

At Sea.
BY J. T. THORNBURGH.
The night is made for cooling shade,
For silence, and for sleep;
And when I was a child, I laid
My hands upon my head and prayed,
And sank to slumbers deep;
Childlike as then, I lie to-night,
And watch my lonely cabin light.
Each movement of the swaying lamp
Shows how the night is passing;
As o'er her deck the billow rears,
And all her timbers strain and creak,
With every shock she feels,
It starts and shudders, while it burns,
And in its hinged socket turns.
Now swinging slow, and slanting low,
It almost level lies;
And yet I know, while to and fro
I watch the seeming pendule go,
With restless fall and rise,
The steady staff is still upright,
Poising its little globe of light.
O hand of God! O soul of peace!
O promise of my lamp!
Thou weak and tossed, and lit at ease,
Amid the roar of smiting seas,
The ships convulsive roll,
I own, with love and tender awe,
You best type of faith and law!
A heavy trust my spirit calms,
My soul is filled with light,
The ocean's billows seem to pass,
The wind-wind's cross my palms,
I know as if I were at sea,
Under the cottage-roof, again,
I heard the soothing summer rain.

ALMOST GONE.

The Story of an Affliction.

"Sir, are you a medical man?"
Such was the question suddenly put to me by the only other occupant of the carriage in which I was traveling one night to Chester by the Irish mail, some two or three years ago.
He was an elderly man, with gray hair, handsome features, and a somewhat careworn expression of face, which, seen eyes, and commanding presence.
"I am," I replied. "Can I be of any service to you?"
He sighed, and paused a moment before replying. Then, fixing a pair of searching eyes on me, he answered:
"You can be—at least, I fancy it is within your power to be of service to me—if you will."
And he passed again.
I looked at him narrowly. A fine, tall, well-built man, well to do, also, judging from appearance, and in good health, I fancied, in spite of that anxious expression of countenance so often noticeable among mercantile men.
"I shall be happy to oblige you, if it is within my power," I replied, noticing how eagerly he waited for my answer.
"Good!" said he, shortly. "I can trust you. I can read faces, and I feel that you will do. When do you return to London, for I conclude you are a London practitioner?"
"Yes," I answered, "but not in a fashionable quarter." And I smiled. "The greater part of my practice lies around Holborn—Lang's Conduit Street, Gray's Inn Road, and that direction."
"Just so," he nodded, "so much the better."
And then he was silent for a moment, and a melancholy look passed over his countenance.
"You will soon be in London again?" he inquired.
"Yes; to-morrow night," I replied.
"And you go no farther than Chester?" he continued.
"Only to Chester, to visit an old friend and patient professionally," I replied.
"Good, good! Now," and he leaned forward toward me, "this is what I want you to do for me: I am leaving England forever—forever!"
And he spoke solemnly.
"Take this letter to my brother, and draw a small packet from his breast-pocket. Don't look at the address till you are in London, and then deliver it to the person to whom it is directed, with your own hand. Will you promise me this?"
"I will," I said, and moreover, promise me to mention the existence of this packet to no one till it is in its owner's possession. Nay, do not imagine," he continued, "noticing a doubtful expression on my face, I suppose, that I am asking you a wrong act. No; on the contrary, by doing what I ask you will harm no one, but render a service to humanity, perform an act it was my duty to do, and which, months ago, and which now, alas! I have not time left to execute."
And he signed again deeply.
"Do you promise?" he inquired, at length, holding out the letter to me.
"I give you my word of honor to do what you require," I replied.
"And under no circumstances to repeat the existence of this packet to any one till it is delivered?" he continued, earnestly.
"I swear it!" I said solemnly.
"Thank Heaven!" he muttered, and gave me the letter, which I immediately buttoned up in my inner pocket.
"What hour is it?" he asked.
"Ah! then in a few minutes we shall be at our journey's end."
"Yes, if the train is up to time," I replied; "but do you go no further than Chester?"
"I think not," he answered, oddly. "I have no time to lose. Thank you, Dr.—I do not know your name."
"Herbert," I interposed.
"Dr. Herbert," he repeated, bowing, "thank you for your great kindness. You will never repeat it, come what may. Now adieu!"
And he shook hands with me heartily, then moved to the other end of the carriage, and before I could prevent it, and almost as the train entered the station, drew a pistol from his pocket, placed it against his forehead, and fired, falling back into my arms a corpse.
The report of the pistol, the smoke issuing from the carriage window, speedily drew a crowd of officials and excited passengers around us, and I was discovered supporting the dead body in my arms.
A desperate case of suicide beyond question. The body was speedily identified—indeed, there were two gentlemen traveling by the same train who proved themselves to be personally acquainted with the deceased. He was a Mr. Hollingsworth, a great merchant, rich and respected.
An evident case of insanity it seemed at first sight, for no house in the city was finer or better thought of than his. Yet in one of the dead man's pockets was found a paper in his own hand writing, in which appeared the following words:
"This is to certify that, being ruined, I intend to shoot myself—if possible before I reach Chester."
(Signed) JOHN HOLLINGSWORTH.
(Dated) Easton Square Station,
Nov. 8, 187—.

And next day news of a different character reached Chester. That morning a great sudden and unexpected failure, accompanied by very suspicious circumstances, had been announced in the city. Hollingsworth & Co. had smashed—failed for an extraordinary large amount, and in its ruin, had dragged down many smaller firms with it.
There was a long consultation at the coroner's inquest, and the jury at length returned a verdict of *felo de se*. For, when matters were more closely investigated, reasons, stronger, and stronger appeared to show that the miserable man's rash act had not been unmeditated, nor caused by an unaccountable fit of mania. Had he lived, England would have no longer been a safe home for him; the bankruptcy was a fraudulent one; penal servitude would have stared him in the face.
Many were the articles that appeared in the daily journals on Hollingsworth's bankruptcy, and far and wide was the suffering it caused spread; and as I traveled back from Chester to London, I wondered if I had done right in making blindfold the promise I had made to the unfortunate man. But it had been made, and I felt I must abide by it, and the writing after my return to town that I read, for the first time, the address on the packet that had been confided to me:
"Mrs. Gerald Conington, No. 4 Vulture Court, Golden Lane, Gray's Inn Road."
"A slum that I fancy?" thought I. "Who can Mrs. Conington be? I don't much like the idea of penetrating into such places alone, but I suppose it must be done," and I put on my hat and coat and started off to hunt out Vulture Court, not, however, in the best of tempers.
Great Heaven! what a narrow side street, in which groups of coughing, snoring, smoking idly, and knots of houseless, stooped women chattered and screamed together, and dozens of dirty, dull-eyed children shouted and fought in the gutters. I saw a man, ragged and miserable-looking enough, but bearing for all that the stamp of a gentleman about him, coming down the street in a state of evident agitation and distress.
"What's up now?" said the gentleman Jack all of a flutter. "Here's a dirty woman, starting at the approaching figure."
"O, aye; his missus be real bad, they say. May be she wants a doctor," replied a girl with bold black eyes and arms akimbo, that a prize-fighter might have envied.
As she spoke, the man came up, and his eyes fell on me.
"For the love of Heaven, sir, if you are a doctor, come with me! My wife, I believe, is dying," he said.
"Dear, dear!" I said, "I'll go with you. Poor soul, she did look mortal bad last week!"
And they stared open-mouthed at me. "I am a doctor, sir," I said. "Lead the way, and I'll do what I can for your wife."
And down the street I followed him, in a small, dark, dirty court, reeking with dirt and the air loaded with bad smells, into a dingy house, and up three pairs of rickety stairs, till we stood in a wretched garret, lighted by one small, shattered window.
It was November, and bitterly cold and damp, but there was no fire in the fire on the hearth, and a single blanket covered the bed whereon lay the sick woman. A man's threadbare coat lay over her feet.
It was half dark, so the man struck a match, and lighted a farthing dip stuck in an old tin candlestick, and held it up, to let the light fall on the invalid.
Great Heaven! what a sight met my eye! The man's face was as white as a sheet, and his eyes were staring and wild. He had a look of exhaustion from starvation, and beside her lay a tiny child barely a month old.
"Have you any brandy?" I cried.
The man shook his head.
"No, the means to get it, I suppose? Here, sent and buy some, and food also!" And I held out half a sovereign to the man.
"Heaven bless you, sir!" he said, disappearing down the dark staircase, and leaving me alone beside the sick-bed.
I looked around the garret, half lighted up by the guttering candle. What a scene of wretchedness was presented to my eyes! A broken chair and table, a pitcher and basin, and a few rickety cups and plates were all that it contained. No carpet was on the floor, no curtain before the window. No article of dress, save an old bonnet and shawl, were to be seen. Evidently the occupants were reduced to the last stage of destitution, for beyond a dry crust of bread and a mug of water, the room contained no trace of provisions.
The man soon returned, bringing with him brandy and provisions, and while I strove to rouse the sick woman from the dazed lethargy into which she had fallen, he, aided by a miserable, skinny child of perhaps thirteen or fourteen years of age, lit a fire, and set some water to boil in a delapidated tin saucepan. Then he came to the poor bedside, and assisted me to administer the brandy to his wife. I saw how thin and starved he was, with the unmistakable signs of recent illness written on his wan features, handsome still in spite of poverty and hunger.
At length my patient opened her eyes and fixed them on her husband. The man came into his eyes as he kissed her tenderly.
"Gerald," she murmured, in a faint voice, "I thought it was all over. Who is this?" And she looked at me inquiringly.
"I am a doctor, madam," I replied, cheerfully, "and had the good fortune to be passing just as you were wanted. Now you must be good, and do as I direct. Keep quiet, and talk little, and you will soon get round again. Now let me see the little one. Ah! not much wrong here; but he is small and a trifle weak. Never mind; I don't doubt but that he'll grow up to be a blessing to you. Now," and I turned to the husband, and walked as far as I could out of earshot of the invalid—"now, sir, I see well enough that you are in trouble. Make a friend of me, and tell me in what way I can assist you."
I was hardly prepared for the effect my speech would have on him. He looked at me for a moment, and then burst into tears. It was a painful sight, but sympathy from an outsider, especially from one in the rank of life to which he belonged, had for so long been unfamiliar to him, that the first kind word overcame him, and he sobbed like a child.
"Gerald, Gerald," cried his wife, terrified from the bed, "what is it, darling? Come to me." And she strove to raise herself.
"Control yourself, for your wife's sake, my friend," I said, in a low, firm voice; "excitement might be fatal to her."
"So with an effort he controlled himself,

and seating himself on the side of the bed, with his wife's hand in his, he told me the pitiful story of their woes and sufferings. Shattered health, loss of work, the usual gamut of troubles that had passed through, till at last, gasping I had rescued them from positive starvation.
I listened attentively, and promising to return the next morning, I left the house, the man accompanying me as far as the street.
"What could I do to help them? They were evidently people of education and refinement. How could I aid them to regain the position in life for which they were intended, and which, through a series of misfortunes, they had lost. This thought filled my mind as I walked quietly home through the crowded streets, and I came put it out of my head.
Next day a press of business forced me to give up my intention of visiting my new friends, and it was not until midway of the following that I found myself again at the entrance of the dingy house. The equal girl who had helped to light the fire on my first visit, opened the door, and escorted me to my patients, telling me that "Gentleman Jack had got half a day's work somewhere, but would be back shortly."
"And the missus, how is she?" I asked.
"O, she be nicely, and the child, too," replied the girl, with a look of triumph. "For Gentleman Jack was like to drop of sleep."
"And how long have they lived here?" I asked.
"Nigh four month," said she. "She taught me to sew and knit, she did."
"Is she good to you, then?" I asked.
"Yes. Good to me, and to the kids. I guess she was a real lady, and wore a silk gown once," and the girl winked confidentially. "Here we are, missus—here's the doctor."
And without further ceremony I was ushered into my patient's room.
She was sitting up, holding the child on her lap, and I saw a marked change for the better in her appearance. The large blue eyes were clearer, and the look of famine—that look which once seen can never be forgotten—had left the delicate face. The rough, disordered hair was now combed neatly back, and the room cleaned and reduced to something like order. She smiled at me, and I returned the smile, and she said, "I have been signed to me to take the only chair the room contained."
"So your husband has some work?" I began, seating myself.
"Yes; half a day in the tanyard. They're in want of extra hands, I believe. We hope he may be taken on regularly, only I fear it may be too much for his strength," she replied, and then she paused and blushed. "He is an artist by profession—or, was, sir."
"Ah, indeed! An uphill life that at first," I answered.
"Yes, so we found; but I believe that had it not been for me, he would have done, and perhaps have been a rich man by this time; but—well, we ran away together, doctor, and so he lost all his pupils—all his connection. Then he got ill, and we spent all we had; and then the child came and got ill, and if it had not been for you, sir, I don't know what would have become of us. You have saved our lives. How can we ever thank you?"
"By getting well quickly," I replied, laughing. "How is the little son? Rather a small child, but healthy, I think."
"Poor wretch!" she said, fondly kissing the sleeping child. "Ah, here is my husband!" and she started up joyfully.
"The doctor, Gerald," she said. "I rose and apologized for not having come sooner, and we sat down and had a long friendly talk together. At length a neighboring church clock warned me to take my departure—indeed, that I had far exceeded the limits of an ordinary professional visit—and rose to depart."
"By the way," I said, turning as I was on the point of quitting the room, "can you by any chance tell me whereabouts Vulture Court is?"
"Vulture Court!" replied the man. "Why, this is Vulture Court, regularly."
"Indeed!" I said. "And what your number?"
"He told me, looking rather surprised at my questions."
"Excuse me," I continued, "if I ask you what, maybe, you may wish to conceal; but, believe me, I am no idle questioner. I must ask your name."
"Certainly," he replied, "to one who has been as kind to us as you have been, Dr. Herbert, I would not refuse it, though I might to others. My name is Gerald Conington."
I started; surely that was the name on the letter—that letter which I had on my mind to deliver to its owner for so many days past. I felt that I had done so immediately and, shaking hands with my friends, I set off homeward at once. On opening my desk, where I had placed the letter, I found that my memory had not deceived me—Conington was the name.
"It is for them, then—for my poor friends. How strangely things turn out!" I mused. "Perhaps the old man was her father. In her state, however, she must not be subjected to a any sudden shock. I must speak to Conington first, and get him to break the matter to her. I hope the letter may contain something more to spy the squall. I must go back to Vulture Court at once." So back I started on my mission.
I found Vulture Court in an uproar—women screaming, children shrieking, and two men fighting in the midst of a noisy group, and just as I entered four stalwart policemen appeared, and began to disperse the angry crowd.
"You'd better not go down there, sir," said one to me; "it's no place for a gentleman like you, especially at this hour."
"O, I'm a doctor, and have patients there," I replied; but for all that, I did not feel comfortable, and was glad enough to spy the squall. I went in, and the crowd conveyed me through the excited crowd in safety. At the door of the house I met Conington.
"What, back again, doctor! Nothing wrong, I hope?" he said.
"No, nothing. How is your wife? I have something of importance to tell you. Where can I speak to you alone?" I asked.
"O, here," he replied. "Mrs. McTaggart lets me sit in her parlor when she is out; and out she is, fortunately."
And he showed me into a miserable little room, containing a four-legged table and five or six chairs, dignified by the owner with the name of parlor.
"Tell me, Mr. Conington, was your wife's name Hollingsworth?" I asked, as we seated ourselves before a smouldering fire.
"He started.
"Yes," he said, eagerly.
"Then you have not seen the papers lately?" I said.
"The papers," he replied; "it is likely, doctor?" with a sad gesture.
"Then you do not know that Mr. John

Hollingsworth, of the late firm of Hollingsworth & Co., of Fleet Street, is dead—that he died, indeed, under very painful circumstances?"
"Dead, is he? Well, heaven forgive me! He has been my bitter, remorseful foe, Dr. Herbert. He knew our state of poverty and want—knew that we were well-nigh starving. My poor wife, there, went not a month ago, forced her way into his presence—for he had sternly refused to see her since her marriage with me, a poor artist—and on her knees begged his forgiveness and help! He refused both, cursed her to her face, praying Heaven that the child that should be born to me might prove as unfaithful to her as she had been to him. The excitement and grief was too much for my darling, and she was taken ill that night; and you know the rest, doctor?"
And he groaned and hid his face in his hands.
"Mr. Hollingsworth left a packet in my care for your wife," I said, after a pause.
"In your charge!—then you knew him?" cried Conington, in surprise.
"Yes," I answered, "but I was once before his death, which was a terrible one."
"How so?" he asked, anxiously.
"He died by his own hand," I replied, in a low voice.
"Horrible!" said Conington, in tones of deep distress. "But tell me all!"
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