

the office counter; it was four o'clock. What a freak I had engaged in! I felt as foolish as one who at midday remembers his fears of an imaginary ghost at twilight. I hastened to the door to recall the messenger, but he had turned a corner and was beyond the reach of my voice. I looked a moment at the calm night. There was no moon; a meteor fell slantingly across the northeastern sky; myriads of stars shone from the clear vault of heaven; a heavy freight train toiled slowly up the grade a mile or two away, the engine's deep pulsations coming in measured swells on the still air. This peaceful scene calmed my soul and put to flight my fears. I again retired to rest and slept profoundly until a late hour in the morning.

As soon as I had breakfasted I sought my cousin's abode. The morning was beautiful in the extreme, and I walked slowly to enjoy the exhilarating effect of sunshine and atmosphere. My cousin met me at the gate.

"I was just going to see you," was his abrupt greeting, as he took my hand and led me toward the house. "Come up stairs at once and tell me what has happened."

"Happened?" said I, "I don't understand you."

Winthrop dropped my hand and gazed at me with a look of mingled surprise and pain. "Do you mean to say you sent me that strange message in the night time merely as a joke?"

"What message? Oh, that note? No, it wasn't intended as a joke, cousin, though I guess we had better let it pass for one and say no more about it. The fact is, I had a troublesome dream, and I acted upon an irresistible impulse. It was silly, I confess; but what did I write?"

I had, singularly enough, no memory of the details of my dream or of the letter I had so strangely sent my cousin. I remembered the bare fact of getting up in the night and writing something, and that I had sent it to him long before dawn. The recollection at this hour was a very ludicrous one, and I felt inclined to turn it off by a little merriment. Winthrop looked at me sharply.

"You are not in earnest," he said. "You tried to frighten me by a ruse, and now because you are ashamed of your folly you pretend to be ignorant of it."

"No, indeed," I replied, "I haven't the remotest idea what that letter contained."

Winthrop looked at me in dismay. Lifting up a volume of Brownings poems, which was lying on a small table, he took from underneath it a letter. The envelope bore the return card of the hotel.

"Read it," he cried, thrusting it into my hand. I took a piece of common print paper from within, upon which I read the following in my own handwriting:

TO-DAY.

MY DEAR COUSIN:—We are crossing the same bridge. Beware of your footsteps. Anxiously yours,
ARTHUR.

Twice I read the mystic lines before I looked at my cousin; and then the attempted smile fled from my face as if in the presence of sudden calamity, for behind those enigmatical words was a picture, the horrible picture of my forgotten dream, which now reappeared to me with startling vividness. Beyond this the words of warning were as meaningless to me as to Winthrop. They must have been written in obedience to some overpowering phantasy; certainly they were not the result of reflection or judgment, for in the event of either resuming its functions I should have regarded my fears as no more to be heeded than the phantasmagoria of a dream. I confess my inability to render any explanation of this mysterious presentiment even to this day. I simply narrate the facts as they occurred, and the reader may take them and their connection, if any, with my story for just what they are worth.

"Well, for my part, I hate dreams," said Winthrop, resuming the conversation. "There is something supernatural about them, something we can not understand. However, it can't be any worse to know what it is, so tell me all about it."

I recounted the particulars of my dream without any hesitation, because, as one who has always been subject to strange dreams, I was inclined to pay it but little heed. I noticed, however, that it produced a deep impression upon my cousin, so much so that I rallied him on his superstition. Then I proposed a walk, which I knew he enjoyed, and we started forth in the calm, mild, September sun.

How delightful it was! Never shall I forget that walk. The early awakening and the strange excitement, united with the intoxication of his whole being in a great passion seemed to have rendered Winthrop supersensitive to the influences of the sky, the landscape, the empurpling woods and the odorous winds, which, too faint to blow, fitfully bathed us like the perfumed air of a lady's boudoir. Possessed of an ardent poetical temperament, which he only half-truthfully described as imperturbable, Winthrop yielded himself unreservedly to the charms of the occasion, and his conversation flowed forth rich and full. He told me more than ever before of his aims in life, and his devotion to art, his abiding, almost unreasoning, faith in humanity. To listen to the outpourings of his enthusiasm, which I knew welled up from a heart as yet unsullied by the vile taint of the world's hypocrisy, it seemed if we were

Standing on the top of golden hours,
And human nature seeming born again.