

## SOME STRANGE FANCIES

A HOME FOR DELUDED AND HYSTERICAL WOMEN.

The Various Fancies Which Affect Their Brains—Hysteria Combined to Leisure Classes—Cotillon one of Hysterias Great Dangers—Love and Matrimony.

In the heart of fashionable London there is a certain large, beautifully furnished mansion which although externally conveying the impression that it is just an ordinary expensive dwelling, is one of the most interesting houses the searcher after novelty can visit. It is no less than a home for wealthy ladies who suffer from hysteria, awkward delusion, and imaginary grievances.

Some of its windows are barred—a precaution observed for the benefit of patients who are prone to violence—but there is such an air of luxury about the place that a stranger entering it for the first time would have no suspicion of what the institution really was. The inmates are permitted to intermingle freely, and the apparent absence of restraint seems complete. As a matter of fact, however, although the ladies are free agents, not having been certified as mad, they are minutely watched, the whole time of the managers and her staff being devoted to curing them of their absurd delusions.

'Hysteria,' remarked the lady superintendent when the writer called upon her, 'is one of the most extraordinary yet interesting complaints known to the doctors. As a rule, it only attacks the leisured classes—those who have nothing particular to do. It is seldom that it is found among people who have to work for a living. Rich lazy people who have no serious object in life give way to it and finally cultivate it. All my patients here belong to the moneyed portion of humanity.'

'The word 'hysteria' practically signifies loss of self-control. Ladies who are victims of the disease periodically fly into the most frightful passions. Storming and raging like help-less maniacs, some of them destroy everything within reach. I have seen a hysterical patient bite her lips till the blood positively flowed from them, and for no legitimate reason whatsoever.'

'It is an ailment that is nearly always accompanied by delusions of a most extravagant nature. Most of my present patients imagine that they are in love and that they are shortly to be married. They have no grounds for this belief. Curiously enough, they rarely allude to their love affairs either to me or to their fellow-boarders. Indeed, they are singularly reticent, though it is a lady patient is in a room by herself you can frequently hear her carrying on an animated conversation with her imaginary lover, who, she deludes herself into supposing, is seated beside her.'

'It is an astonishing phase of life. Our method of treatment consists in being very firm, very kind, and giving the patients plenty to do. Every case is, of course, dealt with on its merits, but generally speaking we affect to ignore the delusions altogether. Sometimes we hold them up to ridicule, a policy which is occasionally fraught with good results, but anyhow a hysterical patient is dreadfully difficult to manage.'

'You may scarcely credit it, but nevertheless it is a fact that I once had under my charge a lady who, imagining that somebody was in love with her, wrote love-letters to herself. Immediately they arrived by post she used to fly to her room and go into raptures over them. Women afflicted in this way are never constant in their affections. They have a variety of imaginary lovers, and frequently start a new one. I recollect a lady writing to a gentleman to whom she had never been introduced to inquire if he would have any objection to another man paying his addresses to her.'

'Do you allow these romantic maidens to go out by themselves?'

'No, that would never do. They are invariably accompanied by a nurse. You are evidently not aware that some of these affectionate souls have a habit of thinking that every masculine mortal they meet is over head and ears in love with them. They dress in gorgous style, and when out in the streets do all they can to attract attention.'

'There is no doubt that a number of these women get their ideas of love from the shilling shocker. A sensational story of romance seizes upon their imaginations, and they assume the roles of heroines. Some of them work up their imaginations to such a pitch that they eventually wear themselves out and die.'

'The average hysterical patient is exceedingly cunning. She possesses the gift of being able to color a story in such a masterly way as to convey an utterly false impression without actually overstepping the bounds of truth, if you understand what I mean. Many of the adventures that are described in the newspapers as having occurred to women are purely fictitious.'

Hysterical girls are extremely self-conscious, and have a perfect passion for notoriety. As long as they can gain publicity they don't care what happens.

'I have known girls to make the most elaborate preparations for the recital of an 'adventure.' Some of them, when they intend to spread a report that they have been waylaid and attacked, will go to a particular spot and disturb things here and there and beat down the ground, and perhaps leave behind them some article by which they can be identified. Then they disappear. The parents start out on the track, and, of course, discover the scene of the 'outrage.' A hue-and-cry is raised, when lo and behold, mademoiselle turns up with a terrible tale of woe!

'Hysteria has countless peculiarities, and a sufferer from it can imitate almost any kind of ailment with astounding exactitude. I remember a patient who for a moment induced people to believe that she was paralyzed in every limb. It is contagious, too. At the hospitals they isolate their hysterical patients. You can see in girls' schools how catching it is. If one pupil loses control of herself and kicks and screams two or three others are almost bound to follow her example.'

'It can be very dangerous, and leads to fearful fits of depression. I recollect a young lady who got it into her head that a gentleman ought to have married her. The man in question was a stranger to her—nevertheless, she drowned herself.'

'The fits of hysterical ladies are no less varied than they are queer. For the most part young girls imagine themselves in love, but old ladies are usually taken with religious mania. One patient equipped herself with an immense supply of hymn-books. She distributes them all over the house, so that no matter where she was, she could turn to a hymn.'

'The pet delusion, however, as I have said, concerns love and matrimony. After that comes beauty. It is truly pathetic to see a very plain and very hysterical lady getting herself up for effect. The looking glass which is not commonly associated with our old friend Ananias, is before her, but not even the testimony of a hundred mirrors will suffice to convince her that she is wanting in good looks. Sane in every other respect, and permitted by the law to enjoy the fullest liberty, she goes about making herself ridiculous in the eyes of others.'

'Well, what we try to do here,' the lady superintendent added, 'is to make patients forget their preposterous fancies by interesting them in sundry things and keeping them continually busy. They come to us of their own free will, and are conscious of their weakness, yet—and this is the strangest part of it—they brood over their crazy notions immediately their hands are idle.'—Tit Bits.

## Danger of Postage Stamp Plasters.

An inquest was held at Fleetwood on a child named Mary Mason, daughter of a local sailmaker, who died on the previous evening under singular circumstances. The deceased fell at school about a month ago and grazed her knee. When she got home, without telling her parents she applied a piece of postage stamp paper to the wound. On the following day she complained of pains, but continued to go to school. Blood poisoning, superinduced by pneumonia, however, set in, and the child died. Dr. Prenton spoke of the danger of applying stamp paper to wounds. The coroner hoped it would be a warning to people.

## SIEGE OF THE COLD CHISEL.

Five Sleepy Policemen and a Sexton Surround a Bath Beach Church.

This is a story of the Episcopal Church at Bath Beach, an over zealous citizen five sleepy policemen, a sexton, and a church robbery that turned out to be something else.

The over zealous citizen was returning to his quiet little home—twelve rooms, modern improvements, view of the bay, and two minutes' walk from the trolley car—at 2 A. M. the other morning after spending the early part of the night with a sick friend in some indefinite part of New York. As he was passing the church, dreamily listening to the soft susurrus of the waves on the unrivalled bathing beach, his attention was arrested by a muffled but rhythmical metallic sound in the basement. A glance in the direction from which the sound came revealed to him a dim, irreligious light in one of the windows, and the situation flashed upon him instantly. He remembered the church robberies in New York a year or so ago and the desperate characters who had taken part in them, but being a man of zeal and decision, he realized what the circumstance demanded and decided to do his duty. Drawing a deep breath, he broke for middle of the road and sprinted toward the police station. A few moments later he tumbled into the presence of drowsy Sergeant and gasped: 'Robbers! Burglars!'

'Where?' exclaimed the Sergeant. 'The Episcopal church,' said the dutiful citizen. 'Busy breaking open the poor box or the Sunday school cash box or something! They've got dark lanterns and you've got to hurry if you want to catch them.'

In a couple of minutes the five policemen who constitute the reserve were blinking and rubbing their eyes before the Sergeant's desk and receiving their instructions. Then they broke out into the night with the zealous citizen and started on a steep chase toward the episcopal church. When they reached it they halted to listen.

'Chink! chink! chink! chink! chink! chink! chink! went the mysterious cold chisel on something metallic in the basement, and a faint light could be seen in this part of the building from which the sound came. Like the trained men they were, four policemen



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stationed themselves at the corners of the church while the fifth went to try the door. The zealous citizen in the meantime went and stood on the opposite side of the street. Finding the door securely locked, the policeman consulted with the two nearest corner men, and it was decided that as the sexton lived only a couple of blocks away it would be better to have him come and quietly unlock the door, so that they could capture the marauders with a rush, leaving the church surrounded, the policeman went away and rang up the sexton, and all the while the burglar hammered unobtrusively with his cold chisel. Presently the messenger returned with a man in a night cap, bathrobe and carpet slippers, who proceeded to unlock the door. At the same instant he heard five mysterious clicks in the darkness, and looking around, he saw the policeman who had summoned him standing at his shoulder with a large open-faced revolver pointing toward the partly opened door. At a signal from the leader the two corner men came to the door. While one remained to keep guard the other two tip-toed into the church and listened. The burglar was still unobtrusively and industrious.

'Hist!' said the leading policeman, 'they are in the basement. Come and show us the way downstairs.'

The sexton took the policemen by the shoulders and pushed them cautiously toward the top of the basement stairs.

'You go ahead,' said one of the policemen, 'and open the door.'

'Not if I know it!' said the sexton. 'I'm no rough rider and this church has no pension fund that I'm aware of.'

'What in thunder are you of?' hissed the policeman who was in the lead.

'Don't do that,' said the other cop, 'don't swear in a church.'

While this whispered conversation was going on the two policemen and the sexton were huddled against the basement door listening to the chink! chink! chink! chink! of the burglar's chisel!

'Now, wait a second,' said the profane policeman, 'and I'll tell you what we'll do. Let the sexton open the door and stand out of the way. I've got a match in my pocket, and when I strike it you rush in and cover the burglars with your revolver and I'll do the same.'

The sexton opened the door softly, the match crackled, and the heroic policemen made a rush. The basement was as empty as a drum, but the phantom cold chisel still continued its nefarious work. Before the match had splattered out the sexton had turned on the light and then he began to growl.

'Where's your burglars and house-breakers?' he demanded. That's no cold chisel that you've been listening to. It's just the hot water in the radiator communicating with itself as it's cooling off. There was a prayer meeting here last night and I turned on the heat. Say, you policemen make me tired.' Adjusting his nightcap at an angle of defiance, the sexton turned out the light and stalked home.

Obviously, the basement of a church was no place in which to do justice to such a situation, so the policemen kept silent until they had reached the middle of the street and called their friends from the back corners of the church. They then found that the light that they had noticed was reflected from a gas lamp on the other side of the church, and their language for some moments afterward was lofty and ritualistic. Suddenly the leading cop remembered something.

'Where is that meddlesome suburban goat that came and wakened us up? Why didn't the blame fool know that it was a steam heater he was listening to? A man that didn't know that ought to be run in to have his wheels examined, and even if the church hasn't been robbed we've been robbed of a couple of hours of sleep. Let's run him in.'

But the over zealous citizen had adjourned sine die and the disgruntled cops went back to the station house to report and swear.—N. Y. Sun.

## Pauper Animals.

A Calcutta paper contains an account of the workhouse or asylum for aged and infirm beasts and birds that was established some thirteen years ago by a society of influential Hindus. It is near the Sodepur station, about ten miles from Calcutta, and is under the control of a manager, with a staff of eighty servants, and an experienced veterinary surgeon. In the place at present there are 972 paupers—to wit 129 bulls, 307 cows, 171 calves, 72 horses, 13 water buffaloes, 59 sheep, 15 goats, 241 pigeons, 44 cocks and hens, 4 cats 3 monkeys and 5 dogs. This remarkable asylum is described as being most systematically and mercifully managed. The cow paupers have especially a good time of it, inasmuch as, on the occasion of the 'mela' natives go from far and near to decorate and worship them.

## Carbolic Acid Poisoning.

Deaths from carbolic acid poisoning are unpleasantly frequent. Sometimes the taking of the poison is accidental, and it is important to know that there is at hand in every house a simple remedy that may save life. An Ardwick doctor (Dr. R. C. Smith) states that milk taken at once in copious draughts will produce vomiting and counteract the effects of the carbolic acid. He has proved this himself, and therefore advises the use of milk in an extremity. Had Dr. A. K. H. Boyd, the well-known writer, who partook of carbolic acid in mistake for a sleeping draught a few days ago, and died from the effects of the poison, known of the remedy, the sacrifice of his life might have been avoided.

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