

Stories from the Diary of a Doctor.

SECOND SERIES.

BY L. T. MEADE AND CLIFFORD HALIFAX, M.D.

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

V.—THE RED BRACELET.



ONE morning, just at the close of my hours of consultation, my servant introduced into my consulting-room a tall, good-looking, middle-aged man. His name was Stafford. I had never seen him before. His face was slightly bronzed, and looked as if it had been much exposed to wind and weather. He had keen blue eyes, a frank expression of mouth, and a hearty manner which impressed me favourably. I motioned him to a chair and inquired what I could do for him. He looked at me for a moment or two without replying. I saw that he was taking my measure; I also noticed that there was considerable anxiety in his eyes. After a time he spoke abruptly.

"I fear I have come here on a wild-goose chase."

"Perhaps you will allow me to decide that," I answered, with a smile.

"Yes," he continued; "of course, you are the one to decide. I had better tell you what I want at once—I am not here on my own account—I have a daughter—" Here he broke off abruptly, and taking his handkerchief from his pocket, wiped the moisture from his brow. As he did so he sighed.

"Your daughter is ill, and you want me to see her?" I interrogated.

"I want you to see her, certainly, but she is not ill," he answered, springing suddenly to his feet—"that is, not ill in the ordinary sense of the word. I don't suppose anything

can be done—still, I have heard a great deal of you. You have a facility for helping people out of difficulties. The facts of the case are briefly these: My girl—she is my only child—is blind, she is affected with congenital blindness. I have taken her to the best oculists in Europe, and they all alike regard her case as hopeless."

"I am sorry to say that I agree with them," I interrupted. "Congenital blindness is, as a rule, hopeless. It arises, in all probability, from some defect in the construction of the eye. The optic nerve, or some other important part of the wonderful mechanism of sight, is omitted. I shall be glad to help you, but in the first place I am not a specialist, and——"

"I have not come to ask you to help me in the matter of the blindness," said Mr. Stafford. "My daughter is so accustomed to this that she scarcely feels her defect. She has been splendidly trained, and can do almost every single thing that a person with full sight can attempt—she rides, she walks, she rows like any other girl; as to her music, it is wonderful. But, there, I must come to the point."

"Is your daughter in town?" I interrupted.

"No, she is in the country. We live in Yorkshire. Molly hates town. The atmosphere of a town has a particularly irritating effect upon her nerves. Her mother and I can seldom get her to visit London with us."

"What are her special symptoms?" I asked.



MR. STAFFORD.

"In the ordinary sense she is not ill at all. She sleeps well, eats well, and enjoys life to the full."

"What are you uneasy about, then?" I asked.

"What am I uneasy about? I'll tell you. You must know that our child is the heiress of great wealth. I am a rich man, and she inherits all I possess. About two months ago, a man who went by the name of Winchester took up his abode in our village. He stayed at the 'White Hart' and spent the greater part of his time fishing. No one knew anything about him. He was tall, good-looking, and about fifty years of age. On a near view his eyes repelled you—they were too close together, and had an ugly expression in them. In an evil moment my little girl made his acquaintance. He had the luck to save her life. You may think I ought to be grateful for this, but upon my honour, whatever he did in the first instance, I don't think I could feel a sense of gratitude towards that man. Well, I'll tell you how they came to know each other. I mentioned that the girl could ride—she can, as if she had the keenest sight under Heaven. She was fond of having a gallop across the moors on her mare, of course accompanied by someone.

"One afternoon, a little more than a month ago, the mare took fright and ran off with her. The brute made straight for the line of rail. I don't know what might have happened had not Winchester suddenly appeared and caught the mare by her bridle just as the groom came galloping up. Yes, I acknowledge that it was a brave act, and of course I had to thank the fellow, and to make his acquaintance. He called at our place, and from the very first I noticed that he had an extraordinary influence over my child. My belief is that he hypnotized her almost directly. To make a long story short, this fellow, old enough to be her father, has had the presumption to propose for my girl, and she is so desperately in love with him, that if I don't give my consent to the marriage her health, reason, or even perhaps her life itself, may be endangered."

"You use strong expressions," I answered. "May I ask what you expect me to do in the case?"

"I want you to open my child's mental eyes, in some way or other, in order that she may see this man as he really is. It is a craze—a regular craze—with the girl. Winchester hasn't a penny; he only wants the child for her money. Do you think he would

saddle himself with a blind wife if he didn't want her gold?"

"Perhaps not," I answered; "and yet I have known blind girls very attractive."

The father gave an impatient sigh.

"My child would be a lovely creature if her eyes were right. The sightless balls are well formed, the eyelashes black and long, and the eyelids well open; but the eyes are covered with a thick film, and this film gives to her face a peculiarly strange, and even startling, appearance. I know Winchester doesn't care a bit for her except for her gold, and I'm determined he sha'n't have her."

"I am truly sorry for you," I answered, "but I must frankly say I am puzzled to know how to help you. How is it possible for me to influence your daughter, when I don't even know her?"

Stafford gave me a hopeless gaze.

"I thought you might suggest something," he said. "I have heard of you from several friends. I tell you the man has hypnotized my girl, and what I want you to do is to hypnotize her in another direction. Now, can you, and will you?"

"I am afraid you ask for an impossibility," I replied. "You will forgive me for saying that I think the matter simple enough. It is plainly your duty to remove your daughter from the immediate vicinity of this man. You don't like him, you think his object in paying his addresses unworthy, you have but to be firm, to refuse your consent to the marriage, to take your child away, and the influence which Winchester exercises over her will be weakened and will gradually die out."

When I said this, Stafford shook his head—he walked across the room, turned his back on me, and gazed out of the window.

His manner annoyed me, and I spoke with some slight irritation.

"Surely you, as Miss Stafford's father, can forbid the union?" I said. "Surely you have trained your child to obey you?"

"I have, Dr. Halifax; a sweeter and more obedient child never lived until she met this fellow. I must tell you frankly, however, that now I have lost all power over her. Molly has told both her mother and me that she will marry Basil Winchester whether we wish it or not. Our wishes, our distress, have not the slightest power over her. We consider her, in short, scarcely responsible for her actions. The man's influence is the strangest thing I have ever seen. I believe he can hypnotize her even from a distance, and he is so clever that if we take her to the other end of the world, he will contrive to follow us."



"I WANT YOU TO HYPNOTIZE HER."

"Well," I said, "as you cannot influence Miss Stafford to yield to your wishes, had you not better try the other way round. You think that Winchester wants your daughter for her gold. Can you not inform him that if he marries her without your permission, you will cut her off with the proverbial shilling?"

Stafford shrugged his shoulders, and gave a grim smile.

"I might say so twenty times," he replied, "but Winchester would not believe me. He would know, what is a fact, that whatever the child did, I could not be unkind to her. The fact is, she is the apple of her mother's eye and mine. At the present moment she is simply lost to us: she is deaf to our entreaties. She thinks of nothing morning, noon, or night but this man, who has contrived to get such an appalling power over her. I tell you what it is, Dr. Halifax, I have such a dislike to the fellow that I would rather see my only child in her grave than his wife, and yet I feel that if something is not done at once he will contrive to accomplish the marriage."

"The case is a strange one," I said; "still——"

"You will do something for us, won't you?"

I have come up to London on purpose to consult you."

"You are very good, but you place more faith in me than I deserve."

"You do acknowledge that there is a power in hypnotism?" asked Stafford.

"Undoubtedly."

"Well, can't one hypnotist counterbalance the will of another, if he happens to have a stronger power?"

"Perhaps so," I replied. "To tell the truth, I have never gone thoroughly into this subject."

"Well, at least, will you do this? Will you come down to Yorkshire and see my girl?"

"Certainly, if you wish it."

"I do. When can you come?"

"Towards the end of the present week, if that will suit you."

"Admirably. Come on Saturday and stay till Monday. We will speak of you to Molly as a friend, and not address you by your name of doctor."

"As you like," I replied.

"Very well, then—that is happily arranged. Our place is called Mount Stafford, and is situated about five miles out of York. If you will send a telegram to state the hour when you will leave town, I will meet you at York station. I am heartily obliged to you for giving me so much of your time."

On the appointed day I went down to Yorkshire. Stafford met me at the railway station. It only needed one glance at his face to see that something fresh had occurred.

"Thank God you have arrived," he said, taking my hand in his great grip. "Now come along to the carriage."

"Is anything the matter?" I asked, as we hurried across the platform.

"Yes, yes; but I won't wait to tell you here. What a relief it is to see your face. Here we are. Step in, Dr. Halifax. Home, Jenkins, as fast as you can."

The carriage door was opened by a footman in livery. Immediately afterwards a pair of spirited horses started forward at a quick pace. We had soon left the picturesque city of York behind us.

"What has happened?" I asked, turning to my host.

He took off his hat, and, pulling a handkerchief out of his pocket, wiped his overheated face.

"What do you think?" he exclaimed. "That scoundrel made an appointment no later than yesterday morning to run off with my child. To this last act of wicked folly had he brought the gentlest and most obedient creature that ever breathed. She waited for him in the pine wood at the back of our house for one hour—two hours. It rained—she was wet to the skin. By the merest accident I found her there—she looked like one in a trance. I touched her and called her name. She turned round quickly and told me what she meant to do, just as though it were the most natural thing in the world. I expressed some of my horror to her—I expostulated—I appealed to her old affectionate feelings—I might as well have spoken to a stone.

"I am going with him—I shall die without him," she reiterated over and over again.

"There was no shame in her—no sort of sense of guilt. I had finally to bring her back to the house by force. I left her with her mother and went off to the 'White Hart.' You can imagine my feelings. When I inquired for Winchester, I was told that he had left—gone off, bag and baggage, at an early hour that morning—left no address, and owed some debts in the neighbourhood. He has not since been heard of."

"He is a good riddance," I could not help exclaiming.

"Yes, yes; but, Halifax, the child is dying."

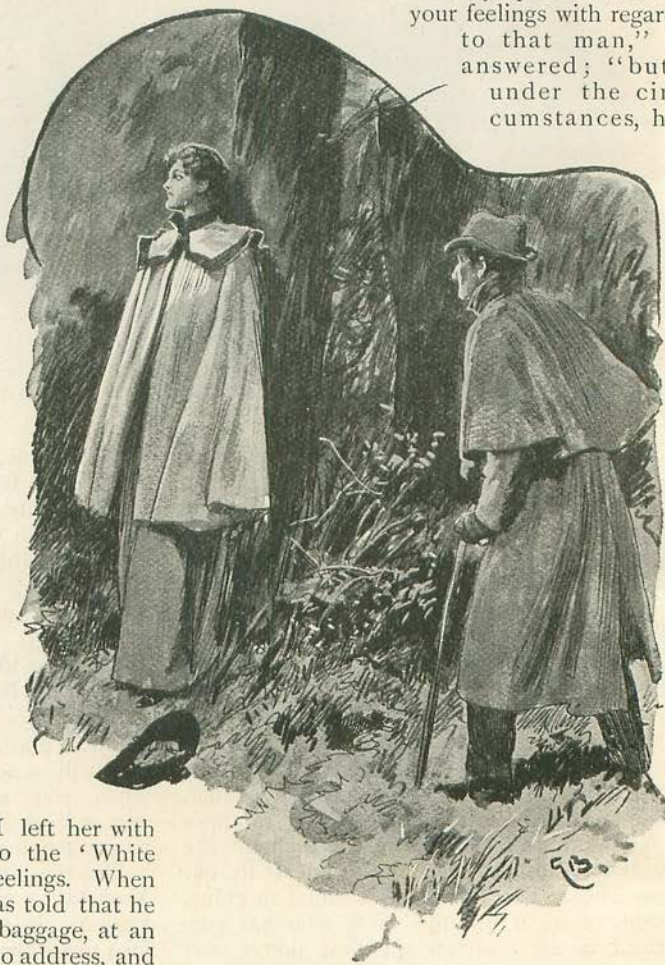
"Oh, come; it can't be so bad as that!" I exclaimed.

"But it is—I tell you it is. You don't know the power that man had over her. She

was the brightest creature you can possibly imagine; but, after all, she was not like other girls, and this love affair was not of the ordinary kind. I told you, of course, that it was in my opinion a case of hypnotism from first to last.

"Even in the short month of their intercourse she has changed from a hardy, healthy-looking girl to a mere shadow. Sleep and appetite have failed. The scoundrel won her heart by the most underhand means, and then deliberately forsook her."

"I sympathize with all your feelings with regard to that man," I answered; "but, under the circumstances, he



"SHE LOOKED LIKE ONE IN A TRANCE."

did the best thing he could when he left your daughter."

"You say so, because you have not seen her," replied Stafford. "She has touched no food since yesterday morning—her sleep is more like torpor than natural slumber. Her low moans would wring anyone's heart. In

short, she only takes consolation in one thing."

"What is that?" I asked.

"The fellow gave her a bracelet, which he told her he had hypnotized—it is made of red coral. He had the face to inform the child that when she wore it round her arm she would be able to ascertain his wishes—he said it was a link between her and him. Badly as he has treated her, her overpowering passion for him is beyond all reason—she clings to the bracelet as if it were her life. It is piteous to see her sitting apart from everyone worshipping this silly trinket, and imagining that the scoundrel is communicating with her through it."

"There is no doubt that Winchester's influence has affected Miss Stafford's mind for the time being," I replied. "We must see what can be done to get it into a healthy channel as quickly as possible. As to the bracelet, it is bad for her to have it, and, if possible, it ought to be taken from her."

"There is no use in thinking of that, Halifax. She would find it wherever we put it. Her mother managed to slip it from her arm last night while she slept. Mrs. Stafford took it from the room, and locked it in her own wardrobe. What do you think happened? Molly awoke, felt her arm, found that the bracelet was missing, and walked straight from her own room into ours, approached the wardrobe, placed her hand on the drawer which contained the bracelet, and asked her mother for the key."

"I want to get my bracelet out of that drawer, mother," she said.

"How can you possibly know it is there?" asked my wife, quite startled and thrown off her balance by the child's words.

"I see a light pointing to the red bracelet," she answered. "I shall go mad if I don't have it. Give it to me at once."

"There was nothing for it but to humour the child—her mother gave her back the bracelet, she pressed it to her lips, sighed with pleasure, and carried it off at once. Well, here we are. You shall see my daughter in a moment or two, Halifax. She knows you are coming. I have told her you are a friend of mine—I have not mentioned the fact of your being a physician. Try and get her confidence, if you can."

The carriage drew up before a tall portico. A footman ran down a flight of steps to open the door. The next moment we were in my friend's entrance-hall.

"Tell your mistress we have arrived," said Stafford, turning to the servant.

The man immediately left the hall, and in a moment Mrs. Stafford came hurrying out of one of the reception-rooms to meet us. She was a tall, dignified-looking woman with a pale face, and large, dark grey eyes. These eyes showed traces now of recent tears.

"How is Molly?" asked Stafford, when he had introduced me to his wife.

"Just the same," answered Mrs. Stafford, with a sigh.

"Have you tried to get her to eat anything?"

"I have, but it is useless," replied the mother. "She pushes all food aside with the extraordinary remark that her throat is closed. She is lying down at present, and when I left her room she had the red bracelet tightly pressed against her cheek. I think she sleeps just now. As I was leaving her room I heard her murmur that terrible man's name."

"Suppose I go up and see her while she sleeps?" I said. "I will be very careful not to arouse her."

Mrs. Stafford gazed at me fixedly.

"Perhaps you forget," she said, "that our poor darling is blind. All you have to do is not to speak. Molly has never seen anything in the whole course of her life. She will not know you are in the room if she does not hear your voice."

"Well, that is all the better," I answered, cheerfully. "I can watch her without her noticing me."

"She is very weak," answered the mother, as she took me upstairs and led me down a corridor to Miss Stafford's room. "Her failure of strength is most remarkable. It is now nearly thirty hours since that man disappeared. Each moment seems to take something from her vitality. I could never have believed that hypnotism was such an awful power if I did not witness its effects upon my child."

"It is a fearful and dangerous power," I replied. "The sooner your daughter is released from its spell, the better."

"Sometimes I fear that it may be necessary for us to find this Basil Winchester," said Mrs. Stafford. "He has exercised this spell over the child: he alone may be able to remove it."

"I hope we may relieve Miss Stafford by some other means," I answered. "The less she sees of Winchester in the future the better—but now let me see her. Is this her room?"

"Yes; let us tread softly—I should like the child to have her sleep out."

We entered a very dainty and prettily furnished girl's room. The last rays of the evening sun were streaming into the chamber, and one of them now fell right across the foot of the bed on which the recumbent figure of a very young and remarkably pretty girl lay. Thick dark lashes shaded the cheeks—the brows were delicate, finely pencilled, and perfectly black. The hair, which was thrown back over the pillows, was abundant, and of the luxurious and curly order. Its shade was of a rich tone of brown, with a slight admixture of red in it—the complexion was delicate—the features regular. As I looked for the first time at Molly Stafford, I could not help feeling a distinct pang at my heart. She was an only child—she was the one treasure of this rich and prosperous couple. Without her, of what avail to them would be their house, their lands, their gold? If ever a girl appeared ill unto death, this one did. There was a transparency about her complexion—a waxlike hue was spread all over her face, which showed me how serious was the drain on her system made by a mysterious and little understood power. I took one of her limp hands in mine, and felt her feeble, fluttering pulse. The other hand was pressed against her cheek. On the wrist of this small right hand I saw the bracelet—the red beads pressed the sleeper's soft cheek, making faint marks there. The mother came up and stood by my side as I gazed. Suddenly she bent forward and touched my arm.

"What do you think of her?" she asked, in a whisper of uncontrollable anxiety.

"Hush," I replied. "I will talk to you presently."

As I spoke I bent down over the child, and pushing back the hair from her brow, listened to her hurried breathing. When I did this she suddenly, and without the least warning, opened her eyes wide. The effect was so startling that I stepped back. While she slept I had forgotten the fact of her blindness—now it was abundantly manifest. The opened eyes made such a complete change in her whole appearance that her beauty vanished, giving place to positive ugliness—ugliness of an almost repellent

order. The sightless eyes themselves were well formed and of a good size. They were turned now full upon me, and the brows became slightly knit. I had never seen such eyes before. I can only describe them as all white. There was no cornea, no iris, no pupil. The entire eyeball was white, as is the outside margin of the ordinary eye.

"Who touched me?" said the girl, starting up in bed, and covering the wrist on which she wore the bracelet with her other hand. "There is an adverse influence in the room. I won't have anything to do with it. Mother, are you there?"

"I am close to you, my darling."

"But there is someone else in the room—someone who is against me. Who is it?"

"Tell her at once," I said to the mother; "there is no use in deceiving her."

"You can't deceive me even if you try," answered Miss Stafford. As she spoke she flung the bed-clothes aside and sprang out of bed—she had lain down in her dress—she came quickly up to where I was standing.

"Who are you? Tell me at once," she repeated.

"I am a friend of your father's," I answered, "and I hope also to be a friend of yours."



"WHO ARE YOU?"

Your father and mother have told me that you are in trouble."

"Yes, I am—I am in awful trouble," she answered.

"Well, as I am a doctor, I may be able to do something for you."

She laughed wildly.

"Of all people in the world, I wish least to see a doctor," she answered. "I am not ill—at least, in the ordinary sense. I am in trouble because—because my heart bleeds—but this comforts me. It is warm—it has life in it—some of his life."

Here she pressed the coral beads passionately to her lips.

"Listen to me," I said, in a firm voice. "You are at present under the influence——"

"Oh, you need not tell me," she interrupted. "I glory in being under Basil Winchester's influence."

"You are at present under the dangerous influence of hypnotism," I answered.

She started violently when I said these words; then, with a swift movement, infinitely touching, went straight up to her mother, and put her arms round her neck.

"Mother, darling, don't let that man say anything more to me," she whispered—"he is a stranger—his influence is adverse—I don't want to get under it—take him away from me, mother."

"You are mistaken, Molly," answered Mrs. Stafford; "this gentleman would not hurt you for the world: he is a friend of ours, Dr. Halifax."

"I don't wish to have anything to do with him. I know what he has come for—he wants to take my bracelet away."

"You are altogether mistaken," I said, coming near her as I spoke. "I faithfully promise not to touch your bracelet, if you will do something for me."

A look of great relief came over her face.

"I will do anything, if I may keep my bracelet."

"On one condition you may keep it."

"What is that?"

"That you eat something which I am going to order for you."

"I can't eat, my throat is closed."

"No, that is folly," I replied. "You are giving way to a feeling of hysteria. This is causing your father and mother great unhappiness. Your throat is not closed, you only imagine it. Mrs. Stafford, will you get your daughter to wash her face and hands and then bring her downstairs to one of the sitting-rooms? You will eat something, Miss Stafford, when I tell you to?" I finally added.

She made no reply, but detaching her arms from her mother's neck, she let them fall to her sides, and followed me with her queer, sightless eyes as I left the room. The terrible eyes seemed to watch me as if they could see. I went immediately downstairs, and in about ten minutes Mrs. Stafford appeared in one of the drawing-rooms, leading her daughter by the hand.

To my astonishment, the girl loosened her clasp of her mother's hand and came straight up to me, exactly as a person with sight would do.

"Here I am," she said. "I promise to obey you if I may keep my bracelet. Now, what am I to do?"

"Take this glass of port wine, and drink it off," I said.

I had asked Stafford to have wine and biscuits in readiness, and I now filled a glass with good old port, and put it into Miss Stafford's hand.

"Drink," I said; "you can do so if you wish."

She didn't even attempt to struggle against my stronger will. Taking the glass, she raised it to her lips and drained off the contents at one draught.

"That is capital," I answered, "now eat this biscuit."

She did so with a sort of queer, desperate haste. When she had finished the first, I gave her another, which was also devoured quickly.

"That will do," I said, when she had finished the second biscuit. "Now sit here—I want to have a talk with you."

"I may keep my bracelet?" she inquired.

"I have said so," I answered. "I hope, before long, that you will give it to me of your own free will, but until that time comes I, for one, will certainly not deprive you of it."

"I believe that you are speaking the truth—I believe that I can trust you," she answered, with a profound sigh of relief.

She sat down on a low seat. The coral bracelet was on her left wrist; she stroked the red beads tenderly with the fingers of her right hand. As she did so, pleased smiles began to flit across her worn, little face.

"I am better for my food," she said, after a pause.

"Of course you are," I answered. "It was very silly of you to refuse to eat. You must have another meal presently, but not just yet."

She raised her head and gave me one of her sightless gazes; alarm became manifest in her face.

"I don't believe I shall be able to eat any more," she said; "my throat is getting that dreadful closed feeling again."

"You won't feel your throat troubling you when I wish you to eat," I said.

"But, surely, doctor, you are not going to hypnotize me?"

"I am not," I answered.

"Then why do you suppose that I shall obey you?"

"Because I intend to exercise my strong will over yours—yours is just now weakened by sorrow."

"Oh, yes," she interrupted, "by terrible, maddening grief."

"You have parted for the time being with common-sense," I continued, taking no apparent notice of her anguish. "I mean to bring that precious possession back to you."

I spoke so far in the driest way, but then, seeing how weak she was, I allowed some of the sympathy which I really felt to get into my voice.

"I pity you sincerely," I said. "It is possible that I may be able to help you, if we can have a little talk alone. May I see Miss Stafford for a few moments by herself?" I continued, turning to the parents.

"Certainly," said Stafford. He and his wife had been watching us with the most intense anxiety. They now left the room. Molly took no notice of their departure. She sat huddled up near a fire, which was not unpleasant on this late autumn day. Her sightless eyes seemed to watch the flames as they flickered.

"Do you know that there is a fire in the grate?" I asked, suddenly.

"Yes," she replied.

"You doubtless feel the warmth?" I continued.

"I feel the warmth," she answered, "but that is not all. I have a sensation when my eyes are fixed on a fire, or on the sun, as if

at any moment I were going to understand the full meaning of light. I have had that strange sensation all my life. I daresay most blind people know it."

"Possibly," I replied; "you were born blind, were you not?"

"Yes, but pray don't talk about my blindness now, it is incurable; my eyes are not made the same way as other people's. That which gives sight has been denied them."

"So I have heard," I answered, briefly.

"Don't let us talk of it now. I don't miss what I never had; but, oh, my God, my God, I miss one thing *inexpressibly*."

Here she clasped her hands so tightly together, that the delicate blue veins started into view. She stood up and gave utterance to a low and bitter cry.

"You know what has happened?" she said,

turning swiftly round to me.

"The man I love has left me."

"I know," I answered—"your father has told me. You see, he is not a good man."

"What does that matter? He is necessary to me."

"Do you really love him?" I asked. My words evidently surprised her; she paused in thought.

"I can't tell you whether I love him or not," she said at last.

"I can only re-

peat that he is necessary to me. I have only known him for a little over a month, and during that short time he has become an essential part of my life. All the rest of the world may go, but if he remains, I shall be happy. He has gone, and the world is dark—dark as my sightless eyes. Oh, this agony will kill me. I feel as if my heart were bleeding inside—it will soon bleed itself to death."

The poor girl gave utterance to a terrible groan as she spoke—she sank back into a chair, her face looked ghastly.

"If this man were back with you, you would be happy?" I asked.



"SHE SAT HUDDLED UP NEAR A FIRE."

"My heart would stop bleeding."

"But, answer me, would you be happy?"

"I don't—quite—know." She brought out these words with startling distinctness.

"When people love, and are together, they are generally happy," I said.

"I have heard so," she replied. "I never thought that love—love of this sort—could come into the life of a blind girl. It came, but I don't think my sensations were ever those of happiness. I can't tell you what I really felt. An irresistible and great force surrounded me. I knew that I had no will apart from that of Basil Winchester's. Anything he told me, I did—even if he asked me to do wrong, I did it. My father and mother were opposed to our marriage, but I cared nothing for their opposition. I lived—I live—only for him. He has gone now, and—I am dying—it is as if the sun had set."

"You ought not to speak in that way—think of your parents."

She shook her head.

"It is useless," she murmured.

"They love you dearly."

"I know that, but the knowledge of their love doesn't affect me in any way."

"Don't you love them in return?"

"No, I don't think I love anyone. The only emotion my heart is capable of is of a great, passionate, starved yearning to be with Basil Winchester."

"Suppose you found out that Winchester was not a good man—that he was, in short, a scoundrel?"

"I should not care—he would still be Basil Winchester to me."

Beads of perspiration were standing out on her forehead. As she spoke, she panted. I saw that I must not question her further.

"Well," I said, in a soothing tone, "you have my promise not to take your bracelet from you—that is, if you will continue to eat when I think it necessary to give you food."

"I will do anything if you will leave me my bracelet. I am certain that, without it, I shall lose my senses."

She began again to stroke the beads with her thin fingers. As she did so, a look of calm returned to her face.

"This bracelet is part of the man I love," she said. "When I press it to my cheek, I experience a very strange sensation. I feel as if cords were drawing me to where my lover is. I feel as if I must arise, and go to him—then I seem to hear his voice telling me to stay where I am—I try to be patient—I endure—but the drops of blood come from my heart all the time. My starved

heart is dying. Dr. Halifax, can anything be done for me?"

"Certainly," I answered; "what you need more than anything else just at present is quiet sleep—you have talked quite enough. I am going to ask your mother to put you to bed, and then I will give you something to make you sleep."

"But my bracelet?"

"You have my promise that it shall not be touched. Now, I am going to speak to your mother."

I left the room—Mrs. Stafford was waiting for me in the ante-room.

"The strain and excitement are considerable," I said. "I can't conceal from you that the case is one of great anxiety. The hypnotist has exercised his wicked power to the full. I by no means despair, however, and the first thing necessary to be done, is to get your daughter to have a long, refreshing sleep. Will you see that she goes to bed at once, Mrs. Stafford? When she is comfortably in bed, I want to give her a composing draught."

Mrs. Stafford hurried off to obey my orders. In half an hour the exhausted girl was lying between the sheets. I took a draught which I had specially prepared to her bedside.

"Drink this at once," I said.

I was glad to find that my voice had already considerable power over her. The moment I spoke, she raised herself obediently on her elbow. I put the glass containing the medicine in her hand—she drained off the dose.

"Now you are certain to have a pleasant sleep," I said. "I am going to sit with you until I find that you are in refreshing slumber."

I took my seat by the bedside. Miss Stafford closed her eyes immediately. In less than ten minutes she was in the land of dreams.

The rest of the evening passed quietly. Soon after dinner Mrs. Stafford went up to her daughter's room. She was absent for nearly an hour; when she returned there was an excited, triumphant expression on her face.

"What has happened, Mary?" asked her husband.

"I think I have done a good thing," she replied. "I have got rid of the coral bracelet at last."

I started up in annoyance. "Have you really taken the bracelet from Miss Stafford's arm?" I said. "If so, I must ask you to put it back at once."

Mrs. Stafford gazed at me in astonishment.

"I don't understand you," she said. "The influence of that bracelet has been most pernicious—I removed it just now when the child was in such heavy sleep that she did not in the least notice what I was doing."

"I promised Miss Stafford that she might keep the bracelet," I repeated. "Will you kindly give it to me, and I will slip it back again?"

Mrs. Stafford looked startled and distressed.

"But I can't," she replied. "I was wondering where to hide it, for Molly's instinct about recovering it has been marvellous. As I was hurrying downstairs, one of the servants came to tell me that a gipsy woman, whom I know very well, was waiting in the lower hall to speak to me. It occurred to me that I would give her the bracelet. I did so; she slipped it on her baby's arm, and left Mount Stafford some minutes ago."

Mrs. Stafford had scarcely said these words, and I had no time to reply, when a slight noise near the door caused us all to turn our heads. To our astonishment and dismay, Molly Stafford, in her long white night-gown, entered the room. She was staring straight before her with her queer, sightless eyes. She walked across the room in the direction of an open window. One glance into her face showed me that she was walking in her sleep.

"Hush," I whispered to the parents, "we must not awaken her—let us follow her."

She stepped over the window-sill and went out into the starlit night. Straight up the avenue she went—her rich hair fell over her neck and shoulders—her feet were bare, and I wondered that the pain of walking on the

gravel did not awaken her. We all followed her at a little distance. Presently she paused at a wicket gate which led up to one of the lodges; she opened the gate quickly, and with a decided push; walked up the narrow path, and lifting the latch of the door entered. There was a bright light inside; the lodge-keeper and his wife were sitting over their supper, and in one corner I saw to my astonishment the dark face of a woman who evidently must have been a gipsy. A baby sat on her knee. On the baby's arm dangled the coral bracelet.

With a warning gesture Mr. and Mrs. Stafford enjoined silence on the amazed group. Miss Stafford walked quickly to the child, snatched the bracelet from its arm, slipped it on her own, and left the cottage as abruptly and noiselessly as she had entered. As quickly as she had left the house, she now returned to it, entered the drawing-room by the open window, crossed the room, and went straight upstairs to her own bedroom. She lay down in bed with a sigh of relief, folded the bed-clothes around her, and clasped her recovered treasure to her cheek.

The whole occurrence must have been a dream to her, and she would not in all probability know anything about it when she awoke.

"I should like to watch by her for the present," I said to the mother.

"I will share your watch," she replied.

The sick girl slept far into the night. As the hours went by her condition satisfied me less and less. The sleeping draught I had given her had produced heavy slumber, but there was no doubt, from her restless movements and her heavy groans, that her mind



"STARING STRAIGHT BEFORE HER."

was awake and active. Few doctors believe in the well-known phrase, "a broken heart," but if anyone were likely to die of this malady, the girl over whom I was now watching would be the one. Her blindness and her peculiarly nervous and highly strung temperament would all conduce to this effect. Amongst the many victims of hypnotism, there would be no sadder case than that of Molly Stafford, unless I could devise some means for her relief. Up to that moment no light dawned upon me, but I waited in hope.

About three in the morning, the sick girl awoke. She opened her sightless eyes, and in her own peculiar fashion turned them immediately upon the person nearest to her. I happened to be that person. She looked at me without speaking—presently she put out the hand on which she wore the bracelet and touched my coat-sleeve.

"You are there?" she said, in a whisper.

"Yes," I answered.

"Why do you watch me?"

"Because you are ill," I replied. "Now, I am going to give you something to eat."

"My throat is closed," she began.

"I am not going to listen to that sort of nonsense," I answered. As I spoke I motioned to Mrs. Stafford—she approached the bedside with a cup of strong beef-tea. I took the cup in one hand, and putting my other hand under the girl's shoulder, raised her to a semi-sitting position.

"Drink this at once," I said.

For a moment she seemed to shrink into herself, but then, making an effort, she held up her lips obediently. I held the cup to them—she emptied the contents, lying back again on her pillow with a sigh.

"Now you are going to sleep again," I said. "Give me your hand."

"No," she answered, "you will hypnotize me; Basil used to hold my hand when he wanted me to do what he wished—I don't wish anyone else to hold my hand."

"I promise not to hypnotize you," I answered, "but I should like to hold your hand for a few moments, for I think it will help you to sleep."

"I want to rest," she answered, in a low voice—"I am tired—tired to death!"—as she spoke, she slipped her little hand into mine.

For the first few moments she was restless, then she quieted down; she had nearly dropped off to sleep, when she raised herself to say a few words.

"I don't feel the dreadful, drawing sensa-

tion so badly now," she whispered. Then her eyes closed in slumber.

When she was quite sound asleep, I motioned to Mrs. Stafford to take my place by the bedside, and softly left the room.

I had thought hard while she slept—an idea had come to me at last.

Stafford was waiting for me downstairs; he was far too anxious to go to bed.

"Well," he said, when he saw me, "what do you make of the case?"

"It is serious," I answered. "It would be wrong for me to tell you anything else, but I don't consider it hopeless."

"What do you mean? Can you do anything to counteract the terrible influence under which our child is lying?"

"At present I am not quite certain," I answered. "The right thing—the only thing to do will be, by some means or other, to divert your daughter's thoughts into a completely new channel. Her illness is due to a strange and overstrained condition of the imagination. All her thoughts are turned inwards. Her blindness adds much to this condition. If I could only give her back her sight!"

Stafford laughed, hoarsely.

"My dear fellow," he exclaimed, "even doctors can't do impossibilities—remember, the child was born blind."

"I know," I answered. I did not add any more.

"Her mother and I have taken Molly to nearly every oculist in Europe," continued Stafford. "One and all pronounce the case hopeless. A glance ought to show you, Halifax, that the eyes are not properly formed—there is no coloured part—the entire eye is white."

"Yes," I answered again. I was silent for a few minutes, thinking deeply; then I spoke.

"With your permission, Mr. Stafford, I should like to examine your daughter's eyes very carefully by full daylight. I have doubtless no right to differ from my brother doctors, but I have noticed a strange peculiarity about your child, which I have never seen before in a blind person. She is stone blind, but she turns her eyes fully upon the person she is speaking to. She confessed to me also that in strong light, such as bright fire-light or the full rays of the sun, she has a sensation which she thinks must resemble the feelings of those who see light. I own that I have very little to go upon, but I shall not be satisfied with regard to the condition of your daughter's eyes until I have examined them for myself."

My words could scarcely fail to excite Stafford—his eyes sparkled, his voice shook.

"You speak in a strange way," he said, "and I am the last to put an obstacle in your

The day which was now about to dawn was Sunday.

Soon after eleven o'clock Miss Stafford softly entered the room where I was sitting.

I did not know that she was awake, and could not help starting when I saw her. She was dressed in white, and looked very young, beautiful, and child-like. A glance, however, at her sightless eyes changed the beauty into ugliness. Oh, that I could but remove the hideous veil which covered them. She came into the room with a gliding, graceful motion peculiarly her own, and as was her wont, came straight up to me as though she saw me. She put out her hand and spoke in a low, musical voice.

"I feel a little better," she said.

"That last sleep refreshed me. You soothed me when you held my hand. I don't think any the less of Basil—the links between us are still complete, but I am less restless when you are by."

"That is right," I answered, in a cheerful tone. "Please remember what I told you yesterday—the man whom you call Basil Winchester has hypnotized you. I am not going to hypnotize you, but I am going to exercise my will over yours."

"You have done so already,"

she answered. "I eat when you tell me; I sleep when you wish me to; I don't feel wicked when I am with you. I even begin, just a little, a very little, to take an interest in my father and mother again. Basil used to make all the rest of the world a blank. He always stood himself in a wonderful light, but beyond him was darkness."

"You talk of light," I said, suddenly; "what do you know about it?"

A wave of colour rushed up to her pale cheeks.

"Nothing really," she replied, "and yet a great deal. I am always imagining what light is like. On a sunshiny day nothing gives me such pleasure as to go out and gaze directly up to where the great heat comes from. I seem to see light then. I know well it is only seeming, for I shall never see light, but I picture what it is like."

"I wish you would try to describe your picture," I said.



"'YOU SPEAK IN A STRANGE WAY,' HE SAID."

path, but for God's sake don't arouse a hope in that poor child which can never be realized."

"In her present condition, even the presence of such a hope for a few hours can be nothing but beneficial," I answered. "When I examine her eyes it will be necessary for me to ask her a few questions. If I am right—if there are really perfect eyes behind the curtains which now shroud them—I am firmly convinced that your girl will be completely cured from the strange infatuation under which she labours. The effect of hypnotism is overpowering to some natures. Your daughter was an easy victim. I can scarcely think of that scoundrel with patience, but if Miss Molly can get back her sight, I am convinced that all will be well with her."

"I should think so," exclaimed Stafford. "To think of Molly with eyes like other girls' is too great a hope to be realized quickly."

"Don't build on it," I answered, "but allow me to examine the eyes as soon and as thoroughly as possible."

"It is difficult," she answered, "for of course you know I have no knowledge of colour. I can best describe what I fancy light to be by telling you what noises are to me. Do you know the clashing sound of a full string band? Bright light seems somewhat to resemble that. Twilight is like the slow movement in one of Mendelssohn's 'Songs Without Words,' and darkness resembles the 'Dead March.' Oh, I know I am talking nonsense."

"Not at all," I replied; "you describe your sensations wonderfully. Now come and stand in this sunshine, and tell me what you feel."

To my surprise, she went immediately and stood by the window. The noonday sun was pouring a great flood of light into the room.

"How did you guess that the sunshine was here?" I asked.

"I heard the noise of the string band," she answered; "now I feel the heat on my face. Oh, I have a rapturous moment—it is almost as if I must burst some veil at any instant, and really see."

"Stay still for an instant," I said; "I should like to look into your eyes."

"Don't, they are terrible to look at."

"They are peculiar; now stand perfectly still while I examine them."

She stood as motionless as a statue. The sightless balls were turned full upon me—I examined them carefully. The white sclerotic membrane completely covered the entire ball, but where the cornea ought to be in the ordinary eye, I noticed a very slight bulging. That was enough.

"Thank you, Miss Stafford," I said to her; "that will do for the present."

She replied, in a fretful tone.

"I wish you hadn't looked at my eyes," she said. "Many doctors have done so already. I have had many brief moments of hope, but they have always been extinguished in despair. You are not an oculist. Why did you raise hopes that can never be realized?"

"How do you know they can never be realized?" I said.

"How do I know?" she answered. "I have got no eyes in the ordinary sense."

"It would make you very happy to see like other people?" I continued, after a pause.

"Happy," she answered; "it is unkind of you even to speak of it."

She stood perfectly still, while large tears gathered in her sightless eyes and rolled down her cheeks.

"I can't bear it," she said, after a pause; "no one knows what the longing for light has been to me. There have been moments, but that was before I knew Basil, when I even wished to die, because I believed that afterwards I should see."

"Come over here," I said, taking her hand. "Sit down, I have something to say. I have just looked at your eyes, and an idea which occurred to me last night has been very much strengthened. Now you must stay quite calm while I speak to you. Your blindness is of a very peculiar and uncommon type. I don't *know* that it can be cured."

"Cured," she exclaimed. "You speak as if there were a possibility. Oh, Dr. Halifax, do you dare to give me hope?"

"Yes," I answered, slowly, "I do. You are blind—you are afflicted with congenital blindness, but nevertheless I believe there is a chance of your sight being restored. Now I will tell you frankly what my idea is. I think—remember, it is only conjecture after all; but I am strongly inclined to believe that you possess perfect eyes under the thick membrane which now covers them. My reasons for this idea are twofold. First, you have a conception of light, which a totally blind person who has never seen does not as a rule possess. Second, your sensations are intensified when you look full up at the sun, or when you gaze at a very bright fire. This would be scarcely likely to be the case if the organs of vision were altogether absent. I have a third reason for my hope. Where the cornea ought to exist in the normal eye, you have a very slight bulging. In short, my hope with regard to your recovery of sight is sufficiently strong to induce me to ask you to consent to a slight operation. If, after all, my hopes are false, you will be no worse off than you are at present. If, on the other hand, I am right—"

"Yes, if you are right?" exclaimed Molly—she grasped my hand, holding it with the strength of iron. "If you are right?" she repeated.

"If I am right," I said, quietly, "you will see as well as any other person."

"Oh, merciful and kind God," she exclaimed—she covered her face with her trembling hands—"then I shall see Basil! Oh, I can scarcely dare to think of this rapture."

"I am going to speak to your parents now," I said; "stay quietly here until I return to you."

I left her and went to seek Stafford, who

was wandering restlessly about, evidently waiting for me.

"Well," he said, when he saw me—"well, did you examine her eyes?"

"I did—let us come into this room, I want to talk to you."

Stafford drew me into his smoking-room. Mrs. Stafford was there—she looked even more excited than her husband.

"My husband has told me all about your extraordinary thought, Dr. Halifax," she said. "Have you looked at our child's eyes? Is there a vestige of hope?"

"There is," I replied. "I have examined your daughter's eyes very carefully. Their condition is peculiar—the sclerotic membrane covers the entire eyeball. The present condition of the eyes points to hopeless congenital blindness; nevertheless, I am not without hope. In examination I noticed a bulging where the cornea ought to be. My hope is that there is a perfect eye behind the membrane which now completely covers the whole ball. I have told my hope to your daughter."

"You have told Molly? How cruel of you," exclaimed Mrs. Stafford.

"No," I answered, "if you saw Miss Stafford now, you would not think what I have done cruel. She is so excited—so lifted out of herself—that, for the time, at least, she has almost forgotten the strange craze which is over her. She will willingly submit to an operation."

"An operation? We ought not to risk it," said the mother.

"There is no risk," I answered. "At the worst the slight scar which I shall make will quickly heal, and the eye will be no worse than it is now. At the best—remember all that that includes—sight!"

"Oh, dare we think of anything so joyous?" said Mrs. Stafford.

"Allow me to perform the operation," I said, going up to her. "I am not a rash man; believe me, I would not advise this if I did not think there was a fair hope of success."

"Suppose you are wrong: the child will then be in a worse condition than ever."

"Even if I am wrong, that will not be the case," I replied. "The thread of her present thoughts will have been broken if only for a few hours. That fact alone will be greatly to her benefit. If I am the means of restoring her sight to her, I am fully convinced that the spell under which she now labours will vanish."

"You are right," said Stafford, who had not spoken a word up to this point. "Mary,

my dear, we will allow our good friend to have his way. If the operation is successful, we shall have our child as we never had her yet; remember, too, that if by any chance she is permitted to see Winchester's face, her love for him must vanish on the spot—those sinister eyes of his would repel anyone."

"She does not love him now," I interrupted. "What she feels is not love. She is hypnotized. The restoration of sight will make such a complete revolution in her whole being, that I doubt if the man could hypnotize her again even if he tried. She will soon forget this strange and terrible episode in her life. In short, I believe in the acquisition of sight as a complete cure."

"We will make up our minds to the operation," said Stafford. "Am I not right?" he added, turning to his wife.

"Yes, we will consent," she answered.

I looked at her when she spoke—her face was as white as a sheet, but her eyes blazed with light and colour. I noticed for the first time the strong likeness between mother and daughter. In the case of the mother, however, the eyes were of the deepest, clearest grey—scintillating eyes, full of light and expression. I thought of the blind girl's charming face, and wondered what it would look like if it could ever be lit up with eyes like her mother's. The thought cheered me, and strengthened my resolve to do my utmost for Miss Stafford.

"Very well," I said; "I have your consent to perform the operation. In order to get the necessary instruments, I will take the next train to London. I can return here at an early hour to-morrow, and will operate on one eye immediately."

"Will the operation be painful?" asked Mrs. Stafford. "Will it be necessary for you to use chloroform?"

"No; I shall put cocaine into the eye—don't be alarmed, Miss Stafford will feel no pain. I shall only operate on one eye at a time. A very slight incision will enable me to confirm my theory, or to see that it is hopeless. While I am absent, please talk frankly about the operation. Induce your daughter to eat and drink plenty; get her to bed early to-night; do everything to keep up her strength. I will go back to say a word to her now."

I re-entered the drawing-room. Miss Stafford was sitting just where I had left her—her hands were crossed on her lap—the right hand clasped the red bracelet, which encircled the left-hand wrist. She knew my

footstep, and looked up with a face of expectation.

"Well?" she said, in a hoarse whisper.

"Good news," I replied, cheerfully. "Your father and mother consent to the operation. I am going to town by the next train and will return with my instruments to-morrow. Keep up your courage—by this time to-morrow we shall know whether the precious gift of sight is to be yours or not."

"If you fail, I shall die," she answered, speaking in a low and intense voice.

"No," I replied, "even if I fail, you will be too brave, too good, deliberately to throw away your life. Try to think now of success, not failure—try to think of what life may be yours if you can see like other girls."

She sighed; there was hope, even joy, in that sigh. I hurriedly left her. The next day, at an early hour, I was back again at Mount Stafford. The operation which I meant to perform was quite simple in character, and I did not require any help. I suggested to Mr. and Mrs. Stafford that it would be best for me to be alone with my patient.

"She feels the presence of anyone so intensely," I said, "that she will be less nervous, and will keep more quiet, if I am alone with her."

The father and mother agreed to this suggestion, and decided to wait in the outer drawing-room. I placed Miss Stafford in a chair facing the window.

"Now, you must keep up your courage," I said. "I shall operate to-day on your right eye. You must keep perfectly quiet. This will be easy—for you won't feel the slightest pain."

"I could even bear pain with the great hope of sight before me," she answered.

I saw that she was in a state of tense and rapt excitement. She had strung herself up to bear anything.

"You will feel no pain," I said, taking her hand as I spoke.

Her pulse was fluttering, but not weak and fitful like yesterday. I supported her head with props, and then dropped the cocaine into the eye. After waiting until complete insensibility

was produced, I quickly began to operate. I carefully divided the sclerotic at the upper part of the eyeball, just where I had seen the bulging, such as there is at the edge of the cornea in the normal eye. After dividing the sclerotic, I made a small flap, which I raised. It did not need my patient's sudden exclamation to tell me that I was right in my conjecture, and that there was under the thick membrane a cornea intact and transparent. To dissect off the whole of the fibrous curtain which covered this cornea was but the work of a few minutes.

After her first cry, Miss Stafford did not utter a sound. But when I had finished she started up and looked wildly around her.

"I see," she exclaimed—"I see! How queer everything is—how confusing—I would almost rather be in the dark again. I feel as if mountains were surrounding me. I don't know where I am—all is hopeless confusion. I see—oh, I am glad, I am glad; but I can't use my sight. Now that I have it, I don't know what to do with it."

As she uttered these last words, she fell back in her chair in a semi-conscious state.

I applied restoratives, and then carefully bound up the wounded eye.

The shock and joy were almost too much for her in her weak state. I had her taken straight to bed. I gave her a composing draught, and she fell quickly asleep. Having seen her in a satisfactory slumber, I hurried downstairs to speak to her father.

"Your girl will have as beautiful and perfect eyes as anyone need care to possess," I said. "I will operate on the left eye in a week's time. For the present, the right eye must be kept bandaged, but the bandage may be removed in a day or two. She will then have to learn to see just as if she were an infant."

"What do you mean?" asked Stafford.

"What I say," I replied; "your daughter cannot focus at present. She has no idea of distance—she must learn to use her sight just as a baby does."

"But she possesses eyes," said the mother, who



"WHAT DO YOU MEAN?" ASKED STAFFORD.

had followed me into the room. "Oh, Dr. Halifax, how can we thank you?"

The second operation was performed as successfully as the first, and in a month's time from the date of the last operation, Molly Stafford could use her new possession with tolerable freedom. The eyes were beautiful: clear grey like the mother's, with black rims. They transformed her face, making it a specially lovely one.

A few weeks later, as I was about to leave my consulting-room after my morning's work, Stafford was announced. He came into the room in a hurry, and with signs of agitation on his face. He held in his hand a little box, which he laid on the table.

"How are you, Halifax?" he said, grasping my hand in his great grip. "I won't take up more than a moment or two of your valuable time. I have come with news."

"What is it?" I asked. "I hope nothing bad has happened. How is my patient?"

"How can I tell?" I said.

"Molly sees as perfectly as I do," said Stafford. "Her joy in her new possession is beyond all words. Since the date of the first operation she never once mentioned Winchester's name. Her mother and I hoped she had completely forgotten him, but we did not fail to remark that she still wore the coral bracelet."

"I should take no notice of that," I interrupted.

"Well, let me proceed. She wore the coral bracelet day and night, but she never spoke of the man. Yesterday she went out accompanied by a girl, who is a great friend of hers. This girl, Miss Henderson, is the daughter of our next-door neighbour. She told us exactly what occurred. They were walking in the pine wood, chatting, as girls will, when who should appear directly in their path but that scoundrel, Winchester! He came up to Molly and tried to take her hands."

"She started back in amazement."



"SHE STARTED BACK IN AMAZEMENT."

"In perfect and blooming health."

"Something has disturbed you, however," I continued, giving him a keen glance; "what is it?"

"Yes," continued Stafford, "I am both disturbed and relieved. I hurried up to town on purpose to tell you. What do you think happened yesterday?"

"Pray don't touch me," she said. "I don't know who you are."

He laughed and spoke in that confidently seductive voice of his.

"I am the man whom you love—Basil Winchester," he said. "I have come to explain why I could not meet you six weeks ago. Can I see you alone?"

"'You, Basil Winchester?' exclaimed Molly. She looked full at him with an expression of puzzled incredulity. Then her voice took a half frightened, half scornful tone. 'You must be mistaken,' she said. 'I could never, never at any moment have loved a man like you.'

"Before he could utter a word, she turned from him and fled back to the house. She rushed into her mother's presence, flung her arms round her neck, and burst into tears.

"'Mother,' she exclaimed, 'I met a dreadful man in the wood just now. He told me his name was Basil Winchester. He said that I—I loved him once.'

"'But you don't love him now, my darling,' said her mother, soothing and kissing her.

"'I could never have loved that man, mother,' said Molly. 'I have a dim remembrance of an awful time, when someone of the name had a terrible power over me; but it could not have been that man, mother. I looked in his face, and I saw his ugly soul.'

"Miss Henderson came in just then and gave us a full account of the interview.

The moment Molly fled from him, Winchester left the pine wood. Perhaps you think that is the end, but there is more to follow. Two hours afterwards the news reached us that the fellow had been arrested. The fact is the police had been wanting him for a couple of months. His reason for deserting Molly on that first occasion was fear of arrest. He ventured back hoping to secure his prize, the spell was broken, and he saw he could do nothing with the child. He was arrested on a grave charge of forgery, and is now in York Gaol awaiting his trial."

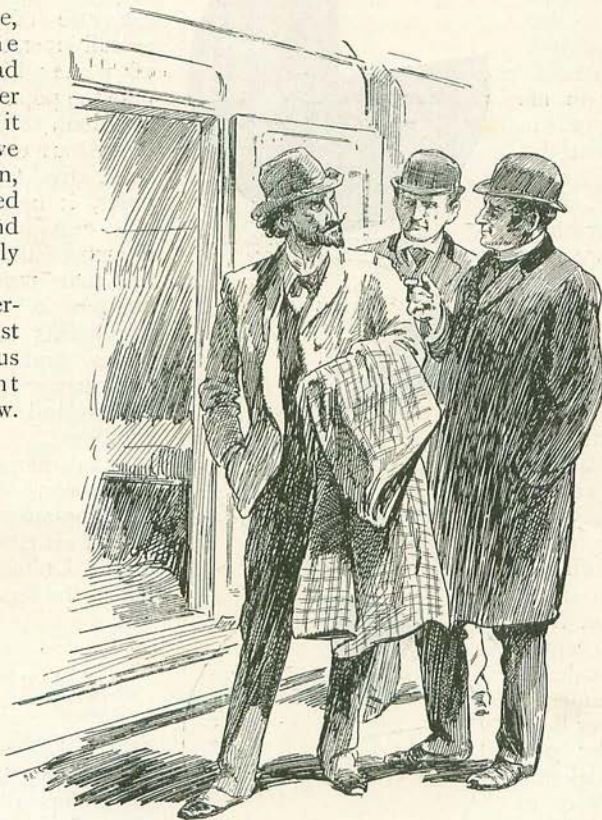
As Stafford said these last words, he sank back in a chair in manifest agitation.

"When I think of my child's narrow escape, I can't help shuddering, even now," he said.

"She has escaped, and now all is well," I answered.

"Yes, all is well. We have our child as we never thought to have her—beautiful, perfect, with eyes as lovely as her mother's. By the way, she told me to give you this."

When Stafford left me, I opened the little parcel. It contained—the red coral bracelet.



"ARRESTED."