

"I do not know," she replied. "I saw a picture of Fosbroke this morning, and it brought him to my mind." She said the words "this morning" as though years of sorrow had elapsed since then. I could not help thinking something had happened to her, some trouble or sorrow, that made the beginning of the day seem so far off.

"John would break his heart if he were to lose Fosbroke, would he not?" she asked, her eyes dwelling anxiously on my face the while.

"It would be a great blow to him, undoubtedly," I replied; "he would be a soured and disappointed man."

"He should not have married me," she said, drearily. "I had neither money nor position. I am only a burden upon him."

"Why, Alsie, what are you thinking of?" I cried—she was so unlike her bright, gay self, I hardly knew her. "You are more precious to John than all the world beside—you know that."

"Yes," she replied, smiling through her tears. "I know it. Let us hope he may have the wife he loves, and the estates he expects—both."

I could not understand her—her agitation, her nervousness, her manner, were so unusual. I felt there was a mystery; and yet, after all, I might be mistaken, and the girl's agitation might be nothing but the result of having spent her day, as she told me, with her mother's papers and letters open before her.

To my great relief, Alsie rose, and said she would go to her own room. The next morning, when I saw her again, the deadly whiteness had left her face, but in it there was a look of constraint and dread. John, who never indulged his imagination, did not observe the change in his wife. She smiled as usual, and he did not observe that the smile had lost its sunshine; she laughed, and he never noted that her laugh had lost its old music.

"What is the day of the month?" asked my sister-in-law, one morning, as we all three sat at breakfast.

"The ninth," said my brother.

"The tenth," I corrected; "you never could remember dates, John, and never will."

"No," he laughed; "all that kind of thing is too much trouble for me. I want a memory-keeper, if such a thing is to be had."

"Is it really the tenth?" asked Alice, and I saw the cloud deepen on her face.

"Are you going out this morning, Alsie?" asked my brother.

She blushed crimson; and then replied, hastily—

"I do not know; I never care to know one hour what I shall do next."

"There's philosophy!" said John, with another hearty laugh. "Well, if you do not want my escort, Alsie, I am going over to Knightsbridge. I shall not return for luncheon."

Again I could not help seeing the look of relief that came over her face.

"Why," I asked myself, "should she be glad of his absence? She used to grumble if he were away for one hour."

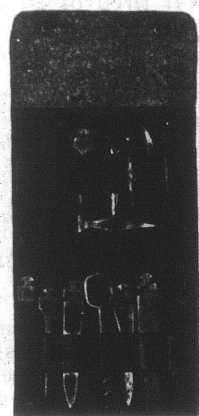
I had no thought of tracking my sister, of watching her, or hunting her down. I loved her; but I was young, and the instincts of my profession were strong upon me. I could not help wishing to solve what I felt to be a mystery.

John went off gaily enough, and soon afterward I saw my sister-in-law go out very quietly, and dressed as plainly as possible. I hurried after her, and asked her if she would like me to accompany her, as I was not busy, and could spare a few hours if she wished. She gave a little cry when she saw me; it might have been of surprise, but it sounded to me like despair. Then I left her.

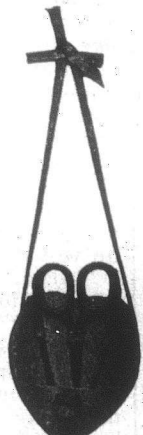
And so a cloud settled upon our house. John never seemed to observe how much his wife was altered. In his presence she was more like her old self; before me she did not keep up appearances so well; and before long I felt convinced that some great sorrow was eating her life away. One evening I went up to her as she stood at the window, watching the twilight deepen.

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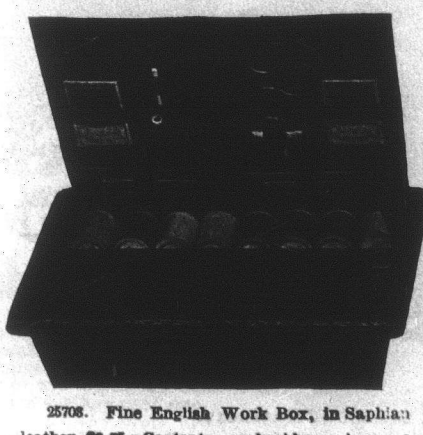
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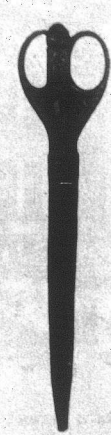
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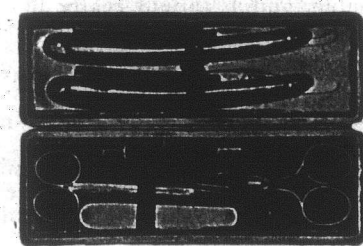
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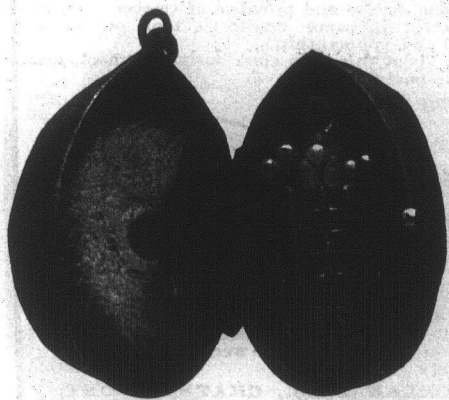
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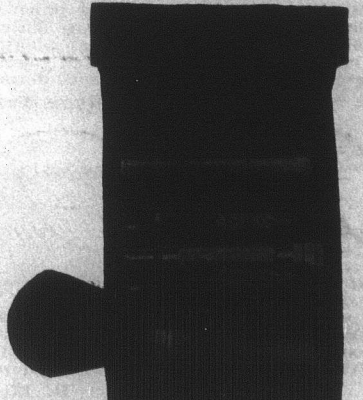
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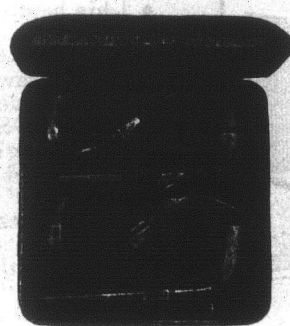
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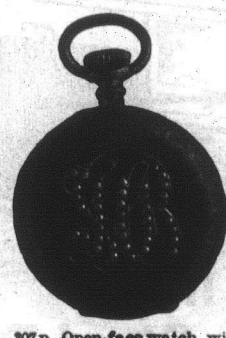
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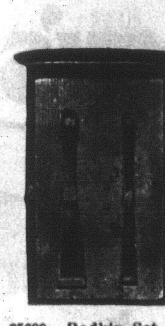
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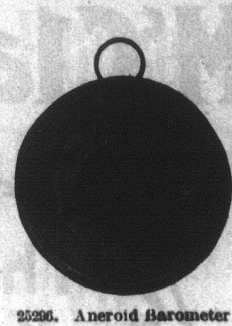
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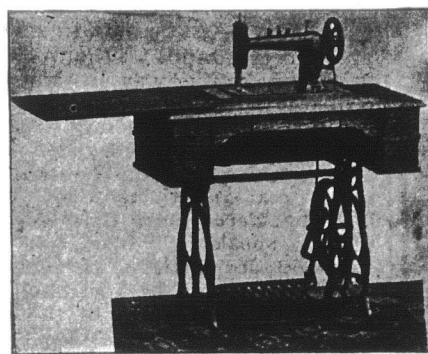
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