CHRISTMAS STORY

By HERBERT MONTGOMERY

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Springthorpe.

you lately, doctor," he said, came and sat beside me. "That was a very clever cure you effected in my friend Russel's the owner of the voice?" case.'

"That was nothing," I replied. "I discovered that my predecessor in the little nervous tricks of manner to which case had made a mistake in his diag- we are all subject and which so clearly nosis and was treating the patient for an imaginary disease, thereby aggravating the one from which he was really suffering. I simply reversed the ply: treatment, whereupon the patient, who is a man of excellent constitution, began to mend directly."

"You are modest, dector," he said laughingly. "However, I have sufficlent confidence in your Judgment to ask your advice in a somewhat dellcate matter. The delicacy lies in the circumstance that the patient must be kept in ignorance of the fact that she is being observed. It is my wife, Mrs. Springthorpe, to whom I refer. She has been in failing health for some time, but from what cause I cannot ascertain. Our family physician, Dr. Hollister, in whom I place implielt trust, ronfesses himself entirely at fault and would be very glad of your opinion, but Mrs. Springthorpe is firm in her refusal to see another physician. Therefore, you will have to conceal the real object of your visit under the guise of friendship."

"Can you give me any idea of the symptoms?" I asked.

"Nothing but a wasting away, a fad-Ing from day to day, a mysterious sapping of the foundations of vitality." "Has Dr. Hollister formed any opin-

"He is inclined to believe that the trouble is mental; that she has some brain disease, or that she has something on her mind the anxiety of which is killing her. But that, of course, we know to be impossible."

"I must confess that you have arousod my professional curiosity," I said, ad I shall be happy to see Mrs. ingthorpe and compare notes with 4. Hollister."

Thank you, doctor. As I have alteady intimated, it would not do for you to come openly in your profession-

capacity, but I shall be entertaining ew friends Christmas week at Gravy Grange, my North Carolina counv place-you know we live in a very ict way, as Mrs. Springthorpe does got care for town life with I shall be ry glad if you would work to the one of

'Nothing could better than with my own ideas," I replied. "It the case preset is any difficulty, I shall be more likely to arrive at a correct opinion from random observations."

"Very well, then, doctor; we shall expt 't you on Monday."

Gravelly Grange was a red brick edifier faced with stone, in the style Springthorpe entered.

"I believe we tacitly agreed not to discuss the real object of your visit, but I must express my great anxiety for my wife's health. I am afraid if she was called away. this mysterious disease is not promptly checked Mrs. Springthorpe is not long for this world. I must tell you that we are an exceptionally affectionate and devoted couple, although I am nearly twice her age, and the separation would be a cruel blow to me. As we grow older our attachments become stronger or our sensibilities more keen. Come; I will introduce you to Mrs. Springthorne."

One glance told me as much as I should probably ever know of Mrs. Springthorpe's case. In the emaclated lines of her face I read phthisis, and tary malady?" there was a furtive, hunted look in the eyes that as plainly spoke of mental trouble. I saw, too, that she was no ordinary person.

I was surprised to detect a fleeting expression of recognition at sight of me, but it passed so quickly that I should have thought myself mistaken had not Springthorpe, also observing it, asked:

"Have you two met before?"

"No," I replied; "at least not to my recollection." She smiled sweetly and extended her

hand. "No," she said. "Dr. Norris and I have never met."

At the sound of her voice I started, fin!" for there was a tone which struck my ear as familiar; but, although I serutinized her countenance, I certainly did of consumption?" not remember having seen that face.

"Now it is your turn to appear surprised," said Springthorpe.

motest idea."

"How singular!" sald Springthorpe. "Perhaps Dr. Norris will presently recollect whose voice it is of which health than usual. The prospect of mine reminds him," Mrs. Springthorpe again seeing her son seemed to buoy said.

"Very likely," I replied.

and pensive. Mrs. ringthorpe's voice ent wife says, it was the result of the haunted me. Every time she spoke I joyful anticipation of her son's return." involuntarily looked up, expecting to "Had she no attendance during the encounter a familiar face.

RECEIVED one morning in my | After dinner, when we had rejoined surgery a visit from Herbert the ladles and the other guests were elther chatting in couples or grouped "I have heard a good deal of about the plane, Mrs. Springthorpe

"Well," she asked, "have you found

The speech was accompanied by a slight, peculiar gesture, one of those mark our individuality. In this case it supplied me with the missing link of evidence and enabled me at once to re-

"Yes; it has just occurred to me." "Who was it?"

"A lady who once called to consult me professionally." "Indeed?"

Her tone implied a desire for further information, so I proceeded:

"It was about six years ago. I was then a struggling young physician, nursing a feeble practice in a new neighborhood. One day a lady in a thick vell called to ask my advice in regard to her mother, who, she said, Mrs. Springthorpe. was suffering from heart disease. Then she described the symptoms, which were those of a person in a very critical state. They had been expecting, she said, the return of a long absent son and brother who was a naval offlcer, but she had that morning received the sad intelligence of the wreck of his vessel, with the loss of all on board. Some explanation would have to be made to the mother of his continued absence, but could they tell her the truth in the state of her health?

"I replied that such a revelation at such a time would probably be attended by fatal consequences. She left, declaring that at whatever cost she would conceal the truth from her mother."

"And you have never seen her since?" "No; I had quite forgotten the cir

cumstance." "And you would not recognize ber if you met her again?"

'As I said, her face was concealed by a thick veil. I have not the slightest idea of her features."

"But the voice was like mine?" 'Yes.'

"You do not think it was 1?" "Had it been you you would have recollected the circumstance."

"Which I do not. But there are resemblances between voices, I suppose, as there are sometimes between faces." "I do not remember ever having

heard of such a case." "And you are skeptical on the point?"

"I should have been but for this instance."

"The coincidence appears to me to be remarkable, for at first sight it seemed as though I had met you before. How do you account for that?"

"It is something I cannot account

"Do you believe that two people who have never met in the flesh may meet and become acquainted in dreams?"

"I protest," I said, laughing. "You km in as colonial. Upon my arrival i | have me at a disadvantage. This is a had scarcely time to change my dress | theory I never heard before and in rewhen a knock came at my door, and gard to which I am unprepared to offer an opinion. I am curious to hear more of it. What do you call it?"

"Ah, doctor, I am zfraid you would only prove a scoffer." At this point

That night in the smoking room Springthorpe and I lingered over our cigars after the other guests had retired. I had been thinking over the mystery of that woman with the veiled face. That she and Mrs. Springthorpe were the same I had not the slightest doubt, but as she evidently feared recognition I had been too politic to insist upon it. Why there should be any mystery about a visit to a physician puzzled me.

"Do you know," I asked, "if Mrs. Springthorpe is liable to any heredi-

"I really cannot say," he replied. "

never knew her family." "Are her parents dead, then?" "Yes; she has been an orphan since childhood."

Here I made a mental note. A little later I asked:

"Have you any children?" "I have an only son by my first wife, He is an officer of one of my East India packet ships."

"Was he at home at the time of his mother's death?"

"No, but he was hourly expected after three years' absence on a foreign station. Poor fellow! He arrived only in time to find his mother in her cof-

Here I made another mental note. "Did the first Mrs. Springthorpe die

No: of beart disease."

"Her end was unexpected, then?" "Not altogether. She had been ail-"Pardon me," I said, "but it seems to ing for years, and the doctors warned me that I have heard Mrs. Spring- us to be prepared for death at any mothorpe's voice before, though under ment. At the same time they said she what circumstances I have not the re- might live for years if spared excitoment or shock."

"Did she receive a shock, then?" "No; she retired to rest in better her up. In the morning she was found dead in bed. It must have been a During dinner I as unusually dull happy ending, for no doubt, as my pres-

night?"

ment-she was my first wife's companion-but on this particular night my face have a worn look, and her eyes first wife was feeling so well that she were sunken and surrounded by dark dismissed her to her own room. The rings, but her conversation was as maid slept in the anteroom, but heard nothing.

"Had your present wife access to her during the night?"

"No. Although their rooms adjoined wall to wall, they were entered from different passages. But I am sure I am boring you by talking so much of my own affairs."

"On the contrary, you have aroused my interest."

"You are very kind to say so, doc-

Here we parted, and I retired to rest. learned more of Mrs. Springthorpe's case than I care to know."

for taking my departure on the following day, I fell asleep.

My rest was uneasy. I seemed never to lose consciousness of my surround- thing like defiance. ings, yet there was something cerie and uncanny about them that did not bemoon had been open to the sky, and there were rushes of cold wind that out, even though I am beaten." stirred my hair with the soothing rustle of leafy branches. I seemed to hear the whisperings about my bed as round about me, and through all and years before, the voice of the present

not part us!" It seemed to say. Then I companied by a deep, suppressed was awakened by an unmistakable actual sound, a dull thud, that jarred the

dow, which I had left partly open to my feet on the floor, prepared to grapadmit a free current of air. Doubtless sash line had parted, I thought, and turned again to slumber.

seemed to me I was imprisoned deep interpreting some distant sound; but,

thorpe, usually slept in the same apart worse for my experience. At break an ordinary woman. fast I met Mrs. Springthorpe. Her sparkling as ever. When she commiserated me on my night's adventure and coquettishly rallied me on my heedlessness I could feel my suspicions

slipping away from me. After breakfast I stole upstairs and made a careful examination of my bedroom. No sash line had been broken. I had no doubt but that a deliberate attempt had been made on my life. There was no means of ingress to the room except by the window, and that was at least forty feet from the ground, with no balcony or other "So," I thought, "I have already projection from the steep face of the

As I stood looking from the window Revolving in my mind some pretext Mrs. Springthorpe crossed the grounds below, looking up and bowing, with her most radiant smile, in which I thought I detected a shade of some-

"You are no ordinary woman," thought I, apostrophizing her retreatlong to the waking world. There seem- ing figure. "Who plays with you has ed alternations of light and shadow, a dangerous opponent. But there is as thin, fleecy clouds chased each other | such a thing as overreaching oneself. across the path of the moon, as if the Today I should have left you without a sign. Now I remain to see the game

That night I went to the same room. As it had been thoroughly ventilated I begged that no change be made. I was strange, airy beings floated in and out just drifting into a doze when a upon the moonbeams and hovered stealthy footstep fell upon my car, seeming to come from the corner of above all I heard the sound of that the room behind me. I was wide voice I had heard in my surgery six awake in an instant, but I suppressed the impulse to betray myself by motion. The footstep was repeated again "You shall not part us! You shall and again and seemed approaching, acbreathing. The sounds ceased at the bedside, with a long sustained inspiration. At that moment, with a sudden It was the closing down of my win twist of my body. I brought myself to ple with the intruder. To my consternation there was no one there.

My first thought was that my imag-This time I slept so heavily that it ination had played me a trick by mis-



I SPRANG UP, SEIZING THE UPLIFTED ARM.

sulphurous atmosphere at an enormous pressure in a darkness so dense as to seem material. My head was buried under some crushing weight. Ages passed thus, and I had become incorporated with the rock itself, when human voices broke in upon the eternal stillness of my inferno; but, although heard their very words and can remember them now, they conveyed no meaning to me. Then came the sound of blows, which gave way to a fearful crash, and the pure air of heaven rushed into my prison house. I felt myself lifted upon my feet, but movement that season of the year. I had taken a was so painful that I threw myself turn out as far as a little piece of down again, for I felt that I only wanted to sleep undisturbed. Then a voice said:

"Norris, Norrist For God's sake, rouse yourself!" "Walk him up and down," said another voice. "Bring him out into the

passage!" Again I was lifted up and forced along, and after what seemed to be

endless peregrinations it began to dawn upon me that I was in the passage of Gravelly Grange, surrounded by Springthorpe's guests. "How did this happen, doctor?" ask-

ed my host, who held me by the arm. I turned and gazed upon him stupidly. "How did what happen?" I asked.

What has happened? "You left your gas turned on full on going to bed."

"Impossible!" "It is true. However, we were in time to save you. It was a fortunate circumstance that the major here chanced to be awake and, detecting the smell of gas, was able to trace it to your room. We were just in time, for you were quite unconscious."

"I cannot explain it," I said. never make a practice of leaving a jet burning. It is incredible that I should have broken into a habit of a lifetime." In five minutes I was sleeping on a couch in my host's room without being

troubled with dreams.

down in the bowels of the earth in a no, almost in my face I heard the same long breath expelled in a sigh, while the footsteps turned and retreat ed to that corner whence they had first issued. Then, in a nervous fury, I sprang after the retreating sounds and smote the air, but my blows met with no resistance. I lit the gas and searched the room, only to find that it had no occupant but myself. The next day was Christmas, and,

despite my exciting experience, I was literally "up with the lark." I went out into the garden for a stroll, for the weather was delightfully balmy for woods on the edge of the estate and his heart with your revelation. was nearing the house on my return when I became aware of the fact that I was followed. I had just passed a weather beaten oak on the edge of the garden. This one time giant had been denuded of its superstructure by the gales of decades, but its trunk had grown until now it was pointed out to visitors as the tree of largest girth on the estate. On the side whence I had come there was a large cavity in the shelf, with a seat below it.

I turned about quickly, but saw no one. I was about to proceed when I noticed a small portion of the bottom of a woman's dress obtruding beyond the edge of the tree. I walked back and found Mrs. Springthorpe sitting in the recess of the tree apparently engrossed in the contents of a book which lay open before her.

She looked up and cheerly greeted me. I had by this time become convinced that Mrs. Springthorpe was worse than any woman ought to be, but her smile of greeting was so ingenuous, her surprise at seeing me so genuine, that for the moment my suspicions were dissipated. She observed that she was about to return to the Grange and rose as though to accompany me. At the time it did not occur to me that the ordinary person would scarcely select Christmas morning for

Christmas passed at Gravelly Grange as it usually passes in the country houses of wealthy persons. There were the usual service at the church, the

usual good cheer on the table and the usual Christmas tree in the evening for the guests. At the latter function Mrs. Springthorpe was at her best. She greeted every woman and child with a condescension so charming as to rob it of the implication of superiority. She was undoubtenly the most popular person present, and Springthorpe's eyes followed her with an eagerness and affection that to me were almost pitiable.

After the Christmas tree festivities host, hostess and guests danced merrily together, and the celebration was kept up until a late hour. When we went to our rooms we were a very tired lot of mortals; but, despite my fatigue, I determined to remain at my post to await developments. I threw myself half dressed upon the bed, resolved that nothing should tempt me to go to sleep. But the flesh is weak, and in a short time I was in as deep a slumber as though nothing were on my mind. Suddenly I started up, awakened by the shuddering sound of my slowly rising window.

There, without the window, outlined against the sky, appeared a dark robed, hooded figure like that of a Capuchia monk. Slowly the sash ascended to Its full height, and noiselessly the figure mounted upon the sill and, stepping upon the window seat, reached the floor, whence it glided into the shadow that filled the corner of the room and was lost to sight.

After an anxious interval I again saw ts dark outline encroaching on the area of diffused light that lay between me and the window, and I knew that It was slowly drawing toward me. As it approached the same stealthy footfall and deep, suppressed breathing I had heard the night before became audible. By the side of the bed it halted, with a deep inspiration, and a hand holding something which gleamed was lifted above the head. Dropping my feet to the floor, I sprang up, seizing the uplifted arm with my left hand and with my right arm pinioning the figure against my breast.

There was a woman's cry, the gleaming thing fell to the floor, and the figure lay limp in my embrace. I placed it in a chair and hastily lit the gas.

Then I saw the insensible form of Mrs. Springthorpe and on the floor one of my own surgical knives, which I had thought secure in the case in my portmanteau. I had solved the mys-

As Mrs. Springthorpe recovered her senses we remained gazing at each other in silence.

"Well," she said at last, "you have conquered. You know everything." "Unhappy woman," I said, "I know that you caused the death of your former mistress because she stood in the way of your ambition and that you have twice attempted my life,"

She slipped to the floor at my feet. "Mercy, mercy!" she cried. "If you knew how I dreaded this moment! It was your life against his love. All night I paced my room, crying, You shall not part us!"

"I heard you in my sleep." "Yes; years ago I discovered the secret of these two rooms, the curious acoustic fact that at certain points in one low, intense sounds are reproduced in the other with such vivid distinctness as to seem actually present, and so I heard you breathing as you slept, and the thought came to me, as it came to me when I listened to her breathing and broke upon her slumber with the false story that killed her. My ambition has reaped nothing but Dead sea

fruit.' "And you entered my room, and by he window! But how? Surely not by

the coping, less than a foot in width?" "Yes. At one time I was a gymnast and acrobat, and even if it had not peen for that my determination would have carried me through, the determination of a dying woman, for whom death and danger have no further terror. The first night you were saved by an accidental discovery. The second I alarmed you by ineautiously allowing you to hear me listening for your sleep. Tonight, the third, I thought to make sure. I put in your water bottle an opiate.'

"Which I did not touch."

"You would have been found dead with your own knife in your heart. The general verdict would have been suicide. But it was not to be. You were to be my fate. Go to him. Break nounce me as a murderess."

She fell forward. I raised her and, seeing that she was indeed near the point of death, administered a restoraive from my case.

"Mrs. Springthorpe," I said when she had somewhat recovered, "whatever your crime, this is not a time for Judgment, and I am not your judge. Tomorrow I leave this place, and, believe me, I shall never open my lips in retrunk. In this had been fitted a small gard to what I have discovered. Your punishment is complete. May your days end in peace and your husband never have cause to regret you less. But let me assist you to your room,

You must not be discovered here." I raised her to her feet, but she drew away. "My door is locked on the in- times and in some countries the gladside," she said and glanced toward the window.

"Not that way, for heaven's sake!" I cried. But she sprang upon the win- ligious festival, but the great truth of tow seat and, turning, waved me back. Then she disappeared.

I dared not look after her, fearful of bringing about the catastrophe I dread- tivity it must always remain one of ed. I stood breathless until I heard the great festivals of the Christian the words seemingly whispered in my very ear:

"All safe! Good night!" should be obliged to return at once to to accentuate the truth that our rethe city. Springthorpe objected strenu- ligion is one of hope and cheerfulness, ously. "I have taken a great liking to -Christian Work.

"Miss Clay, the present Mrs. Spring- ' I grose the next moraling little the | an outdoor reading, but this was not you," he said. "I like to talk to you, Perhaps it is because you are a good

listener." I again pleaded that my patients in Baltimore required my attention and Informed him as gently as possible that Mrs. Springthorpe was beyond emy help. I begged him to be prepared for the end.

Springthorpe was stunned by my information, but so far from operating as I had hoped my statement only seemed to make him more insistent that I should remain. Again I sought refuge in a white lie and explained with great circumspection the impossibility of my staying a day longer. Several of the guests who were to be there until Satu: hty afternoon importuned me to accede to Mr. Springthorpe's request, but I was obdurate. I could not bring myself to pass another night under the roof of a hostess I knew to be morally, if not technically, a murderess. Seeing that argument was unavailing, Springthorpe ordered a carriage to take me to the station, and, looking at my watch, I saw that I had barely time to catch the fast mail for Baltimore. The carriage came in due time, and, with a hurrled "Goodby," I was about to step into it when a servant from the Grange informed me that his mistress begged that on no account should I leave without seeing her. I was in a quandary, but there was nothing for me but to wait. In a moment Mrs. Springthorpe arrived. Her usually drawn features were more pinched than ever, and she walked uncertainly. Her husband stepped forward and gallantly assisted her. As Mrs. Springthorpe approached the carriage she looked at me in an indescribably significant manner and, holding something aloft, said:

"Doctor, have you not forgotten this?"

In her hand was the knife with which she had the night before attempted my life. In the confusion of the moment I had neglected to pick it up from the floor where It fell when I grappled with her, and she must have got it after I had left to start for home. Mr. Springthorpe reached for the instrument, but she withdrew her hand.

"No," she said, "I will hand it to the doctor myself. He has been so kind to me since he has been here." And she gave me a meaning look as she advanced, shaking off her husband's

I was in doubt as to the creature's intentions. Something in her eye, something in the tigress-like movement with which she came toward me, warned me that her mind had given way and that there was just enough lucidity left to enable her to realize that before her was an enemy whom she must destroy. But I stepped forward, at the same time keeping my eye fixed upon the knife. We were within a couple of yards of each other when Mrs. Springthorpe staggered and would have fallen but for her husband, who caught her as she recied backward.

I hastened to her side. As I bent my head toward her bosom I heard an indistinct whisper. I listened, and with a last effort she fairly hissed into my ear, "I hate you, and I should have" --She collapsed. I made a careful examination, but it was unnecessary.

Mrs. Springthorpe had paid the price of her ambition.

FOR TWELFTH NIGHT. Important Role Played by the Cake

In England.

A Twelfth Night cake in England is as much a part of the Christmas festivities as is the tree itself. On Twelfth Night various gayeties and revels are arranged, the cake being finally drawn in by the children on a decorated eart or borne aloft by the servants on a board trimmed with Christmas greens. A recipe for making the cake comes from England: Beat to a smooth cream two pounds of unsalted butter, then add two pounds of powdered sugar, a whole nutmeg grated and an ounce each of powdered cinnamon, ginger, mace and allspice. Beat this mixture ten minutes and add gradually twenty eggs, beating the cake after that for twenty minutes. Stir in, a little at a time, two pounds of flour, four pounds of currants, a half pound of bruised almonds and half a pound each of candied orange and lemon peel and citron, beating the cake lightly after each addition. Last of all add a claret glass of brandy. Line a large cake tin with well buttered paper and fill it threequarters full of the dough, which will leave room for the cake to rise. Cover the top with the buttered paper, and if the oven bakes fast at the bottom put a fin under the cake to keep it from burning. It should bake for four and a half hours in a slow but well heated oven. The icing that covers it is very thick, and to be thoroughly English the cake should be decorated with sugar figures and other large designs in ornamental icing. It will be seen that these are proportions for a large cake, and such the English Tweifth Night cake is meant to be .- Pittsburg Chronicle-Telegraph.

Joycusness at Christmastide. Joyousness is the keynote of Christ. mastide. It is a time for Faith to sing her highest songs of praise. Somesome spirit of the season has degenerated into boisterous mummeries out of harmony with the character of a rethe incarnation of Jesus has ever been beneath the various manifestations of joy. As the celebration of Christ'snayear. This is a time for charitable deeds, for smiling faces, merry greetings and exchange of gifts, and it is The next day I announced that I certainly a fitting opportunity for us