

Stories from the Diary of a Doctor.

By the Author of "THE MEDICINE LADY."

II.—MY HYPNOTIC PATIENT.

"VERY 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 WILL TAKE YOU ROUND WITH ME."

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."

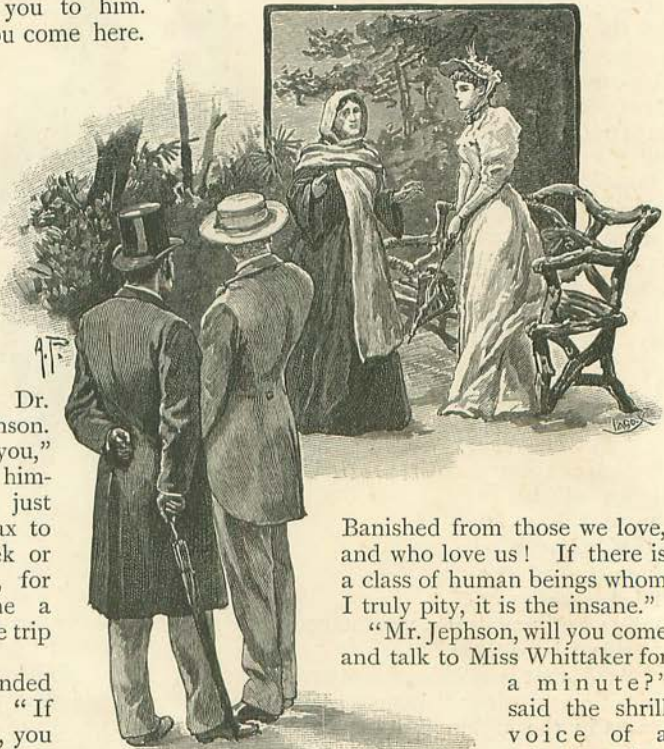
"You will do what you can for my friend here," said Poynter. "At first, of course, he will be a stranger, but if I place him under your wing, Jephson, I have no fear for the result."

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 melancholy 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! 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,

"WILL YOU COME AND TALK TO MISS WHITTAKER?"

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 indorsed 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.

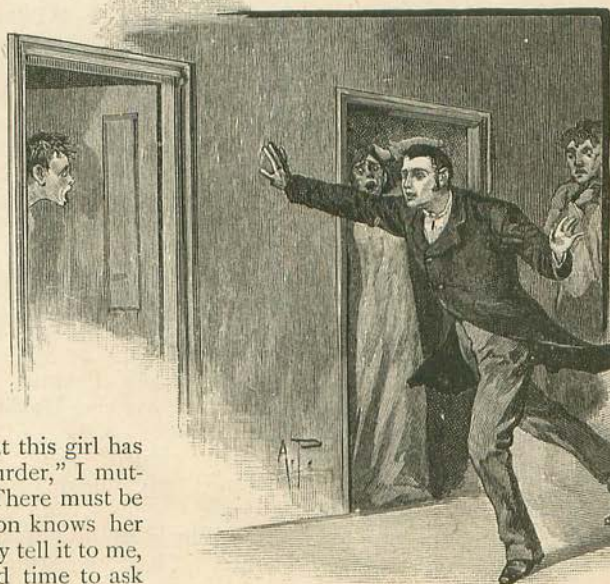
Shrieks of agonized human beings, the quick, hurrying tread of many feet—and then a rushing sound as of a body of water, smote upon my ears.

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 com-



"KEEP BACK! KEEP BACK!"

pletely 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 BECKONED THE NURSE TO THE DOOR."

"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 dark 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—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."



"YOU MUST NOT SPEAK OF HIM."

"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?"



"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



"HE CAME FORWARD AT ONCE."

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 right 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 men-

tioned 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——"



"WE RUSHED UP THE STAIRS."

"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.