A House of Mystery

OR, THE GIRL IN BLUE

CHAPTER VIII.—(Continued).

When we were alone, with the door closed, he made the following explanation—

"I have called upon you, Mr. Heaton, at the request of a lady who is our mutual friend. You have, I presume, received a letter signed 'Avel'?"

"Yes," I said, remembering how that I had promised to blindly and obediently render my protectress whatever assistance she desired. "I presume you desire some service of me. What is it?"

"No," he said. "You are mistaken. It is with regard to the terrible affliction from which I see you are suffering that I have been sent."

"Are you a medical man?' I inquired, with some astonishment.

"I am an oculist,' was the reply.

"And your name?"

"Slade—James Slade."

"And you have been sent here by whom?"

"By a lady whose real name I do not know."

"But you will kindly explain, before we go further, the circumstance in which she sought your aid on my behalf,' I said firmly.

"You are mutual friends,' he answered, somewhat vaguely. "It is no unusual thing for a patient to seek my aid on behalf of a friend. She sent me here to see you, and to examine your eyes, if you will kindly permit me."

The man's bearing irritated me, and I was inclined to resent this enforced subjection to an examination by one of whose reputation I knew absolutely nothing. Some of the greatest oculists in the world had looked into my sightless eyes and pronounced my case utterly hopeless. Therefore I had no desire to be tinkered with by this man, who, for aught I knew, might be a quack whose sole desire was to run up a long bill.

"I have no necessity for your aid," I answered, somewhat bluntly. "Therefore any examination is entirely waste of time."

"But surely the sight is one of God's most precious gifts to man," he answered, in a smooth, pleasant voice; "and if a cure is possible, you yourself would, I think, welcome it.'

"I don't deny that," I answered. "I would give half that I possess — nay, more—to have my sight restored, but Sir Leopold Fry, Dr. Measom, and Harker Halliday have all three seen me, and agree in their opinion that my sight is totally lost for ever. You probably know them as specialists?"

"Exactly. They are the first men in my profession," he answered. "Yet sometimes one treatment succeeds where another fails. Mine is entirely and totally different to theirs, and has, I may remark, been successful in quite a number of cases which were pronounced hopeless."

Mere quackery, I thought. I am no believer in new treatments and new medicines. The fellow's style of talk prejudiced me against him. He actually placed himself in direct opposition to the practice of the three greatest oculists in the world.

"Then you believe that you can actually cure me?" I remarked, with an incredulous smile.

"All I ask is to be permitted to try," he answered blandly, in no way annoyed by my undisguised sneer.

"Plainly speaking," I answered, "I have neither inclination nor intention to place myself at your disposal for experiments. My case has been pronounced hopeless by the three greatest of living specialists, and I am content to abide by their decision."

"Oculists are liable to draw wrong conclusions, just as other persons do," he remarked. "In a matter of this magnitude you should—permit me to say so—endeavor to regain your sight and embrace any treatment likely to be successful. Blindness is one of man's most terrible afflictions, and assuredly no living person who is blind would wish to remain so."

"I have every desire to regain my sight, but I repeat that I have no faith whatever in new treatments.'

"Your view is not at all unnatural, bearing in mind the fact that you have been pronounced incurable by the first men of the profession," he answered. "But may I not make an examination of your eyes It is, of course, impossible to speak with any degree of authority without a diagnosis. You appear to think me a charlatan. Well, for the present I am content that you should regard me as such;" and he laughed as though amused.

He seemed so perfectly confident in his own powers that I confess my hastily formed opinion became moderated and my prejudice weakened. He spoke as though he had detected the disease which had deprived me of vision, and knew how to successfully combat it.

"Will you kindly come forward to the window?" he requested, without giving me time to reply to his previous observations. I obeyed his wish.

Then I felt his fingers open my eyelids wide, and knew that he was gazing into my eyes through one of those glasses which other oculists had used. He took a long time over the right eye, which he examined first; having apparently satisfied himself, he opened the left, felt it carefully, and touched the surface of the eyeball, causing me a twinge of pain.

"As I thought!" he ejaculated when he had finished. "As I thought! A slight operation only is necessary. The specialists whom you consulted were wrong in their conclusions. They have all three made an error which is very easy to make, yet it might have deprived you of sight for your whole life."

"What!" I cried, in sudden enthusiasm. "Do you mean to tell me solemnly that you can perform a miracle?—that you can restore my sight to me?'

"I tell you, sir," he answered quite calmly, "that if you will undergo a small operation, and afterwards subject yourself to a course of treatment, in a fortnight—or, say three weeks—you will again open your eyes and look upon the world."

His words were certainly startling to me, shut out so long from all the pleasures of life. This stranger promised me a new existence, a world of light and movement, of color, and of all the interests which combine to make life worth living. At first I was inclined to scorn this treatment of his, yet so solemnly had he uttered it, and with such an air of confidence that I became half convinced that he was more than a mere quack.

"Your words arouse within me a new interest," I said. "When do you propose this operation?"

"To-morrow, if you will."

"Will it be painful?"

"Not very—a slight twinge, that's all."

I remained again in doubt. He noticed my hesitation, and urged me to submit.

But my natural caution asserted itself, and I felt disinclined to place myself in the hands of one whose bona fides I knew absolutely nothing.

As politely as I could I told him this, but he merely replied—

"I have been sent by the lady whom we both know as Edna. Have you no confidence in her desire to assist you?"

'Certainly I have."

"She has already explained to me that you have promised to carry out her wishes. It is at her urgent request that I have come to you with the object of giving you back your sight."

"She wishes me to submit to the experiment?"

"Pardon me. It is no experiment," he said. "She desires you to submit yourself to my treatment. If you do, I have entire confidence that in a week or so you will see almost as well as I do.'

I hesitated. This stranger offered me the one great desire of my life—the desire of every person who is afflicted with blindness—in return for a few moments' pain. Edna had sent him, prefaced by the mysterious letter signed "Avel.' It was her desire that I should regain my sight; it was my desire to discover her and look upon her face.

"If I find your name in the Medical Register I will undergo the operation," I said at last.

"To search will be in vain," he responded, in the same even tone.

"Then your name is assumed?"

"My practice is not a large one, and I have no need to be registered," he said evasively.

His words again convinced me that he was a mere quack. I had cornered him, for he was palpably confused.

"As I have already told you,' I said, with some warmth, "your attempts at persuasion are utterly useless. I refuse to allow my eyes to be tampered with by one who is not a medical man."

He laughed, rather superciliously I thought.

"You prefer your present affliction?'

"Yes," I snapped.

"Then, now that you force me to the last extremity," he said firmly, "I have this to present to you."

And next moment I felt within my hand a paper the nature of which, nor the writing thereon, I could not distinguish; yet from his voice I knew instinctively that this stranger, whoever he was, held triumph over me.

CHAPTER IX.

—"I have no knowledge of what this is,' I said, puzzled, holding the paper he had given me.

"Then I will read it to you," he responded; and taking it from my hand, he repeated the words written there. Even then I doubted him, therefore I took the paper into the kitchen and bade Parker read it. Then knew that he had not deceived me, for Parker repeated the very same words that he had read, namely—

"The first request made to you, Wilford Heaton, is that you shall repose every confidence in Doctor Slade, and allow him to restore your sight. Obey.

"AVEL.'

The note was very brief and pointed, written, I learnt, like the first note, with a typewriter, so that no clue might be afforded by the caligraphy. It was an order from the unknown person whom I had promised to blindly and faithfully obey. At the time I had given the mysterious Edna that promise I was in deadly peril of my life. Indeed, the promise had been extracted from me under threat of death, and now, in the security of my own home, I felt disinclined to conform with the wishes of some person or persons whom I knew not. I saw in what a very serious position I had placed myself by this rash promise, for I might even be ordered to commit a crime, or, perhaps, for aught I knew, have unwittingly allied myself with some secret society.

The one desire which ever possessed me, that of being able to look upon the unseen woman with the musical voice, who had at one time been my protectress and my captor, urged me, however, in this instance, to accede. There was evidently some object in making this attempt to give me back my sight, and if it really succeeded I alone would be the gainer. Therefore, why should I not carry out my promise for once, and obey with that blind obedience that had been imposed upon me as part of the compact?

Understand that I had no faith whatever in the stranger who had thus come to me with a promise of a miraculous cure; on the other hand, I felt that he was a mere charlatan and impostor. Nevertheless, I could not be rendered more blind than I was, and having nothing to lose in the experiment, any gain would be to my distinct advantage.

Therefore, after further argument, I very reluctantly promised to allow him to operate upon me on the morrow.

"Good," he answered. "I felt that your natural desire for the restoration of your sight would not allow your minor prejudices to stand in the way. Shall we say at noon to-morrow "

"Any hour will suit me," I answered briefly, with rather bad grace.

"Then let it be at noon. I and my assistant will be here by eleven-thirty.'

"I should prefer to come to your surgery," I said with the idea of obtaining some knowledge of the stranger's address. If I knew where he lived I could easily find out his real name.

"That is, unfortunately, impossible," he answered blandly. "I am staying at a hotel. I do not practice in London."

He seemed to have an ingenious answer always upon the tip of his tongue.

So, after some further conversation, in which he continually foiled any attempt I made to gain further knowledge of Edna or of himself, he rose and bade me adieu, promising to return on the morrow with the necessary instruments.

With a rather unnecessary show of punctuality he arrived next day, accompanied by a younger, sad-voiced man, and after some elaborate preparations, the nature of which I guessed from my own medical knowledge, I sat in my big armchair, and placed myself entirely at his disposal. From the first moment that he approached me and examined me prior to producing anæsthesia of the part to be operated upon I knew that my prejudice had been hastily formed. He was no quack, but careful, confident and skilled, with a firm hand evidently used to such cases.

To fully describe what followed can be of no interest to any save medical men, therefore suffice it to relate that the operation lasted about an hour, after which my eyes were carefully bandaged, and my attendant and his assistant left. Slade called each day at noon, and carefully dressed my eyes, on each occasion expressing satisfaction at my progress, but always impressing upon me the absolute necessity for remaining with the blinds closely drawn, so that no ray of light should reach me. Darkness did not trouble me, yet Parker found it rather difficult to serve my meals in the gloom, and was very incredulous regarding the mysterious doctor's talents. She viewed the whole affair just as I had once done, and, without mincing words, denounced him as a quack, who was merely running up a long bill for nothing. Like many old country-bred women, she did not believe in any doctoring save that of the usual homely remedies; and in her rural ignorance declared that the whole medical profession were a set of self-conceited rogues.

For nearly three weeks I lived with the Venetian blinds of my sitting-room always down, and with a thick curtain drawn across them, shutting out all light, as well as a good deal of air, until the summer heat became stifling. Hour after hour I sat alone, my hands idly in my lap, ever wondering what the success of this experiment would be. Should I ever again see, after those grave and distinct pronouncements of Fry and the rest, who had plainly told me that my sight was for ever destroyed? I dared not to hope, and only remained inert and thoughtful, congratulating myself that I had at least obeyed the dictum of my mysterious and unknown correspondent, under whose influence I had so foolishly placed myself.

At last, however—it was on a Sunday—Slade came, and as usual removed the bandages and bathed my eyes in a solution of atropine. Then, having made a careful examination, he went to the window, drew aside the curtains, and slightly opened the Venetian blinds.

In an instant I cried aloud for joy. My sight had been restored. The desire of my life was an accomplised fact. I could actually see-

(To be Continued.)

ON THE FARM

TO PREVENT FRAUD IN MILK SUPPLY.

Some amendments to the act preventing fraud in the manufacture of cheese and butter, were made by the Ontario Legislature. These amendments and changes, together with the portions of the old act remaining, will be consolidated into a new act governing the whole question of fraud in milk supply

The new bill gives power to inspectors appointed by the government, to go on the farms of persons supplying milk to cheese and butter factories, and take and test samples, so that by comparison with the milk delivered at the cheese or butter factory, it may be determined whether the milk has been skimmed or watered. Under the old act inspectors had not this power, though it was exercised, in some cases. The president or other officer of a cheese or butter company, had the right to go on a patron's farm, and take or test samples of milk, or he could authorize some one to go.

The bill gives the government the power to appoint qualified inspectors, who shall inspect milk supplied to cities, towns and villages. They will have the same power as cheese and butter factory inspectors have to take samples of milk on the producer's farm, in transit to city or town dealer, the premises of the dealer or while being delivered to customers, the intention being to see that the milk, as produced from the cow shall reach the consumer without watering or skimming. Where a city desires such an inspector, the Minister of Agriculture would by Order-in-Council, make the appointment, the city paying for his services. By this provision the inspector would have the power conferred by the Act.

The new bill makes provision for the sale of skim-milk in cities, towns and villages provided it is sold as such and so labelled. The use of preservatives in milk is forbidden unless the milk so treated is publicly advertised to that effect.

An important clause is that dealing with the trial of a person suspected of watering or tampering with milk. Under the old act a person could plead ignorance or blame the offense on some member of his family or the hired help. This cannot be done under the new Act. Whether watering or taking the cream off milk is done by the proprietor himself; by any members of his family or by anybody employed by him, he is responsible. The onus is on the suspected patron to prove that the deed was done by a person or persons outside of his family or employees. Under this provision the guilty patron cannot shield himself by blaming the wrong doing on his wife, as has been frequently done.

LIVE STOCK NOTES.

The digestive apparatus of the hog should be developed to its utmost capacity. This is the machine that produces the pork, and the better it is cared for the greater our profits.

Some good farmers mix sulphur, salt, wood ashes and oil meal, and keep the mixture before horses and dogs, believing it to be of great benefit to them, and saying that the animals will not use enough of the compound to injure themselves. There is no rule for the proportions; equal parts will do.

It is important to give good care to all animals, but particularly to sheep. To restore flesh to an animal is an expensive process, as costly to sheep as to other animals; but the sheep, if allowed to get poor, meets with loss in the fleece that cannot be restored. A weak and poor sheep grows a feeble fleece, even if but a short time in that condition, and its wool shows a weak place, termed "a joint," by buyers and manufacturers of wool. The preventive is to keep sheep well at all times.

All chilled and weakly lambs should be wrapped up, nose and ears. If they will lake it, they should be allowed some milk first. But warmth is the first and most essential requirement for sustaining animal functions. The lamb from a well-fed ewe has innate sufficient nutriment to sustain it many hours. The loss from freezing is far greater than from starving. This loss may be much lessened by prompt and proper treatment, even when to the novice there would appear no possibility of restoration. Hot water here works miracles. To the inexperienced it would appear literally to reanimate. If there is any sign of life whatever, place the lamb in a tub or water, as warm as the hand can bear, then pour in a little more hot water. Keep it in several minutes, rubbing well to establish circulation. When thoroughly warm, rub dry, wrap and lay in a warm place.

CHEESE IN THE CURING ROOM

"A source of trouble to our industry," said Mr. N. J. Kuneman, cheese factory inspector, in speaking at the Manitoba Dairymen's Convention recently, "is the curing rooms." Many are poorly constructed, the temperature cannot be controlled in them. Let a cheese be ever so well made, if it goes into a poor room it will, perhaps, be spoiled there, because when a cheese is placed in the curing room it is only half made, the other half must be done there. On the curing depends the quality and the quantity. This affects it to the extent of about one and a half pounds on an 80 pound cheese in about one month. If people only realized this fact they would not hesitate to construct good curing rooms. If a reputation is to be built up the product must be improved.

OUR ANIMAL FRIENDS.

Every unkind treatment to the cow poisons the milk—even talking unkindly to her.

Every kind word you say to a dumb animal or bird will make you happier.

Always kill a wounded bird or other animal as soon as you can. All suffering of any creature, just before it dies, poisons the meat.

If there were no birds, man could not live on the earth, and birds are decreasing in this country.

If you have any doubt as to whether animals feel pain, watch the look of extreme suffering and hopeless woe upon the face of a poor, half-starved overworked horse.

DUEL WITH WAX BULLETS.

The World's Noted Expert Shots to Meet in London.

Arrangements are being made in London, England, by a number of the world's deadliest revolver shots for giving a public exhibition of the "sport" of dueling on July 13 and 14 next, in connection with the Olympic games in London.

Walter Winans, the champion revolver shot of the world, whose sideboards and tables at Surrenden Park, his Kentish seat, groan beneath the trophies he has won as marksman, is at the head of this novel departure in public entertainments.

He has secured the enthusiastic co-operation of many of his fellow-members of the Pistolet Club, which, as he said recently, comprises all the greatest revolver shots and all the duelists. "The public duels will be fought exactly in every detail as though they were private affairs of honor, only that the bullets will be of wax, which will explode as soon as they touch their object. All the conventional ceremony connected with dueling will be carried through. There will be seconds, the paces will be solemnly measured, the duelists will take their stand back to back, and on the word being given, will wheel around and fire—that is to say, they must fire before three seconds are counted.

"There will be just enough risk in these duels to make them exciting, though not really dangerous," said Mr. Winans. "A little too heavy a charge of powder might cause the bullet to penetrate slightly, and no doubt most of the duelists will protect their persons. I do not think I shall wear any protection myself, however, as I do not want to make too large a target.

"I have been practising hard during the last few days, and to-day got twelve consecutive shots home from the regulation distance, all within a space of a few inches.

"If we are successful in fixing up these duels I shall shoot on behalf of the United States.

"Some crack Belgian and French shots will take part, and I do not doubt we shall be able to secure representatives of one or two other countries."

CAPE TO CAIRO ROAD.

Will Probably be Completed in Six Years.

The dream of the late Cecil Rhodes of a railway from Cairo to Cape Town will probably be realized within the next six years, when the line from Lobito Bay to the Katanga district will be opened.

The railway from Cairo southward has already reached Khartoum, while the following table will show the progress that has been made by the railway coming up from the south:—

1890—Railhead at Kimberley.

1897—Cape Town-Bulawayo section opened.

1904—Zambesi reached.

1905—Zambesi Bridge at Victoria Falls declared open.

1906—Broken Hill reached, 400 miles north of Zambesi and 2,100 miles north of Cape Town.

Negotiations are now in progress for the extension of the railway from the present terminus at Broken Hill to Mabaya, an important point on the Congo frontier. The understanding is that if the British line is extended to the frontier the Belgian financiers will continue the line from the frontier in a northwesterly direction to Ruwe. The Katanga copper belt in the south of the Free State is expected to surpass the Rand in the production of wealth, but even more important than tapping this rich district is the opening up of the port at Lobito Bay in Portuguese West Africa to Rhodesia.

COMPLIMENTARY TO HIM.

"Really," said Cholly Sappey, "I cawn't understand Miss Rood at all. She actually called me a crank.'

"The idea!" exclaimed Miss Cutting, "how flattering!"

"Flattering?"

"Yes; a crank, you know, is a man with one idea."