

THE DREAM THAT CAME TRUE

REMARKABLE achievement of Ivan Brodsky, physician, whose investigations into psychic phenomena enabled him to cure physical diseases and to exorcise evil spirits from the bodies of their victims.

By H. M. EGBERT

I HAD often wondered why Dr. Ivan Brodsky had never married. I had been associated with him in numbers of those cases of psychical investigation in which he had brought relief and happiness to many sufferers whose souls had capitulated to evil forces; I had heard him speak of women constantly in terms of the utmost reverence. He had indeed alluded to some unrequited love episode in his own life, but he had never, confided in me, and of course I forbore to question him. It was the merest accident—if, indeed, anything be fortuitous—that revealed to me the story.

We were sitting upon the veranda of a summer hotel, a little place in the mountains to which we frequently journeyed to spend the week-end, one summer evening. With us was a stranger, a man of rare personality whom we had met the day before; and, as is often the case, we had discussed with him matters of belief and conduct on which one is silent toward acquaintances of long standing. And then came up the ever interesting question of faith.

"There is one thing could give me back my faith," said the stranger slowly. "I was married for 20 years to a woman of the highest character; we were supremely happy together. I believe in her still as I once believed in the consolations of religion. Yet my wife died without recognizing me, calling upon the name of some man whom I had never seen nor heard of. Restore me my complete confidence in her, answer that nameless question that will rise up in the depths of my consciousness, and I will believe again."

Then, somehow—I do not remember just the sequence of words that led to it—Brodsky was telling us his story.

"I came to America when I was a young man. Through all my early struggles the friendship of one woman sustained me. I do not think there has been a moment since I first met her when I have not loved Marion Strong. But nothing was said. It was a quiet understanding that grew up between us; so that, when the rupture came, there remained nothing to be said either. Marion explained nothing of the trivial incident that came to be an unbreakable barrier between us. That was her way; Marion was always proud. If she had been less proud our lives would have been different.

"I saw her only twice after her marriage. She still resided in Boston, where I was then in practice, but in a different quarter of the city. I had sought comfort in work and had succeeded in some measure in finding it when we met face to face in the rose garden that adjoins the Common. She stopped and spoke with me.

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"Thank heaven for work. It is life's anodyne. I put her memory out of my mind to the best of my ability, for I think only the sentimentalist weaves the silken threads of longing around the cocoon of his sorrow. And then, I had no right to think of her. I worked hard, I had already achieved some measure of recognition in my profession. When the methods of the Nancy school of hypnotics were introduced into medical practice in this country, so that it was no longer considered the sign of a charlatan to make use of them, I found that I possessed unusual facilities for curing ailments of consciousness and reviving lost personalities by hypnotism. One day a woman called on me, in company with a little girl.

"The child suffered from some slight nervous ailment, common among girls of that period of life—listlessness, 'blue studies,' as the laity call fits of abstraction, and nervousness. I prescribed some child's remedy. But when I came to look into her pupils for the examination, for just one fleeting instant the eyes of Marion seemed to look back at me. Could it be anything but hallucination? Marion's eyes were the most beautiful I have ever seen in their intelligence, their gray and liquid softness. Fearfully I looked again. But only the sleepy pupils of the ailing child looked back at me.

"I see you do not remember me, Dr. Brodsky," said the woman, when my investigation was ended. "Nevertheless, I know you well, and I came to see and consult you partly out of interest. Do you not remember Marion Strickland?"

"I started involuntarily. Yes, that was the name of the man whom she married; this was Mrs. Strickland who had brought the child to me. She was the second wife of Marion's husband, and this was her daughter. My heart leaped in my throat. Thank God, in this new marriage he had forgotten Marion; at last I might now have the right once more to turn my thoughts upon her; she was as much mine as his!"

"Her end was curiously sudden, poor thing," said the woman in gossiping fashion. "She died quite unexpectedly, you know."

"Yes," I murmured, though I had been told nothing.

"We thought that it was nothing but a congested chill until she died in Florida. Strangely, too, her last words seemed to be about you. We fancied that she tried to leave some message for you, but we could not understand her. It was some phase of the delirium, I suppose."

"A new phase of my life opened up on that day. Marion had thought of me at the end; then she had always loved me. I might have known her better than I have doubted that her love could change. That her married life had been neither happy nor unhappy I had suspected; clearly this was not one of those unions that seem to transcend the limitations of our mortality, that are not severed by death. And at the end her thoughts had turned back to me. Thenceforward I had a new impulse of joy in my work; from that time, too, I began to look forward to the day when much that is hidden from us will be revealed and death will no longer sever. That was the beginning of my psychical work.

"The years slipped by and I found me still steadily at work, with an increasing amount of patients and of reputation. I had sought in vain to communicate with Marion through all the recognized mediums. Though her inspiration remained with me, once again her outward memory had grown weak. One evening a young man called upon me in my consulting room.

"I do not see new patients," I informed him, for at that time I had already begun to withdraw from active practice in preparation of the professorship which had been offered me for the succeeding year. But he was insistent. It was not for himself, he said, that he wished my services, but for his fiancée, a girl of 25. Always liable, since childhood, to nervous attacks of obscure origin, these had developed, during the past three months, into fits of imbecility, during which she became almost an automaton and manifested the most extreme aversion for him. Her friends and family had even spoken of the necessity of placing her in some institution unless she could be cured. He happened to have heard of me; would I assist him?"

"The young man's earnestness, his solicitude for the girl impressed me, and I consented to take her case in hand. To my surprise I found that my patient was none other than Ethel Strickland, the girl whom I had treated some dozen years before. I looked long and I fear unprofessionally to discover whether I could discern Marion's unforgettable expression in the eyes, but the heavy pupils discerned Marion's back at me listlessly and indolently. They were not Marion's. As the young woman was at that time in the enjoyment of normal health I left instructions that she was to be brought to my office immediately that a crisis occurred and went away.

ments were soaked with water. She did not attempt to remove her coat, however, nor responded to my proffered assistance, but advanced into the center of the room and stood staring at me blankly at one brief of reason.

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"Slowly the eyes opened. One glance and I was reeling backward, seeking to steady myself by gripping the edge of the study table. For the eyes were those of Marion Strong, clear and unclouded as on the day when I had seen her for a thousand years I could never forget their beauty, their quiet tenderness.

"She looked into my own; she came toward me, her arms outstretched, her face alight with ineffable happiness.

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"I could not speak. Silently I saw her draw near, a moment later, and I felt her arms enfold me. As in a dream, through drooping in the mirror on the wall, I sank upon the lounge, and there we sat, the living and the dead, stammering and babbling happily, like two young lovers but lately parted.

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