



Spangle- = = -Winged.

BY L. T. MEADE
AND CLIFFORD HALIFAX.

MAKE no excuse. The odds were in favour of virtue, a respectable life, and a happy conclusion when the time came for the curtain to fall. I had never suffered the pangs of hunger or the anxious throes of poverty—my health was good, and my intellect, I was proud to think, above the average. I was a scientist of no mean attainments, a medical man for whom one of the laurel wreaths of the profession was a possibility. Nevertheless I fell. I plead no excuse; on the contrary, I would heap upon myself every epithet of censure and contempt, for I of all men should have done differently. I fell, and I reap the consequences. As I write these words death is within a very measurable distance—a few more days, and that cold embrace will caress me.

But—to begin.

My name is George Matchen, and I am at the present time thirty-two years of age. I have a competence of about £800 a year; there has, therefore, never been any absolute need for me to earn my own living. I consider such a sufficiency rather a curse than a blessing; it cuts away from under a man's feet the natural desire for that work which means bread. I had bread without work, and although I had a strong predilection for the medical profession, when I found myself fully qualified it seemed that I could better serve my fellow-men by taking up what is known as preventive medicine than any other branch. It was my pleasure to follow in the footsteps of the great discoverers who undoubtedly are the lights of our profession. Such men as Koch, Pasteur, Professor Fraser, Sanarelli, and last, but not least, Dr. Patrick Manson, were beacon-lights to follow at a measurable distance. Manson's recent discoveries with regard to malaria aroused my deepest interest, and in the summer of last year I determined to make investigations on his lines for myself.

For this purpose I resolved to spend a month on the Campagna near Rome. I would, in imitation of those who had gone

before me, provide myself with a mosquito-proof hut with wire gauze doors and windows, and carry on my investigations in the most malarial district of this unhealthy spot. The cause of the spread of malaria was all but proved, but the wild hope animated me that it might be my happy privilege to discover the remedy. If I could prevent the organism taking effect in man, or eliminate it when once it had entered his body; and secondly, if the mosquito itself could be destroyed, malaria, one of the greatest curses to which the human race is liable, would cease to exist.

The mere thought of such a remote and glorious contingency made my somewhat cold heart beat fast and filled me with a laudable enthusiasm. Yes, if I was anything I was a scientist, but I had another passion. This passion had grown with my growth, until silently but surely it had assumed big proportions.

I was deeply and I may say remorselessly in love with a young girl of the name of Rachel Denza. I say remorselessly, for as the sequel will prove my love was absolutely and completely selfish. I had known Rachel since she was a child. Her father was a distinguished colonel in the Army, who at the time of this story had retired from the Service. Colonel Denza adored his only child, and Rachel lived for her father. In my eyes she was extremely beautiful, although I cannot analyze her features. Her whole personality had long ago taken such complete possession of my heart that I had lifted her quite out of the ordinary region of young womanhood. When she appeared a soft sunshine seemed to come with her, a gentle warmth to emanate from her gracious young presence, and a complete and absolute contentment to visit me. I spoke little in her presence—I never made love to her in the ordinary sense—to be with her was sufficient. That she could ever be the wife of another I dismissed as an impossibility. For years I had claimed her as my own property, and that without

any sanction on her part. If she guessed that I loved her she never said so. We were excellent friends; Rachel gave me almost as many confidences as if I were her brother, and I make little doubt now that she had not the most remote idea of the passionate feelings which animated my breast when I looked at her.

It was on the day before I left England for my labours on the Campagna that I first ventured to speak openly to Miss Denza. I had written to request a private interview, but my letter had not at all prepared her for what took place. She was startled, not so much by the vehemence of my words as by my looks and actions, for when I saw that she was unprepared for my declaration of love I grew strangely agitated, restless, and unlike myself. I paced the room; I struggled



"I FACED THE ROOM."

to restrain my emotion. When I saw her cheeks turn white and her eyes avoid mine, anguish, which I little supposed could ever visit my heart, took possession of me. But for long years I had been training in self-control, and I soon managed to compose myself

"I have taken **you** by surprise," I said; "but you know **at last**. Your answer, Rachel, your answer!"

"You have startled and distressed me," she began.

"You can leave all that out," was my reply. "Rachel, is it yes or no?"

"I cannot **marry** you, George," she said then, "for I do not love you."

This was a stagerer. I tried hard to win her to make an admission of regard for me. She was frightened, but very steadfast in her words.

"I shall never marry any man whom I do not love," she said.

"Is it possible you can look me in the face and say that you do not love me?" I said.

She did look me full in the face then, and her reply, low and quiet, fell on my heart like lead.

"Yes," she said.

"Then you have deceived me all these years."

"I have never willingly deceived you. I had no idea of this; I am terribly pained and sorry."

I turned from her, rage as well as agony choking my voice. Once again I regained my self-control, and then I said, in a low voice:—

"You say that you will only marry a man whom you love?"

"That is so."

"Then you will marry me."

"I do not love you."

"I shall make you love me; when you love me you will marry me."

"I shall never love you in that way," she answered.

"You will," I replied.

"Rachel, listen. Make up your mind, prepare yourself for what is going to happen. You will never marry any man but me; as there is a

God in Heaven, I swear that I will be your husband, and no one else."

She started away and I noticed an expression of fear coming into her eyes. I did not say any more, but my mind was made up. If I had intended Rachel to be mine before I asked her, I was now like a man possessed on the subject.

The next day I went to Rome. The time of year was favourable for my project, Rome being distinctly malarial in the month of August. I began to make my investigations at once. My experiments from the first were more for the possible cure of malaria than on the cause of its dissemination, but in order to attain the one I had to investigate the other. It is now no secret that the parasite which causes malaria in the human subject is to be found within the bodies of certain mosquitoes. The special mosquito which disseminates this terrible disease has spotted wings and lays boat-shaped eggs. For the purpose of this story it is unnecessary to go too much into the scientific question, it being sufficient to say that when this mosquito has a meal off a man infected with malaria it can, and does, convey the disease to the next healthy person whom it bites. Up to the present only the mosquito with spangled wings, the anopheles, has been discovered which is capable of conveying this dire infection from man to man, but in all probability there are many others of the species which can perform equally deadly work. As anopheles abounded on the portion of the Campagna where I had placed my hut I had abundant opportunities of studying them. Having taken the necessary precautions, and being in any case, as I considered, impervious to the bite of the mosquito, I remained free from the dread disease, and could occupy myself all day long in watching the natives of the place, who suffered much from the most malignant type of malaria, taking notes with regard to their various symptoms and examining the anopheles themselves. Thus I was occupied from morning till night, but it was when I lay down to sleep that the thought of Rachel returned to me. My madness with regard to her grew greater, not less. Each day I was more firmly resolved to make her my wife at any cost, and to inspire in her some of the passion for me which I felt so strongly for her. I had been a month on the Campagna when one morning I received the following letter:—

“MY DEAR GEORGE,—After our last painful interview I feel that it is only due to us both that I should inform you at as early a date as possible of my engagement.”

The letter fell from my hands—an ugly word dropped from my lips. I was conscious of a strange faintness round my heart; then, uttering a savage curse, I sprang to my feet, took up Rachel's letter, and as I paced the narrow limits of the hut continued to read it:—

“I have just promised to marry Captain Channing, of the — Lancers, whose regiment acted so brilliantly in the late Boer campaign. Geoffrey was invalided home, and we met a few weeks ago at the house of my cousins, the Pryors. From the first we liked each other, and when he asked me to be his wife I found that I loved him, and gladly accepted him. I do not mind telling you, George, who have always been my good friend, that I love Geoffrey with all my heart, and look forward with delight to our future. I hope you will send me your congratulations. I am the happiest girl in existence. You will be glad to know this, I am sure.

“I hope you are progressing satisfactorily with your work—some people say that it is a dangerous time to be in Rome. I only wish, my dear George, I could introduce you to Geoffrey.—Yours sincerely, RACHEL DENZA.”

To this letter I sent an immediate and brief reply.

“MY DEAR RACHEL,” I wrote,—“I wish you happiness and prosperity. I consider Captain Channing a lucky man. Pray invite me to your wedding, and may our friendship continue.—Yours sincerely, GEORGE MATCHEN.”

I posted this letter myself in Rome, and then returned down the Appian Way to my hut on the Campagna.

As I walked, looking outwardly calm and quiet enough, I was, within, nothing short of a smouldering volcano. The threat which I used in Rachel's presence was no idle one, and although I had written to her with such apparent coolness, I was resolved at any cost to carry it out to the bitter end. Rachel should never marry Channing; Rachel should be my wife at any cost. When a man gives himself over to such feelings as now animated me he is in danger of losing his mental balance, but I was naturally cool and wise, and had not the slightest idea of handing myself over to the penalties of the law. There was a strange beating in my heart and an answering pulse in my temples. Inwardly I was as a man torn and wronged. Between me and the time before I had received Rachel's letter spread an immeasurable distance. Before the arrival of that letter I was practically a humane scientist who loved his work and wished to benefit his fellow-men. Now, every thought was concentrated on one idea—how could I frustrate Channing, how could I make Rachel my wife? Before I slept that night I took the first step towards my terrible fall. I had a distant cousin of the

name of Marian Fletcher. She was a tall, dark, handsome girl, dashing in appearance and up-to-date in manner. She was the sort of woman I had always cordially disliked, but unfortunately for me I had the extreme penalty of attracting her. I was not conceited enough to suppose that she loved me, although I did know that I had always exercised an influence over her. From our earliest days Marian would do my bidding, and, imperious and wilful to others, would be little less than a slave to me. Now it occurred to me that she was the sort of woman to be my tool. Marian was visiting friends in the south of England. I knew her address, for we kept up a rather perfunctory correspondence, at least on my part. I wrote to her now on ordinary matters, but in the course of the letter I mentioned that I had heard of Rachel's engagement, and I begged Marian to furnish me with any particulars she could with regard to the character, ways of life, and circumstances of Captain Channing. In about a week's time I received a reply to this letter. Its contents were of deeper interest than even I had hoped.

"MY DEAR GEORGE," wrote Marian,—"In reply to your letter I have a good deal to say. It is in my power to give you much information with regard to Rachel Denza's engagement. In the first place, the marriage between her and Captain Channing must be performed between now and the 1st of January next year, for by the will of Geoffrey Channing's late uncle, Sir Edward Marbury, he loses a large estate unless he marries before that date. Geoffrey is well off even without this money, but with it he will be an extremely rich man, able to give his wife every luxury. Now,

pray listen to the divers and sundry chances which this world sometimes offers. You will start when I tell you that Geoffrey and I are first cousins; that Sir Edward Marbury was the uncle with whom I spent the greater part

of my youth; and that if by any chance Geoffrey fails to marry before the 1st of January has expired, I, Marian Fletcher, come in for the property which he loses. I have no wish, believe me, to deprive him of his money, for I have abundance of my own; but at the same time his engagement more than interests me. When our uncle's will was read and this curious proviso was discovered Geoffrey was very angry and said he would never marry anyone, fortune or no fortune, except for love. Now, my dear George, I believe that Geoffrey has absolutely kept his word. Until he met Rachel he had never loved any woman. You ask about his character—he is honourable, good-looking, and by

most people considered a very captivating man. I am fully convinced that he would far rather lose the fortune which will be his on the day he marries Rachel than satisfy the conditions of his uncle's will without love. Can any woman praise a man further? Well, luck attend him—he has won a prize amongst women. There seldom was a more beautiful woman than Rachel; you know that. She is not without means on her own account, although she could scarcely be called wealthy; but that fact matters little, for Rachel is in love; yes, George, madly, desperately in love, and love has transformed her. It has added to her beauty and accentuated her grace. She is now one of the most lovely women I have ever seen. They both make a splendid couple. It is



"UTTERING A SAVAGE CURSE, I SPRANG TO MY FEET."

good to see two people so happy ; or, George Matchen—is it good? Does it not stir certain qualities in the hearts of the spectators which are not altogether those of virtue? Forgive me, I have sometimes fancied that you had a tender place in your heart for the beautiful Miss Denza. Do you too lose by this marriage?—then we ought to sympathize one with the other, for if you lose the woman I lose the fortune. Have I anything more to tell you? Oh, yes. Colonel Denza has not been well and his doctors have ordered him to winter in Cairo. The entire party go to Egypt about the middle of November, where they will remain until after the wedding. Captain Channing of course accompanies them, and so also does your humble servant. Rachel in a letter which I have just received says she has heard from you and that you have given her your congratulations. Are these straight from your heart? I query.—Yours sincerely, MARIAN FLETCHER.”

Marian's letter was the beginning of a frequent correspondence between us, the result being that the day came when I packed my traps, took my mosquito-hut to pieces, and started for Egypt a week after the Denzas had gone there. I too had made up my mind to winter in Cairo. The Denzas and their party put up at the Continental Hotel, but I took rooms at Shepherd's. For various reasons I preferred not to be under the same roof as Rachel. But I had not been six hours in Cairo before we met. I went to the Continental, and she greeted me in the great hall which forms one of the principal features of the place. Several visitors were standing about, and there was no one to notice the man who walked gravely forward and shook hands with the lovely girl who stood up and greeted him. No one could guess in the grave face of this man, in his few courteous words, that the passion of a murderer was consuming his heart.

“How well you look, George,” said Rachel, and it seemed to me at that instant that she mocked me.

There was a wild beating in my ears, and her next words were almost inaudible. Then emotion passed away and I became watchful, circumspect, and resolved at any cost to hide my feelings.

“I must introduce you to Geoffrey,” she said. “It is so good of you to have come to Cairo ; your presence will just make our party complete. Ah, and here is Geoffrey.”

She moved a step or two away, said something to a man who advanced to meet us,

and the next moment Captain Channing and I had met. I looked him all over, taking his measure at a glance. When my eyes lit upon his well-formed face, his open and handsome brown eyes ; when I perceived how kind Nature had been in giving him not only all the exterior attributes of manly beauty, but had further endowed him with a right, good, and honourable heart, I hated him with intense satisfaction. It was more agreeable to me in my present mood to hate than to love, but I had to be wary.

My conversation as I talked to Channing was light and agreeable ; our laughter rang out. Presently Colonel Denza and Marian appeared. Although we both knew that we should meet in Cairo we each of us expressed surprise at seeing the other.

“How nice this is !” said Marian, and as she spoke she looked me full in the face, and I beheld in her big, black eyes a look of *knowledge*. I felt uncomfortable—she seemed to read me through. But she quickly put me at my ease by suggesting that we should all sit out on the moonlit terrace and enjoy our coffee and cigarettes. Towards the end of the evening Rachel and I found ourselves for a moment alone. She turned immediately and just touched my hand with hers.

“How good you are, George !” she said. “You make me so happy. It is kind of you to be nice to Geoffrey.”

“But why should I not be friendly, my dear Rachel ?” was my answer.

She raised her brows a very little.

“It makes me happy,” she said, simply.

I knew what she was thinking of. She was quite silent for a moment, and the moonlight fell on her slender figure. She looked, I thought, ethereal.

“I cannot help thinking of your words,” she began.

I interrupted her.

“Rachel,” I said, in a hoarse voice, “let the curtain drop between the past and the present ; a man is not accountable for what he says when he is mad.”

“And you are sane now, George, are you not ?” she asked, in a tone of great relief.

“Absolutely.”

“How glad I am ! You do not mind my talking to you now and then of my great happiness ?”

“Treat me as your old friend, Rachel, and tell me what you will.”

“We are to be married,” she said, “two days after Christmas, in a little over three weeks. We are going to India for our wedding trip.”

I bowed.

"You will be present at my wedding, will you not, George?"

"Certainly," I answered. I said this with marked emphasis, for as I intended to be the bridegroom on that auspicious occasion I should, of course, not be absent.

A moment later I took my leave. As I was going from the Continental to Shephard's Hotel, a distance of a few yards, I saw under the shade of the big terrace the figure of Marian Fletcher. She stretched out her hand as I passed and touched me.

"You did it very well indeed," she said, "and you gave yourself away to no one but me."

"What do you mean by saying that, Marian?" I replied.

"I have acquired the power of reading your heart," she answered. "It is a subtle one, George Matchen, but I have the gift of reading it through and through."

"May I not see you back to the Continental?" was my answer.

"You may when we have walked up and down here in the shade. I came out on purpose. No one will see us, and even if anyone does I do not care. We are old friends, and I must know exactly the part I am to play."

"The part you are to play?" I replied, my heart beating quickly.

"I intend to help you," she answered, and she laid her hand on my arm.

Rachel's hand was the last to touch me—it seemed to me now that Marian's touch was profanation. I started away, almost rudely. She observed the gesture, and her black eyes flashed.

"The wedding takes place in three weeks," she said. "You are agreeable, of course?"

"It shall never take place," I answered, in a low voice. "I have vowed, and I mean to keep my vow."

"Bravo!" she answered me. "I thought as much. George, I too have good reason to wish this marriage not to take place."

"By the way, of course you have," I replied. "How much money comes to you if Channing fails to marry before the 1st of January?"

"My late uncle's house and estate, and something like £50,000 in Consols. A big fortune," she continued, "but I do not care so much for that; something else influences me."

"What?" I asked.

"You," she replied. "You, George Matchen. Do you not know that I love you?"

"Do not say it, Marian," I answered, hoarsely.

"It is easy to say 'Don't,'" she replied, "when the deed is done, and when nothing can alter facts. Do you know how many men I have refused for your sake? And, yes, even if I do receive that fortune, I vow that I will marry no one but you. You have made a vow to marry one woman, while another woman has made a vow to marry you. Now you see your position."

I laughed somewhat ruefully.

"You do not put things too pleasantly," I said.

"You will acquiesce by-and-by, for you must," she replied. "But we must both clearly understand. You do not wish the marriage—we both have strong reasons why it should never take place. We both intend to act with cleverness, we both intend to hide our real feelings; that is enough for to-night, our further consideration must be how we are to take the steps we wish to take."

"Aye," I said. "Good-night, Marian."

She did not take my hand this time; she glided away. I returned to my hotel, but not to sleep.



"I EXAMINED MY TREASURES." Original from

During my recent experiments on the Campagna I had followed Manson's discoveries. The spangle-winged mosquito, small, light as air, almost transparent, scarcely visible to the naked eye, carried within its tiny body a weapon of death almost as sure and certain as the assassin's knife.

Before leaving the precincts of that malarial district I had secured several of these mosquitoes in a bottle. The bottle was, of course, provided with a breathing apparatus, and in order to keep the insects alive I fed them on bananas, but I knew that in order to insure the truth of Manson's theory I must give the mosquitoes a malarial victim to feed upon. How could I find such a victim?

To-night I examined my treasures. I held the bottle between myself and the light. They seemed in good condition. I lay down to sleep in the small hours and my sleep was troubled by dreams. I awoke early, jumped up and dressed hastily. After breakfast I determined to pass away the morning hours in the far-famed bazaars. As I walked there now through the crowded streets, the air, light, dry, exhilarating, insensibly cheered my spirits; the weight which had lain against my heart lifted, and although my mind was irrevocably made up I determined to enjoy the present. As I strolled along the narrow streets, knocking up against Arabs and Egyptians as I did so, and finally entered under the low portal which led to the bazaars, I wondered if I should meet Rachel here. Most girls like to visit these homes of curiosities and articles of *vertu*. I thought of Rachel and of her alone as I passed between the gaily set-out counters, and listened to the eager remarks of the merchants as they advertised their wares. I thought of Rachel's glorious eyes, the ring in her voice, the immeasurable comfort which one glance at her afforded me. I should be a madman indeed if I did not make a frantic struggle to secure so great a prize. I walked on and on, shouted to in broken English by the Arabs as they stood behind their counters. But the moonstones, the turquoises, the bracelets, the necklets, the kerchiefs, the rich embroideries, did not attract me; I saw them without seeing them. Presently I passed right through the bazaar of varieties, down through the Turkish quarters, and into the Silver Bazaar. Here one could see the metal itself formed into bangles, bracelets, and brooches before one's eyes. It was the fashion for each visitor in Cairo to visit this special bazaar. A more

dangerous and hideous-looking place it was scarcely possible to find. There was barely room for me to walk between the stalls; men of all Eastern nationalities, Arabs, Egyptians, Bedouins, Syrians, peered at me as I passed by. The crafty face of a Greek looked into mine; the suave, smooth, expressionless countenance of an Arab was within a foot or two of my own face. It would, I knew, be easy for these men to bind me hand and foot, to rob and murder me, and there would be an end for all time of George Matchen; but no one was interested in me to that extent. I passed by, buying nothing and exciting no comment whatsoever. I was just about to come out again when a man who was standing by a counter and examining some soft silver bangles attracted my attention. The place was lit artificially, and the flame of a torch fell on his face. I stopped when I saw him, and a spasm of mingled agony and delight crossed my heart. He was a sad-looking object—his face was so thin that the bones all but protruded; it was sallow, too, with a sickly sallowness which spoke of deranged liver and blood-poisoning; his black eyes were sunken in his head; he coughed as he spoke, and as I approached him and stared almost rudely into his face I saw him shiver as if with sudden rigor. Beyond doubt, dark as was his complexion, he was a European—perhaps an Englishman; beyond doubt, also, he was suffering from malaria. I knew this at once; I knew also that the malaria which was draining his life-blood was of the kind known as malignant. Now, all malarias are intermittent, and this man was in the stage of this fell disease when the fever for a short time had relaxed its grip. He completed his bargain with the silver merchant and I followed him out of the bazaar. He took no notice whatever of me, but walked languidly, tottering slightly as he did so. Suddenly he almost fell. This was my opportunity. I went quickly to his side and offered him my arm.

"You are ill," I said, speaking in French. "Can I assist you to a carriage?"

He replied to me at once in excellent English.

"I was mad to come out," he said. "Thank you for your courtesy. I shall be very much obliged if you will see me into a victoria."

I observed that he was past all other speech. I led him gently to the end of the street and put him into a carriage. He gave the driver the name of the Continental Hotel. Again there came a grip at my



"I WENT QUICKLY TO HIS SIDE AND OFFERED HIM MY ARM."

heart, but this time it was altogether one of satisfaction.

Cairo is perhaps the last place on earth where malaria is to be found; the extreme dryness of the climate makes such a disease all but impossible. This man, therefore, must have come to Cairo already attacked. I needed such a victim. Beyond doubt he was the tool to execute the deadly work which I had in hand. That evening I had a private conversation with Marian.

"There is a man under this roof very ill," I said. "Do you happen to know about him?"

"Are you alluding to Mr. Aldis?" she said at once.

"Perhaps so," I replied. "I met a man to-day at the Silver Bazaar; he was suffering from malignant malaria. Oh, it is not infectious; you need not start. I helped him to a carriage and he gave the address of this hotel. I am interested."

Then I looked at her and stopped speaking. Her face became watchful and eager.

"Tell me something about malaria," she said, in a whisper.

I hated her as she came nearer to me; I hated her still more when she lowered her voice; all the same, I knew I must use her.

"Malaria in all forms is deadly," I said. "It works havoc on the constitution. Malignant malaria as a rule kills, and quickly. The man I helped to-day will shortly die."

"Could you not be of service to this suffering individual?" was her next question, made after a pause. "There is doubtless," she continued, "no one else in Cairo who has so thoroughly studied the deadly complaint."

"That I am sure is the case," I replied.

"Perhaps you would like to see Mr. Aldis?"

I looked full at her, then I lowered my eyes.

"Wait a moment," she said. "I know the manager—I will go and speak to him."

She jumped up and left me. In a few minutes she returned to my side.

"I think Mr. Aldis will see you," she said, in a whisper. "A message has been sent to his apartments. He is very ill this evening, but refuses to see any of the doctors of the place. It is possible, therefore, that he may give you the pleasure of prescribing for him."

"Then, in that case," I answered, abruptly, "I will leave the hotel for a few minutes. If a message comes in my absence keep it for me, will you?"

I went straight to Shepherd's. I reached my own room. There I took a bottle which contained my pet mosquitoes from its hiding-place and held it between me and the light. Opening this bottle with extreme care I transferred two of the winged insects to another and smaller bottle. These I christened on the spot Lucifer and Diabolis. I smiled strangely as I watched their attenuated, shadowy forms. They immediately settled themselves at the bottom of the bottle. They looked languid; doubtless they were weak for want of their proper food.

"I am prepared, my friends, to give you a meal to-night," I said to them.

I slipped the bottle into my pocket and went back to the hotel.

"Oh, George," said Rachel, the moment I appeared, "there is a poor man dreadfully ill upstairs; the concierge has been to inquire for you; the man, a Mr. Aldis, wants to know if you will pay him a professional visit."

"With pleasure," I replied. "Ah, there is the concierge; I will speak to him."

I went up to the man, said a few words, and a moment later was taken up in the lift to Aldis's room. He had a large room on the third floor. The man flung open the door, announced—"Dr. George Matchen," and shut it behind him. The patient was bending over a wood fire in all the first rigor of a terrible attack.

"How do you do?" he said, just nodding to me and speaking with difficulty, for his teeth chattered so. "I have to thank you for your kindness to-day; I did not know, then, that I was being helped by a doctor, and one who the manager tells me has specially studied the infernal disease which is bringing me to the grave. I do not suppose you can do anything for me, but all the same it is kind of you to call."

"I may possibly be able to give you a little relief," was my reply. Then I sat down by his side and asked him a few questions.

He was far gone, indeed, with acute malignant malaria. He told me he had contracted it in New Guinea, that the attacks were becoming more and more frequent and his strength less and less. He had fled from the deadly place to Cairo hoping to recover, but his own supposition was that he was too deeply imbued with the disease for any chance of cure, and was to a certainty dying.

"I shall never go out again," he said, "until I am carried from here. I have declined, however, to go to a hospital, and I do not want a nurse; I can manage myself."

As he spoke he cowered yet nearer to the fire. I took out my glass bottle and, unobserved by him, removed the cork and let one of the spangle-winged mosquitoes free. I then turned and sat down near the patient.

I tried to draw him to talk on other matters, but he was too ill even to answer my questions. I knew that I was cruel, almost brutal; but was he not my tool—should I not be a madman to lose this chance of acquiring what I desired? Presently there sounded on my ears the well-known musical hum of a mosquito. It came nearer and yet nearer;

passing me by, it selected the sick man as its victim. A moment later and my spangle-winged beauty alighted on the invalid's hand. He immediately raised the other hand to brush it off, but before he could do so I interposed.

"One moment," I cried; "this is most curious. Let me secure this mosquito; it is surely not one of the ordinary kind one finds here."

As I spoke I laid my hand lightly on the mosquito. It fluttered in its unwelcome prison. I put it back into my bottle. The invalid gazed at me in astonishment.

"The brute has bitten me," he said. "It is early in the year for mosquitoes in Cairo, but I have been bitten before."

"Indeed," I answered, with eagerness. "Yes, I see you have mosquito curtains round your bed."

"The season has been so warm that they have never died off as is their usual habit," was his answer. "But excuse me, doctor, I think I shall get into bed; the second stage of my disease is approaching."

I now changed my manner and helped him to the utmost of my ability. I sat with him until the fury of the attack had spent itself, and it was late before I left his room.

From that hour Frank Aldis was my patient. I visited him once or twice a day. I spoke to my friends downstairs of the interesting case which had come under my notice. I specially mentioned how extremely favourable it was for my special investigations. Marian watched me morning, noon, and night—she was intensely interested; Captain Channing mildly so; but Rachel scarcely listened to me. For the time she was altogether absorbed; it was her nature to be polite to everyone, but I could see that she lived in a dream-world, and only Captain Channing's voice and Captain Channing's face had power to make her heart awake. I saw the light of love in her eyes whenever she looked at him—but for that look which was never directed towards me I might have paused and considered; as it was I was obdurate. I had now fed all my mosquitoes one by one from the veins of my malarious patient, but Lucifer and Diabolis I still kept in a bottle by themselves—they were fully primed to do what destruction lay in their power. Meanwhile the days flew. Christmas Day arrived, and two days afterwards the wedding was to take place. On that day Marian watched me much as a cat watches a mouse. As to Captain Channing and Rachel they were more and

more absorbed in each other. On Christmas night I knew that the time had come to strike. For this purpose I must secure the services of Marian Fletcher. I asked her, therefore, as the evening approached to stroll with me on the terrace. The night was balmy, like an English midsummer. There were several guests sitting about; the waiters in their quaint Oriental costumes were darting here and there supplying the different small tables with coffee and cigarettes. Marian and I moved into the shade where no one walked or lingered.

"Well?" she said.

I turned to her. "Will you help me?" I asked.

"On a condition," she replied, very slowly.

"You come in for the fortune, Marian, that is the condition."

"You marry me, George. That is my condition," she answered.

I looked her full in the eyes.

"You ask the impossible," I said. "I want to remove a certain man from my path because I love the girl who is engaged to him. How can you expect me to marry you?"

"This is a case of revenge," she answered, lightly. "You deprive Rachel Denza of her lover and her fortune, but you marry me afterwards. The whole thing is well conceived, and I can and will help you."

I was silent, thinking hard. I could not do what I intended to do without her help; at the same time nothing on this earth would induce me to marry her.

"Listen, Marian," I said, softly. "What we do we must do to-night. You and I step down from the paths of respectability and enter the shady

paths of crime—deliberate and wicked crime—to-night. We will talk of the conditions afterwards. If you fail to help me on this night, which is already upon us, it will be too late."

"In any case I get the fortune," she said, softly, under her breath. "What am I to do to-night, Dr. Matchen?"

I took a glass bottle from my pocket.

"In this," I said, "is a mosquito."

She laughed.

"Really," she answered; "we descend from the sublime to the ridiculous. I am not partial to mosquitoes; one got inside my curtains last night and bit me savagely on my neck; my neck is inflamed. Did you not notice the ugly mark at dinner?"

"I did not," I replied. "But listen, pray. There are mosquito curtains, are there not, round all the beds?"

"Of course."

"In what room does Captain Channing sleep, Marian?"

"On the same corridor with the rest of our party. All our rooms adjoin; his is the farthest off, then Colonel Denza's, then mine, then Rachel's."

"Then your course is easy," I answered. "Pray go upstairs some time this evening when no one is by, enter Captain Channing's room, open the curtains of his bed, and let the insect which rests in this bottle have its freedom *inside* the curtains. When you are quite certain that it is safe within, tuck the curtains down again and come away. The work is easy," I continued, and I gave a light laugh.

"Work easy, pay heavy," she answered.

Just then a waiter carrying a tray with glasses



"YOU LOOK LIKE A MURDERER!" SHE HISSED.

passed us. The reflection of a bright light in one of the rooms of the hotel caused the glasses to gleam. There was a second reflection on Marian's face and on mine.

"You look like a murderer," she hissed, "and you want me to be one, too."

"Ask no questions," I replied. "What is a mosquito? Keep your secret. If you do your work well you will at least be an heiress, one of the richest women in England.—There."

I thrust the bottle which contained Diabolis into her hand. Diabolis was full-fed and ripe to pursue his deadly work.

The next morning, by invitation, I breakfasted at the Continental with the Denzas. The whole party were in high spirits. Captain Channing, in particular, looked in radiant health; but I noticed to my own intense satisfaction that he rubbed his cheek, and I observed the small but sure bite of a mosquito in the little red patch which irritated him. Rachel's eyes met mine; she noticed the direction of Captain Channing's hand, and, bending towards him, said:—

"So you were the victim last night?"

"What do you mean?" he asked, turning to her.

"I was bitten the night before; I see that those horrid creatures attacked you last night."

"Do you mean the mosquitoes?" he asked, immediately. "It is surprising that they should be active at this time of the year. Of course, one knows there are always a few in Cairo, but a most persistent brute had got into my mosquito curtains; it worried me indescribably: I managed, however, to kill it at last."

So Diabolis was dead! I smiled grimly to myself. Captain Channing jumped up and asked Rachel if she had finished breakfast. They went out together; Marian and I found ourselves alone.

"When will the poison begin to work?" she asked.

"Hush!" I replied. "Walls have ears."

"But when?" she persisted.

"Probably this afternoon."

"Is one dose sufficient?"

"It would be safer to give a second," was my answer, after a moment's hesitation. "Can you help me to do this, Marian?"

"Certainly I can. Will you let me have the bottle which contains the insect before night?"

I nodded. She looked full at me.

"You clearly understand what my collaboration in this matter implies?"

"You get the money," was my answer.

"And the man," she continued.

I shrugged my shoulders.

"You know, Miss Fletcher," I said, "that I only love one woman, Rachel Denza."

"And she is good," replied Marian, slowly.

"A nice husband you would make for a good woman! You had much better be content with me. Like ought to mate with like in this world. I at least shall never reproach you, for we shall both be in the same box."

I made no answer. Not one single thrill of remorse had visited me. If I ever had a heart it was now hard as iron. I was only thinking of the result which a second dose of poison would certainly produce. Rachel, deprived both of fortune and lover, must assuredly turn to me. My work could not be spoilt now. I must soothe and satisfy Marian later on, but at any cost she must complete what she had begun.

Just then Rachel came up to us. Her face was a little pale and a trifle anxious.

"I am so glad you have not gone," she said, eagerly. "Geoffrey is not well; he complains of shivering and headache. It is impossible that he could have caught malaria, but certainly the symptoms seem very like those from which Mr. Aldis suffers."

"Do not be anxious," I replied. "Malaria is not infectious in the ordinary sense, but I will go and see him; where is he?"

"He has gone to his room to lie down; he feels very sick."

"Better and better," I whispered to myself.

I ran upstairs and saw Channing. He had slight rigor, which I knew would soon increase; he had also sick headache. He could not understand his own sensations.

"Give me something to put me right, won't you, Matchen?" he said, when he saw me. "It is no end of a nuisance to be knocked up to-day, for remember I marry Rachel to-morrow."

"That you do not, sir," was my inward comment.

Aloud I said:—

"I will prescribe something for you, and the main thing is not to worry."

I went downstairs and ordered a harmless compound. It was by no means my intention to cut the attack short, even if I could do so.

In the evening I inquired for Captain Channing. He was now very ill, indeed, and all thought of to-morrow's ceremony was abandoned. Colonel Denza was anxious and spoke to me.

"I hope Channing will be able to be

married on the following day," he said. "You have doubtless heard of the curious will which provides him a fortune if he takes to himself a wife before or on the first of the New Year?"

"I have heard of it," I replied, briefly. "He is suffering from malaria, and there are symptoms which point to a malignant type, but I hope the attack will have died down by the morning."

Colonel Denza looked very anxious. I saw that I was not wanted, and went back to my hotel.

I returned later to put my glass bottle into Marian Fletcher's hand.

"I am appointed nurse," she said, "for the time being; you see how everything suits, but do not forget our bargain."

I nodded to her and went away. Again, that night, callous wretch that I was, I slept, but I awoke early and went to the hotel. Captain Channing had got over the first acute attack, and was lying on his pillows, languid, weak, and indifferent. Rachel was

standing in the room; she turned when she saw me.

"This is our wedding-day," she said, "but Geoffrey says he cannot marry me to-day."

"Why, of course not," I replied. "How could you be so cruel as to expect it?"

She fell on her knees beside his couch and took one of his feverish hands in hers.

"I have a headache myself," she said; "it is caused by disappointment."

"Darling, I shall be all right to-morrow," he said, and, making an effort, he raised her little hand to his lips and kissed it.

The sight maddened me. I made a remark, ordered the prescription which I had made up yesterday to be renewed, and left the room. Colonel Denza was standing on the landing.

"Well," he said, "how is the patient? Any improvement?"

"There is not the least doubt, Colonel," I replied, "that Captain Channing is suffering from malignant malaria. The fact is he ought not to marry for some time."

"He must marry before the 1st. We must get through the ceremony somehow to-morrow."

"Ah," I answered, "I do not think you will."

"It is worse than provoking," said the Colonel. "I do not want to be heartless, believe me, Matchen, but to throw away such a fortune! Surely a great effort ought to be made to comply with the uncle's will."

"I will do my best," I answered. "But would you like to call in another doctor?"

"Certainly not; no one knows so much about malaria as you do."

Just then Rachel passed me, going languidly and very slowly to her room. I was struck by the feebleness of her step and followed her.

"Are you ill, Rachel?" I said. "Is this little disappointment more than you can bear?"

"Believe me, it is not the money," she answered, and tears filled her lovely eyes. "It is the sight of his suffering—the change in his face. Oh, you do not think he will die?"



"I WAS STRUCK BY THE FEEBLENESS OF HER STEP."

"No, no," I said, as soothingly as I could. "But you really are ill."

"I do not know what is the matter," she answered. "I feel much as Geoff did yesterday morning, shivery, tired, headachy."

"You are nervous," I replied. "You cannot possibly be contracting malaria. Now, go like a good girl and lie down."

She left me. Again I observed that feeble walk. She was a tall, strong girl, but she absolutely tottered as she went down the long corridor. Her walk reminded me of Aldis as he tottered up the street after leaving the Silver Bazaar.

I could not quite account for the strange, fierce nervousness which suddenly arose within me, nor could I in the least understand the vague fear which clutched at my heart and shook me to the foundations of my being. I went downstairs; Marian sat reading an English newspaper. She raised her eyes when I approached.

"All going well, eh?" she inquired.

I sat down near her.

"How can you look so cool and indifferent?" I said. "Sometimes I wonder if you are a woman at all."

"As much woman as you are man, dear sir," was her gentle response. "But how go the patients?"

"The patients!" I cried. "There is only one patient; he is bad enough, God knows."

"I fancy there are two," she replied.

"Two?" I cried. "Two?"

Then I remembered Rachel's condition. I looked full at Marian. My very heart stood still—the words I tried to utter froze on my lips.

"There are likely to be two," continued Marian, in a low tone. She stood up as she spoke. "Come out on the terrace, Dr. Matchen."

I followed her. The terrace was absolutely deserted. We stood side by side in the shade caused by the big hotel. The sunshine blazed hot everywhere else; a number of Arab women carrying necklaces, feathers, and other things to sell came up and proffered their wares. Marian ordered the women off with an imperious gesture.

"Dr. Matchen," she said, facing me and looking me full in the eyes, "I asked you for a promise last night you virtually refused to give. Remembering that man above all things is frail, weak, and uncertain, anxious to have his own way at any cost, but not anxious to perform that which is afterwards expected of him—to make all safe, I took the matter into my own hands. It does not

suit my wishes that Captain Channing should die and Rachel live, beautiful and free. I think you call your favourite mosquitoes Diabolis and Lucifer. Diabolis poisoned Captain Channing on the night of the 25th; Lucifer poisoned Rachel last night."

"What do you mean?" I cried.

I took her by her shoulders and turned her round.

"What do you mean?" I hissed again in her face.

"What I say. Take your hands off. I took the one step possible to take. They are both ill now, and it is—yes, your doing and mine. Cure them if you can."

I did not say a word—I was incapable of speech. I turned from Marian, walked across the hall of the big hotel, and, not waiting for the lift, bounded up the stairs three steps at a time to the third story. I turned down the corridor where the Denzas' rooms were situated. Rachel's door was slightly ajar; I heard voices within. Her father was standing by the bedside. The girl herself was lying on the bed; she had not troubled to undress, but from where I stood I noticed the frightful rigor which caused her to shiver from head to foot. Colonel Denza saw me, and asked me to enter.

"Ah, Matchen," he said, "you are the very man. What can you make of this? Are not Rachel's symptoms singularly like those from which Channing suffered yesterday?"

I went up to the bed and took the small, hot hand in my clasp. The pulse was galloping—it did not need me to lay my finger upon it to know that the girl's temperature was high.

"You must get into bed, Rachel," I said, as gently as I could speak. "You are more ill than I thought; I will get a nurse from the hospital to see after you."

"I am so cold," she answered, and her teeth chattered.

I bent towards her.

"Tell me," I said, "and speak truly. Were you bitten by anything last night?"

"Bitten?" she answered, pressing her hand to her eyes and pushing back her hair. "How funny! I had forgotten. Of course I was. A mosquito got inside my curtains; it bit my little finger and my wrist: see how inflamed they are. I lit a candle and hunted for the little wretch, but could not find it. Oh, how my head aches; how giddy I am!"

"I will get you a nurse; we will soon have you all right," I said; but my face must have

belied my words. I motioned to Colonel Denza and we both left the room.

"What is the matter?" he asked.

"Matter!" I cried. "Only God knows. Your daughter is infected with the same horrible thing from which Captain Channing is suffering. Yes, they will be cured; they must be cured. I take it upon me to say that is almost a certainty; but they are both ill—alarmingly so. Get nurses from the hospital, my dear sir. Do not allow Miss Fletcher near them; any excuse—infection—what you like. I am off to—to do that which I mean to do."

"But the marriage—the marriage on the 1st!" cried the agonized father.

"Marriage!" I answered. "Colonel Denza, you may be thankful if you keep your daughter. Go on your knees to Almighty God and ask Him to spare her life. Do not keep me now."

"But where are you going?" he called after me. "Are there no immediate steps to be taken?"

"Yes, yes. Dose her with quinine, dose them both with quinine. I will prescribe the dose. Do not keep me, I beg of you."

I rushed from the hotel. I was like a madman, like one possessed; and yet, and yet, I was not as guilty as I had been when I awoke that morning. It was given to me at the eleventh hour to repent, to repent with the agony which lost souls must feel in purgatory. Little did I care then whether Rachel married the man she loved or not. All I required of the God who made her was her life.

"Oh, spare her young and beautiful life!" I cried, and then I thought no more of the past, but only of the present. I must take means.

While studying the great malarial question on the wide plains of the Campagna I had, as I have already stated, thought much of the possibility of a remedy or a cure—something which should destroy the parasites in the blood. I had already made extensive experiments in this direction, but hitherto, I must own, without marked success. Still, in moments when I could think clearly and devote my whole time to the question, I had wild dreams of a certain disinfectant which I called by the name of spirileen. Spirileen was a mixture of more than one strong disinfectant, and could be introduced by inoculation into a healthy or infected subject at will. Up to the present, as I have said, I had found no certain results, but I was nearly mad now, and determined, come what would, to try to inoculate Rachel.

I went to my rooms, shut myself in, worked up my subject carefully for a few hours, and then went back to the Continental. There was a hush and quiet over the place. Everyone in the hotel knew what had occurred: that the bride and bridegroom of to-morrow were both literally lying at death's door. The manager of the hotel looked disturbed; if it were known that an attack of malignant malaria was assailing his guests he himself would be ruined. He came to me to ask what it meant.

"Can you throw any light on the subject, sir?" was his inquiry. "Panic is beginning which will empty the hotel; several people have already gone. Mr. Aldis is so bad he is not expected to live out the day."

"What do you say?" I asked.

I started, turned, and faced him.

"Just what I say, sir. Mr. Aldis is not expected to hold out until night, and Miss Fletcher, one of your party, sir, has already started for Alexandria *en route* for England."

This was a relief which the man must have seen reflected in my face. I evaded any further questions from him and rushed upstairs. I went to Aldis's door and knocked. A feeble voice responded. I opened the door and entered. The man was lying weak unto death on his bed. He could scarcely speak, his face was cadaverous, the signs of approaching death were manifest.

If I saved him—and surely in such an extreme case any experiment was justifiable—then Rachel at such a much earlier stage of the complaint would be delivered. I went straight up to Aldis and bent over him.

"I am nearly gone," he said to me.

"I have something that I want to try," I said. "It is kill or cure. May I?"

He gave a vague nod; I doubt if he understood me. I had my syringe ready, and within two minutes I had inoculated him. I sat down by him then and waited for the result. I had watched his case for days now, and I knew when the fever would begin to return. It was due. The temperature ought to rise within half an hour. I sat and watched the clock as a man who is drowning watches to see whether the saving rope will reach him. When the clock struck I took Aldis's temperature. It was normal; there was no rise. I took it again in half an hour; still no rise.

"What is this?" I said. "Your attack is not coming back."

I observed that his eyes were a shade brighter. I gave him a stimulant. I sat

with him for another hour; still no rise of temperature, no sign of the terrible recurrence of the fever. Already he looked better; he was able to turn in bed and to watch me. I gave him a second dose of the disinfectant and then left him. My mind was made up; I went straight to Rachel's room.

She was in a paroxysm of extreme misery. The nurse whom Denza had summoned was seated by the bedside. Rachel was delirious; she did not know anyone.

"It is a very sharp attack, sir," said the nurse, in French.

"Yes," I answered, and then I took the girl's white hand and pushed up her sleeve, and introduced the spirileen.

I must not make my story too long. Suffice it to say that by a miracle, as it seemed to me, Rachel Denza, Captain Channing, and, last but not least, Mr. Frank Aldis crept back from the gates of death to the shores of life. Step by step I watched them as the cruel enemy withdrew and life and health and strength returned to their faces. They all spoke of me as their benefactor, and I, coward that I was, could not disillusionize them. There came a day when Channing and Rachel, quite well again, drove to church together and were made one by the officiating priest. On that day I crept to the church and stayed there and listened to the words which took Rachel from me for ever. But in reality

she had never been mine, and that which I had done in my madness had removed her immeasurable miles from me and my life. I was thankful that she was alive. I crept back to Shepherd's Hotel, for I was ill. I myself had been bitten by the deadly mosquitoes, heeding little what they did during those hours that I watched by Rachel's bed. Should I give myself the spirileen and so, perhaps, save my life? No; it seemed useless. The very desire for life had left me. Up to the present I had just strength to keep from my friends the fact that I was ill. I sat in my room between the raging paroxysms of fever and wondered what was before me. At least I might do one good. Spirileen, thought out by me, in very deed and truth my own discovery, the fruits of my months of labour, had proved efficacious. I would give my discovery to the world before I died. At intervals I had written my story, and there was just this one thing to add—the proportions and the natures of the disinfectants which made my protective. I took a sheet of paper and prepared to write

NOTE.—Dr. Matchen was found dead in his room, seated by his writing-table, his hand still holding his pen. The manuscript which lay by his side was carefully packed and forwarded to his friend, Colonel Denza.

