

"No, no, Halliday, I won't do that. Here's one with the seal of the Alliance Insurance Office. I suppose your premium is all right." Tom Halliday lifted himself on his elbow for a moment, startled into new life, but he sank back upon the pillows again immediately, with a feeble groan.

"I don't know about that," he said anxiously, "you'd better look to that, Phil, for the little woman's sake. A man is apt to think that his insurance is settled and done with when he has been pommelled about by the doctors and approved by the board. He forgets there's that little matter of the premium. You'd better open the letter, Phil. I never was a good hand at remembering dates, and this illness has thrown me altogether out of gear."

Mr. Sheldon tore open that official document which, in his benevolent regard for his friend's interest, he had manipulated so cleverly on the precious evening, and read the letter with all show of deliberation.

"You're right, Tom," he exclaimed presently. "The twenty-one days' grace expire to-day. You'd better write me a cheque at once, and I'll send it on the office by hand. Where's your cheque-book?"

"In the pocket of that coat hanging up there." Philip Sheldon found the cheque-book, and brought it to his friend, with Georgy's portfolio, and the frivolous little green glass inkstand in the shape of an apple. He adjusted the writing materials for the sick man's use with womanly gentleness. His arm supported the wasted frame, as Tom Halliday slowly and laboriously filled in the cheque; and when the signature was duly appended to that document he drew a long breath, which seemed to express infinite relief of mind.

"You'll be sure it goes on to the Alliance Office, eh, old fellow?" asked Tom, as he tore out the oblong slip of paper, and handed it to his friend. "It was kind of you to jog my memory about this business. I'm such a fellow for procrastinating matters. And I'm afraid I've been a little off my head during the last week."

"Nonsense, Tom; not you."
"O, yes, I have. I've had all sorts of queer fancies. Did you come into this room the night before last, when Georgy was asleep?"

Mr. Sheldon reflected for a moment before answering.

"No," he said, "not the night before last."
"Ab, I thought as much," murmured the invalid. "I was off my head that night then, Phil, for I fancied I saw you; and I fancied I heard the bottles and glasses jingling on the little table behind the curtain."

"You were dreaming, perhaps."
"O, no, I wasn't dreaming. I was very restless and wakeful that night. However, that's neither here nor there. I lie in a stupid state sometimes for hours and hours, and I feel as weak as a rat, bodily and mentally; so while I have wits about me I'd better say what I've been wanting to say ever so long. You've been a good and kind friend to me all through this illness, Phil, and I'm not ungrateful for your kindness. If it does come to the worst with me—as I believe it will—Georgy shall give you a handsome mourning ring, or fifty pounds to buy one, if you like it better. And now let me shake hands with you, Philip Sheldon, and say thank you heartily, old fellow, for once and for ever."

The invalid stretched out a poor feeble attenuated hand, and, after a moment's pause, Philip Sheldon clasped it in his own muscular fingers. He did hesitate for just one instant before taking that hand.

He was no student of the Gospel; but when he had left the sick chamber there arose before him suddenly, as if written in letters of fire on the wall opposite to him, one sentence which had been familiar to him in his school-days at Barlingford:

And as soon as he was come, he goeth straightway to him, and saith, Master, master; and kissed him.

The new doctor came twice a day to see his patient. He seemed rather anxious about the case, and just a little puzzled by the symp-

oms. Georgy had sufficient penetration to perceive that this new adviser was in some manner at fault, and she began to think that Philip Sheldon was right, and that regular practitioners were very stupid creatures. She communicated her doubts to Mr. Sheldon, and suggested the expediency of calling in some grave elderly doctor, to supersede Mr. Burkhams. But against this the dentist protested very strongly.

"You asked me to call in a stranger, Mrs. Halliday, and I have done so," he said with the dignity of an offended man. "You must now abide by his treatment, and content yourself with his advice, unless he chooses to summon further assistance."

Georgy was fain to submit. She gave a little plaintive sigh, and went back to her husband's room, where she sat and wept silently behind the bed-curtains. There was a double watch kept in the sick chamber now; for Nancy Woolper rarely left it, and rarely closed her eyes. It was altogether a sad time in the dentist's house, and Tom Halliday apologised to his friend more than once for the trouble he had brought upon him. If he had been familiar with the details of modern history he would have quoted Charles Stuart, and begged pardon for being so long a-dying.

But anon there came a gleam of hope. The patient seemed decidedly better; and Georgy was prepared to reverence Mr. Burkhams, the Bloomsbury surgeon, as the greatest and ablest of men. Those shadows of doubt and perplexity which had at first obscured Mr. Burkhams' brow cleared away, and he spoke very cheerfully of the invalid.

Unhappily this state of things did not last long. The young surgeon came one morning, and was obviously alarmed by the appearance of his patient. He told Philip Sheldon as much; but that gentleman made very light of his fears. As the two men discussed the case, it was very evident that the irregular practitioner was quite a match for the regular one. Mr. Burkhams listened deferentially, but departed only half-convinced. He walked briskly away from the house, but came to a dead stop directly after turning on to Fitzgeorge-street.

"What ought I to do?" he asked himself.
"What course ought I to take? If I am right, I should be a villain to let things go on. If I am wrong, anything like interference would ruin me for life."

He had finished his morning round, but he did not go straight home. He lingered at the corners of quiet streets, and walked up and down the unfrequented side of a loomy square. Once he turned and retraced his steps in the direction of Fitzgeorge-street. But after all this hesitation he walked home, and ate his dinner very thoughtfully, answering his young wife at random when she talked to him. He was a struggling man, who had invested his small fortune in the purchase of a practice which had turned out of a very poor one, and he had the battle of life before him.

"There's something on your mind to-day, I'm sure, Harry," his wife said before the meal was ended.

"Well, yes, dear," he answered; "I've rather a difficult case in Fitzgeorge-street, and I'm anxious about it."

The industrious little wife disappeared after dinner and the young surgeon walked up and down the room alone, brooding over that difficult case in Fitzgeorge-street. After spending nearly an hour thus, he snatched his hat suddenly from the table on which he had set it down, and hurried from the house.

"I'll have advice and assistance, come what may," he said to himself, as he walked rapidly in the direction of Mr. Sheldon's house. "The case may be straight enough—I certainly can't see that the man has any motive—but I'll have advice."

He looked up at the dentist's spoolless dwelling as he crossed the street. The blinds were all down, and the fact that they were so sent a sudden chill to his heart. But the April sunshine was full upon that side of the street, and there might be no significance in those closely-drawn blinds. The door was opened by a sleepy-look-

ing boy, and in the passage Mr. Burkhams met Philip Sheldon.

"I have been rather anxious about my patient since this morning, Mr. Sheldon," said the surgeon, "and I've come to the conclusion that I ought to confer with a man of higher standing than myself. Do you think Mrs. Halliday will object to such a course?"

"I am sure she would not have objected to it," the dentist answered very gravely, "if you had suggested it sooner. I am sorry to say the suggestion comes too late. My poor friend breathed his last half an hour ago."

(To be continued.)

THE TIGRESS AND HER YOUNG.

A FEW years ago, some English officers, camping in the vicinity of Mulksport, went out tiger-hunting, and bagged a splendid tigress. Whilst returning home with the trophy, they found a secluded spot, in the lee of a jagged rock, which evidently was the lair of a tiger; for there lay bones of both human and brute kind and shreds and rags of clothing. There was also a tiny kitten, not more than a fortnight old, coiled in a corner, winking and blinking and gazing at the intruders. The hunters at once decided that it must be the cub of the beast they had slain, and willingly took charge of the little orphan. Tiger kittens are not captured every day; so, when the hunters returned to their quarters, the excitement in their tent was considerable. The newly acquired kitten was provided with a tiny dog-collar and chain, and attached to the tent-pole, round which it gambled to the delight of an audience numbering nearly twenty. About two hours after the capture, however, and just as it was growing dark, the good people in the tent were checked, in the midst of their hilarity, by a sound that caused the bravest heart to beat rather irregularly.

It was the roar, or rather the combination, of shriek and roar, peculiar to the tiger when driven mad with rage. In an instant the gamboling kitten became every inch a tiger, and strained with all its baby strength at the tether, while it replied with a loud wail to the terrible voice outside. The company were panic-stricken. There was something so sudden and unearthly in the roar, that it seemed as though the great tiger, brought in an hour before, had come to life again. Certainly the tiger in question was already flayed; but the picture conjured up became none the more pleasant for that. There was, however, not nearly so much time for speculation to the scared company as writing those lines has cost; for almost simultaneously with the roar there leaped clear into the centre of the tent a bold tigress; and, without deigning to notice a single man there, she caught her kidnapped baby by the nape of the neck, and, giving it a jerk, snapped the little chain, and then, turning for the tent-door, trotted off at full speed. After all, it appeared that the little thing did not belong to the tiger that was slain, but to the brave mother that had tracked and recovered it. Sanguinary man eater as she may have been, one can be scarcely sorry to hear that not a gun was levelled at the great rejoicing creature as she bore off her young one, and that she got off clear.

WHOEVER looks for a friend without imperfections will never find what he wants. We love ourselves with all our faults, and we ought to love our friends in like manner.

CURIOUS EXPERIMENT.—If a bottle be half filled with ground coffee, such as is used for making that beverage, and the bottle then filled with cold water, and the cork replaced, the evolution of gas or air will be so great as to force out the cork. It is also stated that the force is sufficient to burst the bottle if the cork be tightly secured.

THE Prince of Wales has abandoned the razor, and has announced his intention to wear his beard for the future in patriarchal fashion.