

THE WALLED IN ROOM.

I opened my eyes and looked around me. A man was leaning over my bed; near the man stood a woman with a bonnet with great white wings on the sides, holding in her hand a moist compress. The room was plain and neat, with clean white walls. On a table, covered with a great napkin of yellow linen, I noted a number of strange objects—rows of little vials, and a brown earthen jar filled with bits of ice. Through the muslin curtains, which belled out from the windows in the balmy air, I could see a patch of blue sky and the tops of green trees bending lightly in the breeze. Where was I? It seemed like a long dream which I had had: my head felt empty, my limbs ached, and I could not think.

The man gently lifted my head, and gave me a few drops of some liquid, which I swallowed with avidity.

"Well, Mr. Furniss," he said, "how do you feel now?"

"Eh, what?" I cried. "Where am I?"

"You are in my house, my dear sir, and we shall take good care of you. Now," he added, replacing my head on the pillow, "be quiet and go to sleep."

I gazed at him for a long time, and all at once I recognized Dr. Bertram, the celebrated specialist in insanity. A shudder passed through my frame. Why was I in Dr. Bertram's hospital instead of my own home near Phoenix Park, with my books, my herbs, and my microscopes around me? His hospital was for mad people—and that sister of charity, those vials, that bowl of ice—my God, I must be mad! But why? How?

"How long have I been here?" I asked after a time.

"For four weeks, Mr. Furniss. But you must be quiet and sleep. Now do not try to talk."

For a month! Was it possible? What had happened? But even as I asked myself these questions little by little I went off to sleep, and I saw, in a billowy meadow, a road covered with blood and bordered on either side with monstrous microscopes shaped like trees, a road on which two little girls played at pitch and catch with a severed head, while Dr. Bertram, comically bonneted with a religious cap, rode astride of a dead body, which reared and pranced and kicked till he could scarcely keep his seat.

The next morning I was better, and day by day I improved, though that horrible nightmare came to me each night. But it grew less and less distinct, and after a few weeks it almost ceased to trouble me.

One evening the doctor, whom I had not seen during the day, seated himself near my bed.

"Well," said he, feeling my pulse, "you are doing famously. I'll have you out, as good as new, in a few days. But you have had a close shave. It has been one of the prettiest cases of cerebral congestion I ever handled—a beautiful case. Why, it is a wonder you are alive now. Tell me, how is your memory; can you remember what happened before you were brought here?"

"I—I don't know; I can not think. I have passed through something fearful. What it is I can not say. From the faint glimmer of recollection that comes to me I have the sensation of having been dead—murdered! Oh, it is frightful! My brain is weak yet. Then, the child, a pretty golden haired child—rolling on the floor."

"Come, come, this will never do," said the doctor. "You can tell me all about it in the morn—"

"No, now, doctor," I cried, "it is coming back to me. Yes, I have it now."

Here is an exact transcript of my recital as I told it to Dr. Bertram and later to the magistrate.

You know my passion for natural history. Well, scarcely a week passes that I do not go into the country botanizing. That day I went to Glacervin, where, as you may know, the marshy meadows are rich in curious plants, infusoria, and diatoms. I was returning, and was almost in Dublin with my box full of rare specimens, on which I expected to make a report that would astonish the Botanical Society, when I saw a little girl, certainly not over 5 or 6 years old, who was all alone, crying as if her little heart would break. I approached her, but at sight of me she redoubled her cries. I could see that the little one was lost, and that she did not know where to go, so I spoke to her kindly, and, by dint of promising her unlimited bonbons, got her to tell me that her name was Lizzie, and that she lived in Beresford place in Lower Abbey street.

I took her hand, and we soon started off, talking together like old friends. She was a beautiful child, fresh and rosy, with great candid eyes and fair hair, which was cut short over her eyes and fell in golden ringlets about her shoulders. She trotted bravely along, her soft little hand in mine. As we walked she told me remarkable tales, in which figured a big, black horse, a little knife, a doll, and a number of people I did not know.

Lizzie was afraid she would be scolded when she arrived home, but she was not, and I—I was received with transports by her mother, who was half distracted. Never was gratitude expressed so heartily and pleasantly. Who was I, where did I live, how did I happen to find her, and a thousand like questions were showered upon me.

"Oh, Mr. Furniss," said the mother, "you are the saviour of my child. How can we express our gratitude? We are not rich, but such a debt can not be paid in gold. How happy my husband will be to repeat my thanks to you. He is still at his office, but will you do a great kindness, will you honor our humble board to-morrow? I shall have a savant here like yourself, and you two will enjoy each other's company, I am sure. And my husband will be so happy to have you."

I thanked her for the invitation and promised to be on hand.

At the appointed hour I was shown into their modest parlor, and you may be sure the husband's gratitude was no less warmly expressed than the wife's. And little Lizzie threw her arms around my neck and showered on me the inno-

cent caresses of a happy child. I seemed, indeed, to be one of the family.

The dinner was a merry one, the savant seemed to be an interesting man—in brief, I passed an excellent evening.

The air had been heavy the whole day and in the evening a storm came on. Thunder claps succeeded one another without interruption and the rain fell in torrents. Whether it was the effect of the storm, of the suffocating heat, or of the wine I had drunk, I felt a strange melancholy—I could not breathe comfortably.

I was about to set out for home, however, for it was late and my house was at some distance; but they insisted that I should stay. It would be foolish to expose myself to such a tempest, when I was not feeling well; the mother begged me with such a good grace that I felt forced to remain and pass the night in that hospitable house.

They ceremoniously conducted me to my room, and there wished me good night. I even remember that little Lizzie having fallen asleep in her father's arms, I kissed her little cheek, paled by sleep, and her dimpled little arms.

Left alone, I began to undress slowly and wander about the room, as one always does when one sleeps in a strange place. I felt as if I should smother in the close atmosphere of the room. Before getting into bed I wanted to inhale a little of the outside air, and in spite of the roaring of the storm I tried to open the window. It was a false one.

"Well, well!" I exclaimed, a little surprised.

I thought I would remove the chimney screen; it was a false chimney. I rushed to the door—it was locked. Fear seized me, and, holding my breath, I listened. The house was quiet, all seemed to be asleep. Then I inspected the room carefully, straining my ears for the least sound. On the floor, near the bed, I noticed spots; they were blood—dried and blackened blood! I shuddered, and a cold sweat stood out on my forehead.

Blood! Why should there be blood there? And I saw that a whole sea of blood must have been spilt there, for a great space around the hard wooden floor had been freshly scrubbed and scraped. All at once I cried out. Under the bed I had seen a man stretched out, motionless as an overturned statue. With trembling hands I touched the man. He did not move. With trembling hands I seized the man by the feet and drew him forth—he was dead. His neck had been cleanly cut, as with one stroke of the razor, and the head held to the trunk only by a slender ligament.

I thought I should go mad. But something must be done—the assassin might come at any moment. I raised the body to place it on the bed. I made a false step, and the head turned over, swung to and fro for a moment like a pendulum, and then, detached from the trunk, fell on the floor with a dull sound.

With great difficulty I introduced the decapitated trunk between the sheets. I picked up the head and placed it on the pillow, like that of a sleeping man, and, having blown out the candle, I slipped under the bed.

I did all this mechanically, without thought of defense or safety; it was instinct that prompted me, not intelligence or reflection. My teeth chattered; my hands were wet with a thick moisture. I felt as if I had gone to bed in a charnel house.

I remained there in that awful fear for minutes, hours, months, years, centuries—I do not know how long. I lost all idea of time and place. All was silent. From without the noise of the storm and the whistling of the wind came to me softened and sad, like moans.

I could not picture to myself the assassin who was coming—who was there, perhaps. In that state of horror I could see only little Lizzie, fair, rosy, and frank, with her doll and her great hat; I could see her sleeping in her father's arms; now and then she lightly raised her eyelids and disclosed her eyes, which seemed to me to be bold, implacable, cruel, murderous.

The door opened, but as softly as the scratching of a mouse. I bit my lips till the blood came to keep from crying out. Now a man stepped in with gliding tread, with infinite precautions to avoid touching the furniture. It seemed to me as if I could see the cruel, clutching fingers gliding over my clothes, searching my pockets. Then the steps came nearer—seemed to graze me. I felt that the man was bending over the bed, that he struck one fierce blow. Then I knew nothing more.

When I recovered consciousness the room had become silent again. But I length I decided to escape—with what caution you may imagine. On tiptoe I gained the door, which had not been closed. Not a sound, not a breath. Feeling my way, I passed into the hall. I waited to see a head thrust suddenly from out the shadows, a knife gleam in the dark. But no—the brute, glutton with crime, slept without remorse. I descended the stairs, drew the bolt of the door, and half fainting, with the blood frozen in my veins, I fell into the gutter of the deserted street.

Dr. Bertram had listened to my recital with the deepest interest.

"And there I found you, Mr. Furniss—and in what a state! Could you recognize the house?"

"Yes," I replied; and to what end?

"Well, let me cure you, and then we will go together to the house of these assassins."

Eight days later the doctor and I stood in Lower Abbey street. I recognized the terrible house. All the blinds were drawn. In front of the door a placard was placed, bearing the words: "To Let."

I inquired of the former residents from a neighbor.

"They have been gone a month and more," she replied. "It's a great pity, for they were very nice people."

"Mercy me!" said Miss Pansie; "I sincerely hope they will not pass the law making a day of eight hours." "Why not?" "Just think how rapidly we shall age! Just three times as fast."—[Harper's Bazar.]

HOW SHE LOST HER LOVER.

'Twas a summer ago when he left me here, A summer of smiles with never a tear, Till I said to him with a sob, My dear! Good-bye, my lover; good-bye!

For I loved him, oh, as the stars love night! And my cheeks for him flushed red and white When he first called me his heart's delight; Good-bye, my lover; good-bye!

The touch of his hand was a thing divine, As he sat with me in the soft moonshine. And drank of my love as men drink wine: Good-bye, my lover; good-bye!

And never a night as I knelt in prayer, In a gown as white as our own souls were, But in fancy he came and kissed me there: Good-bye, my lover; good-bye!

But now, O God! what an empty place My whole heart is! Of the old embrace And the kiss I loved, there is not a trace; Good-bye, my lover; good-bye!

He sailed not over the stormy sea, And he went not down in the waves, nor he; But oh, he is lost, for he married me; Good-bye, my lover; good-bye!

—James Whitcomb Riley.

A Woman's Way.

She—Oh, don't you think Miss Browne is the nicest girl in the world?

He—Why, yes, of course, if you think so.

She—And her eyes; oh, don't you think they are splendid?

He—Very.

She—And hasn't she the cutest little mouth, and the kindest, dearest face?

He—Yes, indeed.

She—And such beautiful complexion; and what hair!

He—Very beautiful.

She—And then, isn't she graceful, and doesn't she wait divinely?

He—My, yes.

Return, Love.

They had a quarrel and she sent His letters back next day. His ring and all his presents went To him without delay.

"Pray send my kisses back to me," He wrote, "Could you forget them?" She answered speedily that he Must come himself and get them. —Outing.

Not Cigarettes This Time.

Willie (on the fence)—Say, Downy, I heard my sister standing up for you last night.

Upon Downy—Ah! What did she say?

Willie—She said she didn't believe it was cigarettes made you look so pale.

Upon Downy—Did she? That was good of her. What did she say was the cause?

Willie—She said she guessed you had an ingrowing mustache.

Willing to Learn.

Mrs. Prohibition—Johnny, didn't you sign the pledge the other day?

Johnny—Yes, ma'am.

Mrs. P.—And isn't that hard cider you are drinking?

Johnny—Yes, ma'am.

Mrs. P.—Well, isn't that intoxicating?

Johnny—That's just what I'm trying to find out.—[Boston Courier.]

No Loss.

Overheard in the parlor of a Broad street hotel: "What are you crying for, my little lad?"

"Boo hoo! I just dropped a 10 cent piece and I can't find it."

"Never mind; you'll find it, for 10 cents would not go far in this hotel!"—[Philadelphia Record.]

Poor Old Chicago.

Ethel—Now, don't tell me, Bob, that you really care anything for that Miss Cornbeef from Chicago.

Bob—Sister Ethel, if the whole great world were mine, I'd gladly lay it at her feet.

Ethel—Well, they'd need it.—[Boston Courier.]

A Wonderful Cure.

Carker (calling on friend)—Mercy! What's that frightful shouting upstairs?

Servant—That's Mr. Barker, sir.

Carker—Why, I thought he had lost his voice.

Servant—He had, sir; but he has just received the doctor's bill.—[Puck.]



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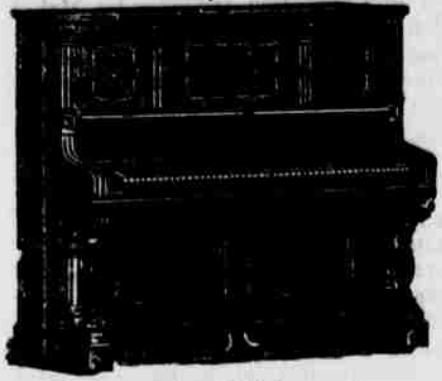
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