

"His Place in the World"

By Mrs. Bilsborough

OUR NEW SERIAL STORY

LOSS of memory, or amnesia as it is known to science, has been the cause of more than one romance both in real life and in fiction. One of the plays now being presented to Canadian audiences by Martin Harvey, "The Cigarette Maker's Romance," is based entirely upon this phenomenon in a young Russian count. The serial, which begins in this issue of the COURIER, deals with it from a different and less conventional angle. The customary cause of amnesia is a blow on the head. In the case of Dr. Arnold Bassingbroke it is caused by the use of a new anesthetic, by means of which the leading character in the story loses all knowledge of "His Place in the World" for a term of several months. This period of amnesia is the beginning of a remarkable series of romantic adventures. The story is perfectly modern, accurately reflective of medical science, and it deals in a vivid, impartial and unsparing style with some of the social weaknesses of England, whose social fabric is under consideration more than that of any other country in modern times. "His Place in the World" has a distinct place in the world of fiction readers. It stimulates curiosity, challenges the judgment and sustains the interest from beginning to end in a remarkable way.

CHAPTER I.

The Specialist.

ALIGHT still burned in the surgery at Harley Street, although the sonorous notes of Big Ben had long since boomed the midnight hour.

Dr. Arnold Bassingbroke, M.D., F.R.S.C., a rising brain specialist of great promise, was busy with bent brows in his laboratory, absorbed in research work.

That very morning, at the hospital, he had performed a most critical operation upon the brain of a man, a soldier shot in the trenches in South Africa; the bullet glancing off the skull had left what seemed merely a superficial wound in the head.

The man, invalided home, had gone from one army hospital to another. After three years he was pronounced incurable. Hopelessly insane, and growing steadily worse, he had become at last violent and dangerous. The young specialist advocated an operation, being convinced that something was pressing upon the brain.

The issues were gravely and plainly laid before the patient's distracted young wife. There was the chance that the operation might mean much. On the other hand there was the risk of death—or madness for life! The man's powerful physique promised long life. Terrible alternatives—death—or madness!

The woman's haunted face and wild eyes turned from the grave countenances of the medical men, as she burst into tears.

"Oh, sirs," she cried out passionately. "I'd rather see Jim dead—than mad! He used to be so kind—but now"—she covered her face as if to shut out some mental picture—"now he's more like a wild beast than a

man, crams his food into his mouth with both hands—prowls round the house vacant-like and growling, and using awful words, him that never used to swear—it fair makes my blood creep to hear him, an' when he fixes his bloodshot eyes on me, and grins—I feel like screaming, I'm that scared. Oh, indeed—indeed—I love Jim, I do—but it's awful!"

There was no doubt that it was awful—the doctors knew it, the poor woman's white, scared face testified to the fearful strain she had endured daily, hourly—for weeks and months—it was a marvel that she had not completely broken down under the stress and horror of it.

So it was decided that the experiment should be made; the dread experiment that might take away James Kenway's life, or give him back his reason—his sanity.

That very morning the unconscious man had been laid on the operating table.

STUDENTS ranged themselves respectfully in the "theatre," to watch the critical and interesting performance.

The assisting nurse regarded it as an honour to be chosen for the nerve-trying ordeal of waiting upon the operator, and was released afterwards from further duty that day.

Sir Lawrence Goss, the highest known authority upon cerebral lesions and injuries, supported the younger specialist with the solidity of his name and presence; lending his great reputation to sanction what might easily be a failure—this supreme effort of science to snatch a man back to sanity.

If the operation should fail—there would not be wanting those who would raise their voices in loud protests and violent condemnation—on the other hand, if the operation were a success, there would be no lack of praise, of laurels, of popular enthusiasm.

With a large-heartedness worthy of himself, Sir Lawrence Goss accepted the issues, knowing their gravity, knowing the infinitesimal chance there was of success; and it was chiefly for the latter reason that he stood by the side of his brilliant and daring young colleague to support and assist him.

Watching the deft, firm fingers perform their delicate task, Sir Lawrence felt a fresh admiration for the skill, which without doing further injury to the brain—could remove a splinter of bone, fine as a hair, that had penetrated to the grey matter.

That was a moment in which one scarcely dared to breathe! Sir Lawrence Goss glanced at the tense, white face of the operator, so clever, so intent. It was a refined face, full of nervous energy, with dark, thoughtful eyes, and a sensitive mouth.

The patient was at length ready to be removed. Skilful nursing remained, and that, of course, would be unremittingly given. It would be a record case. Doctor Arnold Bassingbroke's future reputation was assured, his name would be in every medical journal, in every newspaper, he would be the most talked of man of the hour. The splendid achievement was bound to create a sensation.

From above, almost in the ceiling, came the sudden click of a camera. Someone in the gallery was taking a

snapshot of the group below, no doubt for the medical journals.

The two doctors glanced up at the sound.

Sir Lawrence Goss in his big, hearty way was congratulating the younger man.

Arnold Bassingbroke, with an unconscious sigh of relief, lifted thoughtful eyes to his senior's face.

"You really think it will be a success? He will wake up sane?"

"I am sure of it—couldn't have been better done—splendid," the big doctor gave unstinted praise.

A wave of colour passed over the strained features of the younger man, and he murmured almost inaudibly: "Sanity!—Reason!—What a little thing to unhinge it all! A foreign substance no thicker than a hair—and the brain—the mind—all that a man prides himself upon—is—lost!"

"Most interesting thing I've seen for a long time," asserted Sir Lawrence Goss cheerfully, as the two surgeons walked towards the hospital entrance. "Grand thing for the man and his young wife."

"Poor thing," said Arnold sympathetically; "she was waiting to hear the result. I saw Nurse Wilkinson telling her as we came into the corridor. The poor woman was sobbing as if her heart would break, almost in hysterics."

"Emotional creatures, women," grunted the big man; "never can tell how they'll take a thing—do her good to cry—guess she was pretty strung up."

"No wonder." Arnold Bassingbroke spoke gravely. "I shall be glad if her husband is given back to her—sane."

"Quite so! quite so! But come, my boy, I must be off, we may as well go together. You ought to take a rest, Bassingbroke—you're overdoing things." He spoke briskly, bustling the younger man along the corridors, followed by the admiring, almost adoring, eyes of several young nurses.

"I don't see your motor about," he said in surprise.

"No, I sent it home. I thought I would walk back."

"Better come with me," said the big man, whose car waited at the kerb.

The two men got in.

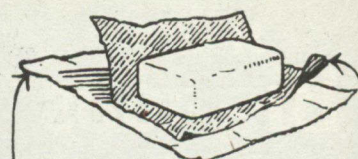
"**S**O much to learn," muttered the young specialist almost to himself, as the big motor sped smoothly along. "Life is too short to find out all the hidden secrets of nature and science as applied to the complex human frame." His dark eyes glowed with the fire of the enthusiast.

"It will be shorter still, Arnold, if you go on as you are doing, burning the candle at both ends," warned the big man affectionately. "You cannot cram everything into your thirty-five years, my boy; I've been going nearly sixty years, and I often feel I am only on the threshold yet."

"So much suffering," mused Bassingbroke. "So much to discover to alleviate it. I am sure every disease has its cure—if we knew it—and if the world would live sanely and healthily, there would be no disease."

Sir Lawrence Goss laughed, a jolly, genial laugh, good to hear.

"No need for us then, my boy; but the world never will live sanely—not in our time, at least—so we shall still have a chance to earn our bread."



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