

Board Works Office

# THE REVIEW

VOL. 8. NO. 4.

RICHIBUCTO, NEW BRUNSWICK, THURSDAY SEPT 10 1896.

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### Which Way?

Going down Main street the other day, I saw a gentleman coming my way. As he came nearer and close in sight, I moved on the sidewalk to the right. He moved to the right to pass me by. Quick as a flash, he's wrong says I, I dodged to my left quick as a wink. He dodged to my side, and I should think twice more, when I quickly jerked away. Against the curbstone, but neither did say, Excuse me, it is quite impolite. To dodge a stranger coming in sight; Now there's one thing don't do. for it is wrong. To dodge your neighbor whose coming along. For a friendly smile or a word of advice, Do not frown and slip by him in a trice; Don't dodge the paper boy for his due. On yesterday's paper, he has sold to you; Don't dodge the milkman, who early and late Is bringing sweet milk around to your gate; Don't dodge the bill the grocer will bring. Don't dodge the butcher with easy swing; It may be only a dollar or two, But it is as good to him as it is to you; Never dodge a friend for an honest debt, But pay as you go, and leave no regret. Some day there is a bill you cannot dodge. Nor the bill you'll owe, can ever dislodge. 'Twill be written, and written plain and white. Whether longer or shorter, whether ill or right. You can't dodge it then, 'twill then be too late. To repress the swing of that other gate, And perchance, methinks I hear you say, I wish I'd done better my bills to pay, When you stand at the bar, and held to you. The name of the neighbor and his honest due, But pay as you go with a will and might, Don't rob any one, and then say it is right. MARY M. BRYANT.

## THE NAIL IN THE SKULL

VALENTINE SCOBIE IN THE LOUNGER CHAPTER I.

The wind was abroad that night, crooning his mournful dirge as he came along, sweeping the tree-tops with his ghostly mantle and trailing it wide over the ground, while grass and shrubs shrank from such uncanny contact; rattling the church windows with his long shadowy fingers, and sending in at the cracks and crevices, his weird whistling call till the Old Sexton, sleeping in his tiny cottage by the churchyard, heard the sounds and roused from his slumber thinking himself called. He shivered as he drew up the casement, and peered out into the grey, fitful light of the bleak autumn night, and was about to return to his couch with a vague sense of dread of ghostly visitors and uncanny presences. Scarcely had he formed the purpose, when with a start he became aware of an actual presence outside in the gloom. At first he thought his senses were playing him false, and that it was only a freak of imagination, but a second glance convinced him of the reality of a long dark-cloaked figure, which stood not far from the window and was evidently regarding the same window with a peculiarly steadfast gaze. As the sexton looked the figure turned towards the churchyard, and stood in much the same attitude as before. As he did so the moaning of the wind rose to a mournful wail, then gave forth a wild shriek of agony as it shook his long cloak as if it had been a flimsy sheet, and seemed to cry in the man's ears "go away, go away," and even to try its strength against his, as if it would take him in its relentless embrace and carry away the intruder from the sacred spot. The sexton hurried on his clothes. He was not afraid of anything visible. It was only the vague sense of an indefinable

presence, that had thrilled his awakening consciousness. He slipped outside and in a moment stood beside the man in the cloak. So noiselessly, indeed, did he come that the stranger started and shrank within his cloak as the voice of the sexton rose above the voice of the wind. "It's a dreary night, sir?" "Yes." "Your a stranger in this part?" "Yes." "Ain't been here long?" "No." "Visiting friends here I suppose?" "No, not exactly," returned the stranger seeing that the sexton's curiosity was not to be satisfied by monosyllabic answers, "I am taking a holiday—am stopping at the inn. I could not sleep to-night and came out for a walk. You are the sexton; are you not?" "Yes; I've been sexton here nigh on to twenty years."

"Yes? It's a quaint old church, and graveyard too. I've just been strolling through. By the way, I'm a medical student. I'm looking for a skull, a particular kind of skull. Perhaps you could get me one. I would pay you well, of course."

"I don't know," returned the sexton doubtfully, but evidently considering the chance of a good bargain. "The trouble is I'm a little particular," continued the stranger. "It's the skull of a woman I want, and of one who died at about the age of thirty five years."

"Well, you see I cassin't touch any of them that's known and for the rest.—Do you think you could tell the right kind now by seeing it—?"

"I don't know, it might be necessary to apply some test," he replied looking at the face of the sexton, as if to measure his intelligence. What he saw was a little, shrivelled, brown skinned visage, seamed with many wrinkles and lines of cunning rather than intelligence. "There's a grave I saw as I came along. The age, sex and all, as stated on the tombstone would just fit."

"Ah, but if there's a stone I could scarcely disturb it. There is a talk of moving the yard farther back. Then you see Mr.—What may your name be?"

"Hardyng." "Mr. Hardyng, then I might get into trouble, you know."

"Suppose we go and look at the graves," suggested Hardyng.

The two men made their way in silence through the graves, many of which were sunken, and their headstones fallen, or standing awry, some white, some grey with age, and all clothed in the fitful spectral light of the moon, over whose face the wind-swept clouds passed in a hurrying train.

They stopped at last beside a grave whose stone stood tall and erect. Just then Mr. Hardyng read aloud "Isabel Stanton beloved wife of James Wilmot, died June 15th, 18—aged thirty-five years and four months."

"It's impossible, sir, I dare not meddle with this grave. Dr. Wilmot is one of our most influential people. It would never do. All this part of the yard must be moved soon. You see the ground is sinking here and—"

"Yes, I see, I see. Then I will tell you what I will do. Let me have the skull for awhile and when I have made a study of it I will return it, and you can replace it."

"I'm afraid to risk it. Look here though, there's a grave in the other corner. The stone has fallen but you can read the inscription yet."

He trotted over to the spot while the other reluctantly followed at a little distance.

"The age is about the same. No one remembers who the woman was, and if this will do"—he said, pushing aside the wild rose bushes which grew about the grave.

Mr. Hardyng drew nearer, and striking a match held it close to the inscription. "Ah," he said in a tone of relief, as the match flared up and went out, just giving him time to notice the date, "this grave is half a century old. It would not do at all. Why, man, the skull would be crumbled and imperfect. Come, you'd better agree to my proposal," and he named a price which caused the little blue eyes of the sexton to dance in their shrivelled sockets. There was silence for a moment then the sexton looked around him cautiously as if fearful of some lurking spirit divining his thoughts.

"It's an awful risk, Mr. Hardyng, and I've known older skulls than that to be perfect."

"Tut, tut, man, this or no other," said Hardyng impatiently as he strode towards the first grave while the old man shuffled after him. Then the sexton went off for his spade, returned to the spot and before long handed the skull to Hardyng

who dusted the loose earth from it with his handkerchief, and then carelessly brushed his hand over the top. Suddenly he started with a smothered exclamation, "By Jove! a nail! what a fiendish—!" "What?" cried the sexton in tones of intense curiosity, hurrying over from the other side of the grave.

"Oh nothing, only a peculiar formation of the skull," answered Hardyng as he placed it under his cloak and strode off, while the sexton endeavored to keep pace with him.

"Let me have a look at it?" "Oh you would hardly notice the peculiarity, a professional man you know—" he said "but I'll pay you the money now," and he counted out the price into the sexton's hand, then with long strides disappeared in the gloom, leaving the sexton fumbling over the money in his hand and muttering to himself: "Well it's mighty queer. That chap come for that skull and no other or I'm beat, and he come at night a purpose too. It's a lot of money for a paltry skull."

Had the moon shone forth just then it would have illumined a face of infinite cunning and curiosity combined with exulting avarice, as the little shrivelled, old man mechanically counted his money and muttered, "Mighty queer, I'd like to know what's in it. I wonder now—" but this vague speculation did not put itself into definite form.

Meanwhile Mr. Hardyng made his way to the inn, and having reached his own room, drew a lamp towards him, as he sat down at a table and placed the skull before him.

"It is as I thought," he muttered touching with his finger a small dark spot on the top of the skull, "a nail, a common nail, and well rusted in too. Heavens, what a cold blooded deed!"

### CHAPTER II.

Alfred Hardyng had been about a week installed in his quarters at the inn when one day at about dinner hour (he was always out excepting at meal times, drumming up what sport the place afforded, making as was his custom, as hard work of his holidays as of anything else) he received a call. A tall dark gentleman was ushered into his room and presented his card. "James Wilmot M. D." was the inscription. Hardyng looked at it in a dazed way for some seconds, then at his visitor as he asked him to be seated. He was conscious of a rather stern face which was not turned directly towards him, the eyes having a restless fashion of flitting from one object to another, and later on he formed the idea that the doctor spoke mechanically, as if there were two forces at work within him, one of which controlled his power of speech with so much of his mental faculties as was necessary for the practical purposes of life, while the other and stronger guided some deep under-current of mind and soul.

"Thank you, I have not time to sit. I am over pressed with work just now, and find I will have to have an assistant. I have felt the need of one for some time, but it is only this week that several cases have happened together, so as to force me to seek someone immediately. I hear you are a medical student. Perhaps we can make some agreement together, if you are in a position to be open to any engagement of the kind. I should like to procure your assistance for a time at least." Hardyng hesitated for a moment, but, considering that he was already so nearly through his college course it struck him that a little practice at this time might not be a disadvantage. The upshot of it all was that in a few words an agreement was made between Alfred Hardyng and Dr. Wilmot, by which the former was to come on the following day, and take up his abode at the doctor's house for the time being, the more conveniently to render the required assistance.

When the door closed upon Dr. Wilmot Hardyng stood looking at it for a moment. "The Deuce!" he exclaimed. "It seems like fate. And here I am actually about to be domiciled in the very house of the man who—Pshaw! the woman must have been mad. I remember there was something wrong about her." Then he sat down and spread out before him a closely and laboriously written sheet of paper and allowed his eyes for the third or fourth time to follow these lines:—

"Dear Mister Alfred:—You will remember your old nurse Jane Richards. You were quite a big boy when I left your house. I was very fond of you and remember you as a brave, strongwilled lad, and I have always been interested in learning how you were growing up, and now I hear you are to be a doctor. But I must keep to the object of this letter. I am ill and they tell me I shall die. I have a secret which weighs heavily on my

mind. Indeed I feel as if I could not die in peace without telling it to some trustworthy person. After leaving your mother I came to take care of an invalid lady, a Mrs. Wilmot. She was unhappy I thought. She and her husband, Dr. Wilmot, did not seem to agree very well. She was jealous and always trying to find out things about him. Anyway he did not spend much time with her. Perhaps she bothered him when he did come to her, with her complaints and suspicions. There was a young lady in the house, a governess to the little girl, whom I disliked from the first—the governess I mean, not the child. Well, Mrs. Wilmot I could see did not like her either but she could find no just cause of complaint and as the doctor ruled the house the governess remained. She used to be always dropping into Mrs. Wilmot's room, and I took to suspecting her of something, so I was very careful about the medicines. One day after I had been there about three months, I had left the room, as Mrs. Wilmot was sleeping, for I had given her an opiate which the doctor had ordered. I was just at the foot of the stair going up, when I fancied I heard a moan and a slight scuffling noise in the room above. I listened for a moment then started upstairs, when the governess appeared at the top—'O it is you, Richards,' she said. 'Please tell the doctor to come here at once. You will find him in the surgery, I think, if not he is about the premises somewhere.' I, thinking that Mrs. Wilmot had waked and asked for him, spent some time looking for him. I believe she knew I would do so. Anyway I did not find him and when I returned both the doctor and the governess were in the room and Mrs. Wilmot was dead. I was all struck of a heap, completely dumbfounded. From that minute till the poor lady was in her coffin, the governess never left the room when anyone else was in it. She helped me to arrange the corpse for burial. As the time passed and I was working about the dead body, the thought of Mrs. Wilmot's face as I had first seen it when I came into the room and found her dead, impressed itself more and more on me. till at length I was sure that Mrs. Wilmot had not died a natural death. I did not believe she was poisoned and there was not a mark about her body. I was not allowed to touch her hair. The governess did that, saying that she had known her longer than I. I took a chance when she was not looking to run my hand over the head, and I just fancied I felt a small lump when the governess turned on me and frightened me almost to death. I was always afraid of her.

"How much of that opiate did you give her?" she asked.

"The dose was a teaspoonful," I answered.

"Look," she said, holding up the bottle which stood on a table near. It was the same bottle but it read half a teaspoonful. I was frightened then in earnest though I never thought but that the half had been put on since I gave the dose. I could not think whether she or the doctor had done it, anyway I don't believe it was the medicine killed her. Well, though I was afraid of this small woman, I stayed on as I did not dare to ask her for a character for she had some other things against me; till at last I did not want to leave the little girl, and I could see that the new Mrs. Wilmot, (for the doctor married her), did not want me to go. Since then I have lived in terror and now I cannot die for very fear. Then too, there is my darling May, I know her stepmother hates her, and after I am gone there will be no one to watch over her. I have now come nearly to the end of my long letter. It has been written bit by bit. I want you to take up this matter, or tell it to someone who will. I do not know a soul to whom I could speak, nor the proper persons to apply to. That Mrs. Wilmot died a violent death I am sure. I will never forget the look of pleading agony on her dead face, as I saw it then. I have never been able to decide whether the doctor was a party to the thing.

"I believe she died from a wound in the head."

"Mrs Wilmot is going away to-day and I will get this letter mailed.—Your old nurse, Jane Richards."

"I can't imagine what possessed the woman to write to me," mused Hardyng "or me to come to this place. Pshaw! I came for the shooting and I'll think no more of the thing. The woman must have been crazy. I remember it was on account of her inveterate habit of pilfering that my mother dismissed her." Then he rose and lifting the lid of a small box in a cupboard, took out the skull and examined the nail.

"Looks as if it had been here as long as since the lady's death. Bother the thing! what shall I do with it, I can't take it in-

to the man's house. I'll return it and be done with the whole affair." So saying he replaced the skull and took up a fishing rod, and as he meditated upon the chances of the fish biting in the afternoon the dinner bell rang.

That afternoon Hardyng had another caller, the old sexton—who upon being told that he was out insisted upon waiting in his room. Upon being left alone the sexton speedily proceeded to investigate the contents of the room, which being meagre, he soon noticed a box, which he opened, disclosing two skulls both of which he examined in turn, falling at last upon the imbedded nail.

"Ah, here it is!" he exclaimed, "I thought he said a nail. Its a queer business. I wonder what he's after. I've a mind to have a try at the game too." Then he hurriedly closed the box and cupboard and sat down, just as approaching footsteps stopped at the door, and Hardyng entered.

The sexton soon made his errand known. He wanted the skull to return it to its place. It had been decided to begin moving the graves at once. Hardyng after some consideration walked to the cupboard and opened the box, then he hesitated a moment, and finally handed the one which had not the nail in it, to the sexton.

"I declare it never struck me till now," he mused, "that of course the fellow would notice the nail, and that would give the thing a fresh start. It was best to do as I thought of doing all along, give him another one instead. Pshaw! I wonder if I'll ever get rid of the thing. I begin to have a horror of it. Anyway the woman has been dead these ten years, and what is the use of calling up her ghost?"

### CHAPTER III.

Once domiciled in his new abode, Hardyng viewed his surroundings with interest. He found himself in a large, old fashioned house built of stone, evidently by a past generation. There were long corridors, broad staircases, and large, low-roofed rooms, with small, square windows high up in the walls. The little panes of tinted or frosted glass admitted only a subdued light which, added to the faint, musty odor peculiar to old stone buildings, lent a mystical savour to the place which accorded well with the old fashioned furniture and the silent women in low-necked gowns, with hair dressed high upon their heads, and surmounted by tall combs, and the grim looking men, who with chins propped up above the swatches of neck cloth over their ruffled shirts looked down from their canvasses, with lofty indifference, upon the scenes enacted below.

Especially about the bedroom which was allotted to him, Hardyng felt this strange depressing influence. This was owing partly to the fact that the room had evidently been unused for some time, for upon the announcement of the advent of a new inmate there had been much scurrying about, and airing of bed and curtains, so that when Hardyng was ushered into the room, the windows were open and there was fire in the grate though it was not cold, while closet, and wardrobe doors stood open, and the curtains were looped back from the tall four-posted bed which stood in the middle of the floor.

"I hope you will not find it damp," said the servant who showed him in. "We would have had it aired before if we had expected anyone. The room has not been used since the first Mrs. Wilmot died."

Hardyng involuntarily started at these words, but the woman closed the door without waiting for further talk, and he was left to adjust himself to his surroundings.

About the room itself there was nothing particularly noticeable, more than the style in which the whole house was built and furnished. His small travelling trunk had been placed in the room, and after walking restlessly about for a few moments he came and stood before it, then knelt down, and turning the lock threw back the lid. The first object that his eyes encountered was the square wooden box about whose contents there had already gathered for him, that dread fascination which a ghost story has for a child. He had felt the sensation once after the doctor had been to see him, and now again he felt it with double force as he thought of the weird fate which had brought the thing into the very room in which in all probability the deed had been done.

Yielding for a moment to the horror of the thing he then shook himself together with a laugh at his own foolishness, and once more swayed by the daring spirit which influenced all his life, the tendency to follow with curious expectancy the leadings of any fate, he looked about for a convenient place to put the box. There was a large wardrobe on one side of the room, whose top did not reach the ceiling, and after a quick glance around, Hardyng decided to put it up there, out of the way of meddling servants, for the box had no lock or fastening of any kind. With the aid of a chair this was easily accomplished and when he stood back and looked up only a shadowy outline of the box was visible in the dark recess. He then placed some of his things in the wardrobe, closed the door and went down stairs. It must be said that he had looked forward with some curiosity to the meeting with the other members of the family. He had relinquished all idea of acting in the matter of the supposed crime, but had given himself up to the fascination of watching the development of the chain of circumstances, which it seemed fate had thrown in his way. He was met in the lower hall by a lady whose appearance at once struck him as peculiar, and whom he took to be Mrs. Wilmot, for she greeted him as if she were mistress of the house, and he addressed her as such. She was a woman of about medium height, but seeming taller on account of her slight figure and erect carriage. Her skin was fair, to dazzling whiteness; the eyes cold, impenetrable, grey, beneath well marked brows and black hair growing low on the forehead; a face beautiful and yet repellent, beautiful in the delicate contour of feature, repellent in the chill color and inscrutable expression. This latter impression vanished, however, when she spoke, in soft persuasive accents, while the smile relieved the coldness of the face. As they entered the parlor Mrs. Wilmot spoke—"My step-daughter, Miss Wilmot, Mr. Hardyng," and a young girl rose to meet him. There was nothing very striking about her appearance except that she was pretty, with a young girl's freshness. There was one thing, however, that Hardyng noticed, whether it was the restless glance which she had inherited from her father, or the evidence of some influence within herself, he could not decide, but, especially when Mrs. Wilmot spoke, she seemed to be strangely affected, and to look at her stepmother from time to time furtively, always avoiding meeting her eyes. It looked like fear. Hardyng had time to notice this, for, after the first few moments the two ladies resumed their former occupations and talked of little things of the household without much reference to him. Presently the doctor came in and for the remainder of the day Hardyng was confined to the surgery, or attending to one or two outside cases to which his attention had been directed. Then for some days following he met the ladies of the household only at meal time, and occasionally in the halls. There did not seem to be much social intercourse between the members of the family, each having his or her own occupation.

After a time Hardyng began to notice himself growing more and more interested in the young girl, Miss Wilmot. Something about her face attracted him, and more than once his eyes had met hers, and she had shown some embarrassment, but beyond a gentle word of salutation when they met there was little conversation between them. Here again Hardyng was conscious of that mysterious influence to which it was his habit to yield. He felt that between him and this girl was some hidden link which time and circumstances would strengthen.

One evening as Dr. Wilmot was going out he said to Hardyng, "I shall be late, Hardyng, and I may want you to take my place after a while. However, if I am not home soon after midnight don't mind. You may lie here on the lounge till then unless you prefer going to bed."

"All right I'll stay here," returned Hardyng.—

He read or tried to read for two or three hours after he was left alone, but his mind was strangely disturbed. At last he gave it up and stretched himself upon the lounge to dream. He was haunted by the sweet face of May Wilmot nor could he banish it.

"Pshaw! I believe I'm in love" he said, justifying, half aloud. "This gloomy old place is making me sentimental." But somehow, whether from force of habit, or because there was something not altogether repulsive in the idea, Hardyng mused upon the possibility of his destiny being interwoven with that of the gentle girl in the house. Then at last his dreams grew more vague, until finally his eyes closed as he felt himself yielding to a steady resistless current, which was carrying him and May Wilmot side by side, out to vague unknown seas.

(To be Continued.)

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