

The Adventures of a Man of Science.

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

We have taken down these stories from time to time as our friend, Paul Gilchrist, has related them to us. He is a man whose life study has been science in its most interesting forms—he is also a keen observer of human nature and a noted traveller. He has an unbounded sympathy for his kind, and it has been his lot to be consulted on many occasions by all sorts and conditions of men.

I.—THE SNAKE'S EYE.

TOLD BY PAUL GILCHRIST.



HAVE met with strange adventures in my time, and none perhaps queerer than the story I am just about to relate.

The Crosswaites were old friends of mine, and amongst them I had no greater favourite than the pretty Lady Pamela. She was a motherless girl of great beauty, and when first grown up had gone through much trouble owing to an unlucky love affair. A certain Laurence Carroll, a penniless subaltern in a line regiment, had conceived a desperate passion for her and she for him. There had been exciting scenes, for the young people had sworn to be true to each other in spite of obstacles. Carroll was a gentleman by birth, but somewhat harum-scarum and reckless in character. He had already contracted debts to a considerable amount, and was, in the eyes of her family, no suitable match for Lady Pamela. The Earl of Attrill forbade him the house—Lady Pamela broke down and had a somewhat severe illness, but in the course of a year had recovered her normal health and spirits. I had been consulted at the time of the Carroll trouble, and was, therefore, sincerely rejoiced when the news of Lady Pamela's engagement to the right man reached me.

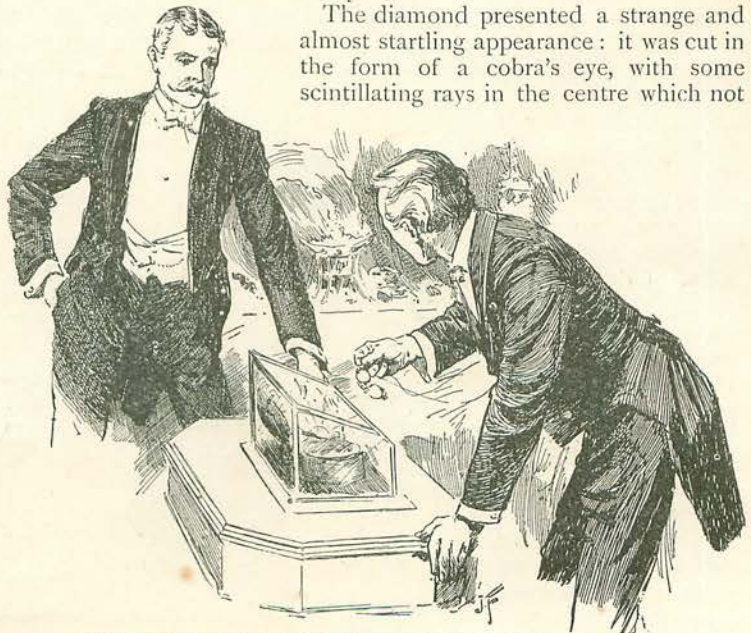
She had now to all appearance given her whole heart to a certain Captain Mainwaring, a well-known traveller and a particularly brave officer. He had money of his own, and a character without a flaw. He was twenty years older than his pretty young bride, but that fact mattered nothing in the eyes of her relations.

At Lady Pamela's earnest request I had promised that no scientific work should pre-

vent my being present at her wedding. She was to be married with much ceremony early in February of this present year 1896. The wedding was to take place from the Crosswaites' town house in Portland Square, and the bridegroom arrived on leave of absence from his regiment in India just one week before the wedding. He was a tall, fine-looking, soldierly man, and Lady Pamela's friends congratulated her on all sides. These congratulations rose to a sort of *furor* of enthusiasm when it was discovered that, amongst other presents, the soldier had brought for his future bride's acceptance a diamond of extraordinary size and brilliancy.

The night after Captain Mainwaring's return from India, I dined at the Crosswaites', and after dinner was permitted to see the gem. It reposed on a velvet bed under a glass case, and stood on a centre table in the room where the other wedding presents were displayed. This room was not only guarded by a detective from Scotland Yard, but also by a manservant, an old retainer of the family, who was supposed never to leave it except when the detective was present.

The diamond presented a strange and almost startling appearance: it was cut in the form of a cobra's eye, with some scintillating rays in the centre which not



"YOU WOULD LIKE TO HEAR THE STORY OF THAT QUEER DIAMOND?"

inaptly represented the pupil; it was set in a thin gold socket, and looked like an eye of evil and strange import as it glittered on its purple bed. In addition to the value which its queer shape and unique appearance gave it, the stone itself was of great intrinsic worth, as it weighed over thirty carats. One glance was sufficient to show me that it was of the first water and was free from the least clouding or imperfection—in certain lights it gave out a blue, in others again a red, colour.

"You would like to hear the story of that queer diamond?" said Captain Mainwaring, coming up to my side when he saw me examining the gem.

"It certainly presents a unique appearance," I answered. "It must have a history."

"It has—it is in reality one of the eyes of an Indian idol. It was given to me by a Rajah whose life I had been instrumental in saving. When he presented me with the gem he made a queer request.

"'It belongs to a tribe with whom I and my people have had a life-long quarrel,' he said. 'It is, as a glance will show you, the eye of a cobra—we call it in Hindustani Sānp Kee Ankh, which means the Snake's Eye. The money value of this stone is immense, but I run considerable danger by having it in my possession. In fact, I should be glad to be rid of it. If you are willing to take the responsibility, you shall have it on a condition.'

"I told him," said Captain Mainwaring, "that I was not a nervous man, and that I would gladly accept the responsibility of such a valuable possession.

"'You saved my life, and I owe you something,' replied the Rajah. 'The stone shall be yours if you will take my servant, Gopinath, as its guardian. I do not wish to have your blood on my head, and you would assuredly never reach England in safety if Gopinath did not take care of the diamond for you. He is a Brahmin, a valuable and excellent fellow. He will serve you day and night, and will protect the gem. Take him with you to England. While

he remains in your service the diamond is safe.'

"As he spoke, the Rajah lifted a curtain and Gopinath appeared. He was a good-looking fellow, tall, with the sleek skin, sinewy frame, and glowing, jewel-like eyes of his countrymen. I happened to be in need of a servant, and gladly accepted the guardian with the gift. Gopinath has accompanied me to England, and is so much attached to me and to the Snake's Eye, that I do not think we are likely to part for many a long day."

"You suffered no hair-breadth escapes, then, in travelling down the country with a gem of such value?" I asked.

"I believe I did, several—but Gopinath was always to the fore. I have not the least doubt that my Brahmin stood between me and death on several occasions."

Other guests now crowded round the glass case, and Mainwaring entered into a fresh description of the gem, the Rajah, and Gopinath for their benefit. I only listened with half an ear, being absorbed in contemplation of the splendid stone itself.

"How do you like the idea of a Brahmin bodyguard?" I said, turning to Pamela, who came up at that moment.

"Do you mean Gopinath?" she answered, with a laugh; "I think him a delightful person." She turned her sparkling eyes full on my face.

"I should like to see him," I said.

"He is in the house: I will fetch him at once," she answered. She ran off, returning in a few moments with the Brahmin, wearing a gorgeous turban and elaborately attired in



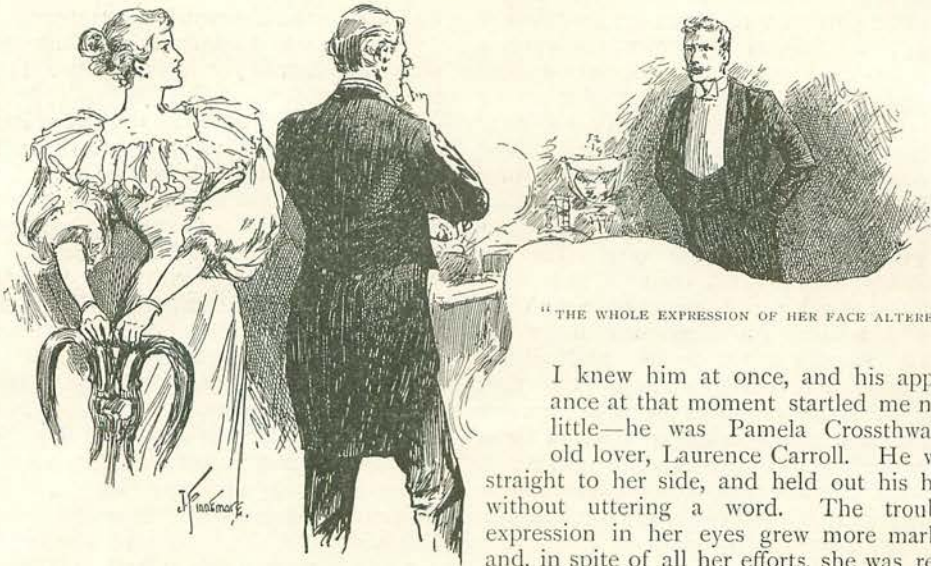
"HE GAVE A LOW SALAAM."

the rich colours of his country—he gave a low salaam as the young girl introduced him to me. His glittering eyes turned from her face to mine, then I saw them light upon the stone itself with a peculiar expression. A moment later he had vanished into a shady part of the room.

“That gem, beautiful as it is, will be a white elephant,” I said, to Pamela.

“Herbert means to have it re-set, and I

be his wife—her eyes met his for an instant, then she looked towards the door. In a moment the whole expression of her face altered—it grew white, and she clutched hold of the nearest chair as if to support herself. A lady came up to speak to Captain Mainwaring, who turned to reply to her courteously. At the same instant I saw a tall man, with a pale face and somewhat nervous expression, come hastily forward.



“THE WHOLE EXPRESSION OF HER FACE ALTERED.”

am to wear it when I go to Court after the wedding,” she said. “Afterwards I should like it to be sent to the bank. It would not be safe to have such a treasure in one’s house.”

“Certainly not,” I replied; “that is, unless you intend to keep Gopinath.”

“Oh, I don’t know about that, he is certain to wish to return to India. I don’t suppose, either, that I shall often wear the stone—it is too magnificent, and there is something about it which frightens me.”

“I should regard this stone more as representing monetary value than as an ornament to wear,” I said. “It is really almost too big, and as you say, looks too like the eye of a cobra to be a really comfortable ornament.”

“It is that which gives it its value,” said Captain Mainwaring, who now joined us. “I don’t think, after all, Pamela, that we ought to change the setting. A gem like that is a possession—it must be a family heirloom, eh?”

As the soldier spoke he gave an affectionate glance at the pretty girl who was so soon to

I knew him at once, and his appearance at that moment startled me not a little—he was Pamela Crossthwaite’s old lover, Laurence Carroll. He went straight to her side, and held out his hand without uttering a word. The troubled expression in her eyes grew more marked, and, in spite of all her efforts, she was really trembling violently. Captain Mainwaring turned towards her again; with a great effort she seemed to recover herself, and laid her hand on his arm.

“Let me introduce you to my friend, Laurence Carroll,” she said. “Mr. Carroll—Captain Mainwaring.”

The Captain bowed, and favoured Carroll with a brief glance—the slight nervousness left Carroll’s eyes—they grew bright and steady. He began to talk eagerly, and so did Pamela. The conversation once again turned upon the diamond. Captain Mainwaring unlocked the glass case and, taking the gem in his hand, gave it first to me and then to Carroll to examine. We were exchanging opinions as to the beauty and rarity of the stone, but when he thought no one was observing him, Carroll’s eyes followed Lady Pamela, who had left us, with a queer resolve growing stronger and stronger in their depths. It needed but a few glances to show me that his passion was as strong as ever. Presently Lady Pamela and her friends approached the part of the room where he was standing. She was passing him

without a word, but he stretched out his hand as if to detain her; she turned then and looked him full in the face. As she did so every vestige of colour left hers.

"I came here to-night to give you back your promise and your gift," he said. He thrust a letter into her hand, and a moment later left the room.

Shortly afterwards I also took my leave, and returned to the flat which I occupy in Bloomsbury. I have fitted myself up a laboratory there, and spend a great deal of my time in that sanctum. It was past eleven o'clock when I got home; my servant, Silva by name, a Hungarian, was waiting up for me. I told him to go to bed, and went straight to my laboratory. I was making certain experiments of an interesting nature, and in particular was anxiously developing some photographs which I had just taken by means of the Röntgen rays. The new discovery was now the craze of the whole scientific world, and I, of course, with other men of science, was bitten with it. I had several vacuum tubes by me, and all the necessary apparatus for making the rays. My impression was that the new discovery would make rapid strides, and would be of immense importance to medical science. I had just retired into my dark room to develop some photographs when there came a ring at the front door. It was late for a visitor to call, and I went out in some surprise to ascertain what could be the matter. Silva had not yet gone to bed—he opened the door, ushered someone in, and then came to me.

"Mr. Carroll, sir—he would like to see you for a few moments."

"Carroll," I exclaimed, "and at this hour—where have you shown him?"

"Into the laboratory," answered Silva.

"I will go to him," I replied. "Do not sit up—I can let Mr. Carroll out myself."

I returned to my laboratory. Carroll was standing where the full rays of the electric light fell on his face. He looked cadaverous—his cheeks were hollow, his eyes had a disturbed and glassy expression. When I entered the room I saw that he had taken up some proofs of mine which lay on a table

near. They had been sent to me from the medical paper for which I constantly write. When he heard my step he threw down the sheets and came forward to meet me.

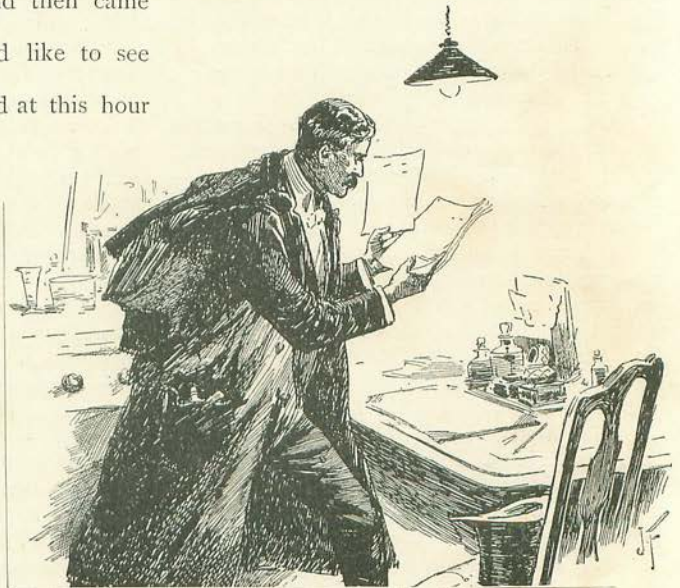
"I do not apologize for calling at so late an hour," he said, "for my business is of great importance. By the way, that article on poison is full of interest—is it for a medical journal?"

"It is for a forthcoming number of the *Lancet*," I replied. Then I added: "But the subject would scarcely interest you."

"It happens to interest me immensely," answered Carroll; "it is about a strange poison."

"It is—one of the most dangerous known. As you have read some of my description, I will tell you how I happened to write the paper. I am much interested just now in the Röntgen rays, and make many experiments with the new light. A few days ago, while experimenting with ferrocyanide of potassium, I accidentally found that I had evolved as a by-product that most dangerous drug, anhydrous hydrocyanic acid. The article, a proof of which you have just looked over, is written with a view to show the danger which I myself or anyone else, forgetful of this fact, might unknowingly run. There is, as I said just now, no more dangerous poison known. It causes death by inhalation, and the process of making, without certain precautions, is fatal."

"Would the victim suffer?" asked Carroll, abruptly.



"HE HAD TAKEN UP SOME PROOFS OF MINE."

"No—death would be instantaneous."

"And you have really made the drug, Gilchrist?"

"Yes, a few days ago—entirely by accident, as my article explains."

"Well, the subject is interesting," said Carroll—he sank into the nearest chair as he spoke.

"There are moments," he continued, gazing at me with bright eyes—"there are moments in the lives of many men when the poison question becomes full of strange fascination."

"I hope such a moment may never come into your life," I said, favouring him with an earnest glance—his eyes avoided mine—he locked his thin hands tightly together.

"Now to turn to my own business," he said—"I do not apologize for this late visit—my state of mind and my circumstances are beyond mere apology. I have come here to-night, Gilchrist, to ask your advice."

"My dear fellow, you are heartily welcome to it," I answered.

"You see before you the most wretched dog in all Christendom."

"Oh, come," I said, "matters cannot be as bad as that."

"You have heard all about Lady Pamela and myself?"

"Yes, Carroll, I know that story. I need not say that I pity you—you are going through a rough time just at present, but believe me——"

"I can scarcely listen to ordinary consolations just now," he replied, breaking in abruptly on my well-meaning speech. "I had better come to facts at once. I do not intend that marriage to take place."

"What do you mean?"

"Pamela Crossthwaite is not to marry Captain Mainwaring."

"You must be mad!" I exclaimed. "How can you possibly prevent the marriage?"

He laughed in a troubled sort of way.

"I have put a cog in the wheel of that confounded Captain's prosperity to-night," he said. "I gave Pamela a letter which will at least insure her having a bad night."

"You did very wrong."

"I do not agree with you—I wish to save her from the greatest misery any woman can know. Marriage is at best an awful thing—to be married to the wrong man is torture."

"What have you come to see me about?" I asked, after a pause.

"Because it is necessary for me to speak to someone, and you are an old friend of the family. You are also a good sort of fellow

all round, and have helped other men out of scrapes before now. Lord Attrill would be sure to listen to any words you were good enough to say to him. Gilchrist, I want you to do me a favour. I want you to go to him to-morrow morning in order to plead my cause once again."

"You must be ill, Carroll," I said. "How can I possibly interfere at the eleventh hour? The wedding is to take place on Thursday. Do you suppose for any plea of mine Lord Attrill would permit his daughter to break her word to Captain Mainwaring?"

"He might if the truth were put straight before him," answered Carroll. "Lady Pamela loves me—she does not love Mainwaring."

"You have no right to say anything of that sort."

"I have every right, for it is true. Did you not notice her face when she saw me to-night?"

I was silent—I had certainly noticed the changing colour, the misery which clouded the beautiful eyes. After a pause I spoke.

"I must say some very plain words to you," I began. "You are not acting in a manly way. It is true that Lady Pamela was at one time attached to you—her people did not approve of you for her, she was very young, and not supposed to know her own mind. She suffered at the time, but has now got over her troubles. A man in all respects worthy of her has come forward, and if you have only half the courage you ought to have, you will leave her alone to marry him happily the day after to-morrow."

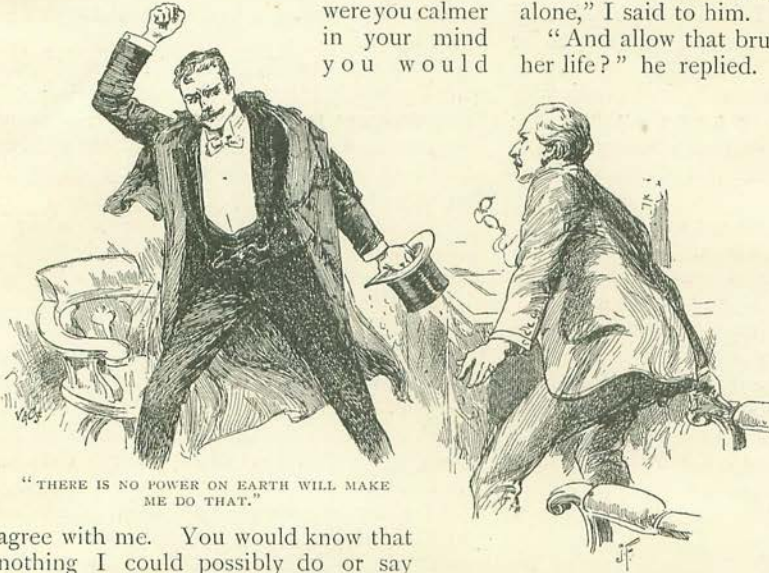
"I am quite impervious to any hard things you may like to say of me," answered Carroll. "My mind is absolutely made up. Either the marriage between Lady Pamela and Captain Mainwaring is broken off, or I commit suicide."

"Oh, folly!" I retorted, starting to my feet. "I am ashamed even to listen to you. You profess to love Lady Pamela, and yet you would cast such a terrible shadow over her life?"

"No, I would draw the line at that," he answered; his lips trembled, and his eyes softened for the first time. "If she marries Mainwaring, she will never know of my horrible fate. I have given her people to understand that I am returning to my regiment. If I cannot effect the object for which I have visited you to-night, I will allow her to continue in that belief. She will think of me, when she thinks of me at all, as living and suffering far out of England. I will take good care that she does not learn

the worst. But now to business: will you help me or will you not?"

"It is impossible for me to help you in the way you have just suggested. It would be useless—were you calmer in your mind you would



"THERE IS NO POWER ON EARTH WILL MAKE ME DO THAT."

agree with me. You would know that nothing I could possibly do or say would alter matters now. If you meant to interfere, why did you leave it to the eleventh hour?"

"Because I have been out of England with my regiment. The news of the engagement reached me in Africa three weeks ago. I managed to get leave of absence, and took the first boat back to England. I arrived in London this afternoon. Well, I will not keep you any longer. I am sorry you cannot see your way to help me. Had you arranged to talk to Lord Attrill, matters might have been made a little easier. As it is, I must take my own course."

"You are fully resolved to see Mainwaring?"

"I am. I have told Pamela in the letter which she received to-night of my intention. Mainwaring shall not marry her in the dark. Before he sleeps to-night he will know from me the whole story of our engagement."

"And your idea is that this news will induce him to break off the match?"

"I think it probable; anyhow, I will put him to the test."

"Suppose he sticks to his engagement?"

"Then I shall not live to hear the marriage bells ring. By the way, Gilchrist, how did you say that drug of yours was to be used?"

"You have nothing to do with that," I answered. "In your present state of mind the less you think of poisons the better."

He rose without a word. He was a tall and slenderly-made man of wiry build; his lips shut in a firm line. I had seldom seen a more determined face.

"I wish I could induce you to leave well alone," I said to him.

"And allow that brute to have his way with her life?" he replied. "There is no power on earth will make me do that."

He shook hands with me and left the house.

He had been gone but a few moments when, approaching the table where the proofs from the *Lancet* lay, I perceived that page eight was missing. On this page a careful description was given of the use to which the deadly acid could be put. I looked

around me in consternation—the page might possibly have dropped on the floor—I could not find it—the next moment a cry of alarm escaped my lips. A small bottle of the drug itself had been standing near the manuscript—it also was gone. In a moment I knew what had occurred. Carroll had seen the word "poison" written in large letters on the label of the bottle, and had evidently slipped it into his pocket before I entered the laboratory.

I am not in the ordinary sense of the word a doctor, although I have studied both medicine and surgery—I know, however, only too well the deadly and awful nature of the drug which the unhappy man had provided himself with. To follow him was my immediate duty. I put on my hat and went out—the hour was now past midnight. The moment I found Carroll I would force him to return me the bottle which contained the anhydrous hydrocyanic acid, but I had not gone many steps before I remembered, to my consternation, that I did not know his address. He had spoken, however, of visiting Captain Mainwaring. Mainwaring was staying at the Savoy. I would go there, inquire for the Captain, and, if necessary, force my way into the room where the two were having their interview.

I hailed the first hansom I came across, and desired the man to drive me to the Savoy

Hotel. When I got there it was close on one o'clock. The night porter alone was up. In reply to my message he said he would go up to Captain Mainwaring's rooms and ascertain if Mr. Carroll was with him. I waited in the hall—the man came back after a few moments to inform me that Carroll must have left, for the lights were all out in the Captain's rooms, and he concluded therefore that he had retired for the night.

I left the hotel—there was nothing more to be done until the morning. I returned home, and entering my laboratory spent many hours thinking over Carroll's unhappy story. As the time flew by my uneasiness grew greater and greater—towards morning I dropped asleep in my chair. In my sleep I was troubled by dreams, in which I saw the awful drug which I myself had manufactured taking deadly effect on more than one hapless victim. When I awoke with a start and bathed in perspiration the winter daylight was struggling into the room.

I went to my bedroom, changed my things, and ordered Silva to get breakfast. While dressing I quickly made up my mind. I would have a cup of coffee and call at an early hour on Captain Mainwaring at the Savoy. He might possibly know Carroll's address. In any case I would be able to judge by his manner what effect the young man's communication had had upon him.

Breakfast was served, and I had just entered my morning-room when a loud peal at the front door startled me. Silva went to open it, and the next moment Carroll, white as death, and with an expression on his face which paralyzed the words I was about to utter, entered the room.

The moment the servant withdrew he came eagerly up to me.

"I cannot realize it," he said; "I do not feel the slightest pain; but all the same, I know I am a doomed man. Captain Mainwaring is dead."

I sprang to my feet.

"What do you mean?" I asked.

"I state a fact. I saw him last night,

and told him the whole story of my engagement to Pamela Crossswaite. He was angry at first, then he calmed down—said he would take a night to think over matters, and begged of me to be at the Savoy at eight o'clock this morning. I arrived there to find the whole place in consternation—the Captain was found dead in his bed—a doctor had been summoned, who gave it as his opinion that there was undoubted foul play. I could see by the expression on the faces of the hotel servants that I was suspected. I told the head waiter that I was going to see you, and walked straight out of the hotel. Now, what is to be done?"

"This is terrible," I said; "there must be some mistake."

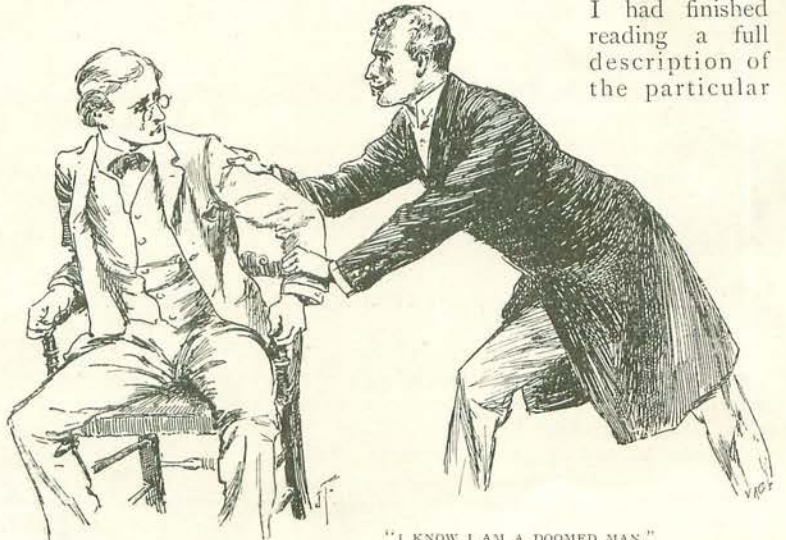
"There is none. Would I invent anything so ghastly? You must see for yourself, Gilchrist, what this means to me. I was the last person with Mainwaring—we parted in anger—the hotel servants will swear as to the length of our interview. I shall be arrested almost immediately—and to confirm matters, to make it impossible for me to escape hanging, there is this, Gilchrist, in my pocket."

As he spoke he drew out the little bottle of anhydrous hydrocyanic acid.

"Give it to me," I said, stretching out my hand for it.

"No, I shall keep it now. I took it for my own purposes. It lay on your table last night. The first thing I saw when I entered the room was the 'poison' label on the bottle. I was tempted, and appropriated it before you appeared. I was searching for means to take my own life if necessary. Just as you

entered the room I had finished reading a full description of the particular



"I KNOW I AM A DOOMED MAN."

action of the poison. I slipped page eight of your proof also into my pocket. Here is the proof now and here is the bottle."

"Well, at least you can give them back to me—you need not voluntarily slip a rope round your neck."

"It is too late," he replied. "When I heard the fatal news at the hotel I staggered and almost fell. Some fiend tempted me to put my hand into my pocket. I pulled out the bottle and stared at it as if I was stupefied. A waiter who stood near must have seen the word 'poison' on the label. No, I shall brazen the thing out now. I have come to you as the only friend I possess. What do you advise me to do?"

"To sit down and if possible tell me what occurred," I replied.

Carroll stared at me fixedly for a moment, then he flung himself into the nearest chair, and clasping his big hands round one of his knees began to speak.

"I will tell you what occurred.

I arrived late at the Savoy Hotel, but Mainwaring had not gone to bed. I saw him and told him my story. He absolutely refused to give Pamela up."

"About this bottle?" I said, as Carroll paused and wiped the moisture from his brow.

He glanced at it with a strange expression.

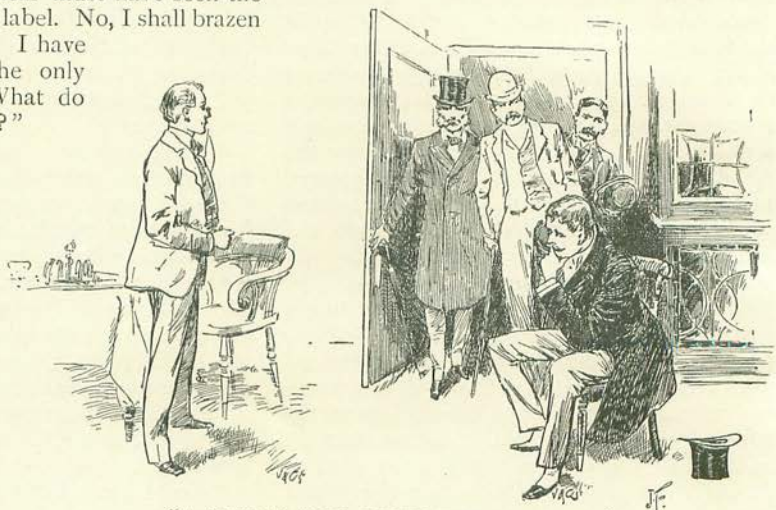
"I went to the Crown Hotel," he continued, "a small one, not far from the Savoy. When I reached my room I took the bottle out of my pocket. Mainwaring's words had nearly maddened me. I saw he would not relinquish Pamela on any terms. A horrible desire to take away my own life surged into my brain. I read the paper once again in which you give a description of the exact action of the poison. I broke the seal and removed the cork from the bottle. In another moment I should have inhaled the drug, and my miserable life would have been over—but in that instant, terror, as cowardly and complete as my former mad passion, filled me. I dreaded death as much as a moment before I had longed for it. I put the cork back into the bottle and thrust it into my

pocket. Now, that is all—what do you advise me to do?"

I was just about to speak when a ring at the front door interrupted my words. The next instant a couple of police officers, accompanied by Lord Attrill, entered the room. One of the men went straight up to Carroll.

"Is your name Laurence Carroll?" he asked.

"It is," replied the young man.



"A COUPLE OF POLICE OFFICERS ENTERED THE ROOM."

"Then I hold a warrant for your arrest on suspicion of having murdered Captain Mainwaring at the Savoy Hotel last night."

Now that the blow had really come, Carroll was quiet enough.

"I will go with you, of course," he said, "but I wish to say at once that I am perfectly innocent."

"The less you say, the better for your own sake just now, sir," replied the man. "It is my duty to take you, and, of course, I am sorry, but the quieter you come the better."

Carroll held out his hand to me—he did not even glance at Lord Attrill, who, on his part, took not the least notice of him.

A moment later I found myself alone with the old Earl.

"The scoundrel!" he cried, when the door had closed behind Carroll and the police officers. "I wonder you allow such a fellow to visit you Gilchrist—well, this is a nice state of affairs—the only thing left to me in life is the pleasure of seeing that fellow get the fate he deserves."

"He is innocent, Attrill," I said. "Before God, I am speaking the simple truth—

Carroll has no more committed murder than I have."

Lord Attrill favoured me with a queer smile.

"Well," he said, "I suppose you will stick to your opinion, although you must not expect me to share it. By the way, this fearful news has upset my poor child to a terrible degree. She begged of me to ask you to call and see her. Will you come with me now?"

"Of course I will," I replied.

I put on my hat, and Lord Attrill and I left the house. We took a hansom and drove direct to Portland Square.

All preparations for the wedding had been of course abandoned, and the big house presented a curious spectacle. Waiters and upholsterers were quickly taking down the wedding decorations and removing all traces of the coming festival. A door at the further end of the wide hall stood open, and Lord Attrill and I went straight in that direction when we entered the house. The next moment we found ourselves in the room where Lady Pamela's wedding presents were still on view. The table with the glass case stood in the centre of the room; a purple cushion lay inside the case—but the diamond was gone.

"Ah!" said Lord Attrill, noticing the direction of my eyes, "poor Mainwaring had a queer fad about that stone. He brought it here every morning, but insisted on taking charge of it himself at night. By the way, under existing circumstances, it will not be safe to leave it at the hotel. I had better go at once and fetch it."

He had scarcely said the words before a door at the farther end of the room was opened, and the Indian servant, Gopinath, glided in. His noiseless entrance might scarcely have been noticed by either of us, but the moment he saw us he made a queer sort of cry which seemed to come from some unknown depths, and rushing forward flung himself at our feet.

"'Sānp Kee Ankh' is stolen!" he gasped. "I have found the empty case."

He held up the morocco case in both hands.

Lord Attrill seized it.

"What do you mean?" he said. "Get up, fellow. What have you discovered?"

"The cobra's eye is gone," repeated the man. "I found the case empty, as you see it, under my master's pillow. I have brought it here. Mainwaring sahib must have been assassinated by the thief who stole the gem."

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Lord Attrill's excitement on hearing these tidings was extreme.

"This, indeed, gives a motive for the murder," he said. "Gilchrist, I must leave you. Gopinath, come with me at once."

The Earl and the Indian servant left the room together. The moment they did so I turned and rang the bell. A footman appeared.

"Have the goodness to tell Lady Pamela that I am here," I said. "Ask her if I can do anything for her."

The man withdrew silently. He came back after a very few moments.

"Lady Pamela wishes to see you at once, sir," he said—"will you follow me?"

He led me upstairs, and the next moment I found myself in a pretty boudoir, the rose-coloured blinds of which were down.

A girl in white glided eagerly forward—she stretched out both her hands, and grasped mine with frantic force.

"Do not begin to pity me," she said. "I feel no sorrow for Captain Mainwaring's fearful end. Oh, I know it is horrible of me, but I must tell you the truth—he loved me, and they say he has been murdered. As far as he is concerned I only feel stunned—you will hate me for it, I know, but all my sufferings are for Laurence Carroll."

"Sit down," I said to her. "This terrible event has upset you. Try to be more calm."

"How can I?" she said, in reply. "They have just told me that Laurence has been arrested on suspicion—they believe, too, in his guilt, I see it in their eyes—they think he murdered Captain Mainwaring. Oh, I cannot speak of my fear. A bottle of poison was found in Laurence's pocket. They tell me you know something about that."

"Unfortunately, I do."

"How did he get it? Had you anything to do with it?"

"I refused to tell your father when he asked me a similar question," I replied, "but you are different; if you will listen to me, I will tell you the simple truth."

I then related in as few words as possible the manner in which the dangerous acid had got into Carroll's possession.

"You think he took it because he meant to commit suicide?"

"That was his intention. Thank God, when the supreme moment came he had not sufficient strength to carry out his own desperate resolve."

"Are you going to attend the inquest?" asked Lady Pamela, after a pause.

"Yes."

"Are you likely to be asked about the poison?"

"I am certain to be questioned about it."

"You will not tell what you know?"

I looked at her in some surprise.

"I must not keep my knowledge back," I said. "Remember, I shall be under oath."

"That is the point to which I am coming," she replied, seeming to gather up all her strength for a supreme effort. "Even though you are under oath, I want you to promise me, to promise me faithfully, that you will keep your knowledge back."

"You want me to commit perjury?" I said. "You cannot know what you are talking about."

"Yes, I do know," she replied—here she flung herself on her knees at my feet—"what

"What do you mean?"

"I cannot help it," she gasped; "I fear the worst. He was desperate—the letter he wrote to me told me that. I ought never to have given him up—I never really loved Captain Mainwaring. Oh, anything might have happened under such terrible, terrible circumstances."

"You must listen to me quietly," I interrupted. "You did not speak to Carroll last night as I did—you did not see him this morning as I did, again. Had you done so, the fears which now haunt you would not have arisen. That he is a desperate and despairing man, I fully admit; but, Lady Pamela, he is not a murderer."

"You comfort me, in spite of myself," she sighed. The look of agony partly left her eyes. She wiped the moisture from her brow.

"I would not tell you this if I did not believe it," I said. "Now I must revert to something else. Do you know that the diamond is missing?"

"What!" she cried, "the Snake's Eye?"

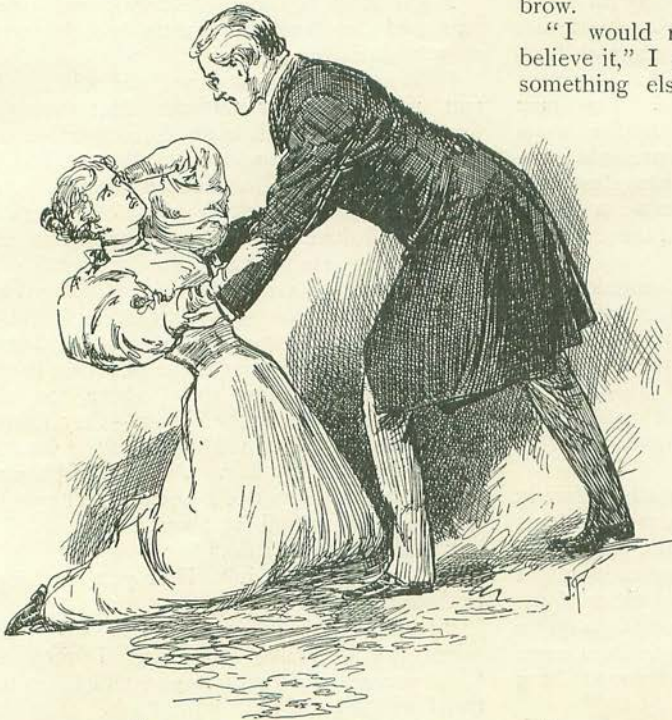
"Yes, it has been stolen. Gopinath has just come to the house with the news. Your father has gone away with him. That fact alone seems to me conclusively to prove Carroll's innocence. The person who stole the diamond was undoubtedly the one who committed the murder. Now, it was not money Carroll needed—the diamond would not, in such a moment of his life, have been of the slightest value to him."

Lady Pamela listened to me with flaming cheeks and bright eyes. The fact that the Snake's Eye was missing gave her the greatest consolation. I had to leave

her soon afterwards, but promised to return when I had any news to convey.

The inquest was held at an early hour the following morning. I was, of course, obliged to be present. The evidence against poor Carroll was overwhelming, and a verdict of wilful murder was returned by the coroner's jury.

Carroll was locked up to await his examination before the magistrate, and the Cross-thwaite family were all plunged into the



"HE WILL BE HANGED IF YOU SPEAK THE TRUTH."

does perjury matter? He will be hanged if you speak the truth."

"Get up," I said, taking her hand—I led her to a sofa which stood near.

"Promise to conceal your knowledge."

"Let me speak to you quietly, Lady Pamela; your fears run away with you. The way to do Carroll a real kindness is to clear him."

"But what if he cannot be cleared?"

deepest gloom. I called late in the evening to see Lady Pamela, but was told that she was seriously ill, that a doctor was in attendance, and that an affection of the brain was considered imminent.

I returned to my own house too restless and miserable to take any interest in those secrets of Nature which generally absorbed my closest attention. I was in my library, trying in vain to divert my thoughts, when Silva came to tell me that the Indian servant had called and wished to speak to me. I desired him to be admitted at once, and the man entered the room.

He came straight up to me and presented me with a letter from Lady Pamela. I opened it. It was a request that I would call to see her at an early hour the following morning.

"I am nearly mad with trouble and illness," she said. "An interview with you would give me the greatest comfort."

While I was reading the letter, Gopinath stood with folded arms a few feet away from me. I glanced up at him, and was immediately struck with the great change in his appearance. When last I had seen him, he had appeared to me as a strikingly handsome specimen of his race—thin and wiry, upright as a dart, with beautiful, supple limbs. Now his face was emaciated, his eyes had the expression of anguish which one sometimes notices in those of a suffering dog, his figure was bowed, and at intervals long, shuddering sighs escaped his lips.

"You are ill, Gopinath," I said, speaking abruptly.

"Sahib, I suffer," he replied. He pressed his hand, as he spoke, to his right side. "I suffer agony," he said again.

"Give me your hand," I said. I took it in mine. The pulse in the thin wrist was quick and wiry; the man's skin also burned; he was evidently very ill, and I thought he must have fallen a victim to some form of Oriental fever.

"When I breathe I suffer torture," he said; he spoke with a gasp. I motioned to him to take a chair, but instead of doing so he seated himself on the floor with his legs doubled up under him. "Can you relieve me?" he asked. "They tell me you understand the healing art."

"You had much better see a proper doctor," I said.

He shut his eyes and began to sway backwards and forwards.

"I don't want an English doctor," he said; "it is the cruel cold of your England that makes me suffer. I want to get back to my own country. I shall die if I stay much longer here."

He rubbed his hand over his right side. As he did so a sudden idea darted through my brain. His unaccountable grief, the complete change in his appearance, made a wild hope leap within me. No suspicion in connection with the murder had yet fallen on Gopinath. Suppose, after all, he knew more about it than anyone else? In my mind there was not the least shadow of doubt that the person who stole the diamond was the murderer. Suppose the temptation to appropriate so valuable a gem had proved too much for Gopinath?

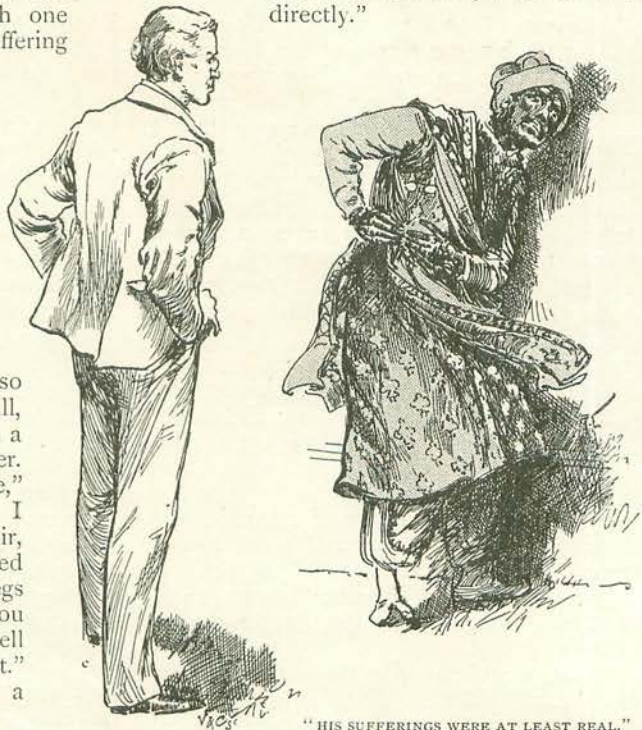
"Stand up," I said to him, suddenly. "You suffer pain there?" I pointed to his side.

"Torture," he replied. I saw that he could scarcely pull himself upright—his sufferings were at least real.

"I am going to find out what is the matter," I said.

"Can you cure me?" he asked, a faint return of hope coming into his eyes.

"I may be able to do so. Stay where you are for a moment; I will be back directly."



"HIS SUFFERINGS WERE AT LEAST REAL."

I left him and went into my laboratory.

The moment had come when I might really test the Röntgen rays. Was it possible that they might indeed be the means of discovering crime, and so save an innocent life? Crookes's vacuum tube was got into the right position—I saw that the rays worked well—then I returned to Gopinath.

"Come with me," I said.

He followed me into my laboratory without a word. I desired him to strip, and then after some difficulty arranged him in such a position that the rays should pass through his body. I turned off the light in the room—my electrical battery worked well, the rays played admirably in the vacuum tube. I removed the cap from the camera, and after an exposure of from seven to ten minutes, felt certain that I had taken a careful photograph.

"That will do," I said to the black man.

I led him back to my library.

"I have taken a photograph of you," I said to him, "which may show me the seat of your malady. When I have developed it, I will come back to you."

I returned to my dark room, and quickly developed the plate. When I had done so, and really saw what the mysterious X rays had produced, I could scarcely restrain a loud and joyful exclamation. The skeleton of the wiry Brahmin was distinctly visible, and just below the region of the ileo-caecal valve, a foreign substance about the size of the Snake's Eye was seen. I had not the least doubt, from its peculiar shape, that I was looking at the gold socket of the cobra's eye, the diamond itself being probably not impervious to the X rays. Men of Gopinath's nationality had swallowed precious stones before now. This was not the first time in the annals of history that the human body had been made a hiding-place for theft.

I returned to the sick man, told him that I had found out what was the matter with him, and might possibly give him relief before long. He was in such a state of agony that he scarcely listened to my words, and evidently suspected nothing.

I then left the house, and returned in a short time with Lord Attrill, and a very clever doctor of the name of Symes. I showed my photograph to both these gentlemen, and their astonishment was beyond all bounds.

"The wretched man is suffering from peritonitis," said the doctor, giving a careful glance at the well-marked obstruction revealed

in the photograph. "Of course, the first thing is to remove that substance, whatever it is—but I doubt if he can stand it. If that cannot be done almost immediately he will not recover."

"The most important matter of all is to wring a confession from him," said Lord Attrill.

"Well, come with me now, both of you," I said.

We went to my library, where Gopinath lay flat on the floor, groaning piteously.

"You are so ill," I said to the Indian, "that I could not possibly cure you without the aid of a good medical man. This is Dr. Symes. The first thing he must do is to remove the diamond which you have swallowed."

His dark eyes, glowing like jewels, were fixed on my face. It did not even occur to him to deny my accusation.

"Is there any hope that I shall recover?" he asked.

"None whatever, unless the diamond is removed. Now tell us by what means you murdered Captain Mainwaring."

"With a drug known only to my people; but I will not reveal that secret. I brought the poison all the way from India, and only waited my chance. On the night that I saw Mainwaring sahib talking to the young English sahib I thought the hour had come. I always meant to recover the stone. The Sānp Kēe Ankh was the eye of one of our gods, and his curse was on me unless I brought it back. I had furnished myself with a skeleton key of the sahib's room, and when I thought he was asleep I entered softly and poured the poison on his pillow. I knew well that it would kill him in a moment. I saw him breathe his last, and when he was quite dead I slipped the case from under his pillow and took the eye. I swallowed it as the best means to prevent it being discovered."

The wretched man tried to say something more, but fell back, writhing in pain.

Dr. Symes did all he could for him, but in vain; Gopinath died at an early hour the following morning. After death it was easy to remove the cobra's eye, and the case against Laurence Carroll naturally fell through.

Lady Pamela left England about a month ago, and is said to be slowly but surely recovering her health. Carroll is still in England. Whether these unhappy lovers will ever be united in the bonds of holy matrimony, time alone can prove.