

India, the rule of England in this region would be greatly imperilled.

Projects are on foot which may give Russia a continuous water-way from St. Petersburg to the foot of the Hindoo-Koosh Mountains. Thus massed in force on the northern border of India, with a fertile and submissive country in the rear and the warlike and friendly Afghans in front, India would lie open to invasion at any time that European troubles might give pretext for such a course; and in the event of any home difficulty between England and Russia, we may safely look to the war's being transferred to the plains of Hindostan, and fought out on the banks of the Ganges.

## MY DEAD CLIENT.

Sitting alone in my chambers: I have dismissed my clerk, there being no chance of clients calling at this late hour; and, indeed, I myself ought to be off westward, but I sit, dreamily gazing into the glowing embers, my mind wandering to other scenes and to times long past. There is a great wind out-of-doors, and it is howling and roaring in the chimney. It rushes in violent gusts across the Thames, which is now as rough as a little sea, and seems to spend its force upon the Temple, as if the spirits of broken-hearted suitors, victims to forged evidence, disappointed lawyers, unjust judges, were abroad upon the blast, endeavoring to wreak their vengeance upon the piles of buildings they so diligently haunted in their lives.

Why do I still sit here? I hardly know. From no love for my gloomy chambers, assuredly. The fact is, I have nothing particular to do this evening, and I have fallen into a reverie: old faces and old scenes are crowding upon my memory—bright eyes and golden hair—low whispers and soft hands! Ah! I know no such things nowadays; but it is sadly pleasant to remember them. Pleasant, perhaps, to sit here thinking of them than to be fighting my way along the gusty streets toward the club for my solitary dinner, with the prospect, afterward, of a lonely evening in my lodgings. Time was when I hoped my evenings were not to be forever lonely—when I looked upon one fair young face, and thought the eyes looked more than kindly at me. But that hope soon passed, and it has never come again; and I do not think it ever will.

A knock at the door—a soft, solitary knock. What can that be? Was I mistaken? No! there it is again. I rise hurriedly and go to the door—open it: outside is standing the figure of a woman. I can hardly see her, as the passage is but dimly lighted.

"Is this Mr. Grantley's place?"

"Yes. I am Mr. Grantley. What is it?"

"I wish to speak to you for a moment. I am afraid I have not come at the right time, but please let me speak to you for a moment."

There is a hurried earnestness in her manner; and I admit her, close the outer door, and place a chair for her by the fire. Now I can see her plainly: apparently a young woman, but her face is marked by sorrow and suffering. She is plainly dressed; but I take her to be a lady. For a few moments she sits silently gazing into the fire. Does she see there any of the scenes that I have been gazing at? I wonder, vacantly.

"Mr. Grantley, I will tell you shortly why I am here. Some years ago you were intimately acquainted with George Marr?"

"I was indeed. Poor fellow!—if you could tell me where he is now, you would indeed be welcome."

"You also knew Denis Hilton?"

"Yes, I did."

"Are you as anxious to know where he is at this moment?"

"I can not say I am. Friendship existed between us once. His conduct broke that friendship in such a manner that it can never be renewed."

"I know it. He slandered you, Mr. Grantley."

"Pardon me. It can hardly be for the purpose of reminding me of unhappy circumstances, now long past, that you—a perfect stranger came to me thus?"

"No, it is not. I have come here to intrust you with something. I have heard your name mentioned often, and I know that you are an upright and honest man, and I may trust you."

"Before you go any farther, I must remind you that you have not yet told me who you are."

"There is not the slightest need that you should know my name. I hate my name—it shall not pass my lips unnecessarily. The favor that I am about to ask of you is a very slight one at present; and I believe that you will not refuse me."

"You are about to confide something to me. It is unreasonable that I should ask why you confide in me, if I may not ask who you are?"

"I confide in you because, from what I have heard of you—it is no use to ask when or where," she breaks in, hurriedly, as she sees the question in my face—"from what I have heard of you, I believe that you will faithfully comply with my request."

She rises from her chair and gathers her shawl about her, as if to go out into the stormy night again.

"What is it? What is this request you so strangely make to me?"

From her pocket she draws out what seems to be a letter, sealed.

"Take this packet. When you next see me in this room—just not before—open it, read the

contents, and then act as your honest conscience bids you."

I take the packet mechanically. She adds nothing more, and in a moment or two I am alone again in my chambers, peering into the embers as before.

I am more than ever disinclined to move. What can there be inside this mysterious packet? I must put it away carefully. Have I ever seen this woman before? No; I cannot recall her features. And then, what can she know of George Marr and Denis Hilton? We were all three at college together, and at one time were great friends. But that is a long while ago. Denis and I did not continue friends; for upon one occasion—the particulars of which there is no necessity for me to mention now—his conduct was such that high words passed between us, and our intimacy came to an end. But Denis had great influence over George Marr, and they continued to be as much together as before. The consequence was that Denis Hilton, prejudiced against me—or, at all events, succeeded in keeping him away from me—though George and I had at one time been inseparable. It is three years ago now, nearly since I last saw Marr, and I have heard that he has left England, having got into some pecuniary difficulties, the exact nature of which I never learned. Ah, George! why did you not come to me, as you would have done in old times? Why did you not confide your misfortunes to me, and see whether I could not help you out of them? Well, well; it's no use thinking about that now. What is Denis Hilton doing with himself, I wonder? I hear his name occasionally in connection with war matters, but from what I have heard at the club, I don't think his reputation stands very high. A sullen, evil-tempered man, who breaks out now and then into gay and boisterous spirits, but that is only when he has had plenty to drink. No one likes him—no one calls him friend.

I really must go now. Staring at the red-hot coals, and mentally surveying the past, may be very useful employment, but exhausted nature requires to be restored. I must go to dinner.

The month passed on. Summer came, and my gloomy chambers positively became somewhat cheerful, but in proportion as they grew cheerful I grew restless; for I had had enough of roasting and writing, and was longing for a holiday. The packet given me by my mysterious client still remained safely where I had deposited it, and I believe I had almost forgotten all about it; and, indeed, whenever I did think of it, I endeavored to satisfy myself that it was quite possible the woman who had given it to me was only some harmless lunatic, who had been acquainted, in her sane days, with Marr and Hilton.

I was going to pass three months upon the Continent with an old Oxford friend of mine; and the morning before our departure I was busy packing up, and my traveling companion was in my sitting-room, consulting "Murray" and the Continental "Bradshaw." I was in the bedroom, which communicated with the sitting-room, and the door was open. Suddenly my friend called out:

"I say, Grantley, do you ever study the second column of the *Times*?"

"Of course I do; but I have not had time to look at it this morning."

"Do you remember Marr, who was at Oxford with us?"

"Yes, to be sure," I reply, entering the room.

"What about him?"

"I see he is advertised for. Listen:

"£100 REWARD.—The above reward will be given to any person or persons who can give such information as will lead to the discovery of George Marr, son of the late Colonel Thomas Marr, of Marr Court, in the County of Gloucester. The said George Marr was last seen in London, in November, three years ago, and has not been heard of since. It is supposed that he emigrated either to America or Australia. The same reward will be given on satisfactory proof of the death of the said George Marr. All communications to be addressed to Messrs. Bingley & Bell, solicitors, Gray's Inn."

"I know that firm," I said. "I should like to ask some questions about this. Marr was a great friend of mine, as you remember."

I managed to find time, in the course of that afternoon, to call in at Gray's Inn, and I saw Mr. Bell. From him I learned that George Marr's elder brother was dead, and as he left no issue, the estate devolved on George—falling him, on a cousin, and this cousin was naturally rather anxious to know whether George was alive or not. Private inquiries had been made fruitlessly in all directions, but it was hoped that some information might be obtained by means of the advertisement which had appeared that morning in the *Times*, and had been sent for insertion in American and colonial papers.

Well, we went abroad to spend our holidays, and so pleasantly did the time pass that the long vacation seemed unaccountably short; but as what we did and where we went have nothing to do with the main point of this story, I must come at once to the day of our return to England.

It was the last day of October. The autumn of that particular year broke up hurriedly, and winter seemed to be already upon us, and when we arrived at Calais the weather was so stormy that some doubt was expressed as to the possibility of the mail-boat crossing the Channel. However, we hurried on board—those of the passengers, that is, who had no time to spare, and were bound to be in London that evening; many stood behind, intending to wait for another weather. I think we were nearly four hours

crossing, the wind and sea increasing in their fury; and when we were safely in harbor at Dover the storm rose to a hurricane. Many persons had gathered together on the pier and quays, waiting to see the boat come in. As I was walking toward the railway station, I particularly noticed one figure in the crowd. It was a man closely muffled up, who, I observed, was continually glancing first over one shoulder and then over the other, as if to see if any body was following him. His face was a peculiar one, and it seemed not unfamiliar to me. I heard him ask a custom-house officer what he thought about the weather, and would it prevent the night mail from crossing. The custom-house officer merely replied that the weather was about as bad as it could be, and that the boat would cross if the captain thought it could be done in safety. It was not till I was comfortably seated in a corner of the railway carriage, and half-way to town, that I remembered to whom that strange face belonged. It was Denis Hilton that I had seen at Dover, evidently intending to cross over that night if possible.

On that night the storm raged on. The papers, the next morning, were full of accounts of great damage that had been done by the violence of the wind, and its fury had not moderated when I walked down to my chambers.

I was busily engaged in the perusal of a case which had been sent for my opinion, when I fancied I heard the sound of a confused murmuring, and of many footsteps upon the staircase. A minute or two afterward there was a knocking at my door. It was opened by my clerk. I heard a whispering outside, and then my clerk came hurriedly into my room, with a horrified expression on his face, and said:

"It is the Thames police, sir; they have brought something for you to see."

"Let them bring it in," I answered, rather astonished.

Great Heaven! What's this? Four men bring in a satchel, upon which is lying something covered up.

"Beg your pardon, sir," said one of the men. "We found this here in the river this morning."

He partially removes the covering.

My God! It is the same woman who called on me nearly ten months ago, and left a packet in my charge.

"Why have you brought her here?" I ask.

"On searching her this bit of paper turned up."

The man handed me a crumpled piece of paper, on which I could read these words: "If ever my body should be found drowned, let it be taken to the chambers of Mr. Grantley, in the Temple. He will know what to do."

"Policeman," I began, "I have only seen this unhappy creature once in my life, and I cannot imagine—"

"Beg your pardon, sir," interrupted the man; "but you are a lawyer, and you know as there must be an inquest. Wouldn't it be as well to reserve anything you have to say for that occasion?"

I saw at once what the man hinted. I might be implicated in her death. So I merely observed:

"All I say is, that I have not a notion who she is, nor who her friends are. You had better take the body to the usual place; and I shall be quite ready to attend the inquest, and give all the information in my power."

Silently the men bore away their ghastly burden, and I was left alone. Now, then, to open that packet I was to read the next time she who had given it to me should be in my room. She had come to me again, and I began to suspect that I understood the motives of my Dead Client. I took the packet from its place of safety, broke the seal, and read as follows:

"If you keep the promise which I shall ask you to make when I place this paper in your hands, you will not read this letter till I am dead. If I do not die in the manner in which I firmly believe that I shall die, it is possible you may never read it at all; but I know what must happen, sooner or later, and I leave to you the task of first avenging me."

"You will say, 'What has this woman to do with me? Why am I to avenge her?' My answer is—You were once George Marr's beloved friend."

Six years ago I was a happy and light-hearted girl. All my future life seemed to smile upon me, and I had a happy home. But love came to me, and, unaccountably at first, all my happiness faded away. It was at a small party in the country that I first met George Marr and Denis Hilton. Both of them paid me great attention, but I liked the former, and disliked the latter. Time passed on, and George and I grew to love each other, but suddenly my father took a violent prejudice against him, declared that George had been making love to me against his—my father's—disorder, and forbade him to enter the house again. So strict a watch was kept on me that I had no chance of communicating with him, and for six months I saw and heard nothing of him. Then Mr. Hilton began to come frequently to our house; my father liked him, and was constantly throwing him into my company. He was kind and gentle in his behavior, and sometimes he would talk about George, but it was in a reserved and cautious manner, but at last I learned from him that George was married. What could I do but scatter to the wind my shattered love? What could I do but accept Denis Hilton for my husband, a few months afterward, when urged passionately by him and strongly by my father?

"I could not love him—there was something in his nature that prevented me from doing that—yet I strove to be a good and obedient wife to him; and for a few weeks I believe I was contented. But I soon discovered that he had a terrible propensity for drink, and though he had kept a careful guard over himself while he was courting me, and for a short time after our marriage, the old habits soon came back upon him, and night after night he would come home terribly intoxicated; and when in this state he would be madly jealous about me, and would fancy that there was some one concealed in a cupboard, or in one of the rooms, and would compel me to go through the house with him, and search every place. His dissolute courses were the cause of his losing an excellent appointment which he held and consequently we became very poor indeed; and we had to remove from our pleasant quarters in Baywater to a small house in Chelsea, close to the river. Denis's manners, too, became so violent when the effects of drink were upon him, that we never could get a servant to stay with us any length of time. One day, after he had been particularly outrageous the night before, our two servants left saying they would not stop another hour. Denis went out in a great rage, and I was left alone.

"I was sitting solitary that dark November evening—crying, I think—mourning for the lost happiness of earlier days, when there came a gentle knock at the door. I ran to open it, and there I found George Marr.

"George Marr!" I exclaimed. "What are you come for?"

"To see you, Fanny," he replied. "I passed you accidentally the other day. You did not see me. I watched you in here. I had not time to try and see you then, as I was engaged. May I not come in?"

"You can come in, if it will afford you any pleasure," I answered. "I should scarcely think it could do that. What makes you wish to see me again?"

"What makes me? Oh, Fanny! I have never ceased to love you."

"We were now in the sitting-room."

"Hush, Mr. Marr. How dare you speak to me like this?"

"Why not, Fanny? Good Heaven! you are not married?"

"I am—to Denis Hilton. What reason had you to suppose that I should keep true to you, when you were so soon false to me?"

"False to you! Never for an instant."

"George, they told me that you were married. When I learned that you had so forgotten me I abandoned all hope."

"Who told you this?"

"My husband—Denis Hilton."

"He told an infamous lie!"

"Perhaps he did; but it answered his purpose, said another voice, in mocking tones."

"I had left the street door open, and Denis himself had staggered in, just sober enough to understand what was going on."

"I told you, Master George," he continued, "that you weren't always going to have it all your own way with the girls."

"Denis went back into the passage, and closed the front-door; came back into the little parlor, and closed that door too."

"And now you think you are going to make up to the old love, do you?"

"I say that you are a scoundrel, Denis. I care not so much for your having tricked me as for your being her husband, and showing yourself before her the drunken brute you are."

"What! Say that again. Drunken brute, eh? How often have you been here before—you, Marr—when I have been out, eh?"

"Never before this evening. I have been abroad. I never even knew that you were married."

"You lie—and I will have your life for it!"

"Denis sprang furiously upon him, and there was a short scuffle. They both fell—Denis uppermost. They fell close beside the fire-place, and Denis, seizing the poker, struck George Marr twice heavily upon the forehead."

"You will not come again, I think, he muttered, savagely, after the last blow."

"What have you done, Denis?" I shrieked.

"He looked up at me, with a malignant smile upon his face."

"You and I have killed him," he replied, in a low tone.

"Killed him!—I! I have done nothing. You villain! I will call the police."

"No, you won't," he said, rising. What had happened seemed to have quite sobered him. "Sooner than that you should do that, I would serve you the same. Don't be a fool, Fanny—the law will believe you to be as guilty as I am. See here;" and he took a pocket-book from George Marr's breast—there are plenty of bank-notes inside. We are known to be wretchedly poor. If this is discovered, we shall both be hung." He hissed this last word into my ear.

"Come, we must hide it away."

"Hush! I believed him. I believed that I should be thought to be his accomplice in the murder, and I feared to die. Oh, what a coward I have been! I have done worse than die every day since then; and yet—the trial! the sentence! the scaffold!"

"All that night, nearly, we worked stealthily—at least he worked, while I lay on the ground close to him; and he removed, after great difficulty, three flag-stones from the floor of the little cellar, dug out a grave beneath, and there, at this moment, lies George Marr!"

"I have little more to tell. I vowed that vengeance should one day overtake Denis; but I dared not trust myself to do the task, for fear of its falling through my weakness. But I had often, in happy days gone by, heard George speak of you, Mr. Grantley, as a brave and honest