

## A DOCTOR'S STORY

By WILLARD BLAKEMAN

When I first set up my shingle as a physician I was told by the older practitioners to look out for traps set for me by lawbreakers, for it is the inexperienced doctor who is called upon to aid them, they knowing very well that an old bird is not to be caught with chaff.

I had not been practicing long before I was asked one day to call at a certain address. I found a stately mansion standing by itself. I was admitted by an elderly gentleman, whose dress and appearance was in keeping with the premises. He led me into a reception room and said to me:

"Doctor, you have come some distance and at the call of one unknown to you. Under the circumstances I do not think it fair to you to ask you to treat a patient without handing you your fee in advance, and that fee should be liberal."

Stepping to a little mahogany desk, he wrote a check and handed it to me. It was for \$50.

By this time it began to dawn upon me that I had struck one of those cases against which I had been warned. But I took the check and put it in my pocket. It might get me into trouble, but it might be valuable as evidence. The gentleman led me upstairs to a room where a man was holding a young woman down on a lounge. She was struggling to free herself from him and was hysterical.

As soon as she saw me she became more so than ever. My conductor took me aside and in a low voice told me that she was insane and he was intending to take her to a retreat for such patients. She had been so violent that he feared she would injure herself and desired that I give her some soothing remedy.

I took a small vial from my medicine case, dropped some of its contents in a glass of water and, approaching the young lady, told her to drink it. She looked up at me with a frightened glance and almost shrieked: "Don't poison me! I'll do anything if you won't poison me!"

Now, I am a believer in physical indications, and I consider myself an adept at interpreting them. If I see two persons together whom I don't know and have never seen before I can tell if they are of the same blood. I can also tell by a person's eye whether he or she is insane. I looked into the young lady's eye and saw no evidence of insanity whatever. Another matter influenced me—the handsome fee I had received in advance.

"Don't fear me," I said to her in a reassuring voice. "I am a physician, and this is a simple soothing draft to quiet your nerves."

She looked at me searchingly and anxiously, evidently having felt confident that I had been brought in to poison her.

"I don't need anything to soothe me," she said, "if they'll only let me go. They took me from my home and brought me here in a carriage. They are going to shut me up for a lunatic."

"Drink it," I said, holding the glass to her lips. "It won't hurt you and will do you good."

I told her with my eyes what I had spoken with my voice, and she took the dose. It was really a help to her in restoring her equanimity and lessening the advantage her enemies—if they were such—had over her. Leaving her, I went to a window and, taking out a prescription slip, wrote some-

thing on it. Then, casting my eyes up at the ceiling as if in thought, I crumpled the paper in my fist and taking another slip wrote the prescription for bread pills, which I handed to the gentleman who had me in charge and who never took his eyes off me for a moment. Then I went again to the young lady and felt her pulse.

"Good day," I said, taking her hand in mine. "Don't fear to take the medicine I have prescribed for you."

In the palm of my hand was the prescription slip I had crumpled, and I left it in her palm, she closing her hand on it. What I had written was: "I understand the situation. Leave all to me. Do what they compel you to do without struggling."

From her I turned to my conductor, to whom I said that he need not give her the medicine prescribed unless she became violent and if she became very violent before he could remove her to send for me. He seemed satisfied with this and confident that I had either been deceived or the fifty dollar check had stifled any suspicions I might have.

I left the house and, going to a store near by, telephoned my chum, Charlie Knowlton, who had gone into law when I went into medicine, to come to me at once. For half an hour I watched the house I had been in till Charlie came, then told him the story, and in half an hour more he had detectives on the watch. Charlie rushed off to take legal means to free the young lady and succeeded, though I never quite understood how he managed it. He told me, using a lot of Latin words—"de lunatico inquirendo," "habeas corpus" and all that—but I knew nothing of what he meant.

The case was one of those which happen now and then wherein claimants to an estate attempt to get rid of a legal heir by claiming him or her to be of unsound mind and unable to manage property.

Charlie made a fortune by the operation, for he married the heiress, while I, poor devil, even returned the check I had received for my fee.

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