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.]

VIII.—ON A CHARGE OF FORGERY.

THE study of the human character in its many complex forms has always been of deep interest to the doctor. From long practice, he becomes to a great extent able to read his many patients, and some characters appear to him as if they were the pages of an open book. The hopes, fears, aims, and motives which influence the human soul are laid bare before him, even in the moment when the patient imagines that he is only giving him a dry statement of some bodily ailment. The physician believes fully in the action of mind on body, and can do little good for any patient until he becomes acquainted with his dominant thought, and the real motive which influences his life.

For the purpose of carrying on what has become such an absorbing study of my own life, I have often visited places not at all connected with my profession in the hope of getting fresh insight into the complex workings of the human mind.

Not long ago, having a day off duty, I visited the Old Bailey while a celebrated trial was going on. The special case which was engaging the attention of judge, learned counsel, and twelve intelligent members of the British jury was one which aroused my professional acumen from the first. The man who stood in the prisoner's dock was a gentleman by birth and appearance. He was young and good-looking—his face was of the keenly intelligent order—his eyes were frank in their expression—his mouth firm, and his jaw of the bulldog order as regards obstinacy and tenacity of purpose. I judged him to be about twenty-eight years of age, although the anxiety incident to his cruel position had already slightly sprinkled the hair which grew round his temples with grey.

His name was Edward Bayard—the crime he was being tried for was forgery—he was accused of having forged a cheque for £5,000, and I saw from the first that the circumstantial evidence against him was of the strongest. I listened to his able counsel's view of the case, watching the demeanour of the prisoner as I did so. He leant the whole time with his arms over the rail of the dock, looking straight before him without a vestige of either shame or confusion on his fine face. I observed that his intellect was keenly at work; that he was following the arguments of his counsel with intense interest. I also noticed that once or twice his lips moved, and on one occasion, when a very difficult point was carried, there came the glimmer of a smile of satisfaction round his firmly-set lips.

"THE COUNSEL FOR THE PROSECUTION."

The counsel for the prosecution then stood up and pulled the counsel's argument for the defendant to pieces. The case seemed black against the prisoner—still he never moved from his one position, and stood perfectly calm and self-possessed. The case was not finished that day. I went away so deeply interested, that I resolved at all hazards to return to the Old Bailey on the following afternoon. I did so—the case of Edward Bayard occupied another couple of hours—

in the end, the jury brought in a verdict of "Guilty," and the prisoner was sentenced to five years' penal servitude. I watched him when the sentence was pronounced, and noticed a certain droop of his shoulders as he followed his gaoler out of the dock. My own firm conviction was that the man was innocent. There was nothing for me to do, however, in the matter. A jury of his countrymen had pronounced Edward Bayard guilty. He had been employed in the diplomatic service, and hitherto his career had been irreproachable; it was now cut short. He had metaphorically stepped down, gone out, vanished. His old place in the world would know him no more. He might survive his sentence, and even live to be an old man, but practically, for all intents and purposes, his life was over.

I am not given to sentimentalize, but I felt a strange sensation of discontent during the remainder of that day; in short, I almost wished that I had taken up the law instead of medicine, in order that the chance might be mine to clear Bayard.

That evening at my club a man I knew well began to talk over the case.

"LADY KATHLEEN CHURCH."

"It is a queer story altogether," he said; "it is well known that Levesen, the man who prosecuted, is in love with the girl to whom Bayard was engaged."

"Indeed!" I answered. "I know nothing whatever of Bayard's private history."

"Until this occurred," continued Teesdel, "I would have trusted Bayard, whom I have known for years, with untold gold—the evidence against him, however, has been so overwhelming that, of course, he had not the ghost of a chance of acquittal; still, I must repeat, he is the last man I should ever have expected to do that sort of thing."

"I was present at the trial," I answered, "and followed the story to a certain extent, but I should like to hear it now in brief, if I may."

"I will present it in a nutshell," said Teesdel, in his brisk way. "Levesen, the prosecutor, is a tolerably rich man—he has a house in Piccadilly, where he lives with his sister. Levesen is guardian to a very beautiful girl, a ward in Chancery—her name is Lady Kathleen Church. She has lived with Levesen and his sister for the last couple of years. Lady Kathleen is only nineteen, and it was whispered a short time ago in Levesen's circle of friends that he intended to make the fair heiress his wife. She is a very lovely girl, and, as she will inherit a large fortune when she attains her majority, is of course attractive in every way. Lady Kathleen met Bayard at a friend's house—the young people fell in love with each other, and became engaged. Bayard was rising in his profession—he was far from rich, but was likely to do well eventually. There was no reasonable objection to the engagement, and Francis Levesen did not attempt to make any. Levesen took Bayard up—the two men were constantly seen together—the engagement was formally announced, although the wedding was not to take place until Lady Kathleen's majority. One fine morning it was discovered that Bayard's banking account was augmented to the tune of £5,000, that Levesen's account was short of precisely that sum, that a cheque had been presented by Bayard at Levesen's bank, with Levesen's signature, for exactly that sum of money. The cheque was, of course, a forgery. Bayard was arrested, prosecuted, and found guilty. His version of the story you have, doubtless, followed in court. Levesen is in Parliament, and has a secretary; Bayard was in money difficulties. He asked Levesen to help him, and declares

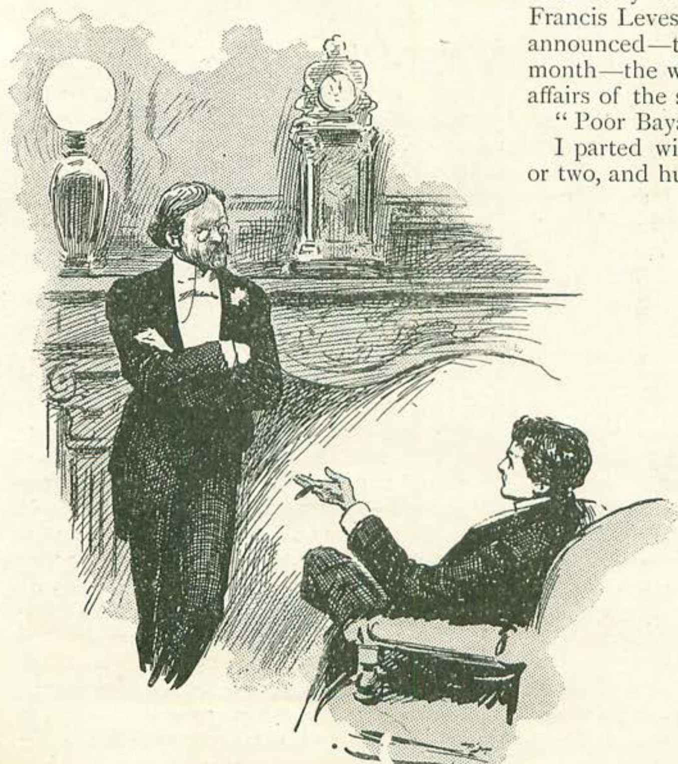
that the cheque was handed to him by Mr. Franks, Levesen's secretary. There is no evidence whatever to support this story, and Bayard has, as you know, now to expiate his crime in penal servitude. Well, I can only repeat that he is the last man in existence I should ever have expected to do that sort of thing."

"We none of us know what we may do until we are tried," said a man who stood near.

"The story is undoubtedly a strange one," I answered. "I have listened carefully to the evidence on both sides, and although the verdict is evidently the only one which could be expected under the circumstances, my strong feeling is that Bayard did not commit that forgery."

"Then how do you account for the thing?"

"I wish I could account for it—there is something hidden which we know nothing about. I am convinced of Bayard's innocence, but my reason for this conviction is nothing more than a certain knowledge of character which from long experience I possess. Bayard is not the sort of man who, under any circumstances, would debase himself to the extent of committing a crime. The whole thing is repugnant to his character—in short, I believe him to be innocent."



"I BELIEVE HIM TO BE INNOCENT."

My words evidently startled Teesdel; he gazed at me attentively.

"It is queer that you, of all men, should make such a remark, Halifax," he said. "You must know that character goes for nothing in moments of strong temptation. It was clearly proved that Bayard wanted the money. Franks, the secretary, could not have had any possible motive for swearing to a lie. In short, I can't agree with you. I am sorry for the poor fellow, but I am afraid my verdict is on the side of the jury."

"What about Lady Kathleen?" I asked, after a pause.

"Of course the engagement is broken off—people say the girl is broken-hearted—she was devoted to Bayard; I believe Miss Levesen has taken her out of town."

I said nothing further. It was more than a year before I heard Bayard's name mentioned again. Walking down Piccadilly one day I ran up against Teesdel; he stopped to speak to me for a minute, and as we were parting turned back to say:—

"By the way, your face reminds me of something—yes, now I know. The last time I saw you, you had just come from poor Bayard's trial—well, the latest news is, that Lady Kathleen Church is engaged to Francis Levesen—the engagement is formally announced—they are to be married within a month—the wedding is to be one of the big affairs of the season."

"Poor Bayard!" was my sole exclamation.

I parted with Teesdel after another word or two, and hurried off to attend to my duties.

A week later two ladies were ushered into my consulting-room. One was elderly, with a thin, somewhat masculine, type of face, shrewd, closely set dark eyes, and a compressed mouth. She was dressed in the height of the reigning fashion, and wore a spotted veil drawn down over her face. Her manner was stiff and conventional. She bowed and took the chair I offered without speaking.

I turned from her to glance at her companion—my other visitor was a girl—a girl who would have been beautiful had she been in health. Her figure was very slight and willowy—she had well-open brown eyes, and one of those high-bred faces which one associates

with the best order of English girl. In health, she probably had a bright complexion, but she was now ghastly pale—her face was much emaciated, and there were large black shadows under her eyes. Looking at her more closely, I came to the quick conclusion that the state of her bodily health was caused by some mental worry. The melancholy in her beautiful eyes was almost overpowering. I drew a chair forward for her, and she dropped into it without a word.

"My name is Levesen," said the elder lady. "I have brought my ward, Lady Kathleen Church, to consult you, Dr. Halifax."

I repeated the name under my breath—in a moment I knew who this girl was. She had been engaged to Bayard, and was now going to marry Francis Levesen. Was this the explanation of the highly nervous condition from which she was evidently suffering?

"What are Lady Kathleen's symptoms?" I asked, after a pause.

"She neither eats nor sleeps—she spends her time irrationally—she does everything that girl can do to undermine her health," said the elder lady, in an abrupt tone—"in short, she is childish to the last degree, and so silly and nervous that the sooner a doctor takes her in hand, the better."

"What do you complain of yourself?" I said, turning to the patient.

"I am sick of life," said the girl. "I am glad that I am ill—I don't wish to be made well."

"It is all a case of nerves," said Miss Levesen. "Until a year ago there could not have been a healthier girl than Lady Kathleen—she enjoyed splendid health—her spirits were excellent—from that date she began to droop. She had, I know, a slight disappointment, but one from which any sensible girl would quickly have recovered. I took her into the country and did what I could for her; she became better, and is now engaged to my brother, who is deeply attached to her. They are to be married in a month. If ever a girl ought to enjoy life, and the prospect before her, she ought."

"Ill-health prevents one enjoying anything," I answered, in an enigmatical voice. "Will you tell me something more about your symptoms?" I said, turning again to my patient.

"I can't sleep," she replied. "I do not care to eat—I am very unhappy—I take no interest in anything—in short, I wish to die."

"Your manner of speaking is most reckless and wrong, Kathleen," said the elder lady, in a tone of marked disapproval.

"Forgive me, but I should like to question Lady Kathleen without interruption," I said, turning to Miss Levesen.

Her face flushed.

"Oh, certainly," she answered. "I know that I ought not to speak—I sincerely hope that you will get to the bottom of this extraordinary state of things, Dr. Halifax, and induce my ward to return to common-sense."

"May I speak to you alone?" suddenly asked the young lady, raising her eyes, and fixing them on my face.

"If you wish it," I replied. "It may be best, Miss Levesen, to allow me to see Lady Kathleen for a few moments by herself," I continued, in a low voice. "In a case like the present, the patient is always much more confidential when quite alone with the doctor."

"As you please," she replied; "only, for Heaven's sake, don't humour her in her fads."

I rang the bell, and desired Harris to take Miss Levesen to the waiting-room. The moment we were alone, Lady Kathleen's manner completely changed; her listlessness left her—she became animated, and even excited.

"I am glad she has gone," she said; "I did not think she would. Now I will confess the truth to you, Dr. Halifax. I asked Miss Levesen to bring me to see you under the pretence that you might cure my bodily ailments. My real reason, however, for wishing to have an interview with you was something quite apart from anything to do with bodily illness."

"What do you mean?" I asked, in astonishment.

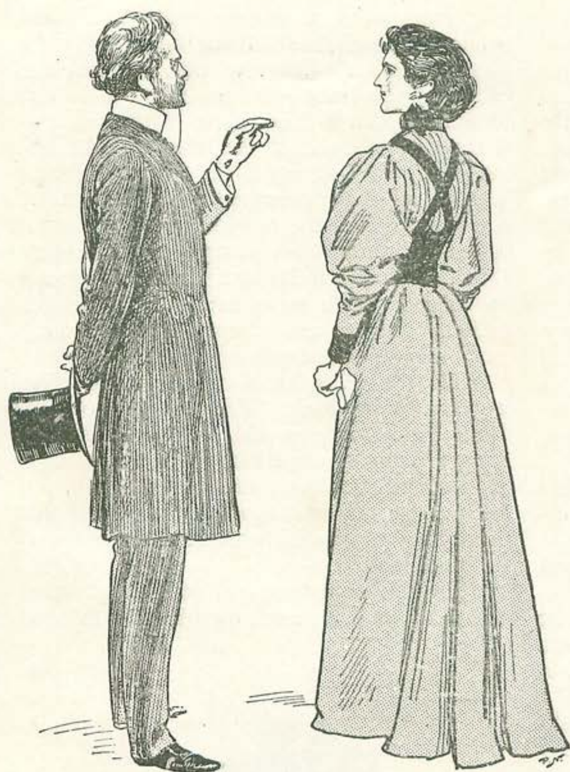
"What I say," she answered. "I think I can soon explain myself. You know Mr. Teesdel, don't you?"

"Teesdel," I replied; "he is one of my special friends."

"He called at our house last week: I was alone with him for a moment. He saw that I was unhappy, that—that a great sorrow is killing me—he was kind and sympathetic. He spoke about you—I just knew your name, but no more. He told me something about you, however, which has filled my mind with the thought of you day and night ever since."

"You must explain yourself," I said, when she paused.

"You said, doctor"—she paused again, and seemed to swallow something in her throat—"you said that you believed in the innocence of Edward Bayard."



"HE SAW THAT I WAS UNHAPPY."

"My dear young lady, I do," I replied, with emphasis.

"God bless you for those words; you will see now what a link there is between you and me, for you and I in all the world are the only people who believe in him."

I did not reply. Lady Kathleen's eyes filled with tears; she took out her handkerchief and wiped them hastily away.

"You will understand at once," she continued, "how I have longed to come and see you and talk with you. I felt that you could sympathize with me. It is true that I am ill, but I am only ill because my mind reacts on my body—I have no rest of mind day or night—I am in the most horrible position. I am engaged to a man whom I cordially loathe and hate, and I love another man passionately, deeply, distractedly."

"And that man is now enduring penal servitude?" I interrupted.

"Yes, yes. Did Mr. Teesdel tell you that I was once engaged to Edward Bayard?"

"He did," I answered.

"It is true," she continued; "we loved each other devotedly—we were as happy as two people could be—then came the first cloud—Edward in a weak moment signed his name to a bill for a friend—the friend failed, and Edward was called upon to pay the money. He said that he would ask my guardian, Francis Levesen, to help him. He did so in my presence, and Francis refused. Edward said that it did not matter, and was confident that he could get the money in some other way. Immediately afterwards came the horrible blow of his supposed forgery—he was arrested—he and I were together when this happened. All the sun seemed to go out of my sky at once—hope was over. Then came the trial—the verdict, the terrible result. But none of these things, Dr. Halifax, could quench my love. It is still there—it consumes me—it is killing me by inches—my heart is broken: that is why I am really dying."

"If you feel as you describe, why do you consent to marrying another man?" I asked.

"No wonder you ask me that question. I will try and answer it. I consent because I am weak. Constant, ceaseless worrying and persuasion have worked upon my nerves to such an extent that, for very peace, I have said 'yes.' Miss Levesen would like the marriage; she is a good woman, but she is without a particle of sentiment or romance. She believes in Edward's guilt, and cannot understand how it is possible for me to love him under existing circumstances. She would like me to marry her brother because I have money and because my money will be of use to him. She honestly thinks that he will make me a good husband, and that after my marriage I shall be happy. I respect her, but I shrink from him as I would from a snake in the grass—I don't believe in him. I am certain that he and his secretary, Mr. Franks, concocted some awful plot to ruin Edward Bayard. This certainty haunts me unceasingly day and night. I am a victim, however, and have no strength to resist the claim which Mr. Levesen makes upon me. When Mr. Teesdel called, however, and told me that you believed in Edward, a faint glimmer of light seemed to come into my wretchedness; I resolved to come and see you. I told Miss Levesen that I should like to see a doctor, and spoke of you. She knew your name, and was delighted to bring me to you—now you know my story. Can you do anything for me?"

"I can only urge you on no account to marry Mr. Levesen," I answered.

"It is easy for you to say that, and for me to promise you that I will be true to my real lover while I am sitting in your consulting-room; but when I return to my guardian's house in Piccadilly I shall be a totally different girl. Every scrap of moral strength will have left me—in short, I shall only be capable of allowing matters to drift. They will drift on to my wedding-day. I shall go to church on that day, and endure the misery of a marriage ceremony between Francis Levesen and myself—and then I only sincerely trust that I shall not long survive the agony of such a union. Oh, sometimes I do not believe my mind will stand the strain. Dr. Halifax, is there anything you can do to help me?"

The poor girl was trembling violently—her lips quivered—her face wore a ghastly expression.

"The first thing you must do is to try and control yourself," I said.

I poured out a glass of water, and gave it to her. She took a sip or two, and then placed it on the table—her excessive emotion calmed down a little.

"I will certainly do what I can to help you," I said, "but you must promise on your part to exercise self-control. Your nerves are in a very weak state, and you make them weaker by this excessive emotion. I can scarcely believe that you have not sufficient strength to resist the iniquity of being forced into a marriage which you abhor. You have doubtless come to me with some idea in your mind. What is it you wish me to do?"

"I have come with a motive," she said. "I know it is a daring thing to ask. You can help me if you will—you can make matters a little easier."

"Pray explain yourself," I said.

"I want you to do this, not because you are a doctor, but because you are a man. I want you to go and see Edward Bayard—he is working out his sentence at Hartmoor. Please don't refuse me until I have told you what is exactly in my mind. I have read all the books I can find with regard to prisons and prisoners, and I know that at intervals prisoners are allowed to see visitors. I want you to try and see him, and then tell him about me. Tell him that my love is unalterable—tell him that when I marry Mr. Levesen, I shall only have succumbed to circumstances, but my heart, all that is worth having in me, is still his, and his only—tell him, too, that I shall always believe in his innocence as long as I live."

"You make a strange request," I said, when she had finished speaking. "In the first place, you ask me to do something outside my province—in the next, it is very doubtful, even if I do go to Hartmoor, that I shall be allowed to see the prisoner and deliver your message. It is true that at stated intervals prisoners are allowed to see friends from the outside world, but never alone—a warder has always to be present. Then why disturb Bayard with news of your marriage? Such news can only cause him infinite distress, and where he is now he is not likely to hear anything about it."

"On the other hand, he may hear of it, any day or any hour. Prisoners do get news from the outside world. Newspapers are always being smuggled into prisons—I have read several books on the subject. Oh, yes, he must get my message; he must know that I am loyal to him in heart at least, or I shall go quite mad."

Here the impetuous girl walked to one of the windows, drew aside the blind, and looked

"SHE DREW ASIDE THE BLIND."

out. I saw that she did so to hide her intense emotion.

"I can make no definite promise to you," I said, after a pause; "but I will certainly

try if it is in my power to help you. I happen to know the present Governor of Hartmoor, and perhaps indirectly I may be able to communicate with Bayard."

"You will do more than that—you will go to Hartmoor—yes, I am sure you will. Don't call this mission outside your province. You are a doctor. Your object in life is to relieve illness—to soothe and mitigate distress. I am ill, mentally, and this is the only medicine which can alleviate my sufferings."

"If possible, I will accede to your request," I said. "I'm afraid I cannot speak more certainly at present."

"Thank you; thank you. I know that you will make the thing possible."

"I can at least visit the Governor, Captain Standish; but remember, even if I do this, I may fail utterly in my object. I must not write to you on the subject—just rest assured that I will do my utmost for you."

She gave me her hand, turned aside her head to hide her tears, and hurried from the room. I thought a good deal over her sad story, and although I was doubtful of being able to communicate her message to Bayard, I resolved to visit Hartmoor, and trust to Providence to give me the opportunity I sought.

Some anxious cases, however, kept me in town for nearly ten days, and it was not until a certain Saturday less than a week before the day appointed for the wedding that I was able to leave London. I went to Plymouth by the night mail, and arrived at the great, gloomy-looking prison about eleven o'clock on the following morning. I received a warm welcome from the Governor and his charming wife. He had breakfast ready for me on my arrival, and when the meal was over told me that he would take me round the prison, show me the gangs of men at their various works of stone-quarrying, turf-cutting, trenching, etc., and, in short, give me all the information about the prisoners which lay in his power.

He was as good as his word, and took me first through the prison, and afterwards to see the gangs of men at work. I was much interested in all I saw, but had not yet an opportunity of saying a special word about Bayard. After dinner that evening Captain Standish suddenly asked me the object of my visit.

"Well," he said, "has your day satisfied you?"

"I have been much interested," I replied.

"Yes, yes, but you must have had some special object in taking this journey—a busy man like you will not come so far from town, particularly at this time of year, without a motive—even granted," he added, with a smile, "that we are old friends."

I looked fixedly at him for a moment, then I spoke.

"I have come here for a special object," I said.

"Ah, I thought as much. Do you feel inclined to confide in me?"

"I certainly must confide in you. I have come to Hartmoor to see a man of the name of Bayard — Edward Bayard; he was sentenced to five years' penal servitude about a year ago—I was present at the trial—I have brought him a message—I want, if possible, to deliver it."

While I was speaking, Captain Standish's face wore an extraordinary expression.

"You want to see Bayard?" he repeated.

"Yes."

"And you have brought him a message which you think you can deliver?"

"Yes. Is that an impossibility?"

"I fear it is."

He remained silent for a minute, thinking deeply—then he spoke.

"One of the strictest of prison rules is, that prisoners are not allowed to be pointed out to visitors for identification. It is true that at stated times the convicts are allowed to see their own relations or intimate friends, always, of course, in the presence of a warder. Bayard has not had anyone to see him since his arrival. Are you personally acquainted with him?"

"I never spoke to him in my life."

"Then how can you expect——?"

I broke in abruptly.

"The message I am charged with is in a certain sense one of life or death," I said; "it affects the reason, perhaps the life, of an innocent person. Is there no possibility of your rule being stretched in my favour?"

"None whatever in the ordinary sense, but what do you say"—here Captain Standish sprang to his feet—"what do you say to seeing Bayard in your capacity as physician?"

"What do you mean?"

"Simply this. I should be glad if you would see him in consultation with our prison doctor. I know Bruce would be thankful to have your views of his case."

"Then he is ill?" I said.

"Yes, he is ill—at the present moment the prisoner whom you have come to see is in a state of complete catalepsy—stay, I will send for Bruce and ask him to tell you about him."

Captain Standish rose and rang the bell. When the servant appeared he asked him to take a message to Dr. Bruce, begging him to call at the Governor's house immediately.

"While we are waiting for Bruce," said Standish, "I will tell you one or two things about Bayard. By the way, we call him Number Sixty here. He came to us from Pentonville with a good character, which he has certainly maintained during the few months of his residence at Hartmoor. He is an intelligent man, and a glance is sufficient to show the class of society from which he has sprung. You know we have a system of marks here, and prisoners are able to shorten their sentences by the number of marks they can earn for good conduct. Bayard has had his full complement from the first—he has obeyed all the rules, and been perfectly civil and ready to oblige.

"It so happened that three months ago a circumstance occurred which placed the prisoner in as comfortable a position as can be accorded to any convict. One morning there was a row in one of the yards—a convict attacked a warder in a most unmerciful manner—he would have killed him if Sixty had not interfered. Bayard is a slightly built fellow, and no one would give him credit for much muscular strength. The doctor placed him in the tailoring establishment when he came, declaring him unfit to join the gangs for quarrying and for outside work. Well, when the scuffle occurred, about which I am telling you, Sixty sprang upon the madman, and, in short, at personal risk, saved Simpkins's life. The infuriated convict, however, did not let Bayard off scot-free; he gave him such a violent blow in the ribs that one was broken—it slightly pierced the lung, and, in short, he had to go to hospital, where he remained for nearly a fortnight. At the end of that time he was apparently well again, and we hoped that no ill-consequences would arise from his heroic conduct. After a consultation with Bruce, I took him from the tailoring and gave him book-keeping and the lightest and most intelligent employment the place can afford. He has a perfect genius for wood-carving, and only this morning was employed in my house, directing some carpenters in putting together a very intricate cabinet. He is, I consider, an exceptional man in every way."

"But what about these special seizures?" I asked.

"I am coming to them. Ah, here is Bruce. Bruce will put the facts before you from a medical point of view. Bruce, let me introduce my friend, Dr. Halifax. We have just been talking about your patient, Number Sixty. What do you say to consulting Halifax about him?"

"I shall be delighted," answered Bruce.

"I think I understood you to say, Standish, that Bayard is ill now?" I asked.

"That is so. Pray describe the case, Bruce."

"Your visit is most opportune," said Dr. Bruce. "Sixty had a bad attack this morning. He was employed in this very house directing some carpenters, when he fell in a state of unconsciousness to the floor. He was moved at once into a room adjoining the workshop—he is there now."

"What are his general symptoms?" I asked.

"Complete insensibility—in short, catalepsy in its worst form. His attacks began after the slight inflammation of the lungs which followed his injury. Captain Standish has probably told you about that."

"I have," said Standish.

"He may have received a greater shock than we had any idea of at the time of the accident," continued Dr. Bruce, "otherwise, I can't in the least account for the fact of catalepsy following an injury to the lungs. The man was in perfect health before this illness, since then he has had attacks of catalepsy once and sometimes twice in one week. As a rule, he recovers consciousness after a few hours; but to-day his insensibility is more marked than usual."

"You don't think it by any possibility a case of malingering?" I inquired. "One does hear of such things in connection with prisoners."

The prison doctor shook his head.

"No," he said, "the malady is all too real. I have tested the man in every possible way. I have used the electric battery, and have even run needles into him. In short, I am persuaded there is no imposture. At the present moment he looks like death; but come, you shall judge for yourself."

As Dr. Bruce spoke, he led the way to the door; Captain Standish and I accompanied him. We walked down a stone passage, entered a large workshop with high guarded windows, and passed on to a small room beyond. The one window in this room was also high, and protected with thick bars. On a trundle bed in the centre lay the prisoner.

For a moment I scarcely recognised the man. When I had last seen Bayard, he had been in ordinary gentleman's dress; he was now in the hideous garb of the prison—

his hair was cut within a quarter of an inch of his head—his face was thin and worn, it looked old, years older than the face I had last seen above the dock of the Old Bailey. There were deep hollows, as if of intense mental suffering, under the eyes—the lips were firmly shut, and resembled a straight line. The bulldog obstinacy of the chin, which I had noticed in the court of the Old Bailey, was now more discernible than ever.

"If ever a man could malinger, this man could," I muttered to myself; "he has both the necessary courage and obstinacy. But what could be his motive?"

I bent down and carefully examined the patient. He was lying flat on his back. His skin was cold—there was not a vestige of colour about the face or lips. Taking the wrist between my fingers and thumb, I felt for the pulse, which was very slow and barely perceptible—the man's whole frame felt like ice—there was a slight rigidity about the limbs.

"This is a queer case," I said, aloud.

"It is real," interrupted Bruce; "the man is absolutely unconscious."

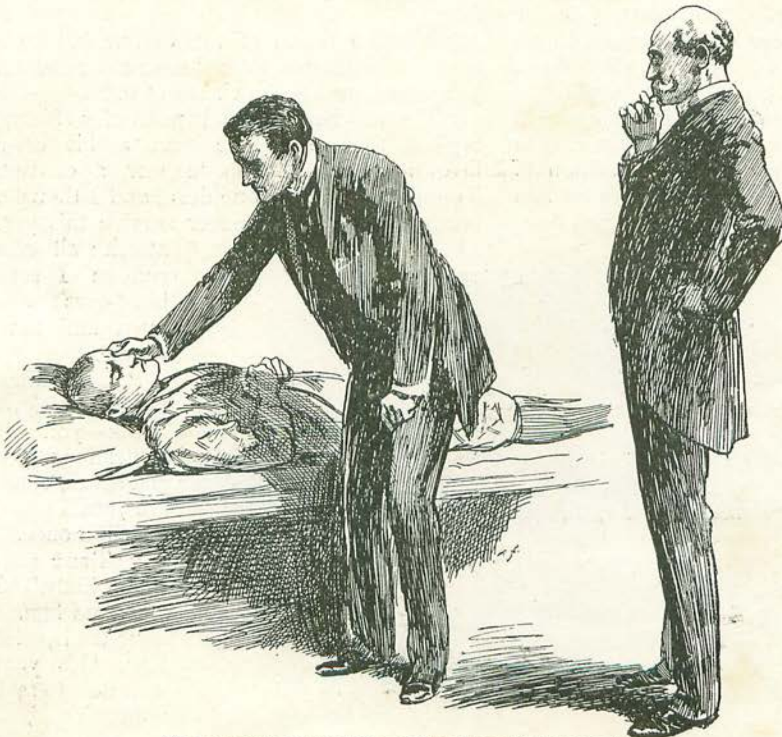
When he spoke, I suddenly lifted one of the patient's eyelids, and looked into the eye—the pupil was contracted—the eye was glazed and apparently unconscious. I looked fixedly into it for the space of several seconds—not by the faintest flicker did it show the least approach to sensibility. I pressed my finger on the cornea—there was not a flinch. I dropped the lid again. After some further careful examination, I stood up.

"This catalepsy certainly seems real," I said—"the man is, to all appearance, absolutely unconscious. I am sorry, as I hoped to have persuaded you, Captain Standish, to allow me to have an interview with him. I came to Hartmoor to-day for that express purpose. I have been intrusted with a message of grave importance from someone he used to know well in the outer world—I should have liked to have given him the message—but in his present state this is, of course, impossible."

"What treatment do you propose?" asked Bruce, who showed some impatience at my carefully-worded speech.

"I will talk to you about that outside," I answered—I was watching the patient intently all the time I was speaking.

Standish and Bruce turned to leave the room, and I went with them. When I reached the door, however, I glanced suddenly back at the sick man. Was it fancy, or had he looked at me for a brief second? I certainly detected the faintest quiver about the eyelids. Instantly the truth flashed through my brain—Bayard was a malingerer. He had feigned catalepsy so cleverly that he had even imposed upon the far-seeing prison doctor. He would have imposed upon me, but for that lightning quiver of the deathlike face. I had spoken on purpose about that message from the outside world. Mine was truly an arrow shot at a venture, but the arrow had gone home. When I left the room, I knew the man's



"I SUDDENLY LIFTED ONE OF THE PATIENT'S EYELIDS."

secret. I resolved, however, not to reveal it.

Bruce consulted me over the case. I gave some brief suggestions, and advised the prison doctor not to leave the man alone, but to see that a warder sat up with him during the night. Standish and I then returned to the drawing-room. We spent a pleasant evening together, and it was past one o'clock when we both retired to rest. As we were going to our rooms, a sudden idea flashed through my mind.

"Have you any objection," I said, turning suddenly to Standish, "to my seeing Number Sixty again?"

"Of course not, Halifax; it is good of you to be so interested in the poor chap. I will ask Bruce to take you to his room to-morrow morning."

"I want to see him now," I said.

"Now?"

"Yes, now, if you will allow me."

"Certainly, if you really wish it—I don't suppose there is the least change, however, and the man is receiving every care—a warder is sitting up with him."

"I should like to see him now," I repeated.

"All right," answered Standish.

We turned and went downstairs; we entered the cold stone passage, passed through the workshop, and paused at the door of the little room where the sick man was lying. Standish opened the door, holding a candle in his hand as he did so. We both looked towards the bed; for a moment we could see nothing, for the candle threw a deep shadow, then the condition of things became clear. The warder, who had charge of Bayard, lay in an unconscious heap on the floor—the prisoner himself had vanished.

"Good God! The man was malingering after all, and has escaped," cried the Governor.

I bent down over the warder; he had been deprived of his outer garments, and lay in his shirt on the floor. I turned him on his back, examined his head, and asked Standish to fetch some brandy; a moment or two later the man revived.

He opened his eyes and looked at me in a dazed way.

"Where am I?" he said. "What, in the name of wonder, has happened? Oh, now I remember—that scoundrel—let me get up, there is not a moment to lose."

"You must not stir for a minute or two," I said. "You have had a bad blow, and must lie still. You are coming to yourself very fast, however. Stay quiet for a moment, and then you can tell your story."

"Meanwhile, I will go and give the alarm," said Standish, who had been watching us anxiously.

He left the room. The warder had evidently been only badly stunned—he was soon almost himself again.

"I remember everything now, sir," he said. "I beg your pardon, sir, I don't know your face."

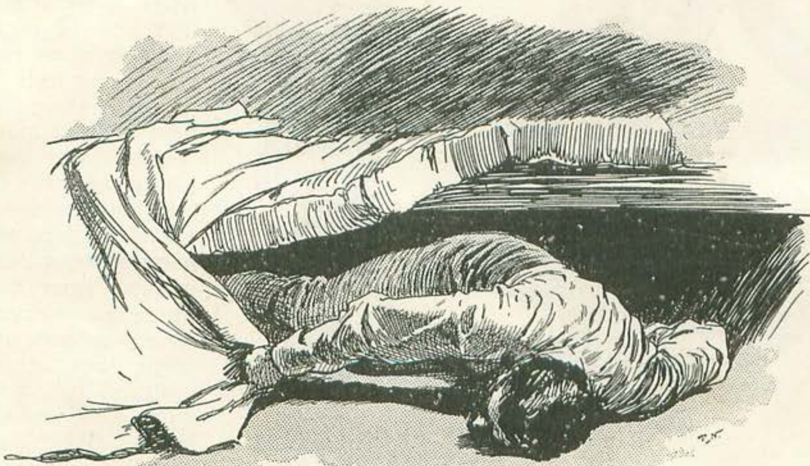
"I am a friend of the Governor," I answered, "a doctor from London. Now tell your story, and be quick about it."

"We all had a good word for Sixty," replied the man; "'e was a bit of a favourite, even though 'e wor a convict. To-night he laid like one dead, and I thought, pore chap, 'e might never survive this yere attack; all of a sudden I seed his eyes wide open and fixed on me.

"'Simpkins,' he says, 'don't speak—you are a dead man if you speak, Simpkins, and I saved your life once.'

"'True for you, Sixty,' I answered him.

"'Well,' he says, 'it's your turn now to save mine. You 'and me over your hat,



"THE WARDER LAY IN AN UNCONSCIOUS HEAP ON THE FLOOR."

and jacket, and trousers,' says 'e. 'Be quick about it. If you say "no," I'll stun you—I can—I've hid a weapon under the mattress.'

"'Oh, don't you go and break prison, Sixty,' I answered; 'you'll get a heap added to your sentence if you do that.'

"'I must,' he said, his eyes wild-like. 'I saw it in the papers, and I must go—there is one I must save, Simpkins, from a fate worse than death. Now, is it "yes" or "no"?'

"'It's "no,"' I answered, as I makes for him.

"I'd scarcely said the words," continued the man, "before he was on me—he leapt out of bed, and caught me by the throat. I remember a blow and his eyes looking wild—and then I was unconscious. The next thing I knew was you pouring brandy down my throat, sir."

"You are better now," I replied; "you had better go at once, and tell your story to the authorities."

The man left the room, and I hastened to find Standish. There was hurry and confusion and a general alarm. There was not the least doubt that Bayard had walked calmly out of Hartmoor prison in Warder Simpkins's clothes. One of the porters testified to this effect. A general alarm was given, and telegrams immediately sent to the different railway and police stations. Standish said that the man would assuredly be brought back the following morning. Even if by any chance he managed to get as far as London, he would, in his peculiar clothes, be arrested there immediately.

I remained at Hartmoor for a good part of the following day, but Standish's expectations were not realized. Although telegrams were sent to the different police-stations, there was no news with regard to Edward Bayard. It was presently ascertained that Simpkins had money in the pocket of his jacket—he had just received his week's wages, and had altogether about £3 on his person. When this fact became known the success of the escape was considered probable. As there was nothing more for me to do, I returned to London on the evening of the following day, and reached my own house in time for breakfast.

I was anxious to see Lady Kathleen, but was puzzled to know how I could communicate with her. My doubts on this point, however, were set to rest in a very unexpected manner. When I returned home after seeing my patients that afternoon, Harris surprised me with the information that Miss Levesen was waiting to see me. I went to her at once. She came forward to greet me with a look of excitement on her face.

"You remember your patient, Lady Kathleen Church?" she asked.

"Perfectly," I replied. "I hope she is better."

"Far from that, she is worse—I consider her very ill. Her wedding is to take place in a few days, but unless something is done to relieve her terrible tension of mind, we are more likely to have a funeral than a wedding on that day."

"What are her special symptoms at present?" I asked.

"She has been going from bad to worse since you saw her, Dr. Halifax. This morning she went out by herself for a short time, and returned in a very strange state of excitement. Her own impression was that she was losing her senses. She begged and implored that I would send for you. And I resolved to come to fetch you myself. Can you come to see her?"

"Certainly," I replied; "at what hour?"

"Now, if you will; there is no time to be lost. Will you return with me? Your patient is very ill, and ought to have attention without a moment's delay."

"My carriage is at the door; shall we go back to your house in it?" I asked.

"Certainly," replied Miss Levesen.

She rose from her chair at once—she was evidently impatient to be off. As we were driving to Piccadilly, she turned and spoke to me.

"While we have an opportunity, I wish to say something," she said.

"What is that?" I asked.

"I should naturally be glad if Lady Kathleen married my brother, but I wish you clearly to understand that I am not one to force the marriage. I fear the poor girl has not got over another most unfortunate attachment. Under present circumstances, I have made up my mind to cease to urge the wedding which we had hoped would so soon take place. I can't get my brother, however, to view matters in the same light; he is determined at any risk to keep Lady Kathleen to her promise."

"He cannot force her," I said.

"By moral suasion, yes—you do not know the man, Dr. Halifax."

I said nothing further—we had drawn up at the magnificent mansion in Piccadilly, and a few moments later I found myself in the presence of my patient. Miss Levesen brought me as far as the door, then she withdrew.

"Go in alone," she said, "that will be best. I don't want my brother to think that I'm in any way plotting against his interests."

She said these last words in an almost frightened whisper, and vanished before I had time to reply. I knocked at the door—a man's voice called to me to enter, and I found myself in a pretty boudoir.

The young girl whom I had come to see was lying on a sofa—her eyes were shut—a handkerchief, wrung out of some eau de Cologne and water, was placed over her brow. A man was seated by her side—he was evidently nursing her with extreme care, and there was a look of solicitude on his face. I guessed at once that this man was Levesen. A hasty glance showed me that he was in the prime of life. He was dressed irreproachably, and looked not only gentlemanly, but aristocratic. He rose when I entered, and bowed to me rather stiffly. I hastened to tell him my name and errand. Without a word he offered me his seat near the patient. Lady Kathleen had opened her eyes when I came in—she roused herself from the sort of deathlike stupor into which she had sunk, and gave me one or two glances of interest and relief. I put some questions to her, but I quickly saw that in Levesen's presence she was constrained and uncomfortable.

"Do you object to my seeing the patient for a few moments alone?" I asked of him.

His answer surprised me.

"I do," he said; "there is nothing you can say to Lady Kathleen that I have not a right to listen to. She is suffering from nervousness — nervousness bordering on hysteria—she needs sleep—a sedative will supply her with sleep. Will you have the goodness to write a prescription for one?—you will find paper, pen, and ink on this table."

He spoke in a quiet voice, the rudeness underneath being covered by a very suave manner. I was just turning to put some more questions to Lady Kathleen, when she surprised me by sitting up on the sofa and speaking with startling emphasis and force.

"You won't go away?" she said to Levesen.

"I will not," he replied.

"Then I will speak before you. No, you cannot cow me — not while Dr. Halifax is here. You shall hear the truth now, Francis, unless you change your mind and leave the room."

"I prefer to remain," he answered, with a sneer. "I should be glad to know what is really in your mind."

"I will tell you. I only marry you because I am afraid to refuse you. The only influence you have over me is one of terror. At the present moment I feel strong enough to defy you. That is because Dr. Halifax is here. He is a strong man, and he gives me courage. I don't love you—I hate you—I hate you with all my heart and strength. You don't love me—you only want to marry me for my money."

While Lady Kathleen was speaking, Levesen rose.

"You see how ill your patient is, doctor," he said, "you perceive how necessary a sedative is. My dear child," he added, "you are not quite accountable for your words at the present moment. Pray don't talk any more while you are so feverish and excited."

"But I have something more to say," she answered. "Perhaps you will think me mad—perhaps I am mad—still, mad or sane, I will now say what is in my mind. I hate you, and I love Edward Bayard. I saw Edward in the park this morning. He was standing close to Stanhope Gate. I passed him. I wanted to turn and speak to him, but before I could do so, he had vanished. Yes, I saw him. It was that sight which completely upset me—it took my last remnant of strength away. When I returned home I thought I should die—the shock was terrible—perhaps I did not really see him—perhaps I am mad, and it was a case of illusion. Oh, Francis, don't ask me to marry you—don't exercise your strength over me—give me back my freedom. Don't make a girl who hates you as I do, your wife."

"Come," said Levesen, "this is serious. Stay quiet, my dear child; you are really not in a condition to excite yourself. I did not know, doctor," he added, turning to me, "that the case was so bad. Of course, Lady Kathleen is suffering from illusion, seeing that Bayard is at present working out the sentence he richly deserves at Hartmoor."

"He is an innocent man, and you know it," said Lady Kathleen.

"Poor girl, her malady has grown much worse than I had any idea of," continued Levesen.

I interrupted.

"That does not follow," I replied. "Lady Kathleen is very ill, but she is not suffering from illusion. It is very probable that she did see Bayard this morning, seeing that he escaped from Hartmoor two nights ago."

"What?" said Lady Kathleen.

My words seemed to electrify her. She

"HE IS AN INNOCENT MAN, AND YOU KNOW IT."

sprang from the sofa, and clasped one of my hands in hers.

"Edward has escaped from prison?" she said, with a sort of gasp.

Levesen said nothing, but his face assumed an ugly, greenish tint.

"It is true——" I began.

My words were interrupted. A sudden noise was heard in the drawing-room which communicated with the boudoir. Quick footsteps approached, the door of the boudoir was burst open, and a man whom I had never seen before rushed in, and clasped Levesen by one of his hands.

"What in the world is the matter, Franks?" said Levesen, in a tone of displeasure.

"Matter!—it is all up," said Franks, in a choking, trembling voice—"that—that poor fellow has escaped—he is in the house. Oh, I know he has come for me—he—he'll murder me—he'll shoot us both, Levesen. I saw him in the hall, and he carried a revolver. He'll kill us, Levesen, I say—he will—there is murder in his eyes—he is a madman—oh, what shall we do?"

"For God's sake restrain yourself," said Levesen; "it is you who have taken leave of your senses."

"No, it isn't," said another voice; "he has reason enough for his fears."

The door had been opened a second time, and Bayard, the man I had seen last in prison garb, looking like death upon his trundle bed, stood before us; he carried a revolver, but did not use it. Franks, who had been almost beside himself, rushed now towards Bayard and flung himself on his knees at his feet.

"Spare my life," he said; "don't take my life. I have repented for months. Spare me—don't murder me—I'm afraid of you. Let me go, I say."

The wretched man raised his voice almost to a shriek.

"Don't kneel to me," said Bayard. "I won't take your wretched life—I don't want it. Tell the truth, you coward. You gave me that cheque?"

"I did, Bayard, I did. I've been in misery ever since—I was tempted and I fell. It is true. Don't take my life."

"I don't want your life," said Bayard. "I would not soil my hands with you—I would not pollute myself with your blood. You have got to answer me one or two questions, however. You gave me the cheque for £5,000?"

"Yes, yes."

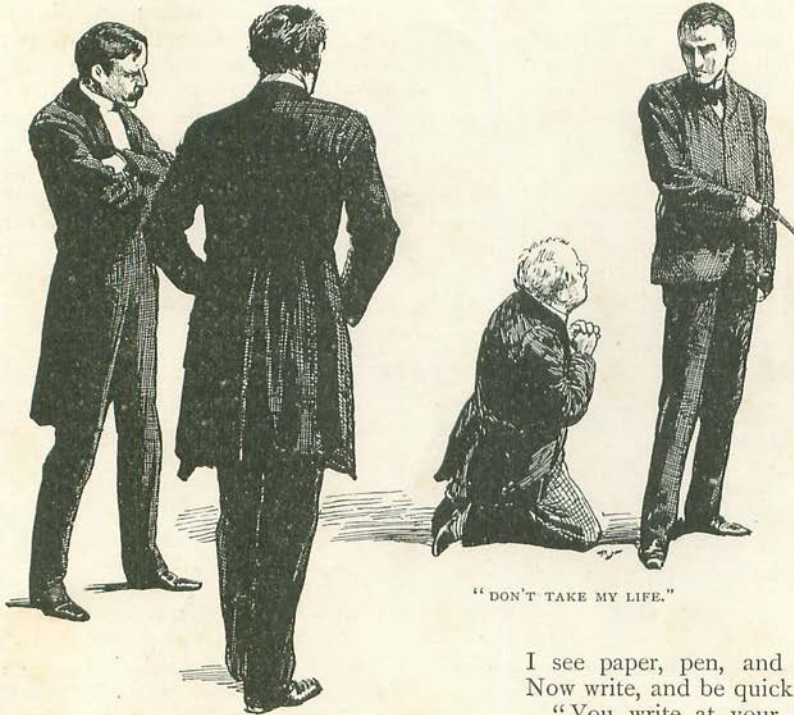
"Levesen gave it to you for the purpose?"

"He did."

"Franks, you don't know what you are saying," interrupted Levesen; "terror has turned your head."

"No, it hasn't, Levesen," replied Franks. "You did give me the cheque to give to Bayard. I can't help telling the truth. I would do a great deal for you, but I prefer ruin and disgrace to the mental anguish our crime has caused me. This fellow will shoot me if I don't tell the truth now, and by heavens, I'm not going to lose my life for you, Levesen."

"As far as I am concerned, you are safe," said Bayard, laying his pistol on the table. "You have admitted the truth, that is all I want. As to you, Levesen, the game is up.



"DON'T TAKE MY LIFE."

You never guessed that I should break prison to confront you. You and Franks between you invented the most malicious conspiracy which was ever contrived to ruin an innocent man—you got me false imprisonment, but it is your turn now. You sha'n't escape, either of you. This gentleman here, I think I know him—I saw him two days ago at Hartmoor—will be my witness. Your game is up; I, too, can plot and contrive. I feigned serious illness in order to lull suspicion, and so got out of prison. I did this because you, Levesen, goaded me to madness—you took away my liberty—my character—you ruined my entire life; but when, added to these iniquities, you determined to force the girl whom I love, and who loves me, to be your wife, I felt that matters had come to an extremity. By a mere accident, I saw the notice of your engagement to Lady Kathleen in a paper which another convict lent me. I was in hospital at the time. From that moment I played a desperate game. I escaped from prison with the intention of shooting you, if necessary, you black-hearted scoundrel, rather than allow you to become the husband of the girl I love."

"The girl who loves you, Edward," said Lady Kathleen.

She flew to his side, and threw her soft, white arms round his neck. He gave her a quick, passionate glance, but did not speak.

"You must make a statement in writing," he said to Franks. "As to you, Levesen —— No, you don't leave the room" — for Levesen had softly approached the door—"I have a pistol here, and I'm a desperate man. You will know best if it is worth exciting my rage or not. You will witness Franks's confession. Now then, Franks, get your deposition down. I see paper, pen, and ink on that table. Now write, and be quick about it."

"You write at your peril, Franks," said Levesen. "Are you mad to give yourself away as you are doing? What is this fellow here, but an escaped convict? Don't put anything on paper, Franks."

"Yes, but I will," said Franks, suddenly. "It is not only that I am frightened, Levesen —upon my word, I am almost glad of the relief of confession. You don't know what I've been through—perfect torture—yes, no more and no less. Bayard was no enemy of mine. I know you gave me money, and I have not much moral courage, and I fell; but the fact is, I'd rather serve my own time at Hartmoor than go through the mental misery which I have been enduring of late."

"Put your confession on paper without a moment's delay," said Bayard, in a stern voice.

His words rang out with force. Notwithstanding his dress, his shaven head, his worn and suffering face—he had the manner of the man who conquers at that moment. The spell of fear which he had exercised over Franks he so far communicated to Levesen that he ceased to expostulate, and stood with folded arms, sullen face, and lowered eyes, not far from the door. I saw that he would escape if he could, but Bayard took care of that.

"Write, and be quick about it," he said to Franks.

The wretched Franks bent over his paper. He was a short, thickly-set man, of middle age. His face was red and mottled. Large beads of perspiration stood on his brow. His iron-grey head was slightly bald. The hand with which he wrote shook. All the time he was writing there was absolute silence in the room. Lady Kathleen continued to stand by Bayard's side. She had lost her nervousness and hysteria. Her cheeks were full of beautiful colour, her eyes were bright —she had undergone a transformation.

At last Franks laid down his pen. He took his handkerchief from his pocket and wiped the moisture from his brow.

"Give me the paper," said Bayard.

Franks did so.

"Will you, sir, read this aloud?" said the ex-prisoner, turning suddenly to me.

"Certainly," I answered.

The queer group stood silent around me, while I read the following words:—

"On the 4th of May, 189—, Francis Levesen, whose secretary I have been for several years, brought me a cheque for the sum of £5,000, which he had made payable to Edward Bayard. He told me to give the cheque to Bayard, remarking, as he did so:—

"'The fellow is in difficulties, and will find this useful'

"Bayard at the time was engaged to Lady Kathleen Church, Francis Levesen's ward. I replied that I did not know Mr. Bayard was in money difficulties.

"'He is,' said Levesen; 'he has been fool enough to put his name to a bill for a friend, and has to meet a claim for £3,000 within the next ten days. He asked me to lend him that sum to meet the difficulty in Lady Kathleen's presence yesterday. I refused to grant his request at the time, and he seemed in distress about it.'

"'And yet you are now giving him £5,000,' I said. 'That seems strange, seeing that he only requires a loan of £3,000.'

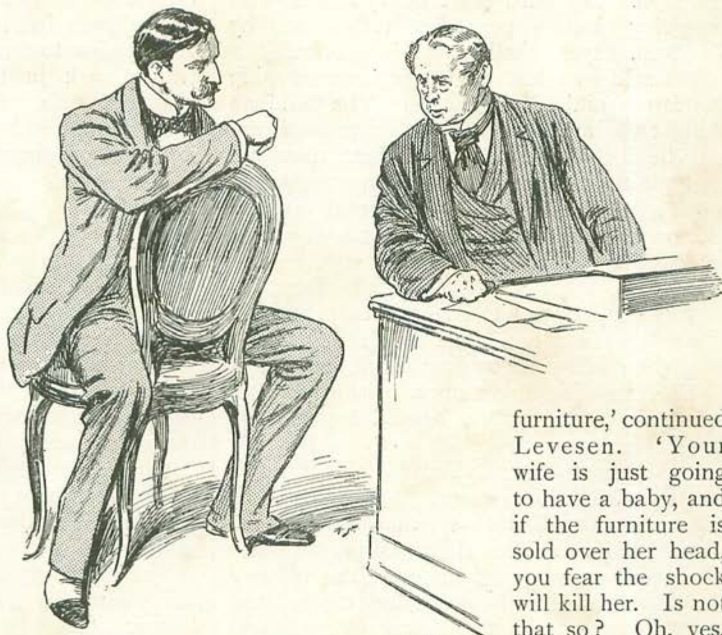
"'Never mind,' said Levesen, 'a little ready cash will be acceptable under the circumstances. Get him to take the cheque. The fact is, there is more in this matter than meets the eye. I want you to help me in a small conspiracy, and will make it worth your while. You are to give this cheque to Bayard when no one is present. See that he presents it at my bank. If you can act quietly and expeditiously in this matter, I will give you that thousand pounds you want so badly in cash.'

"'What do you mean?' I asked, looking at him in fear and astonishment.

"'You know you want that money,' he replied.

"'God knows I do,' I answered.

"'To meet that bill of sale on your furniture,' continued Levesen. 'Your wife is just going to have a baby, and if the furniture is sold over her head, you fear the shock will kill her. Is not that so? Oh, yes, I know all about you — a thousand pounds will put all straight, will it not?'


"I WILL GIVE YOU THAT THOUSAND POUNDS."

"'Yes, yes; but the deuce is in this matter,' I replied. 'What are you up to, Levesen—what is your game?'

"Levesen's face became ashen in hue.

"'My game is this,' he hissed into my ear: 'I mean to do for that wretched, smooth-tongued sneak, Bayard.'

"'I thought he was your friend,' I answered.

"'Friend!' said Levesen. 'If there is a man I hate, it is he. He has come between me and the girl I intend to marry. I have made up my mind to ruin him. In short, he sha'n't have Lady Kathleen—I shall lock him up. Now, if you will help me, the deed

can be done, and you shall have your £1,000.'

"I was as wax in his hands, for the state of my own affairs was desperate. I asked what I was to do.

"'I mean to have Bayard arrested,' said Levesen. 'I mean to have him arrested on a charge of forgery. When the moment comes, you are to help me. I mean to prove that Bayard forged the signature to the cheque which you now hold in your hand. He will declare that you gave it to him—you are to deny the fact—in short, you and I will have to go through a good deal of false swearing. If we stick together and make our plans, I am convinced that the thing can be carried through. My ward can't marry a man who is going through penal servitude, and, by Heaven, Bayard shall have a long term.'

"I said I couldn't do it, but Levesen said: 'Sleep over it.' I went home. The Evil One fought with me all night, and before the morning he had conquered me. That thousand pounds and the thought of saving the home were what did for me. We carried out our scheme. I am prepared to swear to the truth of this statement before a magistrate.

"JOHN FRANKS."

"It would be well to have witnesses to this," I said, when I had done reading. "Lady Kathleen, will you put your name here?"

She came forward at once, writing her full name in a bold, firm hand. I put mine under hers.

"And now, Bayard," I said, "this is not a moment for showing mercy; a foul deed has been committed, and only the stern arm of justice can set matters right. Will you have the goodness to go at once for the police? Levesen and Franks must be taken into custody to-night on the charge of malicious conspiracy against you, for causing you to be falsely imprisoned, and for perjury."

"One moment before you go, Bayard," said Levesen—moving a step forward and speaking with the studied calm which all through this strange scene had never deserted him. "There is another side to Franks's story, and when I have said my say to-morrow morning before the magistrate, I can easily prove that the statement made on that piece of paper is worth no more than the paper on which it is written. There is not a magistrate on the Bench who is likely to give even a moment's serious consideration to such a trumped-up tale told under pressure, and at the instigation of an escaped convict. You can do your worst, however—I am so conscious of my own innocence that I have no wish to escape."

"Have you done speaking?" said Bayard.

"I have—you will repent of this."

Bayard left the room. In less than half an hour, Levesen and Franks had been carried off to the nearest police-station, and Bayard was left alone with Lady Kathleen. I went then to find Miss Levesen. I had a painful task in telling the poor lady the shameful truth. She was a hard woman, but she at least had been no partner in Levesen's horrible conspiracy.

The events which followed can be told in a few words. The next morning, early, I took Bayard to see my own solicitor, who instructed him to return to Hartmoor, and to give himself up; in the meantime, a petition would be immediately presented to the Queen for his free pardon.

That pardon was obtained in less than a week—although Bayard had to go through a short nominal punishment for his assault on the warder and his escape from Hartmoor.

One of the sensational trials at the autumn assizes was that of Levesen and Franks. The intelligent jury who listened to the trial were not long in making up their minds with regard to the verdict. I do not know that I am a specially hard man, but I could not help rejoicing when the judge's sentence was known. Levesen and Franks are now serving their time at Hartmoor—their sentence was seven years' imprisonment.

As to Lady Kathleen, she has completely recovered her health, and the long postponed wedding took place before the Christmas of that year.