

or curiously, they turn from me; and much as I want to join them, I am unable to do so. Finally; there comes and touches me a woman who, half in pity and half in contempt, it seems, takes me by the hand to lead me away. How, or from what I could have got the idea, I do not know, but I am sure that she knows what it is about me which makes me fall behind, unable to join the others; but just as I speak to her each time to find this out, I awake, having learned nothing from her except that her name is 'Miriam.' That, Mr. Trant," the girl concluded, collectedly, "was always the way that dream went. But it never especially alarmed me, as I said, till 'Miriam' took me beyond that point for the first time three years ago and again this summer."

"In July, after Mr. Ritchie and his mother had come here to visit you, you said?" the psychologist asked, rapidly, as he saw that Mrs. Blythe, who had refrained from making any comment, was about to interrupt.

"Yes. During Mr. Ritchie's visit here three years ago, Mr. Trant," the girl continued, "but not when he was here in July; it was after he had gone away and come back again in August. I had been engaged to Charles a little over four months," she explained more particularly, "and during those months the dream, up to the point of 'Miriam's' entrance into it kept coming very frequently. It never took me farther than 'Miriam,' even during Charles' first visit here in July. He had suddenly to go to Arizona to inspect some properties which he was interested in, and during the two weeks he was gone, I went in the dream five times as far as 'Miriam'; but never any farther till the terrible night that Charles returned. On that night, as soon as he was asleep, in the room across the hall from mine—where Randall is now sleeping, Mr. Trant—I dreamt it again; but now 'Miriam' led me farther."

AGAIN there came to me, as soon as I fell asleep, the old feeling of falling away, and dropping back, and vainly struggling to stay with my friends and with Charles; again the awful paralysis and the sudden stopping; again the great crowd of people staring at me and never seeing me, and again all the people pressing about me, and 'Miriam,' half pitying, half condemning me. But this time she—silently, and still with her disdainful, cold pity—led me on. So solemn and so still was she that I was afraid to follow; but I forced myself to go with her, still full of fear. The people about me all disappeared, and 'Miriam,' without speaking a word, guided me through an orchard of peach trees all in full bloom; but the flowers did not give me pleasure at all, somehow. Instead, though they were bright and fresh and the sunlight shone upon them, they only brought an increase to my horror, and added to my dreadful sense of impending misfortune. And,



as I felt that, suddenly I saw I was no longer out doors; the peach blossoms were still about me; but now they were forming the walls and ceilings of a dark room—a room furnished like a library, and a long, flat couch; and on the couch was a figure covered by a sheet.

AS 'Miriam' forced me forward and made me lift the sheet, I saw it was my father lying dead before me! But as I looked again, I now saw that it was not he, but Charles—Charles Ritchie, lying there cold and dead!" The girl gasped. For a moment she could not proceed.

Trant bent forward swiftly and laid his hand on her wrist. "And then?" he urged.

"I awoke and found Charles Ritchie dead, Mr. Trant," the girl managed to reply. "His door was locked, and when I got no answer to my knocks and cries, I got help and had it broken down. And on his bed he lay—his face almost as I had seen it in my dream—dead!"

"I meant, there was no more of the dream?" the psychologist questioned gently.

"No; no more of that dream, Mr. Trant; and never even so much again after that for three years; never anything like the last part of it in any form till the identical dream, with the substitution only of Mr. Blythe for poor Charles Ritchie, came to me yesterday morning and this morning again, and forced me to send for you, Mr. Trant. I fear with all the intuition of a woman—and a woman who loves—that it means death again, if we pay no heed to it!"

"Unless Mr. Trant can assure us," Mrs. Blythe put in, with a distrustful look at the girl, "that nothing threatens Randall in this lonely place, twenty miles from everyone except chance camping parties, while he is sleeping in the same room and surrounded by the same circumstances in which Charles Ritchie met his death in so—peculiar a manner!"

"Mother, are you crazy?" Blythe cried, severely. "Edith, my dear—my dear!" He bent over and patted the girl's hand. "You must not mind what mother says, for that is only because she is frightened for me, just as you are. And do not think I cannot appreciate the fears you both feel for me. Now that you have told him all your side, I think Mr. Trant can safely allay your fears—can you not?" Blythe turned to the psychologist. "Ritchie's death came from a perfectly evident and even foreseen cause. His heart was weak, as nobody knows better than Miss Coburn herself. She has told me, when discussing this sanely, that he had been warned by his doctor that he must temporarily avoid all fatigue and excitement. Not only did Ritchie return from his midsummer trip to Arizona entirely exhausted, but he was so obviously distressed and agitated about something which had occurred upon this trip, that even the servants noticed it. His condition, therefore, was such as to make it almost inevitable for her to dream of his death, if she dreamed of him at all, and for his death to happen at that time was perfectly natural. As I am now sleeping in the room where he died, it is not strange that she recollects that experience in her dreams. Is that not so, Mr. Trant?"

The psychologist avoided replying directly to any of the three. He gazed away from them among the dark pines that surrounded the bungalow.

"Dreams are like shifting mists," he said, turning back to them finally. "Through them one can detect, but not easily define, the reality that exists behind them. I think I can detect as much as that in this dream—the presence of a reality. Let me ask you, Miss Coburn, whether you still accept the explanation Mr. Blythe has given of Charles Ritchie's death?"

"I know no other cause for it, Mr. Trant," the girl replied, "though Mr. Blythe overstates it when he says I was prepared for Charles's death. Though his family doctor had warned him, as Mr. Blythe has said, and the local doctor here said that heart exhaustion was undoubtedly the cause of his death, yet that night I was more encouraged about him than I had ever been."

"Then, tell me, are you ever conscious in your waking hours, Miss Coburn, as you are in this strange dream of yours, of any feeling of loneliness and isolation, or of being slighted by other people?"

"Nothing could be more foreign to me when awake than the feelings I have in that dream," the girl replied, promptly.

"Then I have only one other question for you," Trant continued. "Whom do you know that may be the prototype of this 'Miriam' who appears always in your dream?"

"I know no one who resembles this dream woman in any way," the girl responded, "and I have never known anyone named Miriam. I have no association with the name at all, except that it is the title of



one of the poems in the last book of verses published by my father."

"Ah!"

"Just a single stanza among fifty other poems, Mr. Trant, with nothing about it to impress me originally except that it is rather more obscure and melancholy even than most of his other verses. If you wish I will repeat the stanza."

"Let us hear it, then."

The girl leaned back and a shadow came into her eyes as she recited:

"She comes to mock me, with laughter free
Though clothed in dead years and in leprosy;
For my heart goes out to the throngs of men—
Though I check it and draw it back again,
My heart goes out forever;

And triumphing still over man and God,
As over the prophet who bore the rod,
She laughs; for my hand would be left unclaspt
And she knows I must draw it back at the last
The thread of my life to sever."

"Obscure and melancholy, as you say!" Trant raised his head at last. "Did your father end his own life?"

"Yes, Mr. Trant," the girl answered. "My father killed himself. He was one of those sweet but willful characters who have a hard time fighting their places in the world. At nineteen he had already quarrelled violently with my grandfather."

"Why, Miss Coburn?"

HE had published his first small volume of poems, and their unconventional tone so offended my sternly religious grandfather and my almost fanatically religious aunts; that my father left home and went West. It was in the West that he met and married my mother. It was not until a year after my grandfather's death that my father finally returned to Detroit. My mother had died on the lonely Arizona ranch, where we had been living, just before my second birthday, and my father, though still only a boy in years, was a broken and discouraged man." Edith Coburn drew her breath sharply and her eyes brightened with tears. "He lived for a few months a lonely and misanthropic life in Detroit, with no companion except myself—his baby daughter—and almost no servants except Linette, who, as I told you, has had charge of me ever since my mother's death. His only occupation during that time was to bring out another edition of his poems. Almost immediately after this book appeared he committed suicide."

"And the means he used to end his life?"

"He poisoned himself with prussic acid," the girl answered, steadily. "But I was too young to remember the particulars, though they say they found me with the body—a little frightened child—for the nurse had left me to go out for help."

"Ah, he used poison!" Trant repeated, intently. "I am sorry to have been obliged to give you the pain of telling me—or us—all this, Miss Coburn; but with what I have now in hand it will be odd