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## The Power of Thought

By H. M. EGBERT

(Copyright, 1913, by W. G. Chapman.)

Dr. James Dyce looked down on the unconscious figure upon the bed. The man had ceased to mutter and toss in his delirium, and now lay in that stupor which was itself the crisis. In eight hours he would be dead or on the road to recovery.

Beside the doctor stood the white-capped nurse, almost as silent and still as the figure huddled among the sheets and pillows. The mental crisis through which the two watchers were painfully struggling was almost as acute as the physical crisis of the typhoid victim.

It was not a severe case, but the man's system, weakened by years of debauchery and months of poverty, seemed unable to fight against the attack.

Doctor Dyce beckoned the nurse outside the room. They stood face to face together. There was on the doctor's look of grave inquiry.

"That is the man who was your husband?" he inquired.

"Who is," she answered.

"And you refused to marry me because of him?"

"You are unfair, Charles," she answered, in low, passionate protest. "It is because he is what he is—that I know my duty is toward him. He recognized me. He will come back to me. I cannot desert him, in spite of all."

"You love him!" sneered Dyce, and then suddenly caught her in his arms.

"Molly!" he whispered, "you are never going to ruin our two lives for that man!"

She let him kiss her, but she withdrew from his arms and stood still facing him, still pale and expressionless.

"I cannot do wrong toward him, much as I love you," she replied. "But—oh, Charles, it would be a mercy for all of us, and none would be better off than he if he were to die."

The doctor, who seemed to be restraining himself by a mighty effort of will, now became the professional man again.

"We will try atropin," he said. "I believe it will give him his fighting



Lay in That Stupor Which Was Itself the Crisis.

chance. I shall mix the prescription myself. It is a dangerous drug to use, but it is a case where heroic measures are needed."

"Yes, doctor. At what time should it be administered?"

"In four hours, when the crisis is imminent. When do you go off duty?"

"When the crisis is over."

"You are wearing yourself out, Molly," began Doctor Dyce. Then: "Well, we must forget ourselves, with all our hopes and fears, and do our duty."

She sighed. "Yes, doctor," she answered in a mechanical manner.

Doctor Dyce ate his supper in his office. He made his rounds of the patients, bandaging, adjusting, while his mind was working on a totally different matter. At last he stood alone before his medicine chest, where the deadliest drugs were kept, dispensed only under his personal supervision. There he faced his problem squarely.

Dyce had little belief in conventional morality. He loved Molly, and she him. The man on the bed in the little room was useless to himself, useless to the world. Was it right that two lives, or even three, should be blighted so that the man should live and cumber the earth?

He had mixed the medicine before his mind was made up. He remembered afterward that he was working in the same automatic manner, and his brain, cool and singularly clear, seemed animated by an infernal will and dominated the situation completely. Slowly he took down a bottle labeled macinitin and set it upon the table side by side with the atropin.

They were two drugs of equal power, but very different power. An infinitesimal dose of the atropin would exercise a certain stimulus on the red blood corpuscles which might pull the patient through the crisis of his disease. An equal dose of the macinitin, too small for post-mortem detection, would dissolve the corpuscles and

bring about death. In a healthy man an equal dose of either would produce no effect whatever.

Doctor Dyce might have told himself that it would not be he, but the fever that would kill the drunkard above. But he was too honest for that.

"I am going to kill him," he said, and dropped a drop into a tumbler of water. From this he took two drops and let them fall into the medicine. He shook the bottle. He went upstairs.

"Two teaspoonsful in an hour, nurse," he said to Molly. "Call me if he shows signs of a change for the worse. He ought to pull through, however, with this atropin."

He looked down at the face of the unconscious man. There had been not the slightest change; he was breathing slowly and the almost imperceptible pulse had hardly varied a beat.

He went into his room and lay down on the sofa. He could not sleep, but, awaiting the summons, he reviewed his action and justified it, if not in the sight of God, at least in that of man.

It was nearly two hours later when the summons came. There was a light tap at the door. Dyce sprang to his feet and opened it. Before him stood the nurse.

"Come at once!" she whispered tensely. "I am afraid—something is happening to him, doctor."

He hurried up the stairs and into the room. A single glance showed him that the man was dying. The crisis had come and passed. There was hardly a flicker of life. At that instant Dyce was afraid for the first time in his life. He was afraid that the dying man would open his eyes and look at him. He felt his hands trembling. Molly, beside him, clung to the foot of the bed and stared at her husband.

But the dying man gave no sign of recognition. Slowly the remnants of life faded out. The breathing grew deeper and slower. Once it stopped, then it began again. It stopped. There followed a long-drawn sigh. The man was dead.

And Molly, suddenly overcome, fainted clean away.

Dyce raised her in his arms and carried her into the nurses' room. He told the night superintendent what had occurred. "She has been overworking," he said.

"She wouldn't leave the patient, doctor," answered the woman. "She had your permission, sir."

"Quite right," said Dyce. He worked over Molly until she began to revive. And now he had again that singular dread of meeting human eyes. He could not meet Molly's eyes when at last they opened and fixed themselves on his. Though the girl did not suspect, it almost seemed as if she had known, in that dim land to which her swoon had taken her.

And, though they were alone, Dyce did not dare to speak of anything but his professional duties.

"You must go to bed now, and we will talk in the morning," he said. "You have done all that you could do. You could not save him, nor I. The atropin came too late. I should have given it yesterday, but I was afraid."

She rose without speaking and left the room. Dyce went back into his own room. And, flinging himself down on the sofa, he felt the paroxysms of deadly fear take hold of him.

He was a murderer, though none knew of it but himself. He alone must bear that inner brand of Cain for the rest of his life. At that moment even the gain of Molly seemed singularly inadequate in the place of the soul which he had lost.

A murderer! For ever and for ever that word would be burned into his heart and brain. The years would pass with Molly, and she must never know she must never discern the cause of his inner unrest. A murderer! And for her sake!

He saw how mad he had been. At the time he dropped the drug into the glass he had sincerely believed that he was acting according to the laws of human duty. Now he felt the burden of that higher law which says: "Thou shalt not kill!"

He could bear it no longer. He rose and began pacing the floor. But suddenly he remembered that he was not wholly safe from detection, not so long as that tell-tale bottle remained beside the atropin upon the table.

He snatched it up. Then his hand fell to his side, and he was staring in wild amazement at the bottle. It was uncocked. It had never been opened!

The automatism of his hand had been guided, not by his cool and calculating brain, but by some higher power. Perhaps it was God! He had given the sick man atropin after all, and not the deadly alkaloid. He had never touched the waxed stopper of the macinitin!

Suddenly he fell upon his knees and poured forth his heart in thanksgiving. He had not prayed for years; now he prayed for mercy, that the evil thought might be purged from his soul even as the dead had been.

When he arose he was transfused. In an ecstasy of happiness he hardly heard the door open until Molly stood on the threshold.

"O thank God it is all right!" she cried. "I was afraid—I was afraid—you cannot guess what I feared!"

"And now you fear no longer?"

"Your face, Charles! Upstairs it was so clouded, and horrible thoughts came to me; but now I know it is all right. I dared to mistrust you. Can you forgive me? I thought—"

"I thought it too," said Dyce. "but the thought was only a thought, Molly. It is gone now, with all the past. Molly, dear, will you kneel down with me and pray that no such thought shall ever trouble us again?"

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Mrs. Feng Chin Fung, a little Chinese bride, recently arrived in Boston with her husband. She has begun the study of vocal and instrumental music at the Conservatory of Music, and has taken up a five-year course in diplomacy at Harvard. Last year he attended Princeton. Mrs. Fung brought with her a great array of gorgeous silk-embroidered gowns.

MEETS HIS SON AT FRONT



This photograph, taken within 700 yards of the German trenches, shows a chance meeting of General Dubait and his son, who commands a regiment of chasseurs.

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