

# 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.]

## VII.—A DOCTOR'S DILEMMA.

**L**HAD taken an interest in Fernal since he was a lad, and had watched his early medical career with pleasure. His brains were decidedly above the average, and he was in all respects a first-rate sort of fellow. As a medical student he was fond of coming to me for advice, which I always gave frankly. By-and-by, he secured the post of house physician at Guy's Hospital—his short career there was marked by much promise, and when the death of a relative enabled him to buy a share in a good country practice, I told him that I regarded his future as secure. He married soon afterwards, and at his special request I was present at the wedding. After this event I saw much less of him, but his letters, which reached me once or twice a year, assured me that he was doing well and happily in every sense of the word.

I had not seen Fernal for nearly three years, when one day, towards the end of the winter of '93, he called at my house. I was

out when he arrived, but when I opened my door with my latchkey he came into the hall to greet me.

"Halloa!" I exclaimed, when I saw him. "How are you? What has brought you to town? I hope you are well. How are the wife and child?"

"My wife is well," replied Fernal; "the baby died a month ago—oh, the usual thing—influenza."

He paused and looked me full in the face—I glanced at him and almost uttered a shocked exclamation.

"We have had an awful visitation of the plague," he continued; "it is my belief that it has been worse at Westfield than in any other part of the country."

"You don't look too fit. Have you had an attack yourself?" I said.

"Yes, and I am overdone in every way. The fact is, I rushed up to town on purpose to consult you."

I gave him another quick glance. When last I saw him he was a handsome, well-set-up fellow, full of muscle and vigour, with the

Englishman's indomitable pluck written all over him; now he looked like a man who had undergone a sort of collapse. He had contracted a slight stoop between his shoulders, his abundant black hair was slightly streaked with grey, his eyes were sunken and suspiciously bright, there were heavy, black lines under them, and his cheeks were hollow.

"I shall be all right presently," he said, with a laugh. "Will you have the goodness to overhaul me, Halifax, and put me into the way of getting back my old tone? Can I speak to you—can you devote a little of your time to me?"

"All the time you require," I answered, heartily. "You have arrived just at a convenient moment; I have come back to dinner, and don't mean to see any more



"HE CAME INTO THE HALL TO GREET ME."

patients before nine or ten o'clock to-night. I have several hours, therefore, at your disposal; but before we touch upon medical subjects, you must have some dinner."

As I spoke I ushered FEVERAL into my dining-room, and, ringing a bell, ordered HARRIS to lay places for two. Dinner was served almost immediately, but I noticed to my dismay that my guest only played with his food. He drank off several glasses of good wine, however, and the fact was soon discernible in his increased animation.

"Come into the study and have a smoke," I said, when the meal had come to an end.

He rose at once and followed me. We drew up our chairs in front of a cheerful fire, and for a time smoked our pipes in silence. It needed but a brief glance to tell me that FEVERAL was completely broken down—I should never have recognised him for the bright, energetic fellow whose happy wedding I had attended three years back. I waited now for him to begin his confidence—he did not say a word until he had finished his first pipe, then he sprang to his feet and stood facing me.

"I can't attempt to describe what a time we have had," he said, abruptly—"that awful influenza has raged all over the place. The more I see of that insidious, treacherous complaint, the more I dread it. It is my firm conviction that influenza has caused more deaths and wrecked more lives than the cholera ever did. You have seen RUSSELL, my partner—well, he and I have been completely worked off our feet: I can't tell you what domestic tragedies we have been through."

"Well, you have not come up to town simply to tell me about them?" I interrupted, abruptly.

"Of course not; I daresay you can record just as dismal a tale."

"Worse, if possible," I replied; "but now to turn to yourself: you say you have been attacked by the enemy?"

"Yes—worse luck—it was after the child's death. She was a bright, healthy little soul, eighteen months old. Perhaps you don't know what a first child is in a house, HALIFAX?—my wife and I simply lived for the little one. Well, she succumbed to the malady in a day or two. Poor INGRID broke down completely—she did not have influenza, but her strength gave way. She lost appetite and sleep. Nothing roused her but my unexpected illness. I suppose one does feel surprised when a doctor knocks up. Yes, I was down with the complaint, and had a

short, sharp attack. I was up and about again in no time. I thought myself all right, but——"

"You acted very unwisely in going about so soon," I replied; "you are not fit for work yet."

"Is it as bad as that? Do I show that things are amiss so plainly?"

"Any doctor can see that you are not the thing," I answered. "You are broken down—your nerve has gone; you want rest. Go home to-night, or, better still, wait until the morning, and then take the first train to Westfield. See RUSSELL, and tell him plainly that you must have a month off work. I can send him down a substitute, if you commission me to do so. Get away, my dear fellow, without delay. Take your wife with you—the change will do her as much good as it will you. Go somewhere on the Continent. Have complete rest in fresh surroundings, and you will be a different man when you return."

"God knows I need to be different," said FEVERAL. "At the present moment I don't recognise myself."

Here he hesitated, paused, and looked away.

"The fact is," he continued, suddenly, "I have not yet told you the true reason which brought me to consult you."

"Well, out with it, old man," I said, encouragingly.

He tried to give me a steady glance, but his eyes quickly fell.

"The fact is this," he said, abruptly, and rising as he spoke: "the influenza has left an extraordinary sequel behind. I have an inexpressible dread over me. By no means in my power can I drive it away."

"Sit down and keep calm," I said; "tell me your fears as fully as possible."

FEVERAL sat down at my bidding. After a pause he began to speak.

"You know," he said, "what an uphill thing an ordinary doctor's career is. I thought I had done a very good thing when I bought a share of RUSSELL'S practice. I found, however, that it was nothing like as large as I had been given to suppose. I did all that man could do to increase it—I have been popular as a doctor, and fresh patients now come daily to consult me. In short, I am likely to do well, and if only I can keep my health, to make a fair provision for my wife."

"Why should you not keep your health?" I asked.

"That is just the point," he replied; "at

the present moment, for practical, useful purposes my health is gone—my nerve has deserted me.”

“You must be more explicit,” I said. “What is up?”

“I dread making a fearful professional mistake, and so ruining my prospects as a medical man.”

“What do you mean?”

“I will try and explain myself. Since I have had influenza I have been subject to brief but extraordinary lapses of memory. You know we dispense our own medicines. Well, this is the sort of thing that happens almost daily: I see a patient—I diagnose his case with my usual care. I then go to the dispensary to prepare the right medicine for him—I take up a bottle, as likely as not of some strong poison, and find that the whole case has vanished from my mind; I do not in the least know what I am holding the bottle for, nor why I am in the dispensary;



“I DO NOT IN THE LEAST KNOW WHAT I AM HOLDING THE BOTTLE FOR.”

my patient and his case, the diagnosis I have made, the medicine I want to make up, become a complete blank to me. After a lapse of several minutes my memory returns; but this state of things comes on oftener and oftener, and the fear of it has made me

thoroughly nervous and unfit for work. You see yourself, Halifax, that grave consequences may arise from such a peculiar state of nerves as mine. I may during a lapse of memory put something into the medicine which may kill my patient. My terror on this point at times almost reaches mania—I am nearly beside myself.”

“Does your memory desert you at any other time?” I asked.

“Yes, but the curious thing is that it only fails me in connection with my profession. When I am alone with my wife I feel at comparative ease, and almost like my usual self; but when I am driving to see patients, I often completely forget my most important visits. I neglect the patients whose lives are in danger, and visit those who have comparatively little the matter with them. Of late I have given my coachman a list of all the patients whom I wish to see. He takes me to the right houses, but when I see the patient I forget the complaint under which he is labouring. Only yesterday I encountered the rage of a man who was suffering from an acute attack of double pneumonia, by asking him if his rheumatic pains were better. Of course, this state of things can't go on. Don't tell me that all my fears are fanciful. I have studied diseases of the brain, and know that my case is a serious one.”

“It is serious, but temporary,” I answered. “You have just been down with the complaint which leaves the most extraordinary sequelæ behind—a complaint which none of us with all our study have yet fully gauged. You are tired out, mind and body—you want rest. You must not attempt to make up your own medicines at present. I can't hide the truth from you; if you do, the consequences may be serious. You must get away at once, Fernal. I told you a moment ago that I can get a good man to take your work for a month or even two months, if necessary; if you like, I will write to Russell on the subject to-night. He will, of course, see the necessity of your leaving.”

Fernal did not reply at all for a minute. After a pause he said:—

“I suffer from other symptoms of a distressing character. I am possessed by that very ordinary delusion of the insane—that I am followed. I walked to this house to-night, and, in spite of all my efforts to assure myself to the contrary, I could not resist the suspicion that someone tracked me from the station to this house. The only thing that comforts me is that we have no insanity in

our family. I cling to that fact as a drowning man does to a spar."

"You are not insane," I replied, "but you will be if you don't take rest. All your present most distressing symptoms will disappear if you take my advice. You had better not return to Staffordshire. You are welcome to make my house your head-quarters until you have arranged matters with Russell. Meanwhile, telegraph to your wife to join you here—get away to the Continent before the end of the week. I promise you that long before the summer you will have returned to work like a giant refreshed."

Feveral heaved a heavy sigh. After a time he rose from his chair and leant against the mantelpiece.

"I suppose there is nothing for it but to take your advice," he said.

"You will not repent it," I answered. "Shall I write to Russell for you, to-night?"

"Better wait until the morning," he replied. "I will sleep over all you have said, and give you my final decision then."

"Well, I must leave you now," I replied. "I have promised to look in on one or two patients this evening; we shall meet at breakfast."

The next morning I was down early, and entered my breakfast-room before eight o'clock. I noticed that a place was only laid for one. "How is this, Harris?" I said to my servant. "Have you forgotten that Dr. Feveral is in the house?"

"Dr. Feveral left this morning, sir," replied Harris. "He came downstairs very early, and told me to tell you that you would find a note from him in your study. I inquired if he would like breakfast, but he said that he did not wish for anything. He was out of the house before half-past six, sir."

I hurried off to my study in some alarm. Feveral's note was on the mantelpiece. I tore it open; it ran as follows:—

"My dear Halifax,—I regret to say that I find it impossible to remain in your house another hour. I spoke to you last night about what I believed at the time to be a delusion, namely, that I was followed wherever I went. I now perceive that this is not a delusion, but a grim reality. Even in your house I am not safe. Last night two men en-

tered my room—they watched me from behind the curtains, and did not leave until daylight. I have risen early, and am leaving London without delay. My fear is that I have already made some extraordinary mistake in my dispensary, and have, perhaps, during my queer lapses of memory, given medicine which has deprived a fellow-creature of life. In this way I have undoubtedly laid myself open to the punishment of the law. The men who came into my room were policemen. You will understand that I can't stay longer in London.—Yours,

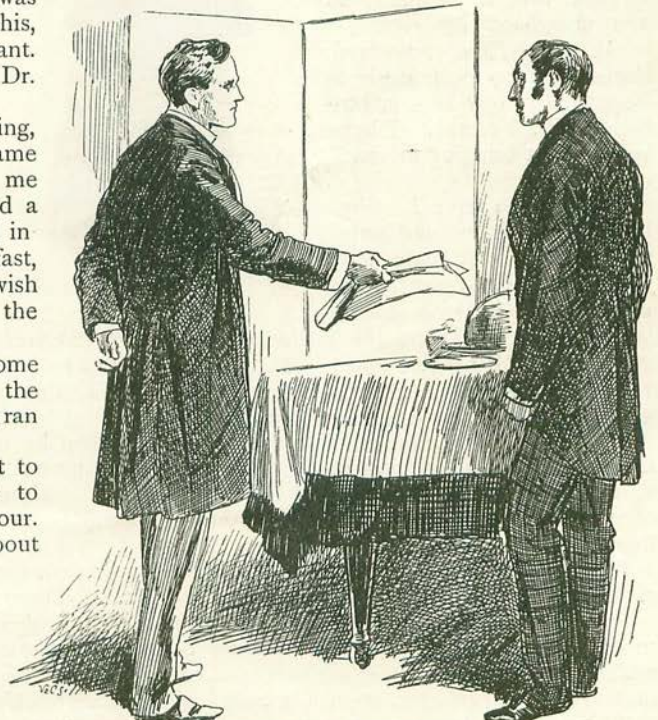
"ARTHUR FEVERAL."

The moment I read this extraordinary letter I put my hat on and went out of the house. I went to the nearest telegraph office, and sent the following message to Mrs. Feveral:—

"Your husband called on me last night—he was not well; he left suddenly this morning, giving no address. If you have no clue to his whereabouts, come and see me at once."

To my surprise, no reply came to this telegram for several hours. In the evening I found a yellow envelope lying on the slab in my hall. It was from Mrs. Feveral—it ran as follows:—

"Thank you for telegram—no cause for



"HAVE YOU FORGOTTEN THAT DR. FEVERAL IS IN THE HOUSE?"

uneasiness. Arthur returned this morning, looking better and cheerful. He is busy in the dispensary now—I have not shown him your telegram.—INGRID FEVERAL.”

“This is not the last of what may turn out a bad business,” I could not help saying to myself.

The next event in my friend’s queer story scarcely surprised me. Within forty-eight hours after his sudden departure, Mrs. Fernal called to see me. I was just going out when she drove up to my door in a hansom cab. I had last seen her as a bride—she was now in deep mourning. She was a remarkably handsome young woman, with an extraordinary fairness of complexion which one seldom sees in an English girl. It suddenly flashed through my memory that Fernal had married a young girl of Norwegian origin. This fact accounted for the whiteness of her skin, her bright blue eyes, and golden hair. She stepped lightly out of the hansom, and, seeing me, ran up the steps to meet me.

“Thank God you are not out,” she exclaimed. “I am in great trouble. Can I see you immediately?”

“Certainly,” I answered, leading the way to my study as I spoke. “How is your husband, Mrs. Fernal? I hope you are not bringing me bad news of him?”

“I am,” she replied. She pressed her hand suddenly to her heart. “I am not going to break down,” she continued, giving me an eager sort of pathetic glance which showed me a glimpse into her brave spirit. “I mean to rescue him if a man can be rescued,” she continued. “No one can help me if you can’t. Will you help me? You have always been my husband’s greatest friend. He has thought more of your opinion than that of any other man living. Will you show yourself friendly at this juncture?”

“Need you ask?” I replied. “Here is a chair—sit down and tell me everything.”

She did what I told her. When she began to speak she clasped her hands tightly together. I saw by her attitude that she was making a strong effort to control herself.

“I asked my husband to visit you a few

days ago,” she began. “He had spoken of some of his symptoms to me, and I begged of him to put his case into your hands. I hoped great things from your advice. Your telegram a couple of days ago naturally frightened me a good deal, but almost in the moment of reading it I received another from my husband, in which he asked me to expect him by an early train, and told me he was better. He arrived; he looked cheerful and well. He said that he believed his grave symptoms had suddenly left him. Several patients were waiting to consult him; he went off at once to the dispensary. I felt quite happy about him, and telegraphed you to that

effect. In the evening he was wonderfully cheerful, and said he did not think it necessary to go to the expense of a change. He slept well that night, and in the morning told me that he felt quite well. He went out early to visit some patients and came home to breakfast; afterwards he spent some hours, as usual, in his dispensary. I had been very unhappy and depressed since the death of my child, but that morning I felt almost glad—it was so good to see Arthur like his usual self again. I was upstairs in my room—it was a little after twelve o’clock—when someone opened the door in great excitement. I looked up and saw Arthur—he almost staggered into the room—his hair was pushed wildly back from his forehead—he went as far as the mantelpiece and leant against it.

“What has happened?” I asked.

“He pulled at his collar as if it would choke him before he replied.

“‘I have just committed murder,’ he said—then he stared straight past me as if he did not see me.

“‘Oh, nonsense,’ I answered; ‘you can’t possibly know what you are saying.’

“‘It is true—I have taken a man’s life,’ he repeated. ‘I am ruined; it is all up with me. There is blood on my hands.’

“‘Sit down, dear, and try to tell me everything,’ I said to him.

“I went up to him, but he pushed me aside.

“‘Don’t,’ he said; ‘my hands are stained with blood. I am not fit even to touch you.’



MRS. FEVERAL.



"HE ALMOST STAGGERED INTO THE ROOM."

"Well, at least tell me what has happened," I implored.

"After a time he grew calm, and I got him to speak more rationally.

"You know those awful lapses of memory," he began. "A young man—a stranger—came to consult me this morning. I diagnosed his case with my usual care, and then went to prepare some medicine for him. I went into the dispensary as usual. I felt quite well, and my intellect seemed to me to be particularly keen. I remember distinctly putting some ammonia and some salicin into a glass—then followed an awful blank. I found myself standing with a bottle in one hand, and a glass containing medicine in another—I did something with the bottle, but I can't remember what. After another period, in which everything was once again a blank, I came to myself. I found myself then in the act of giving a bottle made up in paper, and sealed in the usual way, to my patient.

"By the way," I said, "would you not like to take a dose at once? If so, I will fetch you a glass—even the first dose of this medicine will remove your troublesome symptoms almost immediately."

"The man to whom I was speaking was a fine-looking young fellow of about three or four and twenty. He hesitated when I

suggested that he should take a dose of medicine directly. After a pause, he said that he would prefer to take the medicine when he returned to his hotel. I shook hands with him, he paid me his fee, and then left the house. A moment later I returned to the dispensary. I there made the following awful discovery. In a moment of oblivion I had put strychnine instead of valerian into the medicine. The quantity of strychnine which I had used would kill anyone. I rushed from the house like a distracted person, hoping to be in time to follow my patient. I made inquiries about him, but could not catch sight of him anywhere. Even one dose of that medicine will kill him. He will die of convulsions even after the first dose—in all probability he is dead now. Oh, what a madman I was to return to Staffordshire!"

"I tried to comfort my husband, Dr. Halifax, but I soon found that my words had not the slightest effect upon him. I saw that he was not even listening to me—he crossed the room as I was speaking and, going to one of the windows, flung it open and leant half out. He began to look up and down the street, in the vain hope of seeing his unfortunate patient amongst the crowd.

"I shall never see him again—he is a dead man," he repeated. "He is dead—his blood is on my head—we are ruined."

"We must try and find him immediately," I said.

"Nonsense, we shall never find him," replied Arthur.

"As he said these words, he left the room. I paused to consider for a moment, then I went to consult Dr. Russell. My husband's partner is, as you know, an old man. He was terribly disturbed when I told him what had happened, and said that immediate steps should be taken to find the poor fellow who had been given the wrong medicine. He went out himself to inquire at the different hotels in the town. Meanwhile, I began to search for Arthur. I could not find him in the house. I asked the servants if they had seen him. No one knew anything about him—he had not gone out in his carriage. Dr. Russell presently returned to say that he could get no trace of the stranger. Almost at the same time a telegram was brought to me. I tore it open—it was from Arthur.

"Don't attempt to follow me," he said in it; "it is best that we should never meet again. If I can I will provide for your future, but we must never meet again."

"There was no signature.

"That is the whole story," said Mrs. Fernal, standing up as she spoke. "After receiving my husband's telegram, I went to his bank and found to my astonishment that he had drawn nearly all the money we possess. He took a thousand pounds away with him in notes and gold. That fact seems to point to the conclusion that he had no intention of committing suicide; but where has he gone—why did he want so much money? What did he mean by saying that he would provide for me? I know that he is not responsible for his actions—it is very unsafe for him to be alone. I thought the whole thing over, during last evening and during the long hours of the night, and resolved to come to you this morning. I must find my husband again, Dr. Halifax, and I want to know now if you can help me to search for him."

"I certainly will," I replied; "the story you have just told me is most disastrous. I warned Fernal the other day that he was in no fit state to dispense medicines at present. He did very wrong not to take my advice. Of course, I ought not to blame him, poor fellow, for he is not responsible for his own actions. Two duties now lie before us, Mrs. Fernal."

"Yes?" she replied, eagerly.

"We must first discover whether your husband has really caused the death of this man or not. After all, he may only have imagined that he put strychnine into the medicine."

"No, no," she interrupted; "there is no hope of getting out of the terrible dilemma in that way. My husband used two glasses to mix his medicines—they were found in the dispensary unwashed. Dr. Russell, on examining one, found some drops of strychnine adhering to the bottom of the glass."

"Then that hope is over," I answered. "Well, we must only trust that something prevented your husband's victim from taking the medicine. Our first duty is to find that young man immediately; our second, to follow Fernal. Will you rest here for a few moments while I think over this strange case?"

I left the room, ordered Harris to bring the poor young wife some refreshment, and went off to my consulting-room to think over matters. I was busy, it is true, but I resolved to cast everything to the winds in the cause of my unhappy friend. I had known Fernal since he was a boy. I was not going to desert him now. I came back presently and told Mrs. Fernal that I had made arrangements which would enable me to devote my time for the present to her service.

"That is just what I should have expected," she replied. "I won't thank you in words—you know what I feel."

"I know that you are brave, and will help me instead of hindering me," I rejoined. "Will you accept my hospitality for to-night, Mrs. Fernal? My servants can, I think, make you comfortable. I mean to go to Staffordshire by the next train."

"Why so?"

"I must set inquiries on foot with regard to your husband's patient—I must find out his name and all possible particulars about him. I hope to be back in town with news for you early in the morning. In the meantime, will you hold yourself in readiness to accompany me the moment I get a clue as to Fernal's present whereabouts?"

"I will do exactly what you wish," she answered.

I saw that her lips quivered while she spoke, but I also perceived to my relief that she had no intention of breaking down. A few moments later, I found myself in a hansom cab driving as fast as I could to Paddington Station. I took the next train down to Staffordshire, and arrived at Westfield, the small country town where Fernal had his practice, about nine o'clock in the evening. I drove straight to Dr. Russell's house. He was in, and I was admitted immediately into his presence. The old doctor knew me slightly. When I appeared he came eagerly forward.

"I can guess what you have come about," he said: "that unhappy business in connection with poor Fernal. His wife told me that she was going to town to consult you. Of course, I am glad to see you, but I don't know that you can do anything."

"I mean to find the man if he is still alive," I rejoined.

"The whole case points to suicide, does it not?" replied Russell. "But sit down, won't you? Let us talk it over."

I removed my overcoat and sat down on the chair which Russell indicated.

"I don't believe in the suicide idea," I began. "If Fernal meant to commit suicide, he would not have drawn a thousand pounds out of his bank. He is undoubtedly at the present moment suffering from a degree of mania, but it does not point in that direction. I want, if possible, to get a clue to his whereabouts; and, what is even far more important, to find out if the strychnine which, in a moment of oblivion, he put into his patient's medicine has really led to a fatal result."

"That I can't tell," replied Russell. "The



"I DON'T BELIEVE IN THE SUICIDE IDEA."

young man who came to consult Fernal yesterday morning appears to be a stranger in Westfield. Just after Mrs. Fernal left for town, I succeeded in tracing him to a commercial hotel of the name of Perry's in a back part of the town. He must have walked straight to the hotel after leaving my partner's consulting-room. The waiter there tells me that he looked ill when he entered the house—he observed that he carried a bottle of medicine wrapped up in paper in his hand. The bottle seemed to be unopened when the waiter observed him—he asked for his bill, which he paid, and in ten minutes' time had left the hotel. Yesterday was market day at Westfield, and there were a good many strangers in the town. This young man evidently attracted no special attention—the waiter did not even know his name. He arrived early in the morning, asked for a room, had a wash and change; had breakfast, of which he ate very little; went out, evidently to consult my partner; returned, paid his bill, and vanished. Where he is now, Heaven knows."

"The case must be put into a detective's hands immediately," I said. "Have you a good man in the town, or shall I wire to Scotland Yard?"

"There is, I believe, a private detective in Short Street," answered Russell; "but may I ask what is your object in following up this man's history? If he really dies of the medicine, we are likely to know all about the affair soon enough."

"There is just one chance in a hundred that he has not taken the medicine," I replied, "and on that chance we should act promptly."

"I can't follow you," replied the old man, impatiently. "If this young fellow never takes the medicine, why move at all in the matter? If the thing is known, it will be disastrous to us in every way. It is hard enough, Heaven knows, in these times of keen competition, to keep one's connection, and if it were bruited about that we had a mad doctor on the premises, who ad-

ministered poison instead of cure, we should lose all our patients in a month's time."

"Don't you see my point?" I answered. "In order to prevent your having a mad doctor on the premises, I insist on having this thing cleared up. If by a lucky chance the young man who called at your dispensary this morning is still alive and well, Fernal will in all probability recover from the mania which now threatens to overbalance his reason. From the nature of the medicine given, the patient was most likely only suffering from some simple disturbance. He refused to take the medicine while in Fernal's consulting-room—it is evident that he left the hotel with the bottle still unopened—it is not wrong, therefore, to infer that he was better. Being better, it is also on the cards, although I know it is scarcely likely, that he never touched the medicine at all. If this is the case and the fact is known, Fernal's reason may be saved."

"Oh, poor fellow, I doubt if he is in the land of the living," interrupted Dr. Russell.

"I am certain he is alive," I replied; "but the fact is this, doctor: he will be insane to the end of his days if he has really killed that young man. If his supposed victim is alive and unhurt, Fernal will in all probability soon be restored to his normal state of health."

"Perhaps you are right," said Dr. Russell, "and if so, you had better come with me at once to consult Hudson. He is a shrewd fellow, and will in all probability soon be able to trace the man to whom the strychnine was given. But how do you propose to find Fernal?"

"We will tackle Hudson first," I said. "I



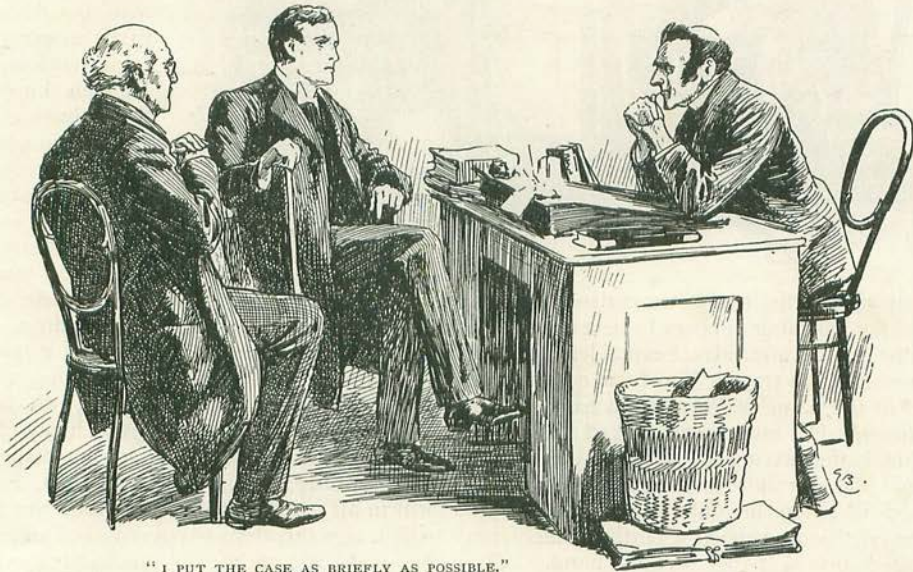
want to set him to work without a moment's delay."

Dr. Russell rose, put on his hat and great-coat, and we soon found ourselves in Short Street. Hudson, the private detective, happened to be in—we had an interview with him. I put the case as briefly as possible in his hands; he promised to take

when he saw him, and we continued our walk.

"What is that about Fernal sending a patient to Monte Carlo?" I asked, suddenly.

"I knew nothing about it until North mentioned it," said Dr. Russell. "Both the Norths have been down with influenza—the younger suffered considerably; he went



"I PUT THE CASE AS BRIEFLY AS POSSIBLE."

it up; assured us that it was a very easy and promising investigation, and told us that in all probability we should know whether Fernal's victim was alive or dead by the following morning.

As we were returning to Russell's house, a young man came up and spoke abruptly to the old doctor.

"How do you do?" he said. "Will you take a message from me to Fernal?"

"Fernal is from home at present," replied Dr. Russell.

"What a pity. The fact is, I heard from my brother this morning. He particularly begged of me to see Fernal, or by some means to convey his thanks to him."

"I hope your brother is better, North," said Dr. Russell, in a kindly tone.

"Thanks, he is getting as fit as possible—he thought Dr. Fernal would be glad to know about him—he is now at Monte Carlo, having a right good time—in short, his nerves are completely restored, and he proposes to return to work within the next fortnight or so."

Dr. Russell said a few more words, assured North that he would give Fernal his message

through just the sort of nerve storm which seems, in a different degree, to have affected poor Fernal himself. I did not know that Fernal had recommended him change—I am surprised that he sent him to a place like Monte Carlo."

"Why so?" I asked.

"On account of the gaming-tables. There never was a man who had such a horror of gambling as Fernal. His father was bitten with the craze years ago, and, as a boy, he learnt something of the tremendous evils which spring from indulgence in such a vice. That he should recommend a patient to put himself in the way of temptation astonishes me a good deal."

I thought deeply for a moment or two.

"Do you happen to know," I asked then, "when the Norths had influenza?"

"Why do you ask?"

"I have a reason for wishing to know. In short, if Fernal gave this advice *since* his own attack, it may give me a clue to his present whereabouts."

"I can't see your meaning," said Dr. Russell, with impatience. "As a fact, the youngest North was down with the malady

immediately after Feneral had made his own quick recovery—he had a short, sharp attack, followed by great depression—Feneral spoke about him to me one day. I said, casually, that he should have change—I did not know until to-night that my advice was acted upon."

"Thanks," I answered; "your information is of great importance. Now, if I can obtain North's address at Monte Carlo, I think my business here will be over, and I should like, if possible, to catch the midnight train to town."

"What in the world do you mean?"

"I am scarcely in a position to explain myself at the present moment," I answered. "Will you oblige me by sending a note round to North at once, asking his brother's address?"

"Why, yes; I will do that, certainly. Here we are, at home—you can have an answer to my note while we are at supper."

Russell was as good as his word; he sent a messenger to North's house asking him for the name of his brother's hotel at Monte Carlo. The answer came back quickly, and with it in my pocket I returned to London.

As I hurried back to town in the express train, the thought which had suddenly darted through my mind on hearing that Feneral had ordered North to seek change at Monte Carlo gathered strength and substance. The advice which he gave this young man was exactly the reverse of what he would have given had his mind been in its normal healthy state. If in a hasty moment he had ordered North to seek change of scene in the very place where he would be most exposed to temptation, was there not a possibility that he might himself seek the same relief? The fact of his having a horror of gambling in his sane moments would make it all the more probable that he would turn to it in his insane hours. In short, the idea grew stronger and stronger the more I thought it over, that North was the man to help me to find Feneral. In the early hours of the morning I reached town, and, driving straight to an office which was open all night, wired to North to his Monte Carlo address. I worded the telegram in the following manner:—

"Dr. Feneral is ill, and has disappeared from home—look out for him at Monte Carlo. If he arrives, telegraph to me without delay."

Having sent off this message, there was nothing whatever to do but to wait. Until I heard either from Hudson, the detective, or from North, I could take no further steps.

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On the evening of that day I received a telegram from the detective—it was unsatisfactory, and contained the simple words:—

"No news; writing."

The following morning I received his letter.

"Dear Sir,"—it ran—"I am completely foiled in my efforts to trace Dr. Feneral's unknown patient; beyond the fact that a young man in some respects answering to his description was noticed by a porter at the railway station entering a third-class carriage for London, I have no tidings to give you. I will continue to make investigations, and will let you know immediately anything turns up.

"Yours respectfully,

"JAMES HUDSON."

I had scarcely read this letter before Mrs. Feneral, who had moved to a hotel close by, called to see me. I showed her the letter. She read it with impatience.

"Can nothing be done?" she cried. "Have you no plan to propose, Dr. Halifax?"

"I have the ghost of a hope," I answered, "but it is really so slight that I have not dared to tell it to you."

"Oh, do not deprive me of the slightest shadow of hope," she answered; "you don't know what my despair is and what my fears are."

At that moment Harris entered the room, bearing a telegram on a salver.

"Wait one moment while I attend to this," I said to Mrs. Feneral.

I opened the envelope and saw, with a sudden leap at my heart, that my conjecture with regard to Feneral had been correct.

"There is no answer, Harris," I said to the man.

He withdrew. I glanced again at the words of the telegram, then placed it in Mrs. Feneral's hands.

"There," I said, "this will explain itself."

She almost snatched it from me, devouring the words with her eyes. They were as follows:—

"Feneral arrived here last night—he is at the Hotel des Anglais—does not recognise me—visited the tables after dinner—lost heavily."

"Thank Heaven he is found!" exclaimed Mrs. Feneral.

Tears streamed from her eyes—she let the little pink sheet of thin paper flutter to the floor.

"He is safe—he is alive," she gasped, with a choking noise in her throat. "How—how did you guess that he might be at Monte Carlo, doctor?"

I repeated in a few words my reasons for telegraphing to North—her tears ceased to flow as she listened to me—her eyes grew bright—a look of determination and courage filled her beautiful face.

“And now, what do you mean to do?” she asked, as soon as I paused.

“Go to him at once,” I answered.

“I will come with you, if I may.”

“You certainly may. There is still time to catch the eleven o'clock boat train from Victoria; we shall arrive in Paris this evening, and, if we are lucky, may catch the Mediterranean Express. Can you have your things packed and be back at this house in a quarter of an hour?”

“I can and will,” she answered.

She left me immediately. I gave hasty directions to my servants, saw the doctor who was to take charge of my patients in my absence, and was ready when Mrs. Fernal returned. We drove to Victoria, caught the boat train by a minute or two, and soon found ourselves rushing away to Dover. We arrived in Paris without any adventure, and were fortunate enough to catch the Mediterranean Express at the *Gare de Lyon*. I wired to North to tell him of our proposed visit, begged of him to meet me at the railway station, asked him to watch Fernal, and to say nothing of the fact that his wife and I hoped to reach Monte Carlo the following day.

Mrs. Fernal and I reached Marseilles at eleven o'clock on the following morning. There we left the train for breakfast. During breakfast I said, suddenly:—

“It would be well for us to arrange our plan of action now.”

She looked up at me in some surprise.

“Is there anything special?” she began.

“I want you to promise me one thing,” I said.

“Yes, of course, anything,” she said, with a heavy sigh.

“I want you to be guided by me—I want you to obey me explicitly.”

“Yes, I will, of course; but surely there is but one thing for me to do?”

“You think you must go straight to your husband?” I said.

“Certainly; that is why I am visiting Monte Carlo.”

“It seems hard to say ‘no’ to such a natural desire,” I said, “but I am anxious that you should not see Fernal on our arrival. All his future depends upon our acting with circumspection in the present crisis. I firmly believe that your husband’s

insanity is only of a temporary character, but one injudicious move would confirm his delusion and make him insane for the rest of his life. He has rushed from home now, under the impression that he has taken the life of a fellow-creature.”

“There is little doubt that such is the case,” replied Mrs. Fernal.

“I am by no means sure on that point. I have asked Hudson, the detective, to telegraph to me at the Hotel Métropole at Monte Carlo. I may find news on my arrival there. All depends on the nature of this news. When we reach our destination to-day, will you allow me to take you straight to a hotel, and will you stay there quietly until the moment comes for you to make your presence known to your husband?”

“It is hard for me to obey you, but I will,” answered the poor wife, with a heavy sigh.

We soon afterwards took our places in the train, and between three and four o'clock that afternoon arrived at Monte Carlo. Young North was waiting on the platform to receive us. He shook his head when I introduced myself to him. By a gesture, I warned him not to say anything in Mrs. Fernal’s presence. She was completely worn out by her journey, and fortunately did not notice the expressive action by which he gave me to understand that he had bad news. I took her to a large hotel not far from the Casino, saw that she was accommodated with a comfortable room, and promised to return to see her after a few hours. I then went out with North. He walked with me to my hotel.

“Well, I am glad you’ve come,” said the young fellow. “I have had an awful time ever since Fernal’s arrival. He is as mad as a man can be—spends every moment of his time at the tables, eats nothing, drinks a good deal—either does not recognise me or won’t. He is losing money at a frightful rate, but, from the manner of his play, seems to be absolutely reckless as to whether he loses or wins.”

“And where is he staying?” I asked.

“At the Hotel des Anglais. He has rooms on the first floor, and evidently denies himself nothing.”

I knew that Fernal was not rich. A little more of this reckless sort of thing, and he and his young wife would be beggars.

“The poor fellow is not responsible for his actions at the present moment,” I said.

“No, he is as mad as a March hare,” said North, with vehemence.

“Well, I trust his madness will not con-



"HE IS AS MAD AS A MARCH HARE."

tinue," I replied. "He is suffering at the present moment from a sort of double shock. The death of his child, followed immediately by an attack of influenza, produced the first bad effect upon his nerves—the second shock was worse than the first, but for that, he would not be losing money as fast as man can at the present moment."

"What do you mean?" said North.

I then told him what had occurred a few days ago at Westfield.

"The unfortunate thing is this," I said: "we cannot find the patient to whom Fernal gave the strychnine. I have put the best detective in Westfield on his track, but there are no tidings whatever of his whereabouts. I had hoped to have a telegram from the detective, Hudson, on my arrival. I desired it to be sent to this hotel, but none has yet arrived."

"Hudson is a very sharp fellow," said North. "If anyone can help to solve a mystery, he is the man. I am glad you put the case into his hands. My father, who is supposed to be the best solicitor at Westfield, often employs Hudson, and thinks most highly of him."

"Well," I said, "there is nothing to do at the present moment, but simply to wait.

One false step now would confirm Fernal's insanity."

"Will you not let him know that his wife has arrived?" interrupted North.

"Not at present; I must be guided altogether by circumstances. It will be your business and mine, North, not to lose sight of him. If by any chance he leaves Monte Carlo, he must be immediately followed."

Shortly afterwards North left me, and I went to seek an interview with Mrs. Fernal. Poor girl, she was worn out in every sense of the word. I begged of her to take some rest, assured her that I would send for her the moment her presence was likely to be of use, and went away.

On the afternoon of the next day, I was walking in the gardens just outside the Casino, when I suddenly saw Fernal coming to

meet me. The weather resembled that which we have in June in England. The tender blue of the sky was intensified in the deep blue of the Mediterranean. I was standing near a large bed of mignonette when Fernal walked by. He was dressed with care and looked like, what he was, a remarkably handsome and well-set-up fellow; he was evidently going to the Casino. He passed within arm's length of me, stared me full in the face, showed no gleam of recognition, and was about to pass me, when I could not help speaking to him.

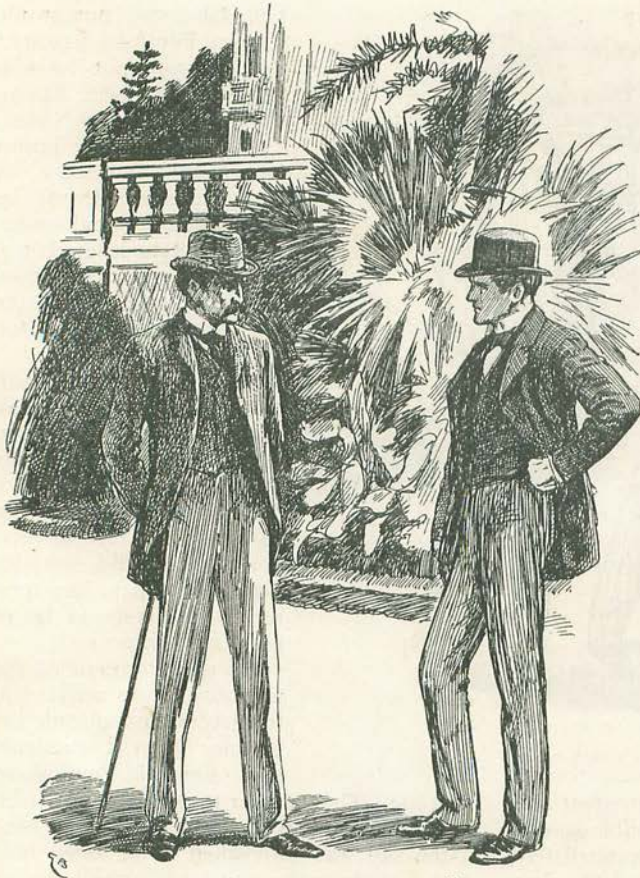
"How do you do?" I said.

He stopped when I said this and looked at me fixedly. A curious change came over his face; his eyes, which had appeared quite frank and untroubled when first he saw me, assumed a secretive and almost sly expression.

"I know who you are quite well," he said. "Will you oblige me by walking down this path with me?"

He pointed to a shady avenue of eucalyptus as he spoke. I yielded immediately to his humour. We walked together for a few paces, then he turned abruptly and faced me.

"You are a detective officer from the London police force," he said. "I know



"I KNOW YOU QUITE WELL."

you quite well, and what you have come about. The whole thing is perfectly fair, and I have not a word to say. It is my last intention to defeat the ends of justice in any way. I have committed murder—I am stained with blood. The law must, of course, have its course—all I beg of you is to give me time. Before I am arrested, I am anxious to win a sum of money to place my wife above want. I came to Monte Carlo for this purpose. Hitherto, I have been strangely unlucky, but I have a presentiment that my luck is about to turn. I shall win largely either this afternoon or this evening. After the gaming-tables are closed to-night, I am at your service, Inspector——"

He paused, but I did not supply any name.

"I will wait on you this evening at the gaming-tables," I said, suddenly.

"As you please," he replied, "but don't come until late—I am certain to win largely. You know yourself how important it is for a man in my position to provide for his wife."

I nodded, and he left me. I sat down on a bench and watched his retreating figure. He went slowly up the steps into the Casino and vanished from view. The beautiful scenery which surrounded me—and, perhaps, there is no more beautiful scenery in the world than is to be found at Monte Carlo—no longer gave me pleasure. I thought very badly of Feneral. His malady had progressed even farther than I had anticipated. If he had indeed killed his man, all hope of his recovering his senses was completely at an end. I went back to my hotel and spent some anxious hours there, during which I could settle to nothing. I had asked North to dine with me, and he came at the appointed time. I told him of my interview with Feneral—he shook his head as he listened.

"He took me for one of the gardeners here," he answered, "and asked me how I acquired my very excellent English. His brain is quite gone, poor fellow. I must say that I am rather surprised, Dr. Halifax, that you don't——"

"Don't do what?" I asked.

"Don't use your authority, and take the poor fellow back to England. He surely is not in a condition to be at large."

"Any forcible step of that kind would make the case hopeless," I answered. "I am inclined to use the most cautious measures until we really know the fate of his unlucky patient."

"And do you intend to follow him to the Casino to-night?" said North.

"Yes, I promised to be there—I shall keep my word."

"May I accompany you?"

"Certainly; I should like you to do so."

"What about Mrs. Feneral?"

"Poor soul, I must have an interview with her before I go," I answered.

My brief interview with the poor young wife was full of pain. I told her that I intended to follow her husband to the tables, and would bring her word of the result before midnight. She replied to this with a ghastly smile. As I was leaving the room she called after me.

"You are expecting a telegram at the Hotel Métropole from Mr. Hudson?" she said.

"I asked him to wire there if he had any news," I answered.

"Suppose his message comes while you are at the Casino?"

"In that case it must wait until I return," I replied.

"Will you commission me to bring it to you, if it does come?" she asked.

"I would rather you did not come to the Casino," I replied; "it is not a fit place for you to visit alone."

She made no answer, but I noticed a queer, determined look creeping into her face.

The hour was growing late now, and North and I hastened to the Casino. We followed the crowd into the vast building, obtained the usual cards of admittance, and soon found ourselves walking slowly through the suite of rooms which contain the celebrated gaming-tables. The hour had approached ten o'clock, and the numerous visitors from the different hotels were crowding in for their evening's amusement. Both ladies and gentlemen were in full evening dress, and the scene which met my eyes was a very brilliant and animated one. Each of the long tables was surrounded by groups of players seated on chairs close together; outside these groups, three or four rows deep, were crowds of spectators, some merely watching the play, others playing themselves over the heads of their more fortunate neighbours, others again waiting for their turns to find seats at the tables. The *roulette* tables, which were eight in number, were all crowded, but as we walked through the rooms, North whispered to me that Fernal despised *roulette*, and only played for high stakes at the *trente et quarante* tables. We passed the first of these, and eagerly scanned the faces of the men and women who surrounded it. Fernal was not amongst them. We stood for a moment or two to watch the play. A woman, splendidly dressed, was drawing attention to herself by the reckless manner in which she was flinging one-hundred-franc pieces on different divisions of the table. She lost and lost, but still went on playing. Her play was reckless in the extreme, and some people who stood near begged of her to desist. The terrible passion for gambling in its worst form was written all over her excited face. I turned away with a sense of disgust, and followed North to the other *trente et quarante* table.

Here I found the object of my search. Fernal was in irreproachable evening dress; his face was calm and pale, there was no apparent excitement either in his manner or appearance. He sat rather near one of the *croupiers*, and, to all appearance, was playing with extreme caution. From thirty to forty hundred-franc pieces were piled up at his left hand. He was making careful notes on a card which was placed in front of him, and was evidently playing with intelligence. At each deal of the cards he placed his gold on certain divisions, and, as we stood at a little distance and watched, I noticed that he won at every deal. His pile of gold grew larger, but his cautious and steady manner never deserted him. By degrees some people who were standing near began to remark on his invariable luck. Hearing a remark close by in the English tongue, he raised his eyes, and for an instant encountered mine.

"I told you I should win to-night," he said; "but you have come a little early, inspector. It is all right—quite right; but you must give me time."

As his success went on he began to double and quadruple his stakes—never once did he lose. A man who was standing near me said:—

"That Englishman has been here for the last three nights, and he has not had a moment's success until now. He evidently means to carry all before him to-night. If only he has sense to stop playing before his luck turns, he may retrieve his losses, which must have been very considerable."

"He plays with caution," I answered.

"He does to-night," was the reply, "but last night and the night before his play was reckless beyond words."

Some people in the crowd of spectators moved away at this moment, and North and I stepped into the space which they had vacated. By doing so we stood at Fernal's left hand, and could look over his shoulder. In the midst of his play he glanced at me once or twice. My presence did not irritate him in the least. He supposed me to be a detective come to take him into custody—his impression was that his time was short to accomplish the task he had set himself to do—he went on doubling and doubling his stakes—still without any apparent recklessness—never once did he lose.

The moments flew by, and the time for closing was not far off. Fernal was already a rich man.

"Stop him now, if you can," said North. "Let him take away his enormous winnings,

and whatever happens, his wife is provided for. Stop him, for God's sake, doctor, before his luck turns."

Before I could reply, a noise at my left caused me to turn my head—there was a slight commotion—a little pressure in the crowd, and I heard a woman's clear voice say:—

"Pardon me if I ask you to allow me to pass. That gentleman sitting there is my husband—I have something I wish to say to him."

The gentle, high-bred tone had an effect. I turned quickly, and saw, to my astonishment and horror, that Mrs. Feneral had come into the room. Unlike the other women present, she was in the quietest morning dress. Her fair face looked all the fairer because of the deep mourning which she wore.

"Your telegram has come at last, Dr. Halifax," she said to me. "I have taken the liberty to bring it to you—don't keep me, please—I must speak to my husband."

Before I could prevent her she had reached his side, her arms were round his neck, her cheek was touching his. The crowded room, the gaze of the many spectators, were nothing to her—she only saw her husband.

"Come away, darling," she said; "come away at once."

He started up when she touched him, and stared at her more in impatience than surprise.

"Don't interrupt me, Ingrid," he said, "I will come presently. Leave me now; I am busy."

He tried to resume his seat, but she clung to him, holding one of his hands in both of hers with a sort of desperation.

"No; you must come now," she said. "You don't know where you are—"

"I don't know where I am!" he interrupted, speaking fast and thick, his face scarlet now with intense excitement. "Yes, by Heaven! I do. I am here because my hands are red with blood. I conceal nothing. All the world may know the truth. I am in this place to-night because I have taken a man's life. I am about to pay the forfeit of my crime. This detective," here he pointed at me, "will arrest me in a moment or two. Before I go, I wish to provide for you—don't touch me—I am a murderer. Hands off, I say."

He pushed her from him. His eyes were wild. The people in the immediate neighbourhood heard his words—they began to move away from him with looks of

horror, even the *croupiers* turned their heads for a moment.

"Go home, Ingrid," said her husband. "Don't touch me. I have made a bargain with that man," again he pointed at me; "he is a detective from Scotland Yard. My bargain is that I am not to be arrested until I have won enough money to provide for your future. I am going to double my winnings. There is blood on my head—don't touch me."

His last words were uttered with a shout. Mrs. Feneral turned ghastly pale. Feneral sat down again by the table. At this moment I remembered the telegram, which was still unopen in my hand. I tore the seal open and read the contents. These were the words which almost took my breath away with relief and delight:—

*"Found Dr. Feneral's patient yesterday—he is a young man of the name of Norris. He lives at Colehill, in Warwickshire. He took the doctor's medicine to the last drop, and says that it restored him to perfect health. On hearing this, I went straight to Dr. Russell, who examined the bottle from which the strychnine was supposed to have been taken, and found it quite full. If Dr. Feneral took strychnine from the bottle by mistake, he must have poured it back again. It is evident that Norris had none in his medicine."*

"Read this," I said to Mrs. Feneral; "read it quickly—tell your husband the truth—he may be saved even yet."

Her quick eyes seemed to flash over the words—she took in the meaning in a couple of seconds.

"You have committed no murder," she said to her husband. "Don't go on with that horrid play—it is unnecessary. You are not what you think yourself—you are innocent of any crime. The man you gave the medicine to is alive and well. Read this—read this."

She thrust the telegram before his eyes. He read it—staggered to his feet, turned first red, then pale.

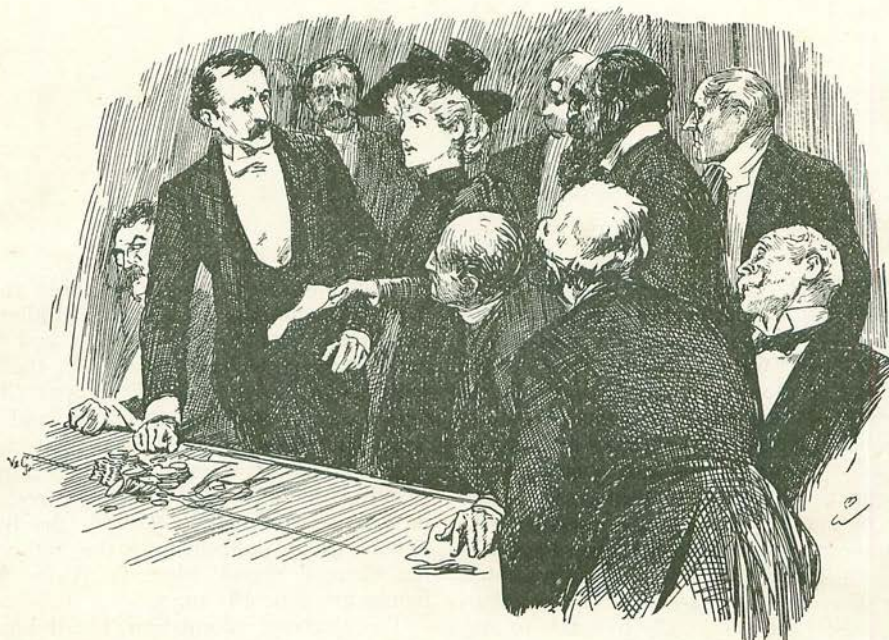
"Is this true?" he said, turning and fixing his eyes on his wife.

"Yes, it is perfectly true; it has just come. The man you gave the medicine to is well, quite well. Your medicine cured him instead of killing him; you shall see him again when you return to England."

Feneral put his hand to his forehead—a bewildered look crossed his face.

"Then what, in the name of Heaven, am I doing here?" he exclaimed.

He turned and looked with bewilderment around him.



"READ THIS—READ THIS."

The piles of gold which he had won lay close to him, but he did not touch them.

"What am I doing here?" he repeated. "How did I get into this place? They play for money here; I don't approve of it—I never play. Come, Ingrid, come home."

He grasped his wife's hand and led her quickly out of the Casino. I followed the pair, but North stayed behind to gather up Fernal's winnings.

The next day, when I visited him, Fernal was quite sane. He received me with a look of surprise.

"I can't imagine how I came to this place," he said; "I have not the least remembrance of how I got here—in fact, I recall nothing since the evening I interviewed you, Halifax, in Harley Street."

"Well, you are here now, and a very good thing too," I interrupted.

"Yes," he replied, "and now that I am out of England, I think I shall stay away

for a little, for although I feel ever so much better, I am not yet quite fit for work."

"Take a good, long change while you are about it," I answered.

I saw, with a sense of relief, that Fernal had completely lost all knowledge of that terrible episode during which he believed himself to be guilty of having taken the life of a fellow-creature. The winnings, which North had carefully secured, counterbalanced the large sums which he had lost during his first two evenings' reckless play at the Casino.

By my advice, Mrs. Fernal persuaded her husband to leave Monte Carlo that afternoon. They spent the next six months visiting different parts of Europe, and when he returned to his work in the following summer, he was completely restored to his normal state of health. I saw him shortly after his return, but he did not allude to the Monte Carlo incident—he is never likely to remember anything about it.