

“AT THE CROSSING OF THE BAR.”

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I am a physician. In the sanctity of my profession, many, at the crossing of the bar, have made known to me strange revelations, but none stranger than my own.

I was young, buoyant, happy. Life lay before me. I loved my chosen art—I would make a name for myself. With this end in view, I began my practice in a charming little town, from London not far distant. It was there I met Bernice Earle. Among my first patients was a little blind boy, upon whose eyes I was then operating, in the almost certain hope of leading him into the wondrous fairy land of vision. How sacred is that mystery of impenetrable darkness! As I sauntered out 'one evening I heard the strains of a sweet child voice. The little fellow was sitting in the helpless attitude of the blind, his tiny hands clasped tightly together. He was singing. It was thus he earned his livelihood. The pathos of his pure, sweet voice touched my heart and hovered there like some heaven-sent seraph. I determined to aid him if science could accomplish it. I applied to the good Rector for a competent nurse. He said he would advise with a lady physician who was then a guest at his house, before starting for India, where she hoped to labor.

And thus I met Bernice. I see her now as she tenderly watched that little one, her tall, graceful form, and sweet, beautiful face forming a strange contrast to the frail, helpless child. Yes, I loved her, as a man loves once only—fondly, faithfully, fervently. Little Harry, thanks to the diligent care of his kind nurse, was now able to have the bandages removed from his eyes. To our inexpressible delight we found that he gave evidence of complete restoration to sight.

About this time I was called away to attend a medical convention. I was to be absent a couple of weeks. As I waved a farewell to Bernice my heart misgave me. I chided myself, but could not shake off the oppression which settled upon me. Had she not promised to be mine when the birds had homeward come, and the woods in blossom to their music woke?

The days sped on. O happy days that bring me to my love again! Who but sometimes knows the sorrow born of love. A telegram reached me which froze my very blood,—“Miss Earle died suddenly, come.” Of the time which followed I have no consciousness. My brain reeled, my reason tottered. For a brief season all sensation was suspended. I reached home only in time to see her carried to her burial. I had her brought to London and laid beside her parents. She whom I loved so well was now no more. How could I endure the long remaining years of life which separated me from my beloved? I was so young, and the years so cruelly long.

Cholera had just broken out in all its dread power in Hamburg. The papers teemed with accounts of awful significance. I left that very night for Germany. What was death now to me? Love is ever stronger than death. I would henceforth live only that I might be worthy to meet her again. I worked—God knows how faithfully—night and day among the poor and forsaken ones who were left to struggle alone with this plague demon. Many at whose lonely bedside I had watched, many whose dying lips had blessed me, I now carried out myself and buried. Hundreds daily lay awaiting interment. The stillness of death pervaded the streets. Business was suspended. All who could fled from