

A TALE OF THE SUMMER.

O, sweet is the south wind's sighing,
And sweet is the brook that sings,
And a myriad sweets are flying
To stir of a myriad wings!
And the murmurous air is heavy
With scents of a myriad flowers,
And the wealth of a golden summer
Is falling in rainbow showers.

The birds and the bees are flying,
And the slanting sunbeams play,
And the lips that I love are sighing
For one who is far away.
O love, I am near—am coming—
Though the wandering song birds stray;
For my heart is weary of longing,
And will love and trust for aye!

Ah! sweet! when the day is dying
Away in the crimson west,
And your lips their secret sighing
(As though it were all unguessed):
When heart to heart is replying,
And you know that my life is blessed,
Methinks that the sound of sighing
Will pass in a kiss—to rest!

The flowers at her easement flutter,
With touch of a passing wing;
The secret I long to utter
The nightingales softly sing.
She heeds not their passionate voices,
She sees not the amorous light;
For her heart with my own rejoices,
And love is our world to-night!

RITA.

THE SHADOW OF A DREAM.

The way of our bank at Charrenden was just this:—We had several branches at different places—small towns, you understand, where there was not enough business done to pay for keeping a clerk constantly on the spot; so we only had an office, and only opened it on market days, once a week.

One of us used to go over in the morning and return at night. The railway helped us to three of these journeys, but the fourth, to Meresdene, had to be made by a gig. The place lay fifteen miles off, in the very bosom of the downs, and the road ran all in amongst them, and sometimes over their topmost shoulders. It was for the most part lonely, and in winter sometimes very rough and bleak. I had to do the day's business at Meresdene, but, beyond bitter winds, snow and rain, nothing ever befell me, as I have said, for twenty years. In the summer it was a fine drive; in winter, of course, in bad weather it was an unpleasant one—that was all the impression it ever made upon me. Young Chase, however, never seemed to fancy it; from the first when it was talked about for him to do, he did not like the idea. He told me so, and I laughed at him. I said, "Oh! you won't mind it; after a bit you'll think nothing of it, no more than I do." You understand, he was not used to the country; he had been born and bred in London, and they drafted him from our chief office there, down here, for the sake of his health. He had been ailing a long while; the doctors said he ought to live out of town; and, being a trusty servant and liked by our manager, an exchange was arranged.

He had been with us six months and it was just about the beginning of November, when I was attacked by rheumatism. They said if I did not take care I should be laid up, and that I must not expose myself through the coming cold weather. This led to young Chase's having to do my work at Meresdene. So I drove him over one week, to show him the road and the way the work was done, that he might be able to take my place the following week and for the rest of the winter.

We were exactly half way on our journey, and had turned on to what are known as the Whiteways; that is, several narrow chalk tracks which show up very white across the turf and run side by side with the road for some distance as it descends the steep hill past a great chalk cutting. This, perhaps, is the most solitary and exposed part of the drive, and lies on one of the highest ridges of the Downs. There is no habitation for a good mile on either hand; Dene's Gate turnpike, at the bottom of the hill, being the nearest; and when we came to the beginning of the descent, where we could see down into the valley—there's a splendid view, mind you, there—he almost frightened the life out of me by suddenly jumping up from his seat and exclaiming: "There! there it is! that's the place; that's the very place I've seen a hundred times before, in my dreams. I have seen it every night, for a month past!"

Sure enough, the road passed the chalk-cutting, but I had never thought anything of that, and it had never occurred to me as being the place he meant.

"Well," I said, "sit down; don't excite yourself like that, you'll upset the gig. If it is the place it won't bite you!" And then he sat down quietly by my side, his chin dropped on his chest, one of his dreamy fits came on, and he never spoke another word till we reached Meresdene.

Well, nothing particular happened during the next week, only I noticed that young Chase was a little more dreamy and odd than usual. I said to him on Tuesday (as he was to go on the Wednesday): "You don't really mind this job, do you? or would you like to have some one with you? We might send the ostler lad, I think." Whereupon he said, very hurriedly and anxiously, I thought: "Oh, dear no; no, certainly not; on no account?" and I answered: "Well, I think you are right; it would look rather silly; you might get laughed at!" Though I am bound to say of late years,

since the railways have brought London so much closer to us, people have more than once said that they thought it rather foolhardy of me to come back at night alone in the winter, seeing that there was always a good sum of money in the driving seat, the farmers' payments, and the like, during the day, you understand. But, bless your heart, I never had any fear, and I could not understand why anybody should; so I was quite relieved when young Chase plucked, and would not hear of having anybody with him.

Well, off he went. We were very busy all day, and I thought no more about him. My time home from Meresdene had usually been a little before seven, according to the roads and the weather. I live over the office, you understand, and have done so ever since was made chief clerk. I looked at my watch after I had had my tea, and was astonished to see it was half-past seven. I was astonished, that is because young Chase was not back, and I confess I began to get a little fidgety when another hour passed and still he had not returned. I looked out of the window and saw a thick fog—so thick I could not see the lamps on the opposite side of the market-place. This accounted for his delay in my mind; the thing had happened to me, but the roads are so white, and Jenny, the old mare, knew them so well that beyond going slowly there was no difficulty, but still, when ten, half-past and eleven came, and no sign of young Chase—well, I didn't like it, and I was going to send over to the chief of the police, when the horse and gig came trotting up to the door.

I looked out. The fog was all gone, and it was a bright starlight night; but you may judge my state of mind when, going down, who should be at the door but Joe Muzzle, the turnpike-man from Dene's gate, and another.

Says he, very excited, and hurrying over his words: "Your young man, sir, found for dead just below the Whiteways. We can't tell northin' at all about it. My missus and I were just going to turn in, when we heard somethin' clanking agin the gate like, I goes out, and there be's a horse and gig, and ne'er a driver, and on examination I find it be's your gig, reins cut or broke, and draggin' on the road; there be's a bit of a fog about, and I sings out, but no one answers, so I routs my youngster out of bed, and sends him off to Grey's Farm, the nearest house, for help, for I know'd there must ha' been an accident, for I let the young gentleman through the gate at the reglar time, soon after five this afternoon, on his way home, and he gives me a sort of sleepy nod like, without speaking; and 'Now where be's 'un?' I says to my missus, for it was just nine then, and Chase and he ought to have been at Charrenden long ago. This man, Farmer Grey's foreman, comes back with my boy in about half an hour, and with a couple of lanterns we goes slowly on the Whiteways, leading the horse and gig with us, 'specting to find the young gentleman pitched out, or somethin' like that. And sure enough, just when we gets under that there old chalk-cutting, this man here comes upon his body just above the edge of the slope, for the fog had lifted then, and we could see plainly. He seemed quite dead, and we thought the best thing we could do was to take 'un back to the pike, which we done, in the gig, as quick as possible. Then I sends my boy to Meresdene for the doctor, and he's with 'un now, and then he sends me on here to tell you. I've spliced the reins up a bit, and we got through, and werry sad it all be's hain't it? and now what be's best to be done?"

This was a puzzling question, truly, but I went and woke up the police and two or three of our clerks, and then we had some more talk with Joe Muzzle. Joe is quite a character in his way and if you give him a start, he'll run on clacking like a clock. I did give him a start, and then he said: "Searching about the place where we found the young gen'l man, as well as we could with the lanterns, we find the cushions pitched out and the whip broke in two—fraid I left that at the pike; but here be's some proper mardrous weapons," and he produced from his capacious pockets a pair of small flint-lock pistols: "there warn't nothin' else to show what had happ'd but the off gig step seems to have got a twistlikes and the off lamp be stove in—that, I reckon, was comin' agin' the pike with ne'er a driver."

Here we adjourned to the stable, to examine the gig, and you'll understand that all this time my mind was running on the cash. Was that safe, I wondered?

To my dismay there was not a sign of it in the driving-seat. I need not tell you that this affair created a great commotion for miles round. It got into the London papers. We had a host of inspectors and detectives down; our bank offered a reward, and so did the government, for the apprehension of the thief.

Young Chase lay at the little turnpike for over a fortnight, quite insensible, like a log. He had received a concussion of the brain, the doctors said; but beyond this, there was no injury apparent. They couldn't quite make it out; no more could anybody, for the matter of that; and even when he had shown signs of life and opened his eyes, he was for a month or two unable to speak coherently, or understood what was said to him. "All this while, you can guess that inquiries and examinations were going on in all directions, but there was no clue to the robbery, for robbery there had been, no doubt, or where was the money? One of the pistols was discovered to be loaded, whilst the other, though the hammer was down, did not appear to have

been fired; both pan and barrel were quite empty and clean; clearly he had not been shot at. Then to whom did the pistols belong? He was never known to possess any, and they bore no maker's name; at least there were signs that it had been erased. The keenest wits of Scotland Yard were baffled; we could make nothing of it; not a person was apprehended, even on suspicion.

I must now tell you, however, as ill-luck would have it, the news of the poor young fellow's mischance was such a severe shock to his aged mother—the only relative that he had, that we knew of—that she died two days after she heard it. Hence I was deputed privately by our directors to look over young Chase's room and effects. This led me to our getting a sort of clue—at least it made a link in the chain, though perhaps on the whole it rather added to the mystery, as you will say, when you have read this paper. I found it in an envelope inscribed with these words: "To be given to my mother, if I do not return this night from Meresdene.—November 15, 1846."

And this is what the paper contained:

"Years have passed since the first faint shadow of the dream fell across my life. I have put it aside again and again as an idle and vain imagining, but it has always returned; sooner or later the vision has always revisited my pillow. When I found with this that the dream was far more frequent in recurrence and more vivid and circumstantial in detail, I was not the less impressed. And when at last I saw that events were conspiring to necessitate my making a night journey across the downs alone, the shadow of the dream oppressed me with a vague dread. I used to think of Hamlet's words: 'O God! I could be bounded in a nutshell, and count myself a king of infinite space, were it not that I have had bad dreams.' I was absolutely sure, when starting on that preliminary drive last week, that I should see the spot. I knew it as a foregone conclusion, so that when we turned the brow of that last big down, and came upon what they call the Whiteways, and the hill road running past the chalk-cutting lay before me, I instantly recognized the place which had for all these years been the one prevailing picture of my dream.

"There it was! There was the scene, as it first faintly presented itself to my sleeping eyes years ago; as it had ever since continued to come before them at intervals with increasing vividness. The effect on the landscape of a winter's twilight, deepening into night, began to suggest itself after a while. In addition to this, I could at times discern, but only in that vague manner belonging to dreams, a horse and gig toiling slowly up the hill. This incident also gradually increased in reality, and by the time I had been here at Charrenden a month I could often see that it was myself who was driving. Almost every night I dreamt that I saw myself doing this. I was alone in the gig, the lamps were lighted, and gave to the white horse, and the chalk cutting under which I was forever passing, a spectral aspect. I never seemed to get beyond this spot, until there first rose a talk in the office about the possibility of my having to do our chief clerk's (Mr. Shephold's) work at Meresdene. After this, there was a change and confusion in the vision. A frosty fog hung about; the gig lamps glimmered through it fitfully, giving an unusual phantom-like look to all I beheld. I saw myself for an instant driving as usual, but the next the horse and gig had vanished, and I was bending over the form of a man prostrate on the road. In one of his hands he held the leather padlocked bag which contained the bank money. A crape mask hid his face, but there was an ominous streak of red upon the white road beside him, and my hands were tinted with the same colour. Intense horror possessed me, for I felt that I had killed him! Aghast at the deed, I strove to drag his body to the side of the Whiteways, opposite the chalk-cutting, where the down slopes abruptly to a hollow some hundred of feet below. In my attempts to do this I always awoke.

"Yet there was more behind; more mystery to aggravate the terror. Coming home after that visit to Meresdene with Mr. Shephold, I threw myself on my bed, with a dread of sleep that I cannot express. Perfectly certain now that I should go on dreaming till the end was reached, I determined I would not sleep. I lay there, devising some plan by which I could avert this impending catastrophe. It was my duty to do so, both to myself and my employers; for the sum of money I should have with me would be very large. I would detail to them exactly what I have said above; I would urge them to see it as I saw it—that it was an unmistakable warning which we had no right to disregard. They might think me a fool, a lunatic, a coward—what they pleased; but I would not take that journey alone, and I hoped they would not wish it! Yes, I would state my case the following morning. An infinite sense of relief came over me when I had made this decision, a calm to which I had been a stranger for months—a calm, indeed, that, despite my resolution, soothed me to sleep.

"Instantly I dreamt. Of course I was upon the downs, under the usual circumstances; the frosty fog, the gig with the glimmering lights, the chalk-cutting, the hill road beneath it, the Whiteways, as I now knew the spot to be called; then the prostrate form upon the road, the red stain upon the chalk, my figure with the bloody hands, bending over it; details which I had always been able to discern plainly in my dreams, notwithstanding the want of light; and the effort I myself am making to drag the body across the road, to hurl it down the deep slope!

"But ah! what new and strong revelation is this? What new and terrible solution to this mysterious dreaming is about to be made to me? The crape mask, that has always hitherto hidden from me the man's face, is gone! and I behold in my assailant and robber the unmistakable features of * * * but I dare not write his name lest this fall into other hands than yours, mother—but you will understand who it was I thus saw in my dream when I say that it was he who was the unhappy cause of our great grief and sorrow, and whom we suppose now to be far away.

"Thus concluding on the morning after my expedition with Mr. Shephold, I had to wait for this, the momentous day. It has come, and in a few hours I shall be on my road. For the last seven successive nights, the vision, with all its latest circumstances, has been present whenever, through sheer fatigue, I have given way to sleep; whilst by day, its shadow has darkened on me hourly, to the exclusion of all but that scene on the White-ways.

"I start, at least prepared."

Very dim was the light, however, that this statement let in upon the catastrophe. To be brief, it led to nothing practical, nothing more could be done until young Chase had recovered sufficiently to be able to give a personal account of the affair. Months passed before this was possible; his health returned very slowly. The doctors forbade any questioning or excitement, and I really didn't know the details of anything that had transpired until he was pronounced fit to appear before our board of directors.

Then I was present, with the rest of the people concerned. It was like a private court of justice, and young Chase was arraigned, as it were, like a criminal. When he came into the room his altered appearance was startling. I had only seen him twice since his setting out on the fatal journey; once when he was lying quite insensible at the turnpike, and once when he was only a little better, at the county hospital. He now looked twenty years older; his thin, pale face was deeply furrowed, his long, dark hair thickly tinged with gray, and the dreamy expression in his large eyes had changed to one of wildness, whilst his black clothes added to his weird, ghost-like appearance. He pulled himself together, however, by a great effort, and in answer to the questions the chairman put, this is about what he said, as near as I can remember:

"The statement, which you, gentlemen, found addressed to my poor mother, and which you have just read to me, is strictly true to the letter. It is fuller than any account than I could give now of my feelings and state of mind, prior to the 15th of November. I have very little to add, but I will tell you what I can.

"As I approached the Whiteways, on my return homeward journey, all the conditions of my dream were realized. I appeared to have been within them so often before that I might have been dreaming then. Everything was so familiar. There was no difference between my sensations asleep or awake. I had no sense of being, of actual existence, in one state more than in another. I felt I was gliding to my destiny, gliding without movement, without bodily effort, precisely as one does in sleep. I can give no better account of what happened. The fog wrapped me round. There was an interval, an impression that I was struggling, I appeared to fall; and then I woke in the hospital two months back. I can tell you no more."

"But did you see no one? Did no one stop you?"

"No one, that I am aware of; but I could not swear it," was the answer.

"But the pistols; were they yours?"

"Yes; mechanically I had provided myself with them, but with no thought of using them. If I remember rightly, I took them from my pocket and placed them between my feet when I left Dene's gate. I wished no one to know that I was armed."

"And, on your word and honor, Mr. Chase, you do not remember being attacked?"

"On my oath, I remember no more than I have told you."

"And the money—where was that?"

"In the driving-seat under me, in the padlocked leather-bag which Mr. Shephold always used."

"You know nothing more of it than that it was there when you started?"

"Nothing; on my oath."

Then, after a long pause, during which many signs of dissatisfaction spread through all listeners, the chairman continued as he referred to Chase's statement:

"It is now my duty to ask you to whom, in this extraordinary story you have given of your dream, you refer as your visionary assailant. It is most essential—vital to your interests—that you keep nothing back from us, whether asleep or awake."

Here Chase was visibly moved. He shrank, as it were, within himself; he dropped his eyes, cowering. He said, recovering slightly:

"I had hoped to be spared this, seeing that my words were intended for no eyes but my mother's."

"The whole business," went on the chairman, "is so visionary and unsatisfactory, that you are bound to explain to whom you refer; your position with us demands it. You have been a tried and trustworthy servant, but you will forfeit all the past if you do not aid us in our efforts to discover the perpetrator of this robbery. An indication of who this mysterious person is may give us a clue. I conjure you to tell us everything, Mr. Chase."

Again he resisted; again he was urged to