

I did so. I sat down near her and told them as briefly as possible. She listened attentively. When I had finished she said, in a puzzled tone:

"I cannot account for the sudden giddiness. Arthur always had excellent health." Then she looked me full in the face. "Do you believe the story, Dr. Halifax?"

I thought for a moment and then said, emphatically: "Yes, I believe it."

She did not speak at all for the best part of a moment. Then she gave a heavy sigh.

"After all," she said, "the thing that effects us is the death. He is dead. The inevitable has overtaken him. It scarcely matters how it happened—at least not now—not to me."

"Pardon me," I interrupted, "it matters a great deal how it happened. The cause of your son's death will be a question of anxious investigation—of the gravest and most searching inquiries. I fully believe the story which Carleton told us last night, but there are others who will—who must—suspect him of foul play. Is it possible, Lady Hartmore—is it in any way within the province of woman, so completely to forget herself in this moment of terrible anguish, as to live for another? You can do nothing now for the dead, but you can do much, very much, for the living."

"You mean for my husband?" she inquired.

"Not alone for your husband—not even principally for him. You can do much for the man who will be accused of the crime of having murdered your son. I can only repeat my firm conviction of his innocence, but the grounds for my belief, at present, go for nothing; circumstances prove a grave case against him. Your son, to all appearance, was much attached to the girl whom Carleton loved and loves. Yesterday morning Carleton received what he considered a final rejection from Miss Farnham. She spent the day with your son; she gave him every encouragement. Carleton was morose, gloomy, jealous. His jealousy and gloom were noticed by every member of our party. Carleton and your son both absented themselves from the drawing-room after dinner. It was during that time that the accident, which deprived your son of his life, took place. There will, of course, be a coroner's inquest. At the inquest the circumstances which I have just alluded to will come out, and there is no question but that Carleton will be arrested on suspicion and sent to trial—unless, indeed, you will help me."

"How can I help you?" she asked. "What am I to do? You ask me to share your belief, which seems to me to be based on nothing. Suppose I cannot share it?"

I was silent for a moment.

"I will tell you what I want you to do," I said then. "I want you to join me in insisting on having a post-mortem examination."

She gave me a glance of horror.

"Why?" she asked. "Why must the sleep of the dead be disturbed?"

Before I could answer her, Lord Hartmore's voice was heard at the door.

She was a brave woman, but at the sound of her husband's voice her courage for a moment deserted her.

"How—how can I break it to him?" she gasped. "Oh, please, don't leave me."

"No," I said, "I will stay with you."

I unlocked the door myself, and a white-headed, feeble-looking man came querulously into the room.

His wife rose to meet him. She put her arms round him and some way, somehow, conveyed the terrible tidings to his mind. I need scarcely linger over the hour that followed. At the end of that time I was accompanying the Hartmores back to Penporran. During the journey my companions were almost completely silent. Lady Hartmore kept her veil down, and I felt sure, wished to avoid speaking to me. The old lord was completely prostrated with grief. Not by word or hint had either parent given me the slightest clue by which I could insist on a post-mortem examination. Their son had evidently enjoyed perfect health during his brief life. I saw that circumstances were very black against Carleton.

It was evening when we reached Penporran. Lord and Lady Hartmore went at once to a private suite of rooms which had been got ready for their reception. As soon as I could, I sought an interview with Brabazon.

"Most of our visitors have left us," he said. "But Miss Farnham and, of course, Carleton, remain. The inquest is to take place in the library at an early hour to-morrow."

I was silent for a moment, then I said, abruptly:—

"Even at the risk of annoying you, Brabazon, I must repeat my strong desire that a post-mortem should precede the coroner's inquest."

"Have you spoken to the Hartmores on the subject?" inquired Brabazon.

I told him that I had mentioned my wish to Lady Hartmore.

"And what did she say?" he asked.

"She shrank from the idea with horror," I was obliged to confess.

"You can scarcely blame her," said Brabazon. "Why should the poor fellow's body be unnecessarily disturbed? The fact is, I have the greatest faith in your judgment, Halifax, but I think in the present instance you carry your sympathy for Ronald Carleton too far. The cause of death in the case of poor Randall was so absolutely apparent that I do not think you will get the coroner to consent to a post-mortem."

"There is one thing that occurred to me," I said:—"If Randall met his death by violence, there would be some traces of a struggle at the spot where he fell over. Randall would not tamely submit to murder—he was a big man and muscular. Has the path along the cliff been carefully searched?"

"Yes," replied Brabazon, "and there is no trace anywhere of a struggle. A little blood had been discovered on a sharp point of rock just where Carleton described the fall to have taken place. The marks of a heavy body being dragged along the sands above high-water mark have also been seen. All these evidences are, of course, I am bound to say, quite consistent with Carleton's story. The blood on the rock indicates also the exact spot of the accident."

"That was where the vault of the skull was broken," I said. "By the way, you forgot to give me poor Randall's letter to his mother. Doubtless Lady Hartmore would like to have it without a moment's delay."

Brabazon started, and put his hand in his pocket.

"I put the letter here," he said, "intending to give it to you as you were starting; of course, I forgot it. Here it is; no, though, there is nothing in my pocket. Surely I can't have dropped it anywhere. I know I put it here this morning. I rushed up to the poor fellow's room to fetch it just when the brougham was coming round."

"You did not give it to me," I said; "that letter ought to be found: it may be of the utmost importance. Was that the coat you wore this morning?"

"Yes, I have not been out of it all day; you don't know what a rush and confusion the whole place has been in."

"You will look for the letter, won't you, Brabazon? I cannot quite tell you why, but it will give me a sense of relief to know that it has been found before the inquest takes place to-morrow morning."

Soon afterwards we parted. I went into one of the morning-rooms, where I found Mrs. Brabazon. I made inquiries with regard to Carleton and Miss Farnham.

"I have not seen either of them," replied my hostess. "I believe Mr. Carleton has spent the day in his room, and a servant told me that Barbara Farnham was not well. I hear she has not risen at all to-day."

"Poor girl!" I ejaculated.

Mrs. Brabazon looked at me with languid interest—she was a very lethargic person.

"Yes," she ejaculated, after a pause—"this tragedy will be a sad blow to Barbara. She is as ambitious as she is handsome. She would have made a regal-looking Lady Hartmore."

I said nothing further—I could not betray the poor girl's secret, nor let Mrs. Brabazon know what a small place high position and greatness occupied just now in Miss Farnham's thoughts.

Just before the inquest the next morning, I asked Brabazon if the missing letter had been found.

"No," he said—"I cannot tell you how vexed I am about it. Every conceivable hole and corner both in the house and out has been searched, but no trace of the letter has been discovered. What I fear is that when I was down on the shore yesterday making investigations, it may have dropped out of my pocket and been washed away with the incoming tide. I cannot think of your hat: I want you to go out at once."

"Of course not," I answered, in some surprise at the request.

I then ran up-stairs. I must, of course, be present at the inquest, but I had still a moment at my disposal. I went boldly to Miss Farnham's door and knocked. After a very brief pause she opened it herself and stood before me. She was fully dressed. Her face was of a dead white—all the beautiful warmth of color had fled.

"I am told I must be present at the inquest," she said. Is it time for me to go downstairs? Have you come to fetch me?" She shuddered visibly as she spoke.

"I have come to ask you to help me," I said, eagerly. "I will manage to account for your absence in the library. Put on your hat: I want you to go out at once."

"What do you mean?" she asked, in astonishment.

"I will tell you," I said. "On the day of his death Randall wrote a letter to his mother. That letter has been lost. Brabazon had it in his pocket and has dropped it—no one knows where. There is no saying, Miss Farnham, what important evidence that letter may contain. I am sure it is not in the house. Brabazon believes that he dropped it when exploring the coast yesterday. Will you go at once and look for it? The moment you discover it, bring it to the library. Now, be as quick as ever you can."

"Yes," she replied, the soul in her eyes leaping up with a sudden renewed joy. She turned, pinned a hat on her head, wrapped a shawl round her, and ran downstairs. Her woman's wit grasped the whole situation at a glance. I went to the library, feeling assured that if poor Randall's letter were still in existence, Miss Farnham would find it.

There were present at the inquest Lady Hartmore, Brabazon and his wife, Carleton, and two gentlemen who had not yet left the house. Also, of course, the coroner and the jury. The moment I entered the room I glanced at the coroner: I had not seen him before. He was a little old gentleman, with a somewhat irascible expression of face, and a testy manner. I looked from him to poor Carleton, whom I had not seen since the time when he told his story in this room. The body of the dead man had been placed in a shell, and still occupied the central table of the library. Lady Hartmore sat near it. A sheet covered the face of the dead. Once I saw her raise her hand and touch the sheet reverently. She had the attitude of one who was protecting the body from intended violence. Her position and the look on her face reminded me of Kispah.

I looked again from her to Carleton. It was necessary for me to glance at the poor fellow, and to notice the despair on his face, to enable me to go up to the coroner, and urge upon him the necessity of a post-mortem preceding the inquest. He did not take my suggestion kindly.

"The cause of death is abundantly evident," he said, with irritation. "I cannot counsel a post-mortem examination."

"And I will not hear of it," said Lady Hartmore, looking at me with eyes full of reproach.

I pray say nothing more about it," exclaimed Carleton.

I bowed, and sat down.

The inquest was conducted with extreme care, but soon Miss Farnham's presence was found necessary, and her absence commented upon. I saw Carleton start when her name was mentioned, and a look of extreme distress filled his eyes.

"I will go and find her," said Mrs. Brabazon, leaving the room.

She returned in a moment to say that Miss Farnham was not in her room, and that no one seemed to know anything about her.

"I have sent several servants into the grounds to look for her," she said.

As Miss Farnham was an important witness, having spent almost the entire day previous to his death with poor Randall, proceedings were delayed during her absence.

The case, however, seemed as black as could be against Carleton, and I had not the least doubt that the coroner would order a warrant to be issued for his arrest on suspicion.

My one last hope now hung on Miss Farnham's being able to find the missing letter, and then on the letter containing evidence which would give a medical cause for poor Randall's extraordinary death.

I seldom found myself in a more torturing position than during the inquest. Relief, however, was at hand. I heard the sound of light and quickly-moving feet in the hall. The door of the library was opened, not softly and with reverent hush, but with the eager, impetuous movement of someone in hot haste. Miss Farnham came into the room with a wild color in her cheeks and a wild, bright light in her eyes. Her skirts were dragged and wet, her hair was loosened and fell over her shoulders—she had cast away both hat and shawl.

"There's your letter—going straight up to Lady Hartmore;—there's your letter—the last letter your son ever wrote to you. It was lost, or supposed to be lost, but I found it. I walked along the cliff, close to the edge—very close. There is a part where the cliff is undermined. I lay on my face and hands and looked over. I saw, far below me, a tiny ledge of rock; there was a bush growing there, and, sticking in the bush, something white—it might be a useless rag or a piece of torn paper, or it might be of importance. The tide was coming in fast; still, I thought that I had time. I put wings to my feet and rushed down a narrow path which led to the beach below. The tide had already come up and was wetting the base of the rock above which the bush which contained the white paper stood."

"I waded through the water and climbed the cliff and got the paper. I scrambled down again. When I came back, the water was up to my knees. I crossed it safely, and mounted to the higher cliff again. Then, for the first time, I examined my prize. Yes, it was a letter—it was open. I don't know what had become of its covering. I sat on the grass and I read it—yes, I read every word. Here it is now, and you can read it. Read it aloud, please, for it is important—it explains—it saves! Ronald, it saves you!" Here the excited girl paused in her eager narrative, and turned her full gaze upon Carleton, who was bending forward to listen to her. "It saves you," she repeated; "it exonerates you completely."

The commotion and interest which Miss Farnham's words and manner excited can be better felt than described. Lady Hartmore stood up and confronted the breathless girl. She held out her hand and clutched the letter, which was torn and dirty from long exposure to wind and weather. She held it close and looked at it. It was in the beloved writing of the dead. The dead man was her only son—the letter was addressed to her, his mother. It contained a last message from the brain now silent—from the heart now still.

Tears filled her eyes.

"I must read this letter in private," she faltered. "This last letter of my boy's is too sacred for anyone but his mother to hear. I must read it alone."

"No," interrupted Miss Farnham, "it contains important information. I call upon the coroner to insist on its being read aloud. I risked my life to get it. Another life hangs upon the information it contains. Dr. Halifax, you are a medical man—will you insist on this letter being read aloud?"

"Yes," said Lady Hartmore, and said something to her in a low voice. She listened attentively—she considered my words. After a pause she put the letter into my hands.

"If it must be, it must," she said. "This is the last drop in the bitterness of my cup."

She sat down, and flinging out her two arms, stretched them over the body of the dead man. Once more her attitude and manner reminded me of Kispah.

Miss Farnham stood close to Lady Hartmore. She forgot her dishevelled hair, her disordered appearance. All her soul filled the eyes which she raised expectantly to my face.

I glanced hurriedly through the letter—then I spoke.

"There is a good deal in this sheet of paper which is strictly private," I said, "and need not be read for the benefit of the coroner and the jury; but there are some sentences referring to the state of Mr. Randall's health which are, as Miss Farnham remarked, of the utmost importance. I will now proceed to read that portion of the letter."

I did so in a loud, clear voice.

These were poor Randall's words:—

"As far as I can tell, I am in perfect health, but for the last week or so I have been suffering, at intervals, from a strange form of giddiness. I feel as though I were made to turn round and round, or against my will impelled to go forwards, or backwards, or to one side. Sometimes the giddiness takes another form—I fancy that objects are revolving round me. I am perfectly conscious all the time, but the giddiness is generally accompanied by a distinct sensation of nausea. Very often the act of closing my eyes removes the vertigo completely for the time being. When the attack goes off I feel perfectly well, only I fancy I am suffering from continued deafness in my right ear. I don't know why I am impelled to tell you this—it is not worth making a fuss over. If I were to consult a medical man, he would probably set it down to a form of indigestion. I had a slight attack this morning at breakfast. If it continues to get worse, I will take the opportunity of consulting a London doctor who happens to be in the house."

I did not read any more, but folding up the letter returned it to Lady Hartmore. Both Carleton and Miss Farnham had approached each other in their excitement.

I looked beyond them to the coroner.

"I am sure," I said, "that I now express Lady Hartmore's sentiments as well as my own, when I demand that this inquest be adjourned until a post-mortem examination has been made on the body of the dead man. The symptoms which he describes in the letter which I have just read aloud, distinctly point to a disease of the inner ear, well known to the medical faculty, although not of common occurrence. I will ask the coroner to take immediate steps to get the services of two independent doctors to conduct the post-mortem, at which I should wish to be present."

My words were followed by a slight pause—the coroner then agreed to my wishes, and the inquest was adjourned.

The post-mortem took place on the afternoon of the same day, and the results amply accounted for the strange symptoms which poor Randall had so faithfully described in his last letter to his mother. On the right side of that portion of the base of the skull which contains the delicate organs of hearing we found a small, bony excrescence growing down into the labyrinth or inner ear. This, though small, was undoubtedly the cause of the terrible attacks of vertigo which the poor fellow complained of, and in one of which he met with his tragic death.

The coroner's inquest was resumed on the following day, and, of course, Carleton was abundantly exonerated.

It was two years afterward, however, before I accidentally saw in the *Times* the announcement of his marriage with Miss Farnham.

—The Strand Magazine.

WINNIE MAY'S DEPARTMENT.

PRIZE ESSAY.

Woman in the Light of History.

BY BETA, ST. MARY'S, ONT.

I want a lyre with other strings,
And undebased by praise of meaner things,
That I may sing thy worth in honor due,
In verse as musical as thou art true.

—Cowper.

The heroism of knights of old has ever been a favorite theme for song and story. Their noble bearing and their adventurous conflicts are graphically described, and the knights themselves lauded to the skies. Not so the faithful squires, who bore their masters' swords and bucklers. The sturdy retainers are kept in the background. So, in the history of the world, man has always had a part to play in the public drama of life. He has a profession in which he may win glory, or a trade in which he may earn distinction and battle his way to fame and fortune. But from how many fields of public life is woman debarred by the constitution of her sex and by that of society? It is not hers to thunder in senates, to marshal armed hosts, to usurp dominions or to explore new worlds.

But the female mind has always exercised a powerful influence over its surroundings. Admiration and respect are ever the reward of pure, self-sacrificing womanhood. The greatest men of our race have freely confessed that their success was primarily due to the early training and pious example of a mother, or to the sage counsel and loving sympathy of a wife. The experience of the world has been that man cannot debase woman without being himself degraded, nor exalt her without sharing her refinement. An eminent historian testifies that "the great centre upon which the machinery of society turns is the conduct of woman." One half of the Old World—the East—is groping about without enlightenment, beneath the burden of barbarism—there woman is a slave. The other half—the West—steadily advances toward a fuller civilization—there woman is free and honored.

Is woman's mental capacity inferior to that of man's? Her attainments in art and in literature, and the increasing confidence which society is placing in her, have already decided the question. What more polished or refined poetry has been given to the world than that of Sappho or Mrs. Browning? What fiction has excelled George Eliot's, or stirred up deeper feeling than Mrs. Stowe's? What delineation of nature can compare with Rosa Bonheur's? Whose deeds of heroism have equalled those of Pocahontas or of Joan of Arc? What reformers more zealous or more untiring than Mrs. Elizabeth Fry or Frances E. Willard?

Woman's character, as revealed in history, is as manysided as it is beautiful. Her sins have been many, her guilt has been deep. But what an atonement! What a wealth of patient self-sacrifice and of loving sympathy! What a constancy was the Empress Josephine's, who loved so tenderly, even when dishonored and divorced! What piety and resignation is shown in the scaffold scene in the life of Mary Stuart!

Hyper to woman's Entwining and braiding
Life's garland with roses forever unfading