

## ANSWER TO "DO YOU LOVE ME."

BY MILTON W. HENLEY.

Do I love thee? Tell thee truly  
The deep meaning of that smile?  
Naught it means but "you are dearest,"  
And not "friendly" all the while.

Yet, combined within my nature  
So to make all round me light,  
Free to all who court its favors  
Yet alone to thee most bright.

Do I love thee? Can the glances  
That you cherish from mine eyes  
Be granted freely to all others  
When 'tis alone I prize?

And, like lamps that kindly favor,  
All that are beneath their rays,  
I would be a beacon-bright-light  
But to guide thee on thy ways.

Do I love thee? There's a deeper  
Meaning in each word and tone,  
When it falls upon thy hearing,  
And 'tis meant for thee alone—

Not so soft and so enchanting  
Aimed to fall on others' ears,  
But to wake thy heart to gladness;  
Believe me, nearest—still thy fears.

Do I love thee? Mind the pressure  
Of the hand. That sends a thrill  
To thy heart whenever you clasp it,  
For 'tis given with a will.

Meaning always more than friendship,  
More than kindness on my part,  
You have mine already, dearest,  
May I claim your hand and heart?

## A MYSTERY.

## CHAPTER I.

At No. 10, Crawley street, Pitborough, lived Mr. Hartley, the uncle of my friend John Ormerod, who had often spoken to me of the old man's peculiarities, and among other things had stated that as his uncle was a bachelor he expected to inherit his property. This, if report spoke the truth, was considerable; for old Hartley, although he lived in a very mean fashion, was reputed to be rich, and was generally known as "the miser."

Crawley street was not exactly the place that a man of wealth would be expected to choose for his dwelling; it was a poor shabby street in the suburbs of Pitborough, a manufacturing town, many of the houses in which were let out to lodgers, and indeed I believe No. 10 was the only house that was not so underlet; but there Mr. Hartley had been born, and there he had expressed his intention of dying, and there, meanwhile, he lived with one old servant.

John Ormerod was a constant visitor at Pitborough, by the old man's invitation, but the latter with characteristic meanness seldom received his nephew as his guest. When only to dine with him now and then. No recognized course was for the younger man to remain at some hotel during his stay, where he was expected to entertain his uncle when his uncle was not disposed to entertain him, which was pretty often. I call this a characteristic meanness, because substantially old Hartley was very generous to his nephew, supplying him liberally with money; but it was in these small things, in the giving of dinners and so on, that his avarice seemed to master him; he had no objection to giving money, but grudging spending it. So although Ormerod was wont to laugh at his uncle's eccentricities (behind his back, of course, for he had expectations), he had an affection for him which, I believe, was not wholly interested, and always showed great pleasure when called down to Pitborough, a pleasure which I used to think was in some measure assumed, not knowing then the true reason for it.

In the autumn of the year 18— occurred the events which I am about to relate. Ormerod was away on one of his Pitborough visits, and I was by myself in London, in anything but a cheerful frame of mind; for I was out of employment and, in a word, hard up—so hard up indeed that I was anxiously waiting for my friend's return, in order to borrow a sovereign or two of him, for he always returned with money in his pocket. One day I had dined on a cup of coffee and a roll—I could afford no more—and having very minutely examined the advertisements and found nothing that would at all suit me, turned to the news part of the paper, when almost the first paragraph which greeted my eye was one entitled "Mysterious Murder."

"On Tuesday morning, Pitborough and its vicinity was thrown into a state of great excitement, by a most mysterious tragedy. It appears that Mr. Hartley, of Crawley street, reputed to be a man of great wealth and eccentric manners, and well known in the neighborhood, failed to make his appearance at the usual time in the morning, and as the servant could obtain no answer on knocking at the door, which according to his usual practice was locked, her suspicions were roused, and she summoned a policeman to her assistance, by whom the door was forcibly entered, when

the unfortunate man was found dead in his bed, murdered in the most frightful manner. Medical aid was at once sent for, but without avail, as life had been extinct some hours. His chamber had been broken open, but whether any money had been taken from it cannot be ascertained, as the deceased was very uncommunicative concerning his affairs, but it is believed he kept his money there. What renders the case more mysterious, is that the door and window were both fastened on the inside; but the police are said to have obtained a clue to the murderer, which they are energetically following up, and we hope in our next issue to report his apprehension."

To say that I was shocked on reading this would be too strong a word; I was startled, but the uppermost thought in my mind was that now my friend would be a rich man; for it must be remembered that Mr. Hartley was a perfect stranger to me, and it was perhaps natural that I should think more of the good that had befallen the one I knew, than of the evil that had befallen the other.

I thought a good deal about the news paragraph that day, having but little to occupy me, and the more I thought about it the more fascinated did I become by one portion of the newspaper report, namely, that relating to the fastening of the door and window. I had always had a fancy, perhaps it was a morbid fancy, for unravelling the mysterious; there was a sort of detective instinct within me, which I was always wishing to indulge, and the strange circumstance of the murderer having locked himself out roused it at once.

There was a fine opportunity of exercising my talents in my friend's service, and I determined, if the next day's paper did not clear up the mystery, to write to Ormerod and offer to assist in tracking the criminal. But that letter was prevented, and in an unexpected manner, for as I sat that evening thinking over the matter and smoking my pipe, Ormerod himself walked in. He was nervous and agitated, and without a word of greeting, plunged at once into the subject.

"You have heard of the terrible affair, have you not, G—? It was in the paper this morning."

"Yes," I said, "I have read it."

"Shocking, shocking! It has quite upset me. I dined with him last night, and this morning—but you don't know the worst—good Heaven, I think I shall go mad with it all!"

"Not the worst?" I said.

"No. They say the police have got a clue. I shrugged my shoulders and said, "We all know what that means—nothing at all."

"It means something! It means this, that they suspect me!"

"You?" I exclaimed, for I was fairly surprised.

"Yes; they have set a watch upon me. I am followed wherever I go. They have followed me up here, and are watching this house even now. I'll tell you what it is, G—: this is a most unhappy business; but the truth is that when that murder was committed I was away from my hotel. I did not return until a very late hour, and that has come to their knowledge."

"But, my good fellow," said I, "that is the simplest matter in the world. Let us go over the circumstances together, and I have no doubt we shall be able not only to account for every minute of your absence, but find credible witnesses to support us. If that is their only evidence their suspicions will soon be laid."

But he shook his head, and said nervously, "No, I can't—I can't."

"Nonsense," I replied, as cheerfully as I could; "bring your mind to it as steadily as you can and you will soon remember."

"You don't understand," he said; "I do remember perfectly where I was, and I was with one person all the while; but that person—look here, G—, I'll tell you the whole story, and then you will see in how unpleasant a position I am placed."

It seems that, in his visits to Pitborough, he had made the acquaintance of a young lady named L—, the daughter of a very rich manufacturer, with whom he had fallen in love at first sight, and that first sight was in church. I confess, that from what Ormerod told me, I was not impressed with a very favorable opinion of Miss L—, although in his eye, she was, of course, an angel. She seemed to be a vain, giddy, thoughtless girl, who, having observed his admiration, gave him a good deal of encouragement. The result was that a clandestine correspondence was established between the two, which had lasted for a considerable time.

He retained sufficient sense to know well that Mr. L— was far too proud and rich a man ever to favor his suit, and so was only too ready to enter into this romantic intrigue, culminating in that unfortunate appointment on the night of the murder. Mr. L— was away on business, and his daughter had taken this opportunity of receiving young Ormerod; but as it was important that no one should know it except her own maid, who was the go-between in the affair, it was necessary that they should wait until the other servants had retired before admitting her lover, and hence it happened that he did not return to his hotel, until so late, and suspicion was directed towards him.

"And now you see," he said in conclusion, "why I cannot account for my time. I had rather be suspected for ever than cast the least stain upon her name. She will know the reason of my silence, and that is sufficient."

I knew him too well to try arguments upon him now. I simply made a mental note of the young lady's name and address, and then said—

"And what do you propose doing now? Do you remain in London?"

"No," he replied, "they will think I am trying to avoid them if I do that. I shall return to Pitborough to-morrow morning, and let them do their worst; besides, I must be present to arrange about the funeral and attend the inquest. Perhaps they will warn me not to give evidence to incriminate myself," he added bitterly, "but I must be there."

"Can you lend me five pounds?" I asked abruptly.

He looked somewhat disgusted at my thinking of such a thing at that moment, but took a note from his pocket at once, and handed it to me.

"He gave it to me," he said, "the last time I saw him."

"What was your purpose in coming to London?"

"My purpose was a foolish one," he said bitterly; "I thought you might have assisted me in my trouble, given me some advice, done something. Heaven knows what! Now I will go back again."

"Good," I said, "I will do something. Now listen to me, Ormerod, and don't fly away with the idea that I am a selfish brute. I want money badly enough, I admit, but I did not ask this for myself, as you shall see. The police think they have got hold of a clue, which we know to be a false one, and therefore they are utterly useless for our purpose. They are following the wrong man, and will persist in following him, whereas we want to get hold of the right one. We will leave them to their task, if you please, and I will undertake to do your detective business for you. I have not matured my plans yet, but I know this, that I can do nothing without money, and there it is. At what time does your train leave to-morrow morning?"

"At eight o'clock."

"Very well; I shall most likely go down by the next train, or at any rate in the course of the day, and we shall meet again in Pitborough; but when we do, above all things remember this, that we have never met before. Don't speak to me unless I speak to you. And now tell me all the particulars you know."

He had not much to tell, the sum of his information being as follows:—On the fatal evening he had dined with Mr. Hartley at his house; the old man was particularly cheerful that evening, had given him notes to the amount of fifty pounds, and when his nephew took his leave rather earlier than usual on such occasions, had gone unpleasantly near the truth by asking jocularly if she couldn't wait a little.

When he left there was only Mr. Hartley and the old servant in the house. The latter, who was very deaf, slept in the basement, and heard nothing during the night. Mr. Hartley slept at the top of the house, in a back room. The intervening rooms, with the exception of the front parlor where he took his meals, and the back parlor which he called his study, were used simply for lumber. All the lower windows were strongly barred and the doors sheathed with iron, several attempts having already been made to break into the house. I took a note of these particulars, and then Ormerod went to his own room, closely followed as I observed by a man. But I took good care not to show myself, as I did not wish to be recognized when I got to Pitborough.

I arranged my plans that night as I lay in bed, and the next morning was ready for action. The first thing I did was to call upon a friend who reported for a daily paper; he was also a friend of Ormerod's, and I had no hesitation in speaking to him on the subject. I told him I was going down to Pitborough in the capacity of a detective, and should hold myself out as a representative of the press, as that character would give me greater facilities of obtaining information than any other.

"And what paper do you represent for the occasion?" he asked.

"It depends on circumstances," I replied.

"What circumstances?"

There were some of his cards on the mantelpiece, bearing his name and the name of the paper on which he was engaged—the *Daily Dart*. I looked significantly at these, he did the same, and then I answered his question—

"What circumstances? Well, it depends on your looking out of the window for a moment."

He laughed and looked out of the window, and as soon as his back was turned I put the cards in my pocket. No more was said upon the subject, but he knew as well as I did what had taken place. I saw him glance at the mantelpiece again when the transfer had been made, and where I had left the two cards for the sake of appearances, but nothing had been said to compromise him in the matter.

That day I paid for my ticket with the note Ormerod had given me, and in due time arrived at Pitborough, where I hired a bed at a small inn near the scene of the murder, and called myself Mr. Burton of the *Daily Dart*.

## CHAPTER II.

I found on inquiry that the inquest had been opened that day, but nothing was elicited beyond what I already knew, and the inquiry was adjourned for a week at the request of the police inspector, who said he expected to obtain some important evidence within that time. The only witnesses examined were the old servant, the conciable whom she called in, the doctor, and a neighbor, whose evidence to the effect that he had heard a noise of groaning about half-past eleven seemed to fix the time when the deed

was committed; but the mystery of the closed door and window remained unexplained.

I found there was a good deal of excitement in the neighborhood, not caused so much by the atrocity of the murder, for there was nothing in that exceptional, but by the mystery attending it; and as I sat in the inn parlor that night, I was amused by the wild conjectures that were started first by one and then by another. Chance had so far favored me in that I found I could not have chosen a better resting-place than that inn, as it was a place of resort for many of those who lived in Crawley Street, and among others of the neighbor who had given evidence at the inquest.

I had not been five minutes in the room before I was aware of this fact, for he was evidently proud of it, and was never weary of rehearsing the questions that had been put to him and the answers he had given. "Says the Crowner to me, 'Was you sure it was half arter eleven?' 'Perfect sure,' says I. 'And why?' says he. 'Beccos I heard the chimies just afterwards,' says I. And then they told me to stand down."

This man, John Martin by name (professionally known as Giovanni Martin), who described himself as Professor of Gymnastics, was a small, mild, anxious-looking man, with a little chirping voice; he appeared quite happy at the sudden notoriety that had fallen upon him, but happy in a modest way. On hearing I was connected with the press, he introduced himself to me, with the information that he was engaged at a place of amusement; that he was desirous of distinguishing himself in the metropolis if he could get a chance, but had hitherto failed; and that he would take it as a great favor if I would come and see his performance, when he had no doubt I should be able to give him a good notice in my paper. With that he slipped a free admission into my hand, which he informed me was available for any night; but as I had not come there for pleasure out business, I put the ticket in my pocket without any intention of using it; however I improved the occasion by asking him a few questions, and found that he occupied the upper floor of No. 9, Crawley Street, and his room adjoined that in which Mr. Hartley slept.

That was the result of my first day's experience as a detective, and it was not much certainly, but then my work did not really begin until the next day. The funeral was to take place in the morning, and as soon after that as possible I determined to make an inspection of the room, having faith in my card to obtain me this privilege, and indeed I found it to be a tall man that admitted me wherever I chose to go.

The police, who had hitherto found nothing in the room to assist, seemed to be of opinion that they might do so, for they had preserved it in the same state as at first and kept the door locked; however my tall man unlocked it and I was allowed to look where I would, but to move nothing, to insure which last injunction a policeman accompanied me in the ostensible character of guide.

I soon ascertained that there were only three means of entrance to the room—the door, the window, and the chimney. My first idea had been that after the fatal wound had been given and the murderer escaped, the old man in a state of terror and frenzy had succeeded in reaching the door and locking it, with a vague intention of putting that barrier between him and the burglar, and had then crawled back to bed and there died; but the medical evidence disposed of that surmise, so having ascertained beyond a doubt that the door was locked on the inside, I dismissed that means of exit.

I next examined the chimney, but the register was fastened down with a stout iron bar, and had been so for some time, the servant informed me; so there only remained the window, of which I made a careful inspection, to the great amusement of the constable.

"You will do no good there," he said; "our people know what they are about, and have gone over every square inch of the room, and I may tell you they don't take much account of the window. Why, it stands to reason that no one could get up fifty feet or more of straight brick wall. The door and the chimney one looks to naturally, but the window—well the thing's impossible, as you may see for yourself."

Seeing for myself was the very thing I meant to do, and I noted two things while the policeman was speaking: that the spring of the fastener was broken, and that about the hinge of the fastener was what appeared to be a piece of tow.

"I suppose there is no objection to my opening the window," I said; "I want to see the height from the ground."

"You'll not want to look twice," the policeman replied, and with that permission I undid the bolt, observing that it worked very easily for want of the spring, and threw up the window. I own I was disappointed, for had hoped to find an outhouse whose roof would have afforded some means of reaching the window, but it was as the policeman said a sheer descent; and he, seeing my blank expression, smiled. Right and left were the zinc water-pipes, but too far from the window for any one to have ascended by them; about four feet below me ran a projecting cornice of brick, about an inch and a half wide, broken away in parts, and scarcely affording foothold for a cat; it seemed to me very rotten, and patched here and there with something white as though the mortar had crumbled down upon it; or the spots might, I thought, be damp-stains; the wall was otherwise unbroken, and had apparently at one time a vine trained up it, as I observed the nail-holes in the mortar. There was a paved yard at the