

sciousness. She wanted to tear at the thing that held her. She had changed her mind, she must get up, what had she done? The anguish that seized her was ungovernable, her half-paralysed hand, so heavy and difficult to move, got at the bell, and pulled, and pulled—and pulled. The knob came off in her hand, and the room swam round her, and then grew dark and peaceful. She had no taste, no smell, and she smiled to herself in the dark.

*“After life’s fitful fever——”*

She had pulled the bell—it was an electric bell—she should have pushed the knob, she smiled to herself in the dark, growing sleepy now, and calm again. It was stupid of her to have pulled the bell, but her hand and arms were too heavy to move, and all of her was heavy. How intensely dark and quiet it was; she opened her eyes—the darkness swam and floated, and made her feel sick, so she closed them again. How peaceful it was, how restful! *“After life’s fitful fever——”*

But the bed was too high, she could not get low enough in it; she was sinking, but she wanted to sink lower, she would feel better on the floor.

And then a long silence, the silence of oblivion, and again a vague consciousness. How high the bed was! She wanted to go lower, get quieter, there was another convulsive shuddering, and Nature’s effort to reject the poison. When this was over, in semi-consciousness, she saw a crawling Reptile of Fear, with viscid eyes, and tongue that slobbered red saliva, it sickened her with its odour, it was the odour of dead desire. Overpowering, the Thing crawled about the room with ribbed and heaving sides, and she lay there shuddering at it, not knowing its direction, as it moved, a hateful yellow light shone through and about it. Then the reptile turned beast, and she recognised it—and tried to shriek. *It was the beast in Louis!* It would spring on her—and its mate was dead—and stank in the bed. With gasping, painful breath and shudder she lay; and in the room, now visible, now crouching, hiding, more fearful still, was that dank, viscid beast, lurking, feeling for its dead mate.