

Stories from the Diary of a Doctor.

By the Authors of "THE MEDICINE LADY."

XI.—TRAPPED.



IN a certain evening in the winter of the year before last, I was sent for in a hurry to see a young man at a private hotel in the vicinity of Harley Street. I found my patient to be suffering from a violent attack of delirium tremens. He was very ill, and for a day or two his life was in danger. I engaged good nurses to attend him, and sat up with him myself for the greater part of two nights. The terrible malady took a favourable turn, the well-known painful symptoms abated. I persevered with the usual remedies to insure sleep, and saw that he was given plenty of nourishment, and about a week after his seizure Tollemache was fairly convalescent. I went to visit him one evening before he left his room. He was seated in a great armchair before the fire, his pipe was near him on the mantelpiece, and a number of *Harper's Magazine* lay open, and face downwards, on a table by his side. He had not yet parted with his nurse, but the man left the room when I appeared.

"I wish you'd give me the pleasure of your company for half an hour or so," said Tollemache, in a wistful sort of voice.

I found I could spare the time, and sat down willingly in a chair at the side of the hearth. He looked at me with a faint dawning of pleasure in his sunken eyes.

"What can I order for you?" he asked. "Brandy-and-soda and cigars? I'll join you in a weed, if you like."

I declined either to smoke or drink, and tried to draw the young man into a light conversation.

As I did so, finding my efforts, I must confess, but poorly responded to, I watched my patient closely. Hitherto he had merely been my patient. My mission had been to drag him back by cart-ropes if necessary from the edge of the valley of death. He was now completely out of danger, and although indulgence in the vice to which he was addicted would undoubtedly cause a repetition of the attack, there was at present nothing to render me medically anxious about him. For the first time, therefore, I gave Wilfred Tollemache the critical attention which it was my wont to bestow on those who were to be my friends.

He was not more than twenty-three or twenty-four years of age—a big, rather bony fellow, loosely built. He had heavy brows, his eyes were deeply set, his lips were a little tremulous and wanting in firmness, his skin was flabby. He had a very sweet and pleasant smile, however, and notwithstanding the weakness caused by his terrible infirmity, I saw at once that there were enough good points in him to make it worth any man's while to try to set him on his legs once more.

I drew the conversation round to his personal history, and found that he was willing enough to confide in me.

He was an American by birth, but had spent so much time in Europe, and in England in particular, that no very strong traces of his nationality were apparent in his bearing and manner. He was an only son, and had unlimited wealth at his command.

"How old are you?" I asked.

"Twenty-three, my last birthday."

"In short," I said, rising as I spoke, standing before the hearth, and looking down at him, "no man has brighter prospects than you—you have youth, money, and I doubt not, from the build of your head, an abundant supply of brains. In short, you can do anything you like with your life."

He gave a hollow sort of laugh, and poking the ashes out of his pipe, prepared to fill it again.

"I wouldn't talk cant, if I were you," he said.

"What do you mean?" I asked.

"Well, that sort of speech of yours would befitt a parson."

"Pardon me," I rejoined, "I but express the sentiments of any man who values moral worth, and looks upon life as a great responsibility to be accounted for."

He fidgeted uneasily in his chair. He was in no mood for any further advice, and I prepared to leave him.

"You will be well enough to go out to-morrow," I said, as I bade him good-bye.

He scarcely replied to me. I saw that he was in the depths of that depression which generally follows attacks like his. I said a word or two to the nurse at leaving, and went away.

It seemed unlikely that I should see much more of Tollemache; he would be well in a few days and able to go where he pleased;



"I BADE HIM GOOD-BYE."

one more visit would probably be the last I should be obliged to make to him. He evidently did not respond to my overtures in the direction of moral suasion, and, much occupied with other matters, I had almost passed him from my mind. Two days after that evening, however, I received a short note from him; it ran as follows:—

"Will you come and see me as a friend? I'm like a bear with a sore head, but I promise not to be uncivil.

"Yours sincerely,

"WILFRED TOLLEMACHE."

I sent a reply by my man to say that I would have much pleasure in visiting him about nine o'clock that evening. I arrived at Mercer's Hotel at the hour named. Tollemache received me in a private sitting-room. Bottles containing wines and liqueurs were on the table. There was a box of cigars and pipes.

"You have not begun that again?" I could not help saying, glancing significantly at the spirits as I spoke.

"No," he said, with a grim sort of smile, "I have no craving at present—if I had, I should indulge. These refreshments are at

your service. At present I drink nothing stronger or more harmful than soda-water."

"That is right," I said, heartily. Then I seated myself in a chair and lit a cigar, while Tollemache filled a pipe.

"It is very good of you to give up some of your valuable time to a worthless chap like me," he said.

There was a strange mingling of gratitude and despair in the words which aroused my sympathy.

"It was good of you to send for me," I rejoined. "Frankly, I take an interest in you, but I thought I had scared you the other night. Well, I promise not to transgress again."

"But I want you to transgress again," said Tollemache. "The fact is, I have sent for you

to-night to give you my confidence. You know the condition you found me in?"

I nodded.

"I was in a bad way, wasn't I?"

"Very bad."

"Near death—eh?"

"Yes."

"The next attack will prove fatal most likely?"

"Most likely."

Tollemache applied a match to his pipe—he leant back in his chair and inhaled the narcotic deeply—a thin curl of blue smoke ascended into the air. He suddenly removed the pipe from his mouth.

"Twenty-three years of age," he said, aloud, "the only son of a millionaire—a dipsomaniac! Craving comes on about every three to four months. Have had delirium tremens twice—doctor says third attack will kill. A gloomy prospect mine, eh, Halifax?"

"You must not sentimentalize over it," I said; "you have got to face it and trample on the enemy. No man of twenty-three with a frame like yours and a brain like yours need be conquered by a vice."

"You know nothing about it," he

responded, roughly. "When it comes on me it has the strength of a demon. It shakes my life to the foundations. My strength goes. I am like Samson shorn of his locks."

"There is not the least doubt," I replied, "that the next time the attack comes on, you will have to make a desperate fight to conquer it. You must be helped from outside, for the fearful craving for drink which men like you possess is a form of disease, and is closely allied to insanity. How often do you say the craving seizes you?"

"From three to four times a year—in the intervals I don't care if. I never touch a drop of strong drink."

"You ought never to touch wine, or strong drink of any kind; your frame does not need it, and with your peculiar bias it only acts as fuel to the hidden fire."

"You want me to be a teetotaler?" responded Tollemache. "I never will. I'll take no obligatory vow. Fifty vows would not keep me from rushing over the precipice when the demon is on me."

"I don't want you to take a vow against drink," I said, "as you say you would break it when the attack comes on. But if you are willing to fight the thing next time, I wish to say that all the medical skill I possess is at your service. I have a spare room in my house. Will you be my guest shortly before the time comes? You are warned of its approach, surely, by certain symptoms?"

"Yes, I have bad dreams; I am restless and nervous; I am consumed by thirst. These are but the preliminary symptoms. The full passion, as a rule, awakens up suddenly, and I am, in short, as a man possessed."

Tollemache looked deeply excited as he spoke. He had forgotten his pipe, which lay on the table near. Now he sprang to his feet.

"Halifax," he said; "I am the wretched victim of a demon—I often wish that I were dead!"

"You must fight the thing next time," I said. "It will be an awful struggle, I don't pretend to deny that; but I believe that you and I together will be a match for the enemy."

"It's awfully good of you to take me up—'pon my word it is."

"Well, is it a bargain?" I said.

"If you'll have it so."

"You must consider yourself my patient," I continued, "and obey me implicitly from this moment. It is most important that in the intervals of the attacks your health should be built up. I should recommend you to go to Switzerland, to take a sea voyage, or to do anything else which will completely brace the system. You should also cultivate your intellectual qualities, by really arduous study for a couple of hours daily."

"The thing I like best is music."

"Very well, study the theory of music. Don't weaken yourself over the sentimental parts. If you are really musical, and have taken it up as a pastime, work at the drudgery part for the next couple of months as if your bread depended on it. This exercise will put your brain into a healthy condition, and help to banish morbid thoughts. Then you must take plenty of exercise. If you go to Switzerland, you must do all the walking and the tobogganing which the weather will permit. If you go into the country, you must ride for so many hours daily. In short, it is your duty to get your body into training condition in order to fight your deadly enemy with any chance of success."

I spoke purposely in a light, matter-of-fact tone, and saw to my satisfaction that Tollemache was impressed by my words—he seemed interested, a shadow of hope flitted across his face, and his view of his own position was undoubtedly more healthy.



"I AM THE WRETCHED VICTIM OF A DEMON."

"Above all things, cultivate faith in your own self," I continued.

"No man had ever a stronger reason for wishing to conquer the foe," he said, suddenly. "Let me show you this."

He took a morocco case out of his pocket, opened it, and put it into my hand. It contained, as I expected, the photograph of a girl. She was dark-eyed, young, with a bright, expectant, noble type of face.

"She is waiting for me in New York," he said. "I won't tell you her name. I have not dared to look at the face for weeks and weeks. She has promised to marry me when I have abstained for a year. I am not worthy of her. I shall never win her. Give me the case." He shut it up without glancing once at the picture, and replaced it in his breast pocket.

"Now you know everything," he said.

"Yes."

Soon afterwards I left him.

Tollemache obeyed my directions. The very next evening a note in his handwriting was given to me. It contained the simple information that he was off to Switzerland by the night mail, and would not be back in England for a couple of months.

I did not forget him during his absence. His face, with its curious mingling of weakness and power, of pathetic soul-longings and strong animalism, often rose before me.

One evening towards the end of March I was in my consulting-room looking up some notes when Tollemache was announced. He came in, looking fresh and bronzed. There was brightness in his eyes and a healthy firmness round his lips. He held himself erect. He certainly was a very fine-looking young fellow.

"Well," he said, "here I am—I promised to come back, and I have kept my word. Are you ready for me?"

"Quite ready, as a friend," I replied, giving him a hearty shake of the hand; "but surely you don't need me as a doctor? Why, my dear fellow, you are in splendid case."

He sat down in the nearest chair.

"Granted," he replied. "Your prescription worked wonders. I can sleep well, and eat well. I am a good climber. My muscles are in first-class order. I used to be a famous boxer in New York, and I should not be afraid to indulge in that pastime now. Yes, I am in capital health; nevertheless," here he dropped his voice to a whisper, "the premonitory symptoms of the next attack have begun."

I could not help starting.

"They have begun," he continued: "the thirst, the sense of uneasiness, the bad dreams."

"Well," I replied, as cheerfully as I could, "you are just in the condition to make a brave and successful fight. I have carefully studied cases like yours in your absence, and I am equipped to help you at all points. You must expect a bad fortnight. At the end of that time you will be on *terra firma* and will be practically safe. Now, will you come and stay with me?—you know I have placed a bedroom at your disposal."

"Thanks, but it is not necessary for me to do that yet. I will go to my old quarters at Mercer's Hotel, and will give you my word of honour to come here the first moment that I feel my self-control quite going."

"I would rather you came here at once."

"It is not necessary, I assure you. These symptoms may vanish again completely for a time, and although they will inevitably return, and the deadly thing must be fought out to the bitter end, yet a long interval may elapse before this takes place. I promised you to come to England the moment the first unpropitious symptom appeared. I shall be in your vicinity at Mercer's, and can get your assistance at any moment; but it is unfair to take possession of your spare room at this early date."

I could not urge the matter any farther. Helpful as I wished to be to this young man, I knew that he must virtually cure himself. I could not take his free will from him. I gave him some directions, therefore, which I hoped might be useful: begged of him to fill up all his time with work and amusement, and promised to go to him the first moment he sent for me.

He said he would call me in as soon as ever he found his symptoms growing worse, and went away with a look of courage and resolution on his face.

I felt sure that he was thinking of the girl whose photograph he held near his heart. Was he ever likely to win her? She was not a milk-and-water maiden, I felt convinced. There was steel as well as fire in those eyes. If she ever consented to become Tollemache's wife, she would undoubtedly keep him straight—but she was no fool. She knew the uselessness of throwing herself away on a drunkard.

Tollemache came to see me on the Monday of a certain week. On the following Thursday morning, just after I had finished seeing the last of my patients, my servant brought me a letter from him.

"This should have been handed to you yesterday," he said. "It had slipped under a paper in the letter-box. The housemaid has only just discovered it."

I opened it quickly. It contained these words:—

"DEAR HALIFAX,—The demon gains ascendancy over me, but I still hold him in check. Can you dine with me to-night at half-past seven? Yours sincerely,

"WILFRED TOLLEMACHE."

The letter was dated Wednesday morning. I should have received it twenty-four hours ago. Smothering a vexed exclamation, I rushed off to Mercer's Hotel.

I asked for Tollemache, but was told by one of the waiters that he was out. I reflected for a moment and then inquired for the manager.

He came out into the entrance-hall in answer to my wish to see him, and invited me to come with him into his private sitting-room.

"What can I do for you, Dr. Halifax?" he asked.

"Well, not much," I answered, "unless you can give me some particulars with regard to Mr. Tollemache."

"He is not in, doctor. He went out last night, between nine and ten o'clock, and has not yet returned."

"I am anxious about him," I said. "I don't think he is quite well."

"As you mention the fact, doctor, I am bound to agree with you. Mr. Tollemache came in between six and seven last night in a very excited condition. He ran up to his rooms, where he had ordered dinner for two, and then came down to the bureau to know if any note or message had been left for him. I gathered from him that he expected to hear from you, sir."

"I am more vexed than I can express," I replied. "He wrote yesterday morning asking me to dine with him, and through a mistake the letter never got into my possession until twenty-four hours after it was written."

"Poor young gentleman," replied the manager, "then that accounts for the worry he seemed to be in. He couldn't rest, but

was up and down, watching, as I gather now, for your arrival, doctor. He left the house soon after nine o'clock without touching his dinner, and has not since returned."

"Have you the least idea where he is?" I asked.

"No, sir, not the faintest; Mr. Tollemache has left all his things about and has not paid his bill, so of course he's safe to come back, and may do so at any moment. Shall I send you word when he arrives?"

"Yes, pray do," I answered. "Let me know the moment you get any tidings about him."

I then went away.

The manager had strict orders to give me the earliest information with regard to the poor fellow, and there was now nothing whatever for me to do but to try to banish him from my mind.

The next morning I went at an early hour to Mercer's to make inquiries. The manager came himself into the entrance-hall to see me.

"There's been no news, sir," he said, shak-



"IN A VERY EXCITED CONDITION."

ing his head; "not a line or a message of any sort. I hope no harm has happened to the poor gentleman. It seems a pity you shouldn't have got the letter, doctor, he seemed in a cruel way about your not turning up."

"Yes, it was a sad mistake," I answered, "but we must trust that no disaster has occurred. If Mr. Tollemache were quite well, I should not, of course, trouble my head over the matter."

"He was far from being that," said a waiter who came up at this moment. "Did you tell the doctor, sir, about the lady who called yesterday?" continued the man, addressing the manager.

"No, I had almost forgotten," he replied. "A lady in deep mourning— young, I should say, but she kept her veil down— arrived here last evening about eight o'clock and asked for Mr. Tollemache. I said he was out, and asked if she would wish her name to be left. She seemed to think for a moment and then said 'No,' that it didn't matter. She said she would come again, when she hoped to see him."

In his intercourse with me, Tollemache had never spoken of any lady but one, and her photograph he kept in his breast pocket. I wondered if this girl could possibly have been to see him, and, acting on the conjecture that the visitor might be she, I spoke.

"If the lady happens to call again," I said, "you may mention to her that I am Mr. Tollemache's medical man, and that I will see her with pleasure if she likes to come to my house in Harley Street." I then further impressed upon the manager the necessity of letting me know the moment any tidings came of Tollemache, and went away.

Nothing fresh occurred that evening, but the next morning, just when I had seen the last of my patients, a lady's card was put into my hand. I read the name on it, "Miss Beatrice Sinclair." A kind of premonition told me that Beatrice Sinclair had something to do with Tollemache. I desired my servant to admit her at once.

The next moment a tall girl, in very deep mourning, with a crape veil over her face, entered the room. She bowed to me, but did not speak for nearly half a minute. I motioned her to seat herself. She did so, putting up her hand at the same moment to remove her veil. I could not help starting when I saw her face. I bent suddenly forward and said, impulsively:—

"I know what you have come about—you are anxious about Wilfred Tollemache."

She looked at me in unfeigned surprise, and a flood of colour rushed to her pale cheeks. She was a handsome girl—her eyes were dark, her mouth tender and beautiful. There was strength about her face—her chin was very firm. Yes, I had seen those features before—or, rather, a faithful representation of them. Beatrice Sinclair had a face not easily forgotten.

"If this girl is Tollemache's good angel, there is undoubtedly hope for him," I murmured.



"I COULD NOT HELP STARTING WHEN I SAW HER FACE."

Meanwhile, the astonished look on her face gave way to speech.

"How can you possibly know me?" she said. "I have never seen you until this moment."

"I am Tollemache's doctor, and once he told me about you," I said. "On that occasion, too, he showed me your photograph."

Miss Sinclair rose in excitement from her seat. She had all the indescribable grace of a well-bred American girl.

"The fact of your knowing something about me makes matters much easier," she said. "May I tell you my story in a very few words?"

"Certainly."

"My name, as you know, is Beatrice Sinclair. I am an American, and have spent the greater part of my life in New York. I am an only child, and my father, who was a general in the American army, died only a week ago. It is three years since I engaged myself provisionally to Wilfred Tollemache. We had known each other from childhood. He spoke of his attachment to me; he also told me"—here she hesitated and her voice trembled—"of," she continued, raising her eyes, "a fearful vice which was gaining the mastery over him. You know to what I allude. Wilfred was fast becoming a dipsomaniac. I would not give him up, but neither would I marry a man addicted to so terrible a failing. I talked to my father about it, and we agreed that if Wilfred abstained from drink for a year, I might marry him. He left us—that is three years ago. He has not written to me since, nor have I heard of him. I grew restless at last, for I—I have never ceased to love him. I have had bad dreams about him, and it seems to me that his redemption has been placed in my hands. I induced my father to bring me to Europe and finally to London. We arrived in London three weeks ago, and took up our quarters at the Métropole. We employed a clever detective to find out Wilfred Tollemache's whereabouts. A week ago this man brought us the information that he had rooms at Mercer's Hotel. Alas! on that day, also, my father died suddenly. I am now alone in the world. Two evenings ago I went to Mercer's Hotel to inquire for Mr. Tollemache. He was not in, and I went away. I returned to the hotel again this morning. Your message was given to me, and I came on to you at once. The manager of the hotel told me that you were Mr. Tollemache's medical man. If he needed the services of a doctor he must have been ill. Has he been ill? Can you tell me anything about him?"

"I can tell you a good deal about him. Won't you sit down?"

She dropped into a chair immediately, clasping her hands in her lap; her eyes were fixed on my face.

"You are right in your conjecture," I said. "Tollemache has been ill."

"Is he alive?"

"As far as I can tell, yes."

Her lips quivered.

"Don't you know where he is now?" she asked.

"I deeply regret that I do not," I answered.

She looked at me again with great eagerness.

"I know that you will tell me the truth," she continued, almost in a whisper. "I owe it to my dead father not to go against his wishes now. What was the nature of Mr. Tollemache's illness?"

"Delirium tremens," I replied, firmly.

Miss Sinclair's face grew the colour of death.

"I might have guessed it," she said. "I hoped, but my hope was vain. He has not fought—he has not struggled—he has not conquered."

"You are mistaken," I answered; "Tollemache has both fought and struggled, but up to the present he has certainly won no victory. Let me tell you what I know about him."

I then briefly related the story of our acquaintance. I concealed nothing, dwelling fully on the terrible nature of poor Tollemache's malady. I described to Miss Sinclair the depression, the despair, the overpowering moral weakness which accompanies the indulgence in this fearful vice. In short, I lifted the curtain, as I felt it was my duty to do, and showed the poor girl a true picture of the man to whom she had given her heart.

"Is there no hope for him?" she asked, when I had finished speaking.

"You are the only hope," I replied. "The last rock to which he clings is your affection for him. He was prepared to make a desperate fight when the next craving for drink assailed him. You were the motive which made him willing to undergo the agony of such a struggle. I look upon the passion for drink as a distinct disease: in short, as a species of insanity. I was prepared to see Tollemache through the next attack. If he endured the torture without once giving way to the craving for drink, he would certainly be on the high road to recovery. I meant to have him in my own house. In short, hopeless as his case seemed, I had every hope of him."

I paused here.

"Yes?" said Miss Sinclair. "I see that you are good and kind. Why do you stop? Why isn't Wilfred Tollemache here?"

"My dear young lady," I replied, "the best-laid plans are liable to mishap. Three days ago, Tollemache wrote to me telling me that he was in the grip of the enemy, and asking me to come to him at once. Most unfortunately, that letter was not put into my hands until twenty-four hours after it should have been delivered. I was not able to keep



"IS THERE NO HOPE?"

the appointment which Tollemache had made with me, as I knew nothing about it until long after the appointed hour. The poor fellow left the hotel that night, and has not since returned."

"And you know nothing about him?"

"Nothing."

I rose as I spoke. Miss Sinclair looked at me.

"Have you no plan to suggest?" she asked.

"No," I said, "there is nothing for us to do but to wait. I will not conceal from you that I am anxious, but at the same time my anxiety may be groundless. Tollemache may return to Mercer's at any moment. As soon as ever he does, you may be sure that I will communicate with you."

I had scarcely said these words before my servant came in with a note.

"From Mercer's Hotel, sir," he said, "and the messenger is waiting."

"I will send an answer in a moment," I said.

The man withdrew—Miss Sinclair came close to me,

"Open that letter quickly," she said, in an imperative voice. "It is from the hotel. He may be there even now."

I tore open the envelope. There was a line from the manager within.

"DEAR SIR,—I send you the enclosed. I propose to forward the dressing-case at once by a commissioner."

The enclosed was a telegram. The following were its brief contents:—

"Send me my dressing-case immediately by a private messenger.—WILFRED TOLLEMACHE."

An address was given in full beneath:—

"The Cedars, 110, Harvey Road, Balham."

I knew that Miss Sinclair was looking over

my shoulder as I read. I turned and faced her.

Her eyes were blazing with a curious mixture of joy, excitement, and fear.

"Let us go to him," she exclaimed; "let us go to him at once. Let us take him the dressing-case."

I folded up the telegram and put it into my pocket.

Then I crossed the room and rang the bell. When my servant appeared, I gave him the following message:—

"Tell the messenger from Mercer's," I said, "that I will be round immediately, and tell him to ask the manager to do nothing until I come."

My servant withdrew and Miss Sinclair moved impatiently towards the door.

"Let us go," she said; "there is not a moment to lose. Let us take the dressing-case ourselves."

"I will take it," I replied; "you must not come."

"Why?" she asked, keen remonstrance in her tone.

"Because I can do better without you," I replied, firmly.

"I do not believe it," she answered.

"I cannot allow you to come with me," I

said. "You must accept this decision as final. You have had patience for three years; exercise it a little longer, and—God knows, perhaps you may be rewarded. Anyhow, you must trust me to do the best I can for Tollemache. Go back to the Métropole. I will let you know as soon as I have any news. You will, I am sure, trust me?"

"Oh, fully," she replied, tears suddenly filling her lovely eyes. "But remember that I love him—I love him with a very deep love."

There was something noble in the way she made this emphatic statement. I took her hand and led her from the room. A moment later she had left me, and I was hurrying on foot to Mercer's Hotel.

The manager was waiting for me in the hall. He had the dressing-case in his hand. "Shall I send this by a commissionaire?" he asked.

"No," I replied, "I should prefer to take it myself. Tell the porter to call a hansom for me immediately."

The man looked immensely relieved.

"That is good of you, doctor," he said; "the fact is, I don't like the sound of that address."

"Nor do I," I replied.

"Do you know, Dr. Halifax, that the young lady—Miss Sinclair, she called herself—came here again this morning?"

"I have just seen her," I answered.

The hall porter now came to tell me that the hansom was at the door. A moment later I was driving to Balham, the dressing-case on my knee.

From Mercer's Hotel to this suburb is a

distance of several miles, but fortunately the horse was fresh and we got over the ground quickly. As I drove along my meditations were full of strange apprehensions.

Tollemache had now been absent from Mercer's Hotel for two days and three nights. What kind of place was Harvey Road? What kind of house was 110? Why did Tollemache want his dressing-case? And why, if he did want it, could not he fetch it himself? The case had been a favourite of his—it had been a present from his mother, who was now dead. He had shown it to me one evening, and had expatiated with pride on its unique character. It was a sort of *multum in parvo*, containing many pockets and drawers not ordinarily found in a dressing-case. I recalled to mind the evening when Tollemache had brought it out of his adjacent bedroom and opened it for my benefit. All its accoutrements were heavily mounted in richly embossed silver. There was a special flap into which his cheque-book fitted admirably. Under the flap was a drawer, which he pulled open and regaled my astonished eyes with a quantity of loose diamonds and rubies which lay in the bottom.

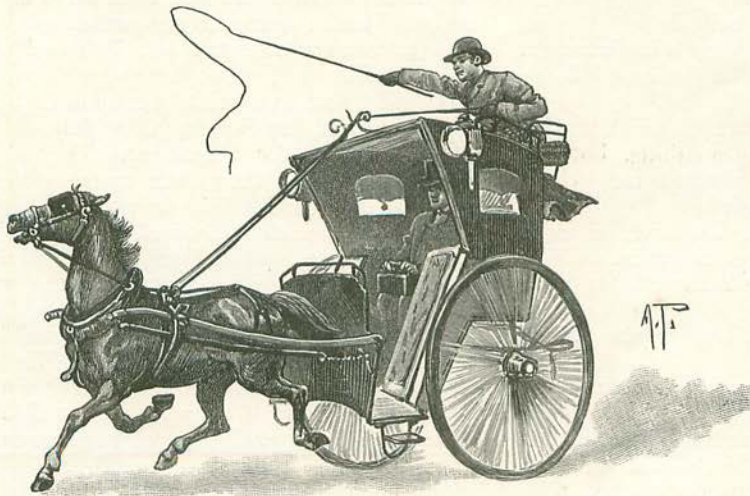
"I picked up the diamonds in Cape Town," he said, "and the rubies in Ceylon. One or two of the latter are, I know, of exceptional value, and when I bought them I hoped that they might be of use —"

Here he broke off abruptly, coloured, sighed, and slipped the drawer back into its place.

It was easy to guess where his thoughts were.

Now that I had seen Miss Sinclair, I felt that I could better understand poor Tollemache. Such a girl was worth a hard fight to win. No wonder Tollemache hated himself when he felt his own want of moral strength, and knew that the prize of such a love as hers might never be his.

I knew well that the delay in the delivery of the note was terribly against the poor fellow's chance of recovery, and as I drove quickly to Balham,



"A MOMENT LATER I WAS DRIVING TO BALHAM."

my uneasiness grew greater and greater. Was he already in the clutches of his foe when he sent that telegram? I felt sure that he was not in immediate need of cash, as he had mentioned to me incidentally in our last interview that he had drawn a large sum from his bank as soon as ever he arrived in England.

We arrived at Balham in about an hour, but my driver had some difficulty in finding Harvey Road.

At last, after skirting Tooting Bec Common we met a policeman who was able to acquaint us with its locality. We entered a long, straggling, slummy-looking road, and after a time pulled up at 110. It was a tall house, with broken and dirty Venetian blinds. The hall door was almost destitute of paint. A balcony ran round the windows of the first floor.

I did not like the look of the house, and it suddenly occurred to me that I would not run the risk of bringing the dressing-case into it.

I had noticed the name of a respectable chemist over a shop in the High Street, a good mile away, and desired the driver to go back there at once.

He did so. I entered the shop, carrying the case in my hand. I gave the chemist my card, and asked him if he would oblige me by taking care of the dressing-case for an hour. He promised civilly to do what I asked, and I stepped once more into the hansom and told the man to drive back as fast as he could to 110, Harvey Road.

He obeyed my instructions. The moment the hansom drew up at the door, I sprang out and spoke to the driver.

"I want you to remain here," I said. "Don't on any account leave this door until I come out. I don't like the look of the house."

The man gave it a glance of quick interrogation. He did not say anything, but the expression of his eyes showed me plainly that he confirmed my opinion.

"I think you understand me," I said. "Stay here until you see me again, and if I require you to fetch a policeman, be as quick about it as you can."

The man nodded, and I ran up the broken steps of 110.

The door possessed no knocker, but there was a bell at the side.

I had to pull it twice before it was answered; then a slatternly and tawdrily dressed servant put in an appearance. Her face was dirty. She had pinned a cap in

hot haste on her frowzy head of red hair, and was struggling to tie an apron as she opened the door.

"Is Mr. Tollemache in?" I asked. "I wish to see him at once."

The girl's face became watchful and secretive—she placed herself between me and the hall.

"There's a gentleman upstairs," she said; "but you can't see him, he's ill."

"Oh, yes, I can," I answered. "I am his doctor—let me pass, please. Mr. Tollemache has telegraphed for his dressing-case, and I have replied to the telegram."

"Oh, if you have brought the parcel, you can go up," she said, in a voice of great relief. "I know they're expecting a parcel. You'll find 'em all on the first floor. Door just opposite the stairs—you can't miss it."

I pushed past her and ran up the stairs. They were narrow and dark. The carpet on which I trod felt greasy.

I flung open the door the girl had indicated, and found myself in a good-sized sitting-room. It faced the street, and the window had a balcony outside it.

Seated by a centre table drawn rather near this window were three men, with the most diabolical faces I have ever looked at. One of them was busily engaged trying to copy poor Tollemache's signature, which was scrawled on a half sheet of paper in front of him—the other two were eagerly watching his attempts. Tollemache himself lay in a dead drunken sleep on the sofa behind them.

My entrance was so unexpected that none of the men were prepared for me. I stepped straight up to the table, quickly grabbed the two sheets of paper, crushed them up in my hand, and thrust them into my pocket.

"I have come to fetch Mr. Tollemache away," I said.

The men were so absolutely astonished at my action and my words, that they did not speak at all for a moment. They all three jumped from their seats at the table and stood facing me. The noise they made pushing back their chairs aroused Tollemache, who, seeing me, tottered to his feet and came towards me with a shambling, uneasy gait.

"Hullo, Halifax, old man, how are you?" he gasped, with a drunken smile. "What are you doing here? We're all having a ripping time: lots of champagne; but I've lost my watch and chain and all my money—three hundred pounds—I've telegraphed for my cheque-book, though. Glad you've come, old boy—'pon my word I am. Want

to go away with you, although we have had a ripping time, yes, *awfully* ripping."

"You shall come," I said. "Sit down first for a moment."

I pushed him back with some force on to the sofa and turned to one of the men, who now came up and asked me my business.

"What are you doing here?" he inquired. "We don't want you—you had better get out of this as fast as you can. You have no business here, so get out."

"Yes, I have business here," I replied. "I have come for this man," here I went up to Tollemache and laid my hand on his shoulder. "I am his doctor and he is under my charge. I don't leave here without him, and, what is more," I added, "I don't leave here without his property either. You must give me back his watch and chain and the three hundred pounds you have robbed him of. Now you understand what I want?"

"We'll see about that," said one of the men, significantly. He left the room as he spoke.

During his absence, the other men stood perfectly quiet, eyeing me with furtive and stealthy glances.

Poor Tollemache sat upright on the sofa, blinking with his heavy eyes. Sometimes he tried to rise, but always sank back again on his seat. During the whole time he kept muttering to himself:—

"Yes, good fellows these; jolly time,

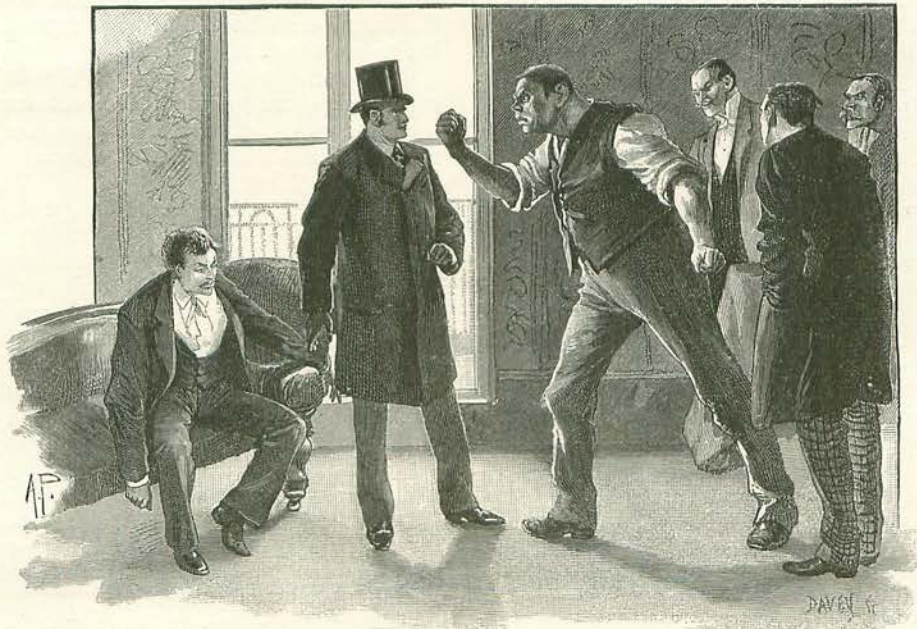
champagne, all the rest, but *I'm robbed*; this is a thieves' den. Don't leave me alone, Halifax. Want to go. You undershtand. Watch and chain gone, and *all my money*; three hundred in notes and gold. Yes, three hundred. Won't let me go till I give 'em my cheque-book; telegraphed for cheque-book in dressing-case. You undershtand, yes. Don't leave me, old boy."

"It will be all right," I said. "Stay quiet."

The position was one of extreme danger for both of us. There was nothing whatever for it but to carry matters with a cool hand and not to show a vestige of fear. I glanced round me and observed the position of the room. The sofa on which Tollemache was sitting was close to the window. This window had French doors, which opened on to the balcony. I edged close to it.

I did not do this a moment too soon. The man who had left the room now returned with a ruffian of gigantic build, who came up to me at once with a menacing attitude.

"Who are you?" he said, shaking his brawny fist in my face. "We don't want *you* here—get out of this room at once, or it will be the worse for you. We won't 'ave you a-interfering with our friends. This gent 'ave come 'ere of *his own free will*. We like him, and 'e's 'eartily welcome to stay as long as 'e wants to. You'd best go, ef you value your life."



"WHO ARE YOU?"

While he was speaking I suddenly flung my hand behind me, and turning the handle of the French window threw it open.

I stepped on to the balcony and called to the cabman: "Stay where you are," I said, "I may want you in a moment." Then I entered the room again.

"I don't wish to waste words on you," I said, addressing the burly man. "I have come for Mr. Tollemache, and I don't mean to leave the house without him. He comes away with me the moment you return his watch and chain, and the three hundred pounds you have stolen from him. If you don't fetch that watch and chain, and that money, I shall send the cabman who is waiting for me outside, and who knows me, for the police. You are best acquainted with what sort of house this is, and with what sort of game you are up to. It is for you to say how near the wind you are sailing. If you wish the police to find out, they can be here in a minute or two. If not, give me the money and the watch and chain. I give you two minutes to make your choice."

Here I took out my watch and looked at it steadily.

I stepped again on to the balcony.

"Cabby," I shouted, "if I am not with you in *three minutes from now*, go and bring a couple of policemen here as quickly as ever you can."

The cabman did not speak, but he took out his watch and looked at it.

I re-entered the room.

"Now you know my mind," I said. "I give you two minutes to decide how to act. If Mr. Tollemache and I are not standing on the pavement in three minutes from now, the police will come and search this house. It is for you to decide whether you wish them to do so or not."

I was glad to see that my words had an effect upon the biggest of the ruffians. He looked at his companions, who glanced back at him apprehensively. One of them edged near me and tried to peer over my shoulder to see if the cabman were really there.

Tollemache went on mumbling and muttering on the sofa. I stood with my back to the window, my watch in my hand, marking the time.

"Time's up," I said, suddenly replacing the watch. "Now, what do you mean to do?"

"We'd best oblige the gent, don't yer think so, Bill?" said one of the men to his chief.

"We'll see about that," said the chief. He came close to me again.

"Now, look you 'ere," he said, "you'd best go out quiet, and no mischief will come. The gent 'ere 'e give us the watch and chain and the money, being old pals of his as he picked up in New York City."

"That's a lie," shouted Tollemache.

"Stay quiet," I said to him.

Then I turned to the ruffian, whose hot breath I felt on my cheek.

"We do not leave here," I said, "without the watch and chain and the money. My mind is quite made up. When I go, this gentleman goes, and we neither of us go without his property."

These words of mine were almost drowned by the heavy noise of an approaching dray. It lumbered past the window. As it did so, I stepped on to the balcony to acquaint the cabman with the fact that the three minutes were up.

I looked down into the street, and could not help starting—the cab had vanished.

I turned round quickly.

The big man had also stepped upon the balcony—he gave me an evil glance. Suddenly seizing me by the collar, he dragged me back into the room.

"You ere a humbug, you ere," he said, "wid yer bloomin' cabs—there ain't no cab there—no, nor never wor. Ef you don't go in one way you go in another. It ain't our fault ef things ain't quite agreeable. Come along, Sam, lend a 'and."

The next moment the ruffian had laid me flat on my back on the floor, and was kneeling on my chest.

Tollemache tottered from the sofa, and made a vain struggle to get the brute away.

"You get out of this," the fellow thundered at him. "I'll make an end of you, too, ef you don't look out."

He fumbled in his pocket and took out a huge clasp-knife.

I closed my eyes, feeling sure that my last hour had come. At this moment, however, the rapidly approaching sound of cab wheels was distinctly audible. A cab drove frantically up and stopped at the door.

The four ruffians who were clustered round me all heard it, and the big man took his knee off my chest.

Quick as thought I found my feet again, and before anyone could prevent me, leaped out on to the balcony. Two policemen were standing on the steps of the house—one of them had the bell-pull in his hand and was just about to sound a thundering peal.

"Stop," I shouted to him; "don't ring for a moment—stay where you are."



"I FELT SURE THAT MY LAST HOUR HAD COME."

Then I turned and faced the group in the room.

"It is not too late," I said; "I give you one minute's grace. Return this gentleman's watch and chain and the three hundred pounds you have stolen from him, and I say nothing to the two policemen who are now waiting on the steps. If I have not the money back within a minute, the police enter your house—now you can choose."

I saw by the expression on the face of the bully who had knocked me down that he was only too eager to accede to my request.

"Come on, Bill," he said to one of his pals, "I suppose there ain't nothing for it but to do what the gen'lman says. Yes, yes, you be quiet, sir, and you'll have all the swag—lor', we only pulled you down by way of a joke, and as to the money and the other valuables, we was *keeping* 'em for the gent. Who'd want to rob a poor innercent like that? You promise not to peach on us, sir?"

"Be quick," I shouted. "I give you a minute, no more—give me the money and the watch and chain. You had better hurry up."

They did hurry up with a vengeance. The big man was as great a coward as he was a ruffian. As he thrust his hands deep into his trousers pockets, I saw that he was absolutely shaking with fright. Tollemache's magnificent watch and chain were laid on the table, and all four men turned their pockets out and deposited gold and notes by the side of the other property. I stepped up to the table and reckoned the money. Two hundred and eighty pounds and the watch and chain were returned to me. The remaining twenty pounds were, I plainly saw, hopelessly gone. It was not worth fighting for them. I put the gold and notes and the watch and chain into my pocket, and going up to Tollemache took his arm.

"Come," I said, "we can go now."

The terror which must have seized him when he saw me struggling on the floor had partly sobered him, but now he had returned to the most imbecile stage of his horrible vice. He struggled to his feet and clutched hold of me.

"Want my pipe," he muttered. "I say, old boy, won't go without my pipe."

I had hard work to keep my patience. He was a big man, and I could not control him against his will. We were by no means yet out of the wood. The four ruffians were eyeing us as if they would only too gladly kill us both by slow torture. Never before had I encountered eight such diabolical eyes as those which they fixed upon me. And there stood Tollemache, with an idiotic smile on his face, and imagining that he was doing a wonderful and clever thing when he refused to stir without his pipe.

"Don't be a fool," I said, sternly, to him. "Come, now, I'll get you your pipe to-morrow."

To my relief he seemed satisfied with this assurance, and suffered me to drag him across the room.

When we reached the door the big ruffian came up and intercepted us.

"We have your word not to peach?" he said.

"Yes," I replied—"let me pass."

He did so, and I helped Tollemache as best I could downstairs.

The four men watched our descent over the banisters.

As soon as I had got my patient out on the steps, one of the policemen came up to me.

"What's the trouble, sir?" he demanded. "Can we help you?"

"This gentleman is hopelessly drunk," I replied—"I thought it possible I might need your assistance in getting him from the house. You will oblige me much by helping me now to put him in the cab."

"No other trouble in there, sir?" asked the man, meaningly.

"None," I answered. "Will you kindly take the gentleman's other arm?"

The policeman did so—his eyes were full of significance. He guessed, of course, that I was hiding something, but it was not for him to make any further remarks.

I took Tollemache straight back to my own house, and for the next week I had once again to lend him what aid I could in fighting the terrible demons who attack the victims of delirium tremens. I engaged two skilful men to nurse him, and, between us, we managed to drag the poor fellow away from the shores of death.

All this time I was in daily communication with Beatrice Sinclair. I got to know her well during these dark days. She was a girl to win the respect and admiration of any man, and she undoubtedly won mine. There was something grandly simple and unconventional about her.

"I am alone in the world," she said to me many times; "my mission in life is to save Wilfred Tollemache."

"You will not save him by marrying him in his present state," I answered her.

She raised her brows and looked at me in some slight surprise.

"I have no intention of marrying him at present," she said. "Nothing would induce me to unite my lot with that of a drunkard—besides, I promised my father. I will marry Wilfred when he has abstained from drink for a year—not before."

"If he abstains for a year he will be cured," I replied.

There came an evening when Tollemache was sufficiently convalescent to come downstairs. I had not yet said anything to him about Miss Sinclair, but as I knew she was impatient to see him, I wondered if it might be safe for me to break the news of her arrival on the scene to him that evening. He sat in my consulting-room huddled up by the fire. The evening was a warm one in April, but he looked chilly and depressed.

I drew a chair near him and sat down.

He looked at me with languid eyes out of a cadaverous face.

"I can't make out why you are so good to me," he said. "I am not worth the thought of a man like you."

I did not reply for a moment. Then I said, tersely:—

"It would be a great victory to save you, and I believe it can be done."

"I have a sort of memory," said Tollemache, "of your having already saved my life at the risk of your own."

"That is true," I answered.

"How can I pay you back?" he asked. "Will money—?"

"No," I interrupted, harshly, springing to my feet as I spoke—"money won't. I want you to become a man again: that is my reward."

He seemed to shrink into himself; there was not a scrap of fibre about him at present.

"Will you tell me," I said, "how you got into that den?"

He roused himself a little at this, and some animation came into his eyes.

"That was partly your fault," he said. "You did not keep your word; you never came to me when I wrote to you. I told you that I was losing self-control—"

I interrupted him to explain why I had not received his letter.

"Well," he said, "I spent a day of fear-

ful torture. I knew I was on the brink of a precipice, and that unless you pulled me back, against my will, over I must go. I returned to Mercer's in the evening and looked eagerly for your note. None had arrived. I waited for you until nine o'clock, and then in a sort of frenzy went out. I had a very stiff brandy-and-soda, which pulled me together for a bit, and seeing a music-hall in Oxford Street, I went in. There I was supplied with fresh drink, and while I was indulging, a man of the name of Hawker, who had once seen me in a drunken condition in New York, came up and claimed acquaintance. I knew, the moment

near me and asked a lot of questions, to which I replied as readily as if I were a baby. I don't know how that day or the next passed. I gave Hawker the address of the hotel where I was staying, and told him about my dressing-case and its valuable contents. Hawker filled in a telegram to the manager of the hotel, which he made me sign. When it was sent off, he gave me a sheet of paper and desired me to write my signature on it. I did so—the men then sat round a table and began to copy it. The horrors of delirium tremens were already upon me, and my mind became filled with all manner of terrible imaginings. I closed my eyes and dozed off. When next I opened them, you were standing in the room."

"You were practically out of your mind," I replied; "but the thing is over, and well over. By the way, have you ever thought, during the last terrible fortnight, of the photograph which you were good enough to show me?"

Tollemache started and clenched his nerveless hand.

"Don't speak of it," he said. "The one thing left to me to be thankful for, is that she has not linked her life with mine."

"You have undoubtedly much cause to be thankful," I replied. "The wife of a drunkard is the most miserable woman on God's earth. Please pardon me, however, if I pain you a little by speaking about the girl whose photograph you showed me. Do you mind telling me her name?"

"Beatrice Sinclair."

"How old is she?"

"Twenty—there is really no use in this catechism, Halifax."

"I am sorry to pain you," I replied, briefly; "but the fact is, I was struck with Miss Sinclair's face—there is a great deal of strength in it. If you conquered your fault,

she would be the woman of all others to keep you straight. She is, I am certain, attached to you. To win a girl like Beatrice Sinclair ought to be a motive strong enough to make any man conquer a vice like yours."

Tollemache was now intensely agitated. He sprang to his feet.

"I tell you," he said, "she has forgotten all about me. It is three years since she



"CAME UP AND CLAIMED ACQUAINTANCE."

I looked at the fellow, that the demon had got the upper hand. Hawker talked, and supplied me with fresh drink. He introduced me to a companion as low as himself. I have a dim remembrance of driving away with these men and of spending the night over cards and unlimited drink. In the morning I wanted to leave, but the fellows threatened me, and in my drunken state I was no match for them. Hawker sat down

has heard my name. She has in all probability married another man long ere this."

"I am sure she has not," I answered.

He thrust his hand into his breast pocket, and drew out the case which contained the photograph.

"Many a time I have wanted to put this into the fire," he said. "I dare not part with it, and yet I dare not look at it."

"Keep it," I said: "there is hope for you while you have it."

"There isn't a ghost of hope for me," he said. He threw himself back again into his chair, and covered his face.

My servant came into the room and brought me a message.

"Tollemache," I said, "a lady has called who wishes to see me. Will you forgive me if I leave you for a minute or two?"

He growled out some reply which was scarcely intelligible, and I left the room.

I went into my library, where Beatrice Sinclair was waiting for me.

"Well," she said, coming up to me eagerly, "is he ready for me?"

"He thinks you have forgotten him," I said, "and that in all probability you are married to another."

"What a cruel thought!"

"But he keeps your photograph in his breast pocket."

"Does he, indeed?" Her eyes blazed with sudden joy.

"He is tempted often to throw it into the fire," I continued, "for he feels himself unworthy of you; but he neither dares to throw it away nor to look at it."

"He shall look at me instead. Take me to him at once."

"You will see the wreck of the Tollemache you used to know."

"He shall not be a wreck long. I have vowed to save him. My life is at his service."

"Remember your promise to your father."

"I remember it. I will not break it. Now take me to him."

She came up to me and held out her hand. I took it and went with her to the door of the next room, opened it, and motioned to her to enter.

When she did so, I closed it softly and came away.

I had a firm conviction that with such unexpected aid, Tollemache would have moral strength to overcome the vice which was ruining him.

Subsequent events proved that I was right.