

THE SEVEN SECRETS by WM. J. QUINN

CHAPTER XV. I Am Called for Consultation.

The incident was certainly a puzzling one, for when a few minutes later my chief entered the study his face was unusually ashen gray, was flushed with excitement.

"I've been having some trouble with a lunatic," he explained, after greeting me and inquiring why I had come down to consult him.

"The woman's people are anxious to place her under restraint, yet for the present there is not quite sufficient evidence of insanity to sign the certificate.

"I have been having some trouble with a lunatic," he explained, after greeting me and inquiring why I had come down to consult him.

"I heard you," I admitted. "That was all." The circumstance was a strange one, and those words were so ominous that I was determined not to reveal to him the exact words I had overheard.

"Like many other women patients suffering from a nervous trouble, she has taken a violent dislike to me, and believes that I'm the very devil in human form," he said, smiling. "Fortunately she had a friend with her, or she might have attacked me to and fro."

"But not quite. Had you been in my place you would have had your curiosity and suspicion roused to no mean degree—not only by the words uttered by the woman and Sir Bernard's defiant reply, but by the fact that the female voice sounded familiar.

"A man knows the voice of his love above all. The voice that I had heard in that adjoining room was to the best of my belief that of Ethelwynn!

"With a resolution to probe this mystery slowly and without unbecomingly haste I dropped the subject and commenced to ask his advice regarding the complicated case of Lady Twickenham.

"While at dinner, a meal served in that severe style which characterized the austere old man's daily life, I commenced to talk of the antics of insane persons and their extraordinary antipathies, but quickly discerned that he had neither intention nor desire to speak of them.

"On this Sunday night it was no exception. The first-class compartment was crowded, mostly, he it said, by third-class passengers who had 'tipped' the guard.

"I noticed that her chest rose and fell in a deep long-drawn sigh and that she wore black cotton gloves, one finger of which was worn through. Yes, she was the picture of poor respectability.

"The other passengers, two of whom were probably city clerks with their loves, regarded her with some surprise and there seemed an inclination on the part of the loudly-dressed females to regard her with contempt.

"In that moment, however, I somehow entertained a belief that we had met before. Under what circumstances, or where, I could not recollect. The wistfulness of the white face, the slight hollowness of the cheeks, the unbecomingly dark eyes, the half-familiar to me, yet, although for some time I have been accosted and thanked by people whom I have no recollection of ever having seen in my life.

"There was an element of romantic mystery in that fragile little figure huddled up in the far corner of the carriage. Once or twice when she believed my gaze to be averted she raised her eyes furtively as though to reassure herself of my identity, and in her restless manner I discerned a desire to speak with me.

"Sometimes when a man's mind is firmly fixed upon an object the events of his daily life casually lead toward it. Have you never experienced that strange phenomenon

for which medical science has never yet accounted, namely the impression of form upon the imagination? You have one day suddenly the vision of a person long absent.

"You have not seen him for years, without any apparent cause, you have recollected him. In the hurry and bustle of city life a thousand faces are passing you hourly.

"And so it was in my own case. So deeply had my mind been occupied by thoughts of my love that several times that day, in London and in Brighton, I had been startled by striking resemblances.

"The situation was becoming more complicated. Since the conclusion of the interview I had seen nothing of the widow. She had stayed several days with Ethelwynn at the Henickers; then had visited her aunt near Bath.

"At Victoria the pale-faced girl descended quickly and, swallowed in a moment in the crowd on the platform, I saw her no more.

"She had before descending given me a final glance and I fancied that a faint smile of recognition played about her lips. But the shadows are heavy and I could not see sufficiently distinctly to warrant my returning her salute.

"I was going my round at Guy's on the following morning, when a telegram was put into my hand. It was from Ethelwynn's mother, Mrs. Mirvart, at Neneford, asking me to go down there without delay, but giving no reason for the urgency.

"I had always been a favorite with the old lady and to obey was, of course, imperative, even though I was compelled to look after Sir Bernard's private practice in my absence.

"Neneford Manor was an ancient rambling, old Queen Anne-place, about six miles from Peterborough on the high road to Leicester. Standing in the midst of the richest grass country in the district, with the ground sloping to the brimming river that wound through meadows which in May were a blaze of golden buttercups.

"I must have been a moment, apparently unable to utter a word. I had expected to find her unwell; but, on the contrary, she seemed as active as usual, notwithstanding the senile decay which I knew had already laid its hand heavily upon her.

"Well!" I inquired, when she had seated herself, and with the evening light upon her face I saw how blanched and anxious she was.

"I was to consult you, doctor, upon a very serious and confidential matter," she began, leaning forward, her thin white hands clasped in her lap.

"To me the police are worse than useless," she said, in her slow weak voice. "They don't seem to have exerted themselves in the least after that utterly useless inquest with its futile verdict.

will. Like all such mothers, she considered wealth a necessary adjunct to happiness, and it had been with her heartiest approval that Mary had married the unfortunate Courtenay, notwithstanding the difference between the ages of bride and bridegroom.

"Her statement startled me. I had no idea that the young widow had taken the old gentleman's death so much to heart. As far as I had been able to judge it seemed very much as though she had every desire to regain her freedom from a marital bond that galled her.

"You mean that she's just a little—well, eccentric?" I remarked seriously.

"Yes, that's true," she said. "Poor mother has been very queer of late. She seems so distracted, and worries quite unnecessarily over me. I wish you'd give her advice. Her state causes me considerable anxiety."

"I really don't know what she has. When he takes up a case he goes into it with a greater thoroughness than any detective living."

"You're not a detective, are you?" I inquired, smiling.

"My hostess had excused me from dressing, but her daughter, neat in her widow's collar and cuffs, sat prim and upright, her eyes now and then raised to mine in undisguised inquiry.

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"The big red-shaded lamp in the center of the table shed a soft light upon the snowy cloth, the flowers and the glittering silver, and as my hostess took her seat she sighed slightly, and for the first time asked of Ethelwynn.

"I haven't seen her for a week," I was compelled to admit. "Patients have been so numerous that I haven't had time to go out to see her, except at hours when calling at a friend's house was out of the question."

"Do you like the Henickers?" her mother inquired, raising her eyes inquiringly to mine.

"I'm not a detective. How can he expect to triumph where the police fail?" "He often does," I declared. "His methods are different from the hard and fast rules followed by the police. He commences at whatever point presents itself, and laboriously works backwards with a patience that is absolutely extraordinary.

of a sudden her thin, wax face lit up with a smile of recognition, and she cried: "Why, doctor! Where did you come from? No one told me you were here, and across the table she stretched out her hand in greeting."

"I thought you were resting after your long walk this morning, dear, so I did not disturb you," her mother explained.

"Very well," I said, feigning to laugh. "I must disguise the ailment, and see what can be done."

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"And he is engaged upon my poor husband's case?" asked Mary, suddenly interested.

IT'S SUMMER IN BELMONT. ONLY ONE CHANCE OF CARS. LOW PRICES. TICKETS, 1502 FARNAM STREET.

"I am quite in ignorance," I said. "We are most intimate friends, but when engaged on such investigations he tells me nothing of their result until they are complete. All I know is that so active he is at this moment that I seldom see him.

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THE ORDER OF THE AGE. THE order of the age is improvement. A substitute may be good, but there is nothing in the world as good as the best. In the treatment of disease a physician's claims are empty unless exemplified by actual results. Old methods are crude and unsatisfactory and a truth-loving people demand that the arguments and claims of specialists nowadays be accompanied with tangible results. In order to meet these demands a doctor must be qualified by natural endowments and the right kind of experience. When these natural gifts are bequeathed to him he is recreant to duty if he does not diligently apply himself and make the most of them. The iron rules of ethics should be made to yield to the inexorable necessities of the times, and bestow as much good upon his fellow man as possible. Such qualities and qualifications were never given to man to be used in a medical tract incorporated under the head of ethics, and until people learn to accept truth where found, whether in the office or newspaper, the crowning achievements in medical science will not have been reached.