

been advised to request you not to see her for some little time.

"I have only a word or two more to say. The death of my son renders it impossible, of course, that you and Eleanor can be married at the time appointed. I ask you, as her affianced husband, to wait for another year. I ask you as her father. Let me, an old man, bereaved, keep my daughter, my only child, for a little time longer. Her mother joins her entreaties to mine.

"I feel that you will do as I implore you to do. I know, indeed, that love is often selfish. But I also know that, in the nobler order of minds, self-sacrifice is sometimes as strong as love."

PAUL MELVILLE.

For a few minutes after reading the letter I remained absolutely stupefied. But by a strong effort of the will I brought myself back to reason. Now became clear the mystery of Eleanor's silence while I was in Quebec. Her sickness prevented her from receiving and from answering my letters. Her parents were too deeply plunged in grief to do more than think of the son they had lost and of the daughter they might be about to lose.

I will not attempt to describe the state of mind brought on by the reading of the notes of Eleanor and her father. I hold that great grief cannot be expressed in words. Mine was great grief. But, above the abyss of agony sat Duty, like a calm, pacifying but imperious spirit, bidding me to at once obey her behests. So I sat down and wrote a letter to Eleanor's father. I need not reproduce it; but this much I may be permitted to say,—that I think it was a letter such as, under the circumstances, was due alike to him and to myself. I began by testifying my grief and offering all condolence. I ended by a full and unfettered compliance with the request which he had made of me.

## PART II.

About the beginning of the New Year, Eleanor, after whose health I never ceased to inquire daily, suffered a relapse. I was most anxious to see her, but I had resolved to forego that pleasure until I was fully assured that she could, without any chance of danger from nervous shock, encounter the excitement of again meeting me. That interview never took place. The reasons will now unfold themselves; whether or not they justified my action is a question not so much for argument as for my own conscience. Early on the morning of the 7th of January, the day that had been appointed for our marriage, I penned the following note to Mr. Melville:—

"DEAR SIR,—I have to ask you for a favour; to yield it to me; to refuse will be to pain both of us. I request you to relieve me from the promise I made to marry Eleanor. An event has happened within the last twelve hours which must be my justification for the extraordinary request I feel myself driven to make. To-morrow morning a packet will be placed in your hands; its contents will disclose to you the reasons for my conduct. But this obligation I lay on you as a man of honour: you are not to open the packet for six months; you are not, for another year, to make known its contents to your daughter.

"In a week from this day I shall have left Canada, perhaps for ever. I now release Eleanor from her engagement; what this costs me is known to myself alone. God bless her and you. Farewell."

EDWARD ARTON.

In a week from the writing of this letter I had wound up my affairs, transferred my business to another medical man, and was on my way to South America.

## THE CONTENTS OF THE PACKET.

It is now time I should let the reader become acquainted with the reasons that compelled me to make the sacrifices of which he is already aware. Here then is a copy of the document I sent to Eleanor's father:—

MONTREAL, January 7, 184—.

PAUL MELVILLE, ESQ.:

"SIR,—I now take leave to present to you the reasons that have forced me to the resolve of which I have already, this day, made you aware. I shall be brief and explicit.

"I am now nearly a year in the practice of my profession. Since the third month I have had with me a young man named Boyce, a medical student in his third year. He has had a room in my house; has carried on his studies under my roof, and has eaten at the same table. I always regarded him as a young man of honourable principles. I gave him

all possible assistance in the prosecution of his studies. The text-books he was not able to purchase, I lent him or bought for him. He had free access to my library and my anatomical collections. In return for these advantages he assisted me in the minor duties of the profession.

"Last night, about ten o'clock, Boyce came into my study and requested the loan of my night-key. He said that he had lost his own, and he volunteered the information that he had promised, that night, to sit by the bed of a fellow-student who was seriously ill. I gave him the key, and, as soon as I heard the hall door close behind him, I resumed the reading of a difficult book. The volume was specially chosen because I hoped that the attempt to master its contents would compel me, for the time, to forget Eleanor's suffering, your trouble and my own.

"I found, after a short time, that the book could not change the current of my thoughts. So I turned my lamp down and threw myself on the sofa. My body was thoroughly fatigued; I should have slept, but my mind would not suffer me. About midnight I fell into a kind of feverish doze, almost worse than wakefulness. I heard the clock strike one. A few minutes after this I was aroused by a noise at the rear of the house. I proceeded to ascertain the cause. Opening a window which looked out of my surgery upon the garden, I saw a sleigh driving rapidly away through a lane which ran at right-angles with the back of the garden. A wicket opened from this lane into the garden. I could see by the clear star-light that this wicket was open. I determined to watch for a few minutes before making an alarm. I had not long to wait before I saw three figures struggling from the lane through the wicket into the garden. They were carrying something heavy; it appeared to me to be a man wrapped up in a buffalo overcoat. I recognized one of the three figures to be Boyce. As soon as they entered the garden they deposited their burden on the snow; Boyce at the same moment sprang toward the wicket, locked it in a hurried, nervous manner, and returned to his companions. [I could keep silence no longer, and roared out, at the top of my voice, "Boyce, what is the meaning of all this? I shall have you explain this to me in the morning, sir."]

"Boyce left his two comrades, who were conversing in the shadow of the wall, and leaning under the window, out of which I had shouted to him, said, in an apologetic tone, 'It is nothing, Dr. Arton, only poor Bill, the best man in our class; took too much toddy; found him in the snow, not able to speak; boarding house people deaf; these other two students and I put him in a sleigh and brought him here. Any harm?'

"Boyce uttered these last two words in a tone of impudent inquisitiveness, which made me suspect that he also had been drinking.

"I replied, 'Harm or no harm, bring that young man into the house and look to him at once. Examine him carefully lest any part be frozen. I think I had better go down and see to him myself.'

"Not the least necessity," replied Boyce; "he is in good hands; this will not be the first time I have looked after poor Bill." So saying, he left me and rejoined his two comrades. I watched the three, however, until they conveyed their helpless companion into the house by a door which opened to the right of the window out of which I was watching them.

"I returned to my study, and again lay down on the sofa. The night air had cooled my head a little, and I felt, in spite of the incident I had witnessed, more composed than I could have expected. It was after two o'clock before I fell asleep. But what a sleep. And what a dream it brought.

"Here is the dream. I thought that your dead son, Ralph, entered my room, and, coming over to the sofa, touched me with his finger. I awoke, looked at him, but did not speak. He did not open his lips to me. But he put his hand into his bosom and brought out what seemed to me to be a pair of mural tablets, bearing inscriptions. Then by degrees the letters of these inscriptions seemed

to grow larger and larger, and to stand out with horrible distinctness.

"The inscription on the first tablet read thus:—  
"Eleanor Melville. Died, March 3, 184—."

"The second inscription read thus:—

"Edward Arton. Died, April 5, 18—."

"In a moment I became thoroughly awake. I jumped from the sofa and plunged my head into a basin of cold water. I then sat down for a few minutes to reason with myself as to whether I had been in a dream or whether I had been awake when I saw this vision. The appalling realism of the apparition and the inscriptions on the tablets half convinced me that I had been awake.

"I walked about the room for some time. Then I went out into the street and marched up and down. But my agitation did not decrease; the dream was as terribly vivid as ever. Then I entered my dwelling, and going up to my room it struck me that I should ascertain the condition of the unfortunate student whom Boyce and his companions had brought into my house. I took my lamp and went down to Boyce's room. The door was half open; his light was still burning. I looked into the apartment. Boyce and his two comrades were apparently asleep; they had been drinking, for a bottle with some spirits in it was on the table.

"I was amazed to find that the student, 'Bill,' was not in the room. I did not wish to awaken any of them, and determined to see if they had put him to sleep in the library, a room adjoining Boyce's. I went to the library; the student was not there. I was now beginning to feel uneasy, and, without knowing why, I thought I would descend to the cellar. The impulse was one for which I had no especial reason. Accordingly to the cellar I went. I saw, in the middle of the floor, a human figure, lying at full length, and covered with a buffalo robe. This, then, was the heartless and disgraceful manner in which Boyce and his two companions had treated poor 'Bill.' I went over to him and felt his pulse. The hand was deadly cold, pulse there was none. I then raised his head, and turned my lamp upon his face. I staggered back in horror. What I saw was the body of your son, Ralph, which had been 'snatched' that night by the lying scoundrel, Boyce.

"My first impulse was one of indignation. I rushed to Boyce's room, stumbling twice and letting my lamp fall. He and his friends had heard the noise, suspected that I had discovered their rascality, and, fearing for their personal safety, had locked the door. It was of thick oak, and would not yield to me. Half frenzied with rage and disappointment, I rushed to a police station to procure the arrest of the grave-robbers. The police could not move without a warrant. I was obliged to go to a magistrate's house, two miles away, to procure a warrant; all this occupied time. Finally three or four officers and myself started for my house. When we arrived the rascals had gone; and, what to me was a hundred times more painful, the body of Ralph had also disappeared. The opinion of the officers was that the sleigh which I had seen drive away had been secreted at no great distance from my house, in order to remove the spoil of the grave as soon as it was likely that I would be asleep. The officers were further of opinion that this removal would have taken place sooner had it not been that Boyce and his companions had been indulging in liquor, and so caused a delay they had not intended. My house is in the outskirts of the city. There was not much fear of a lurking sleigh being disturbed by officers patrolling in my direction, for the neighbourhood was quiet, the snow deep and the night cold. The wretch, Boyce, has vanished from the city.

"You may consider that the dream I have just narrated to you is nothing but the creation of a saddened and overtaxed brain. I do not think so. I am not superstitious; few medical men are. But I am fully convinced in my own mind that the warning as to Eleanor's death will prove true. I do not wish to be in Canada on the 3rd of the coming March. If she should die on that day, I know that my reason would die with her.

"But should the warning prove to be nothing more than the delusion of a dream, still, after what