The Madness of Mrs. Joliffe

Strange Experiences in the Life of a Doctor.

By A. T. MEAD

There are few subjects which interest me so much as those which relate to biology, and the new future which the treatment of disease by animal extract affords. On a certain evening in May my friend Dr. Everard and I were seated together in his private study. We were engaged in an interesting discussion, and I was telling him of experiments which I had been fortunate in completing.

"Yes," he said, thoughtfully, "I fully believe that there is a great future before this theory of treating disease by animal extract, and I shall be greatly surprised if it does not prove of signal use in the case of the insane. Brain disease is often due, I am sure, to functional disturbance and consequent malnutrition of certain centers. We see this plainly in cases of epilepsy, hysteria, etc. If we can, therefore, ascertain where the brain is at fault, there is a rational deduction and line of treatment pointed out."

He glanced at his watch and arose. "How the time has flown," he said. "We have not a moment to waste. Hurry along to your room and get into your evening clothes, Halifax."

Fairleigh Sanitarium is one of the most beautiful places in White Plains. It possesses large, beautifully kept grounds, but on ordinary occasions the high surrounding walls, wrought iron gates and general air of seclusion cast a gloom over the scene. Dr. Everard is much respected in the neighborhood. Fairleigh House belongs to him, he is known to be a very wealthy man, he is unmarried, and has turned his place into nothing more or less than a large lunatic asylum. Life at the sanitarium is all that is luxurious, and the restraint as light as possible. Everard is a great friend of mine, and I like to run down to see him whenever I can. On this occasion I was in time for the annual ball. Once a year the beautiful place is thrown open, the dangerous patients are secluded, and those who are sufficiently well are allowed to sun themselves once more in the public gaze. Not only the splendid house itself, but the spacious grounds, too, are got ready for the reception of guests. Having dressed, I went downstairs. I lifted a curtain, and found myself in the big ball room. Just within the entrance my eyes lighted on Everard and a particularly graceful, fair-haired woman of about thirty-five years of age engaged in conversation. He came forward to meet me.

"Halifax," he said, "allow me to introduce you to Mrs. Joliffe. Mrs. Joliffe, this is my old friend, Dr. Halifax."

"I am very glad to make your acquaintance, doctor," answered Mrs. Joliffe. She raised two sky-blue eyes to my face; a color of the faintest rose mantled her cheeks for a moment, then left them with a lovely creamy pallor.

"What are you doing in your world now?" she queried, as Everard walked away.

"In my world!" I repeated, startled by her tone, and the flashing light which came and went in her eyes.

"Ah," she said laughing, "have I not seen you talking to Dr. Everard? You know my story, or at least some of it. You know that I am a patient. I am leaving here next week, however. Thanks to our good doctor's care I no longer belong to the insane members of the public. Now you understand why I asked my question. I do not wish to appear ignorant when I leave here. Please tell me what they are doing in the outside world."

I began to relate one or two of the topics of the day.

"How interesting," she said when I paused. "I shall enjoy it all again. By the way, Dr. Halifax, I know that you are a noted traveler and a physician who has lifted the curtain which shows the hideous reality of disease, mental or physical. Perhaps some day we may meet again, and it may be in your power to render me assistance."

"If it is," I replied, "you may rest assured I will do my best to serve you."

When I returned to town I found a letter awaiting me from my friend Lucian Maxwell. He and I had spent several months traveling together in Asia, and we were much attached to each other.

"My dear Halifax," he wrote, "I am about to enter into the state of matrimony. I now claim the performance of an offer you once made to act in the capacity of best man, should occasion for your services ever arrive. We are to be married in three weeks, and as Laura has no settled home, the wedding will take place from my residence at Ashley-on-Hudson. Please write at once to say you will be on hand on the 25th of June."

On the afternoon of the 23rd I started for my friend's place, and in due time stepped off at the little railway station which was about two miles distant from the house. As the afternoon was a very fine one, I desired my baggage to be sent after me, and walked across the fields to Maxwell's habitation. My way led through a pine wood, which was in the perfection of its summer foliage. Thankful for the shade, I sat down for a moment under a tree, when I was startled by the sound of a woman's voice. I looked up, and then I sprang to my feet, for the bright blue eyes of Mrs. Joliffe were gazing at me.

"Ah," she said, coming forward, "I thought it likely that you would take this short cut. That is well; I shall be able to have a little conversation with you before we join the rest of the visitors."

"How do you do?" I said. "I am surprised to see you here."

"I can easily account for my presence," she answered; "but before I say anything more I want you to promise that you will not tell anyone where you last saw me."

"I will do as you wish," I replied. "There is no reason why I should betray your secret."

"That is well. You have promised faithfully, remember. I am here as a guest, and not a soul in the house knows my previous history. When I knew you were coming here, I managed to meet you first, so that I could ask you to keep silent. You wonder why I am here—I will tell you. My daughter Laura is to marry Lucian Maxwell the day after tomorrow."

Like a flash a memory rose before my mental vision. If there was one subject on which Maxwell, in my opinion, was a little overparticular, it was on the dreaded topic of heredity. Frequently he had assured me that far rather would he remain single all his life than bring disease into his family.

"You think I have trapped you," said Mrs. Joliffe, who was watching my face intently. "Well, I meant to do so. I hold you to your word—to the bond of professional secrecy you have given me."

"Do you consider it right to keep Maxwell in the dark?" I demanded.

"Yes, from my point of view," she retorted. "When I heard last night that you were coming here, the chief friend of the bridegroom, I experienced a sensation of agony, which you with your cool, well-balanced life, could never understand."

"You can rest assured that I pity you," I said. "But the promise you have wrung from me, Mrs. Joliffe, means injustice to my friend."

"Nevertheless, I refuse to release you from it," she said firmly. "I have but one child, my only treasure. She knows nothing whatever of the doom which hangs over me. She is beautiful, lovable, worthy of the best that life can offer her. I will not have her happiness tampered with, no matter what the cost may be."

"Is your mania of a slight character?" I asked hopefully.

"No," she answered sullenly. "There is no use in mincing matters. I am at intervals pursued by the most horrible, ghastly fear that I am being poisoned. My mania rises to hatred, and unless something is done to arrest its progress, I should think very little of trying to take the life of the person whom I fancy is conspiring against me. Even at the present moment I feel the sure approach of the terrible cloud which shuts away the sunshine of my life. I am convinced, however, that I shall be able to control myself until Thursday morning, when I shall return immediately to Fairleigh sanitarium."

"And your daughter knows nothing of this?" I queried.

"No, I have been very careful. My husband died soon after her birth, and when Laura was five years old she was taken from me and sent to school. We used to meet in the holidays, and we always corresponded regularly. When with her I have had power to restrain myself, and she suspects nothing. Your terrible theory of heredity cannot be correct, for Laura is mentally sound in every way. I have done all that I could by placing her in the healthiest environments. But if she is the victim of a cruel blow I cannot answer for the consequences. She is very fragile and physically delicate; were you to tell what you know of me to Mr. Maxwell it would in all probability render my daughter insane for life."

I rose to my feet. "You place me in a bad position," I said, "but I will not go back on my word. I only hope I am not committing a crime in so doing."

"I trust you, and thank you," she said. "Here come Lucian and some of his guests." She pointed down a vista through the wood, where the forms of several people were visible under the trees, and ran forward to meet them.

"I have been the first to greet Dr. Halifax," she said, going straight up to Maxwell. My friend rushed forward and shook hands with me.

"I cannot say how acceptable your presence is," he exclaimed. "I have much to tell you, but first of all I want to introduce you to Laura. We will go to her at once."

In a little while we entered a long, low conservatory. A slender young girl was standing by an open window, twirling a rose in her fingers. When she saw Maxwell the rose fell from her hand, and she advanced to meet him.

"Here I am, Laura," he exclaimed, and whom do you think I have brought with me? No less a person than my best man and greatest friend, —Dr. Halifax."

"I have heard of you, of course, and I am glad to meet you," she answered, raising shy eyes to my face. She was, I saw at a glance, her mother in miniature, but with a sort of halo cast over her. Under her wonderfully brilliant eyes there were somewhat dark shadows, which seemed to throw up and intensify their expression, adding to the etherealness and fragility of the delicate face. She began to speak to me in a low, sweet voice. At times I fancied that her brows knit as if in momentary pain; now and then her lips drooped slightly; and once I felt certain that I intercepted a startled light of perplexity, almost terror, in her eyes. I said to myself, however, that I was prejudiced, that the knowledge of the mother's history made me read more than I ought in the daughter's face.

The dance that evening was a particularly brilliant one. Many guests arrived, and the grounds were lighted with Chinese lanterns and other varied forms of decoration. Soon after ten o'clock I was standing on the south terrace, when the young bride-elect approached me.

"Can I speak to you, doctor?" she asked.

Her voice was very low, and almost unnatural in tone. Even by the artificial light I could see that she was pale, and her lips trembling.

"You are cold and trembling," I said, "What seems to be wrong?"

"I do not tremble from cold," she replied. "Dr. Halifax, I must confide in some one; it is all too horrible! You are Lucian's best friend, but even you do not know him. He is not what he seems. Bend down, for I must not speak aloud. Mother must not learn the awful truth. Lucian's love for me has changed. He is trying to poison me. He must have lost his senses. Only half an hour ago, Doctor, I saw him put a poison powder into the champagne he asked me to drink. Oh, it is terrible! What will become of me?"

I took my cue in an instant. "You are excited and overwrought," I said quietly. "There is no use in telling you that your imagination is running away with you, for in your present state of mind you would not believe me. I will speak to Maxwell, but I will say nothing to implicate you. In the meantime, as you are terribly tired, the best thing you can do is to go to bed. Trust me, and I will get to the bottom of this mystery for you. But you must obey me now."

"How kind you are," she murmured gratefully. "I had to tell some one. I will lie down now and leave it all to you."

She pressed my hand and glided away. As soon as she had gone I hurried to the ball-room and sought Mrs. Joliffe. At my gesture she arose, and accompanied me outside.

"I have bad news for you," I said gravely. "Your daughter inherits your malady. Tonight she gave way to an aggressive form of the madness which at intervals wrecks your life."

"Impossible!" exclaimed the wretched woman. She stared at me with glittering eyes. I gave her a faithful version of the incident which had just transpired. When I had done speaking she covered her face with her hands.

"Has all my suffering and self-denial been in vain then?" she cried.

"Have not all the years of loneliness, of horror, sufficed to avert the curse?"

"Try to calm yourself," I said. "Mrs. Joliffe, I do not think this marriage ought to be allowed to go on."

She faced me defiantly. "It must," she cried. "I can think of no one but Laura, and you are bound in honor not to betray me. I know, none better, the workings of the insidious malady. Have I not gone through it all? Laura feels badly tonight, but tomorrow in all probability she will be her own happy self. The attacks at first are always light. If she gets a shock now, she will be a maniac for life. Dr. Halifax, I hold you to your promise."

There was little sleep for me that night. I went down to breakfast in the morning ill at ease and strolled away by myself. My one faint hope was that Laura might betray herself that day, and that Maxwell would be thus warned in time before he was united to a mad wife. To my infinite distress, however, her mother's words with regard to the young girl proved correct. When she came to breakfast she looked calm and happy; her eyes met mine with serene unconsciousness. I managed to have a chat with her, and found, to my added perplexity, that she had forgotten every word she had spoken to me on the previous evening.

I could not join the rest of the happy party. I went to the wood and sat down to think over the situation. Suddenly I thought of what my friend Everard had said:

"Brain disease is often due to functional disturbance and consequent malnutrition of certain centers. If we can, therefore, ascertain where the brain is at fault, a rational line of treatment is pointed out."

With Dr. Everard's remark in my mind, I thought carefully over the experiments which I had lately made with regard to animal extracts as a means of cure. If his idea was correct, there was a certain portion of Laura Joliffe's brain which was not sufficiently nourished. The new line of treatment pointed out a definite cure for this. If I could supply the unhappy girl with those portions of brain which were faulty in her own, I might gradually overcome the terrible malady which threatened her. In short, now was the time for me to test the experiments which I had so lavishly made.

I lost no time in excusing myself to my host and caught the first train for New York. I drove straight home, entered my laboratory and secured a box of carefully prepared medicine. Before twelve o'clock that night I returned to Ashley and seized the first opportunity I could find of speaking to Mrs. Joliffe.

"I have been making some experiments," I said, "with regard to a new cure for certain forms of insanity. I need not waste time in repeating to you exactly what I have done. Your part is to obey my directions implicitly. If you refuse, I shall consider myself absolved from my promise, and will tell Maxwell the entire truth."

"I will do anything you wish," she whispered hoarsely.

"This box which I have brought with me from town," I continued, "contains capsules. These capsules are made of gelatine, and each of them holds a certain dose. The medicine is of a new and important kind. In my opinion and that of Dr. Everard it acts directly upon the higher nervous centers. There is a strong possibility, Mrs. Joliffe, that within this box there lies the cure of your daughter's ailment. She must take three of these capsules daily. Get her to promise you this. Give her one when she wakes in the morning, give her another before she leaves here with her husband. Make her vow that she will not omit to take three daily."

"I will do so," she answered. "God bless you, Dr. Halifax. Have you anything more to say?"

"Yes; Miss Joliffe must also furnish you with her address. There are enough capsules in that box to last her exactly a month. If they do anything for her, she will probably be obliged to continue the cure for several months. I must be placed in a position to be able to supply her with more capsules; the whole thing is an experiment, and it may fail, but it is the best I can do."

The tears sprang to Mrs. Joliffe's eyes.

"You are a good man," she said. "You shall be obeyed in every particular."

The next day Laura and Maxwell were married. The wedding ceremony took place without a hitch, and no bride ever looked more lovely. I was standing in the hall when the bride and groom went away. Maxwell had forgotten something, and had to run upstairs. For a moment the bride and I found ourselves alone. She came quickly to my side.

"I remember now all that I said to you the other night," she whispered. "Oh, Dr. Halifax, the awful fear is over me again. From now on I will be in his power, and I know he means to poison me."

For one instant a look of black despair had settled upon her face.

"Have courage," I whispered back. "Take your medicine three times a day without fail, and the terror will cease to pursue you."

"I have promised mother to take those queer little capsules," she said. "I will keep my word, doctor."

The fear passed away from her face as Lucian joined us and she sprang lightly into the waiting carriage, waving us a laughing good-bye as they drove off.

What I suffered in the next few weeks it is difficult to describe. No news reached me with regard to Maxwell and his bride. Mrs. Joliffe, according to her determination, returned to Fairleigh sanitarium. My sleep was broken nightly by dread forebodings. Had I done right or wrong? Would the capsules effect a cure, or would Maxwell find out when too late that I could have warned him against his fate and yet failed to do so? At last, one morning, a month after the wedding, I could stand the strain no longer, and hurried off to Fairleigh sanitarium. As soon as I got there I had an interview with Mrs. Joliffe. She came eagerly to meet me; her face was bright, her eyes full of happiness. She placed a letter in my hands, and I saw at a glance that the writer was Maxwell.

"Read that portion," she said, pointing to the third page. I did so.

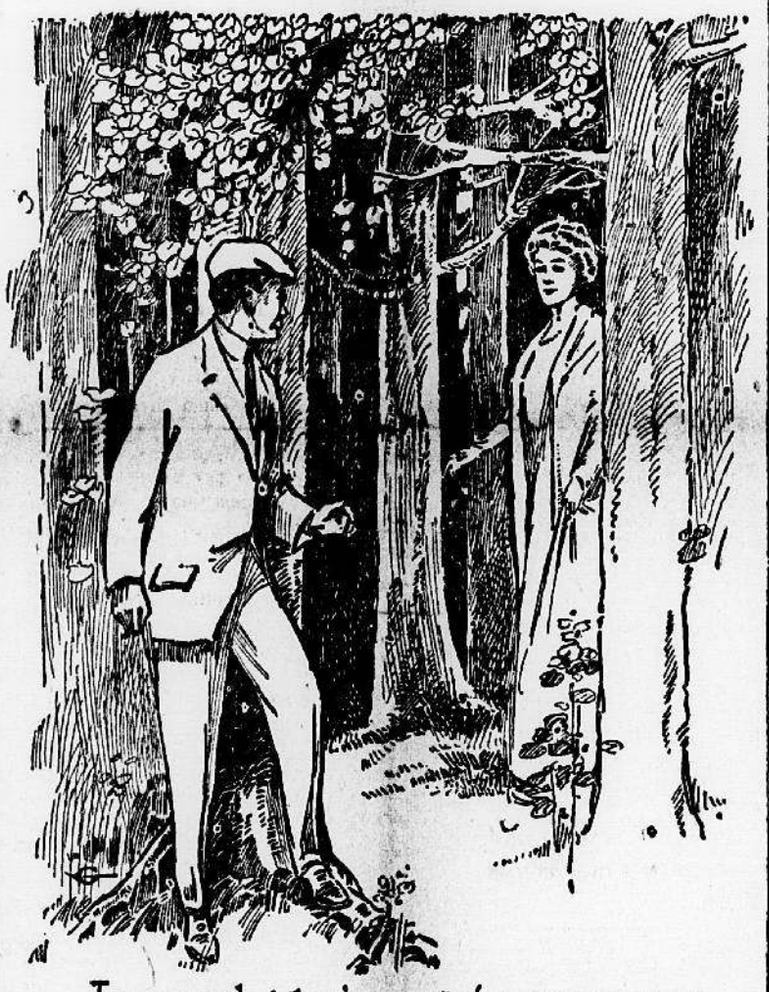
"I am glad to be able to inform you," it ran, "that Laura, who was nervous and depressed, and at times very strange during the first two weeks of our honeymoon, has now quite recovered her normal health and spirits. She is really in excellent form, has a good appetite, and is putting on flesh. I doubt, when we return home, if you will know her for the fragile creature who left her native land a short time ago. There is only one odd thing about her; she insists on dosing herself with some extraordinary little capsules three times daily. She is looking over me as I write, and begs me to say that the supply will soon be exhausted, and she wants you to send her some more. She believes that they have an almost magical effect upon her, soothing her nerves in the most wonderful way."

You see, the experiment is a success, doctor," said Mrs. Joliffe triumphantly, as I finished reading.

"It seems so," I responded, with a sigh of relief. "And now, I have brought you a fresh supply of capsules. Please send them to Mrs. Maxwell by the next mail."

"Dr. Halifax," said Mrs. Joliffe, "I intend to try your medicine on myself. If it has effected a cure in my child's case, why not in mine?"

The suggestion was a timely one, and with Everard's approval it was carried out. Today both mother and daughter are alive and well, mentally and physically, and the black horror of madness has passed out of their lives forever.



I was startled by the sound of a woman's voice.

LEGENDS OF CHURCH BELLS

Legendary lore is filled with strange stories of bells, many of them a peculiar mingling of myth and truth.

Within the last century a spot at Brenckburne, in Northumberland, used to be pointed out by old people, who said they had been told when they were young that a great treasure had been buried there. When at last this "treasure" was exhumed it proved to be the fragments of the bell of the priory church, which stood in ruins near by. According to the legend—and it is one which may well be true—the bell's last resting place can thus be accounted for: A party of mosstrooping Scots, bent on plunder, were seeking far and wide to discover the priory. But it lay in a cleft between the wooded banks of the Coquet, concealed from view from the higher lands about it. The mosstroopers, exceedingly wroth, at last give up the search in despair, and the monks, deeming themselves safe at last, by way of thanksgiving for their deliverance, rang a peal upon the bell. Unluckily, the sound of the bell reached the Scots in the forests above, and with this as guide they found the priory, which they sacked and burned. The priory bell presumably fell to the ground during the conflagration, and was eventually buried.

To this day the choristers of Durham cathedral ascend the tower, on the eve of the feast of Corpus Christi, and sing the Te Deum. This ceremony is in commemoration of the marvelous extinguishing of a fire on that night, in the year 1429, four hundred and eighty-three years ago. At midnight the monks were at prayer when the belfry was struck by lightning and set on fire. All night the flames raged and until the middle of the following day. But for all that the tower escaped serious injury, and the bells were not damaged at all. These bells are not the same as those which now call the inhabitants of the city to worship, for in the registry of the Church of St. Mary-le-Bow, Durham, which records the burial of one Thomas Bartlet in 1632, a note is added to the effect that "thys man did caste the abbey bells the summer before he dyed."

Buried somewhere beneath the soil of the graveyard of Etchingham church, in Sussex, lies, according to the legend, a peal of bells intended once upon a time for the tower, which still has only a single bell to call the faithful to prayer. As far as can be ascertained, the story is as follows: In the early middle ages, when the church could be approached by water as well as by land, a certain valiant knight wished to present to it a peal of bells. These bells were cast at a foundry many miles away and brought to the church by water. They arrived in safety, but through carelessness or inadvertence they were allowed to slide to one side of the boat during unloading, and in a few moments the vessel listed over and sank, depositing the bells in the mud at the bottom of the canal, where they are to this day. When he heard of this the donor made a "vow, enchantment, or spell," saying that Etchingham church should never have more than one bell until the peal he had given was dragged from the bottom by a team of four milk-white oxen. The white oxen do not appear to have been forthcoming, and in later times the canal was filled in. The peculiar fact is that the church is still only possessed of one bell.

Old bells bore many quaint legends graven upon them, such as ejaculations and prayers, and sometimes quite a little history, as in the case of the great bell in Glasgow cathedral, which bears the following inscription: "In the year of grace, 1583, Marcus Knox, a merchant in Glasgow, zealous for the interest of the Reformed Religion, caused me to be fabricated in Holland, for the use of his fellow-citizens of Glasgow, and placed me with solemnity in the tower of their cathedral. My function was announced by the impress on my bosom: Me audito, venias, doctrinam sanctam ut discas, and I was taught to proclaim the hours of unheeded time. One hundred and ninety-five years had I sounded these awful warnings, when I was broken by the hands of inconsiderate and careless men. In the year 1790 I was cast into the furnace, refounded at London, and returned to my sacred vocation. Reader! thou also shalt know a resurrection, may it be to eternal life!"

Henry VIII. looked upon bells as a useful means of addition to his income, and nothing more, and owing to his vandalism in this direction, many valuable and beautiful old bells disappeared with other church property to be sold for their value as metal. Many curious things happened when these bells were removed which gave rise to innumerable legends. At Lynn and at Yarmouth ships carrying bells to foreign ports foundered and sank, and the wrecking of a vessel carrying fourteen of the bells of Jersey at the entrance of St. Malo Harbour gave rise to the legend that when the wind blows the drowned bells are pealing. Sir Miles Partridge, who won the Jesus Bells of St. Paul's from King Henry when playing at dice was shortly after hanged on Tower Hill, and, perhaps most remarkable of all, a certain Bishop of Bangor, who, having sold the bells of his cathedral, went to see them shipped, was forthwith stricken with blindness.—London Globe.

Forces of Light.

The late Arthur McEwen, a famous journalist of San Francisco and New York, was once engaged in a political fight in the California city in which the better element was arrayed against the bosses and their followers, and the better element was getting decidedly the worst of it.

On election morning McEwen met the bishop of the Episcopal diocese and the Catholic bishop on the street, both of whom had been active in the movement. The Episcopal bishop asked McEwen how things looked.

"Very bad!" said McEwen. "I don't think we have a chance. I understand they are paying $4 apiece for votes against us down in some of the districts. I guess we're beaten!"

Both bishops were properly aghast at this iniquity and proceeded on their ways. Presently the Catholic bishop met McEwen again.

"Don't be discouraged, Arthur, me boy!" he said. "Though it may be true the forces of darkness are paying $4 for votes, I have reliable information the forces of light are paying $5!"—Saturday Evening Post.

Rainfall and Consumption.

A study of the influence of rain bearing winds upon the prevalence of tuberculosis has been made by Dr. William Gordon, physician to the Royal Devon and Exeter hospital. After classifying several Devonshire parishes according to their exposure to rainy winds, Dr. Gordon searched out in precisely which parishes the deaths from consumption during a series of years had mainly occurred. He found that the death rate in the parishes exposed to rain bearing winds was generally twice as high as that of the parishes sheltered from them. Further investigations were conducted in many other localities, among them the city of Exeter. The result was the same. Dr. Gordon declares that the important point to consider in the choice of a residence for consumptives is the matter of shelter from the rain bearing winds of the locality, exposure to which is a more serious matter than altitude, character of soil, or even the amount of rainfall.—Youth's Companion.

Decided Long Ago.

"Now, my dear," said young Mr. Ponsonby when he had signed the lease for the pretty little flat which he and his bride of three months were to occupy, "the first thing we shall have to decide is which of us is to be in supreme command here."

"Oh, no, George, you are mistaken," she sweetly replied. "I decided that, while our friends were still throwing old shoes at us."