

"I thought of going at once."

"Then I'll do better than give you a letter. I'll call him up by telephone and make an appointment for you. Say in half an hour. It will take you about twenty minutes to drive to his place. Will that be convenient?"

"Perfectly, Mr. Phelps, and thank you very much."

"Nonsense, my dear girl. Only too happy to do it for you. You must come and meet Mrs. Phelps later on, and dine with us. Just at present she is out, taking tea with some friends. I want you to know her."

He rose and started toward the door. "Excuse me for a few moments, while I telephone the doctor."

Grace, left alone, could not help regretting the deceit she had been obliged to practise upon her aunt's old friend, but there seemed to be no help for it. She only hoped that nothing would occur, subsequently, to involve the latter in any disagreeable explanations.

Mr. Phelps returned to the drawing-room in a few minutes, his face wreathed in smiles of satisfaction.

"You're lucky," he said. "Dr. Hartmann tells me that he can accommodate you at once, as he discharged one of his patients, cured, only this morning. If you propose to remain at his house for treatment, which would be the only satisfactory way. I would suggest that you drive around by way of your hotel and arrange to have your baggage sent at once."

"I have written the address, and a few words to the doctor, on this card. Any of the cab-drivers will know it, of course. Dr. Hartmann is one of the most prominent men in Brussels. I wish you good luck in your stay at his place, and whenever you are in the city, come in and have luncheon. Mrs. Phelps will be delighted."

He led the way to the door and ushered the girl into her cab. "Glad I was able to be of service to you," he said, as she drove off. "Good evening."

When Grace entered the office of Dr. Hartmann, she was quite conscious of the fact that it would not be necessary for her to pretend to be nervous. In fact, she felt herself turning hot and cold with fear, and wondered whether she would have the courage to play the part which had been so unexpectedly thrust upon her.

The place itself was pleasant and attractive enough in appearance. It consisted of a large, stone building, with a mansard roof, set back some hundred or more yards from the street, and surrounded by a small park, filled with trees and shrubbery.

A well-kept gravel driveway led from the gate to the main entrance, which opened into a large hall. She observed, as she came in, a sort of parlor, or reception-room, to the right, handsomely furnished in rather an old-fashioned style, with a large marble mantel, and fireplace at one end of it. In the latter a blaze of canal coal lit up the room with a pleasant radiance. It was not yet dark without, and the lights in the reception-room were unlit, although a lamp was burning in the hall.

The maid who admitted her, a pleasant-faced German woman of middle age, conducted her into the reception-room, and taking her card disappeared down the hall. In a few minutes she returned, and nodding to Grace, opened a door at the left of the hall and bade her enter.

She found herself in the doctor's office; a large room, furnished in leather. A table in the center contained a lamp, and many magazines, and papers. There was no one in the room when she entered, but before she had time to select a chair, a door at the rear opened, and Dr. Hartmann came in.

He was a man of powerful build, and gave one the impression of great size, although not in reality above medium height. His shoulders, however, were very broad and thick, his neck short and powerful, his head large, with heavy iron-gray hair.

A short beard of the same color covered the lower part of his face, while through a pair of gold-rimmed spectacles his eyes shone with piercing brightness.

Grace thought, as he came toward her, that she had seldom seen a more striking-looking man.

"Be seated, miss," he said addressing her in English, though with a decided

accent. "You are Miss Grace Ellicott, I believe." He glanced at the card which he held in his hand.

"Yes," said Grace, nervously taking a seat.

"Mr. Phelps tells me you suffer from somnambulism," the doctor went on. "How long have you observed the symptoms?"

"About six months," answered Grace steadily.

"Are the occurrences frequent?"

"Yes. Almost every night."

"Had you experienced any great shock about the time these manifestations began?"

"Yes. My aunt, whom I loved very dearly, had died."

"Oh! And when you walk in your sleep, do you seem to see her?"

Grace reflected over this question for several moments. Then she recollected that persons given to somnambulism never remember their experiences.

"No. I have no recollection of what occurs."

The doctor's face was lit with a satisfied smile. He came over to Grace, drew apart the lids of one of her eyes, and gazed into it, looked at her hands critically, felt her pulse for a moment, then asked suddenly:

"Have you ever been placed under the influence of hypnosis?"

She trembled. If this man were to hypnotize her, as she was perfectly certain that he could, he might force her to tell him everything, and thereby endanger the success of the whole plan.

"No," she replied firmly. "I should not care for it."

"It is a method of treatment, Miss Ellicott, which I use a great deal."

"I hope it will not be necessary, doctor to use it upon me. I have always had a horror of being hypnotized. Please do not attempt it."

"Very well," the doctor laughed. "It may not be necessary. Before we go further with your case, I shall want to observe it carefully for a few days. You understand my terms, of course?"

The doctor named a large sum. "So much each week, and an additional charge for my services, depending upon the nature of the case."

Grace nodded, although the amount was sufficiently large to stagger her.

"I shall gladly pay what you ask," she said, "if you can only cure me."

She rose as the doctor stepped to the side of the room and pressed an electric button.

"You can go to your room at once, Miss Ellicott," the doctor went on. "One of the maids will conduct you. Your meals will be served there, or you can eat in the large dining-room, as you prefer. There are only twenty other patients. Some of them you might find very agreeable. Make yourself thoroughly at home. There are many excellent books in the library, if you are fond of reading, and you will perhaps wish to walk in the grounds, or visit your friends in the city."

"The nature of your case is such that no particular regimen, no rules of health are necessary. Remember, however, that we close the gates to the park at sundown. I will see you again this evening and bring you some medicine. It is merely a sedative, to quiet your nerves. It is not possible to do much for complaints such as yours by means of drugs."

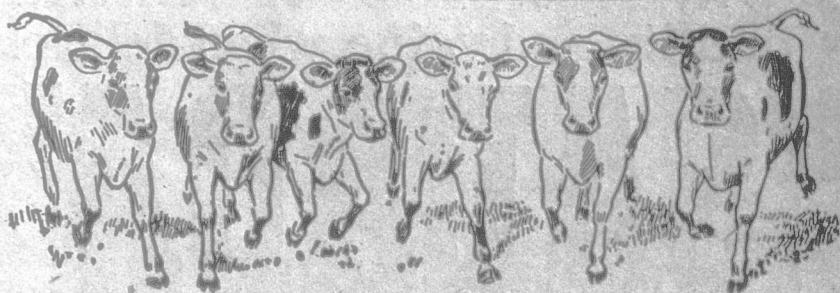
He turned as a quiet, pleasant-faced woman opened the door.

"Anna," he said to her in German, "conduct Miss Ellicott to her room, and make her comfortable."

Not wishing to endure the ordeal of dining with strangers, Grace decided to have her dinner served in her room. She found the meal excellent, and very well cooked. After dinner she sat in an easy chair by the large electric lamp and read a book she had brought with her.

At ten o'clock Dr. Hartmann came in, asked her a few more questions, and gave the nurse a small bottle containing a dark, brown liquid and instructed her as to administering it. Then he said good night and went out.

Grace threw down her book and announced that she was ready to retire. The maid assisted her to undress, gave her a few drops of the medicine in a small glass of sherry, put out the light, and departed, informing Grace that she would be in the hall, within call, if the latter wished anything.



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