

MR. ESHOLT'S YOUNG WIFE

BY T. W. SPEIGHT.

CHAPTER VII.

Presently, Mr. Esholt looked up from his *Blackwood* and said: "It may perhaps be as well to explain how I and young Burrell chanced to fall in with each other. His father, my brother Richard, and Mr. Granby were friends after a fashion which seems to be going more out of vogue year by year. In telling you ladies this I daresay I am telling you no more than you know already. Be that as it may, when young Burrell came to Liverpool previously to his first voyage, he brought a letter of introduction to me from Mr. Granby, whereupon I invited him to come and stay a few days with us at Everton; but he was unable to do so. Between his voyages he has called on me two or three times at the office, and I have always been pleased to hear of his welfare. Well, three days ago he and I met by chance in Water Street. It seemed to me that he looked very thin and sallow; and on inquiry I found that he had been struck down by fever a few weeks after reaching the Bonny River, and on his partial recovery, had at once been transferred to another ship that was about sailing for home. He is now, however, convalescent, and walking about with nothing to do. As he expressed himself as being tired of the sea and wanting some berth ashore, I offered him the post of second cashier in my counting-house, which just now happens to be vacant—but of course no probation. He was only too glad to accept the offer, and he started on his new duties this morning. He seems to be a young man of education and manners. What I have done for him so far has been out of regard to my brother's memory; if I find that he merits it on his own account, he will not find me neglectful of his interests."

Miss Esholt took care to be present at the introduction of Wilmot Burrell to her brother's wife.

Wilmot had casually heard that Mr. Esholt had been lately married, but had attached no importance to the fact, as being one that in no way concerned him. When, therefore, he followed Mr. Esholt into the drawing-room on his arrival at The Hollies and was introduced to Agnes as "my wife," it was all he could do to keep back the cry of surprise which rose involuntarily to his lips. He bowed low, so as to hide his emotion, and held out his hand, but would not trust himself with even a word in reply. The keen eye watching from the easy-chair saw Wilmot's quick startled look and the momentary contraction of his mouth, and could not help admiring his power of self-command. Agnes, who had been training herself, ever since she heard the news, to go through the ordeal with composure, hardly succeeded as well. Her cold trembling hand, her colourless cheeks, her unsteady voice, all betrayed the agitation of her mind. Not for one moment did she venture to lift her eyes to his.

Miss Esholt received the young man graciously—and she could be very gracious when it suited her purpose to be so. She made him sit next her at dinner, and entered freely into conversation with him, endeavouring to discover the salient points of his character, and to lead back the conversation more than once, when it seemed inclined to go astray, to his early life and his long vacations at the vicarage, and all the surroundings of those pleasant days, but careful always to leave out Agnes's name, waiting, in fact, till Wilmot should introduce it of his own accord, which, however, he unaccountably failed to do. He had not spoken a score of sentences to Miss Esholt before something seemed to put him on his guard against her, and when he noticed the cold vindictive expression of her eyes as her glance followed Agnes about the room, he said to himself: "This woman is her brother's wife's enemy. She's trying to draw me out for some purpose of her own. Gardez-vous, mon ami."

Consequently, as it fell out, Miss Esholt's information—that is, for the information she was desirous of getting at—was productive of little or no result. Wilmot was willing to talk and answer any number of questions about his life on board ship and his experiences on the coast of Africa, many of them very strange and startling; but when Miss Esholt, leading him by the hand, as it were, would strive to draw him skilfully back to where he felt the ice eye moment growing thinner under him, he would bluntly away, glide lightly over the dangerous spot, and get back to safer ground as quickly as possible.

Agnes would have been more than woman if she could have kept her eyes from occasionally wandering in the direction of Wilmot, when she felt that his gaze was turned another way. It seemed to her that he had never looked so handsome as he looked to-night. His late illness had lent a touch of refinement of his features which gave him more the look of a hero than ever. His thick brown curls, among which her fingers had so often strayed, still clustered round his white forehead with the same apparent carelessness as of yore. She had often been struck with his likeness to a certain portrait of Lord Byron she had once seen to-night; she was more struck with it than ever. As her eyes glanced from Wilmot to her husband and then back again, a little sigh fluttered involuntarily from her lips.

Wilmot, for his part, was no less struck with the change in Agnes. He had left her a lovely and fascinating girl, a girl of whom he often thought with a sort of regretful tenderness, whom he would gladly have made his wife, had not Dame Fortune played her such a scurvny trick; he found her now a woman, as lovable still, no doubt, and equally fascinating, but with an indescribable charm about her which had never struck him before. Of what that charm consisted, he did not care to ask himself; it was enough for him to feel and know it was there. He went home that night a prey to a tumult of conflicting emotions—love, anger, mortification, and vain regrets. He felt that never in his life had he loved Agnes as he loved her now, when she was lost to him for ever.

That first visit of Wilmot to The Hollies was by no means his last. Mr. Esholt generally brought him to dinner at least twice a week, and he had a standing invitation to drop in for an hour or an evening whenever he felt so disposed—an invitation of which he availed himself pretty frequently. He had lodgings about a mile and a half higher up the river, so that it was only a pleasant walk between his place and The Hollies,

there allowed to smoke his cigar. He would have given something to know from whom his invitation had emanated—whether from Miss Esholt or from Agnes, for he did not doubt that it came from one or the other. In any case, should the Fates prove propitious, he would seize the opportunity for having that explanation with Agnes which hitherto it seemed to him she had studiously avoided.

For some time after they reached the Grange, it appeared as if the Fates were about to remain unpropitious. Agnes kept close to her husband, and evidently would not be drawn into a tete-a-tete. A Bath-chair had been provided for Miss Esholt's use, and Miss Remington as a matter of course kept by the side of her friend.

They had explored the house, and were now out in the grounds, wandering about at their own sweet will. Mr. Esholt, Agnes, and Wilmot were walking a little way ahead of the others, when some thought seemed to strike Mr. Esholt, and he turned back to speak to his sister. As he did so, a gentleman, accompanied by a youth with a sketch-book under his arm, emerged from a side-walk and came full upon him. The gentleman, a Mr. Day, was well known to him on 'Change. There was a mutual laugh over the rencontre; then Mr. Day—after having explained that the youth was his son, and that, having a mania for sketching, he would let his father have no rest till he had made some drawings of the Grange—button-holed Mr. Esholt and drew him out of earshot of the others, after the manner of merchants in general and stock-brokers in particular.

Agnes and Wilmot strolled slowly on till they came to a point where the path they were following turned sharply to the left. Then Agnes paused and looked back. Her husband was still engaged with Mr. Day; but Miss Esholt and her friend were following slowly on. When she turned, Wilmot had stepped round the corner to the left; after a moment's hesitation, she followed him. Even if her husband should be detained, Miss Esholt would turn the corner in another minute or two at most.

Wilmot saw that now or never was his opportunity. Not a moment must be lost. High privet hedges screened the walk on either hand; not a creature was in sight. But before he could make up his mind how to begin, Agnes said coldly: "We had better go back; we are leaving the others behind."

"Stay one moment, Agnes—Mrs. Esholt—I entreat of you!" exclaimed Wilmot, with that indescribable thrill in his voice which moved her to-day even as it had been wont to move her of old.

"Well," she said, confronting him with a steady gaze. She had felt for some time that he had something to say to her, but hitherto she had carefully avoided affording him the required opportunity; now, however, she made up her mind on the spot to have the matter over and done with.

"Ah! Agnes, why are you so cold to me? why?"

"You forget, Mr. Burrell, that you are speaking to Mr. Esholt's wife."

"Pardon me if for one moment I forgot that fact—a fact which has burnt itself into my brain night and day ever since that moment when Mr. Esholt introduced as his wife one whom, not three short years ago, I had every reason to hope I should some day call my own."

"If this is all you have to say, Mr. Burrell, we had better turn back at once."

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"She can't deceive me," said Miss Esholt grimly to herself, "for all she tries to make one believe she has no more feeling than a statue. There has been more, far more, between those two than appears on the surface. Mr. Burrell tries to hoodwink us all; but it's plain that he loves her; and as for madam, unless I'm much mistaken, she reciprocates the feeling, but is too frightened to let it be seen. And yet in Robert's mind there is not even the faintest suspicion groping its way towards daylight! Eyes hath and yet he sees not."

Miss Esholt, considering in her own mind the state of affairs at the end of the third week after Wilmot Burrell's first appearance at The Hollies, found that matters did not progress so rapidly as it seemed to her that they ought to do; though in what way they fell short of her expectations she probably never cared to ask herself, or could have categorically explained, had she been called upon to do so. But she felt like a spectator of the first act of a comedy (might it not, perchance, develop into a tragedy by the time the last act was reached) when the action flags, and one becomes impatient to get on to the unknown something which one has a presentiment must surely come. She had a presentiment that there was an unknown something yet to come.

At this time Miss Esholt had only one friend staying with her at Syringa Cottage, a young lady, Miss Remington by name.

"Robert," she said to her brother one evening, when Wilmot happened not to be there, "Miss Remington has been dying to visit Rushmere Grange ever since she saw some drawings of it a month or two ago. I'm told it's only about a dozen miles away. Don't you think that she and I and Agnes might drive over some fine morning, explore the old place, have luncheon at the hotel, and come back in the cool of the afternoon?"

"Why not? I have no doubt you would find it a very enjoyable excursion."

"But fancy three ladies and no gentlemen! Couldn't you manage to steal a day from business and go with us?"

Mr. Esholt laughed, and shook his head. "So that's your game, is it? No; I don't think you must count on me, charmed as, of course, I should be to join you."

"I am quite sure you can spare a day if you only choose to do so. You are like the rest of the men, you fancy yourself of far more importance than you really are. Jabez Kimber would see that nothing went wrong during your absence, as he has had to do on many occasions already. You might also spare us Mr. Burrell for the day. I am sure a holiday would do him good."

"Oh, you shall have Burrell, and welcome; but as for myself—"

"If you can't go, Robert, I shall certainly prefer to stay at home," broke in Agnes.

"In that case, there's no option left me in the matter," answered Mr. Esholt with an air of mock resignation.

Miss Esholt had half hoped that her brother would be unable to go, and there was still a chance that he might be detained at the last moment. What did she expect to gain, what end did she look to achieve by her little plot, which was purely an arrangement of her own?—for although Miss Remington had expressed a languid desire to visit Rushmere, she was certainly not "dying" to do so. Probably she could not have told herself. But in the chapter of accidents there always lurk unnumbered possibilities.

Rushmere Grange dated from the reign of the Eighth Henry. His daughter, the great Elizabeth, was said to have "trod a measure" there on one occasion with the Sir Godfrey of those days, who went far towards ruining himself in his efforts to do honour to the visit of his royal mistress. The place was now partly in ruins, and none of the family had lived there for many years. It was in charge of caretakers, whose duty it was to show visitors over such portions of the old mansion as were still in a tolerable state of preservation. Inside, there was little to see beyond the worm-eaten paneling of the walls, a new finely carved chimney-piece, and some wonderful old tapestry, which had not been removed when the place was denuded of all else it contained. The gardens, however, with their formal walks and pleached alleys, with their mazes, their fountains, and their more or less dilapidated statues, were still carefully looked after, and in themselves alone were well worth a visit.

When the day of the excursion arrived, Mr. Esholt, after a couple of hours at business, reached the starting-place by the appointed time, somewhat to his sister's secret chagrin. A roomy wagonette had been hired for the occasion. Wilmot perched himself aloft beside the driver, and was

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IN A PANTHER'S JAWS.

A Battle with a Feroceous Beast on a Railroad Track While a Train Approached.

Mike Donovan, a track walker employed by the Southern Pacific Railroad and in charge of the section at Stella, Fort Bend county, Texas, was recently attacked by a large panther, and only with much difficulty succeeded in killing the beast. Donovan, armed only with a hatchet and wrench, was engaged in his daily inspection of the track, and had reached a part bordered on one side by a dense thicket of post oaks when his attention was attracted by a rustling in the undergrowth.

The next moment he was startled by the panther hurling himself on him. The attack was so unexpected that the man staggered and fell under the creature's weight, but managed to deal it a blow with his hatchet, which, without wounding it severely, caused it to spring from his body with a hoarse cry. Donovan had only time to scramble to his feet, however, before the panther returned to the attack.

SCREAMING FEARFULLY.

He met it with uplifted hatchet, and cut it deeply about the head and shoulders, but the infuriated creature, though bathed in blood, appeared only the more determined in its animosity, and sprang upon its foe with such force as again to fell him to the earth, when it endeavored to fix upon his throat. Unfortunately for the man, the panther's assault had knocked his hatchet from his grasp as he fell, leaving him with bare hands to grapple with the snarling maddened animal tearing at him with distended claws, and suffocating him with its fetid breath as its gaping mouth strained at his throat.

It was only by the exertion of his utmost strength that he was able to retain his grasp on the panther's throat, and so prevent it from getting at his own, but a new horror confronted him as they struggled madly over the pebble-strewn roadbed. The panther had thrown him across the track, and, in spite of his frantic efforts to throw it off, held him with his back across the rails.

The shrill whistle of the afternoon train here warned him of the approach of a horrible death, and, literally sick with terror, he exerted himself with a strength borne of desperation, and succeeded for a moment in so crushing the panther's throat that the beast, gasped for breath, relinquished its hold sufficiently to enable him to roll to one side and off the track. Before he could rise, however, the panther fell upon him again, and as they closed in—

THEIR DEADLY EMBRACE

the long train swept by. Donovan says that so close were they to the track that the heat of the engine scorched them as it passed. He screamed lustily for help, but supposed that the noise of the train prevented his cries from being heard.

The panther appeared frightened out of its senses by the thunder of the locomotive, and springing up from Donovan's body, made for the woods, screaming at every jump. The Irishman here was enabled to recover his footing, and seized his wrench that lay near, then, running to an adjacent tree braced himself against it, awaiting the return of the panther, which, on seeing the train disappear, advanced towards him as undaunted as at first. Donovan raised the heavy wrench as it reached him, and brought it down with full force on its head. The blow sent the creature reeling to one side.

The man with another blow, succeeded in knocking it over and stunning it, when, running for his hatchet, he despatched the animal by nearly severing the head from the body. Donovan was badly scratched about the limbs and breast, and very much exhausted by his fearful struggle, but otherwise uninjured. The panther was a large one, of a species known as "gary cats," and bore the marks of a still inflamed gunshot wound, given probably by some hunter, which had evidently run the animal mad.

London Is Alarmed.

The influx of poor foreigners into London is alarming English workingmen. Octavius Morgan, Gladstonian member of Parliament for Battersea, one of the divisions of the metropolis, has given notice that he will ask the Government whether it is not advisable to adopt measures to check foreign immigration.

He will suggest the adoption of legislation on the lines of that which has been found necessary in the United States, Canada and Australia. An obnoxious feature of the stream of foreign emigration into London is the increase of street walking. Regent street and other thoroughfares are infested to a degree that is seriously injuring the business of tradesmen in those streets, a large proportion of the women being foreigners from Poland and Russia. It is claimed that these women are the serfs of masters who pay them starvation pittance and receive all their earnings, and that the ranks of the unfortunate are recruited from the continual arrivals at this port from the continent. The Regent street tradesmen have petitioned the authorities to abate the annoyance, and the police have been ordered to take vigorous measures with that object.

An English traveller, who has returned to London recently from an extensive tour through Russia, says that only a faint idea can be entertained of the cruel treatment to which the Jews are subjected. He says they can be persecuted with impunity, as they are considered dogs, whose cries of pain no one is bound to regard. He refers to a riot in which a dozen Jewish infants were torn from their mothers' arms and thrown in the streets. Young Jewish girls are constantly kidnapped in country towns and sold in St. Petersburg and Moscow for immoral purposes, and when complaints are made to the authorities they are disregarded. Every stranger arriving in Moscow who has a long nose is obliged to go before the authorities and prove that he is not a Jew.

An experiment was made at Rome recently on a railroad train running from Rome to Frascati with a new combustible prepared from lignite, rich deposits of which have been found in Italy. The combustible was invented by Signor Saporita of Siena. Of the new fuel 367 kilograms were used, doing the work of 300 kilograms of coal. The discovery is expected to prove a valuable one, as it will do away with the necessity of importing coal. The new fuel makes a light smoke.

An engineer named Zalski, of Berlin, quarrelled with his sweetheart two years ago and went to America. Last week he returned, found her married, and in a rage attacked the husband, who, in defending himself, shot Zalski dead.

EIGHT WEEKS WITHOUT FOOD.

A Pitiful Story of a Suffering Little Girl in Missouri.

Little Lizzie Meadows has lain speechless, motionless, and without food for fifty-six days. The other day a reporter visited the Meadows' home in Walnut Park, a half deserted suburb of Independence. In a darkened room lay the girl, pallid as a corpse and as motionless, save for the quick drawn breath through her parted lips. Her shoulders, arms, and hands were emaciated beyond belief, her face, though absolutely colorless, being much less affected. An occasional lifting of the eyelids was the only perceptible motion, though Mrs. Meadows says her daughter is now able to lift one arm slightly.

The child is starved to pitiful gauntness. Her face is waxen pale, thin, and drawn with agony, her arms are wasted till nothing but the skin covers the bones, and her slender fingers are transparent and fragile. Of her condition she is fully conscious, though she is speechless and absolutely motionless save for the twitchings of the face and the half lifting of the eyebrows.

On Dec. 29 Lizzie was 12 years old, and though slender and delicate, she was in excellent health. She attended school a few days after the Christmas holidays closed, but soon began to complain of strange fleeting pains, first in her head, then about the chest, then in her finger tips. She was taken from school and was soon very ill—the physicians who came said it was spinal meningitis.

The girl's condition grew serious. She lost the power of speech, of motion, and on March 21 she partook of the last morsel of food that she has tasted in eight weeks. Her parents and attending physicians tempted her with every conceivable dainty, but she was compelled to reject them all. Occasionally the motionless sufferer would take a few sips of lemonade or of water and this with an occasional draught of soda her parents say was the only approach to nourishment she has had during her long trial. Cistern water she could not endure, being able to drink only that taken from a neighboring spring.

Daily the doctors who puzzled themselves in vain over the strange case said "the girl must die within twenty-four hours," and her patient mother, who has scarcely left her side, thought every feeble breath would be the last. But the girl, though fading daily, until but a skeleton remains, lived on. The physicians who came confessed themselves at fault; no such case had ever before come under their observation. At times the girl's tongue became black, coated, hard and as dry, her mother says, "as a cob." These coatings, however, were removed, their presence apparently affecting the sufferer little.

Through all these weeks the child's mind remained unaffected. She knew of her sufferings and was able, by changes of countenance, to answer questions. An offer of assistance which displeased her or a question to which she wished to answer "no" brought a frown; a question which pleased her was answered by a pitiful ghost of a smile. Sometimes the mother, seeing that the child desired something, would put to her a dozen questions, all being answered by frowns; then the little one would struggle hard to speak until she gasped for breath. Frequently she would weep in distress at her inability to make herself understood.

The doctors of Independence came and exhausted their skill in unavailing efforts to restore health to the child until last week, when one determined to apply a galvanic battery. The battery was used charily, a very feeble current being transmitted to the child through the hands of her brother and the physician, who each held a pole of the battery, lest a too strong shock might drive the life from the feeble body. There was at first no perceptible effect from this treatment, which was repeated daily, but at present it promises to release the girl from her living death.

Saturday morning the mother, as has been her wont, was breakfasting at her child's bedside, vigilantly watching the patient. The girl by her expectant countenance and parted lips manifested a desire for something.

"Do you want some breakfast, Lizzie?" asked the mother.

The child smiled. Carefully the mother gave her a bit of buttered bread and an egg, which were swallowed with avidity, the little one mutely pleading for more. Three times again during the day did Mrs. Meadows and the physician give the child food in minute quantities, the morsels being eaten with no apparent evil effects. She was also given four meals Sunday, Monday, and yesterday, and with daily applications of the galvanic battery the faster is beginning to exhibit signs of life.

Sufferings of Expelled Jews.

The Hebrew Relief Committee at Berlin has secured a long railway tunnel at Charlottenburg in which to shelter Russian Jews en route to Hamburg for embarkment. Boxes of clothing and necessities, enormous boilers of tea and coffee, and supplies of bread and brandy are in readiness to relieve the misery of the crowds of fugitives that daily pour out of the railway trains. Many heartrending scenes are described and tales are told of extreme suffering. Many of the fugitives had to leave on a day's notice and were compelled to abandon everything but what they stood in, while others, often octogenarians hardly able to walk, are seen staggering under sacks containing all their worldly possessions. In many cases the fugitives are of the poorest classes, with numerous scantily-clothed children dragging after their mother's skirts and crying for bread. All are shy and suspicious, remembering their ill-treatment at Russian railway stations, and fear fresh torments if they enter the waiting rooms. A doctor attends the children who are ill from the effects of the journey. The fugitives describe how the streets in which they lived would be suddenly cordoned with the police searching for Jews, who would fly to the synagogues for safety; how the doors of the synagogues would be wrenched and troops of armed men would tie their hands and feet and plunder everything in the place, and how on arriving at the frontier the police would extort fresh bribes to allow them to cross.

"Mr. Gladders," said that gentleman's wife, rather severely, "I want you to give that typewriter of yours the sack." "You are a little behind the age my dear; I gave her a sealskin two months ago." "What?" "O—er—that—is—yes I'll discharge her tomorrow."