

MAYBURY'S REPENTANCE.

By W. Pitt-Ridgely.

"I don't pay much attention to what doctors say," he remarked, in his important jovial way. He was a tall, athletic, well-dressed man of thirty. "Point of fact, I've never occasion to see one before, but—"

"You are fortunate, Mr. Maybury, if you sit down?"

"No," he replied, "I won't. One can't get on in life by sitting down. Motto is to keep going."

"Most of us have to pull up now and again. The human frame—"

"Look here," remarked the city man tranquilly, "you're not going to frighten me. Although I've had little to do with you medical men, I know there are two sets of you, the optimists and the pessimists. Some of you are too sanguine and others are not sanguine enough, but none of you tell the precise truth."

"A medical man," said the doctor, trying to preserve his temper, "has to use discretion. A medical man who blurted out the actual truth might well be doing his patient a great deal of harm. You must allow us my dear sir, to know our own business best."

"That's just what I shall not do!" cried Maybury, with vehemence. "There's more of humbug among you doctors than—than—"

"Tuan on the stock exchange?"

"Tuan in any other profession. Those of you who are not sheer quacks!"

"Really, Mr. Maybury," said the doctor, offended, "you must allow me to say—"

"Are you a specialist in this trifling complaint that I am suffering from?"

"No," replied the doctor, shortly, "I'm not."

"Then give me," said Maybury, "a note to the man at the top of the tree, and I'll go there in my cab like a shot."

The doctor was sorry to lose sight so quickly of an important client, but Mr. Maybury's aggressive manner had not pleased him, and even doctors, careful as they are to cloak the fact, have their sensitive moments. He scribbled a note. Mr. Maybury laid on the table an admirable fee, and taking the letter ran out to his cab.

"Two, five, two Harley street!" he shouted.

"Right you are, sir," said the cabman. "Winder up or down?"

"Never mind the winder. Put your horse along sharp."

"Gent," muttered the cabman to himself, "seems to be in a bit of a hurry."

Indeed, this was the usual manner of Arthur Maybury. When the cab stopped at one of the large houses in Harley street, which bore, like all its neighbors, a square brass plate on the open door, he went hastily through the hall and, without going into the waiting room, opened a side door. A stout, florid man was seated at the table reading the advertisements in the British Medical Journal. Mr. Maybury banged his silk hat down on the table and shook hands.

"My name's Maybury," he said, delivering the note. "Here's my card. A meeting of directors is waiting for me at Canon Street Hotel; I can just spare five minutes. Now, I can run over me, Dr. Jeyson, as sharp as ever your card can give me a prescription."

"First give me your symptoms."

Mr. Maybury described them. A feeling of depression in the evening; slight insomnia; absence of appetite. The florid man eyed him seriously and held his wrist for a few moments. "I may as well tell you," went on Maybury, with a burst of frankness, "that I am to be married in a few months to a very charming girl; dare to say you have seen the announcement in the papers. Miss Tearle, daughter of that Irishman who lost all his money in the—"

"Mr. Maybury!" the stout, florid man came round and stood with his back to the fireplace. "I have an important announcement to make to you. Your engagement must be cancelled."

"Oh, no," said Maybury with a gesture of protest. "That be hanged for a tale. She'd go and marry some one else, and they wouldn't have six pence between them. I couldn't allow her to endure that fate, Dr. Jeyson."

"I have nothing to do with the lady," he said with gravity. "I am only concerned with you. You are suffering from a rare complaint, known to us medical men as—Maybury did not catch the phrase. "It is my duty to tell you, sir, that," he coughed and lowered his voice, "you have but a few days to live."

Arthur Maybury half fell, half sat on the nearest chair. His face went very white. His lips moved, but no sound came.

"Serious news to tell a man, I know, but it's best that you should know the truth. What I recommend is that you should go to the Riviera at once." Maybury ejaculated something in a

whisper. "Ah, it's of no use damning the Riviera. That won't help you. You get away by to-night's mail without saying a word about your condition to anybody, and take the few remaining days of your life as quietly and easily as you can. Be sure not to talk of it; that will only increase the excitement and hasten the end."

"Are you—are you sure of this, Dr. Jeyson?" stammered Maybury.

"I am not in the habit of making mistakes."

"What is the time now?"

"The hour now is 2 o'clock. You have seven hours in which to make your arrangements."

"And can't you give me a prescription or anything?"

"My dear sir, pray be reasonable. Yours is no case for prescription. There was a pause. Maybury looked steadily at a portrait of Sir James Paget on the wall without seeing it; his adviser drummed at the mantelpiece impatiently.

"What—what is your fee, Dr. Jeyson? Shall I give your man a check?"

"Twenty guineas, if you please. Perhaps you will leave it there on the table. Either gold or notes."

With trembling hand Mr. Maybury counted out the amount.

"Twenty-one sovereigns," he said, thickly. "Rather a lot of money to pay for being told that one's not going to live a week, isn't it?"

"I'll see you to the door, myself, Mr. Maybury. And, above all, don't speak of this to a soul. Make it I beg your own secret."

Harley street is really a very straight thoroughfare, but to Maybury walking unsteadily toward Cavendish Square, it seemed full of odd convulsions. More than once he had to stop to grip at railings in order to recover his self-possession; possessors stared at him curiously, and a servant girl said something so very amusing about his manner to a servant next door that the servant next door nearly slipped down the area steps. In Cavendish Square he became himself. He was a man used to obstacles; his practice in overcoming them came to his aid now.

First he must go somewhere and think. His club? No, there he would find men whom he knew. His flat in Ashley Gardens? Yes. He would be alone there. Much to think about and much to do before he left Charing Cross that evening. He would, as the Harley street man had advised him, keep his own company, there was no one in the world with whom he would care to share the secret. He feared that if he were to tell some men of his acquaintance they would have difficulty in repressing signs of satisfaction.

"Wish now," he said, desolately, "that I had made one or two friends."

A familiar tap on the shoulder from a walking stick made him start.

"My dear boy," said Miss Tearle's father, "what on earth do you mean by loafing about Bond street at this hour of the day? I thought you were always up to your eyes in business. You're taking a day off, maybe?"

"Yes," he said shortly.

"I'm right, then," exclaimed Miss Tearle's father, with surprise. It was, in fact, not often that he was correct. "What wonderful perception on my part! I was telling me daughter only last night that I retained all the powers of insight. But tell me, now, in there anything going that you can recommend to me for an investment?"

"My dear Tearle," said Maybury with impatience, "don't bother me. Besides, you know very well that you have no money to invest."

"I am free to confess," acknowledged Miss Tearle's father, "that for the moment I had overlooked that fact! Is there any message for me dear Margaret? How that girl adores you, my dear Maybury!"

"Are you sure that that is so?"

"Well," said the other, hedging, "she adores you as much as can be expected under the circumstances. I'll be plain with you, Maybury. She's never quite forgotten her young cousin, who died out in West Africa, and that's the truth. But, after all," he went on, indulgently, "that's nothing. It will pass off. You're a man of the world, Maybury."

"Temporarily,"

"Ah!" said Miss Tearle's father, "well none of us live forever, unfortunately. And that reminds me. Have you such a thing as a £5 note, my boy, about you that you could conveniently spare for twenty-four hours. I'm infinitely obliged to you."

"Tearle!"

"Sir!" said the grateful old gentleman.

"With reference to Margaret," Maybury hesitated for a moment. The march of four young women across the pavement from a brougham to a shop separated them for a few moments.

"I want to ask you something. Do you think she would be sorry if—if anything serious were to happen to me?"

"No boy! You're not the kind of man that anything serious happens to. You're too knowing for that."

"I want an answer to my question."

"Maybury," said Mr. Tearle, placing the note carefully in his pocketbook as though to hint that it would be disturbed with great caution. "I'll tell you the truth. Times was when she became engaged to you at my particular request, and that there was no great affection on her side. But I'm speaking the honest truth when I tell you that she is now positively fond of you."

"Ah!"

"To be brutally frank," laughed the old gentleman, "let me tell you that you have some good qualities below the surface, but that it takes time to find them. For my part, I consider myself indebted to you."

"I suppose you are," said Maybury. "Good by."

"I hate the word good by," said the effusive old Irishman. "Let us borrow the phrase of our lively neighbors and say au revoir."

"Good by," repeated the other steadily.

It was a great relief to him when the lift had taken him up to his floor in Ashley Gardens and he was able to lock the dining room door upon himself. The two matronly servants did not hear him arrive, and they went on in high-pitched tones with a quarrel, but a kind of sham debate probably started to chase monotony. The elder of the two had been a servant with his parents; her voice made him think of his mother. One of Maybury's best traits, and one that he never revealed to the world, was his affection for the memory of his mother; for the first time since her death he thought of the possibility of meeting her again.

"But she was a good woman," he said.

Was it too late to make some reparations for his acts of the last few years. The clock on the mantel piece struck the hour and reminded him that there were no moments to waste. He went up to the desk in the corner—there was a writing desk in every room in the flat—and unlocked the stationery stand. He opened his check book and laid it on the ledge, and for half an hour he wrote swiftly, several letters. It was not possible to make amends to all the people to whom he had acted unfairly, but there were some who, by reason of their association with him, were now in distressed circumstances. To these he wrote letters which had for company a check.

"There seems," he said thoughtfully, after half an hour's work, "a good deal to clear up."

To Margaret Tearle he wrote a long affectionate letter, the composition of which cost him some trouble; when he had finished it he thought for a moment and then tore it into many pieces, because he felt that it would give pain. He substituted a friendly little note simply announcing his departure. Maybury had never made his will because it had always seemed an absurdly premature thing to do. Now he took a sheet of paper and thought.

The elder servant, answering the ring, appeared in the dining room. Her master was reading over the sheet of paper which he had written out and he did not speak to her at once.

"Didn't know you were in, sir. Letters to post, sir? I'll send them down by the lift boy at once. Would you like dinner a little earlier?"

"Pack my bag, Martha, please. I'm going away to the south of France."

"Be away long?" inquired the middle aged servant. "Scuse my asking."

"I don't know when I shall be back," he said, wearily. "And Martha?"

"Sir?"

"Oblige me by witnessing my signature here, and call the other maid in to do the same. I have just been making my will."

He indorsed the document, "Will and Testament of Arthur Maybury," and placed it in a corner of the desk. He went again to look at himself in the mirror, and felt gratified to find himself looking sane and normal; a tinge of color had returned to his face. He took the photograph of Margaret Tearle from an expansive frame and placed it carefully in his pocket. Then he looked through the square revolving bookcase for a volume which it seemed was not there, for he had to ring and thus disturb Martha in her work of packing his portmanteau.

"A Common Prayer Book!" echoed that astonished woman. "Certainly, sir, I can lend you one."

He found the service that he desired to read at the end of the collection. It occurred to him that it was a piece of careful editing to begin with the Public Baptism of Infants and to place the service for Burial of the Dead towards the end. He read the latter softly to himself, and tears came very near to his eyes now and again for the words gave him memories. He had heard them read sev-

eral times. It seemed queer that he had never till now thought of the occasion when they would be read over him.

"Your bag, sir," said Martha, bringing in the portmanteau, "and I don't think I've forgotten anything."

"Martha," he said.

"Yes, sir."

The middle-aged woman helped him with his coat.

"I am not very well, and I am going to—going away for the benefit of my health."

"Master Arthur! It's nothing serious, I hope?"

"I'm afraid I've been rather a selfish master during the last few years. If at any time I have been harsh in speaking to you, if I have seemed to forget that you were an old servant of my mother's, I want to ask your pardon."

"No, no, Master Arthur," said the woman, tearfully, "act that you mustn't ask my pardon."

"I should like you to think of me," he said, "as I was when I was a boy, and—"

He stopped short, for there was a choking in his throat. "Ring for a hansom," he said.

"I can tell, sir," said Martha quietly, "that you're not 'alf well."

He looked around when the servant had gone and said farewell to the room. Opening his portmanteau, he found room for some letter paper and envelopes; there would be time he hoped, out in the south of France to take further steps to right the wrongs that he had committed. For the first time he recognized the amazing change that the Harley street man's announcement had made in him; the quiet, thoughtful man, with a great affection in his heart for the world, seemed to have no relationship with the assertive, buoyant man who had left for the city that morning.

"Cab's waiting, sir," said Martha. "And here's a telegram."

"I won't trouble to open it," he remarked. "It's from my partner, I expect, I can't bother about business any more."

"It might be private, sir."

Only the thought that it might be from Margaret Tearle induced him, as he stood in the passage waiting for the lift, to open the envelope. It was not from her.

"Can I see you at your rooms?"

"JEYSON."

He scribbled hurriedly a reply on the back.

"No. Am leaving Charing Cross to-night's mail. MAYBURY."

"Please send that, Martha," he said. "Good bye."

"Good bye."

He repeated these words many times as the cab took him past the abbey and up Parliament street. At Charing Cross there was time to spare, and feeling hungry he went into the hotel, something to his surprise he found himself able to eat with admirable appetite; a small bottle of white wine added to his content. He felt half inclined to speak to the people who were eating at the next table and to tell them that he had but six days to live in this world, to tell them he was facing the certain thing with self-possession. One of the party commenced to brag solemnly about an attack of toothache, and Maybury smiled at the want of proportion.

He had taken his ticket and was at the wooden barriers leading to the continental platform when he saw a clean-shaven, anxious old gentleman scanning the faces of the passengers. He touched the shoulder of the man who was going through in front of Maybury.

"Excuse me," he said, "is your name Maybury?"

"Comment?" asked the man. "Vous dittez?"

"My name is Maybury."

"Glad to have found you," declared the anxious old man. "My name is Jeyson of Harley street."

"I think not," said Maybury. "I saw that gentleman late this afternoon, and you are certainly not he."

"My dear sir," cried the old man, sharply, "do you think I don't know who I am?"

"Apparently you do not."

"I beg your pardon," he said apologetically. "I had forgotten. Very natural consequence of a very annoying circumstance. Tell me. You called at Harley street about four o'clock. I found your card there. You had an interview and you paid a fee. How much did you pay?" Maybury with some interest gave the information. "How a second!" declared the old man.

"What?"

"My new man. I was out when you called; if you had gone into the waiting room the page boy would have told you so. I hope he did not give you a prescription?"

"He only told me," stammered Maybury, perplexed, "that I had but six days to live, and that I had better get away from London at once."

"Upon my word," declared Dr. Jeyson, "that was clever."

"But—was he wrong, then?"

"Wrong," cried the concerned old man. "Of course he was wrong—all



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