

A MANIAC'S FREAK.

"I have heard of persons whose hair was whitened through excessive fear, but, as I never saw, myself, any one 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 also a very pretty one, I surmised that it was powdered to heighten the brilliancy of her 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, no doubt reading my supposition by my look of incredulity, smiled as she shook her snowy tresses over her shoulder, and seating herself by her husband's side, related the following interesting episode:

It was nearly two years ago since 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 study struck 12, 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 and 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 hush. 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 foot-fall 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 slat move slowly and cautiously, and then the rays of moon disclosed a thin, cadaverous face and bright glittering eyes peering at me. Oh, 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 out; my tongue seemed glued to the roof of my mouth, while the deathly white face pressed closer, and the great 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 garboline, and a black velvet fur 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 distinctiveness; heavy grizzled eyebrows hung over them like the tangled mane of the 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 to-night. I perceive,' he added, glancing at my negligé 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 a 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 was the 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 grip 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 recently 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 robes 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 this 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 natural 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 a 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 may 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 by taking out her heart and removing the polypi, in which it was wedged as if in a vice, but I was called too late. The King and I had a little difference; he was German, I am French. I trust this is sufficient explanation."

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

"Indeed, indeed, madam, I would—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 staunch 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 need 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 espiéglerie:

"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 woollen piano-cover was thrown over the head and person of the madman, and bound tightly around him. As quickly was I released, and the things 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 black as a raven, when I left it, it was as you see it now—white as full-blown cotton.

Wet Groceries.

"Maiden's blush" is the favorite early morning tinkle with many of our customers, who come here before breakfast to get something that will stir up the inner man," said a natty bartender at a Chestnut street gilded palace yesterday, to a reporter. "Ordinary folks call it their 'eye openers,' 'Morning glories' and such other names, but the true gentleman whispers 'maiden' blush. What is it? Why only a gin cocktail, extra sweet, with a dash of bitters to give it the delicate tinge which one sees on the modest maid. But there is no accounting for tastes, and there are as many fancy drinks as there are drinkers. Now there is the 'racquet.' Ah! that is lovely, and a few of them will send a fellow on a racket, sure enough. Will I make one? Well, in goes a little Jamaica rum, some Santa Cruz, a squeeze of lemon, some rock syrup and Delacour's soda. Now we shake 'em up; 45 cents, please."

"What will you take?" asked the reporter of the insinuating young man who compounded the decoction.

"I guess a 'fatinitza' is good enough for me," was the reply. In goes some brandy and a bottle of imported ginger ale follows. "Forty-five cents more, please."

"Here! I'm no bank," said the reporter, "chalk it. But I would go further into the mysteries. The 'racquet' is good. I would imbibe a 'potsee' 'amour' on top of that."

"So!" ejaculated the man of drinks. And with delicate hands he placed layer after layer of cordials in the glass, then some chartreuse and curacao. On top of these he floated the yolk of an egg. It was beautiful to behold and tempting to the eye. The variegated colors of the liquors were something to smile at, and somebody prepared to smile.

"Feel better, now," he said, and in five minutes he began to see two bartenders, both dressed alike, and each had the same large diamond pin. Shutting one eye he was enabled to catch the right one as he came along, and just as he was about to call the next drink on the bill an individual with a husky voice whispered: "Give me a 'hot-rum greaser.'" With a magic touch the man of many compounds poured in some hot rum, a little lemon and spices, and then tumbled in a lump of butter. When this had melted and was duly mixed, the husky-voiced man swallowed it, smacked his lips, deposited a quarter and departed.

"A 'Mississippi Punch' is about my capacity," said the reporter; "no grease for me. I know some people call it a 'Rooster,' or a 'Shanghai,' but I'll take the old name."

Then the man in the gilded palace made a plain lemonade and dropped an egg in it. After this was mixed thoroughly it made a most ravishing drink.

"I'll take a 'whisky squeeze,'" said a mild-mannered man who looked over the bar and was satisfied when he saw rum, whisky, rock syrup and some orange squeezed into a glass. "Now, if it was summer, I'd have a 'New England Cooler,'" said the M. M. M., "because you can make them so nice out of old Bedford rum, with a little lemon and sugar."

"The patent is a good wind-up for me," said the reporter, "for I'm obliged to attend a church fair to-night. This was merely solid Bourbon, rock and lemon-juice. After this he could see only one bar-tender—the other disappeared. A brisk walk, a ride in a street car behind fiery steeds, and the newsman felt gloriously happy, if not befuddled.

The Kar.

Few people realize what a wonderfully delicate structure the human ear really is. That which we ordinarily designate so, is after all only the mere outer porch of a series of winding passages, which, like the lobbies of a great building, head from the outer air into the inner chambers. Certain of these passages are full of liquid, and their membranes are stretched like parchment curtains across the corridors at different places and can be thrown into vibration, or made to tremble as the head of a drum or the surface of a tamboarine does when struck with a stick or the fingers. Between two of these parchment like curtains a chain of very small bones extends, which serves to tighten or relax these membranes, and to communicate vibrations to them. In the innermost place of all, rows of fine thread, called nerves, stretch like the strings of a piano from the last point to which the tremblings or thrillings reach, and pass inward to the brain. If the nerves are destroyed the power of hearing as certainly departs as the power to give out sounds is lost by a piano or violin when its springs are broken.

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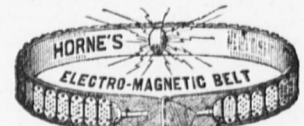
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