

WHY HE HAD HIS LEG CUT OFF.

I was sitting quietly in my office, one March evening, scanning the pages of a medical review, when I heard the bell ring, and soon after a step on the stairs, followed by a sharp tap at my door.

"Come in," said I.

The knob was instantly turned, and a tall good-looking smooth-shaven young man, plainly dressed, crossed the threshold and asked:

"Is this Dr. Bolton?"

"It is," I replied, "take a seat."

"No thank you," said he, "I am in haste. You are a skilful surgeon, I believe?"

It was, in fact, only two years since I received my diploma, but I had had unusual surgical opportunities, and made the most of them, and two or three lucky operations had begun to give me a reputation.

"Well, you can cut off a leg for me, I suppose?" he continued.

"Most probably," said I; "whose is it?"

"Mine."

"What is the matter with it?" I asked, with some surprise, for there was no external sign of accident or disease.

"Nothing," was the curt reply.

"What do you want it cut off for then?"

"That is my affair," said he, a little sharply.

I quietly lifted the shade off my lamp, but the increased illumination did not reveal any look of wildness or insanity in my visitor's countenance. After considering a moment I remarked:

"It will cost you £10."

Without a word he drew a small roll of money from his pocket, counted out two £5 notes on the table, and then taking a slip of white paper from another pocket, he laid it on the two £5 notes, and pushing the whole towards me, he said, "There is your fee and my address. What time to-morrow will you come?"

I had by no means resolved to do the job at all, at least without future inquiry, but I replied:

"I shall be at leisure at three o'clock."

"Well," said he, "I shall expect you at that hour exactly. Don't fail. Good evening."

And he walked out and down the stairs with the firm, rapid step of a man in perfect health.

Although at that time a £10 fee was a decided temptation to me, I was greatly inclined to send the money to "Clinton Hamlin, 19, Queen Street,"—for that was the address he had given—and not go near the place. However, my curiosity was much excited, and as I happened to be absolutely at leisure the next afternoon, I finally took my instrument case, and accompanied by a discreet assistant, set out for Queen Street.

It was a shabby-genteel neighborhood, and No. 19 we found to be an old-fashioned house, occupied by half-a-dozen different families. "Top floor back," was the abrupt response to my inquiry for Mr. Hamlin.

We climbed the stairs and rapped. The door was opened by Mr. Hamlin himself, who ushered us politely into a small room with worn and scanty furniture and a threadbare carpet.

"You are prompt," said he, "and it is a pity I have so poor a place to receive you in."

"Don't mention it," said I. "It is rather a pity that we should have come on such an errand."

His look suddenly became stern. "That is neither here nor there," said he. "You have been paid to do a certain work which you can do quickly and safely. It must be done, if I have to do it myself. If you do it, it is surgery; if I do it, it might be suicide, and my life is every whit as dear to me as yours can be to you."

"Are you perfectly sure you are not labouring under some delusion?" said I.

"Perfectly," said he; "of course you think I am crazy, but I am as sane as you are, and some day I may prove it to you. In

the meantime, you have nothing to do but take that bottle of chloroform and go to work. I don't wish to suffer unnecessarily."

"Well," said I, "I'll not let you commit suicide by trying to do the job yourself. I am ready."

"Thank you," cried he, grasping my hand and shaking it cordially; "I thought you were a sensible man, and now I am sure of it."

"I am not at all sure of it," said I, half smiling; "but I will take the chances."

And I did.

When he awoke out of his chloroform slumbers the job was thoroughly done, every trace of it was removed, and he was comfortably disposed in bed. He looked at me steadily, smiled, and nodded and said:

"Doctor, you're a trump."

Just then some one knocked lightly. "Open the door, please," he continued; "it's my wife."

I did so, and admitted a pretty, though plainly dressed woman. Her face was deathly pale, and she ran to the bed and exclaimed:

"Oh! Clinton, is all over?"

"All over, my dear, thanks to Dr. Bolton," he replied.

"Oh I am so glad!" she cried; "I was afraid you would not do it, doctor," she added, addressing me.

"He will think us both crazy if you talk like that, Agnes," said her husband, with a smile.

"Oh, he mustn't think that, Clinton," she cried; "why don't you explain?"

"But, my dear," she urged, "you will tell him sometime."

"I hope so, certainly," he answered; "and, doctor, if you are sufficiently paid, make out your bill, and I hope to be able to liquidate it soon."

"I am amply paid," said I, "and I only desire to be assured that I have really done you a service."

"Oh, you have," cried both, but they would vouchsafe no further explanation, and I took my departure as much perplexed as ever, but leaving them apparently as happy as if I had given them a fortune instead of maiming one of them for life.

I was much occupied that spring and summer, but I often thought of my mysterious Queen Street case, although I learned nothing more, except that Mr. Hamlin and his wife had departed, and no one knew whither, as soon as the husband was tolerably recovered from the operation he had undergone. Early in September, I was walking one day along the city's most fashionable avenue, when a voice called—

"Dr. Bolton!"

I turned and saw Mrs. Hamlin, exquisitely dressed, sitting in a handsome open carriage beside a tall, fine-looking gentleman whose face was more than half covered with short, thick whiskers, moustache, and beard.

"Jump in doctor," she cried, "and let me introduce you to my husband. Mr. Sylvester, Dr. Bolton."

I stopped, with my foot on the carriage step, as the petrified Mr. Sylvester bowed, smiled very politely, but did not speak.

"Come doctor," said the lady, "do get in, please, I am so glad to see you."

I climbed in and sat down, looking first at one and then at the other in a very stupid fashion.

"What's the matter," cried the lady, "are you not glad to see me again?"

"Why—yes," muttered I, "But—but where is Mr. Hamlin?"

She looked suddenly grave. So did he.

"Didn't you hear?" she said.

"No," said I, horrified; "he—he didn't die?"

I knew then how a homicide feels.

"Not a bit of it!" cried Mr. Sylvester, suddenly thrusting out both hands, grasping mine, and shaking them prodigiously, "I never was better in his life! All this beard has grown since the March, and this leg," rapping my knuckled on a knee of abnor-