

## SEQUEL.

BY F. STARTIN PILLEAU.

**T**HE extraordinary number of letters sent to the Editor, in response to the invitation given at the end of my story entitled "The Vision of Inverstrathay Castle," which appeared in the Christmas Number of THE STRAND MAGAZINE for 1894, must be my apology for intruding myself once more before the readers of that world-renowned periodical. Those who read that story will remember that my old friend, Tom Farquharson, and I were diametrically opposed as to the expediency of informing either, or both, of two young people (who, at that time, were engaged to be married) of a vision we had seen concerning them; and that we determined, after much discussion, to lay the facts of the case before the public, inviting such as felt competent to do so to give us their advice upon the matter.

I now take this opportunity of tendering my thanks to those who so promptly responded to my appeal, and who will, I think, take an interest in hearing the *dénouement* of the story. But, for the information of those who did not read the first story, at the Editor's request, I will begin with a brief summary of what took place.

I, while a guest at Inverstrathay Castle, occupied a haunted room. In the night the room was suddenly lit up; a young girl, terror-stricken, rushed into the room, closely followed by a man, who killed her. The vision was repeated the following night. I was much surprised to find staying in the house a young lady named Miss Craig, who

was exactly like the girl of my vision, and who also bore the same strong resemblance to a portrait of a Lady Betty Colquhoun, an ancestor of Tom Farquharson. There was a story attached to the place that, about the end of the sixteenth century, one Ronald Farquharson married a Lady Betty Colquhoun; but after three years of torture from her husband, the lady was said to have eloped with an old lover. I explained the whole matter to my host, who watched with me that night, when the vision again appeared. We pulled some of the wainscoting away and discovered a secret passage, at the end of which, in a dungeon, was a skeleton of a woman. Farquharson believed that his ancestor must have murdered his wife, hidden the body himself, and set going the story of the elopement. We were greatly perplexed for a solution to the mystery, as both the actors in the visionary tragedy were in modern evening costume. A year later, I met the villain of my vision in London. I told Farquharson of this, who informed me that Sir Philip Clipstone, the villain, and Miss Craig, the victim in the tragedy, were engaged to be married. We were very much troubled as to whether it was our duty to inform the engaged couple of what had taken place, or not; and this was the point which we determined to lay before the public.

The story, however, did not appear in print until it was too late for me to profit by the advice so freely offered by my readers. In the meantime, many important events happened, which it is now my purpose to relate.

Firstly, poor Farquharson, having returned

too soon to Inverstrathy Castle, caught the fever and died (after but ten days' illness), thus leaving to me the sole responsibility of either telling Sir Philip Clipstone and Dora Craig what we had seen, or keeping silence and letting events take their own course.

Secondly, almost immediately after poor Tom's death, both Duncan Farquharson and his younger brother Charles, first cousins of Tom's (the former of whom had succeeded to the Inverstrathy estates), were drowned while coming back from Madeira (where they had been yachting) to take possession of the property.

Thirdly, Sir Philip Clipstone and Dora Craig, in happy ignorance of what might be in store for them, and not knowing the importance of delay, or the excellent advice about to be tendered them by the public, calmly took the matter into their own hands and were quietly married on the 2nd of October, just about the time of the wreck of the *Albatross*, poor Duncan Farquharson's yacht.

Fourthly, in consequence of this last tragedy (the wreck, not the marriage) Sir Philip succeeded to Inverstrathy Castle and property.

It was one of the society papers which informed me, much to my surprise, of this last event; for I had not, until then, any idea Sir Philip was related to poor Tom. It seems, however, he was a second cousin, and took the name of Clipstone in consequence of inheriting an estate, in the West of England, provided he added the testator's name to his own, so that his full style and title was Sir Philip Farquharson Clipstone, Bart., and is, now that he has succeeded to Inverstrathy, Sir Philip Clipstone Farquharson, Bart.

It was with a feeling little short of dismay that I heard of this rapid development of Dora's destiny, and every day I half expected to hear of some terrible *dénouement*, but this was not the case; on the contrary, for the first few months the young couple seemed to be even more devotedly attached to each other than young married folk usually are. And whenever I met them in society, which was pretty often, even my suspicious glances could not detect the slightest appearance of duplicity in the lover-like behaviour of Sir Philip to his charming bride.

At first, it was only at the houses of mutual friends that I had an opportunity of observing them, for, although

Lady Farquharson immediately recognised me on the first occasion of our meeting after her marriage, and at once introduced me to her husband, the acquaintance, for a time, went no further. Indeed, it was not till after the Oxford and Cambridge Boat-race that it rapidly ripened into a warm friendship. It happened, on that occasion, to be one of those unusually beautiful spring days which, now and again, visit our desolate shores, giving promise of better things to come, a promise, alas! but rarely fulfilled, and we were a merry party on Lord Coverdale's steam launch.

It was the first time I had seen Lady Farquharson without her husband, and I gathered, from what she was telling Lady Coverdale, that Sir Philip had been summoned away, on urgent business, just as they were leaving home.

No need to describe the event of the day, which, in fact, proved to be a mere procession; suffice it to say that, after the boats had passed, and the usual number of steamers and other craft were pressing in their wake, a clumsily-steered launch bumped against our quarter. The shock was not great, but more than sufficient to cause Lady Farquharson, who was standing near me, to lose her



"THE COUPLE SEEMED DEVOTEDLY ATTACHED TO EACH OTHER."

balance and fall into the water. Quick as thought, I jumped in after her, and easily managed to support her till a friendly boat took us on board.

It was a simple act, and one which anyone else would have done in the same circumstances, though, from the exaggerated thanks which Sir Philip showered upon me when I took Lady Farquharson home, you would have thought I had done something unusually heroic.

Fortunately, neither of us took the slightest harm from our immersion, for, as I have said, it was a glorious, sunshiny day. Had it been otherwise, it might have proved a more serious matter, at all events for Lady Farquharson, who, at that time, was in somewhat delicate health.

From that time my friendship with the Farquharsons rapidly progressed, and scarcely a day passed without my spending an hour or two in their society. Occupying, as I soon did, the post of confidential friend to the family, I had every opportunity for observing the relations between husband and wife. At first, I had not the slightest doubt as to the genuineness of Sir Philip's adoration of Lady Farquharson, and it was not till some time afterwards that I first began to suspect that there might be a slight "rift within the lute."

It is difficult to explain why my suspicions were aroused at all, so impalpable were the symptoms; but I had not lost any of the impressions of that horrible vision at Inverstrathy Castle, and my perceptions were in an abnormal condition of tension, so that I seemed to intuitively understand, rather than actually observe, that all was not quite right between them. They were both still delighted to see me whenever I put in an appearance, but on more than one occasion I could not help feeling that they looked upon my advent as a relief; that my appearance, in fact, had probably been the means of putting to an end a somewhat heated argument between them. Two or three times, too, I felt quite convinced that Sir Philip was on the point of taking me into his confidence, but some slight interruption on each occasion, unfortunately, prevented his doing so.

At length, in June, they left London for Scotland, having pressed me to join them in August for the shooting, and, though my heart bounded when the invitation was given (for what might I not witness in that gloomy old castle?), I determined nothing should prevent my going, and endeavouring, if possible, to avert the awful tragedy I felt convinced would otherwise take place.

In the early part of July I received a hurried letter from Sir Philip announcing, with much pride, the birth of a son and heir, and stating that, though the youngster had made his appearance somewhat sooner than was expected, both mother and child were doing well.

So far, so good. I was delighted at the news, and could only hope the boy would be a tie between his parents. Another week had barely passed, when I got a second letter from Sir Philip saying that Lady Farquharson was not going on quite so satisfactorily, but that he fully hoped and believed she would be all right again long before the 11th of August, when I was expected. "In fact," he added, "I wish it were possible for you to come here sooner, for there is a matter, about which I do not like to write, but which I should much like to talk over with you. However, I fear, from what you said, that that is not possible, but pray do not delay your visit a day longer than you can help, and please do not refer, in any way, to what I have said, when next you write."

These words set me thinking, and my thoughts were not pleasant. What was it he wished to discuss with me, but did not like to put into writing? And why was not Lady Farquharson to know anything about it?

Twice more I heard from Sir Philip, and, though each time his accounts of Lady Farquharson's health were more than satisfactory, there was a depression about the letters which seemed to me very ominous.

At last the 11th of August arrived, and I once again found myself in Sutherlandshire; but, as I had been visiting friends only some twenty miles off, I managed to reach Inverstrathy Castle in time for afternoon tea.

Both Sir Philip and Lady Farquharson gave me the heartiest of welcomes, but I was at once struck and grieved to see a marked and most distressing restraint in their behaviour. Though their bearing towards each other was precisely what one would expect, it wanted but a very superficial observer to detect the lines of worry and care, which were only too apparent, on the countenance of each.

I had no opportunity of getting a word alone with Sir Philip, though I could see he was most anxious to do so, and tea was barely over when, in all the glory of infant pomp and state, the future "Sir Philip" was ushered into our presence.

It would be difficult to say which of the two, Sir Philip or Lady Farquharson, was the more idiotically devoted to the child, and it did my bachelor heart good to see the extra-

ordinary change his presence made in both my host and hostess. All signs of worry or care seemed to be at once wiped out from their faces, and they out-vied each other in their protestations of love and devotion. Nay, more (somewhat, I confess, to my surprise), neither seemed in the least jealous of the other, but alternately hugged and kissed the little chap, as they called each other's attention to his marvellous intelligence—which, by-the-bye, I could not myself detect—in a manner which only young married people, with their first six-weeks-old infant, could possibly appreciate. When, however, the "phenomenon" was once more claimed by his nurse, I was concerned to see the same worried, anxious look gradually overcast their faces. Lady Farquharson, however, seemed to do her best to shake the depressing influence off, and laughed and chatted in a manner that would have been most cheering, had it not been so obviously forced. At length she rose, and suggested I might, perhaps, like to go to my room, adding, with a smile: "I think you already know your way there, as I understand from Mrs. Morgan, who is still here, that it is the same one you occupied when staying here with poor Tom."

I confess to feeling considerably appalled at the idea of again occupying that haunted chamber; but, not seeing how I could get out of it without making a fuss, I determined to make the best of it.

The moment Lady Farquharson left, Sir Philip eagerly asked me to accompany him to his study; but, as we were going there,

one of the footmen informed him that the steward wished to see him immediately about some matter of importance. He, therefore (very reluctantly I could see), said we must defer our chat till after dinner, and I at once went to my room to dress.

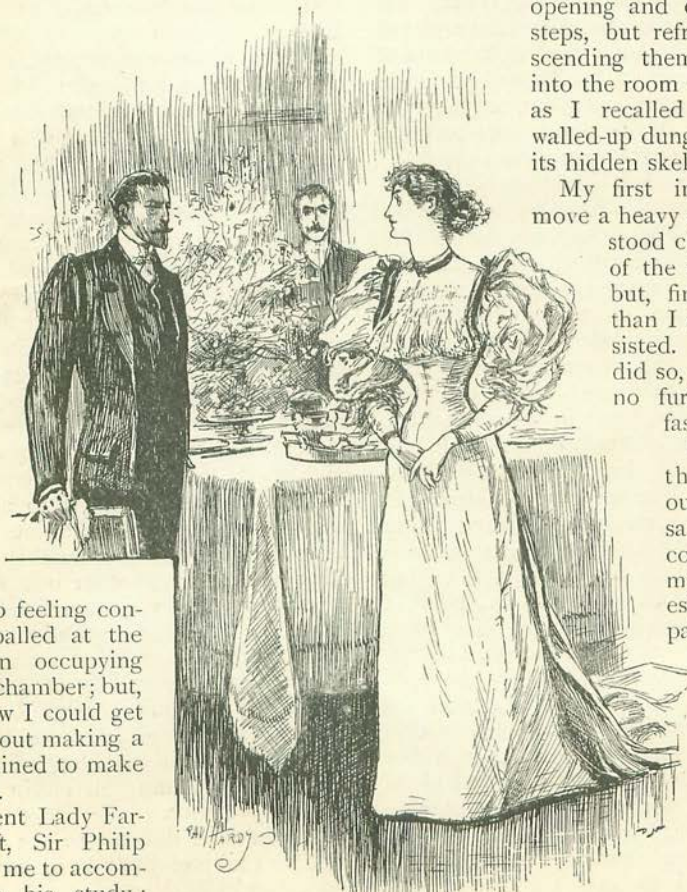
How well I knew it! There was the self-same antique four-poster, the same Persian hearth-rug in front of the fireplace, under which lay the blood-stain, or what Tom and I believed was a blood-stain; and the same rare old tapestry hanging round the gloomy walls. Of course I went at once to the farther corner to see if the secret door had been tampered with. I had no difficulty in finding it, for it opened of its own volition when I drew away the tapestry in front of it. Probably Tom had broken the spring when he forced it open on that memorable occasion, and had not been able, or had not troubled, to repair it, trusting to the heavy tapestry to conceal it.

I could not resist peering through the opening and down the stone steps, but refrained from descending them, turning back into the room with a shudder, as I recalled to mind the walled-up dungeon below, and its hidden skeleton.

My first impulse was to move a heavy oak press, which stood close by, in front of the secret opening; but, finding it heavier than I calculated, I desisted. Thank God I did so, and that I took no further means to fasten up the door!

It was a dreary, though sumptuous, repast that we sat down to, and I could see that both my host and hostess were struggling painfully to appear

at their ease. I did my best to keep the conversation alive, but failed dismally, except when I spoke of the "phenomenon"; then, indeed,



"I THINK YOU ALREADY KNOW YOUR WAY THERE."

both my entertainers opened their lips, and I had no cause to complain of their silence. But one cannot, or at least a bachelor cannot, converse for ever on infantine matters, and the conversation soon lapsed.

At length the weary dinner came to an end, and Lady Farquharson left the room, presumably for the nursery. We filled up our glasses, and I prepared to listen to what I knew Sir Philip was so anxious to tell me, when, before he had barely commenced, Lady Farquharson hurriedly came in and said, with tears in her eyes:—

“Oh, Philip! I'm sure there's something dreadful the matter with baby!”

“Good God! you don't say so?” said Sir Philip, starting up and turning ashy pale. “Excuse me for a moment, there's a good fellow, while I go and see,” and both the fond parents hurried from the room, leaving me, once more, in ignorance as to what it was Sir Philip was so anxious to impart to me.

No doubt I am a cold-blooded, heartless bachelor, but I could not refrain from chucking at the absurdity of Sir Philip's and Lady Farquharson's behaviour. The little beggar had been lively enough a couple of hours before, and it seemed to me highly improbable there could be anything serious the matter with him. It was half an hour before Sir Philip returned, and he then informed me he had already sent off an express for Dr. McDonald, who lived some five miles off. He was in a most terrible state of anxiety, and walked up and down the room in a nervous, agitated manner, which was most distressing to witness. Thinking to distract his attention, I suggested it was a good opportunity for him to tell me what he was so anxious I should hear, but he answered:—

“Not now; I couldn't do it. I'm absolutely distracted with anxiety. My dear fellow, you don't know what an awful life Dora and I have led the last three months, and now, just when little Phil seemed sent on purpose to comfort us, for aught I know, he may be dying.”

“But what does the nurse say?” I inquired. “She seems a sensible sort of woman, and, I suppose, has had experience in these matters.”

“She's an old fool,” he irritably replied, “and the sooner she goes the better.”

“But what does she say?” I persisted.

“Why, she says there's nothing at all the matter! As though his mother and I couldn't see for ourselves that he's terribly ill.”

“What are his symptoms?”

“Oh, I don't know anything about his symptoms, but, anyhow, he's pretty bad; and, if anything were to happen to him, God knows how it will all end!”

Fortunately, Dr. McDonald soon arrived, and Sir Philip at once conducted him upstairs. It turned out, as I fully expected, the wildest of scares, the doctor assuring me that there was absolutely nothing whatever the matter with the kid, except the very slightest amount of indigestion. It was ludicrous beyond description, yet pathetic, too, to see poor Sir Philip's face brighten, as, after the severest cross-examination of the unfortunate doctor, he was forced to believe the child was not *in extremis*.

We spent a much pleasanter evening than I at all anticipated in the smoking-room (for Lady Farquharson only appeared to say good-night, and returned at once to her beloved offspring's cot), and I found Dr. McDonald, whom Sir Philip had insisted upon putting up for the night, a most amusing companion. Long and racy were the yarns we regaled each other with, Sir Philip spend-



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ing his time mostly in going backwards and forwards to the nursery, and it was pretty late before we turned in. When at last we did so, I had not the slightest intention of going to bed, as I expected little rest in that haunted room, but determined to sit up all night and see what would happen, when, upon casually looking out of the window, I was considerably surprised to see Lady Farquharson hurrying across the lawn. Astonished that she should be out so late, I watched to see what would follow, when, to my still further astonishment, she returned clinging to Sir Philip's arm, apparently endeavouring to persuade him to return to the house with her. Seemingly he would not do so, and although they were too far off for me to hear their conversation, I could distinctly recognise Sir Philip's voice raised in angry altercation.

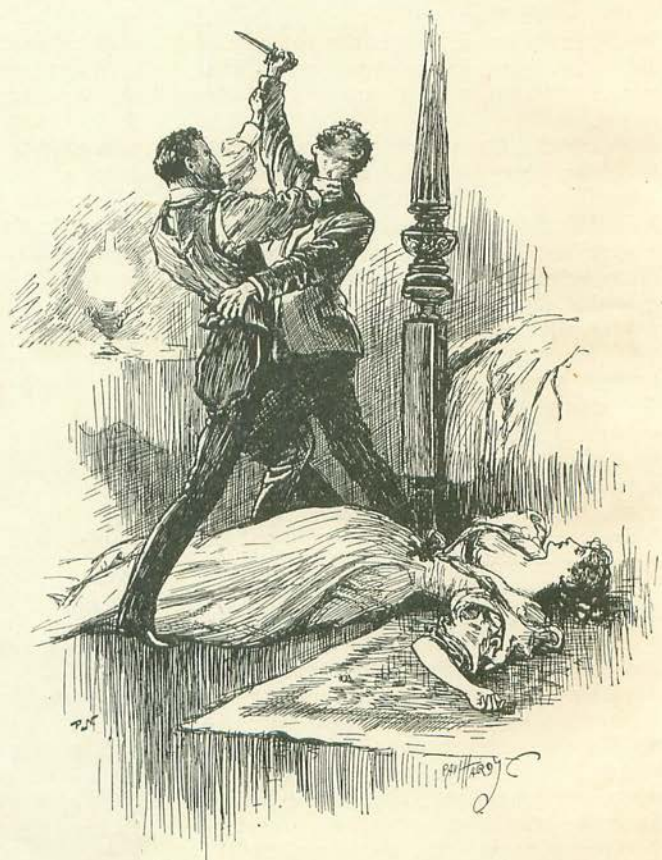
What was the meaning of it all? Was he intoxicated? Was that the horrible mystery which darkened both their lives and caused that anxious look of worry I had seen on both their faces? Yet, no, this could scarcely be the case, for Sir Philip clearly wished to take me into his confidence, and I knew too much of human nature to suppose he would confess his domestic happiness had been wrecked by his own vice.

Puzzled as to what could possibly be the solution of the mystery, I turned from the window and sat down by the fire. After a time I must have fallen asleep, but my rest in that fateful room was ever destined to be brief, and I could not have slept more than a couple of hours at most, when again I wakened up with a horrible feeling of terror.

This time no vivid, unnatural light was the cause of my awakening, but the most awful, ear-piercing shriek, and, as I started up, once again I saw the tapestry at the farther end of the room drawn aside; once again the lady of my vision, so like Lady Farquharson, rushed into the room and fell upon her knees on the hearth-rug; once again the antique jewel slipped from off her neck to the floor;

and, once again, that bloodthirsty villain, so terribly like Sir Philip, raised his dagger to plunge it into her heart.

With one bound I sprang at his throat, and this time the vision vanished not from my eyes. This time my hand clasped human flesh, instead of empty air, and I desperately strove to wrest the dagger from his murderous hand. Fierce was the struggle between us; frantically I endeavoured to choke back his breath with my right hand as I grasped his wrist, as firmly as I could, with my left. Backwards and forwards we swayed in deadly silence, till at length, tripping over the prostrate form of Lady Farquharson, we both fell heavily to the ground, he, alas, uppermost! I knew now it could only be a



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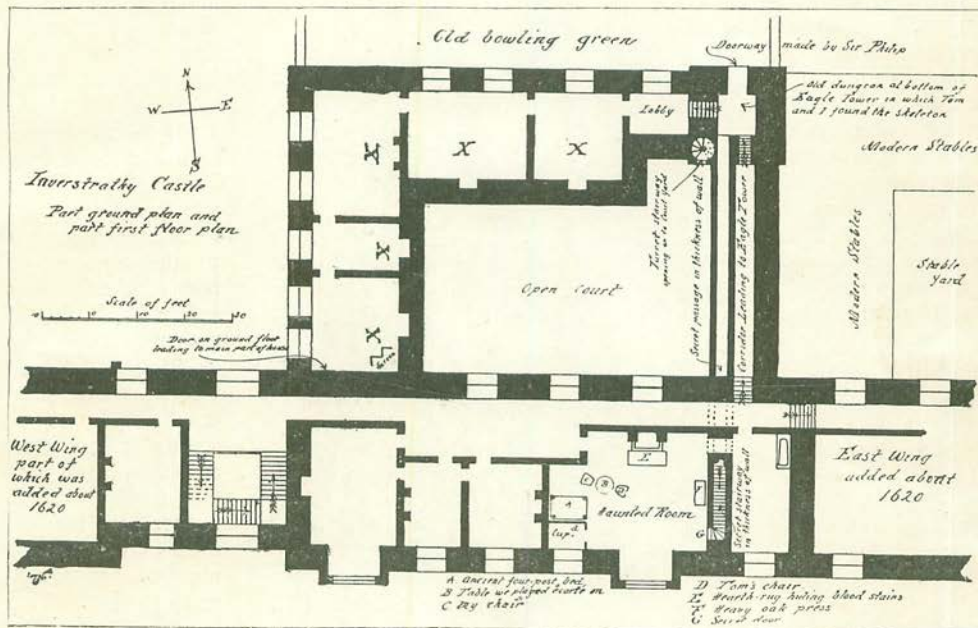
question of a few moments, for in falling I had lost my hold on his wrist; but I desperately clung to him with both hands and knees, twisting and turning to avoid the fatal thrust. At length the decisive moment came, when, kneeling on my chest, the infuriated ruffian

raised the dagger to plunge it into my breast. I even saw the light from the fire flash upon the blade as he waved it round his head, and then, just as it was descending, to my unspeakable relief and amazement, the door burst open and Sir Philip himself, followed by Dr. McDonald, rushed into the room, and, at the very last moment, freed me from my antagonist.

So soon as I had sufficiently recovered, Sir Philip gave me an explanation of the terrible mystery, which was shortly as follows:—

It appears that Sir Philip had a twin brother, who, delicate from his birth, had spent the greater part of his life travelling. While crossing the Libyan Desert, in the early

who was devoted to his brother, and to Lady Farquharson, and they sedulously kept the matter a profound secret, though Sir Philip suggested that I, being such an intimate friend, should be told. Lady Farquharson, however, at first, was strongly against it, and, in deference to her wishes, he abstained from doing so. The change from London to Inverstrathy, so far from proving beneficial, seems to have had an entirely opposite effect upon the invalid, and it became necessary to isolate him entirely from the rest of the household. Sir Philip had, therefore, set apart for his use a suite of apartments on the ground floor (marked X on accompanying plan of Inverstrathy Castle), which were in



PLAN OF INVERSTRATHY CASTLE.

spring of that year, he had received a severe stroke, which, in consequence of his not being able for some time to get proper treatment, and acting upon an already feeble constitution, had left his mind permanently affected, so that, when he at last reached England, he was quite incapable of taking care of himself. It seems it was his unexpected arrival which had prevented Sir Philip accompanying Lady Farquharson to the Oxford and Cambridge Boat-race.

At first the experts hoped that, with proper attention and absolute quiet, he might, to a greater or less extent, recover; and it was in accordance with that advice that Sir Philip had taken him to Inverstrathy.

It was naturally a great blow to Sir Philip,

communication with the identical dungeon-like chamber Tom Farquharson and I had broken into, and which Tom seems to have denuded of its uncanny contents, for I heard nothing of any skeleton having been found there. This chamber is at the bottom of the Watch, or Eagle Tower, at the north-east angle of the castle, and Sir Philip caused a doorway to be made in the outer wall, so that the invalid could get exercise in the old bowling-green, which is quite secluded from the rest of the grounds.

Although these precautions were deemed advisable by Sir Philip and Dr. McDonald (who was in close attendance on the invalid), it was not for a moment supposed that there was any fear of a homicidal tendency develop-

ing on the part of the unfortunate patient, though, on the evening of little Phil's birth, Lady Farquharson had been considerably alarmed by his flourishing a knife in her face. He had, however, immediately quieted down upon Sir Philip's interference, though ever since he seems to have taken a violent antipathy to his sister-in-law, who, in consequence, rarely ventured into his society.

In consequence of the scare of little Phil's supposed illness, the usual surveillance over the patient had been somewhat relaxed,

and Lady Farquharson, happening to look out of the nursery window, noticed him walking about the garden. Not wishing to alarm her husband, she went out and coaxed him back to the house, and some hours later, fearing he might have again effected his escape, she went to his rooms to see if all were right. Shading the lamp she carried so as not to disturb him, should he be asleep, she passed softly through the door leading to his apartments, and was much alarmed at not finding him in any of his rooms. She at once turned back to tell Sir Philip, when, as she reached the last room, which commu-

nicated with the rest of the house, to her horror he sprang out from behind a screen, where he had been hiding, with a naked dagger in his hand, and intercepted her escape.

Scarcely knowing what she did, Lady Farquharson dashed back through the other rooms, pulling the doors to behind her, and thus gaining a few yards' start from her infuriated pursuer, whom she heard close behind, upsetting various pieces of furniture in his desperate eagerness to overtake her. At last she reached the old dungeon, but, to her dismay, found the door, leading to the old bowling-green, locked. Not knowing what to do, in her despair she threw herself

against the only other door she saw, and which she believed led to the turret staircase. Fortunately it was not very firmly secured and gave way, and she at once fled along the secret passage which Tom and I had previously discovered.

By this time the madman was fast overtaking her, and, by the time she had mounted the thirty-three steps, was but a yard or two behind her. Had the secret door leading into my room been fastened, or had I perse-

vered in dragging the heavy oak press in front of the opening, nothing on earth could have saved the poor woman from her doom; as it was, as the reader already knows, I was enabled to rescue her, though I very nearly lost my own life in doing so. Luckily Sir Philip, who had been paying another anxious visit to the nursery, and had ruthlessly called up Dr. McDonald, on account of some fancied change for the worse in the child's condition, heard the scuffle in my room, and they both came to see what was the matter, in the very nick of time to free me from my insane antagonist. Thus, happily, ended my terrible experiences of the haunted chamber at Inverstrathly

Castle, but whether the horrible vision which Tom and I saw was the premonition of coming events, I leave others to determine; suffice it to say that, although I have spent many a night since at Inverstrathly, and have always, at my own request, occupied the haunted room, my rest has never again been disturbed; nor should I say, judging from my own personal observation, are the relations between Sir Philip and Lady Farquharson ever likely to be other than that of a most devoted couple. I may add that Sir Philip's unfortunate brother was at once removed to a private asylum; but I fear, from what I hear, there is small chance of his recovery.



"SHE THREW HERSELF AGAINST THE ONLY OTHER DOOR SHE SAW."