

A WOMAN'S WHITE HAIR.

HOW SHE CAME BY IT.

"I have heard of persons whose hair was whitened through excessive fear, but, as I never myself saw anyone so affected, I am disposed to be incredulous on the subject." The above remark was made by Dr. Maynard, as we sat on the piazza of his pretty villa, discussing the different effects of terror on dissimilar temperaments. Without replying to me, the doctor turned to his wife, and said:

"Helen, will you please relate to my old friend the incident within your own experience? It is the most convincing argument I can advance."

I looked at Mrs. Maynard in surprise. I had observed that her hair, which was luxuriant, and dressed very becomingly, was purely colorless; but, as she was a young woman, and a very pretty one, I surmised that it was powdered to heighten the brilliancy of her fine dark eyes. The doctor and I had been fellow students, but, after leaving college, we had drifted apart; I to commence practice in an eastern city, he to pursue his profession in a growing town in the West. I was now on a visit to him for the first time since his marriage.

Mrs. Maynard, too, doubt reading my supposition by my look of incredulity, smiled as she shook her snowy tresses over her shoulders, and, seating herself by her husband's side, related the following interesting episode.

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It was nearly two years ago that my husband was called on one evening to visit a patient several miles away. Our domestics had all gone to a wake in the vicinity, the dead man being a relative of one of our serving women. Thus I was left alone. But I felt no fear, for we never had heard of burglars or any sort of desperadoes in our quiet village, then consisting of a few scattered houses. The windows leading out on the piazza were open as now, but I secured the blinds before my husband's departure, and locked the outside doors, all except the front one, which I left for the doctor to lock after going out, so that, if I should fall asleep before his return, he could enter without arousing me. I heard the doctor's rapid footsteps on the gravel, quickened by the urgent tones of a messenger who awaited him; and, after the sharp rattle of the carriage wheels had become but an echo, I seated myself by the parlor astral, and very soon became absorbed in the book I had been reading before being disturbed by the summons.

But after a time my interest succumbed to drowsiness, and I thought of retiring. Then the clock in the doctor's office struck twelve, so I determined to wait a few moments more, feeling that he would be home very soon. I closed my book, donned a robe de chambre, let down my hair, then returned to my seat to patiently wait and listen. Not the faintest sound disturbed the stillness of the night. Not a breath of air stirred the leaves. The silence was so profound that it became oppressive. I longed for the sharp click of the gate latch and the well known step on the gravel walk. I did not dare to break the hush myself by moving or singing, I was so oppressed with the deep stillness. The human mind is a strange torturer of itself. I began to conjure up vivid fancies about ghostly visitants, in the midst of which occurred to me the stories I had heard from superstitious people about the troubled spirits of those who had died suddenly, like the man whom my servants had gone to "wake," who had been killed by an accident at the saw-mill. In the midst of these terrifying reflections, I was startled by a stealthy footfall on the piazza. I listened between fear and hope. It might be the doctor. But no, he would not tread like

that; the step was too soft and cautious for anything less wily than a cat. As I listened again, my eyes fixed on the window blind, I saw the slats move slowly and cautiously, and then the rays of the moon disclosed a thin, cadaverous face, and bright, glistening eyes, peering at me. O horror! Who was it? Or what was it? I felt the cold perspiration start at every pore. I seemed to be frozen in my chair. I could not move; I could not cry; my tongue seemed glued to the roof of my mouth, while the deadly white face pressed closer, and the great sunken eyes wandered in their gaze about the room. In a few moments the blind closed as noiselessly as it had been opened, and the cautious footsteps came toward the door. "Merciful heavens!" I cried in a horror-stricken whisper, as I heard the key turn in the lock, "the doctor, in his haste, must have forgotten to withdraw the key."

I heard the front door open, the step in the hall, and, helpless as a statue, I sat riveted to my chair. The parlor door was open, and in it stood a tall, thin man, whom I never before beheld. He was dressed in a long, loose robe, a sort of gaberdine, and a black velvet skull cap partially concealed a broad forehead, under which gleamed black eyes, bright as living coals, and placed so near together that their gaze was preternatural in their distinctness; heavy, grizzled eyebrows hung over them like the tangled mane of a lion; the nose was sharp and prominent; the chin was overgrown with white hair, which hung down in locks as weird as the Ancient Mariner's. He politely doffed his cap, bowed, replaced it, and then said, in a slightly foreign accent:

"Madam, it is not necessary for me to stand on any further ceremony, as your husband, Dr. Maynard," here he again bowed profoundly, "has already acquainted you with the nature of my business here tonight. I perceive," he added, glancing at my negligee robe, "that you were expecting me."

"No," I found voice to stammer; "the doctor has said nothing to me about a visitor at this hour of the night."

"Ah! he wished to spare you, no doubt, a disagreeable apprehension," he returned, advancing and taking a seat on the sofa opposite me, where for a few moments he sat and eyed me from head to foot with a strange, glittering light in his eyes that mysteriously impressed me. "You have a remarkably fine physique, madam," he observed, quietly, one that might deceive the eyes of the most skilled and practiced physician. Do you suffer much pain?"

Unable to speak, I shook my head. A terrible suspicion was creeping over me. I was alone, miles away from aid or rescue, with a madman.

"Ah," he continued, reflectively, "your husband may have mistaken a tumor for a cancer. Allow me to feel your pulse," he said, rising and bending over me.

I thought it best to humor him, remembering it was unwise for a helpless woman to oppose the as yet harmless freak of a lunatic. He took out his watch, shook his head gravely, laid my hand down gently, then went toward the study, where on the table was an open case of surgical instruments.

"Do not be alarmed, madam," he said to me, as I was about to rise and flee, and in another instant he was by my side, with the case in his possession.

Involuntarily I raised my head, and cried, "Spare me! Oh, spare me, I beseech you!"

"Madam," he said, sternly, clasping my wrist with his long, sinewy fingers with a grasp of steel, "you behave like a child. I have no time to parley, for I have received a letter from the emperor of the French, stating that he is desirous of my attendance. I must start for

Europe immediately after performing the operation on your breast," and before I could make the slightest resistance he had me in his arms, and was carrying me into the study, where was a long surgical table, covered with green baize. On this he laid me, and; holding me down with one hand, with the strength of a maniac, he brought forth several long leather straps, which bore evidence of having been cut, and with which he secured me to the table with the skill of an expert. It was but the work of a moment to unloose my robe and bare my bosom. Then, after carefully examining my left breast, he said:

"Madam, your husband has made a mistake. I find no necessity for my intended operation."

At that I gave a long-drawn sigh of relief, and prepared to rise.

"But," he continued, "I have made the discovery that your heart is as large as that of an ox! I will remove it so that you can see for yourself; reduce it to its normal size by a curious process of my own, unknown to medical science, and of which I am sole discoverer, then replace it again."

He began to examine the edge of the cruel knife, on which I closed my eyes, while every nerve was in perceptible tremor.

"The mechanism of the heart is like a watch," he resumed; "if it goes too fast, the great blood-vessel that supplies the force must be stopped, like the lever of a watch, and the works must be cleaned, and repaired, and regulated. It might interest you to know that I was present at the post-mortem examination held over the remains of the beautiful Louisa of Prussia. Had I been consulted before her death, I would have saved her life by taking out her heart, and removing the polypi, between which it was wedged as in a vise, but I called too late. The king and I had some difference; he was German, I am French. I trust that is sufficient explanation."

He now bent over me, his long white beard brushing my face. I opened my eyes beseechingly, trying to think of some way to save myself. "Oh, sir, give me an anæsthetic, that I may not feel the pain," I pleaded.

"Indeed, indeed, madam, I would comply with your wish were you not the wife of a physician—of a skillful surgeon. I wish you to note with what ease I perform this difficult operation, so that you may tell your husband of the great savant whose services he secured, fortunately in season."

As he said this, he made the final test of the knife on his thumb. How precious were the moments now! They were fleeting all too fast, and yet an eternity seemed compressed in every one. I never fainted in my life, and I never felt less like swooning than now, as I summoned all my presence of mind to delay the fearful moment, fervently praying in the meantime for my husband's return.

"Doctor," said I, with assumed composure, "I have the utmost confidence in your skill; I would not trust my life to another; but, doctor, you have forgotten to bring a napkin to stanch the blood. If you will have the goodness to ascend to my sleeping chamber, at the right of the hall, you will find everything you used for that purpose in the bureau."

"Ah, madam," he said shaking his head sagaciously, "I never draw blood during a surgical operation; that is another one of my secrets unknown to the faculty."

Then placing his hand on my bosom, he added, with horrible espeglerie:

"I'll scarcely mark that skin whiter than snow, and smooth as monumental alabaster."

"O God!" I cried as I felt the cold steel touch my breast; but with the same breath came deliverance.

Quick as thought a heavy woolen piano cover was thrown over the head and person of the madman, and bound tightly around him. As quickly as I released and the thongs that bound me soon held the maniac. My husband held me in his arms. He had noiselessly approached, and, taking in the horror of my situation at a glance, had, by the only means at hand, secured the madman who was the very patient he had been summoned to attend, but who had escaped the vigilance of his keeper soon after the departure of the messenger, who had now returned with the doctor in pursuit of him. As the poor wretch was being hurried away, he turned to me and said: "Madam, this is a plot to rob me of my reputation. Your husband is envious of my great skill as a surgeon. Adieu!" I afterward learned that the man was once an eminent surgeon in Europe, but much learning had made him mad. When he bound me to the table, my hair was as black as a raven; when I left it, it was as you see it now—white as full-blown cotton.—From the Argonaut.

KNOWLEDGE

I have known sorrow—
therefore I
May laugh with you,
O friend, more merrily
Than those who never
sorrowed upon earth
And know not
laughter's worth.

I have known laughter—
therefore I
May sorrow with you
far more tenderly
Than those who never knew
how sad a thing
Seems merriment to one
heart's suffering.

—Theodosia Garrison, in August Century.

THE AIM.

O thou who lovest not alone
The swift success, the instant goal,
But has a lenient eye to mark
The failures of the inconstant soul,

Consider not my little worth—
The mean achievement, scamped in act,—
The high resolve and low result,
The dream that durst not face the fact.

But count the reach of my desire,
Let this be something in Thy sight—
I have not, in the slothful dark,
Forgot the Vision and the Height.

Neither my body nor my soul
To earth's low ease will yield consent,
I praise Thee for the will to strive;
I bless Thy goad of discontent.

—Charles G. D. Roberts,
in The Criterion.

The Life Savers.

Quericus—How is it that your death rate is lower than that of any other hospital in the city?

Medicus—We have patent shutters that keep delirious patients from jumping out of the windows.—Town Topics.

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