

Hilda Wade.

BY GRANT ALLEN.

I.—THE EPISODE OF THE PATIENT WHO DISAPPOINTED HER DOCTOR.



ILDA WADE'S gift was so unique, so extraordinary, that I must illustrate it, I think, before I attempt to describe it. But first let me say a word of explanation about the Master.

I have never met anyone who impressed me so much with a sense of *greatness* as Professor Sebastian. And this was not due to his scientific eminence alone: the man's strength and keenness struck me quite as forcibly as his vast attainments. When he first came to St. Nathaniel's Hospital, an eager, fiery-eyed physiologist, well past the prime of life, and began to preach with all the electric force of his vivid personality that the one thing on earth worth a young man's doing was to work in his laboratory, attend his lectures, study disease, and be a scientific doctor, dozens of us were infected by his contagious enthusiasm. He proclaimed the gospel of germs; and the germ of his own zeal flew abroad in the hospital: it ran through the wards as if it were typhoid fever. Within a few months, half the students were converted from lukewarm observers of medical routine into flaming apostles of the new methods.

The greatest authority in Europe on comparative anatomy, now that Huxley was taken from us, he had devoted his later days to the pursuit of medicine proper, to which he brought a mind stored with luminous analogies from the lower animals. His very appearance held one. Tall, thin, erect, with an ascetic profile not unlike Cardinal Manning's, he represented that abstract form of asceticism which consists in absolute self-sacrifice to a mental ideal, not that which consists in religious abnegation. Three years of travel in Africa had tanned his skin for life. His long white hair, straight and silvery as it fell, just curled in one wave-like inward sweep where it turned and rested on the stooping shoulders.

His pale face was clean-shaven, save for a thin and wiry grizzled moustache, which cast into stronger relief the deep-set, hawk-like eyes and the acute, intense, intellectual features. In some respects, his countenance reminded me often of Dr. Martineau's: in others it recalled the knife-like edge, unturnable, of his great predecessor, Professor Owen. Wherever he went, men turned to stare at him. In Paris, they took him for the head of the English Socialists: in Russia,

they declared he was a Nihilist emissary. And they were not far wrong—in essence: for Sebastian's stern, sharp face was above all things the face of a man absorbed and engrossed by one overpowering pursuit in life—the sacred thirst of knowledge, which had swallowed up his entire nature.

He *was* what he looked—the most single-minded person I have ever come across. And when I say single-minded, I mean just that and no more. He had an End to attain—the advancement of science, and he went straight towards the End, looking neither to the right nor to the left for anyone. An American millionaire once remarked to him

of some ingenious appliance he was describing, "Why, if you were to perfect that apparatus, Professor, and take out a patent for it, I reckon you'd make as much money as I have made." Sebastian withered him with a glance. "I have no time to waste," he replied, "on making money."

So, when Hilda Wade told me, on the first day I met her, that she wished to become a nurse at Nathaniel's, "to be near Sebastian," I was not at all astonished. I took her at her word. Everybody who meant business in any branch of the medical art, however humble, desired to be close to our rare teacher—to drink in his large thought, to profit by his clear insight, his wide experience. The man of Nathaniel's was revolutionizing practice: and those who wished to feel themselves abreast of the



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modern movement were naturally anxious to cast in their lot with him. I did not wonder, therefore, that Hilda Wade, who herself possessed in so large a measure the deepest feminine gift—intuition—should seek a place under the famous professor who represented the other side of the same endowment in its masculine embodiment—instinct of diagnosis.

Hilda Wade herself I will not formally introduce to you: you will learn to know her as I proceed with my story.

I was Sebastian's assistant, and my recommendation soon procured Hilda Wade the post she so strangely coveted. Before she had been long at Nathaniel's, however, it began to dawn upon me that her reasons for desiring to attend upon our revered Master were not wholly and solely scientific. Sebastian, it is true, recognised her value as a nurse from the first: he not only allowed that she was a good assistant, but he also admitted that her subtle knowledge of temperament sometimes enabled her closely to approach his own reasoned scientific analysis of a case and its probable development. "Most women," he said to me once, "are quick at reading *the passing emotion*: they can judge with astounding correctness from a shadow on one's face, a catch in one's breath, a movement of one's hands, how their words or deeds are affecting us. We cannot conceal our feelings from them. But underlying character they do not judge so well as fleeting expression. Not what Mrs. Jones *is* in herself, but what Mrs. Jones is now thinking and feeling—there lies their great success as psychologists. Most men, on the contrary, guide their life by definite *facts*—by signs, by symptoms, by observed data. Medicine itself is built upon a collection of such

reasoned facts. But this woman, Nurse Wade, to a certain extent, stands intermediately between the two sexes. She recognises *temperament*—the fixed form of character and what it is likely to do—in a degree which I have never seen equalled elsewhere. To that extent, and within proper limits of supervision, I acknowledge her faculty as a valuable adjunct to a scientific practitioner."

Still, though Sebastian started with a predisposition in favour of Hilda Wade—a pretty girl appeals to most of us—I could see from the beginning that Hilda Wade was by no means enthusiastic for Sebastian, like the rest of the hospital. "He is extraordinarily able," she would say, when I gushed to her about our Master: but that was the most I could ever extort from her in the way of praise. Though she admitted intellectually Sebastian's gigantic mind, she would never commit herself to anything that sounded like personal admiration. To call him "the prince of physiologists," did not satisfy me on that head. I wanted her to exclaim, "I adore him! I worship him! He is glorious, wonderful!"

I was also aware from an early date that, in an unobtrusive way, Hilda Wade was watching Sebastian. Watching him quietly, with those wistful, earnest eyes, as a cat watches a mouse-hole; watching him with mute inquiry, as if she expected each moment to see him do something different from what the rest of us expected of him. Slowly I gathered that Hilda Wade, in the most literal sense, had come to Nathaniel's, as she herself expressed it, "to be near Sebastian." Gentle and lovable as she was in every other aspect, towards Sebastian she seemed like a lynx-eyed detective. She had some object in view, I thought, almost as abstract as his own—some



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object to which, as I judged, she was devoting her life quite as single-mindedly as Sebastian himself had devoted his to the advancement of science.

"Why did she become a nurse at all?" I asked once of her friend, Mrs. Mallet. "She has plenty of money, and seems well enough off to live without working."

"Oh, dear, yes," Mrs. Mallet answered. "She is independent, quite; has a tidy little income of her own—six or seven hundred a year—and she could choose her own society. But she went in for this mission fad early; she didn't intend to marry, she said, so she would like to have some work to do in life. Girls suffer like that, nowadays. In her case, the malady took the form of nursing."

"As a rule," I ventured to interpose, "when a pretty girl says she doesn't intend to marry, her remark is premature. It only means——"

"Oh, yes, I know. Every girl says it; 'tis a stock property in the popular masque of Maiden Modesty. But with Hilda it is different. And the difference is—that Hilda means it."

"You are right," I answered. "I believe she means it. Yet I know one man at least——" for I admired her immensely.

Mrs. Mallet shook her head and smiled. "It is no use, Dr. Cumberledge," she answered. "Hilda will never marry. Never, that is to say, till she has attained some mysterious object she seems to have in view, about which she never speaks to anyone—not even to me. But I have somehow guessed it."

"And it is?"

"Oh, I have not guessed what it is: I am no *Œdipus*: I have merely guessed that it exists. But whatever it may be, Hilda's life is bounded by it. She became a nurse to carry it out, I feel confident. From the very beginning, I gather, part of her scheme was to go to St. Nathaniel's. She was always bothering us to give her introductions to Dr. Sebastian; and when she met you at my brother Hugo's, it was a preconcerted arrangement; she asked to sit next you, and meant to induce you to use your influence on her behalf with the Professor. She was dying to get there."

"It is very odd," I mused. "But, there!—women are inexplicable!"

"And Hilda is in that matter the very quintessence of woman. Even I, who have known her for years, don't pretend to understand her."

A few months later Sebastian began his

great researches on his new anæsthetic. It was a wonderful set of researches. It promised so well. All Nat's (as we familiarly and affectionately style St. Nathaniel's) was in a fever of excitement over the drug for a twelvemonth.

The Professor obtained his first hint of the new body by a mere accident. His friend the Deputy Prosector of the Zoological Society had mixed a draught for a sick racoon at the Gardens, and, by some mistake in a bottle, had mixed it wrongly. (I purposely refrain from mentioning the ingredients, as they are drugs which can be easily obtained in isolation at any chemist's, though when compounded they form one of the most dangerous and difficult to detect of organic poisons. I do not desire to play into the hands of would-be criminals.) The compound on which the Deputy Prosector had thus accidentally lighted sent the racoon to sleep in the most extraordinary manner. Indeed, the racoon slept for thirty-six hours on end, all attempts to awake him by pulling his tail or tweaking his hair being quite unavailing. This was a novelty in narcotics: so Sebastian was asked to come and look at the slumbering brute. He suggested the attempt to perform an operation on the somnolent racoon by removing, under the influence of the drug, an internal growth, which was considered the probable cause of his illness. A surgeon was called in, the growth was found and removed, and the racoon, to everybody's surprise, continued to slumber peacefully on his straw for five hours afterward. At the end of that time he awoke and stretched himself, as if nothing had happened; and though he was, of course, very weak from loss of blood, he immediately displayed a most royal hunger. He ate up all the maize that was offered him for breakfast, and proceeded to manifest a desire for more by most unequivocal symptoms.

Sebastian was overjoyed. He now felt sure he had discovered a drug which would supersede chloroform—a drug more lasting in its immediate effects, and yet far less harmful in its ultimate results on the balance of the system. A name being wanted for it, he christened it "*lethodyne*." It was the best pain-luller yet invented.

For the next few weeks, at Nat's, we heard of nothing but *lethodyne*. Patients recovered, and patients died: but their deaths or recoveries were as dross to *lethodyne*. An anæsthetic that might revolutionize surgery, and even medicine! A royal road through

disease, with no trouble to the doctor and no pain to the patient! Lethodyne held the field. We were all of us, for the moment, intoxicated with lethodyne.

Sebastian's observations on the new agent occupied several months. He had begun with the racoon: he went on, of course, with those poor scapegoats of physiology, domestic rabbits. Not that in this particular case any painful experiments were in contemplation: the Professor tried the drug on a dozen or more quite healthy young animals—with the strange result that they dozed off quietly, and never woke up again. This nonplussed Sebastian. He experimented once more on another racoon with a smaller dose; the racoon fell asleep and slept like a top for fifteen hours, at the end of which time he woke up as if nothing out of the common had happened. Sebastian fell back upon rabbits again, with smaller and smaller doses. It was no good: the rabbits all died with great unanimity, until the dose was

will find them discussed at length in Volume 237 of the "Philosophical Transactions." (See also "Comptes Rendus de l'Académie de Médecine": *tome 49, pp. 72 and sequel.*) I will restrict myself here to that part of the inquiry which immediately refers to Hilda Wade's history.

"If I were you," she said to the Professor one morning, when he was most astonished at his contradictory results, "I would test it on a hawk. If I dare venture on a suggestion, I believe you will find that hawks recover."

"The deuce they do!" Sebastian cried. However, he had such confidence in Nurse Wade's judgment that he bought a couple of hawks and tried the treatment on them. Both birds took considerable doses, and, after a period of insensibility extending to several hours, woke up in the end quite bright and lively.

"I see your principle," the Professor broke out. "It depends upon diet. Carnivores and birds of prey can take lethodyne with

impunity: herbivores and fruit-eaters cannot recover, and die of it. Man, therefore, being partly carnivorous, will doubtless be able more or less to stand it."

Hilda Wade smiled her sphinx-like smile. "Not quite that, I fancy," she answered. "It will kill cats, I feel sure: at least, most domesticated ones. But it will *not* kill weasels. Yet both are carnivores."

"That young woman knows too much!" Sebastian muttered to me, looking after her as she glided noiselessly with her gentle tread down the long white corridor. "We shall have to suppress her, Cumberledge. . . . But I'll wager my life she's right, for all that. I wonder, now, how the dickens she guessed it!"

"Intuition," I answered.

He pouted his under lip above the upper one, with a dubious acquiescence. "Inference, I call it," he retorted. "All woman's so-called intuition is in fact just rapid and half-unconscious inference."

He was so full of the subject, however, and so utterly carried away by his scientific



"IT WAS NO GOOD: THE RABBITS ALL DIED."

so diminished that it did not send them off to sleep at all. There was no middle course: apparently, to the rabbit kind, lethodyne was either fatal or else inoperative. So it proved to sheep. The new drug killed, or did nothing.

I will not trouble you with all the details of Sebastian's further researches: the curious

ardour, that I regret to say he gave a strong dose of lethodyne at once to each of the matron's petted and pampered Persian cats, which lounged about her room and were the delight of the convalescents. They were two peculiarly lazy sultanias of cats—mere jewels of the harem—Oriental beauties that loved to bask in the sun or curl themselves up on the rug before the fire, and dawdle away their lives in congenial idleness. Strange to say, Hilda's prophecy came true. Zuleika settled herself down comfortably in the Professor's easy chair, and fell into a sound sleep from which there was no awaking; while Roxana met fate on the tiger-skin she loved, coiled up in a circle, and passed from this life of dreams, without knowing it, into one where dreaming is not. Sebastian noted the facts with a quiet gleam of satisfaction in his watchful eye, and explained afterwards, with curt glibness to the angry matron, that her favourites had been "canonized in the roll of science, as painless martyrs to the advancement of physiology."

The weasels, on the other hand, with an equal dose, woke up after six hours as lively as crickets. It was clear that carnivorous tastes were not the whole solution, for Roxana was famed as a notable mouser.

"Your principle?" Sebastian asked our sybil, in his brief, quick way.

Hilda's cheek wore a glow of pardonable triumph. The great teacher had deigned to ask her assistance. "I judged by the analogy of Indian hemp," she answered. "This is clearly a similar, but much stronger, narcotic. Now, whenever I have given Indian hemp by your direction to people of sluggish or even of merely bustling temperament, I have noticed that small doses produce serious effects, and that the after-results are most undesirable. But when you have prescribed the hemp for nervous, overstrung, imaginative people, I have observed that they can stand large amounts of the tincture without evil results, and that the after-effects pass off rapidly. I, who am mercurial in temperament, for example, can take any amount of Indian hemp without being made ill by it, while ten drops will send some slow and torpid rustics mad drunk with excitement—drive them at once into homicidal mania."

Sebastian nodded his head. He needed no more explanation. "You have hit it," he said. "I see it at a glance. The old antithesis! All men and all animals fall, roughly speaking, into two great divisions of type: the impassioned and the unimpassioned,

the vivid and the phlegmatic. I catch your drift now. Lethodyne is poison to phlegmatic patients, who have not active power enough to wake up from it unhurt: it is relatively harmless to the vivid and impassioned, who can be put asleep by it, indeed, for a few hours more or less, but are alive enough to live on through the coma and reassert their vitality after it."

I recognised as he spoke that this explanation was correct: the dull rabbits, the sleepy Persian cats, and the silly sheep had died outright of lethodyne: the cunning, inquisitive racoon, the quick hawk, and the active, intense-natured weasels, all most eager, wary, and alert animals, full of keenness and passion, had recovered quickly.

"Dare we try it on a human subject?" I asked, tentatively.

Hilda Wade answered at once with that unerring rapidity of hers, "Yes, certainly; on a few—the right persons. I, for one, am not afraid to try it."

"You?" I cried, feeling suddenly aware how much I thought of her. "Oh, not *you*, please, Nurse Wade. Some other life—less valuable!"

Sebastian stared at me coldly. "Nurse Wade volunteers," he said. "It is in the cause of science. Who dares dissuade her? That tooth of yours? Ah, yes. Quite sufficient excuse. You wanted it out, Nurse Wade. Wells-Dinton shall operate."

Without a moment's hesitation, Hilda Wade sat down in an easy chair, and took a measured dose of the new anæsthetic proportioned to the average difference in weight between racoons and humanity. My face displayed my anxiety I suppose, for she turned to me, smiling, with quiet confidence. "I know my own constitution," she said, with a reassuring glance that went straight to my heart. "I do not in the least fear."

As for Sebastian, he administered the drug to her as unconcernedly as if she were a rabbit. Sebastian's scientific coolness and calmness have long been the admiration of younger practitioners.

Wells-Dinton gave one wrench. The tooth came out as though the patient were a block of marble. There was not a cry or a movement, such as one notes when nitrous oxide is administered. Hilda Wade was to all appearance a mass of lifeless flesh. We stood round and watched. I was trembling with terror. Even on Sebastian's pale face, usually so unmoved save by the watchful eagerness of scientific curiosity, I saw signs of anxiety.

After four hours of profound slumber—breath hovering, as it seemed, between life and death—she began to come to again. In half an hour more she was wide awake; she opened her eyes and asked for a glass of hock, with beef essence or oysters.

That evening, by six o'clock, she was quite well, and able to go about her duties as usual.

"Sebastian is a wonderful man," I said to her, as I entered her ward on my rounds at night. "His coolness astonishes me. Do you know, he watched you all the time you were lying asleep there as if nothing were the matter."

"Coolness?" she inquired, in a quiet voice. "Or cruelty?"

"Cruelty?" I echoed, aghast. "Sebastian cruel! Oh, Nurse Wade, what an idea! Why, he has spent his whole life in striving against all odds to alleviate pain. He is the apostle of philanthropy!"

"Of philanthropy, or of science? To alleviate pain, or to learn the whole truth about the human body?"

"Come, come now," I cried. "You analyze too far. I will not let even *you* put me out of conceit with Sebastian." (Her face flushed at that "*even you*"; I almost fancied she began to like me.) "He is the enthusiasm of my life: just consider how much he has done for humanity!"

She looked me through, searchingly. "I will not destroy your illusion," she answered, after a pause. "It is a noble and generous one. But is it not largely based on an ascetic face, long white hair, and a moustache that hides the cruel corners of the mouth? For the corners *are* cruel. Some day, I will show you them. Cut off the long hair, shave the grizzled moustache—and what then will remain?" She drew a profile hastily. "Just that," and she showed it me. 'Twas a face like Robespierre's, grown harder and older, and lined with observation. I recognised that it was in fact the essence of Sebastian.

Next day, as it turned out, the Professor

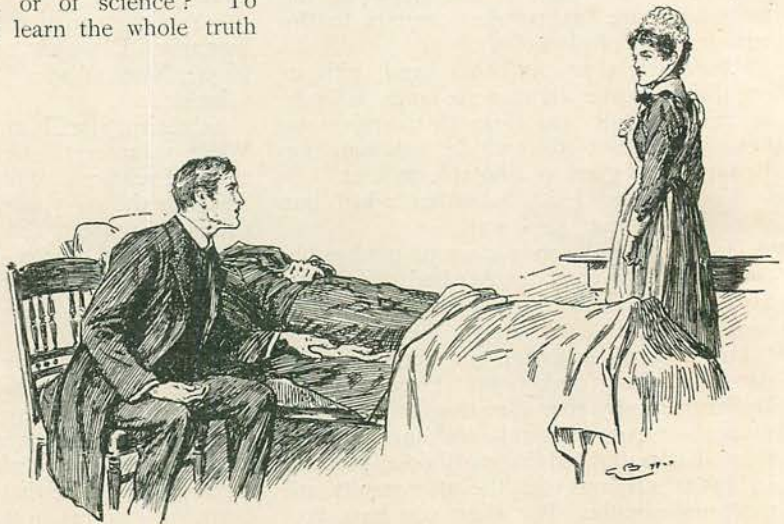
himself insisted upon testing lethodyne in his own person. All Nat's strove to dissuade him. "Your life is so precious, sir: the advancement of science!" But the Professor was adamant.

"Science can only be advanced if men of science will take their lives in their hands," he answered, sternly. "Besides, Nurse Wade has tried. Am I to lag behind a woman in my devotion to the cause of physiological knowledge?"

"Let him try," Hilda Wade murmured to me. "He is quite right. It will not hurt him. I have told him already he has just the proper temperament to stand the drug. Such people are rare: *he* is one of them."

We administered the dose, trembling. Sebastian took it like a man and dropped off instantly, for lethodyne is at least as instantaneous in its operation as nitrous oxide.

He lay long asleep. Hilda and I watched him.



"HE LAY LONG ASLEEP."

After he had lain for some minutes senseless, like a log, on the couch where we had placed him, Hilda stooped over him quietly and lifted up the ends of the grizzled moustache. Then she pointed one accusing finger at his lips. "I told you so," she murmured, with a note of demonstration.

"There is certainly something rather stern or even ruthless about the set of the face and the firm ending of the lips," I admitted, reluctantly.

"That is why God gave men moustaches," she mused, in a low voice; "to hide the cruel corners of their mouths."

"Not *always* cruel," I cried.

"Sometimes cruel, sometimes cunning, sometimes sensuous; but nine times out of ten, best masked by moustaches."

"You have a bad opinion of our sex!" I exclaimed.

"Providence knew best," she answered. "*It* gave you moustaches. That was in order that we women might be spared from always seeing you as you are. Besides, I said 'Nine times out of ten.' There are exceptions—*such* exceptions!"

On second thought, I did not feel sure that I could quarrel with her estimate.

The experiment was that time once more successful. Sebastian woke up from the comatose state after eight hours, not quite as fresh as Hilda Wade, perhaps, but still tolerably alive, less alert, however, and complaining of dull headache. He was not hungry. Hilda Wade shook her head at that. "It will be of use only in a very few cases," she said to me, regretfully; "and those few will need to be carefully picked by an acute observer. I see resistance to the coma is, even more than I thought, a matter of temperament. Why, so impassioned a man as the Professor himself cannot entirely recover. With more sluggish temperaments, we shall have deeper difficulty."

"Would you call him impassioned?" I asked. "Most people think him so cold and stern."

She shook her head. "He is a snow-capped volcano," she answered. "The fires of his life burn bright below. The exterior alone is cold and placid."

However, starting from that time, Sebastian began a course of experiments on patients, giving infinitesimal doses at first, and venturing slowly on somewhat larger quantities. But only in his own case and Hilda's could the result be called quite satisfactory. One dull and heavy, drink-sodden navvy, to whom he administered no more than one-tenth of a grain, was drowsy for a week, and listless long after; while a fat washerwoman from West Ham, who took only two-tenths, fell so fast asleep, and snored so stertorously, that we feared she was going to doze off into eternity, after the fashion of the rabbits. Mothers of large families, we noted, stood the drug very ill: on pale young girls of the consumptive tendency its effect was not marked: but only a patient here and there of exceptionally imaginative and vivid temperament seemed able to endure it. Sebastian was discouraged. He saw the anæsthetic was not destined to

fulfil his first enthusiastic humanitarian expectations.

One day, while the investigation was just at this stage, a case was admitted into the observation-cots in which Hilda Wade took a particular interest. The patient was a young girl named Isabel Huntley—tall, dark, and slender, a markedly quick and imaginative type, with large black eyes which clearly bespoke a passionate nature. Though distinctly hysterical, she was pretty and pleasing. Her rich, dark hair was as copious as it was beautiful. She held herself erect, and had a finely poised head. From the first moment she arrived, I could see Nurse Wade was strongly drawn towards her. Their souls sympathized. Number Fourteen—that is our impersonal way of describing *cases*—was constantly on Hilda's lips. "I like the girl," she said once. "She is a lady in fibre."

"And a tobacco-trimmer by trade," Sebastian added, sarcastically.

As usual, Hilda's was the truer description. It went deeper.

Number Fourteen's ailment was a rare and peculiar one, into which I need not enter here with professional precision. (I have described the case fully for my brother practitioners in my paper in the fourth volume of Sebastian's "Medical Miscellanies.") It will be enough for my present purpose to say in brief that the lesion consisted of an internal growth, which is always dangerous and most often fatal, but which nevertheless is of such a character that if it be once happily eradicated by supremely good surgery it never tends to recur, and leaves the patient as strong and well as ever. Sebastian was, of course, delighted with the splendid opportunity thus afforded him. "It is a beautiful case!" he cried, with professional enthusiasm. "Beautiful! Beautiful! I never saw one so deadly or so malignant before. We are indeed in luck's way. Only a miracle can save her life. Cumberledge, we must proceed to perform the miracle."

Sebastian loved such cases. They formed his ideal. He did not greatly admire the artificial prolongation of diseased and unwholesome lives which could never be of much use to their owners or anyone else; but when a chance occurred for restoring to perfect health a valuable existence which might otherwise be extinguished before its time, he positively revelled in his beneficent calling. "What nobler object can a man propose to himself," he used to say, "than to raise good men and true from the dead, as it were, and return them whole and sound to

the family that depends upon them? Why, I had fifty times rather cure an honest coal-heaver of a wound in his leg than give ten years more lease of life to a gouty lord, diseased from top to toe, who expects to find a month of Carlsbad or Homburg once every year make up for eleven months of over-eating, over-drinking, vulgar debauchery, and under-thinking." He had no sympathy with men who lived the lives of swine: his heart was with the workers.

Of course, Hilda Wade soon suggested that, as an operation was absolutely necessary, Number Fourteen would be a splendid subject on whom to test once more the effects of lethodyne. Sebastian, with his head on one side, surveying the patient, promptly coincided. "Nervous diathesis," he observed. "Very vivid fancy. Twitches her hands the right way. Quick pulse, rapid perceptions, no meaningless unrest, but deep vitality. I don't doubt she'll stand it."

We explained to Number Fourteen the gravity of the case, and also the tentative character of the operation under lethodyne. At first, she shrank from taking it. "No, no," she said, "let me die quietly." But Hilda, like the Angel of Mercy that she was, whispered in the girl's ear, "If it succeeds, you will get quite well, and—you can marry Arthur."

The patient's dark face flushed crimson.

"Ah, Arthur," she cried. "Dear Arthur! I can bear anything you choose to do to me—for Arthur!"

"How soon you find these things out!" I cried to Hilda a few minutes later. "A mere man would never have thought of that. And who is Arthur?"

"A sailor—on a ship that trades with the South Seas. I hope he is worthy of her. Fretting over Arthur's absence has aggravated the case. He is homeward-bound now. She is worrying herself to death, for fear she should not live to say good-bye to him."

"She *will* live to marry him," I answered, with confidence like her own, "if *you* say she can stand it."

"The lethodyne—oh, yes, *that's* all right. But the operation itself is so extremely dangerous. Though Dr. Sebastian says he has called in the best surgeon in London for all such cases—they are rare,

he tells me—and Nielsen has performed on six, three of them successfully."

We gave the girl the drug. She took it, trembling, and went off at once, holding Hilda's hand, with a pale smile on her face, which persisted there somewhat weirdly all through the operation. The work of removing the growth was long and ghastly, even for us who were well seasoned to such sights, but at the end Nielsen expressed himself as perfectly satisfied. "A very neat piece of work!" Sebastian exclaimed, looking on. "I congratulate you, Nielsen. I never saw anything done cleaner or better."

"A successful operation, certainly!" the great surgeon admitted, with just pride in the Master's commendation.

"And the patient?" Hilda asked, wavering.

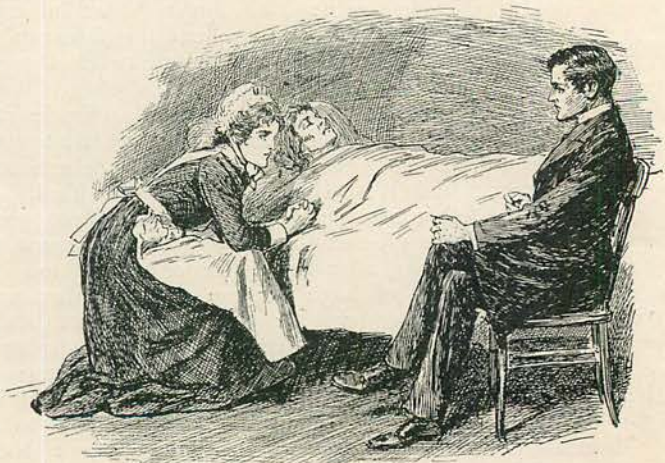
"Oh, the patient? The patient will die," Nielsen replied, in an unconcerned voice, wiping his spotless instruments.

"That is not *my* idea of the medical art," I cried, shocked at his callousness. "An operation is only successful if——"

He regarded me with lofty scorn. "A certain percentage of losses," he interrupted, calmly, "is inevitable, of course, in all surgical operations. We are obliged to average it. How could I preserve my precision and accuracy of hand if I were always bothered by sentimental considerations of the patient's safety?"

Hilda Wade glanced up at me with a sympathetic glance. "We will pull her through yet," she murmured, in her soft voice, "if care and skill can do it. *My* care and *your* skill. This is now *our* patient, Dr. Cumberledge."

It needed care and skill. We watched her for hours, and she showed no sign or gleam



"SHE SHOWED NO SIGN OF RECOVERY."

of recovery. Her sleep was deeper than either Sebastian's or Hilda's had been. She had taken a big dose, so as to secure immobility: the question now was, would she recover at all from it? Hour after hour we waited, and watched: and not a sign of movement! Only the same deep, slow, hampered breathing, the same feeble, jerky pulse, the same deathly pallor on the dark cheeks, the same corpse-like rigidity of limb and muscle.

At last, our patient stirred faintly as in a dream; her breath faltered. We bent over her. Was it death, or was she beginning to recover?

Very slowly, a faint trace of colour came back to her cheeks. Her heavy eyes half opened. They stared first with a white stare. Her arms dropped by her side. Her mouth relaxed its ghastly smile. . . . We held our breath. . . . She was coming to again!

But her coming to was slow—very, very slow. Her pulse was still weak. Her heart pumped feebly. We feared she might sink from inanition at any moment. Hilda Wade knelt on the floor by the girl's side and held a spoonful of beef essence coaxingly to her lips. Number Fourteen gasped, drew a long, slow breath, then gulped and swallowed it. After that, she lay back with her mouth open, looking like a corpse. Hilda pressed another spoonful of the soft jelly upon her: but the girl waved it away with one trembling hand. "Let me die," she cried. "Let me die! I feel dead already."

Hilda held her face close. "Isabel," she whispered—and I recognised in her tone the vast moral difference between "Isabel" and "Number Fourteen." "Is-a-bel, you must take it. For Arthur's sake, I say, you *must* take it."

The girl's hand quivered as it lay on the white coverlet. "For Arthur's sake!" she murmured, lifting her eyelids dreamily. "For Arthur's sake! Yes, nurse, dear!"

"Call me Hilda, please! Hilda!"

The girl's face lighted up again. "Yes, Hilda, dear," she answered, in an unearthly voice, like one raised from the dead. "I will call you what you will. Angel of Light, you have been so good to me."

She opened her lips with an effort, and slowly swallowed another spoonful. Then she fell back, exhausted. But her pulse improved within twenty minutes.

I mentioned the matter, with enthusiasm, to Sebastian later. "It is very nice in its way," he answered; "but . . . it is not nursing."

I thought to myself that that was just what

it *was*: but I did not say so. Sebastian was a man who thought meanly of women: "A doctor, like a priest," he used to declare, "should keep himself unmarried. His bride is medicine." And he disliked to see what he called *philandering* going on in his hospital. It may have been on that account that I avoided speaking much of Hilda Wade thenceforth before him.

He looked in casually next day to see the patient. "She will die," he said, with perfect assurance, as we passed down the ward together. "Operation has taken too much out of her."

"Still, she has great recuperative powers," Hilda answered. "They all have in her family, Professor. You may, perhaps, remember Joseph Huntley, who occupied Number Sixty-seven in the Accident Ward some nine months since—compound fracture of the arm—a dark, nervous engineer's assistant—very hard to restrain—well, *he* was her brother: he caught typhoid in the hospital, and you commented at the time on his strange vitality. Then there was her cousin, again, Ellen Stubbs—we had *her* for stubborn chronic laryngitis—a very bad case—anyone else would have died—yielded at once to your treatment, and made, I recollect, a splendid convalescence."

"What a memory you have!" Sebastian cried, admiring against his will. "It is simply marvellous! I never saw *anyone* like you in my life . . . except once. *He* was a man, a doctor, a colleague of mine—dead long ago. . . . Why—" he mused, and gazed hard at her. Hilda shrank before his gaze. "This is curious," he went on slowly, at last. "Very curious. You—why, you resemble him."

"Do I?" Hilda replied, with forced calm, raising her eyes to his. Their glances met. That moment, I saw each had recognised something; and from that day forth I was instinctively aware that a duel was being waged between Sebastian and Hilda. A duel between the two ablest and most singular personalities I had ever met. A duel of life and death—though I did not fully understand its purport till much, much later.

Every day after that, the poor, wasted girl in Number Fourteen grew feebler and fainter. Her temperature rose; her heart throbbed weakly. She seemed to be fading away. Sebastian shook his head. "Lethodyne is a failure," he said, with a mournful regret. "One cannot trust it. The case might have recovered from the operation, or recovered from the drug; but she could not recover from both together. Yet the operation



"THEIR GLANCES MET."

would have been impossible without the drug; and the drug is useless except for the operation."

It was a great disappointment to him. He hid himself in his room, as was his wont when disappointed, and went on with his old work at his beloved microbes.

"I have one hope still," Hilda murmured to me by the bedside when our patient was at her worst. "If one contingency occurs, I believe we may save her."

"What is that?" I asked.

She shook her head waywardly. "You must wait and see," she answered. "If it comes off, I will tell you. If not, let it swell the limbo of lost inspirations."

Next morning early, however, she came up to me with a radiant face, holding a newspaper in her hand. "Well, it *has* happened!" she cried, rejoicing. "We shall save poor Isabel—Number Fourteen, I mean; our way is clear, Dr. Cumberledge."

I followed her blindly to the bedside, little guessing what she could mean. She knelt down at the head of the cot. The girl's eyes were closed: I touched her cheek: she was in a high fever. "Temperature?" I asked.

"A hundred and three."

I shook my head. Every symptom of fatal relapse. I could not imagine what card Hilda held in reserve. But I stood there, waiting.

She whispered in the girl's ear: "Arthur's ship is sighted off the Lizard."

The patient opened her eyes slowly, and rolled them for a moment as if she did not understand.

"Too late!" I cried. "Too late! She is delirious—insensible!"

Hilda repeated the words slowly, but very distinctly. "Do you hear, dear? Arthur's ship . . . it is sighted. . . . Arthur's ship . . . at the Lizard."

The girl's lips moved. "Arthur! Arthur! . . . Arthur's ship!" A deep sigh. She clenched her hands. "He is coming?" Hilda nodded and smiled, holding her breath with suspense.

"Up the Channel now. He will be at Southampton to-night. Arthur . . . at Southampton. It is here, in the papers. I have telegraphed to him to hurry on at once to see you."

She struggled up for a second. A smile flitted across the worn face.

Then she fell back wearily.

I thought all was over. Her eyes stared white. But ten minutes later she opened her lids again. "Arthur is coming," she murmured. "Arthur . . . coming."

"Yes, dear. Now sleep. He is coming."

All through that day and the next night she was restless and agitated; but still, her pulse improved a little. Next morning, she was again a trifle better. Temperature falling—a hundred and one, point three. At ten o'clock Hilda came in to her, radiant.

"Well, Isabel, dear," she cried, bending down and touching her cheek (kissing is forbidden by the rules of the house). "Arthur has come. He is here . . . down below . . . I have seen him."

"Seen him!" the girl gasped.

"Yes, seen him. Talked with him. Such a nice, manly fellow, and such an honest, good face! He is longing for you to get well. He says he has come home this time to marry you."

The wan lips quivered. "He will *never* marry me!"

"Yes, yes, he *will*—if you will take this jelly. Look here—he wrote these words to you before my very eyes: 'Dear love to my Isa!' . . . If you are good and will sleep he may see you—to-morrow."

The girl opened her lips and ate the jelly greedily. She ate as much as she was desired.

In three minutes more her head had fallen like a child's upon her pillow, and she was sleeping peacefully.

I went up to Sebastian's room, quite excited with the news. He was busy among his bacilli. They were his hobby, his pets. "Well, what do you think, Professor?" I cried. "That patient of Nurse Wade's——"

He gazed up at me abstractedly, his brow contracting. "Yes, yes; I know," he interrupted. "The girl in Fourteen. I have discounted her case long ago. She has ceased to interest me. . . . Dead, of course! Nothing else was possible."

I laughed a quick little laugh of triumph. "No, sir; *not* dead. Recovering! She has fallen just now into a normal sleep; her breathing is natural."

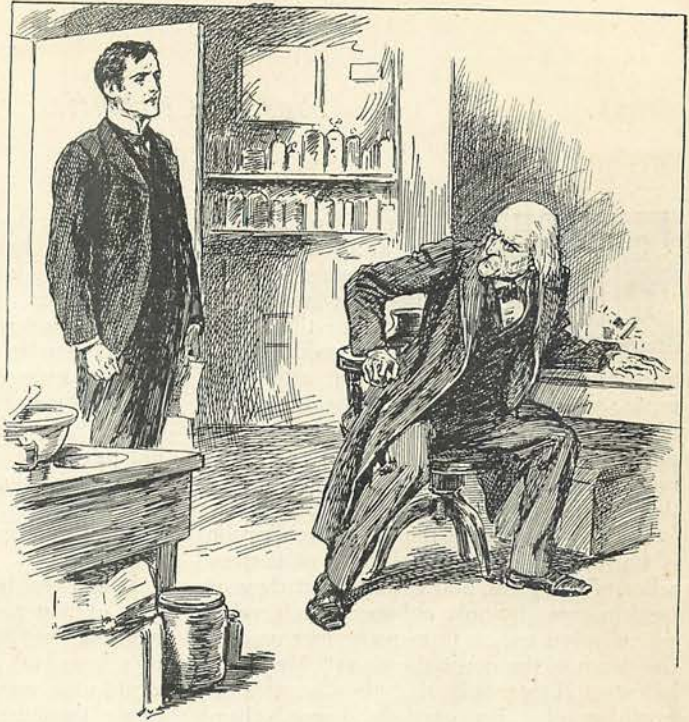
He wheeled his revolving chair away from the germs, and fixed me with his keen eyes. "Recovering?" he echoed. "Impossible! Rallying, you mean. A mere flicker. I know my trade. She *must* die this evening."

"Forgive my persistence," I replied; "but—her temperature has gone down to ninety-nine and a trifle."

He pushed away the bacilli in the nearest watch-glass quite angrily. "To ninety-nine!" he exclaimed, knitting his brows. "Cumberledge, this is disgraceful! A most disappointing case! A most provoking patient!"

"But surely, sir——" I cried.

"Don't talk to *me*, boy! Don't attempt to apologize for her. Such conduct is unpardonable. She *ought* to have died. It was her clear duty. *I said* she would die, and she should have known better than to fly in the face of the faculty. Her recovery is an insult to medical science. What is the staff about? Nurse Wade should have prevented it."



"SHE OUGHT TO HAVE DIED."

"Still, sir," I exclaimed, trying to touch him on a tender spot, "the anæsthetic, you know! Such a triumph for lethodyne! This case shows clearly that on certain constitutions it may be used with advantage under certain conditions."

He snapped his fingers. "Lethodyne! pooh! I have lost interest in it. Impracticable! It is not fitted for the human species."

"Why so? Number Fourteen proves——"

He interrupted me with an impatient wave of his hand: then he rose and paced up and down the room testily. After a pause he spoke again. "The weak point of lethodyne is this: nobody can be trusted to say *when* it may be used—except Nurse Wade. Which is *not* science."

For the first time in my life, I had a glimmering idea that I distrusted Sebastian. Hilda Wade was right—the man was cruel. But I had never observed his cruelty before—because his devotion to science had blinded me to it.