

Silenced.

BY L. T. MEADE AND ROBERT EUSTACE.



THE terrible time is over, but the agony of the last two months must remain with me as long as I live. To-morrow the girl I love will be married. For her I have suffered and almost died. We love those for whom we suffer—it is the law of life.

I am a lady by birth and a nurse by profession. Early in the winter of last year I was sent for to attend a nerve case. My patient was a girl of the name of Leonora Trefusis. She was only nineteen years of age. She had a lovely face, but she owed her beauty, not only to classical features and the extreme first tender bloom of youth, but also to an expression ever-varying and ever-beautiful. She was the victim, however, of nerve distress in one of its acute forms. The trouble was brought on by an unfortunate love affair.

Two years ago she had been engaged to a gallant officer in Her Majesty's service. Captain Gifford belonged to a cavalry regiment. He and Leonora had loved each other since they were children, and he hoped to return to England within a year to claim his bride. One of the many disturbances which are always taking place on the north-west frontier of India claimed him, however, as its prey. The news reached Leonora that her lover had been killed during an encounter with the tribes-men. His body was never recovered, and the stunning and terrible blow completely prostrated the young girl. For a time she was quite inconsolable, and that breakdown of nerve and physical health which specially required my services took place. I got her to confide her sorrows to me—she often talked of Captain Gifford and of the love she still bore to him. Once or twice she said, anxiously:—

“Nurse, he may not be dead, after all!”

I shook my head. I knew that it would be wrong to buoy my patient up with false hopes. Of course, the gallant captain was dead, or we should have heard of him long ago.

By-and-by, slowly and surely, Leonora began to get well, and almost immediately afterwards, rather to my astonishment, she became engaged to a Mr. Hertslet, one of

the cleverest surgeons in Harley Street. I had nursed patients for Mr. Hertslet before now, and never imagined for a moment that he was a marrying man. He was hard and dry in appearance—not more than thirty-five years of age, but he looked considerably older. His skin was of a deep olive, he was painfully thin, and had a wiry, alert appearance; his eyes were black as night. He had black hair also, which was cropped close to his head. His manner was quick and keen and very decided—he never spoke an unnecessary word, and seemed to be always engaged in abstruse speculations. Mr. Hertslet was a brain specialist, and it had been my lot to nurse some very complicated brain cases for him. No man in England had studied the anatomy of the brain more thoroughly. I am certain he knew the localization of every centre. All that modern science could tell him he had acquired. Now and then in moments of confidence he had spoken to me on the subject of his patients. I was extremely fond of anatomy, and I liked to listen to his explanations, to see his diagrams, to learn something of the wonderful mechanism of that most marvellous thing on earth, the human brain. I respected Mr. Hertslet, but it is also true that I feared him. When he became engaged to Leonora I could not but own to a feeling of consternation. Once I ventured to speak to my patient on the subject.

“I am sorry you are going to marry him,” I said; “he is a hard man, and you are full of enthusiasm and fire. By-and-by he will crush your youth out of you.”

The colour filled her cheeks, she clasped her hands together and looked earnestly at me.

“Why do you say that?” she remarked. “It is strange of you. Now, I will confess something. I do not love Mr. Hertslet: I only marry him because my father wishes it.”

“Have you told him so?” I asked.

“Yes, he knows the exact truth. He is aware that I do not love him. All the love I possess is given to the man who lies in his unknown grave. Mr. Hertslet understands that, if such an impossible thing should happen as that Dick Gifford should come back, I could not marry him. Dick will never come back, of course, and in all pro-

bability I shall be married to Mr. Hertslet in two months from now. You will stay with me until the wedding is over, will you not, nurse?"

I readily promised, for I had already learned to love her well.

"But I promised to remain with her until after the wedding," I answered.

When I mentioned the wedding, a gleam of pleasure filled his black eyes.

"It seems strange, does it not," he said, in a thoughtful tone, "that such a young



"I WILL CONFESS SOMETHING."

On a certain day not long after this conversation I happened to be alone, when the door of the room in which I was sitting was opened, and Mr. Hertslet came in. He looked eagerly around him. When he saw that Leonora was not present he raised his brows and came at once to my side.

"I want to say a word to you, Nurse Petre." As he spoke he seated himself near me.

"I mean to trust you," he said. "I have a very critical case in my private hospital just now. I want an excellent nurse, one who can be calm and firm, and who understands her work. The case is one of life or death. You will leave Miss Trefusis to-morrow and come to me."

I coloured with annoyance.

"I cannot do so," I replied. "Leonora is better, but she is still very dependent on me. There are times when her nervous malady still overcomes her."

"She will get over that," said the surgeon, with an impatient movement.

and beautiful girl should want a man like me?"

"She does not want you—you want her," I answered, boldly.

He looked at me and smiled. He had a slow smile, a cruel one—it reduced his lips to the thinness of a straight line, it showed his white teeth, which always seemed to me more to resemble those of an animal than a human being; then it passed, leaving his face serene, quiet, powerful.

"Nurse, you are a strange woman," he said; "too frank for your profession. Some day that frankness of yours will be your undoing. In your position it behoves you to be careful."

As he spoke he stood up.

"The case I want you to attend is a bad one, and I mean to trephine the day after to-morrow. If I am not successful, the victim will go mad; trephining is the one and only chance. You will come to my house to-morrow evening. The operation will take place on the following morning."



"NURSE, YOU ARE A STRANGE WOMAN."

which now worries me. I suppose that is likely to be the case; but, nurse, I am in no hurry to be married. As I told you already, I do not really love Mr. Hertslet; the man I love is the one who lost his life in India. I think of him constantly; I shall never forget him. Sometimes I am possessed with the belief that he is not really dead; there always seems to me a possibility of his returning to England."

"He is dead,"

"I told you that I was engaged to Leonora," I said, angrily.

"I will arrange the matter with Miss Trefusis. I shall expect you. Good afternoon."

He smiled again in that enigmatical way and left the room.

Late that evening Leonora came to see me.

"I have come to say good-night, nurse," she said. "I feel terribly sad at the thought of the parting, but Mr. Hertslet must have his way."

"I am sorry," I answered. She came close to me and nestled by my side.

"And so am I sorry," she said. "I bitterly regret your leaving, but Paul wishes it; there is nothing else to be done."

"Do you feel that you must obey Mr. Hertslet in every particular?" I said, slowly. She looked at me anxiously.

"When he becomes emphatic, I have to obey him," she said. "He is a person whom it is extremely difficult to resist. Don't you find it so yourself?"

"I do," I said; "I do"—and there was horror in my tone.

She was looking straight before her, and I doubt if she heard my last words.

"I shall miss you terribly," she said, at last. "Those nerve symptoms, which are my torture, may return when your strong presence is withdrawn. I mentioned this to Paul, but he only smiled. He says when I am his wife that I will never feel the trouble

I said, "I am certain he is dead. You must not encourage false hopes. I wish you all happiness, Leonora; there is no doubt that Mr. Hertslet loves you devotedly."

"He loves me terribly," she answered. "I wish he did not care so much—it is depressing to take so much and give so little. But come into my room, nurse, I have a strange wish to show you something that you have never yet seen—Captain Gifford's photograph. After I am married it will be wrong of me to look at it; but, until then, I may—I must!"

I followed her to her room. She opened a drawer, took out a morocco case, opened it, and put it into my hands. It contained the photograph of a remarkably fine-looking man. The brow was lofty, the eyes wide open, very vivacious and full of life; the mouth was partly hidden by a moustache, but I could guess that its curves were sweet, and I was certain that when that face smiled it was like the sunshine.

"It is a good face," I said, quietly; "the face of a brave man. I am sorry for you, Leonora."

She looked up at me, and then suddenly burst into a passion of weeping.

Towards the evening of the next day I left her and went to Mr. Hertslet's hospital. The hospital was next door to his own house. Having been taken to my room and given some refreshment, a servant came in to ask me if I would like to go and see my patient.

"Mr. Hertslet is out," said the woman. "He said if you arrived sufficiently early you might like to see the gentleman to-night."

I assented willingly, and in my professional cap and apron followed the girl to the door of a large and spacious room on the first floor. I knocked, a manly voice said "Come in," and I entered. A tall man had risen to receive me; a lamp stood on the table behind him, his face and figure were in shadow. He came forward and held out his hand.

"I have heard of you, nurse," he said. "So your kind services are to be at my disposal?"

"Yes," I answered, "I shall be very glad to do what I can for you."

"Pray sit down. Has Mr. Hertslet told you anything of the nature of the operation which is to take place?"

"Yes," I replied. "He says that it is a serious one."

"It is. It is one of life or death. If I die, I die, and the world is well rid of a suffering invalid. If, on the other hand, I live and recover—ah, well, I have much to live for—perhaps you understand."

As he spoke he smiled. He had turned his face so that the lamp-light fell on it, and his smile flashed out on me in a most unexpected way. It transformed his face, making it brilliant and fascinating to an extraordinary degree. I had a curious, undefinable feeling that I had seen it before, but I could not imagine where or when. I liked him, I took heartily to him on the spot, his voice rang true, I knew him to be a good man.

"I shall do my very utmost for you," I said, with enthusiasm, "be quite certain of that. I have had considerable experience in cases like yours. You suffer from a brain trouble?"

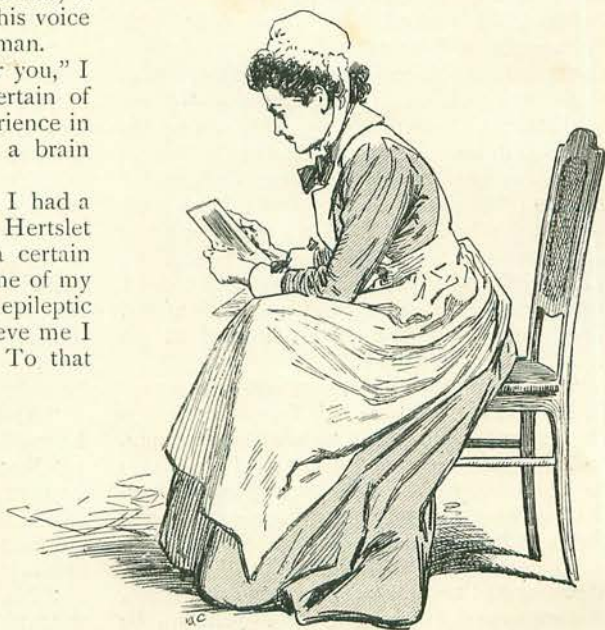
"I do. A couple of years ago I had a severe blow on the head—Mr. Hertslet believes that there is pressure on a certain portion of the brain. Since the time of my accident I have suffered from terrible epileptic fits. If nothing can be done to relieve me I shall soon be in a lunatic asylum. To that awful fate I prefer the chance which the surgeon's knife offers. Even in India I heard of Dr. Hertslet's skill, and resolved to come to him whenever I could set foot again in my native land. I have done so, and here I am."

"Is it long since you returned?" I asked, after a pause.

"Only a fortnight. I had curious adventures, about which

I will tell you another time. When with my regiment I received the blow on the head which I have just mentioned. I was supposed to be dead, but was taken prisoner by the tribe of"—he paused abruptly. "I must not talk too long," he said; "the slightest excitement brings on a fit. Perhaps, nurse, you will go to my room and unpack some of my clothes. Here are the keys."

He took a bunch from his pocket, gave me a few directions, and I went into his bedroom, which adjoined the sitting-room. It was a well-furnished room—a large travelling portmanteau stood on a pair of trestles by the door. I proceeded to unlock it, and began to put my patient's clothes away neatly in the different drawers which were ready to receive them. At the bottom of the portmanteau I found a small leather writing-case. In taking it out of its resting-place, it fell from my hands, the leather band snapped, and the case flew open. Its contents were scattered on the floor. Vexed with my clumsiness, I stooped to collect them. Amongst a pile of envelopes and sheets of paper lay a photograph. I took it up to replace it in the writing-case, then I paused, uttered an exclamation, and running to the light gazed eagerly at the face which was suddenly revealed to me on the little piece of cardboard. It was the well-known and very lovely face of my late patient, Leonora Trefusis. My brain seemed to whirl. For a



"IT WAS THE WELL-KNOWN AND VERY LOVELY FACE."

moment I could scarcely think distinctly. Then, like a flash, the truth, or what seemed like the truth, became clear to me. The man whom I was about to nurse had only just returned from India. While there he had gone through strange experiences, had been wounded in battle, taken prisoner—I clasped my hands together. Excitement almost overpowered me. Was it possible that I was about to nurse Leonora's old lover? Was it to be my delightful task to bring happiness to the girl I loved best in the world? But I must make sure—I must do nothing rash. I returned to the sitting-room.

"I have unpacked your things," I said to the patient; "you will find everything in perfect order in the different drawers. By the way, do you mind letting me know your name?"

"My name?—oh, Captain Gifford," he said, shortly.

He looked worried, and I did not dare to disturb him further. I knew the truth, however; my heart beat wildly. I made an excuse, and a moment afterwards left the room.

It was now nearly ten o'clock at night, but still not too late for me to go to Leonora in order to tell her what I had discovered. I rushed to my room, put on my cloak and bonnet, and was just descending the stairs, when I heard a latchkey in the lock, and Mr. Hertslet let himself in.

"Ah, nurse," he said, "I am glad you are here. Have you seen the patient?"

"Yes," I replied. "I have been with Captain Gifford for some little time; I have unpacked his things. I do not think he cares to be disturbed again to-night, and——"

"You are going out?" he said, raising his brows with an interrogatory gesture.

"I am anxious to see Miss Trefusis," I replied; "it is not too late, and I have some news for her." I tried to speak quietly. It occurred to me that I ought to be careful, but in spite of myself my voice trembled. I was terribly excited, and did not think of Mr. Hertslet in the matter. He looked at me steadily, then he spoke.

"I cannot spare you to go out just now," he said, in a cold tone. "The operation is to be performed early to-morrow morning, and there is much to attend to. I wish also to talk the case carefully over with you. Please go into my consulting-room, I will join you in a moment."

As he spoke he walked down the hall, threw open the door of his consulting-room, and motioned me to enter. I went in, he shut the door behind me. The electric light

was on, the place looked bright and yet gruesome; a queer presentiment of coming danger visited me. I had little time, however, to give way to it, for in a couple of moments Mr. Hertslet entered the room.

"Now, nurse," he said, "I am ready to attend to you—you want to see Miss Trefusis, and you speak of news: what do you mean?"

"I have made a very extraordinary discovery," I said.

He gave me a steady look, then said, in that voice which always compelled both my fear and respect:—

"You are an excellent nurse, but it is a pity you are so excitable. Excitement is bad for a woman in your profession. What possible discovery can you have made in this house which can bring that tremble to your voice? I admit that you are a good nurse, but you will not long remain so if you allow your feelings to get the better of you."

"Never mind about me now," I said, impatiently; "I want to ask you a question."

"Ask it," he said.

"If all goes well, you intend to marry Leonora Trefusis in about six weeks from now?"

"Have you taken leave of your senses, nurse? Of course I shall marry Miss Trefusis; but why allude to a fact you know quite well?"

"I have more to say," I interrupted. "You are engaged to her on a condition."

"That is not your affair."

"It happens to be my affair," I replied. "You engaged yourself to Leonora on a condition. She promised to marry you solely and entirely because she believed her old lover to be dead."

"Oh, you allude to that old affair," said Mr. Hertslet, with a perceptible note of relief in his voice. "I do not even know the name of the man, but Leonora did speak of a boy-and-girl affair. The fellow, whoever he was, is dead, however. I certainly did say to her if such a thing should happen as that the dead should return to life, I should in honour be obliged to give her up."

"And you never asked the name of her lover?"

"No; the subject scarcely interested me—I wished to avoid it. Before Miss Trefusis is my wife three months she will have forgotten that the man ever existed. Passion like mine will be fully returned."

"Mr. Hertslet," I said, "you must be prepared for a blow. Leonora's old lover exists; he is alive. As from the gate of

death he has returned, he is in this house—his name is Captain Gifford.”

The surgeon was standing before me; he staggered when I spoke, then he held himself erect.

“What do you mean?” he said.

“What I say. The name of Leonora’s old lover is Captain Gifford. He is upstairs—he is your patient. Go to Leonora, if you do not believe me, and ask her what the name of her old lover was. She will tell you Captain Gifford. If you do not still believe me, ask her to show you his photograph. The photograph is the photograph of the man upstairs. He is alive—he is your patient.”

“Take a chair,” said Mr. Hertslet.

I dropped into the nearest chair.

“Now, repeat that story again,” he said.

I did so. When I had finished he spoke.

“I must leave you for a little, nurse.”

I started up, I was really frightened.

“I will not stay in this room,” I exclaimed; “I must see Leonora, and at once.”

“You will not see her to-night. While I am absent you must remain here.”

He walked to the door, opened it, went out, and shut and locked it behind him. At the end of an hour he returned. His face was as calm and powerful-looking as ever. He locked the door again and put the key in his pocket.

“I have verified the truth of your statement,” he said. “Now, nurse, you and I must come to terms.”

“No,” I answered.

“Do you dare to defy me?”

“Yes.”

“You will scarcely do so when you know everything. I have spent the last hour looking into the truth of what you have said. I find that your words are correct.”

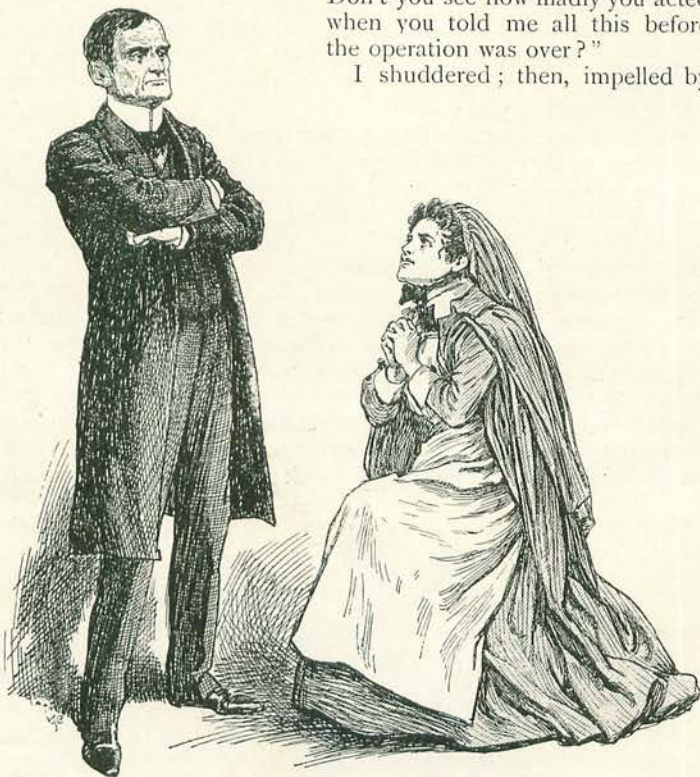
“You did not then believe me?”

“I believed you partly, not wholly; I was resolved to prove the thing for myself. I

have visited Miss Trefusis. For the first time since our engagement I alluded to the subject of her old lover—I talked of him gently. She wept. I kissed her and assured her of my sympathy. I asked his name and particulars about him. I have seen his photograph. You are right; my rival lives, he is upstairs. To-morrow I am expected to perform a most critical operation upon him. Think what you have put into my power. The operation is one of extreme difficulty. The slightest swerve of the knife means death.

Don’t you see how madly you acted when you told me all this before the operation was over?”

I shuddered; then, impelled by



“I FELL ON MY KNEES.”

the most unexpected terror, I fell on my knees.

“For Heaven’s sake do not commit murder!” I cried.

“Get up; I have not the slightest intention of committing murder. I shall operate upon Captain Gifford, and when I do so, the operation will be successful. The case is too critical, too valuable for me to throw it away. I shall gain fresh influence in my profession by the successful performance of so difficult an operation. Ambition and love run a neck-and-neck race with me. I do not intend to sacrifice either, but I have resolved to do this. The operation shall be postponed.

I will give Captain Gifford excellent reasons for this. I shall keep him here, but I shall not operate until after my marriage. Now, do you understand? You can, if you so wish it, return to Leonora, and stay with her until her marriage, or—you can defy me."

"You mean that I am to go back to Leonora and not tell her what I have discovered?"

"That is what I mean; but you can please yourself."

"What other alternative do you offer?"

"*I shall seal your lips!*"

"How? What do you mean? You will make me a prisoner?"

"Nothing of the kind."

"Then how can you seal my lips?"

"That is my secret. You do not leave this house to-night. To-morrow morning I may speak to you again. If to-morrow you make me the necessary promise, I am sure you will keep it, and I shall trust you to return to Leonora. If you refuse to make the promise, I shall seal your lips."

As he spoke he opened the door of his consulting-room and motioned me to leave it.

Trembling in every limb, I went to my room. I was horribly afraid. My earnest wish was to get out of the house. I remained in my room for a couple of hours, then I went downstairs. I tried to unlock the

wearing my bonnet and cloak. The time flew by; the house was silent as the grave. Overcome with excitement and emotion, I suddenly found myself dozing. I determined to resist slumber, and started up. Once more I gave way to it; at last I fell into a deep sleep. A sudden movement awoke me. I opened my eyes wide. In an instant I was making a frantic effort to struggle to my feet. I found I was unable to do so. Mr. Hertslet was in the room. A ward lamp stood on the dressing-table; the electric light was brightly on. The surgeon was bending over me. He was holding something to my mouth and nostrils, and in his other hand both of mine were clasped tightly. I made another futile effort to rise—the faint, sweet smell of chloroform was all too apparent. Each limb was weighted as if with lead. Hertslet's cruel eyes were looking into mine.

"You are in my power," he said. "I seal your lips."

As he spoke I ceased to struggle—nothing in all the world seemed to matter; I did not care whether I lost my senses or not. I remembered nothing more. When at last I awoke it was morning; the windows of the room were wide open. I was lying with my head close to the sharp corner of the fender, I felt queer and heavy, and there was a dull



"I WAS LYING WITH MY HEAD CLOSE TO THE SHARP CORNER OF THE FENDER."

front door. As I was doing so, Mr. Hertslet came out and confronted me.

"Go back to your room," he said, slowly, and with that smile flitting across his lips which I have before mentioned.

I fled upstairs as though I were pursued by a fury. I sat down by my bedside, still

pain in my temples; I wondered what had happened and why I was lying thus. For a moment or two I lay quiet, thinking over the events of the preceding night. Leonora's lover had returned; he was to be operated on that morning; and I was the nurse who was chosen to undertake the case. Still, I was

in no hurry to rise, each limb was soothed, nothing seemed greatly to matter. Presently the door was opened, and a servant entered with a can of hot water. She started back in astonishment and terror when she saw me. Then, hastily putting the can down, she ran towards me.

"What is the matter?" she cried; "what has happened?"

I made an effort to speak, but not a word would come, only a gurgling noise in my throat. I tried to struggle to my feet. Good heavens! my right side, arm, and leg were powerless! I sank back with a moan. As I did so, I noticed a little blood on the corner of the fender against which I had evidently fallen. The girl, now terrified out of her wits, rushed from the room, and in a few moments returned with Mr. Hertslet. He came to me at once and looked at me keenly.

"This is dreadful," I heard him mutter. As he spoke he raised my paralyzed arm and let it fall again. "How did this happen, Nurse Petre?" he asked.

Again I tried to speak—my lips moved, but no sound escaped them.

"Ring for Nurse Martha, and get her into bed at once," said Mr. Hertslet, turning to the servant. "This is a case of apoplexy. What a dreadful thing! I will be back in a few minutes."

The servant helped me to undress, and rang the bell for the other nurse. They soon got me into bed. In about a quarter of an hour Mr. Hertslet returned with another doctor. They both examined me carefully.

"There is no doubt what is the matter," said the fresh doctor, turning to the surgeon. "Hemorrhage from the left middle cerebral, with hemiplegia and aphasia. Rather curious in so young a girl," he continued. "I have only seen two or three cases at her age. One of your own nurses, too, you tell me. Very sad indeed. The mind is fully conscious, but all power of speech is lost. Broca's convolution is evidently involved."

"Can you raise your right arm?" he said, bending down over me.

I shook my head at his question.

"You see she understands what is said to her," he added, looking at Mr. Hertslet.

Some directions were given to the nurse, who had remained in the room, and then both the doctors went out. I could hear them talking outside for a few moments, then they went downstairs. Presently Mr. Hertslet returned. He sent Nurse Martha out of the room and bent down over me.

"You see," he said, speaking in his usual

quiet, deliberate tone, "how wrongly you acted not to yield to my reasonable terms last night. You made a mistake, and are suffering the consequences. I told you that if you did not agree to my conditions I should seal your lips. I have done so."

Once more I made a frantic effort to answer, but not a word would come.

"You injure yourself by the emotion which you exhibit," he said. "Now, listen. I intend to marry Miss Trefusis, and in order to do so I have taken steps to insure your silence. In all probability you will never speak again. With my immense knowledge of the localization of motor centres of the brain, it was easy for me to do what I have done. When I saw you try to leave the house last night I made up my mind. I waited until you dropped asleep, then I administered an anæsthetic. The rest was easy. With a suitable instrument I made a small opening through the bone at the top of your temple, just over the centre which controls the power of speech. Having made the hole through the bone, I introduced a probe and broke up that portion of the brain tissue. The external opening is scarcely visible. You are supposed to be suffering from cerebral hemorrhage. You may by-and-by rise from your bed, but you cannot speak, nor can you control your brain sufficiently to write anything, even with your left hand. Thus you are as powerless to convey the information which you know to Leonora Trefusis as if you were dead."

He paused for a moment, then he continued:—

"You will like to know everything, and I am willing to tell you. Having performed the operation, I placed you with your head beside the sharp corner of the fender, and upon it smeared a little blood. You may call attention to the small wound on your head, by making signs to the nurse, but she has been told that the wound was caused by your fall."

Having said the last words he turned and left the room.

I lay perfectly motionless in my bed. The nurse had little or nothing to do for me. All I wished for was to be alone. My active brain, revolving ever and ever round one problem, brought torture to the point of madness. I knew that I was doomed; I was chained as if in iron: I, in my first youth, was doomed to the silence of the grave. Mr. Hertslet would marry Leonora; Captain Gifford would probably die.

These thoughts, sweeping by in grim procession, tortured me day and night, day and night.

At last, about a week after my seizure, Leonora came to see me. She looked very pale and sad, and when she entered the room and noticed the change in my face she burst into tears.

"Oh, my poor darling!" she exclaimed, "how dreadful you look!" As she spoke she flung herself on her knees by my side.



"OH, MY POOR DARLING!"

"Get up, Leonora," said a voice, which I had learned to dread with an unutterable horror. Mr. Hertslet had entered the room.

"This emotion is bad for you, and bad also for the patient," he added.

"Paul, will she never speak again?" asked the girl.

"It is unlikely, but we must hope for the best."

"She looks so anxious and pathetic," said Miss Trefusis. "Watch her eyes—they are full of a question. She is longing to tell us something. Perhaps she can write it."

"Try her," said Mr. Hertslet. As he spoke he crossed the room, and took a sheet of paper and pencil and brought them to my side.

"Try with your left hand," he said, quietly.

I glanced up at him and made a frantic effort. All in vain. My brain directed the words, but the hand would not obey its

master. I could only effect a few straggling lines on the paper.

"She cannot," said the surgeon, looking at Leonora; "it tortures her to try."

He put the paper back again; Leonora bent over me and kissed me.

"Rest quietly, darling," she said. "After I am married you shall live with me—I will nurse you and love you; I will try to do a little for you because of the much you did for me."

Then she left the room, her tears still falling.

Some more weeks went by—there was no change in my condition. In those weeks I had learned what despair meant. A certain morning dawned; I awoke feeling strangely better. I could not account for my sensations, but I felt lighter and less heavy-limbed. I observed, too, that I could move my arm—the paralysis was evidently passing away. Once again I made an effort to speak, but not

a word would come. Still, the paralysis of the arm and side was less marked.

When the nurse came into the room I longed to say to her "I am better," but I think my eyes must have told her something, for she bent over me and said, cheerily:—

"Oh, come, you are looking more like yourself."

I raised my arm about an inch in order to draw her attention to it.

"This is splendid," she said; "I must tell Mr. Hertslet." She stood at the bottom of the bed as if considering.

"I do not know that I ought to trouble him to-day," she said; "this is his wedding-day. Why, nurse, what a queer expression you have in your face. You have got such strange eyes—I never before saw human eyes express so much. I do not believe you like this wedding. Well, Miss Trefusis is a

beautiful young lady, but then Mr. Hertslet is so clever, the cleverest surgeon of his day. Of course, he is older, but still——"

There came a knock at the door, the nurse went to open it. I heard her utter an exclamation, she then came back on tiptoe to my side.

"What do you think has happened?" she said. "You are highly honoured. There is no less a person standing outside than Miss Trefusis—the bride herself. Shall I show her in?"

My eyes spoke, my hand was raised once again. Leonora entered. She was in her bridal dress. Her beauty was extraordinary and startling, but her sweet face was ghastly pale, and her dark eyes were full of an uncontrollable sadness. I motioned with my hand to Nurse Martha to leave us. Leonora came up close to me.

"I hoped you might have been better," she said, bending over me. "I could not go away without seeing you and bidding you good-bye. Yes, I am going to the church now to be married. Ah, nurse, dear nurse, he never came back. I shall be Mrs. Hertslet within an hour."

I motioned with my hand and said with my eyes, "Stay with me for a little. Mine is a dreadful fate—comfort me with your presence just for a few moments."

She seemed to read my thoughts, for without a word she sat down near me. Presently she took my hand and covered it with her kisses. Some of her tears dropped on it. As she sat so, and the quick moments passed, and I knew that in a very short time her fate would be irrevocably sealed, a frantic determination awoke within me. If no words could rise to my lips, at least I could direct my thoughts to the Providence above. I began to pray frantically, despairingly. I began to plead with the Almighty to give me back the gift of speech.

"Let me have it, Lord!" I entreated. "Only for an hour, for half an hour, for a few moments, just in order that I may save her."

As I spoke thus to God the light in my eyes must have been wonderful, for Leonora touched me.

"What is it?" she said; "your eyes seem to speak—there is something troubling you. Oh, nurse, nurse, make an effort. Surely if you make a great, frantic effort you can move that silent tongue."

My heart was beating wildly.

"One word, Lord, even one word," I pleaded, "one word to save her, to prevent a great, a terrible wrong being done."

I moved my lips, the guttural noise came to my throat. Suddenly, with a mighty effort, the blood surging to my temples, I found that my long-disused speech had returned.

"Leonora," I whispered.

"Good heavens! she speaks, she speaks," cried the girl. She fell on her knees and clasped both my hands. "Dear, dearest, tell me what is in your heart."

I knew that my words must be few. I had to select them before they were uttered.

"Leonora, listen," I said. "Do not marry Mr. Hertslet. Captain Gifford is in this house. Do not marry that—bad man."

These were all the words I found myself capable of uttering. My brain reeled, the room became dark, I sank away into complete unconsciousness.

I was very ill afterwards, and knew nothing more for a long time. When I came to myself Leonora told me the story of the next few days. Acting on my advice, she went to seek Captain Gifford, and found him. She said little or nothing about that interview, nor did I question her. Mr. Hertslet returned to the house about half an hour after I had recovered my power of speech. Leonora herself met him and told him what had occurred. He looked quietly at her, his face grew white, he went out of the house, never to return. Never again did he come back to Harley Street. I cannot tell what part of the world he is now in, but at least his career in England is at an end. Another great surgeon performed the operation on Captain Gifford, who got better, and tomorrow Leonora is to be his wife.

As for me, I am slowly but completely recovering; the awful silence is over. It was broken in time, thank Heaven!