

# Stories from the Diary of a Doctor.

SECOND SERIES.

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## IX.—THE STRANGE CASE OF CAPTAIN GASCOIGNE.

[This story is based on the results of a series of investigations made in France with the modified virus of malignant disease. There is every reason to believe, from the experience gained, that in this direction lies the future cure of maladies of this nature.]

**I**T has for some time seemed to me that in the treatment of many diseases the immediate future holds a great secret in its hands. This secret is becoming more, day by day, an open one. I allude to the marvellous success which has already attended the treatment of disease by the elaboration and discovery of new forms of inoculation of serotheropic virus. The following story may serve as a proof of this theory of mine. One evening at my club I came across an old college chum; his name was Walter Lumsden. He had also entered the medical profession, and had a large country practice in Derbyshire. We were mutually glad to see each other, and after a few ordinary remarks Lumsden said, abruptly:—

“I was in a fume at missing my train this evening; but, now that I have met you, I cease to regret the circumstance. The fact is, I believe your advice will be valuable to me in connection with a case in which I am much interested.”

“Come home with me, Lumsden,” I replied to this; “I can easily put you up for the night, and we can talk over medical matters better by my fireside than here.”

Lumsden stood still for a moment to think. He then decided to accept my offer, and half an hour later we had drawn up our chairs in front of the cheerful fire in my study, and were enjoying our pipes after some port. The night was a chilly one, in the latter end of November.

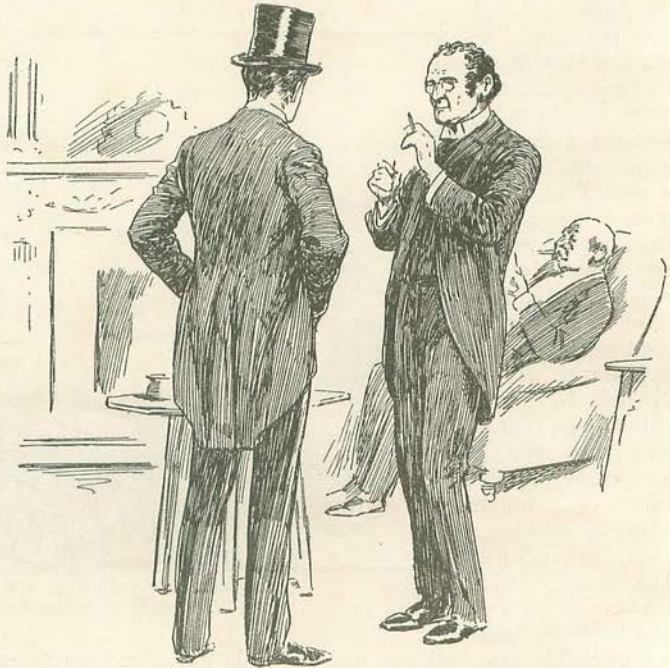
The wind was roaring lustily outside. It is under such circumstances that the comforts of one's own home are fully appreciated.

“You have done a good thing with your life,” said Lumsden, abruptly. “I often

wish I had not married, and had settled in London—oh, yes, I have a large practice; but the whole thing is somewhat of a grind, and then one never comes across the foremost men of one's calling—in short, one always feels a little out of it. I used to be keen for recent discoveries, and all that sort of thing in my youth, now I have got somewhat into a jog-trot—the same old medicines—the same old treatments are resorted to, year in, year out; but, there, I have not come to talk of myself.”

“You want to give me particulars with regard to a case?” I said.

“Yes, an anxious case, too—it puzzles me not a little.”



“LUMSDEN STOOD STILL FOR A MOMENT TO THINK.”

“Have another pipe before you begin,” I said.

“No, thanks; I don't want to smoke any more. Now, then, this is the story.”

Lumsden had been leaning back in his chair taking things easy; he now bent for-



ward, fixed me with two anxious eyes, and began to speak forcibly.

"The case, to put it briefly, is as follows," he said. "One of my best patients and staunchest friends in the parish of Wolverton is Sir Robert Gascoigne. He is a rich man; his people made their money in iron during the latter end of the last century. His great-grandfather bought a fine estate, which goes by the name of 'The Priory.' The old man strictly entailed the property, leaving it in every case to the eldest son of the house, and failing direct succession to a distant branch of the family. The present baronet—Sir Robert (the title was accorded a couple of generations ago)—is between fifty and sixty years of age. His wife is dead. There is only one son—a captain in an infantry regiment. Captain Gascoigne is now thirty years of age, as fine-looking a fellow as you ever met. For many years the great wish of Sir Robert's heart has been to see his son married. Captain Gascoigne came home two years ago on sick leave from India; he recovered his health pretty quickly in his native land, and proposed to a young lady of the name of Lynwood—a girl of particularly good family in the neighbourhood. Miss Helen Lynwood is a very handsome girl, and in every way worthy to be Captain Gascoigne's wife. His father and hers were equally pleased with the engagement, and the young couple were devoted to each other. Captain Gascoigne had to return to India to join his regiment, which was expected to be ordered home this year. It was arranged that he should leave the Army on his return—that the wedding was to take place immediately, and the young people were to live at 'The Priory.' All preparations for the wedding were made, and exactly a fortnight after the captain's return the marriage was to be

solemnized. All the reception-rooms at 'The Priory' were newly furnished, and general rejoicing was the order of the hour. Let me see: what day is this?"

"The twenty-fourth of November," I answered. "Why do you pause?"

"I thought as much," said Dr. Lumsden—"this was to have been the wedding day."

"Pray go on with your story," I said.

"It is nearly told. Gascoigne appeared on the scene looking well, but anxious. He had an interview with his father that night, and the next day went to London. He stayed away for a single night, came back the next day, and went straight to see Miss Lynwood, who lives with her father and mother at a place called Burnborough. Nobody knows what passed between the young couple, but the morning after a hurried message arrived for me to go up at once to see Sir Robert. I found the old baronet in a state of frightful agitation and excitement. He told me that the marriage was broken off—that his son absolutely refused to marry either Miss Lynwood or anyone else—that he would give no reasons for this determination beyond the fact that he did not consider his life a healthy one, and that no earthly consideration would induce him to become the father of children. The whole thing is a frightful blow to the old man, and the



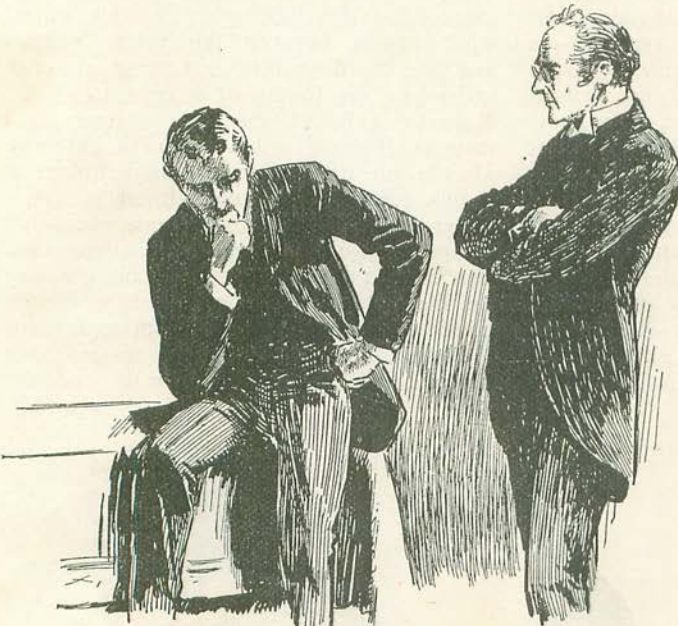
"I FOUND THE OLD BARONET IN A STATE OF FRIGHTFUL AGITATION."



mystery of it is, that nothing will induce Captain Gascoigne even to hint at what is the matter with him. There is no hereditary disease in the family, and he does not look out of health. By Sir Robert's desire, I ventured to sound him on the subject. It seemed impossible to associate illness with him in any way. I begged of him to confide in me, but he refused. All I could get him to say was:—

"An inexorable fate hangs over me—by no possible means can I avert it. All I have to do is to meet it as a man."

"Do you mean that your life is doomed?" I asked of him.



"DO YOU MEAN THAT YOUR LIFE IS DOOMED?"

"Sooner or later it is," he replied; "but that is not the immediate or vital question. Nothing will induce me to hand on what I suffer to posterity. My father and Miss Lynwood both know my resolve."

"But not your reason for it," I answered.

"I prefer not to tell them that," he replied, setting his lips firmly.

"Have you seen a doctor? Are you positive of the truth of your own statement?" I ventured to inquire.

"I have seen one of the first doctors in London," was the reply. "Now, Lumsden," he added, giving me a wintry sort of smile, "even an old friend like you must not abuse your privileges. I refuse to answer another word."

"He left me, and returned to 'The Priory.' This conversation took place yesterday morning. I saw Sir Robert later in the day. He is completely broken down, and looks like a very old man. It is not only his son's mysterious conduct which affects him so painfully, but every dream and ambition of his life have been bound up in the hope that he could hand on his name and property to his grandchildren. Captain Gascoigne's unaccountable attitude completely crushes that hope."

"Why do you tell me this story?" I asked, after a pause.

"Well, with the vain hope that you may perhaps help me to get a clue to the mystery. Gascoigne refuses to fulfil his engagement on the ground that he is not in a fit state of health to marry. He refuses to tell his ailment. By what means can I get him to speak?"

"There is no way of forcing his confidence," I replied. "It seems to me that it is simply a matter of tact."

"Which valuable quality I don't possess a grain of," replied Lumsden. "I wish the case were yours, Halifax; you'd soon worm the captain's secret out of him."

"Not at all," I answered; "I never force any man's confidence."

"You possess a talisman, however, which enables you to effect your purpose without force. The fact is, this

is a serious matter—Gascoigne looks miserable enough to cut his throat, the old man is broken down, and the girl, they tell me, is absolutely prostrated with grief."

"Do you think by any chance Gascoigne has confided the true state of the case to her?" I inquired.

"I asked him that," said Lumsden—"he emphatically said he had not, that his determination was to carry his secret to the grave."

I sat silent, thinking over this queer case.

"Are you frightfully busy just now?" asked Lumsden, abruptly.

"Well, I am not idle," I answered.

"You could not possibly take a day off and come down to Derbyshire?"



"I cannot see your patients, Lumsden, unless they wish for my advice," I replied.

"Of course not, but I am on very friendly terms with Sir Robert. In fact, I dine at 'The Priory' every Sunday. Can you not come to Derbyshire with me to-morrow? As a matter of course, you would accompany me to 'The Priory.'"

"And act the detective?" I answered. "No, I fear it can't be done. If you can induce Captain Gascoigne to consult me I shall be very glad to give him my opinion. But I can't interfere in the case, except in the usual orthodox fashion."

Lumsden sighed somewhat impatiently, and did not pursue the subject any farther.

At an early hour the following morning he returned to Derbyshire, and I endeavoured to cast the subject of the Gascoignes from my mind. Captain Gascoigne's case interested me, however, and I could not help thinking of it at odd moments. The fact of the man refusing to marry did not surprise me, but his strange determination to keep his illness a secret, even from his medical man, puzzled me a good deal.

As I was not Gascoigne's doctor, however, there was nothing for it but to try and cast the matter from my mind. I did not know then that it was my fate to be mixed up in the affair to a remarkable degree.

On the following evening a telegram was put into my hand. I opened it and gave a start of surprise. It ran as follows:—

*"Sir Robert Gascoigne suffering from apoplexy. Wish to consult you. Come to 'The Priory' by the first possible train.—Lumsden."*

Harris waited in the room while I read the telegram.

"The messenger is waiting, sir," he said.

I thought for a few moments, then took up my *A. B. C.*, found a suitable train, and wrote a hasty reply.

*"With you by nine to-morrow morning."*

The messenger departed, and I went to my room to pack a few things. I took the night train into Derbyshire, and arrived at Wolverton Station a little after eight o'clock the next morning. A carriage from 'The Priory' was waiting for me, and I drove there at once. Lumsden met me just outside the house.

"Here you are," he said, coming up to me almost cheerily. "I can't say what a relief it is to see you."

"What about the patient?" I interrupted.

"I am glad to say he is no worse; on the

contrary, there are one or two symptoms of returning consciousness."

"Why did you send for me?" I asked, abruptly.

"Well, you know, I wanted you here for more reasons than one. Yesterday Sir Robert's case seemed almost hopeless—Captain Gascoigne wished for further advice—I suggested your name—he knows you by repute, and asked me to send for you without delay."

"That is all right," I answered. "Shall I go with you now to see the patient?"

Dr. Lumsden turned at once, and I followed him into the house. The entrance-hall was very large and lofty, reaching up to the vaulted roof. A gallery ran round three sides of it, into which the principal bedrooms opened. The fourth side was occupied by a spacious and very beautiful marble staircase. This staircase of white marble was, I learned afterwards, one of the most remarkable features of the house. Sir Robert had gone to great expense in having it put up, and it was invariably pointed out with pride to visitors. The splendid staircase was carpeted with the thickest Axminster, and my feet sank into the heavy pile as I followed Lumsden upstairs. We entered a spacious bedroom. A fourpost bedstead had been pulled almost into the middle of the room—the curtains had been drawn back for more air; in the centre of the bed lay the old man in a state of complete unconsciousness—he was lying on his back breathing stertorously. I hastened to the bedside and bent over him. Before I began my examination, Lumsden touched me on the arm. I raised my eyes and encountered the fixed gaze of a tall man, who looked about five-and-thirty years of age. He had the unmistakable air and bearing of a soldier as he came forward to meet me. This, of course, was Captain Gascoigne.

"I am glad you have been able to come," he said. "I shall anxiously await your verdict after you have consulted with Lumsden."

He held out his hand as he spoke. I shook it. I saw him wince as if in sudden pain, but quick as lightning he controlled himself, and slowly left the room. The nurse now came forward to assist us in our examination. My patient's face was pallid, his eyes shut—his breath came fast and with effort. After a very careful examination I agreed with Lumsden that this attack, severe and dangerous as it was, was not to be fatal, and that in all probability before very long



the old baronet would make the usual partial recovery in mild cases of hemiplegia. I made some suggestions with regard to the treatment, and left the room with Lumsden. We consulted together for a few minutes, and then went downstairs. Captain Gascoigne was waiting for us in the breakfast-room, a splendid apartment lined from ceiling to floor with finely carved oak.

"Well?" he said, when we entered the room. There was unmistakable solicitude in his tones.

"I take a favourable view of your father's condition," I replied, cheerily. "The attack is a somewhat severe one, but sensation is not completely lost, and he has some power in the paralyzed side. I am convinced from the present state of the case that there is no progressive hemorrhage going on. In short, in all probability Sir Robert will regain consciousness in the course of the day."

"Then the danger is past?" said the captain, with a quick, short sigh of relief.

"If our prognosis is correct," I replied, "the danger is past for the time being."

"What do you mean by 'the time being'?"

"Why, this," I replied, abruptly, and looking full at him. "In a case like the present, the blood centres are peculiarly susceptible to dilatation. Being diseased, they are soon affected by any change in the circulation—a slight shock of any kind may lead to more hemorrhage, which means a second attack of apoplexy. It will, therefore, be necessary to do everything in the future to keep Sir Robert Gascoigne's mind and body in a state of quietude."

"Yes, yes, that goes without saying," answered the son, with enforced calm. "Now, come to breakfast, doctor; you must want something badly."

As he spoke, he approached a well-filled board, and began to offer us hospitality in a very hearty manner. My account of his father had evidently relieved him a good deal, and his spirits rose as he ate and talked.

At Lumsden's earnest request I decided not to return to London that day, and Captain Gascoigne asked me to drive with him. I accepted with pleasure; my interest in the fine, soldierly fellow increased each moment. He went off to order the trap, and Lumsden turned eagerly to me.

"I look upon your arrival as a godsend," he exclaimed. "The opportunity which I have sought for has arrived. It has come about in the most natural manner possible. I am sincerely attached to my old patient, Sir Robert Gascoigne, and still more so, if

possible, to his son, whom I have known for many years. Of course, it goes without saying what is the primary cause of the old baronet's attack. Perhaps you can see your way to induce Captain Gascoigne to confide in you. If so, don't lose the opportunity, I beg of you."

"I am extremely unlikely to have such an opportunity," I replied. "You must not build up false hopes, Lumsden. If Captain Gascoigne likes to speak to me of his own free will, I shall be only too glad to listen to him, but in my present position I cannot possibly lead the way to a medical conference."

Lumsden sighed impatiently.

"Well, well," he said, "it seems a pity. The chance has most unexpectedly arrived, and you might find yourself in a position to solve a secret which worries me day and night, and has almost sent Sir Robert Gascoigne to his grave. I can, of course, say nothing farther, but before I hurry away to my patients, just tell me what you think of the captain."

"As fine a man as I have ever met," I replied, with enthusiasm.

"Bless you, I don't mean his character; what do you think of his health?"

"I do not see much amiss with him, except—"

"Why do you make an exception?" interrupted Lumsden. "I have, metaphorically speaking, used magnifying glasses to search into his complaint, and can't get the most remote trace of it."

"I notice that his right hand is swollen," I answered; "I further observe that he winces when it is touched."

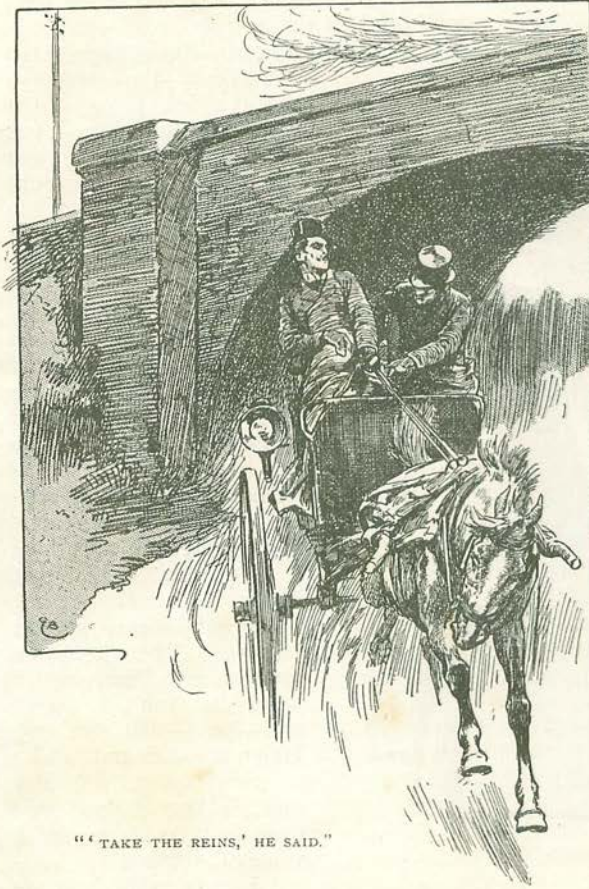
"Well, I never saw it," answered Lumsden. "What sharp eyes you have. The swollen state of the hand probably points to rheumatism."

"Possibly," I replied.

At that moment Captain Gascoigne returned to us. His dog-cart was at the door; we mounted, and were soon spinning over the ground at a fine rate. The mare the captain drove was a little too fresh, however; as we were going down hill, she became decidedly difficult to handle. We were driving under a railway-bridge, when a train suddenly went overhead, rushing past us with a crashing roar. The mare, already nervous, lost her head at this juncture, and with a quick plunge, first to one side and then forward, bolted. I noticed at that moment that Gascoigne was losing his nerve—he turned to me and spoke abruptly.

"For goodness sake, take the reins," he said.





“TAKE THE REINS,” HE SAID.”

I did so, and being an old hand, for in my youth it had been one of my favourite amusements to break-in horses, soon reduced the restive animal to order. I turned then to glance at the captain—his face was as white as a sheet—he took out his handkerchief and wiped some moisture from his forehead.

“It is this confounded hand,” he said. “Thank you, doctor, for coming to my aid at a pinch—the brute knew that I could not control her—it is wonderful what a system of telegraphy exists between a horse and its driver; in short, she completely lost her head.”

“I notice that your hand is swollen,” I answered. “Does it hurt you? Do you suffer from rheumatism?”

“This hand looks like rheumatism or gout, or something of that sort, does it not?” he retorted. “Yes, I have had some sharp twinges—never mind now—it is all right again. I will take the reins once more, if you have no objection.”

“If your hand hurts you, shall I not drive?”

“No, no, my hand is all right now.”

He took the reins, and we drove forward without further parley.

The country through which we went was beautiful, and winter as it was, the exhilarating air and the grand shape of the land made the drive extremely pleasant.

“It is your honest conviction that my father will recover from his present attack?” said Captain Gascoigne, suddenly.

“It is,” I replied.

“That is a relief. I could not leave the old man in danger, and yet it is necessary for me soon to join my regiment.”

“Your father will probably be himself in the course of a few weeks,” I replied. “It is essential to avoid all shocks in the future. I need not tell you that an attack of apoplexy is a very grave matter—that a man once affected by it is extremely subject to a recurrence; that such a recurrence is fraught with danger to life.”

“You think, in short,” continued Captain Gascoigne, “that a further shock would kill Sir Robert?”

“Yes, he must on no account be subjected to worry or any mental disquietude.”

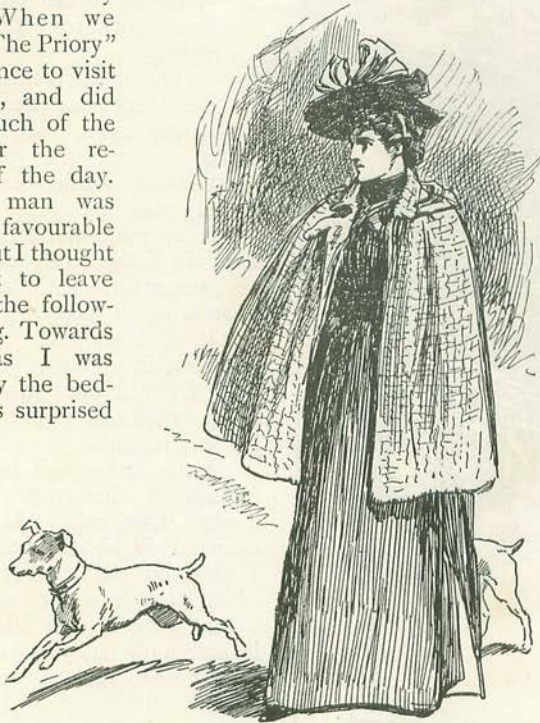
I looked at the man at my side as I spoke. He was sitting well upright, driving with vigour. His face expressed no more emotion than if it were cast in iron. Something, however, made him pull up abruptly, and I saw a dark flush mount swiftly to his cheek. A girl was coming down the road to meet us; she was accompanied by a couple of fox-terriers. When she saw us she came eagerly forward.

“Take the reins, will you, doctor?” said Captain Gascoigne.

He sprang from the cart and went to meet the young lady. I guessed at once that she must be Miss Lynwood. She was a very slight, tall girl, with a quick, eager expression of face. Her eyes were dark and brilliant; the expression of her mouth was sweet but firm; her bearing was somewhat proud. I was too far away to hear what she said. Captain Gascoigne’s interview with her was



extremely brief. She turned to walk in the opposite direction; he remounted the dog-cart and suggested that we should go home. During our drive back he hardly spoke. When we reached "The Priory" I went at once to visit my patient, and did not see much of the captain for the remainder of the day. The sick man was making favourable progress, but I thought it well not to leave him until the following morning. Towards evening, as I was standing by the bedside, I was surprised



"MISS LYNWOOD."

to see Sir Robert suddenly open his eyes and fix them upon my face. Lumsden and Captain Gascoigne were both in the room. The old man looked quickly from me to them. When he saw his son a queer mixture of anxiety and satisfaction crept into his face.

"Dick, come here," he said, in a feeble voice.

Captain Gascoigne went immediately to the bedside and bent over his father.

"What's up, Dick? Who is that?" He glanced in my direction.

"I have come here to help to make you better," I said, taking the initiative at once. "I am a doctor, and your old friend Lumsden wished to consult me about you. I am glad to say you are on the mend, but you must stay very quiet, and not excite yourself in any way."

"No, no. I understand," said Sir Robert. "I have been very bad, I suppose? You have done it, Dick, you know you have."

"Pray rest, father, now," said the son; "don't think of any worries at present."

"Tut, boy, I can't rest—I'm a disappointed man, Dick—I'm a failure—this is a fine place, and it will go to the dogs—it is all your fault, Dick, and you know it. If you want to help me, you will do what I wish—get Helen here and have the marriage solemnized as quickly as possible. Oh, I know what I am saying, and I won't be silenced—there needn't be a fuss—everything is ready—the rooms furnished—the place in order. You can be married by special license—you know you can, Dick. I sha'n't rest in my grave until this thing is set right. You get Helen here and have the wedding by special license, yes, yes. There'll be no rest for me, Dick, until I know that you and Helen are—yes—that you and Helen are man and wife."

"Stay quiet, sir; stay quiet, I beg of you," said Captain Gascoigne, in a voice of distress.

"I can't while you are so obstinate—do you mean to do what I wish?"

The old man's tone was very testy.

"I will talk the matter over with you presently," was the reply; "not now—presently, when you are stronger."

There was something in the captain's voice which was the reverse of soothing. An irritable frown came between the patient's eyes, and a swift wave of suspicious red dyed his forehead.

"I must ask you to leave the room," I whispered to the younger man.

He did so, his shoulders somewhat bent, and a look of pain on his face.

"Has Dick gone for the license?" said Sir Robert, looking at Lumsden, and evidently beginning to wander in his mind.

Lumsden bent suddenly forward. "Everything shall be done as you wish, Sir Robert," he said. "Only remember that we can have no wedding until you are well—now go to sleep."

I motioned to the nurse to administer a



soothing draught, and sat down by the bed to watch the effect. After a time the patient sank into troubled sleep. His excitement and partial delirium, however, were the reverse of reassuring, and I felt much more anxiety about him than I cared to show when I presently went downstairs to dinner.

"There is no immediate danger," I said to Captain Gascoigne, "but your father has evidently set his heart on something. He has a fixed idea—so fixed and persistent that his mind will turn to nothing else. Is it not possible," I continued, abruptly, "to give him relief?"

"In short, to do as he wishes?" said Captain Gascoigne. "No, that is impossible. The subject can't even be talked over," he continued. "Now, gentlemen," he added, looking from Dr. Lumsden to me, "I think dinner is ready."

We went into the dining-room, and seated ourselves at the table. A huge log fire burned in the grate. The massively-furnished room looked the picture of winter comfort; nevertheless, I don't think any of us had much appetite—there was a sense of tragedy even in the very air. After dinner, as we were sitting over wine, Dr. Lumsden's conversation and mine turned upon medical matters; Captain Gascoigne, who had been silent and depressed during the meal, took up a copy of the *Times* and began to read. Dr. Lumsden asked me one or two questions with regard to recent discoveries in preventive medicines. We touched lightly on many subjects of interest to medical men like ourselves, and I did not suppose for a moment that Captain Gascoigne listened to a word of our conversation. He rose presently, and told us that he was going to find out how his father was now. When he returned to the room, I was telling Lumsden of one or two interesting cases which I had lately come across in my hospital practice.

"I am certain," I said, "that inoculation with attenuated virus is to be the future treatment of many of our greatest diseases."

Captain Gascoigne had come half across the room. When I said these words he stood as motionless as if something had turned him into stone. I raised my head, and our eyes suddenly met. I observed a startled, interested expression on his face. Quick as lightning an idea came to me. I turned my eyes away and continued, with vigour:—

"Such inoculation is, without doubt, the future treatment for consumption. Even granted that Dr. Koch's theory has failed,

there is every reason to hope that in that direction the real cure lies. The new anti-toxin treatment for diphtheria proves the same thing; even now there are not unknown cases where certain forms of cancer have been completely eradicated—in short, the poison eliminated from the body by means of inoculation."

"We medical men accept such theories very slowly," said Dr. Lumsden. "It will be many years before we can confidently employ them."

"Why not, if by so doing you can cure disease?" said Captain Gascoigne, abruptly.

We both looked at him when he spoke.

"Why not, if you can cure disease?" he repeated.

"Why not?" repeated Dr. Lumsden—"because we doctors dare not run risks. Why, sir, we should be responsible for the deaths of our patients if we attempted to use means of cure which were not proven, in short, established by long precedent."

"Well, gentlemen," he said, "I can't attempt to argue with you. It is my firm belief, however, that the general run of medical practitioners are over-cautious. I allude, of course, to cases which are supposed under the ordinary treatment to be hopeless. Surely if the patient wishes to try the chance of a comparatively immature discovery, it is allowable for him to do so?"

"Such a case is uncommon," I replied; "as a rule, the sick man prefers to go upon the beaten track—in other words, does not trouble himself about the treatment of his disease, leaving it entirely to his doctor."

"How have you found the patient, captain?" interrupted Dr. Lumsden.

"Asleep, but restless—the nurse thinks there is an increase of fever."

"I will go and see for myself," I said, rising.

My conversation with Lumsden was broken up, and was not again resumed. We both spent an anxious night with the patient, whose case was the reverse of satisfactory. As the hours flew on, the restless wanderings of mind seemed to increase rather than diminish. The fixed idea of an immediate marriage for his son was again and again alluded to by the sick man. He was restless when Captain Gascoigne went out of the room. When he was present he was even more restless, calling him to his side many times, and asking him in strained, irritable tones if the special license had been applied for, and if Helen—as he called her—was in the house.

Towards morning the delirious and excited





"'WELL, GENTLEMEN,' HE SAID, 'I CAN'T ATTEMPT TO ARGUE WITH YOU.'"

state of the patient became so alarming that I felt certain that if nothing were done to relieve him, fresh hemorrhage of the brain would set in. I went out of the room, motioning Captain Gascoigne to follow me.

"I fear," I said, "that the evident anxiety from which your father is suffering is acting prejudicially. In short, unless something can be done to relieve him, I must modify the favourable opinion which I have already given you of his case. Unless his mind is immediately relieved, he may have another attack before many hours have gone by. Such an attack will be, in all probability, fatal."

I looked hard at the captain as I spoke. He had folded his arms, and stood very erect facing me.

"What do you propose?" he said, abruptly.

"You have evidently given him distress," I said. "Can you not reconsider the position?"

He gave a short, irritable laugh. "Good heavens, doctor," he exclaimed, "don't you suppose I am man enough to accede to my father's wish, if it were possible? Can you not see for yourself that the present state of affairs is agony to me?"

"I am certain of it," I replied. "I must not urge you further. The fact is, Lumsden has told me something of your story. Only a very grave cause would make you refuse to fulfil your engagement with Miss Lynwood."

"You are right. The cause is very grave."

"You can't tell me what it is? It is possible that I might be able to counsel you."

"Thanks; but I am past counsel—the end is inevitable—unless, indeed—but, no—I must not bring myself to entertain hope. The person now to be considered is my father. You say, doctor, that if his wish in this matter is not gratified, he will die?"

"It seems extremely like it," I said. "He has evidently set his heart on your marriage—in his present diseased state the longing to see you mar-

ried has become a mania."

"There is nothing whatever for me to do then," he said, "but to lie to him."

"I would scarcely do that," I exclaimed.

"Yes you would, if you were me. I must pledge myself; he must be saved. Not another word—my mind is made up."

He left me before I could expostulate further, and returned to the sick room. The old man's arms were flung out over the bed-clothes—he was muttering to himself and pulling feebly at the sheets.

Captain Gascoigne went and sat down by the bed—he laid one of his hands on his father's, holding it firmly down.

"Listen to me," he said, in a low voice. "I have reconsidered everything. I alter my determination not to marry. I swear now, before Heaven, that if I live I will marry Helen Lynwood."

"Do you mean it, Dick?" said Sir Robert.

"On my honour, yes, father; I have spoken."

"Good boy—good boy; this is a relief. That queer scruple about your health is laid to rest, then?"

"Quite, father. If I live, Helen shall be my wife."

"You never told me a lie yet, Dick—you are speaking the truth now?"

"On my honour," said the soldier.

He looked his father full in the eyes. The sick man gave a pleased smile and patted his son's hand.



"I believe you, Dick," he said; "I am quite satisfied—when can the marriage take place?"

"We need not fix a date to-night, need we?"

"No, no; I trust you, Dick."

"Perhaps, sir, you will try and sleep now—your mind being at rest."

"Yes, my mind is quite at rest," said the baronet—"Dick never told me a lie in his life—thank the Almighty for His goodness, I shall live to see my grandchildren about the old place—yes, I am sleepy—I don't want a composing draught—keep at my side, Dick, until I drop off. We'll have Helen here early in the morning—how happy she will be, poor little girl—I should like to see Helen as soon as I awake."

The patient kept on mumbling in a contented, soothed voice—all trace of irritation had left his voice and manner. In less than half an hour he was sound asleep. He slept well during the night, and in the morning was decidedly better—the anxious symptoms had abated, and I had every hope of his making a quick recovery.

One of his first inquiries was for Miss Lynwood.

"I am going to fetch her," said the captain.

I saw him drive off in the dog-cart. In about an hour and a half he returned with the young lady. I was standing by the patient's side when she came in. She was dressed in furs, and wore a small fur cap over her bright hair. The drive had brought a fresh colour to her cheeks—her eyes sparkled. She entered the room in the alert way which I had observed about her when I saw her for a moment on the previous day. She went straight up to the sick man and knelt down by his side.

"Well, dad," she said, "you see, it is all right."

I marvelled at her tone—it was brisk and full of joy. Had Captain Gascoigne told her the truth? Or had he, by any chance, tried to deceive this beautiful girl, in order more effectually to aid his father's recovery? Watching her more closely, however, I saw that she was brave enough to play a difficult part.

"Yes, Helen, it is all right," said the baronet. "Dick is well, and has come to his senses. That illness of his turned out to be a false alarm—he had an attack of nerves, nothing more. We'll have a gay wedding in a few days, little girl."

"You must get well," she answered, patting

his cheek. "Remember, nothing can be done until you are well."

"Bless you, child, I shall be well fast enough. Your face and Dick's would make any man well. Where is that nurse? Why doesn't she bring me food—I declare I'm as hungry as a hawk. Ah, doctor, you there?" continued the baronet, raising his eyes, and fixing them on my face. "Remember, you didn't cure me. It was Dick's doing, not yours. Dick, bless him, has set the old man right."

I left the room abruptly. Captain Gascoigne met me on the landing.

"You play your part well," I said; "but what about the *dénoûment*?"

"I have considered everything," said the captain. "I shall keep my word. If I live I will marry."

I looked at him in astonishment. A glance showed me that he did not mean to confide further in me then, and I soon afterwards returned to town. Lumsden promised to write to report the patient's progress; and, much puzzled as to the ultimate issue of this queer story, I resumed my town work. I arrived in London early in the afternoon, and went immediately to visit some patients. When I returned to my own house it was dinner-time. The first person I met in the hall was Captain Gascoigne.

"Have you bad news?" I cried, in astonishment. "Is there a change for the worse?"

"No, no, nothing of the sort," was the reply. "My father mends rapidly. The fact is, I have come to see you on my own account. In short, I have made up my mind to consult you."

"I am right glad to hear it," I answered, heartily. "You must join me at dinner now, and afterwards we will go carefully into your case."

"I am anxious to catch the night mail back to Wolverton," said the captain; "but, doubtless, you can spare an hour to me after dinner, and that, I am sure, will be quite sufficient."

During the meal which followed, Captain Gascoigne was silent and *distract*. I did not interrupt him with many remarks, but as soon as it was over we went straight to the point.

"Now," he said, "I will tell you what is up. I had made up my mind to carry my secret to the grave. The strange state of affairs at 'The Priory,' however, has induced me to break this resolve. I have a double reason for confiding in you, Dr. Halifax.



First, because of what occurred last night—second, in consequence of some words which you let drop in conversation with Dr. Lumsden. These words seemed very strange to me at the time, but the more I think over them, the more anxious I am to talk further with you on the subject. In short, they have inspired me with the ghost of a hope.”

“What is the matter with you?” I said, abruptly. “What is your malady?”

The captain had been seated—he now stood up.

“Help me off with this coat, doctor, if you will,” he said.

I removed it carefully, but notwithstanding all my precautions I saw him wince as I touched his right arm.

“You notice this hand,” he said, holding out his right hand as he spoke; “you noticed it the other day when I was driving?”

“Yes,” I replied; “it is much swollen.”

“It is. That could be set down to gout or rheumatism, could it not?”

“It could,” I answered; “it has, doubtless, another cause.”

“It has, Dr. Halifax. You shall examine my terrible disease for yourself—but first let me tell you what ails me.”

He leant against the mantelpiece as he spoke—his face was very white. One or two beads of perspiration stood prominently out on his forehead. When he began to speak he looked straight at me with a frown between his eyes.

“God knows I never meant to whine about this to anyone,” he said; “I meant to take it as a man—it was the state of the old governor and Helen’s grief and her wonderful bravery that upset me. Well, here’s the case. You must know that my mother died of cancer—the thing was hushed up, but the fact remains—she suffered horribly. I recollect her last days even now. I was a small boy at the time. The dread of cancer—of having inherited such a fearful disease—has haunted me more or less all my life. Two or three years ago in India I had a bad fall from my horse. I came down with great weight on my right shoulder. The stiffness and soreness remained for some time, and then they passed away. A year later the stiffness and soreness began to return—my shoulder-bone began to thicken—I could only move it with difficulty. I consulted some doctors, who set down the whole affection to rheumatism, and gave me ordinary liniments. The pain did not abate, but grew worse. The shoulder began to swell and soon afterwards the arm,

right down, as you see, to my finger-tips. These painful symptoms set in about six months ago. I was expected home, and all the arrangements for my wedding were complete. I was seized, however, with forebodings. As soon as ever I landed in England, I went to see the well-known specialist for tumours, Sir John Parkes. He was not long in giving his verdict. It was concise and conclusive. He said I was suffering from osteosarcoma of the shoulder—that the disease was advanced, that the removal of the entire arm and shoulder-bone might save my life, but the disease was in such a position involving the bones of the shoulder girdle, and having already invaded the glands, that the probabilities were almost certain that it would return. I had a bad quarter of an hour with the surgeon. I went away, spent the night in town, and quickly made up my mind how to act. I would break off my engagement and go from home to die. I shrank inexpressibly from my father or Miss Lynwood knowing the exact nature of my sufferings. It would be necessary to tell them that the state of my health forbade matrimony, but I firmly resolved that they should never know by what horrible disease I was to die. That is the case in brief, doctor.”

“May I look at your shoulder?” I said.

I carefully removed the shirt and looked at the swollen and glazed arm and shoulder. There was little doubt of the accuracy of the great Sir John Parkes’s diagnosis.

“Sit down,” I said; “from my heart I am sorry for you. Do you suffer much?”

“At times a good deal—the effort to keep back even the expression of pain is sometimes difficult; for instance, in driving the other day—but, ah, you noticed?”

“I did—I saw that you winced—little wonder. Upon my word, Captain Gascoigne, you are a hero.”

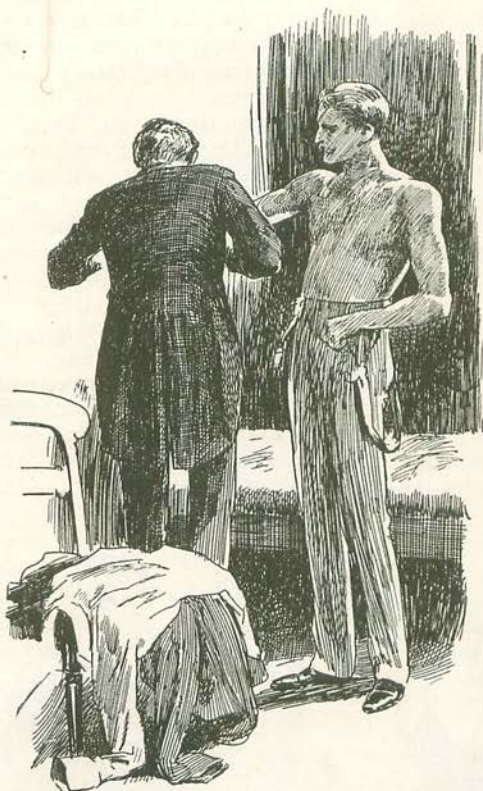
“Not that,” he answered. “In some ways I am a coward. This thing humiliates me as well as tortures me. I have had the instincts of the animal ever since I knew the worst; my wish has been to creep away and die alone. After what occurred last night, however, matters have changed.”

“What do you mean?” I said.

“Can you not see for yourself what I mean? In a moment of extremity, I promised my father that I would marry Helen Lynwood, *if I lived*. You see for yourself that nothing will save me from the consequences of that promise except death.”

“Still, I don’t understand you,” I answered.





"I LOOKED AT THE ARM AND SHOULDER."

"I can soon make myself plain. Do you remember what you said to Lumsden about an immature discovery—a discovery which has been known to cure diseases such as mine? You both spoke of this discovery as in its infancy—never mind, I want you to try it on me."

"My dear fellow, you must be mad."

"Not at all; this is my last chance. It is due both to Helen and my father that I should take advantage of it. In a case like mine a man will submit to anything. In short, I have quite made up my mind. Whatever the risk, I am willing to run it. The treatment may kill me; if so, I am willing to die. On the other hand, there is an off chance that it may cure me—then I can marry Helen. There is not an hour to lose, doctor. When can you operate?"

"You astonish me more than I can say," I answered. "I almost wish you had never overheard my remarks to Lumsden. I only talked over the new treatment with him as one medical man would mention a possible discovery to another."

"But you believe in it?"

"I do believe in its ultimate success."

"It has been tried, has it not?"

"In France, yes."

"And with success?"

"I am given to understand that there has been success."

"That is all right—you will try it on me?"

"My dear fellow, I am inclined to say that you ask the impossible."

"Don't say that—in my extreme case, nothing is impossible; think the matter over, Dr. Halifax. Try and picture the horrible dilemma I am in. I am suffering from an incurable complaint—I have the prospect before me, at no very distant date, of a terrible and painful death. I am my father's only son—the property goes from the direct line if I die. In order to save my father's life I promised him to marry if I lived. There is, therefore, no thought for me of a prolonged life of ill-health. I must either get well quickly or I must die. Surely a desperate man may risk anything. The treatment which I beg of you to adopt is kill or cure, is it not? Then kill or cure me."

"The treatment which you beg me to adopt," I repeated, quoting his words, "is undoubtedly death from blood poisoning, if it does not effect its end of killing your disease, not you."

"I am willing to take the risk—anything is better than the present awful state of suspense."

"Does Miss Lynwood know of this?"

"She does—God bless her! I shrank from telling her the truth—I did not know what mettle she was made of. This morning, in my despair, I confided everything to her. You don't know what stuff she has in her. She bore the whole awful truth without wincing. She said she was with me in the whole matter—it is as much at her instigation as my own desire that I now consult you. We have both resolved to be true to my father, and to keep the promise wrung from me last night by his desperate state. If I live we will marry. You see for yourself that it must be a case of kill or cure, for I cannot run the risk of bringing children into the world in my present terrible state of health. You see the situation, do you not? My father is recovering, because his mind is relieved. Everything, in short, now depends on you. Will you, or will you not, help me?"

"I ought to say 'no,'" I answered. "I ought to tell you frankly that this is not a case for me—I ought, perhaps, to counsel you to put yourself into the hands of one of



those French doctors who have already made this matter a special study—but——”

“But you won't,” said Captain Gascoigne—“I see by your manner that you will give me the advantage of your skill and knowledge—your kindness and sympathy. On the next few weeks the whole future of three people depends. The thing will be easier both for Helen and myself, if you will be our friend in the matter.”

“Can you come again in the morning?” I said. “I must think this over—I must make up my mind how to act.”

“You will give me a definite answer in the morning?”

“I will.”

Captain Gascoigne rose slowly—I helped him into his coat, and he left the room.

As soon as he was gone, I went to see a very able surgeon, who was a special friend of mine. I described the whole case to him—gave him in brief Sir John Parkes's verdict, and then asked his opinion with regard to the other treatment.

“It is a case of life or death,” I said. “Under ordinary circumstances, nothing could save Captain Gascoigne's life—he is anxious to run the risk.”

“As I see it, there is no risk,” replied my friend.

“What do you mean?”

“The man will die if it is not tried.”

“That is true.”

“Then my opinion is—give him a chance.”

“I agree with you,” I said, rising to my feet. “I know you have studied these matters more carefully than I have. I will go to Paris to-morrow, and make all necessary inquiries.”

In the morning, when Captain Gascoigne arrived, I told him the result of my interview with Courtland.

“In short,” I said, “I am prepared to treat you by this new method, provided my investigations in Paris turn out satisfactory. I shall go to Paris by the night mail, return-

ing again the following night. Let me see—this is Thursday morning. Be here by ten o'clock on Saturday morning, and I shall have further news for you.”

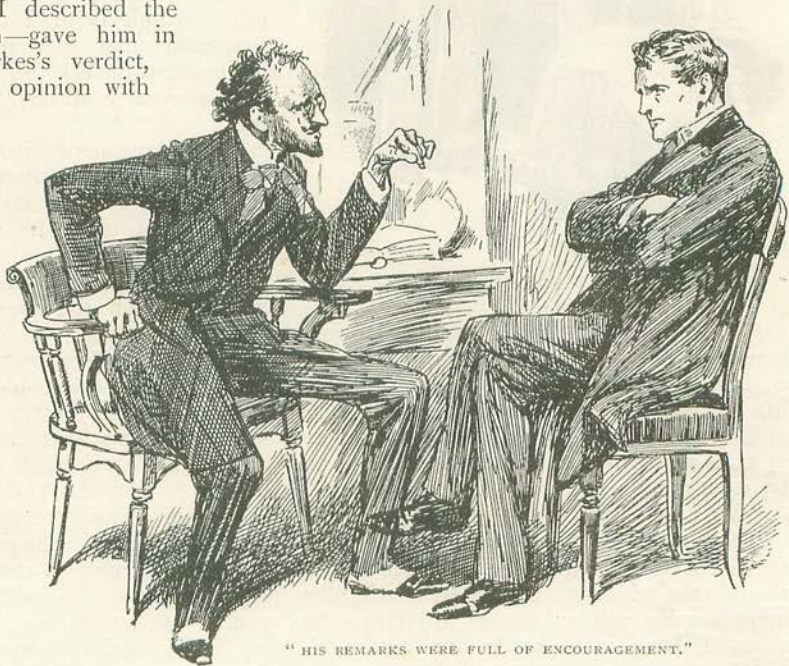
“I have no words to thank you,” he said. “I am going back to Derbyshire now to see Helen, and to tell her what you have done.”

“You must not build absolute hopes on anything until after I have seen the doctors in Paris.”

“I will not.”

He smiled as he spoke. Poor fellow, I saw hope already returning to his eyes.

I went to Paris—my investigations turned out satisfactory. I saw one of the leading doctors of the new school, and talked over the anti-toxin system in all its bearings. His remarks were full of encouragement—he



“HIS REMARKS WERE FULL OF ENCOURAGEMENT.”

considered *serotherapie* as undoubtedly the future treatment for cancer—three cases of remarkable cure were already on record. He furnished me with some of the attenuated virus, and, in short, begged of me to lose no time in operating on my patient. Having obtained the necessary instructions and the attenuated virus, I returned to London, and prepared to carry out this new and most interesting cure. Captain Gascoigne arrived punctually to the moment on Saturday morning. I told him what I had done, and asked



him to secure comfortable lodgings in Harley Street, as near my house as possible. He did so, and came back that evening to tell me of the result.

"To-morrow will be Sunday," I said. "I propose to begin the new treatment to-morrow morning. I shall inoculate you with the virus three times a day."

"How long will it be before the result is known?" he asked.

"I shall very soon be able to tell whether the new treatment acts as direct blood poison or not," I answered. "Your business now is to keep cheerful—to hope for the best—and to turn your thoughts away from yourself as much as possible. By the way, how is Sir Robert?"

"Getting on famously—he thinks that I have come up to town to make preparations for my wedding."

"Let him think so—I begin to hope that we shall have that wedding yet. And how is Miss Lynwood?"

"Well, and full of cheer—she has great faith—she believes in you and also in the new remedy."

"Well, Captain Gascoigne, if this succeeds, you will not only have saved your own life and that of your father, but will have added a valuable and important contribution to modern science."

He smiled when I said this, and shortly afterwards left me.

I began a series of inoculations the following morning. I introduced the attenuated virus into the shoulder—inoculating small doses three times a day. The patient required most careful watching, and I secured the attendance of my most trustworthy nurses for him. His temperature had to be taken at short intervals, and his general health closely attended to. The first day there was no reaction—on the second, the temperature rose slowly—the pulse quickened—the patient was undoubtedly feverish. I inoculated smaller doses of the virus, and these unfavourable symptoms quickly subsided.

In a week's time the treatment began to tell upon the arm—the pain and swelling became less, the arm could be moved with greater freedom, the hand became comparatively well. Captain Gascoigne appeared in every other respect to be in his usual health—he ate well, slept well, and was full of hope. I began to introduce larger doses, which he now bore without serious reaction of any kind. I had begged of Courtland to help me in the case, and he and I made

interesting and important notes evening after evening.

From what I had learned from the French doctors, I expected the cure, if successful, to take about forty days. On the twentieth day the patient suffered from great depression—he suddenly lost hope, becoming nervous and irritable. He apprehended the worst—watched his own symptoms far too closely, and lost both appetite and sleep. His conviction at that time was that the cure would not avail, and that death must be the result.

"This inaction kills me," he said; "I would gladly face the cannon's mouth, but I cannot endure the slow torture of this suspense. I told you that in some respects I am a coward—I am proving myself one."

During these anxious few days all my arguments proved unavailing—Captain Gascoigne lost such hope that for a time he almost refused to allow the treatment to be continued. I watched over him, and thought of him day and night. I almost wondered if it might be best to send for Miss Lynwood, and one day suggested this expedient to the patient.

He started in irritation to his feet.

"Do you think I would allow the girl I love to see me in this condition?" he said. "No, no, I will fight it out alone. You said it would be kill or cure. I hope, doctor, that I shall face the worst as a soldier should."

"But the worst is not here," I answered. "If you would but pluck up heart, you would do splendidly. The cure is going well; there is every reason to hope that within three weeks' time you will be as well as ever you were in your life."

"Do you mean it?" he said, his face changing.

"I do—if you will but conquer your own apprehensions."

He looked at me. The colour dyed his forehead. He abruptly left the room.

My words, however, had turned the tide. In the evening he was more hopeful, and from that time his spirits rose daily.

"The chance of cure is excellent," I said to him one morning.

"The wedding can soon take place," was my remark a week later.

At last a day came when there was no tumour to treat. The arm and shoulder were once more quite well, nothing appeared of the disease but a comparatively harmless induration. I injected large doses now of the virus without the slightest reaction of any sort.



One morning Captain Gascoigne came early to see me.

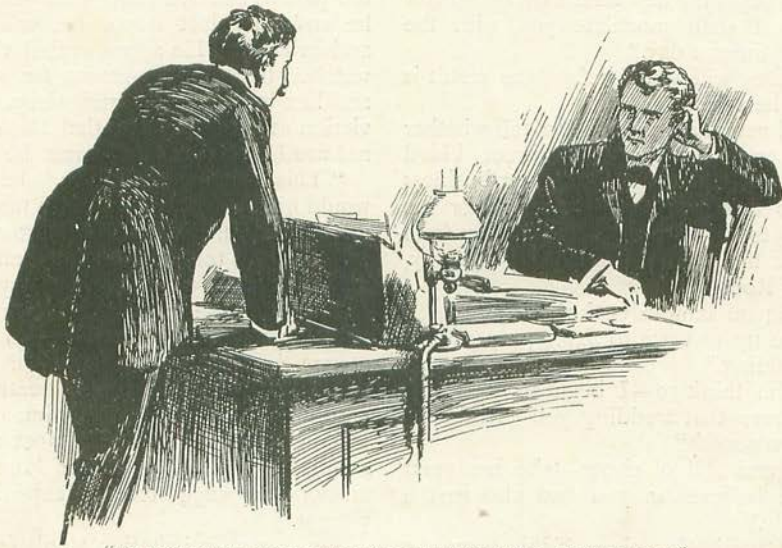
"I saw a look on your face last night which told me something," he said.

"What?" I asked.

illness through which he has passed will probably leave its sting as long as he lives."

"Probably," I answered.

"Then I have made up my mind. He must never know the storm through which



"HE MUST NEVER KNOW THE STORM THROUGH WHICH I HAVE PASSED."

"That I am cured!"

"You are," I said.

"Quite, doctor?" he asked. "Is the poison quite eliminated from my system?"

"Wonderful as it is to relate, I believe that this is the case," I replied.

"Then I may safely marry?"

"You may."

"My children, if I have any, have no chance of inheriting the horrors which I have gone through?"

"It is my belief that the hereditary taint is completely eliminated," I answered.

"Good," he replied.

He walked abruptly to the window, and looked out. Suddenly he turned and faced me.

"My father is an old man," he said. "The

I have passed. I promised him, when he was apparently dying, that I would marry Helen if I lived. Helen tells me that my mysterious absence from home during the last six weeks has puzzled and irritated him much. He has even threatened to come to town to look for me. I mean to put this suspense at an end in the quickest possible manner. I shall immediately get a special license—Helen will come to town if I telegraph to her. We can be married to-morrow morning. Will you attend us through the ceremony, doctor, and so see the thing out? We can then return to 'The Priory' and set the old man's fears at rest for ever. Will you come, doctor? You owe it to us, I think."

I promised—and kept my word.