



Mischief-Making.

Only a tiny dropping from a tiny hidden leak,
But the flow is never stopping, and the flaw is far to seek.
Only some trickling water, nothing at all at first,
But it grows to a valley-slaughter, for the reservoir has burst.
The wild flood once in motion, who shall arrest its course?
As well restrain the ocean as that ungoverned force.

A look of great affliction, as you tell what one told you,
With a feeble contradiction, or a "hope it is not true!"
A story quite too meagre for naming any more,
Only your friend seems eager to know a little more.
No doubt, if explanation, if all was known, you see;
"One might get information from Mrs. A. or B."
Only some simple queries passed on from tongue to tongue,
Though the ever-growing series has out of nothing sprung.
Only a faint suggestion, only a doubtful hint,
Only a leading question with a special tune or tint,
Only a low "I wonder!" nothing unfair at all;
But the whisper grows to thunder, and a scathing bolt may fall,
And a good ship is dismasted, and hearts are like to break,
And a Christian life is blasted for a scarcely guessed mistake.
F. R. H.

The Power of Words.

"I will keep my mouth with a bridle" - Ps. xxxix, 1.

It is not safe for a man or woman to open the lips and permit the heart to pour itself fourth by that channel without selection or restraint. If the spring within were pure, the stream could not be too constant or too strong. But the heart is full of corruption, and from a corrupt fountain sweet waters cannot flow. It is the part of a wise man to set a watch upon his own lips. This is a more profitable exercise, if it be less pleasant, than to set a watch on the lips of our neighbors. If we fling the door open, and allow the emotions to rush forth as they arise, it is certain that many of our words will be evil and do evil. Weigh the words; those that are allowed to take wing should be few and chosen. To bridle the lips is an exercise hard and healthful to our spirits. It requires some practice to make one skillful in it, but skill in that art will be very profitable in the long run. It is easier and more natural when one is full of emotions to open the sluices, and let the whole gush forth in an impetuous stream of words. It is easy, but it is not right; it is pleasant to nature, but offensive to God, and hurtful to man. You must consider well, pull the bridle hard, and permit no false or proud words to pass the barrier of the lips. "The tongue of the just," that is, the stream of words that flows from it, "is like choice silver." Silver is bright and pure and not corrosive. It may safely be applied to the body, whether on a sound place or on a sore. Certain surgical instruments that penetrate the human body and come in contact with the blood must be made of silver; other materials would be liable to contract rust, and thereby inflame the wound. Silver, applied as a healing instrument, does not bite like an adder, and leave a poison festering behind. Thus, when an operation of faithfulness becomes necessary, the tongue of the just is a safe instrument wherewith to probe the sores of a brother's soul. The truth spoken will perform the needful operation; and spoken in love it will not leave the seeds of fever behind it. A biting, corrosive tongue is a curse alike to the serpent who wields it and the victims whom it strikes.

"An hypocrite with his mouth destroyeth his neighbor." - Prov. xxi, 9. Beware of carrying deadly weapons. For what end did God give to man, and to man alone, a speaking mouth? The maker of that tongue meant it not to be a dart to pierce a brother with. Remember who gave you that wonderful instrument, and how He intended it to be used. When a kind parent sends to his distant child a case of curious mechanical instruments, he takes care to send with them "directions for use." Even such a set of directions has our Father in Heaven sent to us, along with the case of cunning instruments which our living body contains. Look into the directions and see what is written opposite the mouth and tongue - *S. James, 3*. The tongue is one, and that not the least, of the ten talents. "Occupy till I come," is the condition of the loan; near, though unseen, is the day of reckoning.

Rev. W. Arnot.

Words.

Words are lighter than the cloud-foam of the reckless ocean spray,
Vainer than the trembling shadow that the next hour steals away.
By the fall of summer rain-drops is the air as deeply stirred,
And the rose leaf that we tread on will out-live a word.
Yet, on the dull silence breaking with a lightning flash, a word,
Bearing endless desolation on its blighting wings, I heard:
Earth can forgo no keener weapon, dealing sure death and pain,
And the cruel echo answered through long years again.
I have known one word hang starlike o'er a dreary waste of years,
And it only shone the brighter looked at through a mist of tears;
While a weary wanderer gathered hope and heart on life's dark day.
By its faithful promise shining clearer day by day.
Words are mighty, words are living; serpents with their venomous stings,
Or bright angels crowding round us, with Heaven's light upon their wings.
Every word has its own spirit, true or false, that never dies;
Every word man's lips have uttered echoes in God's skies.
A. A. Procter.

FAMILY CIRCLE.

Adventures of Sherlock Holmes.

THE MAN WITH THE TWISTED LIP.

BY A. CONAN DOYLE.

(Continued from page 32.)

"No, I don't think you would guess. Every pocket stuffed with pennies and halfpennies—four hundred and twenty-one pennies, and two hundred and seventy half pennies. It was no wonder that it had not been swept away by the tide. But a human body is a different matter. There is a fierce eddy between the wharf and the house. It seemed likely enough that the weighted coat had remained when the stripped body had been sucked away into the river."

"But I understand that all the other clothes were found in the room. Would the body be dressed in a coat alone?"
"No, sir, but the facts might be met speciously enough. Suppose that this man Boone had thrust Neville St. Clair through the window, there is no human eye which could have seen the deed. What would he do then? It would of course instantly strike him that he must get rid of the tell-tale garments. He would seize the coat then, and be in the act of throwing it out when it would occur to him that it would swim and not sink. He has little time, for he has heard the scuffle downstairs when the wife tried to force her way up, and perhaps he has already heard from his Lascar confederate that the police are hurrying up the street. There is not an instant to be lost. He rushes to some secret hiding place, where he has accumulated the fruits of his beggary, and he stuffs all the coins upon which he can lay his hands into the pockets to make sure of the coat's sinking. He throws it out and would have done the same with the other garments had not he heard the rush of steps below, and only just had time to close the window when the police appeared."

"It certainly sounds feasible."
"Well, we will take it as a working hypothesis for want of a better. Boone, as I have told you, was arrested and taken to the station, but it could not be shown that there had ever before been anything against him. He had for years been known as a professional beggar, but his life appeared to have been a very quiet and innocent one. There the matter stands at present, and the questions which have to be solved, what Neville St. Clair was doing in the opium den, what happened to him when there, where he is now, and what Hugh Boone had to do with his disappearance, are all as far from a solution as ever. I confess that I cannot recall any case within my experience which looked at the first glance so simple, and yet which presented such difficulties."

Whilst Sherlock Holmes had been detailing this singular series of events we had been whirling through the outskirts of the great town until the last straggling houses had been left behind, and we rattled along with a country hedge upon either side of us. Just as we finished, however, we drove through two scattered villages, where a few lights still glimmered in the windows.

"We are out on the outskirts of Lee," said my companion. "We have touched on three English counties in our short drive, starting in Middlesex, passing over an angle of Surrey, and ending in Kent. See that light among the trees? That is The Cedars, and beside that lamp sits a woman whose anxious ears have already, I have little doubt, caught the clink of our horse's feet."

"But why are you not conducting the case from Baker street?" I asked.

"Because there are many enquiries which must be made out here. Mrs. St. Clair has most kindly put two rooms at my disposal, and you may rest assured that she will have nothing but a welcome for my friend and colleague. I hate to meet her, Watson, when I have no news of her husband. Here we are. Whoa, there, whoa!"

We had pulled up in front of a large villa which stood within its own grounds. A stable-boy had run out to the horse's head, and springing down, I followed Holmes up the small, winding gravel drive which led to the house. As we approached, the door flew open, and a little blonde woman stood in the opening, clad in some sort of light mousseline de soie, with a touch of fluffy pink chiffon at her neck and wrists. She stood with her figure outlined against the flood of light, one hand upon the door, her head and face protruded, with eager eyes and parted lips, a standing question.

"Well?" she cried, "well?" And then, seeing that there were two of us, she gave a cry of hope which sank into a groan as she saw that my companion shook his head and shrugged his shoulders.

"No good news?"

"None."

"No bad?"

"No."

"Thank God for that. But come in. You must be weary, for you have had a long day."

"This is my friend, Dr. Watson. He has been of most vital use to me in several of my cases, and a lucky chance has made it possible for me to bring him out and associate him with this investigation."

"I am delighted to see you," said she, pressing my hand warmly. "You will, I am sure, forgive anything which may be wanting in our arrangements, when you consider the blow which has come so suddenly upon us."

"My dear madam," said I, "I am an old campaigner, and if I were not, I can very well see that no apology is needed. If I can be of any assistance, either to you or to my friend here, I shall be indeed happy."

"Now, Mr. Sherlock Holmes," said the lady, as we entered a well-lit dining-room, upon the table of which a cold supper had been laid out, "I should very much like to ask you one or two plain questions, to which I beg that you will give a plain answer."

"Certainly, madam."

"Do not trouble about my feelings. I am not hysterical, nor given to fainting. I simply wish to hear your real, real opinion."

"Upon what point?"

"In your heart of hearts do you think that Neville is alive?"

Sherlock Holmes seemed to be embarrassed by the question. "Frankly now!" she repeated, standing upon the rug, and looking keenly down at him, as he leaned back in a basket chair.

"Frankly, then, madam, I do not."

"You think that he is dead?"

"I do."

"Murdered?"

"I don't say that. Perhaps."

"And on what day did he meet his death?"

"On Monday."

"Then perhaps, Mr. Holmes, you will be good enough to explain how it is that I have received a letter from him to-day."

Sherlock Holmes sprang out of his chair as if he had been galvanized.

"What!" he roared.

"Yes, to-day," she stood smiling, holding up a little slip of paper in the air.

"May I see it?"

"Certainly."

He snatched it from her in his eagerness, and smoothing it out upon the table, he drew over the lamp, and examined it intently. I had left my chair, and was gazing at it over his shoulder. The envelope was a very coarse one, and was stamped with the Gravesend post-mark, and with the date of that very day, or rather of the day before, for it was considerably after midnight.

"Coarse writing!" murmured Holmes. "Surely this is not your husband's writing, madam."

"No, but the enclosure is."

"I perceive also that whoever addressed the envelope had to go and enquire as to the address."

"How can you tell that?"

"The name, you see, is in perfectly black ink, which has dried itself. The rest is of the grayish color which shows that blotting-paper has been used. If it had been written straight off, and then blotted, none would be of a deep black shade. This man has written the name, and there has then been a pause before he wrote the address, which can only mean that he was not familiar with it. It is, of course, a trifle, but there is nothing so important as trifles. Let us now see the letter!"

Ha! there has been an enclosure here!"

"Yes, there was a ring. His signet ring."

"And you are sure that this is your husband's hand?"

"One of his hands."

"One?"

"His hand when he wrote hurriedly. It is very unlike his usual writing, and yet I know it well."

"Dearest, do not be frightened. All will come well. There is a huge error which it may take some little time to rectify. Wait in patience—Neville. Written in pencil upon the fly-leaf of a book, octavo size, no watermark. Hum!

Posted to-day in Gravesend by a man with a dirty thumb. Ha! And the flap has been gummed, if I am not very much in error, by a person who had been chewing tobacco. And you have no doubt that it is your husband's hand, madam?"

"None," Neville wrote those words."

"And they were posted to-day at Gravesend. Well, Mrs. St. Clair, the clouds lighten, though I should not venture to say that the danger is over."

"But he must be alive, Mr. Holmes."

"Unless this is a clever forgery to put us on the wrong scent. The ring, after all, proves nothing. It may have been taken from him."

"No, no; it is, it is, it is his very own writing!"

"Very well. It may, however, have been written on Monday, and only posted to-day."

"That is possible."

"If so, much may have happened between."

"Oh, you must not discourage me, Mr. Holmes. I know that all is well with him. There is so keen a sympathy between us that I should know if evil came upon him. On the very day that I saw him last he cut himself in the bedroom, and yet I in the dining-room rushed upstairs instantly with the utmost certainty that something had happened. Do you think that I would respond to such a trifle, and yet be ignorant of his death?"

"I have seen too much not to know that the impression of a woman may be more valuable than the conclusion of an analytical reasoner. And in this letter you certainly have a very strong piece of evidence to corroborate your view. But if your husband is alive, and able to write letters, why should he remain away from you?"

"I cannot imagine. It is unthinkable."

"And on Monday he made no remarks before leaving you?"

"No."

"And you were surprised to see him in Swandam-lane?"

"Very much so."

"Was the window open?"

"Yes."

"Then he might have called to you?"

"He might."

"He only, as I understand, gave an inarticulate cry?"

"Yes."

"A call for help, you thought?"

"Yes. He waved his hands."

"But it might have been a cry of surprise. Astonishment at the unexpected sight of you might cause him to throw up his hands?"

"It is possible."

"And you thought he was pulled back?"

"He disappeared so suddenly."

"He might have leaped back. You did not see anyone else in the room?"

"No, but this horrible man confessed to having been there, and the Lascar was at the foot of the stairs."

"Quite so. Your husband, as far as you could see, had his ordinary clothes on?"

"But without his collar or tie. I distinctly saw his bare throat."

"Had he ever spoken of Swandam-lane?"

"Never."

"Had he ever shown any signs of having taken opium?"

"Never."

"Thank you, Mrs. St. Clair. Those are the principal points about which I wish to be absolutely clear. We shall now have a little supper and then retire, for we may have a very busy day to-morrow."

A large and comfortable double-bedded room had been placed at our disposal, and I was quickly between the sheets. I was weary after my night of adventure. Sherlock Holmes was a man, however, who when he had an unsolved problem upon his mind would go for days, and even for a week, without rest, turning it over, rearranging his facts, looking at it from every point of view, until he had either fathomed it, or convinced himself that his data were insufficient. It was soon evident to me that he was now preparing for an all-night sitting. He took off his coat and waistcoat, put on a large blue dressing gown, and then wandered about the room collecting pillows from his bed, and cushions from the sofa and arm-chairs. With these he constructed a sort of Eastern divan, upon which he perched himself cross-legged, with an ounce of shag tobacco and a box of matches laid out in front of him. In the dim light of the lamp I saw him sitting there, an old brier pipe between his lips, his eyes fixed vacantly upon the corner of the ceiling, the blue smoke curling up from him, silent, motionless, with the light shining upon his strong set aquiline features. So he sat as I dropped off to sleep, and so he sat when a sudden ejaculation caused me to wake up, and I found the summer sun shining into the apartment. The pipe was still between his lips, the smoke still curled upwards, and the room was full of a dense tobacco haze, but nothing remained of the heap of shag which I had seen upon the previous night.

"Awake, Watson?" he asked.

"Yes."

"Game for a morning drive?"

"Certainly."

"Then dress. No one is stirring yet, but I know where the stable boy sleeps, and we shall soon have the trap out." He chuckled to himself as he spoke, his eyes twinkled, and he seemed a different man to the sombre thinker of the previous night.

As I dressed I glanced at my watch. It was no wonder that no one was stirring. It was twenty-five minutes past four. I had hardly finished when Holmes returned with the news that the boy was putting in the horse.

"I want to test a little theory of mine," said he, pulling on his boots. "I think, Watson, that you are now standing in the presence of one of the most absolute fools in Europe. I deserve to be kicked from here to Charing-cross. But I think I have the key of the affair now."

"And where is it?" I asked, smiling.

"In the bath-room," he answered. "Oh, yes, I am not joking," he continued, seeing my look of incredulity. "I have just been there, and I have taken it out, and I have got it in this Gladstone bag. Come on, my boy, and we shall see whether it will not fit the lock."

We made our way downstairs as quietly as possible, and out into the bright morning sunshine. In the road stood our horse and trap, with the half-clad stable boy waiting at the head. We both sprang in, and away we dashed down the London road. A few country carts were stirring, bearing in vegetables to the metropolis, but the lines of villas on either side were as silent and lifeless as some city in a dream.

"It has been in some points a singular case," said Holmes, flicking the horse on into a gallop. "I confess that I have been as blind as a mole, but it is better to learn wisdom late than never to learn it at all."

In town, the earliest rivers were just beginning to look sleepily from their windows as we drove through the streets of