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Iodide Ammonia.
Relieves Joints, Paralysis, Neuralgia, Diphtheria, etc. Protrusion Uterus, Female Weakness.

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JUST IN TIME.

BY ADELINE SERGEANT,
AUTHOR OF "JACOB'S WIFE," "UNDER
THE PALM TREES," &c.

CHAPTER XIII.
A STRANGE CONFESSION.

"I am not Gerald's confidante," said Beatrice coldly.

"Are you not? From some words that he let drop just now I imagined that you were. Why should he say 'Beatrice knows! Beatrice knows!' Why were you so anxious to hide his discolored face and workman's garments? Come, come, my dear Miss Beatrice, it is really useless to try to deceive me. I, who have known you since you were a child in short frocks and pinafores—I, who know every line in your face and every change in your countenance by heart—I know when you are speaking the truth and when you are trying to conceal it."

"I beg your pardon, Dr. Airlie," said Beatrice, with a flush of wrath, "I am not trying to deceive you. If my cousin Gerald has said anything to me in confidence I shall certainly try not to betray his confidence. There is no deception in silence."

"You believe me very greatly," said Dr. Airlie, crossing one leg over the other, and looking pleasantly towards the ceiling. "I am exceedingly glad to hear your remarks upon the subject, Miss Beatrice. They are marked by that logical clearness, that transparent candor, which I have always maintained to be eminently characteristic of your mind. I had been half afraid, I must confess, that Mr. Ruthven's confused words and disjointed sentences indicated some rather disagreeable occurrence—something in fact slightly creditable—of which you were unfortunately aware. But my anxiety on the point is dissipated—quite dissipated—by your reply."

Again Beatrice colored from vexation; she knew not why. The doctor's words were uttered in a bland and gentle tone, and yet they conveyed to her mind a very unpleasant suggestion. Was he seeking to drive her into some admission which might be used to Gerald's disadvantage? Or had he really heard sufficient to warrant her in piping the whole story into his sympathetic ear? She did not know whether to speak or to be silent. So, being a wise woman, she held her tongue, and thereby disappointed Stephen Airlie, who had expected her to confide in him.

"Very curious effects are produced sometimes by a sudden shock or fright," the doctor went on quietly, and in a reflective tone. "I remember a peculiar case in the early days of my own practice in Edinburgh—a young fellow who had suffered a severe shock to the nerves, imagined himself guilty of a crime which he had no more committed than I had."

"Yes," said Beatrice. She tried to control her features, but in spite of herself they twitched a little as she listened, and the doctor noticed the twitch.

"You are in pain," he said rising from the chair in which he had seated himself, and taking her wrist again between his fingers. For the moment I am ashamed to say that I had forgotten this poor hand. I will attend to it now, if you please. Very much swollen. Can you stretch it out? Ah! it is painful, I know. I have bandages here, fortunately. You will be more comfortable in a few moments."

While he spoke he was deftly manipulating the swollen wrist, passing his skillful fingers over it to see that no bone was broken, supporting and bandaging in a way that showed him to be anything but a novice in the art of surgery. He put his patient certainly to a good deal of pain, but Beatrice was hardly conscious of it; her mind was bent upon other things.

"But the young man?" she said presently. "I am interested in your story. Did he—did he—think that he had done something of which he was really innocent?"

"Keep your hand steady, please. Oh, about the young man? Yes, he certainly thought so. He accused himself of theft—an odd thing to do, was it not—and what is more, he was imprisoned for it. It was proved absolutely at a later period that he could not possibly have committed the crime of which he accused himself."

"Oh, Dr. Airlie," said Beatrice, suddenly and almost entreatingly, "it is possible that such a thing might happen—"

And there she stopped. The doctor looked at her keenly. His blue eyes could be coldly, sharply observant when he chose. It seemed to her, proud and reserved as she was, that her whole soul lay open before those penetrating eyes as she sat white and trembling beneath his gaze.

He finished the sentence for her. "It is possible," he said drily, "that such a thing should happen to Gerald Ruthven? Is not that what you were going to say?"

She made no verbal answer, but her head

the answer in her suddenly lifted, and

"It is quite possible, of course, though hardly probable," he went on, "that Gerald Ruthven should develop the same sort of mania. Do I understand you to say, my dear Miss Beatrice, that you have cause to suspect this to be the case?"

She replied by a question. "And if it could be proved," she said, "that he was suffering from mania, from delirium, his self-accusation in such a case might pass for nothing? If it could be shown that he was not in his right mind when he accused himself, then he would go unpunished?"

She was leaning forward now; her eyes, full of a strange light, were fixed eagerly upon the old man's face. The doctor began to feel puzzled.

"Certainly," he said. "If it could be proved that he was insane—"

Beatrice did not wait to hear the rest. She spoke impetuously, though still in guarded tones.

"Then, for heaven's sake, go to Mr. Morven this moment, and tell him not to believe one word of what Gerald accuses himself. It can't be true! But Mr. Morven will believe it; he always believes everything bad of Gerald and he never forgives, never forgets, an offence. Go to him and tell him that Gerald is suffering from that young man's—"

"I am sorry to hear that," said Dr. Airlie, crossing one leg over the other, and looking pleasantly towards the ceiling. "I am exceedingly glad to hear your remarks upon the subject, Miss Beatrice. They are marked by that logical clearness, that transparent candor, which I have always maintained to be eminently characteristic of your mind. I had been half afraid, I must confess, that Mr. Ruthven's confused words and disjointed sentences indicated some rather disagreeable occurrence—something in fact slightly creditable—of which you were unfortunately aware. But my anxiety on the point is dissipated—quite dissipated—by your reply."

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shall never be a sound man again, all from my own cured carelessness. Yes, it was doing that the house is on fire tonight; but I won't be baulked—all the fires of earth or hell shall not keep me from carrying out my plan." Then he fainted again; and I tried to drag him out, but found my strength not great enough; and so I thought the best thing that I could do was to save the box, at my rate, that he was so anxious about. I went back into the inner room; but it was more difficult to go there than it had been before. The floor was hot; and the smoke was suffocating. But I found the box—a tin one—half open, with the lock wrenched aside as if it had been opened by force. It seemed to contain money and papers. I brought it out, and then—I called out to Mr. Lockhart, and he came to our help and carried Gerald out. But when he saw the tools and the box; he declared that Gerald must be a thief, a common housebreaker, and—

But for me—he would have handed Gerald over to the police at once. I was obliged to tell him this, in order to quiet his suspicions; and at last he yielded the point—he let me bring Gerald home and promised to wait for the explanation which he declares is due to his friend, Mr. Douglas."

"Then you did not contrive to banish suspicion from his mind?" The doctor looked keenly interested. His thoughts had flown back to a scene to which he had assisted many years before in the old house of Glenberric. The missing box; had it indeed been found? And by Gerald Ruthven, when the doctor already suspected of knowing more about Maggie Logan's disappearance than anybody else on earth? What a curious linked chain of coincidences was here!

"No," said Beatrice, trembling. "How could I? Having heard what Gerald said, I did not know how to explain the situation. I should have had no doubt of his ability to explain it, but for what he said. I did my best. But Mr. Lockhart did not believe me."

"It is a very awkward state of things," said the doctor. "A peculiar expression had crept into his face; one of amusement and derision rather than of sympathy. Indeed he seemed as if he would like to chuckle quietly to himself over the 'awkward state of things' of which he spoke. But he controlled his inclination, and when Beatrice glanced up, expecting him to speak, he was again as mild, benevolent, and placid as to her he always appeared."

"But you can help us," she said quickly. "You yourself have suggested a way out of the difficulty. If Gerald was suffering from fever for instance—"

"I think," said the doctor, "that we shall have to hear what Gerald himself says about the matter before we invent explanations."

"I don't want to invent anything," said Beatrice abruptly.

"We have to do many things that we do not want to do," murmured the old man in an absent tone. Beatrice looked down and said nothing. Presently Dr. Airlie spoke again. "I was requested to leave him alone with Lord Morven for half an hour. It is long past that time now. If he has explained the matter to Lord Morven our minds may be made easy. Lord Morven would not lightly condone an offence."

"That is true," said Beatrice. "What became of the box?" "Mr. Lockhart gave it into the police officer's care."

"Saying where it had been found?" "Saying that it was found in the burning house; that was all. He wanted to say more; but I prevented him."

"How?" "He had saved Gerald's life; I begged him to save Gerald's honor," said Beatrice, looking up with a clear direct gaze which sometimes had the effect of disconcerting an inquisitive interlocutor. But the doctor was not easily disconcerted.

"Ah!" he said. "There is an old superstition that the man whose life one saves is the man who will do one a deadly injury. Do you know that?" "I am not superstitious."

"There is sometimes a grain of truth in the old superstitions. A man resents being under an obligation and will punish you for putting him under it, if he can."

"A mean, selfish man!" said Beatrice indignantly.

"Most men are mean. Most men are selfish," rejoined the doctor. "Then you have no means of knowing what was inside the box?" He spoke caustically, but there was eager gleam in his eyes.

"No. Except one thing—"

Beatrice started and flushed as he made the reservation. "I had forgotten it. A bundle of letters or papers seemed to have fallen out, and in my hurry I thrust them into my pocket. They may be there now."

She began to search for them, but found that the uselessness of her hand greatly impeded the quickness of her movements. She uttered an exclamation of impatience. "If only I had not hurt my wrist!" she ejaculated.

The doctor was watching her with the quiet, smiling interest which he usually bestowed on his companions—an interest

not at all unlike that with which a cat watches the movements of a mouse which she intends to catch and eat as soon as she is tired of the survey. But before Beatrice had more than half-extricated the letters from her pocket a sound from the next room caused her to less her hold upon them and the doctor to start to his feet. There had been hitherto no sound of voices from Gerald's room. If conversation had been carried on it must have been held in a low key. Now, however, they heard a strange sort of thud—was it caused by a fall, a blow, or what?—then a groan, a stifled cry, and a loud call for help. Before the doctor reached the bedroom door it was thrown violently open by Lord Morven himself, who stood upon the threshold for a moment in evident agitation. His face was pale, his eyes were blazing—for a moment it seemed impossible for him to speak. Then he pointed backward with his hand to the room that he had left. "Go to him," the gesture seemed to say. But no word passed those pale set lips.

Dr. Airlie looked shrewdly at his patient and made his way into Gerald's room. Beatrice would have followed, but he waved her back. "Let me see what is the matter with him first," he said. And he closed the door upon her.

After a moment's hesitation Beatrice went up to her cousin and touched his arm. He did not seem to see her or to notice his cousin's touch. His eyes were fixed on vacancy; his hand hung down by his side clenched as if in mortal agony. Beatrice called him—for the first time in many years—by his Christian name. "Ralph," she said softly. "Ralph, what is it?"

Her voice recalled him to himself. He glanced at the hand upon his arm, and the fire began to die out of his eyes; his face was still ashy white, and he put out one hand to steady himself by the wall, as if he could scarcely stand.

"Is Gerald worse?" asked Beatrice. "He seemed at first nearly to understand her. A dazed, bewildered manner succeeded to his excitement. When he spoke it was in thick, warring tones. "I do not know. He may be dead perhaps. If anyone could call the dead back to life it is Airlie. Let him try now."

"Oh, Ralph, what do you mean?" cried Beatrice. "Gerald is not dead!" "I don't know," he answered. Then he loosened him from her grasp, and set down on the chair which Dr. Airlie had just quitted, with best head and banging hands. Beatrice watched him in perplexity and glanced at the bedroom door with an anxiety which she could not conceal. Morven spoke after a time in low, uneven tones, but with greater quietness of manner. "He had better be dead than live to acknowledge what he had just acknowledged to me. I told him so. I would hear no more. I struck him."

"You struck him? When he was so ill! perhaps dying?" "I could not help it," said Lord Morven with a shiver. "I forgot that."

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