

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.

VI.—THE PANELLED BEDROOM.



THE Perownes of Queen's Marvel belonged to one of the oldest families in Staffordshire. Their country seat was remarkable for all that renders family mansions attractive. Some parts of the house were centuries old. There was the tapestry-room, the picture-gallery, the hall with its splendid suits of mail-armor; the wide, white marble stairs; then, again, there was the old painted glass in the Gothic windows; the Henry IV. chapel, where prayers were still read morning after morning; and in addition, the many modern rooms with every available comfort. The house stood on a slight eminence, and commanded an extensive view of the neighbouring country. Acres and acres of broad lands surrounded the ancient mansion—there was the Queen Anne garden, with its trees cut in many grotesque shapes—there was the old paddock and the bowling alley, and in addition, of course, the modern gardens, with their smooth, rolling lawns, and their tennis courts.

At the time of my visit to Queen's Marvel, King Winter was in the height of his reign. I made one of a large Christmas party, and I found myself on my arrival surrounded by many old friends and acquaintances.

Edward Perowne, the present owner, was an imposing looking man of about sixty years of age. He had a fine face with aquiline features, a very upright carriage, and the courteous manner which belongs more or less to a bygone school. He came into the hall to greet his guests, accompanied by his pretty daughter-in-law, and a blooming girl whom he introduced to the assembled company as his grandchild.

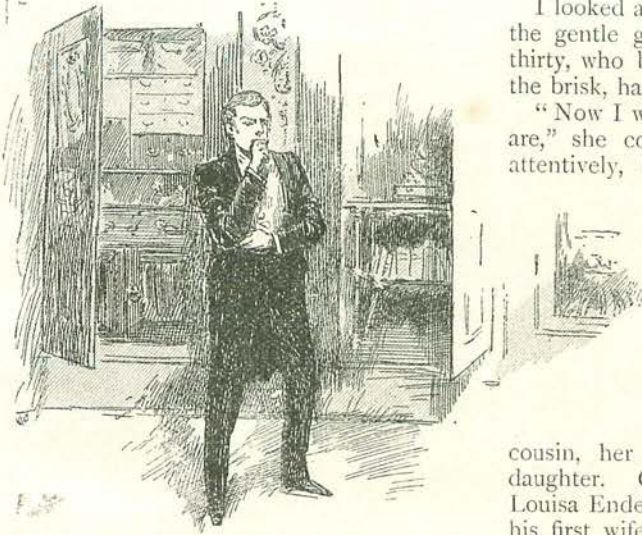
The weather, for the time of year, happened to be perfect—there was frost in the air and sunshine overhead. Tea was served in the hall, and afterwards we strolled about the grounds. It was somewhat late when I sought the apartment allotted to me, and I had only time to dress for dinner. My servant, Silva, had laid out my evening dress, and was waiting to help me to get into it. I told him that I should not require his services further, and he left the room.

As I dressed I noticed for the first time

the great beauty of the room which had been allotted to my use. It boasted of three doors, which at this moment stood slightly ajar—one opened on to the landing, one into a dressing-room and bath-room combined, and one into a small and beautifully furnished sitting-room. This room contained writing-table, easy lounge, many comfortable chairs, also cabinets full of curios, and a large bookcase filled from ceiling to floor with some of the best modern books. I entered the room, but finding I had no time to examine the books more particularly just now, returned to my bedroom, closing as I did so all three doors. When I did that, I gazed around me with momentary perplexity. I found myself in a very spacious bedroom, being nearly 30ft. in length; but what principally arrested my attention was a certain air of emptiness which struck me as strange. On examining the room more closely, I perceived that there was scarcely any furniture—the bed occupied an alcove in a distant corner; a large fire blazed cheerily in the opposite corner; there were a few chairs and one or two tables scattered about, nothing else—no wardrobe, no chest of drawers.

For a moment I felt even annoyed; then I began to examine the walls carefully—they were all made up of panels decorated in white and pale blue. Going near them I discovered in each what looked like a spring. I touched it: immediately the panel revolved on a pivot, and revealed furniture of different kinds within. Behind one was a very deep wardrobe, capable of holding a lady's voluminous dresses. I went to the next panel and touched the spring, and immediately a complete set of drawers of every size and description were revealed to me. Another, when pressed, showed a little table; another, a wardrobe of different construction. In fact, each panel all round the room was really hollow and held furniture of every sort and description, all by this strange means pushed out of sight except when required for use.

But the most remarkable fact about the room was that the three doors which I have already mentioned were also in panels, and when shut absolutely disappeared. The effect was strange, grotesque, and I felt that



"EACH PANEL HELD FURNITURE."

under certain conditions it might even be ghastly. Standing now in the middle of the room, I was, to all appearance, in a room without any door. I smiled to myself at the pleasant deception, and, as the gong sounded at that moment, prepared to make my exit. To do this I had to overcome a certain difficulty. Familiar as I seemed with the room, I could not for a moment find the right door. I went to one panel after another, each exactly alike, looking in vain for any handle. No handle was to be seen, but I presently saw a button in a certain panel at one end of the room. I pressed it, and a door immediately opened. I found myself then in my prettily furnished sitting-room, which, like the bedroom, was brilliantly lighted from above with electricity. I went through it, and, going downstairs, joined the rest of the guests.

We sat down, between thirty-five and forty, to dinner, and I found myself near the pretty girl who was my host's grand-daughter. Her name was Constance Prowne, she was nearly seventeen years of age, and was as gay and bright and happy looking as the heart of man could desire. She chatted volubly to me, and immediately volunteered to tell me who the different guests were.

"I always spend my holidays at Queen's Marvel," she began; "there is no place in all the world like it. You know," she added, dropping her voice to a low tone, "my father is dead, so mother lives altogether here with grandfather. That is mother sitting opposite: is she not pretty?"

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I looked across the table, and encountered the gentle gaze of a lady of about five-and-thirty, who bore but a slight resemblance to the brisk, handsome girl by my side.

"Now I will tell you who the other people are," she continued. "Please listen very attentively, for I am going to begin right away. And first of all I will commence with those in whom I am myself most interested. Do you see that lady at the further end of the table?—she is nearly as old as mother—she is in black velvet, with a diamond star in her hair. Her name is Louisa Enderby. She is my

cousin, her mother is grandfather's only daughter. Grandfather married twice, and Louisa Enderby's mother is his daughter by his first wife. My father was dear grannie's only child. Louisa has spent the greater part of her life abroad. She knows Italy, and Spain, and Corsica, and India—she has also been in Ceylon and Japan, and I believe even China. She is quite a wonderful woman, and, first and greatest of all, the most amazing mesmerist you ever came across."

I glanced in the direction of the lady, and saw a heavily built woman with thick, dark eyebrows, eyes somewhat closely set, with an unpleasant habit of looking up from under the heavy brows; a swarthy complexion, and full, red lips—her chin was cleft in the middle, and there was a good deal of obstinacy about the lower part of her face. Miss Enderby was undoubtedly a plain woman, and yet when her eyes met mine I felt a curious thrill, not exactly of sympathy, certainly not of admiration, but of a sensation which might have been a mixture of both. I could not account for it. I only knew that I was intensely interested in the lady, and would like to hear more about her.

When I entered the drawing-room after dinner, a young girl was seated in an easy chair, and Miss Enderby was standing close to her. To my surprise, and even annoyance, I saw that the victim was no other than the happy, bright girl, Constance Prowne. Obeying the orders of the mesmerist, she was now gazing fixedly at her. Miss Enderby looked quiet and very resolved—her eyes were dark with excitement, and two burning spots glowed on her cheeks.

"Remember, I have no wish to make this experiment," she said, turning and speaking to the rest of us with a curious light coming into her deep, queer eyes; "but I have

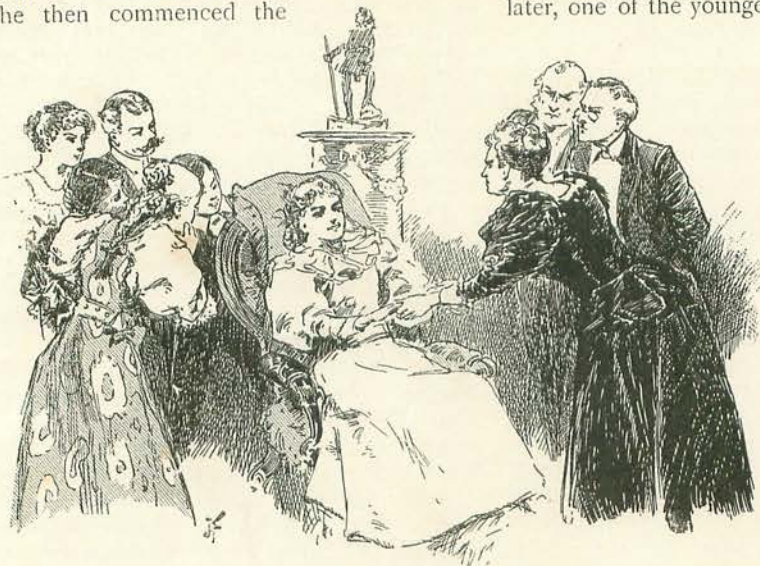
yielded to the persuasions of my many young friends. While I make the necessary passes I must ask everyone to remain as quiet as possible; the slightest noise will distract the attention of the subject of my experiments. Now, then, Constance, you must endeavour to fix your thoughts fully upon me; do not allow them to dwell on outside objects; look me full in the eyes—I will make the passes, and you will doubtless soon fall asleep."

"Oh, dear, it does seem horrible. How can you submit, Connie?" cried a merry girl who stood a few paces away.

Constance laughed.

"I long for the experience," she cried; "it promises to be quite delightful. Now, please, Louisa, begin—I am to fix my eyes on your face—well, I am doing so."

Miss Enderby bent towards her and took hold of both of her hands; she then commenced the



"MISS ENDERBY TOOK HOLD OF BOTH OF HER HANDS."

usual passes which are supposed after a time to produce hypnotic sleep. I soon perceived that Miss Perowne was not going to be an easy subject—she fidgeted in her chair, her bright eyes glanced away from those of the mesmerist—the passes were made gently and without intermission, and gradually they began to take effect. The young girl's eyes were now steadily fixed on the hypnotist, who gazed back with intensity and firmness. After a time Constance began to complain of a tingling and pricking sensation in her skin—soon afterwards I noticed that her eyelids began to twitch, then to

droop, then they slowly closed—she uttered a deep sigh, and Miss Enderby, removing her gaze, announced to us all that Constance was in a mesmeric sleep. The rest of the visitors now crowded round her and began to ask questions through the mesmerizer. What followed was really too absurd to be quoted. Constance answered each remark, however silly.

In some surprise Perowne came up and gazed at her—he shook his white head, and turned to me.

"This is humbug," he said. "Connie is pretending—I shall give her a fine talking to to-morrow. Come into my study, won't you, Gilchrist? I really cannot stand this sort of child's play any longer." He nodded to one or two of his guests, and abruptly left the room.

He and I were looking over some valuable photographs in his study when, half an hour later, one of the younger girls rushed in, with a very pale face.

"Is Mr. Gilchrist here?" she cried.

"Yes," I answered; "what is the matter?"

"Please come into the drawing-room—someone says you know about mesmerism. We cannot wake Connie, we have all tried; but she is in such a queer state, crying and moaning. I think Miss Enderby is really frightened."

"This comes of outsiders meddling with what they

know nothing about," I said, rising and speaking with some annoyance.

"Why, what can be the matter?" said Mr. Perowne. "You surely do not take this seriously?"

"Yes, I do," I answered. "Mesmerism is a real power. Miss Enderby has doubtless got the gift to a certain extent. She put your grand-daughter into a real mesmeric sleep, but now, finding she cannot immediately rouse the sleeper, she has in all probability become agitated and nervous. Her state of mind is communicated by sympathy to the patient. If you will allow me, Mr. Perowne,

I will go immediately to the drawing-room."

"But do you understand this thing yourself?"

"Yes; I have studied mesmerism with some care."

"You believe in it?"

"Fully—but pray do not keep me now."

I hurried back to the drawing-room, followed by Mr. Perowne and the girl who had brought us the message. We found Constance still lying back in the chair in which she had been mesmerized. Her face, which had been serene and even beatific when I last saw it, was now full of suffering, and I thought it highly probable that if any more attempts were made to rouse her by Miss Enderby, she might be seized with spasms or even convulsions. The mesmerist, with a scarlet face and agitated and highly nervous manner, was grasping the poor girl's hands, speaking in her ear, and trying to drag her from her chair.

"Let her alone," I said, "do not touch her, please. When you become calm again you must reverse the passes, but this can only be done when you are quiet and cool."

Miss Enderby started back and stared at me attentively—her face went white to her lips. I noticed that she began to tremble. I had no time then to attend to her, however; all my sympathies were centred round Miss Perowne.

"Mischief will ensue if this young lady is agitated or worried any more," I said; "counter-influences can only do her serious harm. Let her have her sleep out, even if it lasts for a couple of hours; it cannot do her the slightest injury."

I spoke with a voice of authority, and after a time saw that I was making an impression on the agitated company. I lifted Miss Perowne very gently to a neighbouring sofa, and then sitting down near her motioned to everyone else to leave that part of the drawing-room.

They did so—the expression of suffering left the young girl's pretty face, and she slept on calmly. Miss Enderby stood near, watching her victim for a time, then she turned abruptly on her heel. A moment later I saw that she had left the room, but as she was in no condition to make the reverse passes, and as I thought it extremely unlikely that Miss Perowne would sleep for more than two hours, I did not interfere with her departure.

My prognostications turned out to be correct: between eleven and twelve Miss Perowne awoke quite naturally, looked around her, smiled, and asked where she was.

I took her hand and spoke to her gently.

"You are in the drawing-room," I said; "you need not be frightened—you have been subjected to an experiment. Miss Enderby put you to sleep."

"Then I have been mesmerized at last?" said Constance, springing to her feet.

"Yes, but think no more about it. Go to bed and dream of your Christmas pleasures."

"Is Louisa in the room?" she asked, a deep flush coming into each of her cheeks.

"No, you will see her in the morning."

"Go to bed at once, Constance," said her mother, now coming forward and taking both the girl's hands in one of hers. "Go, darling; you look quite excited."

"But, mother, there is nothing the matter with me. I have just had a lovely sleep, and am not in the least tired."

"Very well, but all the same, go to bed now. Good-night, my dear girl."

The pretty girl kissed her mother affectionately, held out one of her hands to me, and presently left the room. I took the opportunity to express my opinion to Mrs. Perowne that her daughter was a very unfit subject for such dangerous experiments.

I went upstairs and once more glanced round my apartment. As far as appearances went, I was in a room without any means of exit—each panel looked exactly like its fellow. There was no outward evidence of the big, hanging wardrobe, the capacious chest of drawers, the ordinary furniture of a bedroom. All the tables, with the exception of a small one near the bed, had disappeared—several of the chairs had also been put out of sight—the three modes of entrance were as if they did not exist. I could not but be conscious of a certain sense of puzzlement, which might, in a nervous person, even arise to a feeling of discomfort. I sat for a little longer by the fire thinking of Miss Perowne, and of Miss Enderby's remarkable face—then, feeling tired, I undressed and got into bed.

I must have awakened suddenly some hours later, for the fire was out and the chamber was in complete darkness. I found myself broad awake and listening intently. There was not a stir, not a sound in the silent room, but a sense of intense discomfort pervaded every atom of my frame. I could not account for my feelings, for I am by no means given to nerves in the ordinary sense of the word. I do not even know that I was nervous at that moment—I only felt intensely restless. Presently an irresistible impulse to rise came over me. I must yield to it—I stretched out my hand, felt along the wall, and turned on the electric light. In the

brightness which immediately ensued the peculiar emptiness of the room once again struck me with a sense of oppression. I lay still for a moment longer, struggling with the inclination to rise—at last it became irresistible; I got up and put on my dressing-gown. When I had done so I felt inclined to laugh at myself—my real wish was to return to bed, but a counter-wish which I had never experienced before impelled me to walk to the opposite end of the room. The three modes of exit so artfully concealed in panels were all, I knew, situated in that direction. In the bright light I could distinctly see the small buttons which when pressed silently opened the panel doors. I approached the centre one, pressed the button, the door revolved noiselessly back, and I perceived that I was on the threshold of the little sitting-room which I have before mentioned. To my astonishment it was bright with electric light, and standing by the mantelpiece I encountered the figure and somewhat arrogant gaze of Miss Enderby.

What did she want with me? How had she got into my private sitting-room in the dead of night? My momentary surprise gave place to indignation.

"What are you doing here?" I asked.

"I have come to speak to you, Mr. Gilchrist," she replied; "I have something to say to you. It will not occupy much of your time."

"Pray be seated," I said; "but permit me to observe that this visit is most extraordinary."

"Not more so than my motive," was the calm reply. "A glance revealed to me this evening that you and I are *en rapport*, as we say in our phraseology. You can influence me, and I can influence you. We are both hypnotists, although you at the present moment are not fully aware of the magnitude of your own gift. I am anxious to pursue a certain course of action which you can, if you will, baulk me in. I

wish you to understand that you do so at your peril."

"What do you mean?" I asked.

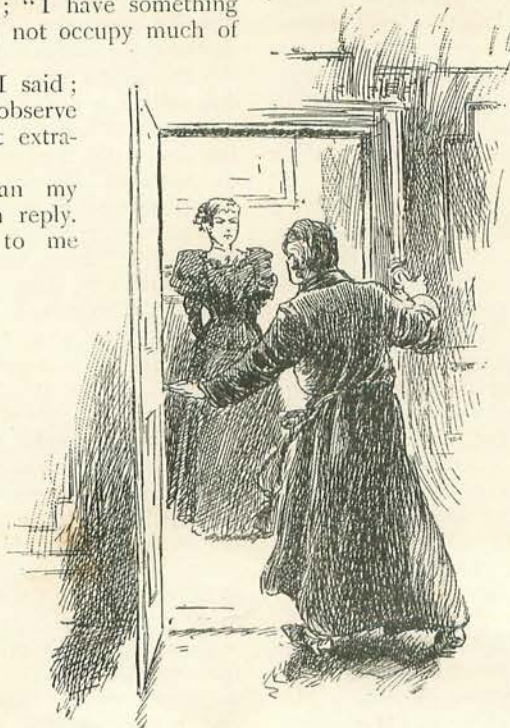
"To-night, after I left the room, you used your counter-influence with Mrs. Perowne to withdraw Constance from my society. Now, my intention is to see much of Constance—I wish to get her into my power—I mesmerized her to-night for the first time; I intend to mesmerize her again. But for the sudden and complete failure of nerve, which, alas! I am subject to at the most crucial moment of my life, you would not have appeared again on the scene. As it is, I am forced to betray to you what I would far rather conceal. I am a hypnotist up to a certain point—beyond that point I find my powers desert me. Now, you are a hypnotist of a much higher order—in fact, without knowing it yourself, you are a 'clairvoyant.' You can help me if you will—you can oppose me if you choose. I want you to promise not to oppose me—it is for that reason I have visited you to-night."

Having spoken in this strange way, she drew herself up, and gazed fixedly at me. I was also standing, and I looked fully back at her. Her face was full of light, her eyes were extraordinary—she was a very plain woman, but she had undoubtedly the queer gift of an almost unfathomable fascination.

"You promise?" she said, when I was silent.

"I do not know what you mean," I said; "but I may as well say at once that I distinctly disapprove of your influencing Miss Perowne. I do not think it right that young and healthy girls should be subjected to the hypnotic trance. I shall use what counter-influence I possess against you, if that is your intention—it is only fair that you should know that."

"You do it at your peril," she



"I ENCOUNTERED THE GAZE OF MISS ENDERBY."

answered; "but you will doubtless think better of this presently. I will visit you again to-morrow night; expect me."

She glided towards the door, opened it, and went out. I returned to my bed.

At breakfast, on the following morning, I observed that all the other guests were present with the exception of Miss Enderby. It occurred to me to wonder if she had become ashamed of her nightly visit, and did not wish to meet me at breakfast. I was seated near the elder Mrs. Perowne, and I turned to her with a question.

"I notice that Miss Enderby is absent," I said; "I hope there is nothing the matter with her?"

"Miss Enderby?" answered the old lady. "Oh, she never sleeps here. She and her mother occupy a house on the south side of the Park. Louisa went away almost immediately after Constance became better last night—she was out of the house long before eleven o'clock."

"Then how did she get back again?" was my mental comment. "How had she managed to visit me in my sitting-room?"

Absorbed in these thoughts, I scarcely replied to Mrs. Perowne, who must have wondered at my abstracted manner. Soon after breakfast we made up a riding party and went out for a long excursion. I found myself riding near Miss Perowne, who was mounted on a spirited horse and looked lovely in her habit. Her eyes were bright, her complexion clear; all evidence of the emotion which had been aroused last night had now completely left her blooming face. She expressed pleasure at finding herself in my company, and amused and entertained me with her girlish conversation.

"Do you know," she said, "that mother made me give her quite a solemn promise this morning?"

"What about?" I asked.

"That I would not allow Louisa to mesmerize me again."

"I am glad you have made Mrs. Perowne that promise; and now, shall we talk of something else?"

"Willingly," replied Constance. "How lovely the day is! Let us gallop across that stretch of turf."

I assented—she whipped up her horse, and we very soon distanced the other riders to a considerable extent. We halted presently for breath by the roadside, and Constance pushed the tumbled hair out of her eyes.

"I cannot help feeling sorry I made that promise to mother," she began, slightly panting as she spoke. "It has been quite an old wish of mine that Louisa should mesmerize or hypnotize me. Mother says that Louisa was always a very queer child, not a bit like any of us, and when she was quite young she was sent abroad to be educated. She came home when she was nearly grown up, just before the—the dreadful tragedy of grandfather's life occurred."

"What was that?" I asked, looking at the lovely face of the young girl.

"It was about my father, Mr. Gilchrist. He was my grandfather's only son. He married when he was very young, only twenty-one, and he died before"—here her voice slightly faltered—"months before I was born. Mother sometimes speaks of him, but not very often. I will show you his photograph if you will come to my private sitting-room some day. I love his photograph—and sometimes I feel that he is near me. Dear father, everyone loved him so much, and he met his death in such a dreadfully tragic manner. He was drowned while fishing about two miles away from Queen's Marvel. He fell into Lock-Overpool. Mother nearly lost her reason at the time; and as to grandfather, he shut himself up and would not see anyone for years and years—it is only lately that he has at all got over it. You see, he had no other child except Aunt Kate, and for some reason she was never a special favourite of his."

"Then who inherits Queen's Marvel?" I asked.

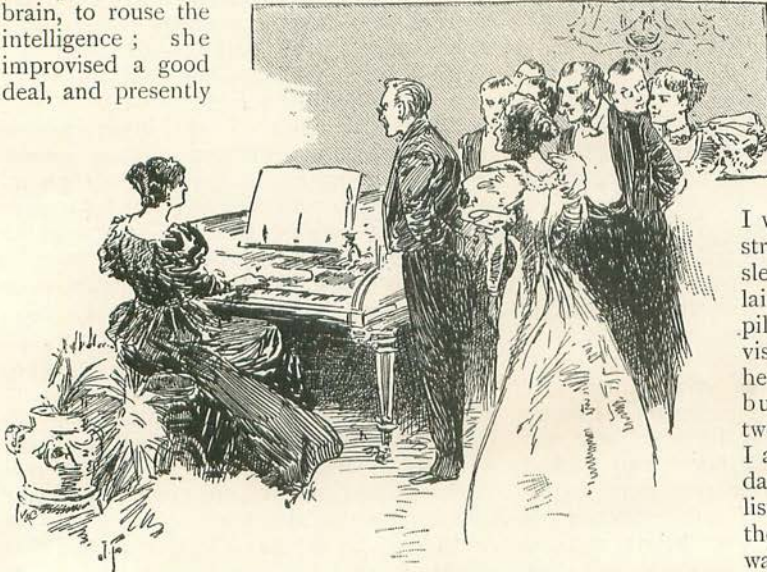
Constance turned her gentle eyes full upon my face.

"At some very far distant date I do," she answered. "It is a great inheritance for such a little person as I am, and I would much, much rather have nothing to do with it, but grandfather says I must take my responsibilities; and he is going to have me carefully trained—he wants me to be a good business woman and to understand all about the estate; but, Mr. Gilchrist, we are spending too much time chatting; we ought to turn our horses' heads homeward now."

Some fresh guests had arrived during our absence, and the evening which followed was all that was gay and entertaining. Miss Enderby, dressed again in her black velvet, with the one diamond star in her dark hair, was, notwithstanding her plainness and peculiar physiognomy, the life and soul of the party. She had a somewhat deep voice, with penetrating notes in it—whenever she

spoke people turned to look at her or to listen to her sentence. She seemed scarcely to trouble herself to entertain, and yet she entertained without effort—her stories were gay, forcible, and to the point—she led the conversation when it languished, and when it grew bright and witty, sustained it at that level.

In the drawing-room she gave us some music—I asked her if she could sing, but she said she had not a note in her voice. Her music, however, like herself, was arresting and convincing—it seemed immediately to penetrate beneath the surface, to stay the thoughts, to quicken the brain, to rouse the intelligence; she improvised a good deal, and presently



"HER MUSIC WAS ARRESTING AND CONVINCING."

a number of the guests clustered round the grand piano to listen to her. From grave to gay she wandered—from the solemn to the trivial, from the deep and the passionate to the light and airy. I found myself involuntarily approaching nearer and nearer to her side. Suddenly she stopped in the middle of a sonata, raised her full greenish eyes to my face, smiled somewhat vaguely, and rose from her seat.

"Go on, go on," said several of the guests.

"No, enough; I am not in the humour," she answered. She glided away, and I presently saw her leaving the room.

By-and-by it was time for us all to retire to our respective rooms. I went to mine, poked up the fire, flung myself into an easy chair, and gave myself up to thinking of Louisa Enderby. She was a very plain woman—she was not even specially young,

and yet no attractive girl had ever a stronger power of arresting the imagination, of touching—was it the heart, or some other more bewildering, more intangible force? Once again I recalled her visit of the previous night—it was strange, incomprehensible. Her manner of to-day, too, was absolutely baffling—during the whole evening she had never favoured me with special attention, but neither had she made the slightest attempt to avoid me.

As she rose suddenly from that music which was haunting my ears even now, she had, it is true, given me one glance, a glance which set my pulses beating, but which in itself only puzzled and disturbed. I sprang suddenly from my chair; I resolved to think of Miss Enderby no more.

I was tired; I would go straight to bed, and to sleep. I had scarcely laid my head on my pillow before slumber visited me—slumber healthy and dreamless; but once again, as twenty-four hours before, I awoke in solitude and darkness to find myself listening intently. In the first moment of waking, I forgot where I was; Miss Enderby's very existence was

blotted from my brain; then memory rushed over me. I recalled what had happened the night before; a sensation, not of nervousness, but a sort of peculiar and very real horror, visited me. I remembered Miss Enderby's promise to come to see me again on this night. Would she keep it? No; ridiculous, impossible! She did not sleep in the house. If she had managed by some underhand means to creep back to Queen's Marvel on the previous night, she surely could not perform this feat twice undiscovered.

I resolved once again to banish her from my mind, and turning on my pillow tried to resume my interrupted nap. This I found impossible. The same queer sense of restlessness which had overpowered me on the previous evening occurred again. I had almost a sensation as if I were struggling with someone who wanted to pull

me from my pillow. Unable to resist the queer and overpowering desire to rise, I sat up in bed, felt along the wall until my hand came in contact with the electrical communication, and turning the handle I once more filled the room with brightness. The chamber looked queer and empty as it had done on the previous night. Its emptiness now began to impress me disagreeably. I almost wished that it had been my fate to be put into an ordinary bedroom. I began to recollect old stories which had troubled me in my long-ago boyhood—stories of rooms with collapsing walls, of rooms with traps of different kinds, all set for the destruction of unwary travellers.

I remembered one tale in particular of a certain hotel in France, where the top of the bed came down upon the visitor and crushed him to atoms. With an effort I shook myself out of this unpleasant memory. I was not staying at an hotel. On the contrary, I was in the modern wing of a happy English home. No more luxurious chamber could be found in the length and breadth of the land. It was queer that I should be the victim of, not nerves, but a state of horror which I could not in the least account for or understand. I looked again in the direction of the three doors: they were invisible. It occurred to me as quite possible that these doors, which could only be opened by touching a spring, might be easily locked in the same way, and that the miserable inmate of this room might find no door out of which to make his exit. I should, of course, laugh at these forebodings when daylight arrived, but they now impressed me disagreeably, and I sat up in bed with my heart beating hard.

"Ridiculous," I said to myself. "I will not be forced out of my bed to-night."

I was about to turn off the electric light, when once again, and more powerfully than before, the desire to rise overwhelmed me. I could not resist it. It was as impossible for me now to lie in bed as if I had been a child trying to resist the mandates of a stern parent. I rose as I had

done on the previous night, and put on a warm dressing-gown which stood near. When I had done so I laughed aloud in a hollow manner.

"This is too absurd," I murmured. "I shall just get straight back to bed, and take a good dose of quinine in the morning—the fact is, I cannot be well." I approached the bed, but a power which I could not withstand kept me from getting into it, and now a queer sensation visited me. I no longer felt the least desire to oppose the influence which was undoubtedly exercising its sway over all my actions. I walked hurriedly across the room, pressed the button of the centre door, opened it as I had done on the previous night, stood again on the threshold of the little sitting-room, and once more encountered the fixed and intent gaze of Louisa Enderby. She was standing then, as she had done the night before on the hearth—she wore her black velvet dress and the diamond star glittered in her hair. When she saw me a ghost of a smile flitted across her face, then it vanished. I noticed that her features were drawn, as if in mental agony—her queer, greenish eyes burned with a curious light.

"Well," I cried, "this is most extraordinary. Will you please explain how you have got into the house?"

"That does not concern you, Mr. Gilchrist," she replied. "I said I should visit you again—I have kept my word. We hypnotists never break our engagements. Will you please sit down?—I have something to say to you."

I found myself impelled to sit.

"You perceive," she said, with a playful and yet intensely disagreeable smile, "that against your will you are more or less under my power. I have come here, no matter how. Suffice it to you that I am in this

house. You were in a calm and peaceful slumber when the near vicinity of my presence made itself felt to you. You awoke; you felt restless and uncomfortable. I willed you to come to me in this room. You



"I SAT UP IN BED WITH MY HEART BEATING HARD."

struggled against my will. In the end I conquered, as I knew I should. You are here—I will you now to listen to me quietly.”

“Say what you have to say, and be quick about it,” I answered.

“I warned you last night that you would do no good to yourself by interfering with me. Against my will you used your influence to-day to put Constance against me. Why did you do so?”

“Because I consider the hypnotic influence bad for any healthy young girl,” I answered.

“Indeed. Then, notwithstanding your undoubted power as a mesmerist, you do not thoroughly understand the curative influence of the gift which you possess.”

“That is neither here nor there,” I answered, impatiently. “Miss Perowne is quite well. My motto always is to let well alone.”

Miss Enderby continued to gaze at me fixedly. The haggard look deepened on her face.

“You are doubtless aware of the value of the young life which you seek to protect.”

“I fail to understand you,” I answered.

“Folly!” she interrupted; “you must know what I mean. Constance as the only child of her father inherits Queen’s Marvel.”

I nodded to this self-evident fact, but did not speak.

“And I,” she continued, “as the only child of my mother, inherit nothing beyond a miserable pittance, and even that is not mine while my mother lives.”

I did not reply—she continued to fix me with her eyes.

“In order to influence you,” she said, “I see I must tell you my story. I will do so as briefly as possible. My father died when I was four years old—he died in a lunatic asylum, where I shall doubtless follow him some day, but not yet, if I can help it. After his death I lived for a time in this house with my mother, but at seven years old I was sent to France to be educated. I was never like other children—I was always moody and peculiar—from my earliest days I was filled with a strange bitterness of spirit—I rebelled against the fate which had given me existence. I received an extraordinary education—just the worst sort for a nature like mine. The lady who had charge of me had dipped from her earliest years into the strange science which we call mesmerism. She quickly discovered that I was a medium, that I had extraordinary occult powers—she encouraged them. she trained me—I became, after a year

or two of her manipulations, a very valuable clairvoyant. When still quite young, she took me with her to India, and we both studied mesmerism amongst the Hindus. Shortly after completing my eighteenth year, I came back again to England; my friend had died—my mother was anxious that I should live with her, and I came to her to the house which she now inhabits. My uncle, my mother’s step-brother, the heir to this vast property, had just been married. I hated him for living at all; but for him I should have been the heiress of Queen’s Marvel. I longed for the place with an avarice, with a passion, which you who are born to wealth can scarcely comprehend. I smothered my sensations, however, and tried to make myself agreeable to the family. I was never beautiful, but I had the power of fascination. In particular, I fascinated my uncle; he was young, only a few years my senior; he was handsome, fully endowed with all that can render life delightful. He had exactly what I had not—a perfect temper, a sweet and generous spirit. I hated him for those gifts as much as I hated him for his wealth.

“Perhaps you have already heard that my Uncle Gerald died when out fishing—he was found drowned in Lock-Overpool, which is part of our river about two miles from here. His fishing-rod was floating on the water, he had a blow on his head, and it was supposed that he had fallen from the rock into the deep part of the pool; and as he had his waders on, he, of course, sank immediately. That was the story credited by the country, and a verdict of ‘Found drowned’ was returned by the coroner. Now, I will tell you how he really came by his death.”

I had been sitting, as she had desired me, up to that moment. Now I rose. The light in her eyes, the queer sort of terror on her face, absolutely startled me. She suddenly crouched slightly downwards, became rigid for a moment, as if she were going to have a cataleptic fit—but then, making a great effort, straightened herself once more.

“Why do you drag my soul from me?” she said.

“I ask for no confidences,” I replied, but as I said the words I found myself looking firmly into her eyes. “All the same,” I continued, “I know you will give them to me.”

“Yes,” she panted, “I cannot help myself. The truth for the first time passes my lips.”

She now stood stock-still, her eyes were

fixed on me as firmly as if she were in a trance, her words came out rapidly.

"The uncle whom I hated, who stood between me and this great property, *did not meet his death by accident!* I was fond of accompanying him on his fishing expeditions. Although no one knew it, I went with him on that special day. He waded into deep water, and I sat on the bank and watched him. He was not far from the pool. I had always had a horror of Lock-Overpool; its depths, its blackness—for it lay partly under a deep, overhanging cave—had always fascinated me. I found myself now gazing into its gloomy depths—as I did so, that demon which seemed to have got into me at my birth suddenly rose and took mastery of me.

"'Uncle Gerald,' I cried, 'will you do me a favour?'

"'What is that?'" he asked.

"'I have a fancy for that green fern which grows right in the depths of the rock above Lock-Overpool: will you get it for me?'

"'With pleasure,' he replied—he admired me, he generally had the power to draw out what little good I possessed. He returned to the shore, and without removing his waders went carefully along the ledge of rock which jutted considerably out over the pool—his gaff lay on the bank—his back was to me—I followed him cautiously—madness was doubtless in my soul—I struck him a heavy blow with the iron instrument on the back of his head—he fell as if he were shot, bounded against a rock, and sank like a stone to the bottom of the pool. With his waders on I knew he had no chance of rising. The moment I had done the deed I repented; I

threw his fishing-rod on the water, and rushed home, mad with fright and terror. No one had seen me leave the house, and no one had seen me return; not the faintest ghost of suspicion was ever attached to my name; but from that moment my life has been a torment. Now you know all. I did the evil deed for the sake of the property, but in the end Fate has conquered, for my uncle's widow, unknown to me, was about to give birth to a child. Three months after my uncle's death Constance was born; she is in the direct succession, and inherits the bulk of the property. By-and-by she will marry and her husband will take her name. Now, Mr. Gilchrist, I mean to get Constance under my influence; I do not wish to commit murder a second time, but I must have Constance Perowne as my tool. If you dare to defy me you will suffer."

She stopped speaking suddenly, flung her arms down to her side, and stared straight past me towards the other side of the room.

"I want you to go away," she said, after a long pause. Her voice had altered, it had become feeble and faint. "You trouble me; I am *en rapport* with you, you are in close sympathy with me; you can even read my thoughts. I came here to-night because I could not help it; I have told you this because I could not help it. Now, will you go—will you leave me alone?"

She suddenly fell on her knees; she approached nearer and crouched at my feet.

"Get up," I said; "you do not know what you are saying—there is the door; you must leave me now."

"Not until you have promised," she said.

"I will not promise."

"Then you are in peril. At least let me advise you to sleep in another room. Farewell." She walked slowly through the open doorway, closed the door after her, and vanished.



"HE FELL AS IF HE WERE SHOT."

I did not go to bed again that night. Overpowered by the emotions which Miss Enderby's terrible tale had aroused, I paced up and down my chamber. When the first dawn began to break I dressed myself and went out. The day just beginning was Christmas Eve.

Against my will my steps wandered in the direction of Miss Enderby's house. I did not want to go to her, and yet I was impelled to do so. Suddenly I saw her turning a corner and coming to meet me—she was dressed in a neat costume, and looked both fresh and calm. She came up and wished me "Good-morning" in a pleasant, everyday voice.

I stared hard at her; she met my gaze without flinching; her face was as indifferent as it had been on the previous night.

"You are out early," she remarked. "At this time of year there is nothing to tempt one abroad before breakfast."

"I came to meet you," I answered.

"Indeed!" she replied, raising her brows in well-acted astonishment; "then perhaps you will turn, for I am coming to breakfast at Queen's Marvel."

Her coolness half maddened me. As we slowly returned to the house I resolved to put her to the test.

"You wonder why I am out so early," I said. "I will tell you. I have had a restless night; after such a night as I have just gone through one often feels the better for a walk."

"I am sorry you slept badly," she replied, and now I noticed, or thought I noticed, a light awakening in her eyes; "but I forgot," she added; "your restlessness can doubtless be accounted for—you sleep in the panelled room."

"Yes—it is a luxurious apartment."

"Very," she replied, and the ghost of a smile played round her lips.

"The panelled room is provided with every comfort," I continued, "and not the least of its charms is the sitting-room, with the cabinets and curios which belong to it. The sitting-room is a good place for a rendezvous."

"An excellent place," she replied. "Mr. Gilchrist, we must hurry unless we wish to be late for breakfast."

"There is plenty of time," I answered, and now I stood perfectly still and compelled her to face me.

"I want to ask you a question, Miss Enderby," I said. "Why did you twice visit me in the dead of the night in the sitting-

room which is connected with the panelled bedroom?"

"I never visited you," she cried. "What in the world do you mean?"

"You must be mad, or you are acting a part," I replied. "You know you came to see me last night, and the night before, in the sitting-room adjoining the panelled bedroom."

"No," she answered; "it is you who are mad. I do not even sleep in the house," but now her face turned ghastly, she panted, and, suddenly losing her self-control, grasped both my hands. "Tell me what you mean," she cried.

"I will," I answered. "On the first night of my arrival you compelled me to get up; you compelled me to go to my sitting-room; you were there waiting for me; again last night you visited me, and on that occasion you told me——"

"My God! what?" she asked, in a low voice, which was almost like a hiss, "what did I say?"

"You told me the secret of Lock-Overpool."

When I said these words, she gave a cry like that of a hunted animal—she turned away from me and covered her face with both her hands.

"I feared this," she gasped, after a moment. "Something told me that you were exercising an awful power over me. Mr. Gilchrist, why do you mesmerize me? Why do you force me to come to you? Why do you drag that, that—oh, I must say no more; you have frightened me. I wish you would leave Queen's Marvel. What can I do to make you go?"

"Nothing at present," I answered, with coolness. "You have imparted to me a very ghastly secret. I am not prepared to say yet what I shall do about it."

With a mighty effort she recovered herself, the fear left her eyes—she stood up once more quite cool and composed, and faced me.

"You had a bad dream," she said. "You had a bad dream, nothing more."

We were interrupted at that moment by the hearty voice of Mr. Perowne himself.

"Halloa! there you are," he cried.

Miss Enderby ran forward to meet him. She looked quite composed—there was a smile round her lips, and pleasant words came from her mouth.

"I am coming to breakfast with you this morning, grandfather," she said.

He gave her a friendly nod, then turned to me, and we three returned to the house.



"SHE GAVE A CRY LIKE THAT OF A HUNTED ANIMAL."

From that moment Miss Enderby avoided me. As far as I could tell, her eyes never once encountered mine. That night, too, I had no mysterious and restless desires as I slept in the panelled room. I was not compelled to leave my bed. Miss Enderby did not again intrude upon the hours devoted to slumber. The story she had told me, however, did not lessen its influence on my mind.

I felt puzzled how to act with regard to it—it was either true, and Miss Enderby was a murderer, a most dangerous person to have abroad; or she was mad. I resolved as soon as possible to get some particulars with regard to the death of Constance Perowne's father. Whether Miss Enderby's tale told to me in so strange a manner was true or false, however, it had lain in oblivion for eighteen years, and I determined not to cast a shadow upon the Christmas festivities by taking any steps in the matter just then. The further mystery of her visits I was unable to fathom—she had either come to me in a state of clairvoyance, or I had dreamt the whole thing—the latter supposition I did not believe for a moment; the former seemed to be the most likely solution. The little-understood science of mesmerism accounts for even more mysterious events than the strange visitations I had undergone. Miss Enderby, who knew the ways of the house well, might easily have

secreted the key of a side door, and so found her way to my sitting-room without difficulty.

During the week which supervened between Christmas Day and New Year's Day, Miss Enderby was in and out of the house continually. As usual she was the life of the place—counselling Constance, helping her grandfather, entertaining the guests as no one else could entertain them. As the days went by, however, I began to notice in Constance herself a subtle change—she did not look well—the bright, laughing light in her eyes was subdued—once or twice when in my neighbourhood I thought I heard her sigh.

On New Year's Night there was to be a grand ball, to which the county was invited. The evening before Constance was standing near me—I touched her on her arm.

"You are sad about something," I said. We happened to be alone. She turned her sweet young face, looked at me fully, and then burst into tears.

"Don't, don't," she sobbed. "*Don't* drag my secret from me."

"I do not want to," I answered, gently; "but you look in trouble. Can I help you in any way?"

"I do not think so; I am only unhappy because I am disobeying mother."

"In what way?"

"Louisa has mesmerized me again. She asks me about you, and—but there she is coming—please do not tell her I have said anything."

She flitted away, and I turned in another direction.

Next day we dined early, and I went up to my room after dinner to rest for a short time before the festivities of the evening began. I was seated by my fire, reading the current number of the *Nineteenth Century*, when a very light tap came on one of the doors of my room.

Before I had even time to say "Come in," the door opened and the lovely, ethereal young form of Constance Perowne stood on the threshold. She was in her ball-dress, which she had not put on at dinner; a circlet of pearls formed a coronet round her head; she carried a large white feather fan in one

hand, and her gloves in the other. I noticed as she stood on the threshold that she slowly unfurled the fan.

She looked at me vaguely—there was a peculiar expression in her eyes. It needed but a glance to show me what had occurred—the girl was in a state of trance or mesmeric sleep. I went up and spoke to her.

“What is the matter?” I asked. “What do you want?”

“There is a box of old silver in a safe at the back of one of the panels,” she replied. “I have come to fetch it.” She looked past me, answering my questions but not apparently seeing me. I glanced at her eyes; they were dull, and totally unconscious of vision—nevertheless, I knew that she was seeing acutely with the inner sense of the clairvoyant. I did not reply to her, and she walked across the room.

Now, in my peregrinations round this curious chamber I had carefully investigated the contents of every panel except one—that one had, to all appearance, no spring, and although I had felt carefully along the wall, I was never able to open it. It was to this special panel now that Constance Perowne directed her steps. Without the slightest hesitation she pressed her finger against an ornamental trail of ivy, which had been painted on the woodwork—when she did so

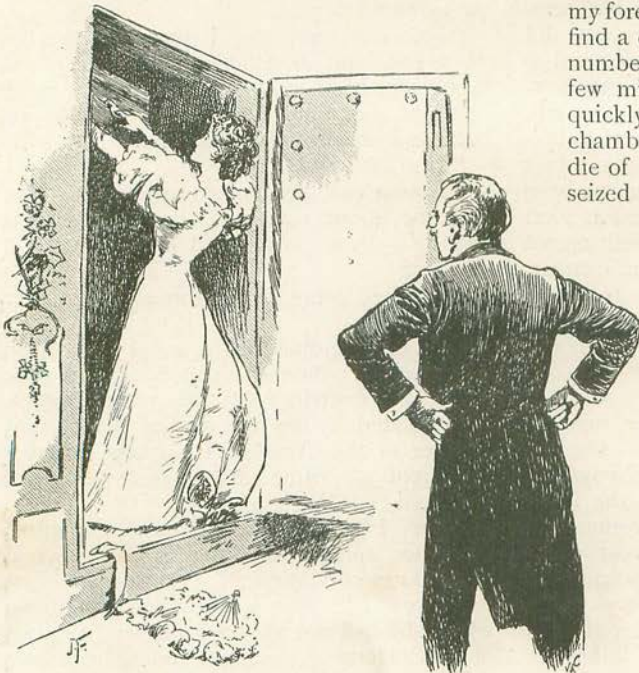
the panel revolved back as the others had done, and revealed inside a long and narrow safe, made of solid iron. The safe was about 3ft. to 4ft. deep. The moment it opened Constance went in, threw her fan and gloves on the floor, and raising her arms began with all her might and main to pull forward a heavy iron box which stood on a shelf.

“It is so heavy,” she panted; “I cannot lift it.”

“Let me help you,” I replied.

Just as if she were in an ordinary state, she stepped out of the safe, and I went in. She stood on the threshold—I stretched up my arms to take down the box, and as I was in the act of doing so, suddenly found myself in complete darkness. The spring door of the panel had come to; I was shut up in a living tomb. I called loudly, but the mesmerist was quite incapable of hearing me. The place in which I found myself was not only dark and narrow, but also, I was quite certain, almost sound-proof. It was a safe built of solid iron, and, doubtless, hermetically sealed. I stood still for a moment to take in the awful position. All too quickly I guessed what had occurred. Miss Enderby had planned this terrible catastrophe; she had made Constance her tool, and had sent her into my room to entrap me into the iron chest. The perspiration stood out on my forehead. I knew that unless I could find a quick mode of exit my hours were numbered; nay, more, that I had but a few minutes to live. I should all too quickly absorb the air in this narrow chamber, and in a very short time should die of asphyxia. For a moment despair seized me—then I resolved to have a

fight for my life. Making a rapid calculation, I thought it probable that there was enough air in the safe to last me from ten minutes to a quarter of an hour. I felt in my pocket, took out a silver case which contained matches, and struck one—already the confined space of my living tomb was taking effect upon me—there was a loud buzzing in my ears—my heart throbbed with difficulty—I panted as one does who is suffering death from suffocation. I did not dare to strike another match, for the light would further exhaust my limited supply of air; but in a brief glance



“‘IT IS SO HEAVY,’ SHE PANTED.”

round my tomb, I saw just over my head and behind the iron box what looked like a bolt. I tapped the wall at this place—it sounded hollow. Dizzy and reeling, but putting forth herculean strength, I endeavoured to pull the heavy iron box from its position, and then flung myself madly against the wall where it sounded hollow. Already I was almost unconscious, but with the strength of a madman I flung myself against the solid iron. Miracle of miracles, it gave way!—I felt a cold breath of air, and in less than a minute was myself again. Lighting another match, I found myself on the edge of some steep steps which went down into apparently bottomless depths. I descended them carefully, striking a match from time to time to guide my steps. Very charily I got to the bottom of the steps, and then pursued my way along a very narrow and winding passage, which presently brought me to an old door thick with cobwebs, in which was a rusty lock. This door had evidently not been opened for many years. Seizing a bar of iron which happened to be on the floor, I pushed back the hasp of the lock—a breath of cooler, fresher air immediately greeted me, and I found myself out of doors and in the direction of the servants' part of the house. As quickly as possible I once more entered the house and regained my chamber by means of the servants' staircase. I went in, shut the door, flung myself into a chair, and sat for some time thinking over the position of affairs. Whether Miss Enderby was mad or sane, my plain duty now was to acquaint her relations with the awful occurrence which had just taken place—it was not safe to have such a woman at large. Doubtless even now she thought that I was dead, as I assuredly should have been but for the discovery of the secret door at the back of the safe.

After resting for about an hour I carefully changed my dress, and went down to the ball-room. I heard the merry strains of music going on below, and entered the ball-room by one of the side doors. The first person I saw was Constance Perowne—her cheeks were blooming—she looked radiant in her white dress—the light of youth and happiness shone in her hazel eyes. When she saw me she smiled; she was, as I knew afterwards, perfectly unconscious of the terrible deed she had just committed. I did not trouble her with any remark, but went further into the room. I stepped up to an open window and, partly concealing myself behind a curtain, began to look

around. I was now able to watch Miss Enderby without being seen myself. She was dressed, as usual, in black velvet, which on this occasion was cut low, and exhibited a lovely white throat and well-shaped arms. The diamond star glittered in her dusky locks; her queer, green eyes were full of light; I fancied I saw a malignant smile round her lips. Doubtless she supposed herself now quite safe—her secret being, as she imagined, in the keeping of the dead. She was dancing with a handsome man, who evidently was succumbing to her fascinations. She was talking to him, showing the gleam of her white teeth, and the queer, mesmeric light in her eyes. He laughed and seemed amused as he listened. Gradually they approached my side—I stepped back a little. They both paused close to me, and I heard her at that moment utter a sigh. I then observed that, notwithstanding her apparent mirth, she was the victim of an uneasy terror. Seen close, her face looked haggard.

I could not resist the temptation to stretch out one of my hands and lay it on her shoulder. She was talking to her partner at the moment, and they were in the act of resuming the waltz. When she felt my hand she turned slowly and looked back at me. As her eyes met mine terror blanched her face, an expression of horror altered each feature—she sank away from the firm touch of my hand nearer and nearer to the ground, looking back at me as she did so all the time with an indescribable and most terrible expression. I have not the least doubt that she thought I was a ghost—it was impossible for her to believe that I could have found any way out of my living tomb. With a loud cry she sank the next moment in a sort of fit at my feet. Some people rushed forward and bore the fainting woman out of the ball-room. When she recovered partial consciousness she was insane. A doctor was summoned, who ordered the utmost quiet, and no one could understand the queer seizure.

Within a week from that date, Miss Enderby died, without ever having one gleam of returning sanity. Doubtless the shock of seeing me when she thought I had quitted the world had completely over-balanced her already too excitable brain. With her death, the necessity for disclosing her terrible secret no longer existed.

As to Constance, she is my special friend, and always will be, and I hope to her dying day she may never know what a near escape she had of taking my life.