

IF IT COULD BE.

He could hold your hands to-night,
For just a little while and know
That only I of all the world,
Possessed them so.

A slender shape in that old chair,
If I could see you here to-night;
Between me and the twilight pale—
So light and frail.

Your cool white dress it's falling lost
In one broad sweep of sha'ow gray;
Your weary head just drooped aside,
The sweet old way.

Bowed like a flower-cup dashed with rain
The darkness cross'd half your face,
And just the glimmer of a smile
For one to trace.

If I could see your eyes that reach
Far out into the furthest sky,
Where, past the trail of dying suns,
The old years lie;

Or touch your silent lips to-night
And steal the sad less from their kiss
And find the last kiss they have kept
This weary while.

If it could be, oh, all in vain
The restless trouble of my soul
Sets, as the gr at tid to the moon,
Toward your control!

In vain the longing of the lips,
The eye's desire, and the pain;
The hunger of the heart. Oh, love,
Is it in vain?

—[All the Year Round.]

A Man in a Dream.

BY CHARLES W. HOOKE.

In an eddy of the great stream which abhors and flows along Broadway I found myself one afternoon unexpectedly face to face with my very good friend, Dr. Adolph Mayer. As we stood there talking, suddenly the doctor stretched forth his hand and drew one whom he knew out of the river of strangers. Thus I became acquainted with Mr. Clarence Hall, whom, presently, the current bore away again.

Dr. Mayer had seized rather eagerly, I thought, the opportunity for this introduction, and so I was not surprised that he should ask me, when Hall had gone, what had been my impression of his friend.

"He is a handsome fellow," said I, "and looks like an athlete."

"True; but as to his manner?"

"He seemed preoccupied. I thought at first that he might be deaf, because I noticed that you pronounced the introductory form with unusual distinctness."

"His hearing is all right."

"Yes, I soon perceived that the trouble was in his faculty of directing his attention. He gave me the idea of a man in a dream."

"You have hit it exactly," exclaimed Dr. Mayer, "that's just what he is."

"I could hardly take the doctor's statement literally. Somnambulism on Broadway at 4 o'clock in the afternoon would be too great a wonder."

"Do you mean that he is in love?" I asked.

"He is in love," was the reply, "but that is only a part of the dream. It was not even the beginning of it."

"I don't understand."

"Of course you don't; but come, you shall hear the whole story. There's no objection to telling it to you. This case is the most remarkable in my experience, and the story will be worth your time."

We walked to the doctor's office, which was near by, and there I stretched myself in his great "operating chair," and listened at my ease.

"Hall was poor at 21, when he came out of college," Dr. Mayer began. "He was alone in the world. The best offer of work which he received—and it wasn't a good one by any means—brought him to this city. He had an artistic nature, and, as I believe, great literary ability; but, bless you, he couldn't have made car fare out of it. So he became a bank clerk."

"He had a great craving for wealth; not for the luxuries it would bring, but for the opportunities. Studious leisure was what he wanted. He was not the man to write poetry in a garret, and he knew it. There was no disguising the fact that dull, hard labor, made him wretched, and he was one of those who can no more produce that good thing of which the seed is in them, without happiness, than a tree can bear its fruit without sunshine. During his two years' servitude in the bank he did not once put pen to paper except in the routine of his daily toil.

"But such an imagination as this would find an expression somehow. In his case the creative power wrought day dreams. We all indulge ourselves in these delusions more or less. He would be a poor creature who could not tell himself a better story than the pointless, bare-bare, barren tale of life. When too much weariness denies us sleep we gain at least a counterfeit of peace by painting restful scenes; we are the stronger, I dare say, for fancied heroisms. This is the natural remedy for the nausea of existence, and it is good, no doubt, in small doses. But Clarence Hall carried the practice to dangerous excess. He established a regular dual consciousness. He was jostled by the crowd in an L train and at the same time he floated on the Bay of Naples; he worked in the bank at \$10 a week and spent his entire revenues with lavish hand in the bright world of fancy."

"I did not know him then, but he has told me that he could banish reality from every place but one, and that was his little room on the East Side. There he led but one life, and that was torture. His most wretched moment of the day was that in which consciousness returned to him after sleep. It was then that the dull wall stared at him and the tawdry furniture mocked him and the hard truth was like a clenched fist shaken in his face."

"Elsewhere, however, he was not unhappy. His dreams at last had taken definite form; they had become unified into something like a Chinese drama, which requires a booth for its performance. He became rich in the first scene, and always in the same way—by inheritance from a relative of whom he had never heard. Then came a luxury at home, then travel and finally love. He would keep his place, in this dream as one does in a book, and if driven into reality for a few minutes he would then pick up the thread of dreamland's story, where he had laid it down."

"It was a great grief to him that he could not dream in his room. He got a horror of the place, and at last he came to believe that another, though equally meager in its furnishings, might not have the same baleful effect upon him. He boarded with a widow, Mrs. Rogers, a good woman who worked hard, to support two or three children. She regarded Hall as a model boarder, and

wept copiously when he announced his intention of going away. She offered to reduce her charges, to give him better furniture; to do anything in reason. Her terms were much more reasonable than he could possibly find elsewhere and he knew it, but superstition had taken hold of him and he could not stay. That room had become to him a prison, of which "Reality" was the warden."

Dr. Mayer paused to light a fresh cigar.

"So that's his case," said I. "He is practically insane, I suppose. Delusions of grandeur, and paroxysms just beginning to get its grip on him. Heavens, but it's a pity! He is certainly one of the handsomest men I ever saw, and a gentleman, as one may see at a glance. Strange how his delusion has stamped itself upon him. He has dreamed of wealth and gained the bearing of a young Crescens."

"Well, as to that," said the doctor, "he really is rich."

"Then his dream came true? at least to the money?"

"Yes, and the event was surprisingly like the dream. Just as he was ready to move away from Mrs. Rogers' house his fortunes changed. It was an inheritance. And it ran up into the millions. The legal business was done through Webster & Hathaway. I knew Webster well."

"The dementor of Hall was such that the lawyers doubted his sanity. In the first place he seemed to know all about it without being told. Webster broke the news to him, and Clarence did not move a muscle. Finally he said he had been expecting it for a long time. Now, Webster had every reason to believe that Clarence had never before heard of Leonard Hall, the Brazilian merchant, whose fortune had been so strangely laid at his feet. Oh, yes, Clarence had known all about it; he had, indeed, already selected bachelor apartments suited to his ample means; he had gone the day before to assure himself that they were still vacant. Webster took occasion to verify this statement the next day. There was no doubt about it. Clarence had called at the Croisie and had examined a suite. He had carried his dreams so far into reality."

"At this stage of the proceedings I was asked to look the young man over. I made his acquaintance and examined him at leisure. Well, he was insane, but I could not bring myself to say so. My report to Webster was such that Hall got his money.

"I should have said it would have cured him," said I. "Knowing that he is rich, should he dream?"

"It would have cured him, as you say," remarked Dr. Mayer. "The trouble is that he doesn't know it."

"Doesn't know that he is rich?"

"No, he thinks that it is all a dream. He has no notion that the luxuries by which he is surrounded are realities."

"But does he not believe you when you tell him so?"

"Unfortunately, he doesn't believe that I am a reality. He thinks that I am a creature of the imagination. Doubtless he has the same thought of you."

"But other people must be continually contradicting his delusion."

"No, for they are not aware of it. Until I told you, no mortal but myself suspected it. You noted his dreamy air, but it would never have led you to guess the truth. You see he acts like a man; his life is incredibly well-ordered. He has a great advantage in his two years' preparation for the joys and responsibilities of wealth. His trouble was in his faculty of directing his attention. He gave me the idea of a man in a dream."

"He has hearing all right."

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"I'll go with you," said he. They passed through many dirty streets, and still the boy said home was a long way off. You can go alone, now," said Clarence. "He ain't after you," said the boy, grinning; "he's had all he wants o' you." It's me he's after.

"So they went together, and at last arrived at the door of a fairly good house. Here Clarence would have said good-night, but the boy begged him to go in and receive his mother's thanks. In the little fellow's eyes Clarence had become a hero. The sound of their voices brought a woman to the door. The boy instantly poured forth his story, and the woman's gratitude was unbounded. She did not, however, neglect to scold the boy for remaining out so late, against her oft-repeated orders, as she declared. She prevailed upon Clarence to come into the house for a minute, and there, in the light of the lamp, he found himself face to face with his former landlady, Mrs. Rogers.

"Lunatic," I hastily supplied the word. "Can nothing be done for him?"

"I don't know. Time may do something, but whether good or ill, I'll be hanged if I know. Talking won't help him. I've laid his own case before him with bare, scientific accuracy, and again with poetical trimming. But what's the use, when he believes me to be a creature of his own brain?"

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