

Stories from the Diary of a Doctor.

SECOND SERIES.

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

X.—WITH THE ETERNAL FIRES.

[This story is founded on a true incident.]



WAS sent for one day towards the end of a certain very hot June to see a boy who was ill at a large preparatory school in the neighbourhood of London. The school was in the country, about an hour's drive from town. My message was urgent, and I did not lose any time in attending to it. I had but a very few minutes to catch my train, an express, and had at the last moment to make a rush, first for my ticket, and then for a seat in the railway compartment. I opened the door of a first-class carriage just as the train was moving, and found that I was to take my brief journey to Wickham in the company of a single fellow-passenger. He was a man inclining to the elderly side of life, and when I got into the carriage his head was buried in a large sheet of the *Times*. He just glanced up when I appeared, and then, quickly looking down, resumed his reading. I did not interrupt him, but sat leaning back in my own seat lost in anxious thought. I had several bad cases on my visiting list just then, and was in no mood even to read. Presently I observed that my fellow-traveller had folded up his paper, and sitting so that I could get a view of his profile, was looking steadily out at the landscape. Hitherto, I had regarded him with the most scanty measure of attention, but now, something in the expression of his face aroused my keen and immediate interest.

He was a handsome man, tall and well-developed—the outline of his face was delicate and finely carved. The nose was slightly aquiline—

a snow-white beard hid the lower part of the features, but the forehead, nose, and finely-shaped head were magnificently proportioned. It gives me pleasure to look at perfection in any form, and this man's whole appearance very nearly approached my ideal. He must suddenly have observed that I was paying him marked attention, for he turned swiftly and glanced at me. His eyes, of a bright hazel, seemed to lift and lighten for a moment, then they filled with a most impenetrable gloom, which was so marked as to be almost like despair. He opened his lips as if to speak, but evidently changed his mind, and once more confined his gaze to the landscape, not a feature of which I am sure by his expression did he see.

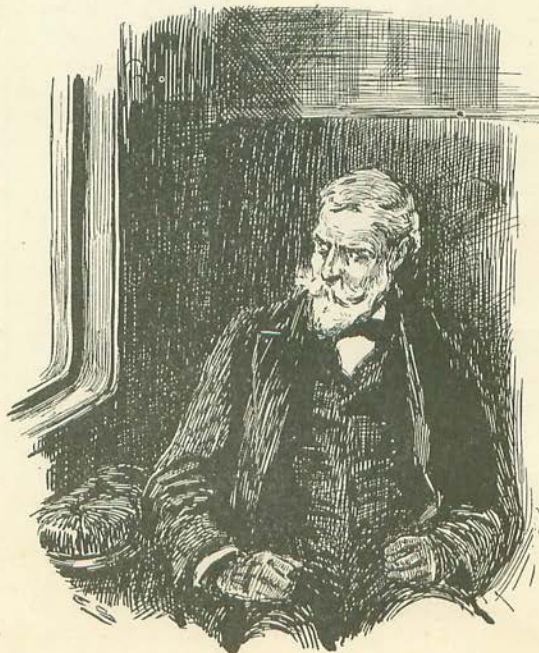
Soon afterwards we arrived at Wickham, a small country town, after which the school was named. I saw that my travelling companion was also getting out here. We found ourselves the only passengers on the platform, and the next moment I heard the stranger inquiring, in somewhat testy tones, for a conveyance to take him immediately to Wickham House. The doctor's brougham was waiting

for me, and as Wickham House was also my destination, I stepped up at once to my fellow-traveller, and offered him a seat.

He stared at me as if he had only seen me then for the first time.

"I am extremely obliged to you, sir," he said, recovering himself with a start; "the fact is, I am anxious to reach the school in order to catch an early train back to town. I will accept your offer with pleasure."

"Step in, won't you?" I said.



"MY FELLOW-PASSENGER."

We both entered the brougham, and were soon bowling away in the direction of the school. As we were driving through the antiquated little town, my companion roused himself to be animated and talkative, but when we got into the more country parts, he lapsed into silence, and the stupor of dull despair once more spread itself over his features. I endeavoured to keep the conversation going, touching lightly on many topics of general interest, but he scarcely responded.

As we approached the house, driving up to it through a winding avenue, he heaved a profound sigh, and cast a glance up at the many windows. The building was a fine old gabled mansion of the Elizabethan period—the main part of the house was completely covered with ivy.

"Wickham House looks quite imposing," I said, with a smile; "this is my first visit—can you tell me if there are many boys here?"

"A couple of hundred, I believe," he replied. "It is a fine building, and the situation is exceptionally good. You would suppose that a lad would be safe here, would you not?"

"It seems to me that boys are safe nowhere," I replied. "I am a doctor, and am coming here to-day to see a little chap who has fallen on his head and hurt himself badly."

"Ah!" he answered, "I did not allude to that sort of ordinary danger. Sir, there is something in your face which makes me willing to confide in you. I am the father of an only boy—if he is alive now, he is fourteen years of age—as fine a lad as ever stepped, strong and hearty, with all the athletic propensities of the best order of young Britain. I sent him here, to prepare for Eton; he would have gone there at the end of the summer holidays. Two months ago he vanished—yes, that is the only word. Ah! here we are."

We drew up at the front door. My companion got out first, and I followed. I was met on the threshold of the house by the local doctor—a man of the name of Hudson; he was waiting for me anxiously, and took me off at once to see my patient. I had no time, therefore, to observe my fellow-traveller any further.

The boy whom I had come to see was very ill—in fact, in great danger; and my attention was completely taken up by his case until late in the evening. In the interest aroused by this acute illness, I had forgotten

all about my strange companion, but just as I was leaving, Dr. Hudson, who was taking me through the hall of the great house on my way to the carriage, spoke abruptly.

"By the way, Halifax, I saw that you gave Mr. Cavendish a seat to the school. He has spent the day here, and is returning to London now. You have no objection, have you, to his sharing your conveyance back to the station?"

"None whatever," I replied. "He is a fine-looking man—I did not know his name until you mentioned it. There is something about him which interests me. By the way, he told me a queer story—he said that he once had a son here, but that the boy vanished about two months ago.

"That is perfectly true. The case is a terrible one, in fact, quite a tragedy. The boy was, without the least doubt, the victim of a horrible plot. The circumstances of his disappearance were as follows: One day, Dr. Hughes, our head master, received a letter purporting to be written by the boy's father. It was to all appearance in his handwriting; the paper was headed with his crest and his private address in Essex. The letter was a very brief one, and requested Dr. Hughes to send Malcolm up to Paddington the following day, in order to see an aunt whom the boy had not met since he was an infant.

"Either his aunt or I will meet him at the bookstall on the arrival platform," wrote Mr. Cavendish. "In case, by any chance, I am not present, let him wear a red tie—Lady Seymour will recognise him by that. Send up one of the masters with him, and do not fail to let him be there—he shall return to school the following day."

"Naturally, after the receipt of such a letter, there was nothing for Dr. Hughes to do but to comply. He sent the boy to town accompanied by one of the junior masters, Mr. Price—they went as directed, and stood near one of the bookstalls. Presently a well-dressed, middle-aged lady came up—she embraced the boy tenderly, told him that she was his aunt, Lady Seymour, and took him away with her in a hansom. Price, quite satisfied that all was right with the boy, returned here, and it was not until the following day, when Malcolm failed to appear, that the first idea of anything being wrong entered Dr. Hughes's mind. He telegraphed to Mr. Cavendish at his place in Essex, but received no reply. He became possessed with a sense of uneasiness which he could scarcely account for, and went himself to Essex that night. On his arrival at 'The Howe,' Mr.



"SHE TOOK HIM AWAY WITH HER."

Cavendish's place, you can imagine his consternation when he heard that the house was shut up, that Lady Seymour was still in India with her husband, and that Mr. Cavendish was somewhere on the Continent, address not known. What followed can be better imagined than described. The letter was, of course, a forgery; the woman who took the boy off had left no address behind her, nor has Malcolm Cavendish from that hour to now been heard of. Such is the pitiable story. There was a short delay in getting Mr. Cavendish's address; but as soon as possible the distracted father returned to England, and not a stone has been left unturned to try to obtain a trace of the missing lad. Up to the present all our efforts have been unsuccessful. The boy is an only son, the heir to a fine estate; the poor father's agony of mind I leave you to conjecture. In short, unless something happens soon to relieve the tension of anxiety and despair, his mind may be seriously overbalanced."

"It is a terrible story," I said. "What an awful villain that woman must be. Who is she?"

"Nobody knows. When questioned, Mr. Cavendish always shirks the subject. Even the detectives can get nothing out of him.

If he does know anything about her, he refuses to tell."

"Well," I said, "your story quite accounts for the expression on his face. I wish with all my heart that something could be done to relieve him."

"Get him to confide in you if you can, doctor, on your way to town; you will be doing a good work, I assure you; one of the saddest features of the case, as far as the old man is concerned, is that he keeps his grief so completely to himself. If you can manage to break the ice, you will be doing him a service."

"I will do what I can," I answered.

Soon afterwards I had left Wickham House, and in Mr. Cavendish's company returned to London. Our compartment was full, and if I had wished to draw my companion out, I should not have had the opportunity. During our short run to town, he sat nursing his grief, staring straight before him, apathy if not despair in his eyes—he was evidently at present in no mood to confide in anyone. We reached Paddington in good time, and I turned to bid him "good-bye." He looked at me with a queer expression on his face.

"They spoke of you at the school to-day," he said; "they told me one or two things about you—you do not quite fulfil the rôle of the ordinary physician—I wonder if it is possible for you to administer to a mind diseased."

"That is the priest's mission, as a rule," I said; then I added, suddenly, "but try me—come home with me now, if you like."

"There is no time like the present," he answered.

My carriage was waiting—I conducted him to it, and in a short time we found ourselves at my house in Harley Street. I took him at once into my study, offered him refreshment, and then waited for him to speak.

"Do you make brain disease your special study?" he said, abruptly.

"Not my special study," I replied; "but I have given a good deal of attention to mental disease."

"Then what do you say to this? I told you this morning that I once had a boy at Wickham House—a fine lad, well-proportioned, sound, brave, and good in body and mind. Owing to the strangest and most diabolical stratagem, he was entrapped away from school—a forged letter was used, and the name of my sister, Lady Seymour, brought into requisition. It is two months

now since the fatal day when the boy was taken to London—since then, not the slightest clue has been obtained of his whereabouts. In short, as far as he is concerned, the earth might have opened and swallowed him up.”

“The story is most tragic,” I replied.

“Ah, you may well call it that. Such a tragedy happening to a man in connection with his only son is enough to—eh, doctor—enough to turn his brain, is it not?”

As Mr. Cavendish said these last words, his face suddenly altered—the look of despair gave place to a curious expression of stealthiness mingled with fear. He rose to his feet and gazed at me steadily.

“I should like the truth from you,” he said, coming a step nearer. “Is it true that I ever had a son? For the last few weeks I have seriously considered every circumstance of this most strange case, and have almost come to the conclusion that I am suffering from a very queer state of illusion. More and more, as the days go by, I incline to the belief that I never had a son. It is true that I carry the photograph of a boy in my pocket—I often take it out and look at it—I gaze at it sometimes for nearly an hour at a time, and say to myself, over and over, ‘I have watched your face since you were an infant. Yes, I have certainly seen you—I have held you in these arms. I have seen the look of intelligence growing in your eyes. I have observed your progress from childhood to boyhood. But, no, perhaps you are only a dream-child—perhaps I never possessed you. Here is a photograph, but may it not represent another man’s son?’ My mind is in this state of torture, Dr. Halifax; always vacillating from belief to unbelief, until I scarcely know what I am doing. Can you not see my point for yourself? How is it possible for me seriously to believe that a lad of fourteen could vanish from the face of the earth leaving no clue behind him?”

“The case is most mysterious,” I replied; “but with regard to its truth, I can absolutely and completely relieve your mind. You are not suffering from an illusion—you have really had a son—nay, I firmly believe him to be still alive. It so happens that Hudson, the doctor who attends the boys at Wickham House, told me your story to-day. Your boy was certainly at school there—he certainly did exist. Your mind is slightly unbalanced by the terrible grief and anxiety you have undergone. Your duty now is to turn your thoughts resolutely from the idea that you are suffering from a case of delusion.”

“The story of the disappearance is too unaccountable to believe,” said Cavendish.

“Have you a photograph of your boy about you?” I asked.

“I certainly have a photograph in my pocket, but whether it is a photograph of a stranger or of my son, I am unable to tell you.”

As he spoke he produced a thin morocco case, touched a spring, opened it, and placed it in my hands. It contained the photograph of as frank and handsome a lad as any man could desire to possess—the eyes, the face, the smiling lips, the open, courageous expression of the brow, all showed that there was no duplicity or anything mean in the boy himself. One glance at his face, as it was reflected in the photograph, was quite sufficient to dispel any doubt as to his having connived at his own disappearance. What had happened to the boy? Whose victim was he? How and by what means had he been kidnapped so effectually as not to leave the ghost of a trace behind?

While I was looking at the picture of the lad, the father’s eyes were fixed on me. I looked up suddenly and encountered his gaze.

“This is a splendid boy,” I said, “and,” I continued, emphatically, “he is your son”

“Why do you say that?” he asked.

“For the simple reason that he is like you—he has got your eyes, and the expression you must have worn when you were happy.”

“I never thought of that,” he answered.

He took the photograph into his hand and studied it carefully.

“I suppose he must be my son,” he said. “I see what you mean. I used to have those particularly bright hazel eyes when I was young.”

“You have them still,” I said; “you have transmitted them to your boy.”

“Well, be it so. It is a relief to hear you speak, for you speak with confidence; but when I am alone the intolerable delusion invariably returns that I never had a son—all the same, I am as tortured as if I really possessed and lost a boy like that.”

“The thing to cure you is simple enough,” I said.

“What is that?”

“We must find your boy and bring him back to you.”

“Ah, Dr. Halifax—ah, if you could!”

“Sit down,” I said, “let us talk the matter out carefully.”

“I have talked it out carefully so often,” he said, pressing his hand to his brow in a



"HE STUDIED IT CAREFULLY."

bewildered manner. "At first I was all on fire—I was nearly distracted—I spent money wildly, here, there, and everywhere—I was full of hope. Although I was nearly mad, my hope of finally discovering the lad never deserted me. But of late the queer feeling that the whole thing is a delusion comes to me whenever I attempt to take any steps to find the boy. Granted that you have cured me for the time being, I shall go back to my rooms at the Albany to-night, and assure myself once again that it is useless to fret, for I never had a son."

"We will not encourage that delusion by talking of it," I said. "Rest assured that you had a son, that in all probability you still have one, and that it is your bounden duty to search the earth until you recover him."

"Do you say so, indeed? With what energy you speak."

"It is necessary to speak with energy," I replied; "the case is pressing, you must move Heaven and earth to get back that boy. It is impossible for you to tell what fate may now be his."

"I cannot do more than I have done, doctor—at the present moment there are two detectives working day and night in my service. From the moment Price, the junior master at Wickham House, saw the boy step into a hansom with a woman who pretended to be his aunt, he has vanished as completely and utterly as if he had never existed."

"The boy has been very cleverly kid-

napped," I said. "The woman who pretended to be his aunt is, of course, at the bottom of the whole affair. There is no reason to suppose that money has had anything to do with this strange case; the boy was also much too old to be trained as an acrobat—in short, the case plainly points to revenge."

"Revenge," said Cavendish, fixing his eyes on me, and giving me a startled and astonished glance—"Who could possibly hate a boy like that?"

"Not likely," I replied; "but someone could hate you. Have you an enemy?"

"If you ask me if I *have* an enemy, I think I can honestly reply 'No,'" he answered, after a little pause.

"You speak with doubt," I said. "I will slightly change my question. Had you an enemy in the past?"

"Oh, the past," he repeated, thoughtfully. "You are half a detective, doctor."

"Only so far a detective," I replied, "that I have made human nature the one study of my life."

"Doubtless such a study gives you clues to men's secrets," was the answer. "Well, I can give you an unpleasant history, but before I speak of it, I will just tell you one or two things with regard to my present. I married late in life. Shortly after the birth of the boy my wife died. Almost immediately after her death I came in for a fine property—an estate in Essex worth some thousands a year. The place is called 'The Howe,' and my boy and I have spent some happy Christmases there. The boy was the brightest creature—I could never be dull in his society—I was glad to feel that he would inherit my acres some day. When with him my past ceased to worry me."

"I am sorry to have to ask you to rake up unpleasant memories," I interrupted.

"Yes, yes, I will tell you all. The fact is this:—

"I was once obliged owing to strange circumstances to act in a very unpleasant, and what appeared to be almost a vindictive, way towards a woman. She was a Creole, a passionate and strikingly handsome creature. She had made the acquaintance of a young fellow, who was at the time one of my greatest friends—she induced him to promise her marriage. I doubted and distrusted her from the first, and moved Heaven and earth

to keep my friend from committing himself to such a disastrous step as a marriage with her. All my expostulations were in vain—he was madly in love; and this woman, Thora, had a most unbounded influence over him. Unexpectedly, it was given to me to put a spoke in her wheel. Even at the altar I was just in time to save my friend—I discovered that Thora had a husband already, and brought him to the church at the critical moment. All was up for her, then, of course; but I shall never forget the look on her face. My poor friend died of yellow fever two months afterwards, and Thora's husband himself fell a victim to the fell disease. But I had made an enemy of this woman, and during the remainder of my stay in Jamaica she was a thorn in my side. One day she forced her way into my presence, and asked me if I would give her compensation for the injury I had inflicted on her. I asked her what she meant. She suggested that I should marry her myself. I refused, with horror. She bestowed upon me a glance of the most unutterable hate, and told me that I should rue the day when I had ever interfered with her.

“Shortly afterwards I went home, and sincerely hoped that I should never see her or be troubled by her again. Judge therefore of my feelings when on the eve of my marriage I received a most intemperate letter from her. She again repeated the words which she had uttered when parting from me: ‘You will rue the day you interfered with me.’ She wrote to me from Jamaica, and being so far away, I did not think it possible that she could carry out her threat, although from what I knew of her character I believed her to be quite capable of any mode of revenge. I married, and was happy. Some years afterwards I received a newspaper with a marked passage; it contained an account of this woman's marriage to a Swede. Since then I have heard nothing about her. Let us forget her, Dr. Halifax—she could not possibly have had anything to do with the disappearance of my son, and the subject is most distasteful to me.”

“Nevertheless, from what you have told me, it is more than evident that if this woman is still living you have an enemy.”

“I had an enemy at the time, no doubt—but I scarcely think that even Thora would keep up her evil feelings for fourteen or fifteen years, and then suddenly rise up as if from the grave to do me a fearful injury. The greatest dare-devil that ever lived would surely not allow her revenge to slumber so long.”

“That may or may not be,” I said. “I consider what you have told me a most important clue to the recovery of your boy. In short, not a moment should be lost in finding out where this woman now is.”

Mr. Cavendish shrugged his shoulders.

“If she is really at the bottom of it,” he said, after a pause, “we shall never find her. She was quite the cleverest woman I have known. In short, she was capable in the old days of outwitting twenty detectives. I have no reason to suppose that her talents have rusted with years. If she is at the bottom of this affair, the boy is hopelessly lost.”

“You have no right to say so,” I answered, with some indignation. “However bad and unscrupulous a woman may be, it is possible, surely, to outwit her. In short, you will forgive me for saying that this story should have been confided to your detectives some time ago.”



“A GLANCE OF UNUTTERABLE HATE.”

Mr. Cavendish looked at me fixedly.

"If you think so, I will tell them," he said. "It did not occur to me to connect her with the affair. My belief is that she is in all probability dead—she comes of a short-lived race. Yes, I think you are mistaken, but, as you say, no stone should be left unturned, and I will have a talk with one of the detectives this evening."

Mr. Cavendish left me soon afterwards. I felt that our interview had at least done this much good—it had shaken the terrible delusion which made him doubt that he had ever been the father of a son. I was glad at least of this, and wondered if it would be my fate to hear anything more of this strange story.

The next day, to my surprise, Mr. Cavendish called again upon me.

"Well," I said, "I am glad to see you. What does your detective say? How is the affair progressing? What steps are being taken to find the woman Thora?"

He gave me a queer and somewhat unsteady glance.

"The fact is this," he said: "I have said nothing whatever about that woman to the detectives employed in my service."

I could not help feeling regret, and showing it.

"Are you not aware," I said, "that there is not a day to be lost if you are ever to get possession of your boy again?"

"Ah, there's the rub," he said, slowly. "*Had I a boy?*" He folded his hands tightly together, and looked straight out of the window. Then he turned suddenly round and looked me full in the face.

"It is useless for you to argue the point," he said. "When I left you last night, that thing occurred which I told you would happen: I went to my rooms in the Albany, ordered dinner, and telegraphed to the detective MacPherson to call upon me. I had no sooner done so than I laughed at myself for my pains. I felt the delusion, or whatever you like to call it, coming upon me in full force. How could MacPherson recover for me what had never existed? How could I who never had a son embrace one? I sat down to dinner, ate with appetite, refused to

believe that I was suffering under any grief whatever, and when the detective arrived apologized for having troubled him, told him that I had nothing fresh to talk over, and dismissed him. No sooner had he gone than I regretted my own action—I perceived that my mind was verging to the other end of the pendulum. I spent a night of agony, bewailing the boy whom I then believed in—cursing myself for having dismissed the detective; but now, again, the belief that I have no son is with me—you see for yourself what a state is mine—I am incapable of taking any efficient steps in this matter."

"You are," I said, abruptly. "May I not take up the case for you?"

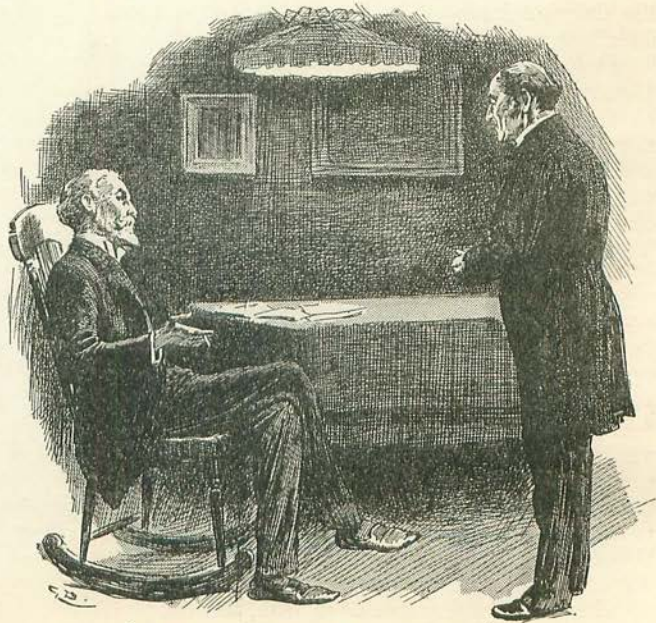
"You?" he said, opening his eyes. "Good heavens! what has a doctor to do with it?"

"I undertake it for you, because you are ill," I said, "because the story is peculiar, and because I am deeply interested."

"You are good," he said. "Yes, act as you think well."

"Give me your detective's address," I said—"I will have an interview with him this evening—and as you know that a woman called Thora certainly did exist in the past, give me what particulars you can with regard to her appearance."

"She was dark and handsome," he answered—"a tall woman with flashing eyes. That was the description of her in the old



"I APOLOGIZED FOR HAVING TROUBLED HIM."

days—if she is still alive, she is probably past recognition, her hair would in all probability be snow-white—I am an old man, and she is older. Oh, she is dead, doctor; do not let us waste our time in thinking of her further.”

I made no reply to this, but took down in my note-book several particulars which I almost forced Cavendish to give me. He left me after a time, and in the course of the day I saw the detective, MacPherson. The man was a shrewd fellow, and I thought it best to take him completely into my confidence. He believed the fresh clue which I was able to furnish him with of the utmost importance—said that the name Thora was in itself so uncommon as to be a valuable guide, and promised to let me hear from him in a few days.

A week passed by without anything fresh occurring—Cavendish was beginning to haunt my house—he came each morning and evening—his mind was still in a terrible state of unbalance—verging one moment to the extreme limits of despair at the thought of the lad he had lost—half an hour afterwards doubting not only that he ever possessed a lad, but even that he himself really existed. I waited anxiously for news from the detective, but day after day passed without any clue whatever being forthcoming.

One morning, early, I received a telegram which upset my own arrangements considerably—the telegram was from a very wealthy patient who was travelling in Russia, and who had been taken seriously ill. He believed himself to be dying in an out-of-the-way place called Bakou. He begged of me to come to him without a moment's delay. Expense was of no moment; he urged me not to delay an hour in setting out on my long journey. The sick man was not only a patient of some years' standing, but was also a very old friend of mine. I could scarcely desert him in such stress, and, after a brief reflection, decided to go to him. I wired to him to expect me as soon as train and steamer could bring me to his side, and then went to Cook's office to get particulars with regard to my unlooked-for journey. Bakou is a small town on a tongue of land jutting into the Caspian Sea—it is on the west coast. I found, to my dismay, that it would not be possible for me to reach this remote corner of the world under ten days' hard travelling. I might slightly shorten my journey by going from London to Vienna, and then on to Odessa by train—but, travel day and night as fast as I could, it would be impossible for me

to reach my poor friend under nine to ten days. I telegraphed to him again to this effect, but his reply, which reached me in the course of the evening, implored me to set off without an hour's delay.

“I am alone in this horrible place,” he telegraphed; “no English doctor within reach. My last chance of life depends on your coming.”

I had scarcely read the words of this long foreign telegram, before the detective, MacPherson, was ushered into my presence.

“Well, sir,” he said, doffing his hat as he spoke, “I am sorry to have kept you and the other gentleman waiting so long, but I do think I have got a bit of a clue at last.”

“Pray be seated,” I said, “and tell me all about it.”

MacPherson seated himself on the edge of a chair, holding his round, soft hat between his knees.

“It is a queer business altogether,” he said, “but the fact is, I have traced the boy to Vienna.”

“Vienna!” I said, startled. “What do you mean?”

“What I say, sir. After very careful inquiries, I have found out that a lad, exactly answering to the description of Master Cavendish, went in the company of two women, one young, one middle-aged, *via* Calais and Dover, to Vienna about ten weeks ago. Let me see, this is the 5th of July; the day the boy went to London was the 26th of April. A fair and a dark lady accompanied by a lad in all points answering to the photograph, a copy of which I hold in my pocket, started for Vienna on that day. From there they went straight on to Odessa. I can't trace them any farther. One of the women would answer to the description Mr. Cavendish gave you of the Creole whom he used to know in his early youth. She is a handsome, tall woman, with a slender, well-preserved figure—flashing, dark eyes, and hair which is only slightly sprinkled with grey—she evidently had an accomplice with her, for a fair-haired woman, much younger, accompanied her and the boy. Now, sir, I propose to start for Odessa to-night, in order to follow up this clue. In a case of this kind, and in such a remote part of the world, only personal investigation can do anything.”

“You are right,” I answered. “Now, I have something strange to tell you. I am also starting for Odessa this evening.”

The man gaped at me in astonishment.

“Yes,” I replied, “I am going to Odessa *en route* to a place on the Caspian Sea of the

name of Bakou. After what you have just informed me, I shall endeavour to persuade Mr. Cavendish to go with me."

The detective rubbed his hands slowly together.

"Nothing can be better for my purpose," he answered, after a pause—"only Mr. Cavendish must be quite certain to keep himself dark, for if this woman Thora really kidnapped the boy, she will be able, in a Russian town like Odessa, effectually to hide him or even to take his life, if her object is revenge and she knows that his father has arrived."

"What can have induced the boy to go with her?" I said. "A lad of fourteen has surely a will of his own."

"Oh, she made up something, sir—the matter seems to me plausible enough. The lad was sent for to town on the pretext of meeting his aunt. This woman would tell the unsuspecting boy that his father, who was then on the Continent, had desired her to bring him out to him. Of course, the lad would follow her then to the world's end, and be only too pleased to do so. Well, doctor, I will leave you now, and prepare for my long journey."

I bade the man "good-bye," and sent a wire to Mr. Cavendish, to ask him to call on me at once. He was at home, and arrived at my house between six and seven o'clock.

"I have news for you," I said, the moment he appeared.

I then told him of the sudden journey which I was obliged to make, briefly related the interview which I had just had with the detective, and then proposed that he should accompany me to Odessa.

"I feel full of hope," I said. "Your presence on the spot may be necessary in order to identify your son. How soon can you be ready to join me?"

He had been looking depressed and full of despair when he entered the room, but the news which I had for him acted like cham-

pagne. His eyes brightened, he clenched his hands in a thoroughly healthy manner, used some strong words with regard to Thora, and then said that he would accompany me.

"Go back to the Albany at once," I said; "pack what is necessary for your journey, get some money, and meet me at Victoria at a quarter to eight. We can talk as much as we like *en route*, but now there is not a moment to lose."

"You are right," he said. "I am a new man; the terrible delusion seems to have left me completely. I will be at Victoria at the hour you name."

He had drawn himself up to his full height. Already he looked ten years younger. He left my house, and, punctually to the moment,

I met him on the departure platform at Victoria Station. We took our seats in the train, and were soon steaming away at a rapid pace towards Dover. I need not describe the early part of our journey—it was absolutely uneventful. Travelling right through, we reached Vienna in about thirty hours from the date of our departure from London. At Vienna I got my first glimpse of the detective, MacPherson, who was travelling in the same train, but second-class. He was dressed in a rough tweed suit, which completely metamorphosed his appearance.

We reached Odessa at night, and I found, almost to my relief, for I was completely tired out, that there were no means of continuing my journey until the following morning. On making inquiries, I found that I must now take steamer and cross the Black Sea to a place called Batoum. The journey by steamer would take some days, as the only boats available would coast a good deal. My duty, of course, lay straight and clear

before me. I was on my way to my sick friend, but I found rather to my dismay that Cavendish, left alone, would be almost incapable of guiding himself. His mind was without any doubt in a weak state. Full of



"I AM A NEW MAN."

hope as he was during the greater part of that long journey, the painful illusion that he was following a vain quest, a will-o'-the-wisp, the dictation of a dream, came over him from time to time. Left alone at Odessa, he would in all probability spoil MacPherson's game.

"You had better come with me," I said; "you will do no good here. MacPherson is as sharp a fellow as I ever met. As soon as he gets a real clue, he can telegraph to you, and you can return. Your best plan now will be to come with me, and give him a clear coast."

"I see no good in that," he replied; "it seems that a boy answering to my son's description has undoubtedly reached this place. I should know that woman among a thousand—I should know the boy—whether he is a dream-boy or my own son, God alone can tell; but I should know his face again. Why should I leave the place?"

"You must please yourself, of course," I answered; "my own course is plain. I must take steamer for Batoum at nine o'clock to-morrow morning. If you like, you can accompany me, and I shall be glad to have you, but if not, I trust you will telegraph to me as soon as anything transpires."

"I will do so assuredly," he answered.

Almost immediately afterwards we both retired for the night. In the early morning I received a note from Cavendish.

"I have made up my mind to remain at Odessa for a week at least," he wrote.

I tore up the note, and prepared for my own journey—I was to be on board the steamer at nine o'clock. When I went down to the quay I saw MacPherson standing there looking about him with all an Englishman's curiosity. In his rough suit, he looked like the typical traveller; he touched his hat and came up to me.

"Mr. Cavendish stays behind," I said to him, briefly; "you will look after him, will you not?"

"Yes, sir; but it is best for me not to appear to know him."

"Have you made any plans for yourself?" I asked.

"I believe I have got a clue, Dr. Halifax, but I am not quite certain yet. I know a little of many languages—even a few words of Russian. At a café last night I met a Russian who knows the part of the world where you are going. There is a great colony of Swedes there—that woman married a Swede."

I nodded.

"Well, there are Swedes at Bakou—in

fact, the most important part of the population consists of that nationality—the great firm of Nobel Brothers have their kerosene works there—theirs are much the largest kerosene refining works in the world. My Russian friend knows all about them. He informed me that there is a woman there who speaks English—the wife of one of the overseers. The point for us to find out now is: Who is this English-speaking woman? Can she be the one whom we are seeking? I shall not leave Odessa until the next steamer starts, in order to search this place thoroughly, but it is more than probable you will see me some day before long at Bakou."

"If you come, you had better bring Mr. Cavendish with you," I said.

"I must be guided by circumstances," he answered.

It was now time for me to go on board the steamer, which almost immediately afterwards got under way.

I shall not soon forget the tedium, and yet the wonderful beauty, of that voyage—the steamer coasted almost the entire way, and in consequence our progress was slow, but in process of time we reached the large town of Batoum. From there I took train to Tiflis, and in course of time found myself at Bakou. My journey had, as I anticipated, quite covered ten days. A more desolate-looking town than Bakou it would be difficult to find. The place at one time belonged to the Persians, but is now owned by Russia—it is built on a sand hill, and overlooks the Caspian Sea. High winds and clouds of sand scour the little town from morning to night. Of trees or green of any sort, there is none. I drove straight to the Hôtel Métropole—the best in the place, where my friend, General Morgan, had rooms. The hotel was built, as is usual on the Continent, round a courtyard, and the sick man, of course, occupied the best rooms. I found him very ill, and my hope that I might be able immediately to bring him home was frustrated—he was suffering from a sharp attack of typhoid fever, and although the worst symptoms had now abated, there was little chance of his being moved for many weeks to come. When I entered his bedroom, I was surprised to see a woman dressed as an English nurse seated by his bedside. She rose when I entered and stood respectfully—when I spoke, she answered me in English—the patient's state had evidently filled her with alarm, and she was much relieved at seeing me. General

Morgan was too ill to enter into any conversation, and after a short time I left the room, beckoning to the nurse to follow me.

"I am glad that you are here," I said; "my patient is fortunate to have obtained the services of an English nurse."

"Oh, I live here," she replied, speaking with a slightly foreign accent; "my home is here; I am the wife of a Swede of the name of Nehber. I happened to hear that an Englishman was very ill at the *Métropole*, and came a week ago to offer my services. I have been well trained as a nurse, and was glad of the chance of earning a little money on my own account. My patient told me that he had telegraphed to his English doctor to come out to him, so we have been expecting you, sir, and I took the liberty to engage a room in advance. May I show it to you now?"

She led the way as she spoke along a gallery, opened the door of a spacious but not uncomfortable bedroom, and left me. When she had done so, I went straight to the window and looked out. The sight of this woman had aroused my keenest interest—her appearance on the scene was absolutely unexpected—she had doubtless saved my patient's life; but, thankful as I was to her for that, it was not on General Morgan's account that my pulse beat faster than usual at the present moment. Was this by any strange chance the woman whom Cavendish had known long ago? She spoke English well, she was

extremely well preserved, but several signs showed me that she was no longer young—her figure was upright, she was well made—in her youth she was doubtless handsome. I felt disturbed, and at first regretted that neither the detective nor Cavendish had accompanied me. But on second thoughts I began to believe that I might manage this matter best by myself. Fru Nehber, as she was called, had no reason to suspect me. I was in very truth a *bonâ-fide* English doctor, who had come at great inconvenience to visit my patient. I might be able to draw her out—it might be my mission to rescue the boy. My heart beat high at the thought.

After refreshing myself with a bath, I went into the town to collect my thoughts. The foreign and peculiar aspect of the place would at any other moment have filled me with interest. Almost every Eastern nationality seemed to be represented in the streets. Turks in green and rose colour, Persians with long, yellow silk coats, Tartars in their white tunics, small caps, and yellow boots—the place was alive with colour and vivacity. The cries of all sorts of nations—in short, a confusion of tongues—resounded through the streets. I entered one of the bazaars, and tried to make myself understood, but found it impossible, as the only languages spoken were Russian or Persian, with an occasional mixture of Swedish. I came back to the *Métropole*, and entering my patient's room, sat down by his side. The nurse—dressed quietly, as an English nurse should be—stood now by one of the windows; the casement was open to let in some air. My patient had awakened after a long sleep; he turned his eyes and fixed them on my face.

"You are good to come, Halifax," he said. "I am more grateful to you than I can say. I feel now that, what with Fru Nehber's care and yours, I have every chance of recovery."

"Yes, you are very fortunate in securing the attendance of an English nurse," I said.

"I should have been dead long ago, but for her," he replied, speaking in a thin, weak voice. "In short, I owe my life to her."

He gave the nurse a grateful glance, which she

did not return—her hands were tightly locked together, her black eyes seemed to be watching the crowd, ever changing, but always present, who wrangled and chattered in the courtyard. A cart rattled in, making a loud noise—it was slightly built, with very high and slender wheels—some travellers alighted and entered the hotel—Fru Nehber left her position by the window, and came into the centre of the room.

"Have you noticed our peculiar and interesting streets, doctor?" she said, speaking with a low, rather strange, intonation, as if she weighed each word before she uttered it.

"I have been in the streets," I replied.



"DRESSED AS AN ENGLISH NURSE."

"I have never visited an Eastern town like this before—it is full of strange wonder to me ; but, of course, being unacquainted with any language spoken here, I am rather at a loss how to proceed."

"You will permit me to be your interpreter," she said again—"I shall have pleasure in helping you in any way in my power."

"That will be kind of you," I answered.

"The patient will sleep after he has had his composing draught," she continued. "Will you come with me and see the place by moonlight?"

I responded in the affirmative. I went down stairs presently to supper, and by-and-by Fru Nehber, who now wore a long grey cloak, and a neat little nurse's bonnet, also grey, joined me.

She took me out with her and explained much of the strange scene.

"This is a queer place to live in," she said suddenly, clasping her hands ; "in short, it is death in life ; you can imagine, can you not, how I hate it?"

"I suppose you have a good reason for staying here," I said. "This is certainly the last place in the world in which I should expect to see a trained nurse and an Englishwoman."

"An Englishwoman never knows where she may go," was the reply ; "and then, have I not told you that I am married? I am married to an overseer of the great kerosene works."

"By the way, where are they?" I asked. "I have heard a good deal of them from different travellers on my journey, and would much like to see them."

She was silent for a moment, and seemed to hesitate.

"You shall see them," she said then ; "but first tell me if it is your purpose to remain here long."

"I shall probably stay for two or three days," I answered. "Of course, it is impossible for me to remain long out of London, but now that I have come so far, I must see my patient right through the crisis."

"It is past, I assure you, doctor ; your friend will live."

"You seem to know a good deal about illness," I answered, giving her a keen glance.

"There are few things I do not know," she replied ; "I have travelled much ; I understand life. Sorrow, regret, bitterness, have been my portion, but through these things we learn. You are doubtless a great doctor, and a clever man, but you do not

understand our Eastern illnesses. Your friend would have died but for me—now he will live, have no fear for him."

"Well, I shall stay here for a day or two," I answered. "I will then return home and send out a friend of mine, also a medical man, who can bring General Morgan by easy stages to England when he is fit to travel."

"That will be a good plan," she replied. "That will relieve me."

"Then you do not nurse as a profession?" I said.

"Not now. But I was glad to nurse the Englishman, for he will pay me well."

"Is not your husband well off?"

"Oh, yes, and I have plenty to do at home—still, the news that an Englishman was sick unto death drew me to his side."

"Have you children?" I asked.

She looked hard at me ; her black, piercing eyes seemed to read me through.

"No," she said ; then abruptly turned aside.

"It is very kind of you to trouble to show me this place," I continued, after a pause.

"I am pleased to help you," she answered ; "you seem good and strong. I don't care for goodness, but I have a great respect for strength."

I made no answer to this, and soon afterwards we returned to the hotel. I noticed that she said nothing more with regard to my request to see the kerosene works, but the next day when I alluded to the subject I found that she had not forgotten my wish.

"I have arranged everything," she said ; "your patient is better—you need not fear to leave him. You can spend an interesting day. It is impossible, of course, for me to accompany you ; but I have a friend—a young girl—who lives with me in my home. My home is not here, but five miles distant, just on the borders of the great kerosene works. I have asked my friend to meet you there. She speaks very little English, but she is a good French scholar—you understand French, do you not?"

"I can speak French, of course," I answered.

"Oh, then, that is excellent. There is a Swede here who speaks French. He will drive you straight to the works of the Brothers Nobel. Doubtless, after you have seen them, you would like to go on to the great feature of this place."

"What is that?" I asked.

"The Eternal Fires—they are wonderful ! No one ought to come as far as Bakou

without seeing them. Now go—your patient is in my charge—have a pleasant day.”

She waved her hand to me in a somewhat theatrical style, and I left her.

Half an hour afterwards, I was driving in one of the queer native carriages in the direction of the great refining works of Nobel Brothers. My driver, who was also to act as my interpreter, understood a few words of the French language. The country over which we went was extremely desolate. After driving about five miles, I saw in the distance a hill, crowned with many tall, black, pyramid-shaped objects, looking something like a pine forest. As we came nearer I quickly discovered what they really were—numberless chimneys, out of which the liquid naphtha was rising, sometimes to the height of two or three hundred feet into the air. Fru Nehber was evidently inclined to be kind to me, and had left no stone unturned to provide for my comfort. When I arrived at the works, I was met by her husband—a n elderly man, with a great white beard and heavy moustache.

He took me all over the kerosene works, gave me a carefully-prepared meal, and showed me every attention. It was late in the afternoon—almost evening—when I parted from him.

“By the way,” I said, suddenly, “your wife told me that I should meet a young French lady here.”

“Oh,” he answered, with a start; “she alludes, of course, to Felicia La Touche, a girl who has been

staying with us for some time; she is away to-day: important business called her suddenly from home.”

I noticed as he spoke that, simple as his words were, a look of irritation and annoyance crossed his face.

“My wife is a peculiar woman,” he said, slowly; “she takes whims, Monsieur le Docteur, and sometimes those who are with her suffer, but Felicia means well. I presume, sir,” he added, breaking off abruptly, “that you are now about to visit the old Temple of the Fire Worshipers?”

“That is my intention,” I replied. “It is surely worth seeing?”

“It is. The fires at night make a weird and fantastic spectacle. I will now say farewell.”

He shook hands with me as he spoke, and a few moments later I was continuing my drive. The distance from the kerosene works to the Fire Worshipers' Temple was a matter of about twelve miles. The sun was now sinking beneath the horizon, and a night of great darkness was ushered in.

The road was of the roughest, and I quickly perceived the advisability of using the queer carriages built of withies, with their very high and slender wheels—the wheels could sink deep into the sand, and their height kept the travellers at a respectful distance from the choking dust. We had gone some distance when I suddenly saw on the horizon what looked like long, low, white walls; in short, what seemed to be the inclosure of an



“THE FLAMES SHOT UP TO SEVERAL HUNDREDS OF FEET.”

Eastern city. I asked my guide what these walls were, and he informed me with a nod that they were the white walls which surrounded the old Hindu Temple of the Fire Worshippers.

As we came nearer, little tongues of fire shot out of the ground at short intervals—they rose from a foot to two feet high, spouting up suddenly, and then dying away. Our horse, a very strong animal, was evidently accustomed to this subterranean burning, and was not in the least alarmed, moving quietly aside when the fire sprang up directly in his path. My guide and charioteer drove with care—he was now absolutely silent—I also sat quiet, musing on the strangeness of my present situation, wondering if an adventure were before me, and if it was really to be my happy lot to rescue Mr. Cavendish's long-lost son.

By-and-by we reached the white walls—my guide jumped down from his driver's seat, and pulled a bell. The custodian of the deserted temple—for the fire-worshipping had long ago been given up—now appeared. He held a lantern in his hand, which lit up his weird and wrinkled face. He was dressed in the garb of a Russian soldier, and took care quickly to inform me, my driver acting as interpreter, that he was one hundred and nine years of age.*

We soon found ourselves in a large courtyard, surrounded by very broad and fairly high walls. Piercing these walls at regular intervals were small doorways, which I discovered led into low, dark rooms. In these rooms the monks used to live. The centre of the court was occupied by a building raised on thick pillars. This was doubtless the ancient temple. On one side of the surrounding walls rose a heavy, square building, surmounted by two low towers. Out of each of these ascended now high columns of flame, lighting up the entire place, and giving it a most strange and weird appearance. The flames rose to several hundreds of feet, and shot up clear and steady into the night air. My guide, having tied up the horse outside, quickly joined us and began to interpret as well as he could the old custodian's remarks, but his knowledge of any language but his own was extremely slight, and the scene spoke for itself. I soon left the guide and custodian, and walking across the court, began to make investigations on my own account. The men stood together, talking in low tones just where the light fell fully upon them, but

behind the temple in the middle of the court there was deep shadow. I had just approached this shadow when I was startled by the touch of a light hand on my arm—I turned quickly, and saw a girl standing by my side.

"I have been expecting you," she said; "I have been hoping you would come—you are the English doctor, are you not?"

"I am a doctor," I replied, "and who are you?"

"Felicia La Touche—oh, I know Fru Nehber will kill me, but I don't care—I have waited for you here all day, when I heard you were coming; I brought the boy here on purpose. Oh, he is ill, very ill—he will die if something is not soon done. My God, I can't stand it any longer—his cries, and the way he wails for his father! I think his mind must be wandering a little—he thinks that his father is coming to him—he has been thinking so all day. Oh, can you do anything—can you save him?"

"One moment first," I said. "What is the boy's name?"

She clasped her hands together with some violence—her agitation was extreme.

"He is an English boy," she said; "Malcolm Cavendish. I helped to kidnap him a couple of months ago. Oh! how wretched I have been ever since! But this is not the time for me to talk of my own feelings. Come; come at once. Oh, you may save him yet!"

As she spoke she pulled me forward—she was a young girl, and very pretty, but her fair face was now absolutely distorted with misery and terror. She opened a door in one of the walls, and the next moment I found myself in a tiny room in which I could scarcely stand upright.

"Here I am, Malcolm," said the girl; "I have brought a good doctor to see you."

"I don't want any light, Felicia," was the strange reply. "When my eyes are shut, I can see father—I know he is coming to me. Don't bring a light, I shall see the horrible faces, and all the queer things, if you do—let me be, I am quite happy in the dark."

"You must bear the light; you will be better soon," she replied.

She struck a match, held it to a candle in a swing lantern, and motioned me to come forward. A boy was lying stretched out flat on the ground at one end of the Fire Worshippers' cell; a rough sackcloth covered him—a bundle of the same was placed under

* A fact.



"SHE STRUCK A MATCH."

his head—his face was very white and thin—his big, dark eyes, which were looking up eagerly, had an unmistakable pathos in them which stabbed me to the very heart.

"Who are you?" he said, half sitting up, and gazing at me in a kind of terror. "Are you—is it true—are you father?"

"No, my boy," I replied, "but I know your father, and I have come to take you to him. Fear nothing now that I have come."

"Oh, take him, take him away," said Felicia, "take him at once. I don't care if I die afterwards, if only his life is saved. He is so sweet—such a dear boy—he has been so brave—he has kept up his courage through so much. I don't mind giving up my life for him. Take him away—take him away."

The boy lay back exhausted on his rough pillow. The relief of seeing me and of hearing my voice was evidently great, but he was too weak for the least exertion. The atmosphere of the wretched little cell was terribly oppressive, and I thought that he might revive in the open air.

I lifted him in my arms and took him outside.

"You are very brave," I said, looking down at the French girl. "This boy's father will thank you for what you have done some day."

"No," she answered; "I shall die—she will kill me—you don't know what her powers of revenge are; but, never mind—never mind; take him and go."

"I will take him," I said; "there is a carriage outside, and he shall return with me to Bakou to-night, but I cannot leave you in extreme peril. Can I do anything for you?"

"It does not matter about me—take him away, go."

She was evidently beside herself with terror and anxiety.

"Why are you delaying?" she said, stamping one of her feet. "Herr Nehber is a good man; but, listen—he is afraid of his wife. If he knew what I am doing,

he would frustrate me; take the boy and go—go before it is known. I have been waiting for you here all day long. I feared beyond words that you would be prevented coming. The man who drove you here is a friend of mine; he will take you safely back to Bakou. Stay, I will speak to him."

She left me and ran quickly across the court—the boy lay in my arms half-fainting—weighted with such a burden, I was obliged to follow her slowly.

"It is all right," she said, when I came up; "my friend will take you safely to Bakou. He is glad—I think we are all glad—to know that the English boy has a chance of escape. Don't fret about me—old Ivan will take care of me, and there are hiding-places here. Good-bye, Malcolm; get well, be happy, and don't forget Felicia."

She flung her arms round the boy's neck, pressed a quick kiss on his forehead, and the next moment had vanished into the great shadow and was lost to view.

It was past midnight when I found myself back again at the Hôtel Métropole. I had thought much during that drive, and resolved by a bold stroke to take the lad right into the enemy's camp. In such an extremity as mine only great daring could win the day. I resolved for the sake of the boy to brave much. I would meet this terrible Fru Nehber on her own grounds. I felt, however, that the odds were against me. As far as I could tell, I was the only Englishman in the place.

I was mistaken. The first person I saw when I entered the courtyard was a tall traveller bearing the unmistakable air and dress of my own country.

"You speak English?" I said, the moment my eye met his.

"Yes," he replied, coming forward; "can I do anything for you?"

"Have you taken a room here?"

"Yes."

"This boy is ill—he is an English boy. I have just rescued him from a most terrible situation. May I take him straight to your room? I can't explain anything now, but the case is critical."

"I will help you, of course," he said; "my room is at your service."

"May I rely on you to watch the boy, and not to leave him a moment by himself until I go to him?"

"I will do all in my power."

I placed the lad in his arms and ran upstairs at once. Almost to my relief, for I was anxious to get the crisis over, I saw Fru Nehber waiting for me in the long gallery which led direct from my room to that occupied by General Morgan.

"I hope you have had a pleasant day, Dr. Halifax," she said, coming forward, and speaking in that low, rather monotonous, voice, which was one of her peculiarities.

"I have had an exciting one," I replied. "Can I speak to you for a moment?"

I saw her brow darken, and a peculiar expression fill her dark eyes—she swept on before me with the bearing of a queen, entered the salon which led into General Morgan's bedroom, and then turned and faced me.

"Will you eat first," she said. "I have had supper prepared for you here; or will you tell me your adventures?"

"I will tell you my adventures," I answered. "I visited the Fire Worshippers to-night."

"Ah!" she said. "The effect of the fire rising straight up out of the earth is fine at midnight, is it not?"

"It is weird," I replied, "weird and terrible—the place is the sort of place where a crime might be committed."

"My God, yes," she said, slightly moistening her lips.

"I was just in time to prevent one," I said, giving her a steady glance.

She did not reply—her arms fell to her

sides; she advanced a step to meet me, and flung back her head.

"Yes," she said, after a very long pause, "you prevented a crime! That is interesting; of what nature was the crime?"

"You will know all that you need know," I replied, "when I tell you that Malcolm Cavendish is at present in this house, under the care of an English gentleman, who will effectually guard him, and prevent your kidnapping him again. I know all, Fru Nehber. I know who you are, and what you have done. Had I not gone to the Fire Worshippers to-night, you would have had that boy's blood on your head; as it is, I believe he can be saved. You are aware, of course, what a grave crime you have committed; even in Russia such a crime would not be tolerated. You have failed in your object, for the boy will live, and it will be my happy task to restore him to his father."

"You can have him," she said, suddenly. "I do not wish you to lodge a complaint against me with the authorities."

"I will certainly do so, if you do not leave this hotel immediately."

"I will go," she said. "When I saw you yesterday, I had a premonition that you would defeat me."

"You thought that I suspected you?"

"I had a premonition. Do you know Mr. Cavendish?"

"Yes."

She was silent again, and walked to the window.

"I have lived so long in this world," she said, suddenly, "that the unexpected never astonishes me. I have tasted some of the sweets of revenge, but you have thwarted me, and for the time being I acknowledge that I am powerless. Take the boy back to his father; but take also a message from me. Tell Mr. Cavendish that I bide my time, and that I *never forget*."

With these last words she abruptly left the room. I never saw her again.

The boy had a bad illness, and my stay at Bakou had to be indefinitely prolonged, but when Cavendish and MacPherson arrived, matters became far easier for me, and in the end I had the satisfaction of bringing back two convalescents to England. The boy is now quite well, and his father has long recovered his mental equilibrium, but I do not know anything about the fate of Felicia.