most important that in the intervals of the attacks your health should be built up. I should recommend you to go to Switzerland, to take a sea voyage, or to do anything else which will completely brace the system. You should also cultivate your intellectual qualities, by really arduous study for a couple of hours daily."

"The thing I like best is music."

"Very well, study the theory of music. Don't weaken yourself over the sentimental parts. If you are really musical, and have taken it up as a pastime, work at the drudgery part for the next couple of months as if your bread depended on it. This exercise will put your brain into a healthy condition, and help to banish morbid thoughts. Then you must take plenty of exercise. If you go to Switzerland, you must do all the walking and the tobogganing which the weather will permit. If you go into the country, you must ride for so many hours daily. In short, it is your duty to get your body into training condition in order to fight your deadly enemy with any chance of success."

I spoke purposely in a light, matter-of-fact tone, and saw to my satisfaction that Tollemache was impressed by my words—he seemed interested, a shadow of hope flitted across his face, and his view of his own position was undoubtedly more healthy.

"Above all things, cultivate faith in your own self," I continued.

"No man had ever a stronger reason for wishing to conquer the foe," he said, suddenly. "Let me show you this."

He took a morocco case out of his pocket, opened it, and put it into my hand. It contained, as I expected, the photograph of a girl. She was dark-eyed, young, with a bright, expectant, noble type of face.

"She is waiting for me in New York," he said. "I won't tell you her name. I have not dared to look at the face for weeks and weeks. She has promised to marry me when I have abstained for a year. I am not worthy of her. I shall never win her. Give me the case." He shut it up without glancing once at the picture, and replaced it in his breast pocket

"Now you know everything," he said.

"Yes."

Soon afterwards I left him.

Tollemache obeyed my directions. The very next evening a note in his handwriting was given to me. It contained the simple information that he was off to Switzerland by the night mail, and would not be back in England for a couple of months.

I did not forget him during his absence. His face, with its curious mingling of weakness and power, of pathetic soul-longings and strong animalism, often rose before me.

One evening towards the end of March I was in my consulting-room looking up some notes when Tollemache was announced. He came in, looking fresh and bronzed. There was brightness in his eyes and a healthy firmness round his lips. He held himself erect. He certainly was a very fine-looking young fellow.

"Well," he said, "here I am—I promised to come back, and I have kept my word. Are you ready for me?"

"Quite ready, as a friend," I replied, giving him a hearty shake of the hand; "but surely you don't need me as a doctor? Why, my dear fellow, you are in splendid case."

He sat down in the nearest chair.

"Granted," he replied. "Your prescription worked wonders. I can sleep well, and eat well. I am a good climber. My muscles are in first-class order. I used to be a famous boxer in New York, and I should not be afraid to indulge in that pastime now. Yes, I am in capital health; nevertheless," here he dropped his voice to a whisper, "the premonitory symptoms of the next attack have begun."

I could not help starting.

"They have begun," he continued: "the thirst, the sense of uneasiness, the bad dreams."

"Well," I replied, as cheerfully as I could, "you are just in the condition to make a brave and successful fight. I have carefully studied cases like yours in your absence, and I am equipped to help you at all points. You must expect a bad fortnight. At the end of that time you will be on *terra firma* and will be practically safe. Now, will you come and stay with me?—you know I have placed a bedroom at your disposal."

"Thanks, but it is not necessary for me to do that yet. I will go to my old quarters at ›Mercer's Hotel,‹ and will give you my word of honour to come here the first moment that I feel my self-control quite going."



"I would rather you came here at once."

"It is not necessary, I assure you. These symptoms may vanish again completely for a time, and although they will inevitably return, and the deadly thing must be fought out to the bitter end, yet a long interval may elapse before this takes place. I promised you to come to England the moment the first unpropitious symptom appeared. I shall be in your vicinity at ›Mercer's,‹ and can get your assistance at any moment; but it is unfair to take possession of your spare room at this early date."

I could not urge the matter any farther. Helpful as I wished to be to this young man, I knew that he must virtually cure himself. I could not take his free will from him. I gave him some directions, therefore, which I hoped might be useful: begged of him to fill up all his time with work and amusement, and promised to go to him the first moment he sent for me.

He said he would call me in as soon as ever he found his symptoms growing worse, and went away with a look of courage and resolution on his face.

I felt sure that he was thinking of the girl whose photograph he held near his heart. Was he ever likely to win her? She was not a milk-and-water maiden, I felt convinced. There was steel as well as fire in those eyes. If she ever consented to become Tollemache's wife, she would undoubtedly keep him straight-but she was no fool. She knew the uselessness of throwing herself away on a drunkard.

Tollemache came to see me on the Monday of a certain week. On the following Thursday morning, just after I had finished seeing the last of my patients, my servant brought me a letter from him.

"This should have been handed to you yesterday," he said. "It had slipped under a paper in the letter-box. The housemaid has only just discovered it."

I opened it quickly. It contained these words:—

*Dear Halifax,*

*the demon gains ascendancy over me, but I still hold him in check.  
Can you dine with me to-night at half-past seven?*

*Yours sincerely,*

*Wilfred Tollemache*

The letter was dated Wednesday morning. I should have received it twenty-four hours ago. Smothering a vexed exclamation, I rushed off to ›Mercer's Hotel.‹

I asked for Tollemache, but was told by one of the waiters that he was out. I reflected for a moment and then inquired for the manager.

He came out into the entrance-hall in answer to my wish to see him, and invited me to come with him into his private sitting-room.

"What can I do for you, Dr. Halifax?" he asked.

"Well, not much," I answered, "unless you can give me some particulars with regard to Mr. Tollemache."

"He is not in, doctor. He went out last night, between nine and ten o'clock, and has not yet returned."

"I am anxious about him," I said. "I don't think he is quite well."

"As you mention the fact, doctor, I am bound to agree with you. Mr. Tollemache came in between six and seven last night in a very excited condition. He ran up to his rooms, where he had ordered dinner for two, and then came down to the bureau to know if any note or message had been left for him. I gathered from him that he expected to hear from you, sir."

"I am more vexed than I can express," I replied. "He wrote yesterday morning asking me to dine with him, and through a mistake the letter never got into my possession until twenty-four hours after it was written."

"Poor young gentleman," replied the manager, "then that accounts for the worry he seemed to be in. He couldn't rest, but was up and down, watching, as I gather now for your arrival, doctor. He left the house soon after nine o'clock without touching his dinner, and has not since returned."

"Have you the least idea where he is?" I asked.

"No, sir, not the faintest; Mr. Tollemache has left all his things about and has not paid his bill, so of course he's safe to come back, and may do so at any moment. Shall I send you word when he arrives?"

"Yes, pray do," I answered. "Let me know the moment you get any tidings about him."

I then went away.

The manager had strict orders to give me the earliest information with regard to the poor fellow, and there was now nothing whatever for me to do but to try to banish him from my mind.

The next morning I went at an early hour to ›Mercer's‹ to make inquiries. The manager came himself into the entrance-hall to see me.

"There's been no news, sir," he said, shaking his head; "not a line or a message of any sort. I hope no harm has happened to the poor gentleman. It seems a pity you shouldn't have got the letter, doctor, he seemed in a cruel way about your not turning up."

"Yes, it was a sad mistake," I answered, "but we must trust that no disaster has occurred. If Mr. Tollemache were quite well, I should not, of course, trouble my head over the matter."

"He was far from being that," said a waiter who came up at this moment. "Did you tell the doctor, sir, about the lady who called yesterday?" continued the man, addressing the manager.

"No, I had almost forgotten," he replied. "A lady in deep mourning—young, I should say, but she kept her veil down—arrived here last evening about eight o'clock and asked for Mr. Tollemache. I said he was out, and asked if she would wish her name to be left. She seemed to think for a moment and then said 'No,' that it didn't matter. She said she would come again, when she hoped to see him."

In his intercourse with me, Tollemache had never spoken of any lady but one, and her photograph he kept in his breast pocket. I wondered if this girl could possibly have been to see him, and, acting on the conjecture that the visitor might be she, I spoke. "If the lady happens to call again," I said, "you may mention to her that I am Mr. Tollemache's medical man, and that I will see her with pleasure if she likes to come to my house in Harley Street." I then further impressed upon the manager the necessity of letting me know the moment any tidings came of Tollemache, and went away.

Nothing fresh occurred that evening, but the next morning, just when I had seen the last of my patients, a lady's card was put into my hand. I read the name on it, "Miss Beatrice Sinclair." A kind of premonition told me that Beatrice Sinclair had something to do with Tollemache. I desired my servant to admit her at once.

The next moment a tall girl, in very deep mourning, with a crape veil over her face, entered the room. She bowed to me, but did not speak for nearly half a minute. I motioned her to seat herself. She did so, putting up her hand at the same moment to remove her veil. I Could not help starting when I saw her face. I bent suddenly forward and said, impulsively: "I know what you have come about—you are anxious about Wilfred Tollemache."

She looked at me in unfeigned surprise, and a flood of colour rushed to her pale cheeks. She was a handsome girl—her eyes were dark, her mouth tender and beautiful. There was strength about her face—her

chin was very firm. Yes, I had seen those features before—or, rather, a faithful representation of them. Beatrice Sinclair had a face not easily forgotten.

“If this girl is Tollemache’s good angel, there is undoubtedly hope for him,” I murmured.

Meanwhile, the astonished look on her face gave way to speech.

“How can you possibly know me?” she said. “I have never seen you until this moment.”

“I am Tollemache’s doctor, and once he told me about you,” I said. “On that occasion, too, he showed me your photograph.”

Miss Sinclair rose in excitement from her scat. She had all the indescribable grace of a well-bred American girl.

“The fact of your knowing something about me makes matters much easier,” she said. “May I tell you my story in a very few words?”

“Certainly.”

“My name, as you know, is Beatrice Sinclair. I am an American, and have spent the greater part of my life in New York. I am an only child, and my father, who was a general in the American army, died only a week ago. It is three years since I engaged myself provisionally to Wilfred Tollemache. We had known each other from childhood. He spoke of his attachment to me; he also told me”—here she hesitated and her voice trembled—“of,” she continued, raising her eyes, “a fearful vice which was gaining the mastery over him. You know to what I allude. Wilfred was fast becoming a dipsomaniac. I would not give him up, but neither would I marry a man addicted to so terrible a failing. I talked to my father about it, and we agreed that if Wilfred abstained from drink for a year, I might marry him. He left us—that is three years ago. He has not written to me since, nor have I heard of him. I grew restless at last, for—I have never ceased to love him. I have had bad dreams about him, and it seems to me that his redemption has been placed in my hands. I induced my father to bring me to Europe and finally to London. We arrived in London three weeks ago; and took up our quarters at the ›Métropole.‹ We employed a clever detective to find out Wilfred Tollemache’s whereabouts. A week ago this man brought us the information that he had rooms at ›Mercer’s Hotel.‹ Alas! on that day, also, my father died suddenly. I am now alone in the world. Two evenings ago I went to ›Mercer’s Hotel‹ to inquire for Mr. Tollemache. He was not in, and I went away. I returned to the hotel again this morning. Your message was given to me, and I came on to you at once. The manager of the hotel told me that you were Mr. Tollemache’s medical

man. If he needed the services of a doctor he must have been ill. Has he been ill? Can you tell me anything about him?"

"I can tell you a good deal about him. Won't you sit down?"

She dropped into a chair immediately, clasping her hands in her lap; her eyes were fixed on my face.

"You are right in your conjecture," I said. "Tollemache has been ill."

"Is he alive?"

"As far as I can tell, yes."

Her lips quivered.

"Don't you know where he is now?" she asked.

"I deeply regret that I do not," I answered.

She looked at me again with great eagerness.

"I know that you will tell me the truth," she continued, almost in a whisper. "I owe it to my dead father not to go against his wishes now. What was the nature of Mr. Tollemache's illness?"

"*Delirium tremens*," I replied, firmly.

Miss Sinclair's face grew the colour of death.

"I might have guessed it," she said. "I hoped, but my hope was vain. He has not fought—he has not struggled—he has not conquered."

"You are mistaken," I answered; "Tollemache has both fought and struggled, but up to the present he has certainly won no victory. Let me tell you what I know about him."

I then briefly related the story of our acquaintance. I concealed nothing, dwelling fully on the terrible nature of poor Tollemache's malady. I described to Miss Sinclair the depression, the despair, the overpowering moral weakness which accompanies the indulgence in this fearful vice. In short, I lifted the curtain, as I felt it was my duty to do, and showed the poor girl a true picture of the man to whom she had given her heart.

"Is there no hope for him?" she asked, when I had finished speaking.

"You are the only hope," I replied. "The last rock to which he clings is your affection for him. He was prepared to make a desperate fight when the next craving for drink assailed him. You were the motive which made him willing to undergo the agony of such a struggle. I look upon the passion for drink as a distinct disease: in short, as a species of insanity. I was prepared to see Tollemache through the next attack. If he endured the torture without once giving way to the craving for drink, he would certainly be on the high road to recovery. I meant to have him in my own house. In short, hopeless as his case seemed, I had every hope of him."

I paused here.

"Yes?" said Miss Sinclair. "I see that you are good and kind. Why do you stop? Why isn't Wilfred Tollemache here?"

"My dear young lady," I replied, "the best-laid plans are liable to mishap. Three days ago, Tollemache wrote to me telling me that he was in the grip of the enemy, and asking me to come to him at once. Most unfortunately, that letter was not put into my hands until twenty-four hours after it should have been delivered. I was not able to keep the appointment which Tollemache had made with me, as I knew nothing about it until long after the appointed hour. The poor fellow left the hotel that night, and has not since returned."

"And you know nothing about him?"

"Nothing."

I rose as I spoke. Miss Sinclair looked at me.

"Have you no plan to suggest?" she asked.

"No," I said, "there is nothing for us to do but to wait. I will not conceal from you that I am anxious, but at the same time my anxiety may be groundless. Tollemache may return to ›Mercer's‹ at any moment. As soon as ever he does, you may be sure that I will communicate with you."

I had scarcely said these words before my servant came in with a note.

"From ›Mercer's Hotel,‹ sir," he said, "and the messenger is waiting."

"I will send an answer in a moment," I said.

The man withdrew—Miss Sinclair came close to me.

"Open that letter quickly," she said, in an imperative voice. "It is from the hotel. He may be there even now."

I tore open the envelope. There was a line from the manager within.

*Dear Sir,*

*I send you the enclosed. I propose to forward the dressing-case at once by a commissionaire.*

The enclosed was a telegram. The following were its brief contents:

SEND ME MY DRESSING-CASE IMMEDIATELY BY A PRIVATE MESSENGER.  
TOLLEMACHE.

An address was given in full beneath:—

THE CEDARS, 110, HARVEY ROAD, HALHAM.

I knew that Miss Sinclair was looking over my shoulder as I read. I turned and faced her.

Her eyes were blazing with a curious mixture of joy, excitement, and fear.

"Let us go to him," she exclaimed: "let us go to him at once. Let us take him the dressing-case."

I folded up the telegram and put it into my pocket.

Then I crossed the room and rang the bell. When my servant appeared, I gave him the following message:—

"Tell the messenger from ›Mercer's,‹" I said, "that I will be round immediately, and tell him to ask the manager to do nothing until I come."

My servant withdrew and Miss Sinclair moved impatiently towards the door.

"Let us go," she said; "there is not a moment to lose. Let us take the dressing-case ourselves."

"I will take it," I replied; "you must not come."

"Why?" she asked, keen remonstrance in her tone.

"Because I can do better without you," I replied, firmly.

"I do not believe it," she answered.

"I cannot allow you to come with me," I said. "You must accept this decision as final. You have had patience for three years; exercise it a little longer, and—God knows, perhaps you may be rewarded. Anyhow, you must trust me to do the best I can for Tollemache. Go back to the ›Métropole.‹ I will let you know as soon as I have any news. You will, I am sure, trust me?"

"Oh, fully," she replied, tears suddenly filling her lovely eyes. "But remember that I love him—I love him with a very deep love."

There was something noble in the way she made this emphatic statement. I took her hand and led her from the room. A moment later she had left me, and I was hurrying on foot to ›Mercer's Hotel.‹

The manager was waiting for me in the hall. He had the dressing-case in his hand.

"Shall I send this by a commissionaire?" he asked.

"No," I replied, "I should prefer to take it myself. Tell the porter to call a hansom for me immediately."

The man looked immensely relieved.

"That is good of you, doctor," he said; "the fact is, I don't like the sound of that address."

"Nor do I," I replied.

"Do you know, Dr. Halifax, that the young lady—Miss Sinclair, she called herself—came here again this morning?"

"I have just seen her," I answered.

The hall porter now came to tell me that the hansom was at the door. A moment later I was driving to Balham, the dressing-case on my knee.

From ›Mercer's Hotel‹ to this suburb is a distance of several miles, but fortunately the horse was fresh and we got over the ground quickly. As I drove along my meditations were full of strange apprehensions.

Tollemache had now been absent from ›Mercer's Hotel‹ for two days and three nights. What kind of place was Harvey Road? What kind of house was 110? Why did Tollemache want his dressing-case? And why, if he did want it, could not he fetch it himself? The case had been a favourite of his—it had been a present from his mother, who was now dead. He had shown it to me one evening, and had expatiated with pride on its unique character. It was a sort of *multum in parvo*, containing many pockets and drawers not ordinarily found in a dressing-case. I recalled to mind the evening when Tollemache had brought it out of his adjacent bedroom and opened it for my benefit. All its accoutrements were heavily mounted in richly embossed silver. There was a special flap into which his cheque-book fitted admirably. Under the flap was a drawer, which he pulled open and regaled my astonished eyes with a quantity of loose diamonds and rubies which lay in the bottom.

"I picked up the diamonds in Cape Town," he said, "and the rubies in Ceylon. One or two of the latter are, I know, of exceptional value, and when I bought them I hoped that they might be of use—"

Here he broke abruptly, coloured, sighed, and slipped the drawer back into its place.

It was easy to guess where his thoughts were.

Now that I had seen Miss Sinclair, I felt that I could better understand poor Tollemache. Such a girl was worth a hard fight to win. No wonder Tollemache hated himself when he felt his own want of moral strength, and knew that the prize of such a love as hers might never be his.

I knew well that the delay in the delivery of the note was terribly against the poor fellow's chance of recovery, and as I drove quickly to Balham, my uneasiness grew greater and greater. Was he already in the clutches of his foe when he sent that telegram? I felt sure that he was not in immediate need of cash, as he had mentioned to me incidentally in our last interview that he had drawn a large sum from his bank as soon as ever he arrived in England.



We arrived at Balham in about an hour, but my driver had some difficulty in finding Harvey Road.

At last, after skirting Tooting Bec Common we met a policeman who was able to acquaint us with its locality. We entered a long, straggling, slummy-looking road, and after a time pulled up at 110. It was a tall house, with broken and dirty Venetian blinds. The hall door was almost destitute of paint. A balcony ran round the windows of the first floor.

I did not like the look of the house, and it suddenly occurred to me that I would not run the risk of bringing the dressing-case into it.

I had noticed the name of a respectable chemist over a shop in the High Street, a good mile away, and desired the driver to go back there at once. He did so. I entered the shop, carrying the case in my hand. I gave the chemist my card, and asked him if he would oblige me by taking care of the dressing-case for an hour. He promised civilly to do what I asked, and I stepped once more into the hansom and told the man to drive back as fast as he could to 110, Harvey Road.

He obeyed my instructions. The moment the hansom drew up at the door, I sprang out and spoke to the driver.

"I want you to remain here," I said. "Don't on any account leave this door until I come out. I don't like the look of the house."

The man gave it a glance of quick interrogation. He did not say anything, but the expression of his eyes showed me plainly that he confirmed my opinion.

"I think you understand me," I said. "Stay here until you see me again, and if I require you to fetch a policeman, be as quick about it as you can."

The man nodded, and I ran up the broken steps of 110.

The door possessed no knocker, but there was a bell at the side.

I had to pull it twice before it was answered; then a slatternly and tawdrily dressed servant put in an appearance. Her face was dirty. She had pinned a cap in hot haste on her frowzy head of red hair, and was struggling to tie an apron as she opened the door.

"Is Mr. Tollemache in?" I asked. "I wish to see him at once."

The girl's face became watchful and secretive—she placed herself between me and the hall.

"There's a gentleman upstairs," she said; "but you can't see him, he's ill."

"Oh, yes, I can," I answered. "I am his doctor—let me pass, please. Mr. Tollemache has telegraphed for his dressing-case, and I have replied to the telegram."

"Oh, if you have brought the parcel, you can go up," she said, in a voice of great relief. "I know they're expecting a parcel. You'll find 'em all on the first floor. Door just opposite the stairs—you can't miss it."

I pushed past her and ran up the stairs. They were narrow and dark. The carpet on which I trod felt greasy.

I flung open the door the girl had indicated, and found myself in a good-sized sitting-room. It faced the street, and the window had a balcony outside it.

Seated by a centre table drawn rather near this window were three men, with the most diabolical faces I have ever looked at. One of them was busily engaged trying to copy poor Tollemache's signature, which was scrawled on a half sheet of paper in front of him—the other two were eagerly watching his attempts. Tollemache himself lay in a dead drunken sleep on the sofa behind them.

My entrance was so unexpected that none of the men were prepared for me. I stepped straight up to the table, quickly grabbed the two sheets of paper, crushed them up in my hand, and thrust them into my pocket.

"I have come to fetch Mr. Tollemache away," I said.

The men were so absolutely astonished at my action and my words, that they did not speak at all for a moment. They all three jumped from their seats at the table and stood facing me. The noise they made pushing back their chairs aroused Tollemache, who, seeing me, tottered to his feet and came towards me with a shambling, uneasy gait.

"Hullo, Halifax, old man, how are you?" he gasped, with a drunken smile. "What are you doing here? We're all having a ripping time: lots of champagne; but I've lost my watch and chain and all my money—three hundred pounds—I've telegraphed for my cheque-book, though. Glad you've come, old boy—'pon my word I am. Want to go away with you, although we have had a ripping time, yes, *awfully* ripping."

"You shall come," I said. "Sit down first for a moment."

I pushed him back with some force on to the sofa and turned to one of the men, who now came up and asked me my business.

"What are you doing here?" he inquired. "We don't want you—you had better get out of this as fast as you can. You have no business here, so get out."

"Yes, I have business here," I replied. "I have come for this man," here I went up to Tollemache and laid my hand on his shoulder. "I am his doctor and he is under my charge. I don't leave here without him, and, what is more," I added, "I don't leave here without his property either. You

must give me back his watch and chain and the three hundred pounds you have robbed him of. Now you understand what I want?"

"We'll see about that," said one of the men, significantly. He left the room as he spoke.

During his absence, the other men stood perfectly quiet, eyeing me with furtive and stealthy glances.

Poor Tollemache sat upright on the sofa, blinking with his heavy eyes. Sometimes he tried to rise, but always sank back again on his seat. During the whole time he kept muttering to himself: "Yes, good fellows these; jolly time, champagne, all the rest, but *I'm robbed*; this is a thieves' den. Don't leave me alone, Halifax. Want to go. You undershtand. Watch and chain gone, and *all my money*; three hundred in notes and gold. Yes, three hundred. Won't let me go till I give 'em my chequebook; telegraphed for cheque-book in dressing-case. You undershtand, yes. Don't leave me, old boy."

"It will be all right," I said. "Stay quiet."

The position was one of extreme danger for both of us. There was nothing whatever for it but to carry matters with a cool hand and not to show a vestige of fear. I glanced round me and observed the position of the room. The sofa on which Tollemache was sitting was close to the window. This window had French doors, which opened on to the balcony. I edged close to it.

I did not do this a moment too soon. The man who had left the room now returned with a ruffian of gigantic build, who came up to me at once with a menacing attitude.

"Who are you?" he said, shaking his brawny fist in my face. "We don't want you here;—get out of this room at once, or it will be the worse for you. We won't 'ave you a-interfering with our friends. This gent 'ave come 'ere of *his own free will*. We like 'im, and 'e's 'eartily welcome to stay as long as 'e wants to. You'd best go, ef you value your life."

While he was speaking I suddenly flung my hand behind me, and turning the handle of the French window threw it open.

I stepped on to the balcony and called to the cabman: "Stay where you are," I said, "I may want you in a moment." Then I entered the room again.

"I don't wish to waste words on you," I said, addressing the burly man. "I have come for Mr. Tollemache, and I don't mean to leave the house without him. He comes away with me the moment you return his watch and chain, and the three hundred pounds you have stolen from him. If you don't fetch that watch and chain, and that money, I shall send

the cabman who is waiting for me outside, and who knows me, for the police. You are best acquainted with what sort of house this is, and with what sort of game you are up to. It is for you to say how near the wind you are sailing. If you wish the police to find out, they can be here in a minute or two. If not, give me the money and the watch and chain. I give you two minutes to make your choice."

Here I took out my watch and looked at it steadily.

I stepped again on to the balcony.

"Cabby," I shouted, "if I am not with you in three minutes from now, go and bring a couple of policemen here as quickly as ever you can."

The cabman did not speak, but he took out his watch and looked at it.

I re-entered the room.

"Now you know my mind," I said. "I give you two minutes to decide how to act. If Mr. Tollemache and I are not standing on the pavement in three minutes from now, the police will come and search this house. It is for you to decide whether you wish them to do so or not."

I was glad to see that my words had an effect upon the biggest of the ruffians. He looked at his companions, who glanced back at him apprehensively. One of them edged near me and tried to peer over my shoulder to see if the cabman were really there.

Tollemache went on mumbling and muttering on the sofa. I stood with my back to the window, my watch in my hand, marking the time.

"Time's up," I said, suddenly replacing the watch. "Now, what do you mean to do?"

"We'd best oblige the gent, don't yer think so, Bill?" said one of the men to his chief.

"We'll see about that," said the chief. He came close to me again.

"Now, look you 'ere," he said, "you'd best go out quiet, and no mischief will come. The gent 'ere 'e give us the watch and chain and the money, being old pals of his as he picked up in New York City."

"That's a lie," shouted Tollemache.

"Stay quiet," I said to him.

Then I turned to the ruffian, whose hot breath I felt on my cheek.

"We do not leave here," I said, "without the watch and chain and the money. My mind is quite made up. When I go, this gentleman goes, and we neither of us go without his property."

These words of mine were almost drowned by the heavy noise of an approaching dray. It lumbered past the window. As it did so, I stepped

on to the balcony to acquaint the cabman with the fact that the three minutes were up.

I looked down into the street, and could not help starting—the cab had vanished. I turned round quickly.

The big man had also stepped upon the balcony—he gave me an evil glance. Suddenly seizing me by the collar, he dragged me back into the room.

“You ere a humbug, you ere,” he said, “wid yer bloomin’ cabs—there ain’t no cab there—no, nor never wor. Ef you don’t go in one way you go in another. It ain’t our fault ef things ain’t quite agreeable. Come along, Sam, lend a ’and.”

The next moment the ruffian had laid me fiat on my back on the floor, and was kneeling on my chest.

Tollemache tottered from the sofa, and made a vain struggle to get the brute away.

“You get out of this,” the fellow thundered at him. “I’ll make an end of you, too, ef you don’t look out.”

He fumbled in his pocket and took out a huge clasp-knife.

I closed my eyes, feeling sure that my last hour had come. At this moment, however, the rapidly approaching sound of cab wheels was distinctly audible. A cab drove frantically up and stopped at the door.

The four ruffians who were clustered round me all heard it, and the big man took his knee off my chest.

Quick as thought I found my feet again, and before anyone could prevent me, leaped out on to the balcony. Two policemen were standing on the steps of the house—one of them had the bell-pull in his hand and was just about to sound a thundering peal.

“Stop,” I shouted to him; “don’t ring for a moment—stay where you are.” Then I turned and laced the group in the room.

“It is not too late,” I said; “I give you one minute’s grace. Return this gentleman’s watch and chain and the three hundred pounds you have stolen from him, and I say nothing to the two policemen who are now waiting on the steps. If I have not the money back within a minute, the police enter your house—now you can choose.”

I saw by the expression on the face of the bully who had knocked me down that he was only too eager to accede to my request.

“Come on, Bill,” he said to one of his pals, “I suppose there ain’t nothing for it but to do what the gentleman says. Yes, yes, you be quiet, sir, and you’ll have all the swag—lor’, we only pulled you down by way of

a joke, and as to the money and the other valuables, we was keeping 'em for the gent. Who'd want to rob a poor innercent like that? You promise not to peach on us, sir?"

"Be quick," I shouted. "I give you a minute, no more—give me the money and the watch and chain. You had better hurry up."

They did hurry up with a vengeance. The big man was as great a coward as he was a ruffian. As he thrust his hands deep into his trousers pockets, I saw that he was absolutely shaking with fright. Tollemache's magnificent watch and chain were laid on the table, and all four men turned their pockets out and deposited gold and notes by the side of the other property. I stepped up to the table and reckoned the money. Two hundred and eighty pounds and the watch and chain were returned to me. The remaining twenty pounds were, I plainly saw, hopelessly gone. It was not worth fighting for them. I put the gold and notes and the watch and chain into my pocket, and going up to Tollemache took his arm.

"Come," I said, "we can go now."

The terror which must have seized him when he saw me struggling on the floor had partly sobered him, but now he had returned to the most imbecile stage of his horrible vice. He struggled to his feet and clutched hold of me.

"Want my pipe," he muttered. "I say, old boy, won't go without my pipe."

I had hard work to keep my patience. He was a big man, and I could not control him against his will. We were by no means yet out of the wood. The four ruffians were eyeing us as if they would only too gladly kill us both by slow torture. Never before had I encountered eight such diabolical eyes as those which they fixed upon me. And there stood Tollemache, with an idiotic smile on his face, and imagining that he was doing a wonderful and clever thing when he refused to stir without his pipe.

"Don't be a fool," I said, sternly, to him. "Come, now, I'll get you your pipe tomorrow."

To my relief he seemed satisfied with this assurance, and suffered me to drag him across the room.

When we reached the door the big ruffian came up and intercepted us.

"We have your word not to peach?" he said.

"Yes," I replied—"let me pass."

He did so, and I helped Tollemache as best I could downstairs.

The four men watched our descent over the banisters.

As soon as I had got my patient out on the steps, one of the policemen came up to me.

"What's the trouble, sir?" he demanded.

"Can we help you?"

"This gentleman is hopelessly drunk," I replied—"I thought it possible I might need your assistance in getting him from the house. You will oblige me much by helping me now to put him in the cab."

"No other trouble in there, sir?" asked the man, meaningly.

"None," I answered. "Will you kindly take the gentleman's other arm?" The policeman did so—his eyes were full of significance. He guessed, of course, that I was hiding something, but it was not for him to make any further remarks.

I took Tollemache straight back to my own house, and for the next week I had once again to lend him what aid I could in fighting the terrible demons who attack the victims of *delirium tremens*. I engaged two skilful men to nurse him, and, between us, we managed to drag the poor fellow away from the shores of death.

All this time I was in daily communication with Beatrice Sinclair. I got to know her well during these dark days. She was a girl to win the respect and admiration of any man, and she undoubtedly won mine. There was something grandly simple and unconventional about her.

"I am alone in the world," she said to me many times; "my mission in life is to save Wilfred Tollemache."

"You will not save him by marrying him in his present state," I answered her.

She raised her brows and looked at me in some slight surprise.

"I have no intention of marrying him at present," she said. "Nothing would induce me to unite my lot with that of a drunkard—besides, I promised my father. I will marry Wilfred when he has abstained from drink for a year—not before."

"If he abstains for a year he will be cured," I replied.

There came an evening when Tollemache was sufficiently convalescent to come downstairs. I had not yet said anything to him about Miss Sinclair, but as I knew she was impatient to see him, I wondered if it might be safe for me to break the news of her arrival on the scene to him that evening. He sat in my consulting-room huddled up by the fire. The evening was a warm one in April, but he looked chilly and depressed. I drew a chair near him and sat down. He looked at me with languid eyes out of a cadaverous face

"I can't make out why you are so good to me," he said. "I am not worth the thought of a man like you."

I did not reply for a moment. Then I said, tersely: "It would be a great victory to save you, and I believe it can be done."

"I have a sort of memory," said Tollemache, "of your having already saved my life at the risk of your own."

"That is true," I answered.

"How can I pay you back?" he asked. "Will money—?"

"No," I interrupted, harshly, springing to my feet as I spoke—"money won't. I want you to become a man again: that is my reward."

He seemed to shrink into himself; there was not a scrap of fibre about him at present.

"Will you tell me," I said, "how you got into that den?"

He roused himself a little at this, and some animation came into his eyes.

"That was partly your fault," he said. "You did not keep your word; you never came to me when I wrote to you. I told you that I was losing self-control—"

I interrupted him to explain why I had not received his letter.

"Well," he said, "I spent a day of fearful torture. I knew I was on the brink of a precipice, and that unless you pulled me back, against my will, over I must go. I returned to Mercer's in the evening and looked eagerly for your note. None had arrived. I waited for you until nine o'clock, and then in a sort of frenzy went out. I had a very stiff brandy-and-soda, which pulled me together for a bit, and seeing a music-hall in Oxford Street, I went in. There I was supplied with fresh drink, and while I was indulging, a man of the name of Hawker, who had once seen me in a drunken condition in New York, came up and claimed acquaintance. I knew the moment I looked at the fellow, that the demon had got the upper hand. Hawker talked, and supplied me with fresh drink. He introduced me to a companion as low as himself. I have a dim remembrance of driving away with these men and of spending the night over cards and unlimited drink. In the morning I wanted to leave, but the fellows threatened me, and in my drunken state I was no match for them. Hawker sat down near me and asked a lot of questions, to which I replied as readily as if I were a baby. I don't know how that day or the next passed. I gave Hawker the address of the hotel where I was staying, and told him about my dressing-case and its valuable contents. Hawker filled in a telegram to the manager of the hotel, which he made me sign. When it was sent off, he gave me a sheet of paper and desired me to



write my signature on it. I did so—the men then sat round a table and began to copy it. The horrors of *delirium tremens* were already upon me, and my mind became filled with all manner of terrible imaginings. I closed my eyes and dazed on. When next I opened them, you were standing in the room.”

“You were practically out of your mind,” I replied; “but the thing is over, and well over. By the way, have you ever thought, during the last terrible fortnight, of the photograph which you were good enough to show me?”

Tollemache started and clenched his nerveless hand.

“Don’t speak of it,” he said. “The one thing left to me to be thankful for, is that she has not linked her life with mine.”

“You have undoubtedly much cause to be thankful,” I replied. “The wife of a drunkard is the most miserable woman on God’s earth. Please pardon me, however, if I pain you a little by speaking about the girl whose photograph you showed me. Do you mind telling me her name?”

“Beatrice Sinclair.”

“How old is she?”

“Twenty—there is really no use in this catechism, Halifax.”

“I am sorry to pain you,” I replied, briefly; “but the fact is, I was struck with Miss Sinclair’s face—there is a great deal of strength in it. If you conquered your fault, she would be the woman of all others to keep you straight. She is, I am certain, attached to you. To win a girl like Beatrice Sinclair ought to be a motive strong enough to make any man conquer a vice like yours.”

Tollemache was now intensely agitated. He sprang to his feet.

“I tell you,” he said, “she has forgotten all about me. It is three years since she has heard my name. She has in all probability married another man long ere this.”

“I am sure she has not,” I answered.

He thrust his hand into his breast pocket and drew out the case which contained the photograph.

“Many a time I have wanted to put this into the fire,” he said. “I dare not part with it, and yet I dare not look at it.”

“Keep it,” I said: “there is hope for you while you have it.”

“There isn’t a ghost of hope for me,” he said. He threw himself back again into his chair, and covered his face.

My servant came into the room and brought me a message.

"Tollemache," I said, "a lady has called who wishes to see me. Will you forgive me if I leave you for a minute or two?"

He growled out some reply which was scarcely intelligible, and I left the room.

I went into my library, where Beatrice Sinclair was waiting for me.

"Well," she said, coming up to me eagerly, "is he ready for me?"

"He thinks you have forgotten him," I said, "and that in all probability you are married to another."

"What a cruel thought!"

"But he keeps your photograph in his breast pocket."

"Does he, indeed?" Her eyes blazed with sudden joy.

"He is tempted often to throw it into the fire," I continued, "for he feels himself unworthy of you; but he neither dares to throw it away nor to look at it."

"He shall look at me instead. Take me to him at once."

"You will see the wreck of the Tollemache you used to know."

"He shall not be a wreck long. I have vowed to save him. My life is at his service."

"Remember your promise to your father."

"I remember it. I will not break it. Now take me to him."

She came up to me and held out her hand. I took it and went with her to the door of the next room, opened it, and motioned to her to enter.

When she did so, I closed it softly and came away.

I had a firm conviction that with such unexpected aid, Tollemache would have moral strength to overcome the vice which was ruining him.

Subsequent events proved that I was right.

## The Posonby Diamonds

**F**ew cases in their day interested me more than that of Beryl Temple, and this, not so much from the medical point of view as from the character of this strong-minded and brave girl.

It was on the occasion of her mother's death that I first became acquainted with Beryl. She suffered keenly at the time, but her courage and presence of mind and fine self-suppression aroused my interest, and when, a month afterwards, she came to me and told me in the simple manner which always characterized her that she was not only friendless but without means of support, I eagerly asked in what way I could help her.

She replied with a blush, and something like tears in her eyes.

"Of all things in the world," she said, "I should like best to be trained as a hospital nurse—do you think I am suited to the profession?"

"Admirably," I replied. "You have nerve and self-control; you have also good health and, although I am sure that you have plenty of heart, you would never be mawkishly sentimental."

"Oh, no," she answered; "I am glad you approve."

"I cordially approve," I replied. "In any cases the profession of nursing is best undertaken by women who are not too highly cultivated, and whose position is below that of the supposed lady—but you, Miss Temple, will make an admirable nurse. Your peculiar characteristics fit you for this calling."

I saw by the expression on her face that my words pleased her. I helped her to take the necessary steps to become a probationer at one of the large hospitals. She entered on her profession with enthusiasm—her time of training passed without hitch, and in due course I placed her on my own special staff of nurses.

I had been by no means mistaken in Miss Temple's qualifications—her nerve was wonderful, her tact perfect. Although slight and rather delicate looking, she had a great reserve of strength, and I never knew her

to break down or fail in anyway, even when the case she had to attend to was involved in serious difficulties.

For nervous cases in especial, I found Miss Temple invaluable, and it so happened that she was the first person I applied to in the case of a very peculiar patient, Lady Violet Dalrymple.

I was sent for to the country to see Lady Violet in the autumn of the year 1889.

I remember the night when the telegram came to me from her mother, the Countess of Erstfield. Lady Violet was the only child—a girl of seventeen. Lady Erstfield had once brought her to see me in town. I then considered her an overgrown, somewhat nervous girl, had ordered change, a quiet life, plenty of fresh air, plenty of nourishment, plenty of congenial occupation, and had felt assured that if these remedies were systematically followed out, the young girl would quickly recover from the nervous derangements which were just then interfering with her health and happiness.

By the tenor of Lady Erstfield's telegram, however, I feared that this was not the case.

"I AM VERY ANXIOUS ABOUT VIOLET. COME WITHOUT DELAY," she wired.

I replied by telegram that I would arrive at "Beeches" by a late train that evening. I did so. Lady Erstfield was up. I had a long interview with her, and got all possible information with regard to my patient's state of health. I did not see Lady Violet herself, however, until the following morning.

At an early hour that day, I was taken into the pretty boudoir, where I found my patient lying on a sofa. It was a room furnished with all that taste, money, and love could suggest. Books, flowers, pictures, birds in cages, all that was gay and bright, surrounded the lovely girl who lay pale and languid on a sofa drawn close to the open window. This window commanded a perfect view of river, wood, and meadow, with a distant peep of low-lying hills against the horizon. To my eyes, accustomed to London bustle and noise, this view alone was restful and delightful.

Drawing a chair forward, I sat down by my patient and entered into a common-place talk with her. I had purposely asked Lady Erstfield to leave us, for I knew by experience that in nervous cases the patient was far more inclined to be confidential and to reply truthfully to questions when alone with the physician.

Having carefully examined Lady Violet, and made certain that she was suffering from no organic disease, it only remained for me to conclude

that she was a victim to one of those many ill-defined and misunderstood nervous disorders, which, by their variety and complexity, present the greatest difficulty in medical practice.

The treatment I saw at once must be moral, not medical.

"I don't find much the matter with you," I said, cheerfully; "your disease is more fancy than reality—instead of lying here, you ought to be having a gallop across those moors yonder."

Lady Violet gazed at me with a look of surprise and even faint displeasure in her large brown eyes.

"I love riding," she said, in a gentle voice, "but it is long since I have had the pleasure of a canter over the moors or anywhere else."

"You should not give up riding," I said; "it is a most healthful exercise and a splendid tonic for the nerves."

"I don't think you can realize how very weak I am," she answered, something like tears dimming her eyes. "Did not mother explain to you the strange symptoms from which I suffer?"

"The symptoms of which you complain are clearly due to an overwrought imagination," I replied. "You must try to curb it by every means in your power. I assure you I am only telling you the true state of the case when I say that there is nothing serious the matter with you."

She sighed and looked away from me.

I took her slim hand in mine and felt her pulse. It was weak, fluttering, and uneven. I bent forward and looked into her eyes—the pupils were slightly dilated. Still I held firmly to my opinion that nervous derangement, that most convenient phrase, was at the bottom of all that was wrong.

"Now," I said, rising as I spoke, "I will prescribe a drive for you this afternoon, and in a day or two, I have no doubt, you will be strong enough to get on horseback again. Take no medicines; eat plenty, and amuse yourself in every way in your power."

Soon afterwards I left the room, and saw Lady Erstfield alone.

"Your daughter is an instance of that all too common condition which we call neurasthenia," I said. "Although, unlike the name, the disease is not a coinage of the nineteenth century, still it has greatly increased of late, and claims for its victims those who have fallen out of the ranks of the marching army of women, in the advancing education and culture of their sex."

"I don't understand your placing Violet in that position," said Lady Erstfield, with reddening cheeks.

"My dear madam," I replied, "your daughter is the undoubted victim of over-culture and little to do. Were she a farmer's daughter, or were she obliged in any other way to work for her living, she would be quite well. The treatment which I prescribe is simply this—healthy occupation of every muscle and every faculty. Do all in your power to turn her thoughts outwards, and to arouse an active interest in her mind for something or someone. I assure you that although I am not anxious about her present state, yet cases like hers, if allowed to drift, frequently end in impairment of intellect in some degree, either small or great."

Lady Erstfield looked intensely unhappy.

"Violet is our only child," she said; "her father and I are wrapped up in her. Although you seem to apprehend no danger to her life—"

"There is none," I interrupted.

"Yet you allude to other troubles which fill me with terror. There is nothing Lord Erstfield and I would not do for our child. Will you kindly tell me how we are to provide her with the interests and occupations which are to restore her mind to a healthy condition?"

I thought for a moment.

"Lady Violet is very weak just now," I said, "her whole constitution has been so enfeebled with imaginary fears and nervous disorders that a little good nursing would not come amiss for her. I propose, therefore, to send a nurse to look after your daughter."

Lady Erstfield uttered an exclamation of dismay.

"A hospital nurse!" she exclaimed; "the mere word will terrify Violet into hysterics."

"Nothing of the kind," I answered. "The nurse I propose to send here is not an ordinary one. She is a lady—well born and well educated. She is extremely clever, and is remarkable both for her tact and gentleness. She thoroughly understands her duties—in this case they will consist mainly in amusing Lady Violet in the most strengthening and invigorating manner. Her name is Temple. I will ask you to call her Miss Temple, and never to speak of her or to her as nurse. She will soon win her own way with your daughter, and I shall be greatly surprised if she does not become more or less indispensable to her. She is just as healthy-minded, as bright, as strong as Lady Violet is the reverse."

After a little more conversation with Lady Erstfield, it was arranged that Miss Temple was to be telegraphed for at once.

I wrote her a long letter, giving her full directions with regard to the patient. This letter I left with Lady Erstfield, and asked her to deliver

it to Miss Temple as soon as ever she arrived. I then went to bid Lady Violet good-bye.

She looked even more wan and exhausted than when I had seen her in the morning. I thought it well to let her know about Miss Temple's arrival.

"She is a thoroughly nice girl," I said. "She will nurse you when you want to be nursed, and amuse you when you wish to be amused, and let you alone when you want quiet, and you will find her so fresh and bright and entertaining that you will soon, I am persuaded, be unable to do without her. Good-bye, now—I hope you will soon be much better, both for your mother's sake and your own."

Lady Violet raised her brows.

"Is mother unhappy about me?" she asked.

"She loves you," I replied, steadily, "and is getting quite worn out with anxiety about you. I wish her mind to be relieved as soon as possible, and I think it is your duty to do what you can towards this end."

"What can you mean?" asked Lady Violet.

"In your mother's presence," I answered, "you ought to endeavour as much as possible to overcome the melancholy which has taken such possession of you. Seem to be gay, even when you don't feel it. Try to appear well, even when you don't think you are. When you are alone with Miss Temple, you can do, of course, exactly as you please. But when with your father and mother, you ought to make a strenuous effort to overcome the morbid feelings, which are due entirely to the nervous weakness from which you are suffering."

Lady Violet looked at me intently.

"I love my father and mother," she exclaimed. "I would not willingly hurt the feelings of either. But, oh! how little you know what I suffer when you speak of my suppressing my trouble and terrible depression. Am I not always—always suppressing my fears? Oh, how hateful life is to me—how distasteful, how hollow. I should like to die beyond anything, and yet I am such a coward that the near approach of death would terrify me. Why was I born to be so miserable?"

"You were born to be happy," I answered, "or, at least, to be useful and contented. Your fear of death is perfectly natural, and I hope it will be many a long day before you are called upon to resign so precious a possession as life. Remember, you have only one life—use it well—you will have to account for it some day; and now, good-bye."

I returned to London, and in about a week's time I received a letter from Miss Temple. It satisfied me thoroughly. Lady Violet was better.

She went out for a little daily. She read to herself, and allowed Miss Temple to read to her. She was interested in a fancy fair which was to be held in the neighbourhood, and was helping Miss Temple to work for it. The nurse had also discovered that her patient had a love, almost a passion, for music. Miss Temple was an accomplished pianist before she took up her present profession, and she and Lady Violet spent a considerable portion of each day over the piano.

In short, Miss Temple was doing all that I expected her to do for the young girl whose life was so valuable. Lady Violet was undoubtedly already acquiring that outward view which means health both of mind and body.

Miss Temple's first letter was followed in the course of time by another, which was even more hopeful than the first. Lady Violet was devotedly attached to her, and could scarcely bear her out of her presence. The girls rode together, walked together, sketched and played together. The colour of health was coming back to Lady Violet's-pale cheeks; she would soon, in Miss Temple's opinion, be restored to perfect health.

Lady Erstfield also wrote to me about this time, and spoke in rapture of the companion whom I had secured for her daughter.

"I cannot tell you what Beryl Temple is to us," she said; "we owe Violet's recovery to her wonderful tact, her sympathy, her genius. She is like no girl I ever met before—she fascinates and subjugates us all—we do not want ever to part with her—as to Violet, it would almost kill her, I think, were Beryl Temple now to leave us."

About a month after receiving these two letters I was astonished and much pleased to see an announcement in the MORNING POST to the effect that a matrimonial alliance was arranged between Lady Violet Dalrymple, only daughter of the Earl and Countess of Erstfield, and Captain Geoffrey Ponsonby, of the Coldstream Guards, and that the marriage was likely to take place in December.

On reading this short paragraph I turned to my case-book, and under Lady Violet's name made the following note:—

*A case of neurasthenia, in which environment with moral treatment caused recovery.*

I then dismissed the subject from my mind, with the final reflection that I should not have much more to do with Lady Violet.

The following circumstances quickly proved my mistake.



On the evening of that same day I had a letter from Miss Temple, confirming the news of the approaching marriage; telling me that it had been contemplated for some time by the parents of the young people, but that a formal engagement had been deferred owing to the state of Lady Violet's health. Captain Ponsonby had arrived at "Beeches" about a fortnight ago, had proposed for Lady Violet, who had accepted him not without a certain unwillingness, and the marriage was arranged to take place immediately after Christmas.

*"Lady Violet is not as well as I could wish," continued Miss Temple, towards the close of her letter. "At first she refused absolutely to engage herself to Captain Ponsonby, but yielded to the entreaties of both her parents, who are most desirous for the match. She is once more languid, and inclined to be uninterested in her surroundings. I am not satisfied about her state, and deeply regret Captain Ponsonby's arrival—she was really in radiant health when he came to the house a fortnight ago. Lord and Lady Erstfield quite fail to observe their daughter's state of depression—they are both in the highest spirits, and active preparations for the wedding are going forward."*

This letter caused me uneasiness—it was followed almost immediately by a second:

*Dear Dr. Halifax,*

*I am in great, in dreadful, trouble—not alone about Lady Violet, whose condition alarms me much, but on my own account. In short, I am bewildered by the fearful calamity which has suddenly overtaken me. I have not a soul to confide in, and greatly long to see you. I know I must not expect you to come here, and yet it is impossible for me, under existing circumstances, to ask for a day off duty. God help me; I am the most unhappy girl in the world!*

*Yours sincerely,  
Beryl Temple.*

I received this letter by the last post one night. It caused me some wakeful hours, for I was greatly puzzled how to act. By the morning I resolved to write a line to Lady Erstfield, telling her that I had heard from Miss Temple of Lady Violet's altered condition, and offering to come to see her. That letter was not destined to be written, however. As I was sitting at breakfast a telegram was put into my hand. It was from Lord Erstfield, requesting me to go to "Beeches" immediately.

I started off by an early train and arrived at my destination about noon. I was shown at once into a reception-room, where Lady Erstfield awaited me.

"It is good of you to respond so quickly to our telegram," she said. "We are in terrible trouble here. Violet is in the strangest condition. She is very feverish: her strength seems completely gone. She lies hour after hour moaning to herself, and takes little notice of anyone."

"How long has this state of things gone on?" I asked.

"The complete breakdown only took place yesterday, but Miss Temple assures me that Violet has been failing for some time. Her father and I noticed on one or two occasions that she seemed pale and languid, but as there was a good deal to excite her, we put her fatigue down to that source. Under your judicious treatment and the admirable care Miss Temple gave her, we considered her perfectly recovered, and it did not enter into our minds that a recurrence of the old attack was possible."

"When you speak of Lady Violet having much to excite her, you doubtless allude to her engagement?" I said. "I saw it officially announced in the *MORNING POST*. I judged from it that she had quite recovered."

Lady Erstfield coloured.

"We thought so," she said; "her father and I both thought so. We were much pleased at the contemplated marriage, and we imagined that our child was happy, too. Captain Ponsonby is all that anyone can desire."

"And you have reason not to be satisfied now?" I asked.

"The fact is this," said Lady Erstfield, shortly: "Violet is unhappy she does not wish the engagement to go on. She told Miss Temple so this morning. I have seen my dear child on the subject an hour ago—we cannot account for her caprice in this matter."

"I will see Lady Violet now, if you will permit me," I said. "The engagement is, doubtless, the cause of this strange breakdown. Will you take me to her room?"

Lady Erstfield led the way without a word.

I found my patient even worse than her mother had given me to understand. In addition to much nervous trouble, she had unquestionably taken a chill of some sort, and symptoms of pneumonia were manifesting themselves. When I bent over her, I noticed the deep flush on her cheeks, her eyes were closed—her breathing was short and hurried. Miss Temple was standing by the bedside—she gave me an earnest glance, her face was as pale as Lady Violet's was flushed. I noticed that Lady Erstfield avoided speaking to the nurse, who, on her part, moved slightly away as she approached. The despair, however, which must

have filled the poor mother's heart as she watched her suffering child might in itself account for her manner. I was very anxious to see the nurse alone, and asked Lady Erstfield if I could do so.

"Certainly," she answered; "I will watch here until Miss Temple is able to resume her duties."

"I will not be long away," answered Beryl. She took me at once into Lady Violet's pretty little boudoir and shut the door

"I must be very quick," she said, "my place is with Violet. You think her very ill?"

"I do," I answered. "Her life is in danger. She is threatened with pneumonia. If the symptoms grow worse, she will not have strength to bear up under the attack."

"Oh, then, I must not think of myself—even now I manage to soothe her as no one else can. Let me go back!"

"Sit down," I answered; "you will not be fit long to nurse anyone unless you look after yourself. What is the matter with you? You are greatly changed!"

"Did I not tell you in my letter that I am in great trouble?"

Miss Temple's words were interrupted by a knock at the door of the boudoir.

She said "Come in," and a manservant entered. He approached Lady Violet's little writing-table, disturbed a book or two, and finally retreated with an "A. B. C." in his hand, apologizing as he did so.

"Do you know who that man is?" asked Miss Temple.

"One of the servants," I replied; "never mind him—tell me your trouble as quickly as possible."

"He is connected with it, unfortunately. He is not one of the usual servants of the house, although he wears the livery. That man is a detective from Scotland Yard, and he came into the room just now to watch me. He, or his fellow detective, for there are two here, watch me wherever I go. On one excuse or another, they enter each room where I am found."

"What do you mean?" I asked.

"I will tell you in as few words as possible—can you wonder that I am changed?"

"I am lost in conjecture as to what you can possibly mean," I answered, looking at her anxiously.

In truth I had cause for my anxiety.

Her fine face looked absolutely aged and worn. Her eyes were almost too large—their expression was strained—they had heavy black lines

under them. Her mouth showed extreme dejection. When I remembered the blooming, healthy girl who had gone to "Beeches" two months ago, I was appalled by the change.

"Speak," I said; "I am deeply interested. You know that I will do everything in my power to help you."

"This is my story," she said: "Lady Violet got quite well—I was much attached to her, we were very happy—it seemed like the old life back again, when my mother was alive and I had a luxurious home. Lord and Lady Erstfield treated me more like a daughter than a nurse; Lady Violet was my dear sister. Then Captain Ponsonby came. He proposed, and was accepted. Immediately after the engagement Lady Violet drooped; she no longer gave me her confidence; she lost her appetite; she became constrained and silent. Once or twice I caught her crying—she turned away when I tried to question her. Lord and Lady Erstfield noticed no change, and Captain Ponsonby came and went as an honoured guest. No one seemed to notice the efforts Lady Violet made to seem at home in his society.

"One morning about ten days ago Lady Erstfield, accompanied by Captain Ponsonby, came into this room, where I was reading aloud to my dear little patient. I could not imagine why they did not observe her pale cheeks and her languor. I saw, however, at a glance that Lady Erstfield was in a high state of excitement and delight. She held a jewel-case in her hand. She opened it and, bending down, showed its glittering contents to her daughter. I was startled at the effect on Lady Violet. She clapped her hands in ecstasy and sat upright on the sofa. Her eyes had grown suddenly bright, and her cheeks rosy.

"‘How I adore diamonds,’ she said, ‘and what beauties these are: oh, you lovely creatures! But, mother, why do you show them to me?’

"‘They are my present to you, Violet,’ said Captain Ponsonby. ‘Those diamonds are heirlooms in the family, and are of great value. They will be yours when we are married.’

"‘Come and look at them, Beryl,’ exclaimed Lady Violet. ‘Are they not splendid?’ As she spoke she lifted a diamond necklace of extraordinary brilliancy and quaint device out of the case. I knelt down by her and examined the gems with delight almost equal to her own. I have always had a great love for jewels, and for diamonds in particular, and these were quite the most magnificent I had ever seen. The necklace was accompanied by a tiara and earrings, and the gems were worth, Lady Erstfield said, from fifteen to twenty thousand pounds.

"We spent some time examining and criticising them. Violet sent for a looking-glass from one of the bedrooms in order to see the effect of the jewels round her throat. She insisted on my trying them on as well as herself. Lady Violet is fair, but, as you know, I am very dark. I could not help seeing for myself that the jewels suited me. Lady Violet uttered an exclamation when she saw them on me. 'You look beautiful, Beryl,' she said.

"I laughed, and was about to answer her, when I met Captain Ponsonby's eyes. There was something in his expression which I did not quite like. I unfastened the necklace quickly and laid it back in its velvet bed.

"'Thank you for letting me try it on,' I said. 'I feel as if for one brief moment I had imprisoned the rainbow.'

"I don't know why I said those words. They did me no good afterwards, but I was excited at the time. The magnificent diamonds had really cast a spell over me. Lady Erstfield suggested that Violet should go out for her usual ride.

"'No, mother; I am too tired,' she replied. 'I will drive instead, and Beryl shall come with me.'

"'Run and get ready, then,' said Lady Erstfield to me.

"I was leaving the room when she suddenly called me back.

"'My dear,' she said, giving me the case which held the diamonds as she spoke, 'will you have the goodness to take these to my room, and lock them up in my jewel safe? Here is the key. You must turn the lock twice, and when the revolving shutter moves back, use this smaller key to unlock the inner compartment. Put the case in there, and bring me back the keys when you have changed your dress.'

"I promised to obey, and ran off with a light heart.

"The safe where Lady Erstfield kept her jewels was built into the wall, and was of a very ingenious device. Following her directions implicitly, I opened it, placed the case within, and locked the safe carefully again. I then went and changed my dress and returned the keys to Lady Erstfield. Captain Ponsonby, Lady Violet, and I had a pleasant drive, and nothing more was said about the diamonds—I really think we all forgot them.

"The next morning Lady Violet came down to breakfast, looking so ghastly pale and so depressed, that even her mother uttered an exclamation of surprise when she saw her.

"'My darling, you look positively ill,' she said, going up and kissing her.

"Lady Violet gave her a startled and queer look. She made some remark in a very low voice, and with a pettish movement. She then crossed the room to my side, and Lady Erstfield did not question her any further.

"Just as we were leaving the breakfast table, Captain Ponsonby announced his intention of running up to town for the day, and suddenly suggested that he should take the diamonds with him in order to give the jeweller plenty of time to re-set them in the most thorough manner.

"That is a good thought, Geoffrey,' said Lady Erstfield. Then she turned to me.

"You know where the jewels are, Beryl,' she said—'here are my keys—run, dear, and fetch them. I don't allow even my own maid to know the secret of my jewel safe,' she continued, looking at Captain Ponsonby as she spoke.

"I ran away, reached Lady Erstfield's room, unlocked the safe, and put in my hand to take out the case. It had vanished. I searched for it at first without any uneasiness, then in bewilderment, then in a sort of frantic terror. There was the empty spot on the floor of the safe where I had placed the case—there were the other cases of jewels pushed aside in some little confusion, but the Ponsonby diamonds had absolutely vanished.

"The full horror of the situation had not yet burst upon me—I had not yet even begun to think that anyone would suspect me, but, nevertheless, I felt sick with a sort of nameless terror.

"I locked the safe and returned to the breakfast-room.

"Lord Erstfield was standing by the hearth, talking to Captain Ponsonby—Lady Erstfield was reading the *TIMES*, and Violet was kneeling on the floor playing with her favourite pug. Their peaceful faces added to my misery. I know I must have looked wild and frightened—I know when I spoke that my voice must have shaken.

"The diamonds are gone,' I said; 'they are not in the safe.'

"It was just as if I had flung a bomb into the midst of the cheerful party. Lord Erstfield drew himself up with a dazed expression. Captain Ponsonby turned white, and Lady Erstfield, with a sharp cry, rushed from the room, snatching the keys from my hand as she did so.

"There is no use in Lady Erstfield examining the safe,' I said, 'the diamonds are certainly not there—I have searched all the shelves. The spot where I placed them yesterday is empty; the case has vanished.'

"I don't believe it,' said Violet. 'The diamonds must be there. You must be mistaken, Beryl.'

"I made no reply, but when the others left the room I followed.

"We all now went up in a body to Lady Erstfield's room, and the safe was carefully examined by Lord Erstfield and Captain Ponsonby. The case containing the diamonds was indeed missing, but not another jewel, not even the smallest ring had been touched. There was no mark of the safe having been tampered with in any way, and as it was made on a perfectly unique pattern, and there was not supposed to be a key in the world to fit it, except the special ones made for it, the whole affair seemed buried in hopeless mystery. No one accused me in any way, and it never occurred to me, as I stood in that room, to accuse myself. We discussed the matter in all its bearings. We stood round the open safe and talked until we were tired. I described the exact position in which I had placed the case. Lady Erstfield was certain that from the moment I returned her the keys they had not been out of her possession until she had again placed them in my hands that morning.

"Finally we left the room in a state of hopeless bewilderment. Violet and I went away by ourselves, and, sitting down together, discussed the strange mystery from every point of view. The loss of the jewels had much excited her. She had regained her colour and her manner was quite animated.

"'I thought, at least, I should have the diamonds,' she said, with a queer sort of desolate echo in her voice, 'and I love diamonds: they seem to comfort me in the strangest way. I feel akin to them. When they sparkle and leap and glitter, they appear to me to be alive; they tell me secrets of the strange things they have witnessed in the course of their long existence. Think, if the Ponsonby diamonds could speak, what stories they could tell of the queer, queer things they have seen and heard; eh, Beryl?'

"I tried to turn the conversation—Lady Violet was always worse after indulging in wild talk of this sort.

"'We have now to consider how to get the Ponsonby diamonds back,' I said. 'Who can have stolen them?'

"We talked the matter threadbare, arriving, of course, at no conclusion.

"At lunch we were surprised to find that Captain Ponsonby had not gone to London. When the servants withdrew, we were told that the affair of the diamonds had been put not only into the hands of the local police, but that the authorities in Scotland Yard had been communicated with, and that in all probability a couple of detectives would be sent to 'Beeches' that night.

"'We have decided,' said Lord Erstfield, 'not to say anything of our loss to the servants. The person who stole those diamonds is quite

clever enough to hide them if the least alarm is raised. Our best chance of recovering the treasure is through detectives, who will come here, of course, in plain clothes. We are expecting several fresh guests tomorrow, and in consequence the servants have heard that two new men-servants from London are coming here to help them. We have communicated this fact to Scotland Yard, and the men will be provided with the house livery.'

"After making this statement, which he did very briefly, Lord Erstfield left the room.

"The early part of the afternoon passed listlessly. Lady Violet was once more pale, deadly tired, and too languid to care to do anything. I persuaded her to lie down, and offered to read her to sleep.

"No,' she answered; 'I don't want anyone to read to me. I will shut my eyes and think of the diamonds. Go and take a walk, Beryl; you look pale and tired yourself.'

"I saw she did not want me, and, putting on my hat, I went out for a stroll. I had gone a little way from the house when I heard footsteps behind me. I turned and saw, to my surprise, that Captain Ponsonby was following me.

"I noticed that you had gone out,' he said, 'and took the liberty of coming after you.' He grew red as he spoke. 'I want to say something to you,' he said; 'something of importance. Can we go somewhere where we can be alone?'

"I told him that I was going to walk through the shrubbery, and that he might, if he pleased, accompany me there; 'but,' I added, 'I shall not be out long, for I am anxious about Lady Violet and want to return to her.'

"We entered the shrubbery as I spoke. He did not speak at all for a moment; then he said, with a sort of abruptness which surprised me: 'I will not keep you long. I am glad of this opportunity.'

"Here he paused, and, turning, looked me full in the face.

"If you will give me back the diamonds,' he said, 'I will faithfully promise to arrange matters so that not a breath of suspicion shall rest upon you.'

"I felt as if I were shot. His words took me so completely by surprise that I could not find either breath or speech for a moment.

"Do you really think,' I said then, in a choking voice—'is it possible that you think, really, that I—I have stolen the diamonds?'

"I suppose my agitation confirmed his suspicions.

"He looked at me with a queer sort of pity.



“‘I could see yesterday how struck you were with their beauty,’ he said. ‘Do you remember what you said about imprisoning the rainbow? The opportunity to take the diamonds was put into your hands. You could not resist the sudden temptation, but I am sure you are sorry now, and would return them if it were possible. I believe I can manage this for you, if you will confide in me.’

“‘I turned quickly; my face was hot; my heart was beating so fast I thought it would burst.

“‘Come with me at once to Lady Erstfield,’ I said: ‘Say those words again in her presence. She shall search all my possessions. Come, don’t delay a moment.’

“‘You must be mad,’ he said. ‘For Heaven’s sake don’t inculcate yourself in that manner. As far as I am aware, I am the only person who, at present, suspects you. It has never, I know, even entered into Violet’s head that you could have had anything to do with the robbery, and Lord and Lady Erstfield, I am sure, think you as innocent as themselves—they are the most loyal people in the world—they believe, and rightly, that they owe Violet’s life to you. I don’t think they could harbour an unkind thought of you. Lord Erstfield and I have talked over the loss for a couple of hours this morning, and your name has not once been mentioned in connection with it—I alone—’

“‘You alone,’ I interrupted, ‘entertain this horrible doubt against a defenceless girl?’

“‘I am very sorry,’ he replied, in a steady voice, ‘but it is not even a doubt.’ Here he looked full at me. ‘In my mind it takes the form of a certainty. It is absolutely impossible that anyone else could have taken the diamonds. They are gone—you were last seen with them—you put them into the safe. You returned the keys to Lady Erstfield, who did not let them out of her possession until she gave them to you again this morning. You must see for yourself what the logical conclusion is—you are the culprit.’

“‘No one else has come to that logical conclusion,’ I answered.

“‘I am a man of the world,’ he replied.

“‘I stood perfectly still for a moment. His cool assurance seemed to deprive me almost of the power of thought. I turned to walk towards the house, but he barred my path.

“‘What can I do to induce you to be guided by my common sense?’ he said. ‘I can understand the sudden temptation—if you return the jewels to me, not a shadow of suspicion shall ever rest upon you from any other quarter.’”

“‘I think,’ I said, in a trembling voice, ‘that the only thing for me to do will be to adhere to my first resolution, to see Lady Erstfield in your presence—to ask you to accuse me of the theft before her—to insist upon having all my possessions searched, and then to leave ›Beeches‹ immediately.’

“‘You won’t screen yourself by any such plan,’ said Captain Ponsonby—‘nay, your wish to leave ›Beeches‹ will seem to all interested as a certain proof of your guilt. I wish I could get you to understand that I do not feel unkindly to you—that I am sincerely anxious to be your friend in this matter. I know you to be guilty. If you protested from now until Doomsday, the firm conviction in my mind would still be unshaken. May I state the case very briefly to you? Will you try and listen as if I were telling you about some other girl? You took the diamonds in a moment of acute temptation. You are, I presume, a penniless girl. You admired the gems, not only for themselves but also for the effect they produced when they shone like so many suns round your warm, white throat. The price of these jewels was named in your presence. If you could sell them, you would be rich—if you could keep them and wear them, you would be beautiful enough to turn any man’s head. Yes, I understand—I pity, and I am most anxious to screen you. No one else suspects you at present at ›Beeches,‹ but that state of things will not continue there much longer. As soon as the detectives from London arrive, their suspicions will naturally be fastened on you. Your youth and apparent innocence will in no way deceive them. They will whisper doubts into the minds of Lord and Lady Erstfield, and into the mind also of Lady Violet. The Ponsonby diamonds are of immense historical importance—they have been mixed up with the fortunes of the family for a couple of centuries, and it is absolutely impossible that a girl like you can hide them successfully. Go where you will, you will never be able to sell that necklace and pendant. Each diamond has a story, and can be traced by experts into whatever hands it falls. You can never sell the necklace, nor would you ever dare to wear it, except in the privacy of your own room. I beg of you, therefore, to let me have it back, and I solemnly swear that the secret shall never pass my lips.’

“I listened to Captain Ponsonby’s speech with great attention. The buzzing in my ears and the great tumult round my heart had now to a considerable extent subsided. I was able to bring my common sense to bear upon the matter, and to absolutely force myself to look the facts in the face as they were presented to me from Captain Ponsonby’s point of view. Strange as it may seem, my whole nature became subjected to a sort of revulsion, and far now from being angry with Captain Ponsonby

for his accusations, I could not but admire something chivalrous in him which made him come as he thought to my assistance. My only wonder now was, that the Erstfields and Lady Violet were not also convinced of my guilt.

"I remained silent, therefore, for a couple of minutes before I replied.

"I understand,' I said then, slowly, 'you have explained the position of affairs. I see plainly how very black the circumstantial evidence is against me. I am not surprised at your suspicions, and my wonder is that they are not shared by the rest of the family. As it happens, I am **not** the thief you imagine me.'

"When I said this, he sighed heavily, shook his head, and, turning, began to walk slowly back with me towards the house.

"I am not a thief,' I continued, 'for the simple reason that the temptation you spoke about did not exist. The beauty of the gems attracted me yesterday, and I looked at them with pleasure, as I like to look at all lovely things, but I never coveted them; the thought never even occurred to me to wish to possess them. I am not as other girls—my life is consecrated—consecrated to the cause of suffering and pain. I live to help people who are obliged to keep on the shady side of life. My whole mind and heart are occupied with these people and their concerns. I do not want money, for my profession supplies me with plenty, and if I had diamonds ten times as beautiful, when, as a professional nurse, could I wear them? I have listened to your side of the affair—I must beg of you to listen to mine. You must see for yourself that, the temptation not existing, it could not be acted upon. I believe you mean kindly by all that you have said, and I thank you for the kindness. Now I will go indoors.'

"I left him—he did not say another word, but I saw by the expression of his face that I had only puzzled without convincing him.

"I went straight up to my own room, and sitting down, thought over the queer turn of events. The horror of the thing grew greater and greater the more I thought it over. I felt torn in two—longing one moment to rush to Lady Erstfield and tell her everything, and the next being kept back by the thought that by so doing I might only put a suspicion into her head which did not exist.

"I was presently sent for to attend to Violet. She had awakened after a bad dream and was in a very uncomfortable and depressed condition. Notwithstanding my own great unhappiness, I could see that she had something on her mind, but although I did all in my power to break the ice, I could not get her to talk to me in a free and natural manner.

"That evening the detectives arrived from London, and the next day several visitors came to the house. Everything went on with outward smoothness, and the subject of the diamonds was by mutual consent never alluded to. Lady Violet grew worse, and the gay house party dispersed sooner than was intended. Captain Ponsonby stayed on, however. I met him occasionally, but we scarcely exchanged a word. I could see that he was anxious and haggard, but I set this down to his fears with regard to Lady Violet, who steadily refused to see him, and never left her bedroom and boudoir. I spent almost all my time with her, but as the days wore on I could not but feel the horror of my position more and more. I saw plainly that the suspicion which Captain Ponsonby harboured was shared by the two detectives, and also, in process of time, the poisonous thought was communicated to Lord and Lady Erstfield. Lady Erstfield's manner to me completely altered. Instead of treating me with almost the affection of a mother, she was cold and distant; she avoided meeting my eyes, and never spoke to me on any subject except what related to Violet's health. That is the position of affairs to-day, Dr. Halifax. I am suspected of the most horrible theft, and have not a chance of clearing myself. Lady Violet alone loves me as of old. She is my dear sister, and for her sake I—"

Here the poor girl completely broke down, and, covering her face with her hands, sobbed aloud.

"Take courage," I said to her. "I have, at least, one bit of comfort for you: I also fully believe in you. You no more stole the diamonds than I did."

"Oh, thank you—that is like you," she said. "God bless you for those words."

"I am glad I have come here, for every reason," I continued. "My presence here is necessary not only on account of Lady Violet, but also on your account. I introduced you to this house, and am responsible for your conduct; I shall therefore not leave a stone unturned to clear you, and now you must go back to your work with as brave a heart as you can."

She rose at once, wiping her eyes and trying to look cheerful.

"One word before you return to Lady Violet," I said. "Is it true that she has broken off her engagement?"

"Yes."

"Lady Erstfield told me that she gave you her confidence in this matter."

"Yes, she spoke to me this morning."

"Do you mind telling me what she said?"

"She was very weak and had a difficulty in using her voice, but she whispered to me. Her words were something like these:—

"Tell my father and mother that I do not love Captain Ponsonby, and will never marry him. From the first he never attracted me and now there is no inducement—not even the diamonds!"

"Did she really say 'not even the diamonds'?"

"Yes, she certainly did. I thought it strange at the time."

"It was undoubtedly strange. Now go back to your patient and keep up all the courage you can. I shall remain at 'Beeches' until to-morrow, and even longer if necessary. I wish to take care of Lady Violet myself to-night, in order to give you rest."

Miss Temple left the room, and after thinking matters over I went downstairs. Captain Ponsonby was still in the house. When I abruptly entered one of the drawing-rooms, I found him talking with Lady Erstfield.

"Can I speak to you?" I said to the lady.

"Certainly," she replied, starting up. "Is Violet worse? What is the matter?"

"There is no change in Lady Violet's condition," I replied. "What I have to speak about refers to Miss Temple."

Captain Ponsonby rose when I said this and prepared to leave the room. I interrupted this movement.

"I beg of you not to go," I said. "I particularly want you to hear what I have come to say."

He turned and walked slowly back to one of the windows. I could see by the expression of his face that he was a good deal annoyed. He was a handsome, soldierly-looking man, of at least five-and-thirty years of age, with a somewhat overbearing manner. I could understand a child like Lady Violet shrinking from him in possible fear, and yet there was nothing underhand about him. I could see that he was scrupulously honourable, although his tact would probably not be of the finest.

"I should like you to hear what I have got to say," I continued, "for you seem to be mixed up in the matter. I refer to the loss of the diamonds."

"Oh, the diamonds!" exclaimed Lady Erstfield. "Do you suppose we, any of us, care about them in an hour of terrible sorrow like this?"

"Pardon me," I continued, "there is one person who cares a great deal about them. A young girl, who came here at my recommendation—I allude to Miss Temple. It seems that you, sir,"—here I turned to Captain Ponsonby—"have accused Miss Temple in the most unmistakable manner of having stolen the diamonds. You accused her of the theft nearly

ten days ago, and since then she has reason to believe that you, Lady Erstfield, share the suspicion."

Lady Erstfield's face grew pale and troubled.

"Beryl has told you," she exclaimed. "Poor child, I feared that she would not fail to see the alteration in my manner. Try hard as I would to hide my feelings, I could not treat her as I did before.

"Well," she continued, "I am sorry, deeply sorry, to say that we all, with the exception of Violet, suspect her now. She alone had access to the safe—not a breath of suspicion falls on anyone else. Miss Temple has managed to hide the diamonds with wonderful skill for the time being—but in the end she must betray herself. We wish if possible to avoid having her arrested; she is closely watched, however, for there can be little doubt of her guilt."

"And believing this," I said, in a stern voice, "you allow this girl to continue to nurse your daughter?"

"Certainly," replied Lady Erstfield; "in Violet's present condition it would kill her to part with Miss Temple."

I had some difficulty in controlling my anger.

"I am glad I have come," I said, after a pause, "and that not only on Lady Violet's account. I cannot leave 'Beeches' until this matter is satisfactorily cleared up. It is my firm conviction that Miss Temple no more stole the diamonds than you did, Lady Erstfield."

Lady Erstfield murmured something which I could not quite hear.

"I can say with the utmost truth that we are all only too anxious to clear Miss Temple from this horrible suspicion if it can be done," remarked Captain Ponsonby.

"Oh, certainly—most certainly," added Lady Erstfield. "Anything you can suggest, Dr. Halifax—"

Her words were interrupted—there came a hurried message from the sick room. Lady Violet had awakened in a high state of delirium. Lady Erstfield and I both hurried to her side. I saw that the case was truly one of life or death, and nothing further was said about the diamonds for the present.

Towards evening the sick girl seemed to grow a little easier; she sank into another heavy slumber, and I saw, with satisfaction, that the remedies I had employed were already getting the pneumonia under. I now arranged that Miss Temple was to have a night's rest, and that Lady Erstfield and I should watch by the patient for the night.

Lady Erstfield lay down on a sofa at the far end of the spacious bedroom, and I sat by Lady Violet. Her sleep was frequently broken by sharp cries

of pain and distress, but I generally managed by a firm word or touch to control her wild fits of delirium. She did not know me, however, although she submitted immediately when I spoke to her. I had many anxious thoughts to occupy me during the night watches. These were chiefly centred round Beryl Temple. I could not help seeing that there was abundant ground for the suspicion which attached to her. She was, I knew well, innocent; but unless the diamonds were discovered, grave doubts would always arise when her name was mentioned. I did not think the Erstfields would prosecute her, but I almost wished them to do so, in order to bring the matter to an issue.

As the night wore on, I fell for a few moments into an uneasy sleep. In my sleep I dreamt of the diamonds. I saw them sparkling round the neck of Lady Violet, whose eyes shone with a strange, fierce fire, which made them look almost as bright as the glittering gems. I awoke with certain words on my lips. Lady Violet had said to Miss Temple: "Now there is no inducement to my marriage—not even the diamonds." I thought the words queer at the time—I pondered over them now.

Rising from my chair, I went over to the bed and looked at the sick girl. She was breathing more quietly. I laid my hand on her forehead, and knew at once that her temperature was less high.

I went across the room to Lady Erstfield. She had been asleep, but woke when I approached her.

"I think my patient is a shade easier," I said. The poor mother uttered a thankful exclamation.

"I will go and sit by her now for an hour or two," she answered. "I have had a long sleep and am refreshed. Won't you lie down, Dr. Halifax?—I will call you if Violet requires anything."

I told her that I would go into the outer room and lie on the sofa. I was by habit a light sleeper, and the least word from Lady Erstfield would bring me back to my patient. I lay down, and in a moment was asleep. I had not slept long when the sound of conversation in the sick room aroused me.

I sprang to my feet, and went back there at once. Lady Erstfield did not hear me. She was standing, facing the bed. Lady Violet was sitting up and speaking in an eager voice.

"I am better," she said; "mother, I want the diamonds—mother, get them for me—I want to feel them and to look at them—they will comfort me—mother, do get them for me at once—the Pensonby diamonds, you know what I mean—*do*, mother, dear, fetch me the Pensonby diamonds."

"You must lie down," I said, going to the other side of the bed; "here, let me cover you up."

She turned to look at me. I forced her back on her pillow and put the bed-clothes over her.

"Who are you?" she inquired, gazing at me with her bright, too bright, eyes.

"Your friend and doctor—my name is Halifax."

"Oh, have you come back again, Dr. Halifax? I like you very much. Thank you for sending me Beryl. I love Beryl. Where is she now?"

"Lying down, tired out; you must not disturb her: your mother and I will do anything for you that you want. Now you must not talk any more. Let me give you this drink."

She allowed me to put my hand under her head to raise her, and drank a little milk and soda-water, with a sigh of relief.

"That is nice," she said; "I am so thirsty."

"Turn on your side now and go to sleep," I said.

"I cannot; I cannot. Are you there, mother? Mother, don't leave me. Mother, won't you give me the diamonds? I shall sleep sound, very sound, if I may wear them round my neck! Do, mother, dear, give me the Ponsonby diamonds—you don't know how I long for them."

"My darling," said Lady Erstfield, falling suddenly on her knees by the bedside, and bursting into tears, "I would give them to you if I could; but they are lost, Violet, dear—the Ponsonby diamonds are lost."

"Oh I no, they aren't, mother," replied the girl, in a voice of astonishment; "they are in my jewel-case—in the lower drawer. The case which holds the diamonds just fits into the lower drawer of my jewel-case. You will find my keys on the dressing-table. Do, do fetch the diamonds, mother."

Lady Erstfield sprang to her feet and looked with a kind of horrified consternation at her child.

"No, my love," she said then, in a soothing voice, "you are dreaming—you are not well and have had a bad dream. Go to sleep, my sweet darling, go to sleep."

"But I am not dreaming," said Lady Violet—"the Ponsonby diamonds are in my dressing-case. I remember putting them there quite well—I had forgotten, but I remember now quite well. Dr. Halifax, won't you fetch them?"

"Certainly," I replied. "Lady Erstfield, will you direct me to Lady Violet's jewel-case?"



"Yes," replied Lady Erstfield.

The poor woman staggered rather than walked across the room. She gave me the key of the jewel-case. I opened it and lifted out the several compartments until I came to the bottom drawer. There lay an old-fashioned morocco case. I opened it, and the Ponsonby jewels in all their magnificence lay before me.

"My God, what does this mean?" gasped Lady Erstfield.

"Hush," I said, "don't say anything—take them to her."

"You must do it, I cannot," she moaned.

I took the case up to the bedside. Lady Violet gave a little cry of rapture when she saw it. In a twinkling, she had lifted the necklace from its bed of ruby velvet and had clasped it round her white throat.

"Oh, my beautiful, sparkling treasures!" she exclaimed; "how I love you—how you comfort me!"

She lay down at once and closed her eyes. In a moment she was in sound and dreamless sleep.

The case was one, without any doubt, of sudden and acute kleptomania. This strange nervous disorder had in all probability been developed in Lady Violet by the depression caused by her uncongenial engagement to Captain Ponsonby. The whole thing was now clear as daylight—poor Lady Violet was the unconscious thief. She had stolen the diamonds and then forgotten all about her theft. In her delirium memory returned to her, and in her desire to possess the gems she recalled where she had placed them. How she secured the keys of the safe was an unsolved mystery for some time, but Lady Erstfield, in thinking matters over, remembered how close Violet had sat by her side on the sofa in one of the drawing-rooms the evening before the loss was discovered.

"She was often fond of putting her hand into my pocket in play," said the lady; "it was a trick of hers as a child, and I used to be quite cross about it, sometimes. She must have transferred the keys from my pocket to her own on that occasion, gone upstairs and removed the diamonds from my jewel safe to her own jewel-case, and then once more slipped the keys back into my pocket."

This explanation seemed sufficiently likely to satisfy people; anyhow, no other was ever forthcoming. Poor Beryl was, of course, restored to higher favour than ever; indeed, Lord and Lady Erstfield felt that they could not possibly make enough of her. The finding of the diamonds was the turning-point in Lady Violet's illness. She slept for many hours with the sparkling gems round her neck, and when she awoke it was to consciousness and recovery.

The diamonds were returned to Captain Ponsonby on the following day, and the engagement between him and Lady Violet was at an end. There is only one strange thing to add to this strange story. Lady Violet has never, from the moment of her awakening to now, alluded to the Ponsonby diamonds. It is my belief that she has forgotten all about them, and, as far as I can tell, I do not think she will ever be visited by another attack of kleptomania.

## END OF VOLUME I