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CARRISTON'S GIFT.

By HUGH CONWAY.

Author of "Called Back," "Dark Days," "A Family Affair," etc.

[TOLD BY PHILIP BRAND, M. D., LONDON.]

PART THE FIRST.

A week passed without news from our agent, Carriston, in truth, did not seem to expect any. I believe he only employed the man in deference to my wishes. He moved about the house in a disconsolate fashion. I had not told him of my interview with his cousin, but had cautioned him on the rare occasions upon which he went out-of-doors to avoid speaking to strangers, and my servants had strict instructions to prevent any one coming in and taking my guest by surprise.

For I had, during those days, opened a confidential inquiry on my own account. I wanted to learn something about this Mr. Ralph Carriston. So I asked a man who knew everybody to find out all about him.

He reported that Ralph Carriston was a man well known about London. He was married, and had a house in Dorsetshire; but the greater part of his time was spent in town. Once he was supposed to be well off; but now it was the general opinion that every acre he owned was mortgaged, and that he was much pressed for money. "But," my informant said, "there is but one life between him and the reversion to large estates, and that life is a poor one. I need you even now there is a talk about the man who stands in his way being mad. If so, Ralph Carriston will get the management of everything."

After this news I felt it more than ever needful to keep a watchful eye on my friend. So far as I knew there had been no recurrence of the trance, and I began to hope that proper treatment would effect a complete cure, when, to my great alarm and annoyance, Carriston, while sitting with me, suddenly and without warning fell into the same strange state of body and mind as previously described. This time he was alone in another part of the room. After watching him for a minute or two, and just as I was making up my mind to arouse him lest could him thoroughly for his folly, he began to his feet, and shouting, "Let her go! Loose her, I say!" rushed violently across the room—so violently that I had barely time to interpose and prevent him from coming into contact with the opposite wall.

Upon returning to his senses he told me, with great excitement, that he had again seen Madeline; moreover, this time he had been a man with her—a man who had placed his hand upon her wrist and kept it there; and so, according to Carriston's wild reasoning, became, on account of the contact, visible to him.

He told me he had watched them for some moments, until the man, tightening his grip of the girl's arm, endeavored, he thought, to drag her or induce her to follow him somewhere. At this juncture, unaware that he was gazing at a vision, he had rushed to her assistance in the frantic way I have described; then he awoke.

He also told me he had studied the man's features and general appearance most carefully with a view to future recognition. All these ridiculous statements were made as he made the former ones, with the air of one stating simple, and visible facts—one speaking the plain unvarnished truth, and expecting full credence to be given to his words.

It was too absurd! too sad! It was evident to me that the barrier between his hallucinations, dreams, visions, or whatever he chose to call them, and pure insanity, was now a very slight and fragile one. But before I gave his case up as hopeless I determined to make another strong appeal to his common sense. I told him of his cousin's visit to me, of his intentions and proposition. I begged him to consider what consequences his extraordinary beliefs and extravagant actions must eventually entail. He listened attentively and calmly.

"You see now," he said, "how right I was in attributing all this to Ralph Carriston—how right I was to come to you, a doctor of standing, who can vouch for my sanity.

"Vouch for your sanity! How can I when you sit here and talk such arrant nonsense, and expect me to believe it! When you jump from your chair and rush madly at some visionary foe! Sane as you may be in all else, my evidence I could give in your favor must break down in cross-examination if anything of these things got about. Come, Carriston, be reasonable, and prove your sanity by setting about this search for Miss Rowan in a proper way."

He made no reply, but walked up and down the room apparently in deep thought. My words seemed to have had no effect upon him. Presently he seated himself; and, as if to avoid returning to the argument, drew a book at hazard from my shelves and began to read. He opened the volume at random, but after reading a few lines seemed struck by something that met his eyes, and in a few minutes was deeply immersed in the contents of the book. I glanced at it to see what had so awakened his interest. By a curious fatality he had chosen a book the very worst for him in his present frame of mind—Gilchrist's recently published life of William Blake, that masterly memoir of a man who was on certain points as mad as Carriston himself. I was about to remonstrate, when he laid down the volume and turned to me.

"Varley, the painter," he said, "was a firm believer in Blake's visions."

"Varley was a bigger fool than Blake," I retorted. "Fancy his sitting down and watching his clever but mad friend draw spectral heads and believing them to be genuine portraits of dead kings whose forms condescended to appear to Blake!"

A sudden thought seemed to strike Carriston. "Will you give me some paper and chalk?" he asked. Upon being furnished with these materials he seated himself at the table and began to draw. At least a dozen times he sketched, with his usual rapidity, some object or another, and a dozen times, after a moment's consideration, threw each sketch aside with an air of disappointment, and began a fresh one. At last one of his attempts seemed to come up to his requirements. "I have it now, exactly!" he cried, with joy, even triumph, in his voice. He spent some time in putting finishing touches to the successful sketch, then he handed me the paper.

"That is the man I saw just now with Madeline," he said. "When I find him, I shall find her." He spoke with all sincerity and conviction. I looked at the paper with an amount of curiosity. No matter from what visionary source Carriston had drawn his inspiration, his sketch was vigorous and natural enough. I have already mentioned his wonderful power of drawing portraits from memory, so was willing to grant that he might have reproduced the outline of some face which had somewhere struck him. Yet why should it have been this one! His drawing represented the three-quarter face of a man—an ordinary man—apparently between 40 and 50 years of age. It was a coarse-featured, heavy-faced face, with a ragged ruff of hair beneath the chin. It was not the face of a gentleman, nor even the face of a gently-bred man, and the artist, by a few cunning strokes, had made it wear a crafty and sensual look. As I sketch, as I write this, the picture is before me. I am not speaking from memory. Now there are some portraits of which, without having seen the original, we say, "What splendid likenesses these must be!" It was so with Carriston's sketch. Looking at it you felt sure it was exactly like the man whom it was intended to represent. So that, with the certain amount of art knowledge which I am at least supposed to possess, it was hard for me, after examining the drawing and recognising the true artist's touch in every line, to bring myself to accept the fact that it was but the outcome of a diseased imagination. As at this very moment I glance at that drawing I scarcely blame myself for the question that faintly frames itself in my innermost heart. "Could it be possible—could there be in certain organizations powers not yet known, not yet properly investigated?"

My thought—supposing such a thought was ever there—was not discouraged by Carriston, who, speaking as if his faith in the bodily existence of the man whose portrait lay in my hand was unassailable, said:

"I noticed that his general appearance was that of a countryman, an English peasant, so in the country I shall find my love. Moreover, it will be easy to identify the man, as the top joint is missing from the middle finger of his right hand. As it lay on Madeline's arm I noticed that."

I argued with him no more. I felt that words would be but wasted.

CHAPTER IX.

A day or two after I had witnessed what I must call Carriston's second seizure we were favored with a visit from the man whose services we had secured to trace Madeline. Since he had received his instructions we had heard nothing of his proceedings until he now called to report progress in person. Carriston had not expressed the slightest curiosity as to where the man was or what he was about. Probably he looked upon the employment of this private detective as nothing more useful than a salve to my conscience. That Madeline was only to be found through the power which he professed to hold of seeing her in his visions was, I felt certain, becoming a rooted belief of his. Whenever I expressed my surprise that our agent had brought or sent no information, Carriston shrugged his shoulders and assured me that from the first he knew the man's researches would be fruitless. However, the fellow had called at last, and, I hoped, had brought us good news.

He was a glib-tongued man, who spoke in a confident, matter-of-fact way. When he saw us he rubbed his hands as one who had brought affairs to a successful issue and now meant to reap praise and other rewards. His whole bearing told me he had made an important discovery; so I begged him to be seated and give us his news.

Carriston gave him a careless glance and at some little distance from us. He looked as if he thought the impending communication scarcely worth the trouble of listening to. He might, indeed, from his looks have been the most disinterested person of the three. He even left me to do the questioning.

"Now, then, Mr. Sharpe," I said, "let us hear if you have earned your money."

"I think so, sir," replied Sharpe, looking curiously at Carriston, who, strange to say, heard this answer with supreme indifference.

"I think I may say I have, sir," continued the detective, "that is if the gentleman can identify these articles as being the young lady's property."

Thereupon he produced from a thick letter case a ribbon, in which was stuck a silver pin, mounted with Scotch pebbles, an ornament that I remembered having seen Madeline wear. Mr. Sharpe handed them to Carriston. He examined them, and I saw his cheeks flush and his eyes grow bright.

"How did you come by this?" he cried, pointing to the silver ornament.

"I'll tell you presently, sir. Do you recognize it?"

"I gave it to Miss Rowan myself."

"Then we are on the right track," I cried, joyfully. "Go on, Mr. Sharpe."

"Yes, gentlemen, we are certainly on the right track; but, after all, it isn't my fault if the track don't lead exactly where you wish. You see, when I heard of this mysterious disappearance of the lady I began to concoct my own theory. I said to myself, when a young and beautiful——

"Confound your theories!" cried Carriston, fiercely. "Go on with your tale."

The man gave his interrupter a spiteful glance.

"Well, sir," he said, "as you gave me strict instructions to watch a certain gentleman closely, I obeyed those instructions, of course, although I knew I was on a fool's errand."

"Will you go on?" cried Carriston. "If you know where Miss Rowan is, say so; your money will be paid you the moment I find her."

"I don't say I know exactly where to find the lady, but I can soon know if you wish me to."

"Tell your tale your own way, but as shortly as possible," I said, seeing that my excitable friend was preparing for another outburst.

"I found there was nothing to be gained by keeping watch on the gentleman you mentioned, sir, so I went to Scotland and tried back from there. As soon as I worked on my own lay I found out all about it. The lady went from Callendar to Edinburgh, from Edinburgh to London, from London to Folkestone, and from Folkestone to Boulong."

I glanced at Carriston. All his calmness seemed to have returned. He was leaning against the mantelpiece, and appeared quite unmoved by Mr. Sharpe's clear statement as to the route Madeline had taken.

"Of course," continued Mr. Sharpe, "it was not quite certain I was tracking the right person, although her description corresponded with the sickness you gave me. But as you are sure this article of jewelry belonged to the lady you want, the matter is beyond a doubt."

"Of course," I said, seeing that Carriston had no intention of speaking. "Where did you find it?"

"It was left behind in a bedroom of one of the principal hotels in Folkestone. I did go over to Boulong; but after that I thought I had learned all you would care to know."

There was something in the man's manner which made me dread what was coming. Again I looked at Carriston. His lips were curved with contempt, but he still kept silence.

"Why not have pursued your inquiries past Boulong?" I asked.

"For this reason, sir. I had learned enough. The theory I had concocted was the right one, after all. The lady went to Edinburgh alone, right enough; but she didn't leave Edinburgh alone, nor she didn't leave London alone; nor she didn't stay at Folkestone—where I found the pin—alone; nor she didn't go to Boulong alone. She was accompanied by a young gentleman who called himself Mr. Smith; and, what's more, she called herself Mrs. Smith. Perhaps she was, as they lived like man and wife."

"Whether the fellow was right or mistaken, this explanation of Madeline's disappearance seemed to give me what I can only compare to a smack in the face. I stared at the speaker in speechless astonishment. If the tale he told so glibly and circumstantially was true, farewell, so far as I was concerned, to belief in the love or purity of women. Madeline Rowan, that creature of a poet's dream, on the eve of her marriage with Charles Carriston, to fly, whether well or ill, matters little, with another man! And yet she was but a woman. Carriston—or Carr, as she only knew him—was in her eyes poor. The companion of her flight might have won her with gold. Such things have been. Still——

"My rapid and wrongful meditations were cut short in an unexpected way. Suddenly I saw Mr. Sharpe dragged bodily out of his chair and flung against the wall, while Carriston, standing over him, thrashed the man vigorously with his own ash stick—a convenient weapon, so convenient that I felt Mr. Sharpe could not have selected a stick more appropriate for his own chastisement. So Carriston seemed to think, for he laid on cheerfully some eight or ten good cutting strokes.

Carriston, standing over him, thrashed the man vigorously.

Nevertheless, being a respectable doctor and man of peace, I was compelled to interfere. I held Carriston's arm, while Mr. Sharpe struggled to his feet, and after collecting his hat and his pocketbook stood glaring vengefully at his assailant, and rubbing the while such of the weals on his back as he could reach. Annoyed as I felt at the unprofessional fracas, I could scarcely help laughing at the man's appearance. I doubt the possibility of any one looking heroic after such a thrashing.

"I'll have the law for this," he growled. "I am't paid to be beaten by a madman."

"You're paid to do my work, not another's," said Carriston. "Go to the man who has overbribed you and sent you to tell me your lies. Go to him; tell him that once more he has failed. Out of my sight!"

As Carriston showed signs of recommencing hostile operations, the man fled as far as the doorway. There, being in comparative safety, he turned with a malignant look.

"You'll smart for this," he said; "when they lock you up as a raving lunatic, I'll try and get a post as keeper."

I was glad to see that Carriston paid no attention to this parting shaft. He turned his back scornfully, and the fellow left the room and the house.

"Now are you convinced?" asked Carriston, turning to me.

"Convinced of what? That his tale is untrue, or that he has been misled, I am quite certain."

"Tush! That is not worth consideration. Don't you see that Ralph has done all this? I set that man to watch him; he found out the espionage; suborned my agent—or your agent, I should say; sent him here with a trumped up tale. Oh, yes; I was to believe that Madeline had deserted me—that was to drive me out of my senses. My cousin is a fool, after all!"

"Without further proof I cannot believe that your suspicions are correct," I said, but I must own I spoke with some hesitation.

"Proof! A clever man like you ought to see ample proof in the fact of that wretch having twice called me a madman. I have seen him but once before—you know it. I then gave him any grounds for making such an assertion. Tell me, from whom could he have learned the word except from Ralph Carriston?"

I was bound, if only to save my own reputation for sagacity, to confess that the point noted by Carriston had raised certain doubts in my mind. But if Ralph Carriston really was trying by some finely wrought scheme to bring about what he desired, there was all the more reason for great caution to be exercised.

"I am sorry you beat the fellow," I said. "He will now swear right and left that you are not in your senses."

"Of course he will. What do I care?"

"Only remember this. It is easier to get put in an asylum than to get out of it."

"It is not so very easy for a sane man like myself to be put in, especially when he is on his guard. I have looked up the law. There must be a certificate signed by two doctors, surgeons, or, I believe, apothecaries will do, who have seen the supposed lunatic alone and together. I'll take very good care I speak to no doctor save yourself, and keep out of the way of surgeons and apothecaries."

It quite cheered me to hear him speaking so sensibly and collectedly about himself, but I again impressed upon him the need of great caution. Although I could not believe that his cousin had taken Madeline away, I was after the affair with the spy, inclined to think that, as Carriston averred, he aimed at getting him, sane or insane, into a madhouse.

But after all these days we were not a step nearer to the discovery of Madeline's whereabouts. Carriston made no sign of doing anything to facilitate that discovery. Again I urged him to intrust the whole affair to the police. Again he refused to do so, adding that he was not quite ready. Ready for what, I wondered!

Carriston made no reply. He seemed in deep thought.

"Your friends ought to look after you and get you a wife," I said.

"I have no friends," he said sadly. "No nearer relation than a cousin a good deal older than I am, who looks upon me as one who was born to rob him of what should be his."

"But by the law of primogeniture, so sacred to [illegible]

[illegible]

"Yes [illegible]

[illegible]

I don't think I shall ever meet a woman I can care enough to make my wife. No; I expect my cousin will be Sir Ralph yet."

I tried to laugh him out of his morbid ideas. "Those who live will see," I said. "Only promise to ask me to your wedding, and better still, if you live in town, appoint me your family doctor. It may prove a sinecure that West End practice which the nucleus of that West End practice to establish." It is the dream of every doctor to establish."

I have already alluded to the strange beauty of Carriston's dark eyes. As soon as companionship commenced between us those eyes became to me, from scientific reasons, objects of curiosity on account of the mysterious expression which at times I detected in them. Often and often they were a look the like to which, I imagine, is found only in the eyes of a somnambulist—a look which one feels certain is intently fixed upon something, yet upon something beyond the range of one's own vision. During the first two or three days of our new-born intimacy I found this eccentricity of Carriston's positively startling. When now and then I turned to him and found him staring with all his might at nothing, my eyes were compelled to follow the direction in which his own were bent. It was at first impossible to divest one's self of the belief that something should be there to justify such a gaze. However, as the rapid growth of our friendly intercourse soon showed me that he was a boy of most ardent poetic temperament—perhaps even more a poet than an artist—I laid at the door of the Muse these absent looks and recurring flights into vacancy.

We were at the Fairy Glen one morning, sketching, to the best of our ability, the swirling stream, the gray rocks and the overhanging trees, the last just growing brilliant with autumnal tints. So beautiful was everything around that for a long time I worked, idled, or dreamed in contented silence. Carriston had set up his easel at some little distance from mine. At last I turned to see how his sketch was progressing. He had evidently fallen into one of his brown studies, and, apparently, a harder one than usual. His brush had fallen from his fingers, his features were immovable, and his strange dark eyes were absolutely riveted upon a large rock in front of him, at which he gazed as intently as if his hope of heaven depended upon seeing through it.

He seemed for the while oblivious to things mundane. A party of laughing, chattering, sensible, tourist girls scrambled down the rugged steps, and one by one passed in front of him. Neither their presence nor the inquisitive glances they cast on his statuesque face roused him from his fit of abstraction. For a moment I wondered if the boy took opium or some other narcotic on the sly. Full of the thought, I rose, crossed over to him, and laid my hand upon his shoulder. As he felt my touch he came to himself, and looked up at me in a dazed, inquiring way.

"Really, Carriston," I said, laughingly "you must reserve your dreaming fits until we are in places where tourists do not congregate, or you will be thought a madman, or at least a poet."

He made no reply. He turned away from me impatiently, even rudely; then, picking up his brush, went on with his sketch. After a while he seemed to recover from his pettishness, and we spent the remainder of the day as pleasantly as usual.

As we trudged home in the twilight he said to me in an apologetic, almost penitent way:

"I hope I was not rude to you just now?"

"When do you mean?" I asked, having almost forgotten the trivial incident.

"When you woke me from what you called my dreaming."

"Oh, dear no. You were not at all rude. If you had been, it was but the penalty due to my presumption. The flights of genius should be respected, not checked, by a material hand."

"That is nonsense; I am not a genius; and you must forgive me for my rudeness," said Carriston, simply. After walking some distance in silence he spoke again:

"I wish when you are with me you would try and stop me from getting into that state. It does me no good."

Seeing he was in earnest, I promised to do my best, and was curious enough to ask him whither his thoughts wandered during those abstracted moments.

"I can scarcely tell you," he said. Presently he asked, speaking with hesitation, "I suppose you never feel that under certain circumstances—circumstances which you cannot explain—you might be able to see things which are invisible to others?"

"To see things? What things?"

"Things, as I said, which no one else can see. You must know there are people who possess this power."

"I know that certain people have asserted they possess what they call second-sight; but the assertion is too absurd to waste time in refuting."

"Yet," said Carriston, dreamily, "I know that if I did not strive to avoid it, some such power would come to me."

"You are too ridiculous, Carriston," I said. "Some people see what others don't, because they have longer sight. You may, of course, imagine anything. But your eyes—hand some eyes they are, too—contain certain properties, known as humors and lenses, therefore in order to see——"

"Yes, yes," interrupted Carriston; "I know exactly all you are going to say. You, a man of science, ridicule everything which breaks what you are pleased to call the law of nature. You take all the unaccountable tales told. Nine hundred and ninety-nine you expose to scorn or throw grave doubts upon, yet the thousandth rests on evidence which cannot be upset or disputed. The possibility of that one proves the possibility of all."

"Not at all; but enough for your argument," I said, amused at the boy's wild talk. "You doctors," he continued, with that delicious air of superiority so often assumed by laymen when they are in good health, "put too much to the credit of diseased imagination."

"No doubt; it's a convenient shelf on which to put a difficulty. But go on."

"The body is your province, yet you can't explain why a catalepetic patient should hear a watch tick when it is placed against his foot."

"Nor you; nor any one. But perhaps it may aid you to get rid of your rubbishing theories if I tell you that catalepsy, as you understand it, is a disease not known to us; in fact, it does not exist."

As soon as we were alone I turned toward my guest. "And now," I said, "we must settle what to do. There seems to me to be but one course open. You have plenty of money, so your best plan is to engage skilled police assistance. Young Indian can't be spirited away like this without leaving a trace."

To my surprise Carriston flatly objected to this course. "No," he said, "I shall not go to the police. The man who took her away has placed her where no police can find her. I must find her myself."

"Find her yourself! Why, it may be months—years—before you do that! Good heavens, Carriston! She may be murdered, or worse——

"I shall know if any further evil happens—then I shall kill Ralph Carriston."

"If you tell me you have no clew whatever to trace her by. Do talk plainly. Tell me something or nothing."

Carriston smiled very faintly. "No clew—at any rate, will believe in," he said. "But I know this much, she is a prisoner somewhere. She is unhappy, but not ill-treated. Heavens! Do you think I could not know this I should keep my reason for an hour?"

"How can you possibly know it?"

"Call it what that gift—that extra sense, or what-ever it is—which you deride. I know it as I come to me some day, but I little dreamt how I should welcome it. I know that some way I shall find her by it."

"If you have already seen her three times, I may see her again at any moment when the strange fit comes over me."

All this fantastic nonsense was spoken so simply and with such an air of conviction that once more my suspicions as to the state of his mind were aroused. In spite of the brave answers which I had given Mr. Ralph Carriston I felt that common-sense was undeniably on his side.

"Tell me what you mean by your strange fit," I said, resolved to find out the nature of Carriston's fancies or hallucinations. "Is it a kind of trance you fall into?"

He seemed loath to give any information on the subject, but I pressed him for an answer.

"Yes," he said at last. "It must be a kind of trance. An indescribable feeling comes over me. I know that my eyes are fixed on some object—presently that object vanishes, and I see Madeline."

"How do you see her?"

"She seems to stand in a blurred circle of light as cast by a magic lantern. That is the only way that I can describe it. But her figure is plain and clear—she might be close to me. The carpet on which she stands I can see, the chair on which she sits, the table on which she leans her hand, anything she touches I can see; but no more. I have seen her talking, I know she was entreating some one, but that some one was invisible. Yes, if she touched that person, the virtue of her touch would enable me to see him."

So far as I could see, Carriston's case appeared to be one of overwrought or unduly stimulated imagination. His I had always considered to be a mind of the most peculiar construction. In his present state of love, grief, and suspense these hallucinations might come in the same way in which dreams come. For a little while I sat in silence considering how I could best combat with and dispel his remarkable delusions. Before I had arrived at any decision I was called away to see a patient. I was but a short time engaged. Then I returned to Carriston, intending to continue my inquiries.

Upon re-entering the room I found him sitting as I had left him—directly opposite to the door. His face was turned fully toward me, and I trembled as I caught sight of it. He was leaning forward, his hands on the table cloth, his whole frame rigid, his eyes staring in one direction, yet, I knew, capable of seeing nothing that I could see. He seemed even oblivious to sound, for I entered the room and closed the door behind me without causing him to change look or position. The moment I saw the man I knew that he had been overtaken by what he called his strange fit.

My first impulse—a natural one—was to arouse him, but second thoughts told me that this was an opportunity for studying his disease which should not be lost—I felt that I could call it by no other name than disease—so I proceeded to make a systematic examination of his symptoms.

I leaned across the table, and, with my face about a foot from his, looked straight into his eyes. They betrayed no sign of recognition—no knowledge of my presence. I am ashamed to say I could not divest myself of the impression that they were looking through me. The pupils were greatly dilated. The lids were wide apart. I lighted a taper and held it before them, but could see no expansion of the iris. It was a case. I confess, entirely beyond my comprehension. I had no experience which might serve as a guide as to what was the best course to adopt. All I could do was to stand and watch carefully for any change.

Save for his regular breathing and a sort of convulsive twitching of his fingers, Carriston might have been a corpse or a statue. His face could scarcely grow paler than it had been before the attack. Altogether, it was an uncomfortable sight—a creepy sight—this motionless man, utterly regardless of all that went on around him, and seeing, or giving one the idea that he saw, something far away. I sighed as I looked at the strange spectacle, and foresaw what the end must surely be. But although I longed for him to awake, I determined on this occasion to let the trance, or fit, run its full course, that I might notice in what manner and how soon conscious ness returned.

I must have waited and watched some ten minutes—minutes which seemed to me interminable. At last I saw the lips quiver, the lids flicker once or twice, and eventually close wearily over the eyes. The unnatural tension of every muscle seemed to relax, and sighing deeply, and apparently quite exhausted, Carriston sank back into his chair, with beads of perspiration forming on his white brow. The fit was over.

In a moment I was at his side and forcing a glass of wine down his throat. He looked at me and spoke. His voice was faint, but his words were quite collected.

"I have seen her again," he said. "She is well, but so unhappy. I saw her kneel down and pray. She stretched her beautiful arms out to me. I cry out I know not where to look for her—my poor love! my poor love!"

I waited until I thought he had sufficiently recovered from his exhaustion to talk without injurious consequences. "Carriston," I said, "let me ask you one question: are these trances or visions voluntary, or not?"

He reflected for a few moments. "I can't quite tell you," he said; "or, rather, I would put it in this way. I do not think I can exercise my power at will; but I can feel when the fit is coming on me, and, I believe, can, if I choose, stop myself from yielding to it."

"Very well. Now listen. Promise me you will fight against these seizures as much as you can. If you don't, you will be raving mad in a month."

"I can't promise that," said Carriston, quietly. "See her at times I must, or I shall die. But I promise to yield as seldom as may be. I know, as well as you do, that the very exhaustion I now feel must be injurious to any one."

In truth he looked utterly worn out. Very much dissatisfied with his concession, the best I could get from him, I sent him to bed, knowing that natural rest, if he could get it, would do more than anything else toward restoring a healthy tone to his mind.

CHAPTER X.

I must confess, in spite of my affection for Carriston, I felt inclined to rebel against the course which matters were taking. I was a prosaic matter-of-fact medical man; doing my work to the best of my ability, anxious when that work was done that my hours of leisure should be as free from worry and care as possible. With Carriston's advent several disturbing elements entered into my quiet life.

Let Ralph Carriston be guilty or innocent of the extraordinary crime which his cousin laid at his door, I felt certain that he was anxious to obtain possession of the supposed lunatic's person. It would suit his purposes for his cousin to be proved mad. I did not believe that even if the capture was legally effected Carriston's liberation would be a matter of great difficulty, so long as he remained in his present state of mind; so long as I, a doctor of some standing, could go into the witness box and swear to his sanity. But my old dread was always with me—the dread that any further shock would overturn the balance of his sensitive mind.

So it was that every hour that Carriston was out of my sight was fraught with anxiety. If Ralph Carriston was really as unscrupulous as my friend supposed; if he had really, as seemed almost probable, suborned our agent; he might by some crafty trick obtain the needful certificate, and some day I should come home and find Carriston had been removed. In such a case I foresaw great trouble and distress.

Besides, after all that had occurred; it was as much as I could do to believe that Carriston was not mad. Any doctor who knew what I know would have given the verdict against him.

After dismissing his visions and hallucinations with the contempt which they deserved, the fact of a man who was madly, passionately in love with a woman, and who believed that she had been entrapped and was still kept in restraint, sitting down quietly, and letting day after day pass without making an effort towards finding her, was in itself prima facie evidence of insanity. A sane man would at once have set all the engines of detection at work.

I felt that if once Ralph Carriston obtained possession of him he could make out a strong case in his own favor. First of all, the proposed marriage out of the defendant's own sphere of life; the passing under a false name; the ridiculous, or apparently ridiculous, accusation made against his kinsman; the murderous threats; the chastisement of his own paid agent who brought him a report which might not seem at all untrue to any one who knew not Madeline Rowan. Leaving out of the question what might be wrung from me in cross-examination, Ralph Carriston had a strong case, and I knew that, once in his power, my friend might possibly be doomed to pass years, if not his whole life, under restraint. So I was anxious, very anxious.

CONTINUED ON FOURTH PAGE.

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