Democratic Watchman.

Bellefonte, Pa., November 6, 1908.

Waiting For The Verdict

By T. W. WYNDHAM.

THE ormolu clock on the mantelpiece ticked monotonously. The little regular sound began to run as a tune in her brain. She even thought that her fingers mechanically drummed the air upon her knee. It was some inane tune of the hour. Its rhythm fitted in excellently with the ticking of the clock, and both jangled in her brain with irritating persistence.

Every detail of the room had stamped itself upon her mind during these minutes she had sat there—minutes was it or hours since the great doctor had said to her in a voice that had struck her as strangely gentle:

"Will you kindly wait in the waiting room, Mrs. Ainslie, while Dr. Bryant and I talk over matters?"

She had attracted many curious and admiring glances from other men and women who waited in the big, gloomy room. One little, shabbily dressed woman who sat in the corner watched her almost enviously. The shabby woman's observant eyes noted the other's fair loveliness, her exquisite dress, the atmosphere of ease and luxury and comfort that surrounded her, the atmosphere of one who has always been cared for and sheltered, upon whom no rough winds have ever blown, and the shabby woman wondered what had brought this pretty, beautifully dressed little person into the doctor's waiting room. The thought flashed through her mind that it was probably some fancied ailment for which she had come. It was impossible to associate the idea of sickness or pain with that lovely face, those smart garments.

How much longer, she wondered, did these doctors intend to keep her in this dreary room while they discussed her case?

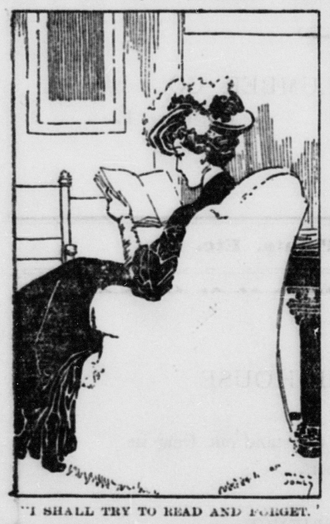
Her case!

It was funny to think that they could talk about her case! Why, she had always been the incarnation of health. Everybody had always said she was so strong and well. It was too ridiculous that she should be sitting in a doctor's waiting room, and she herself would naturally never have dreamed of consulting the great specialist at all if her own doctor's face had not grown so absurdly grave when she had gone to him yesterday about the little lump which annoyed her. Personally she thought he had made rather an unnecessary fuss. In fact, she had told Dr. Bryant as much to his face—had, indeed, asked him why he could not simply cut the thing away then and there and have done with it.

Twenty minutes!

How could it possibly take those two doctors twenty minutes to discuss her simple case? Why, she had considered it so simple a matter that she had not even told her husband about it or that she was to come and see Dr. James, the famous specialist, this morning!

Robert was always in such an agony if her little finger ached that she had refrained from mentioning the lump to him at all, and he knew nothing of her visit to Dr. Bryant yesterday, much



"I SHALL TRY TO READ AND FORGET."

less about the consultation today. Why, her dear, loving, fussy old Robert, the dearest hubby in the world, would think she was going to die at the very least if he knew she was sitting in Dr. Edward James' room waiting the verdict!

"Waiting for the verdict!"

Something in the words framed by her own mind sent a quick little shiver through her for which she could not account, and a vision rose before her of a prisoner waiting at the bar and wondering—wondering, perhaps, whether the judge would presently put on the black cap or not. Ah, well, it must be terrible to be in such a position. She was only waiting—waiting for what?

A sudden recollection crossed her mind of the great doctor's quiet, restrained voice that had held in something which she had at the moment not quite understood. It flashed upon her now all at once that it was pity.

But why pity?

Her heart gave a frightened leap.

She picked up an illustrated paper from the table before her and began hurriedly turning the pages, seeing absolutely nothing. "And his face looked so kind and—so—sorry." Her thoughts ran on till her heart quickened its beat again. "It's nonsense to be nervous!" she told herself. "I shall try to read and forget."

She resolutely took up a magazine and read a page slowly and carefully, then read it over again with equal care, but she found herself spelling each word in turn, and the sense of the phrases did not penetrate into her brain.

Nobody can take in the meaning of a story, she thought, when people whisper, and her glance fell upon a stout widow who sat opposite whispering in the ear of a girl beside her.

The little lady watched the widow's head bob up and down as her words became more and more emphatic. She noticed how dusty the crape was upon her veil. "And that's the worst of crape," she said to herself. "The least thing makes it look shabby. I always tell Robert I won't wear crape when I'm a widow!"

A smile flickered over her face, and the shabby woman in the corner, watching her, thought enviously how happy she must be to smile like that at nothing. Half an hour now!

Half an hour for two clever doctors to discuss one tiny lump which looked like almost nothing! How she and Robert would laugh presently over the slowness of these medical men! But if they kept her much longer she would be late for lunch, and then Robert would be in a flurry and wonder what had become of her.

Oh, why were they not quicker? Time dragged woefully. There was something aggravating about that tiresome clock on the mantelpiece with its persistent voice, and the pair of candlesticks exactly alike that flanked it and the two vases that were such a precise match annoyed her. A wild desire seized her to set them all crooked!

Then she was tired of looking at that hideous silver creation on the sideboard. She was certain it must be a testimonial! And what an ugly one to be saddled with for the rest of one's natural life! She remembered with what dismay she and Robert had received some ghastly old family plate from a rich uncle and how thankfully they had relegated it to a little used room, Robert saying laughingly that it would come in as an heirloom for their grandchildren!

A vision of herself as a white haired old lady made her smile again. She always intended to grow old gracefully—when the time for growing old came! But it was a very, very long way off, and she and Robert had only been married six short months—they had years and years of sunny life in front of them before—

The door opened.

"Mrs. Ainslie," said a trim parlor maid, and the little lady rose and followed her.

And all at once her heart gave that frightened leap again, but she was smiling when she entered the great doctor's room.

Both doctors were standing, and a queer feeling came over her as she saw their faces—that they watched her pitifully—as if—as if she were that prisoner at the bar one of them was just going to put on the black cap.

It was a whimsical idea. Her glance fell almost involuntarily upon Dr. James' gray head, and she smiled again.

Dr. Bryant leaned against the mantelpiece.

It struck her that he kept his eyes averted. She wondered vaguely why he did so. Possibly he had made some little mistake in diagnosis and was rather vexed about it.

"Will you sit down, Mrs. Ainslee?" Dr. James' voice broke in upon her thoughts.

She sat down in the big armchair where she had sat just now—all those minutes—or was it hours ago?—when she had first come into the room today with Dr. Bryant.

Dr. James seated himself at the table facing her.

This room was brighter than the other where she had waited so long. The sun came into it, and little patches of light danced upon the carpet and upon the table that was strewn with letters and upon the great man's kind, quiet face.

Outside the window there was actually a tree. It was April, and the leaves were beginning to grow green and waved gently to and fro in the soft spring air.

Her eyes left the dancing leaves outside and came back to the faces of the two silent men. She realized that they were both strangely quiet.

"Well," she said in a gay little voice, "what is the verdict? You"— The words died on her lips. She could not have said why, only something in Dr. James' face gave her a curious sense of suffocation.

"Mrs. Ainslie," he said gently, so gently that a sudden longing to cry assailed her. "I am afraid we have not very good news to give you." He paused, and the sudden longing to cry left her.

Some instinct inherited from her Revolutionary ancestors made her draw herself up in her chair and look the old man squarely in the face.

It was he, not her, who winced a little as she said quietly:

"Is it a very serious operation, then? Don't mind telling me. I am not afraid."

She was dimly conscious that Dr. Bryant turned quickly away from where he stood and moved toward the window and that the silence following her words seemed weighty with meaning.

"No," Dr. James said slowly, "I am sure you are not afraid of—of—an operation. But—there is no operation that we can do"—

Again she was conscious of a little movement on the part of the silent man by the window; and she watched with a curious sort of fascination how the pattern of the dancing leaves outside was repeated in dancing sun beams upon the carpet within.

"No operation?" she asked. "But"—

Then her eyes went back to Dr. James' face.

"But," she continued, after that queer little pause, "then it is not serious at all, I suppose?"

Dr. James lifted his head quickly, and their eyes met.

So profound a pity lay in them that she drew back a trifle. Her own eyes never faltered, only the hand that held her handkerchief clutched it so tightly that it was almost pain.

"I have never had a harder thing to do than this, Mrs. Ainslie," Dr. James said. "You must prepare for a great shock—a very great shock. We cannot operate because an operation would be useless, but—the growth is so serious a one—that"—

"It will kill me, do you mean?" she said, and the color flushed over her

SAW THE LADY SHAKE HANDS WITH HER DOCTOR.

face, but she sat perfectly still, her eyes never leaving his.

"Yes," he answered so gently that she almost smiled at him, "that is what I mean."

"And—how many years will it take?" she asked, and she noticed how still her own voice was, how her heart that had bounded widely a second before was now beating quickly, "or—will it perhaps be—a shorter time?"

She could almost have sworn that the gray eyes watching her grew dim. She realized that the figure by the window seemed to be rigid in its stillness.

"It will be a shorter time than that." The great doctor's voice trembled.

She was so very pretty—so very young and pretty and fair—and so beautifully dressed. It was absurd to think of her clothes at such a moment, but it would have been easier to tell her if she had worn a shabby gown! It flashed into his mind that it was like killing a butterfly that was dancing in the sunlight, and yet—

"A shorter time?" She interrupted his thoughts.

He leaned forward and laid his hand upon her arm.

"Yes," he said. "I know you will face it bravely." His voice broke again. "I do not think—it—will be more than—a week—and we can do nothing."

The silence in the room was like something tangible, made more emphatic by the chirping of the sparrows in the tree without and the rumble of the busy New York streets.

It was the little lady herself who broke the silence.

"That was a hard thing for you to tell me," she said gently. Then she glanced down at her own clinched hands. "Do you know," she went on, and a queer little smile flitted across her face, "I have torn my handkerchief into ribbons—while I sat here. But—but it won't matter now—will it—if it is only to be a week?"

There was no answer from either of her listeners. Words were impossible to them. Only a great admiration dawned in Dr. James' eyes as he looked into the bright, resolute ones that faced him.

"Thank you very much for breaking it to me so—so gently," she said in that smooth, even tone that never trembled or changed. "It is—a very great surprise. A—a—week—you say?"

The great man bowed his head. Obviously he could not trust himself to speak.

"How strange!" she said. "Next week there is a big ball—and I—am going—I mean I was going—my dress will come home—and I— How strange!"

Dr. Bryant turned abruptly from the window. She saw that his eyes were full of tears.

"It is so hard quite to realize," she went on, "that things will go on just the same—and I—not be here"— She paused, glancing out at the green tree and the sunlight.

"But—I ought not to take up your time." She rose and turned courteously to Dr. James. "You have other people to see, and I hope—I hope you will not have another verdict to give—like—mine"—

For the first time her voice shook a little, but her eyes were still steady.

"Will you have a cab called for me, Dr. Bryant? I should like to go straight—home."

She walked from the great man's room with head erect and unfaltering steps, and, watching her, he said softly to himself: "It is the women who go up to the cannon's mouth without turning a hair. What a plucky soul! My God, what a plucky soul!"

Looking from the window of the sitting room, the shabby woman saw the little lady shake hands smilingly with her doctor and drive away. And the shabby woman said to herself, "How young and happy she is, with all her life before her—and such a happy life!"

But the shabby woman never knew what the verdict had been which the little lady had waited for so long!

Magic and Poison Rings.

The ring began when man thrust his finger through a hole in a pretty shell and later learned to make rings of jet. The ring is very magical. Lord Ruthven, who helped to kill Riccio, gave Queen Mary a ring which was sovran against poison, and she generously replied with the present of her father's wonderful jeweled dagger, of French work, no longer in existence. Whether Ruthven tooled with this magnificent weapon in the affair of Riccio or used a cheaper article is uncertain. At all events, Mary based on the ring that was an antidote to poison a charge of sorcery against Ruthven. The judges of Jeanne d'Arc regarded with much suspicion her little ring of base metal, a gift from her parents, inscribed with the sacred names Jesus Marie.

It was usual to touch the relics of saints with rings. Jeanne d'Arc said that her ring had touched the body of St. Catherine, whether she meant of the actual saint or a relic of the saint, brought from Sinia to Fierbois. The ring might contain a relic or later a miniature. I fear that I do not believe in the virtues or vices of poison rings. Our ancestors practically knew no poison but arsenic, and Carthaginian science can scarcely have enabled Hannibal to poison himself with a drug contained under the stone of a ring.—Andrew Lang.

Our Debt to Champlain.

We of the eastern United States, and, above all, the dwellers in New England, owe to Champlain more than most of us imagine. Northern New York and New England were fields of his exploration, and it was he who charted the coasts of the north Atlantic nearly to Connecticut, making surveys that have not been greatly altered to this day. Three hundred year ago, at the point of Quebec, then covered with nut trees, Samuel de Champlain set his men to work to cut down these trees, saw boards, dig cellars and make ditches to construct a habitation. Before the coming of Champlain Canada had yielded to the French vast quantities of furs and skins and had enriched many a trader, but it remained for this great explorer to see in Canada something more than a mere ground for the trapper and trader—a home for people, a veritable new France. In the accounts of his voyages he described with enthusiasm the land, its people, its animals, its timber, its plants and its minerals, and on these products he based prophecies of a great future for this land.—Forest and Stream.

Imagination.

"Just slap down a sketch of a drunken husband sitting in a wretched hovel of a home," requested the newspaper editor, hurrying into the apartment of the lazy staff cartoonist.

The artist carelessly complied and sprawled back in his chair.

"Don't you think it would fill out better if you were to sketch in a table and an empty whisky bottle?" inquired the editor, gazing at the bare figure.

"Oh, the readers will imagine the booze part of it, all right!"

"Well, how about adding a broken hearted wife and a couple of ragged children?"

"Unnecessary. The readers will readily imagine all that as part and parcel of such a scene."

"Then," ejaculated the editor, tearing the sketch to bits, "then the readers can imagine the drunken man."—Washington Post.

Bath Not Popular In Spain.

In the quaint Spanish city of Toledo the traveler is shown upon the banks of the Tagus below Wamba's palace the alcove in which La Cava was wont to bathe until seen by Roderick, and her fate was none the happiest at the hands of the last of the Goths. To this day she is referred to as an awful example of the fate that awaits those who dare to bathe in water too often. The Spanish woman is none too liberal in her use of water for personal cleanliness, preferring oil or some other medium.

Not Good at Riddles.

A lawyer was questioning a new client, a widow, the other day, about her history. "My history," she replied, "is simplicity itself. My first was the happiness of my life, my second was goodness itself, my third"—

"Excuse me, madam," interrupted the attorney, "but really we aren't here to guess charades."

Sagacity Recognized.

"Our forefathers who framed the constitution were men of mighty intelligence."

"Yes," answered Senator Sorghum. "I am sometimes tempted to believe that they knew as much about the constitution as some of the lawyers who have since interpreted it."—Washington Star.

Art Improvement.

Mrs. De Riche (showing her home to Mrs. Windfall)—What do you think of my Venus de Milo? Mrs. Windfall—Ain't it a shame how careless servants are! But couldn't you glue the arms on again?—Puck.

Inconsistency.

"Pa, what is the meaning of inconsistency?" asked Freddy.

"Inconsistency, my son," exclaimed pa, "means a man who growls all day and then goes home and kicks the dog for barking at night."