

The History of Malcolm Mackenzie

By Olive Burrell

The friends of Dr. Malcolm Mackenzie, and they were numerous, used to wonder why he had never succeeded in his profession. He was clever, he was strong, he was sensible, he had extraordinary skill in diagnosis, but none of these advantages prevailed to help him. Men who did not possess a quarter of his ability mounted to the top of the ladder, while he remained almost stationary, very near the foot. To be sure, his personal appearance might be considered unfavourable. Malcolm was rough and shaggy, but rough doctors have prospered before now, and as a rule do better in the long run than smooth ones.

The answer to this riddle lay no doubt in the fact that he was strangely restless. Just when the fickle goddess Fortune seemed inclined to smile upon his efforts, and had even sent two or three rich patients in his direction, he would rush off to some remote corner of the planet and stay there until the wave of prosperity had gone by. This was odd. It was more odd still that the same promise of success followed him to Bombay, to Rio Janeiro, to Alexandria, to each place he lived in, and was always skilfully evaded. As soon as men began to say to each other, "Mackenzie is becoming an authority on cholera (or yellow fever, or something else). Did you see his name in the Official Report? If he lives, he will make a reputation," the Doctor was sure to astonish them by tossing his chances to the winds and returning to England.

"Do try to settle down, Mack," said his old school-fellow, Walter Rennie. "You can't go on playing battledore and shuttlecock with your prospects for ever. What in the world makes you so erratic?"

Mackenzie never gave a direct reply, though he might have done so, for he knew the cause of his restlessness well enough, and could remember the very hour when the faculty which had marred his life first awoke. He was a little boy of five years old, playing with bricks on the floor while his mother sat beside him writing letters. They were in the morning-room of their house on Loch Alsh, and through the windows he could watch great sea-birds floating past and catch glimpses of lights and shadows chasing each other across heather-clad mountains.

Suddenly all these familiar things faded, and he saw quite distinctly a large funeral hearse going down a street which was thronged with people. Every roof, every balcony, every single coign of vantage was occupied. The faces of human beings looked like a white sea, all turned in the same direction, towards that fearful black carriage, and the coffin it carried. Behind the hearse came a riderless horse, led by a soldier. There was a sound of faint sad music, and then, quick as thought, the vision vanished. Malcolm was not frightened in the least, scarcely even surprised. He turned to his mother and said, very quietly, "Mother, the Duke of Wellington is dead."

Mrs. Mackenzie had seven children, so it was difficult to astonish her. She only said, "What makes you think so, dear?" and continued her writing, scarcely pausing for an answer. The next day the same news reached her through a more convincing source. The great Duke had died at Walmer, and a week later was laid to rest in St. Paul's, to the sound of a nation's lamentation.

Malcolm heard his mother tell another lady of the remarkable foreknowledge he had displayed, but she did not appear exactly pleased. "Children are very queer," was her final comment; "luckily school sets them straight."

He often perplexed his mother, but there was one person who understood him and felt an immense interest in his career. This was his aunt, Miss Grizel Dykes. She happened to call on a certain occasion when he and a little girl cousin were looking out of the window of the family house in Edinburgh.

“There’s nothing to see,” complained the cousin.

“There will be in a minute,” said Malcolm. “A fish-wife will come past crying her fish, and just when she gets near our door, a wee puppy will rush out from the next house and begin yap, yapping at her feet, and she will turn and take him by the scruff of his neck and toss him in the gutter, and then the gun will fire to tell all the town it’s one o’clock.”

The girl stretched her neck to see and was not disappointed. The fish-wife went past, the wee puppy yapped and was tossed into the gutter, and the great gun from the Castle told Edinburgh the hour of day.

“Janet,” said Miss Grizel, when the children had gone, “that boy of yours has second sight.”

“Oh, I think you are mistaken!”

“I am scarcely ever mistaken. Call to mind he told you of the Duke’s funeral.”

“Yes, a mere coincidence.”

“Not a likely coincidence. Besides, it is in the family. Our great-uncle, Colin Hamilton, had it, and Barbara Nicholson. You must surely remember Barbara? The gift passes usually through the mother’s side. I am sorry Malcolm is to be tried in this way. Barbara had a sore time, poor body; I never knew the gift do its owner a stroke of real good.”

“What must I do?” cried Mrs. Mackenzie, all in a flutter and fuss. “Shall I consult a doctor?”

“Hoots!” said Grizel. “We must hold our tongues. That’s the best we can do. I wish no one but ourselves may ever come to hear of it, for somehow or other these gifts are ‘unchancy,’ and get the people who have them an ill name.”

After Malcolm was sent to school his mysterious faculty, or “gift,” as Grizel called it, went to sleep and did not revive until he was one-and-twenty. Then it began to act again; not vigorously at first, but little by little, growing stronger each year. He used to have an uneasy sense of trouble “in the air” long before he saw a distinct vision to acquaint him with the form the trouble would assume. By degrees his senses became acute in more directions than one. He learnt to discover character in the touch of a hand, and to distinguish between people who had noble thoughts and those whose minds were clouded by sensuality or selfishness. Once while reading in the same room as his friend Rennie, he threw him into consternation by saying, after a silence of half-an-hour—

“You are mistaken there. I am certain the book was not written by Herd, but by Driver.”

“Who told you I was thinking about Herd’s authorship?” cried Rennie. “I have taken care never to mention the subject.”

“Were you not arguing the question with yourself?” asked Malcolm.

“I may have been,” said Rennie, and a scared look passed over his face. He did not fancy a companion who had power to steal men’s secret thoughts.

By degrees Malcolm became a very solitary being. It is true that whenever misfortune overtook them his friends lost no time in seeking him out. He heard more confessions than most priests, and listened to so many tales of woe that his patience was well-nigh exhausted.

“Why don’t you come to me with your joys?” he used to say. “It would be a pleasant change. Nature never created me for the purpose of giving sympathy. I lead a dog’s life.”

“You always know how to advise, Mack,” squeaked little Priestley Atherton, a constant plague.

“Well, listen to this advice,” said Mack. “Next time you are in a scrape, put yourself in a bag well loaded with stones, and ask some one to toss it over Vauxhall bridge. That’s my last word to you. Now go.”

He went, but came back next week, and Mack listened to his troubles all over again, and lent him five pounds moreover, which were never repaid. Happiness always drove people away from Mack. Whenever their faces appeared at the door, it was a sure and certain sign that they were plunged in grief. He really had some right to complain.

Once when disgust of life gripped his heart rather harder than usual, he travelled to Edinburgh and laid his case before Aunt Grizel. She was a very ancient woman by that time, and could do nothing except tear up paper to fill cushions.

“I have heard all this before from Barbara Nicholson,” was her comment, after he had talked for nearly ten minutes.

“Don’t remind me of ghastly old-world stories,” cried Malcolm. “I didn’t come here to be driven to suicide. If Barbara went through half what I have done, and lived to be fifty-two, as you always say she did, she must have been a tough woman.

“She was,” said Aunt Grizel.

“If these visions ever told me anything useful!” grumbled Malcolm. “But they don’t. I never know which horse is going to win the Derby. Never in my life did I discover what questions the examiners were likely to set. The whole business is ridiculous.”

“Don’t be flippant,” said Grizel. “We have no idea who may be listening.”

“One must keep one’s spirits up,” sighed the Doctor.

“I make it a rule,” continued Grizel, “to remember who may listening. Perhaps the dead come back and hear what we say of them. Perhaps . . . It does no harm to be careful at all events. Now answer one question, *How long before the event do you get the warning?*”

“I never see anything very distinctly until three weeks before,” said Malcolm. “Wandering impressions come to me, scarcely stronger than most people’s presentiments which may chance to be correct, but are usually mistaken. I pay no attention to such trifles. The liver is responsible for a good many. Three weeks before the event these wandering lights, if there’s any truth in them, *focus* (I can’t hit upon another word), and make a definite picture. I am in splendid health when this happens. There’s no suspicion of liver or delirium or anything else. I *see!* Just for a minute. Then the picture disappears.”

“And what do you deduce from these facts?” said Grizel; “if I may make so bold as to ask the question.”

“Some would think I was in league with the devil!” said Malcolm.

“Never a bit!” cried Grizel.

“I am afraid you don’t believe in his existence,” suggested the Doctor.

“I am not saying that,” replied the old woman cautiously, “but I think you and I, Malcolm, can settle this business without any reference to him.”

“That’s true enough,” said Malcolm. “Now we can get to work on sensible lines. My idea is that if we wish future events to become known to us, we must keep our minds detached. When I am absorbingly interested in a case, for instance, I never receive a single communication. Not even one relating to the case in which I am interested. My mind is much too active. This is why very simple folk succeed better than educated persons. Of course I can’t prevent my mind being active, but it seems to me, that with a little contrivance I can hit upon ways of bridling its activity. Saints do this when they practise meditation. Roman Catholics do it when they tell their beads. What is the aim of the rosary? To chain the mind, so that it shall remain passive and leave

the spirit free to receive impressions from the other world without hindrance. I believe my knowledge of the future need not be limited to three weeks before the time if I practise mental control. Most of my communications come between sleeping and waking. This proves that a quiescent state is necessary, and in the most arduous life moments of quiescence may be sought for."

"You are on a dangerous road," said Grizel, "a very dangerous road, Malcolm Mackenzie. Barbara used to get her knowledge as long as three months before the time. Yes, it came to three months at last. She told me once she knew trouble was preparing for her, and a wee red-haired boy was mixed up with it. Constantly she saw a child with red hair thrust his head in at the door, and saw his lips move, as if he were saying something. She could never hear the words. She was like you, always saw, never heard. But she knew it was a message that broke her heart, for always as the lips moved, a sense of blackness and grief came over her. We were sitting in her house one afternoon, she and I, when wee David Murray opened the door just a chink and peeped in. And the sun shining made his hair look like glittering gold. She cried, 'Here it is, Grizel,' and fainted dead at my feet. He had come to tell us the boat her sons were fishing from had overturned. And she knowing grief was in front of her all the long summer through, and not able to move a finger to prevent it! Take my advice, Malcolm. You are on the wrong road. Go back while you can."

"Don't look so frightened and solemn," said the Doctor, putting his strong hand on her trembling ones. "I am not a sensitive woman like Barbara. This power came to me without my asking, so I suppose it was meant for use. I get angry and bored now and then, but I have no intention of resigning my birthright. I mean to persevere."

Grizel left off tearing paper into scraps and gazed before her into vacancy. Her head and hands always shook a great deal and her sight was dim, but she could hear as distinctly as ever.

"I know what perseverance means," she said.

"If you listen to the advice of a very old woman, you won't persevere. You will let your birthright get dull for want of use. Colin tried that plan. When the warnings came, he just said, 'The will of God be done,' and let the occasion pass. He was not tormented like Barbara. Bit by bit the trouble left him. He was free when he died. Saw no more and knew no more than any one else. Barbara, poor soul, could read thoughts almost as well as a printed book. She often said she didn't need people to speak to her. It's a fearsome state to come to. You had better go back while there's time. Don't pay any heed to the warnings, and whatever you do, don't tell others what you know. You have spoken of the visions, Malcolm, I feel sure you have. Oh, my bonnie man, be advised by me!"

The Doctor looked thoughtful.

"Sometimes I am inclined to agree with you," he said. "Then I grow interested and want to persevere. This faculty of seeing future events is a power. Admit that! It is a power."

No," said Grizel, "it is a disease."

"I am in robust health," observed the Doctor. "You're no judge," replied Grizel. "I remember when I was a bit lassie, a friend of my mother's called and told a tale of her sister who was ill. She lay in her bed on the top floor and heard what people whispered in the rooms beneath. If they so much as breathed a word she heard it through walls and ceilings and carpets an inch thick. They stuffed her ears with wool, and laid down straw for a quarter of a mile along the street, and yet she went on hearing, and died for want of sleep in delirium."

The Doctor nodded.

“A disease of the nerves,” said Grizel, “of the auditory nerve or some other nerve. It’s not for me to be telling you. Call to mind poor Jeanie Murray. She had diseased memory. She forgot all that had happened within ten years, and talked of things she had seen and felt when she was a senseless creature carried in arms. Her people said every place was described just as it stood. Our senses must be tuned to a safe pitch, so that we may live and work, but disease sharpens them and then we don’t live. We die, or go mad. There’s such a thing as a spiritual sense, though most people are none the wiser. Yours is tuned too high, and if that’s not the same thing as being diseased, I can’t find a truer word to describe it.”

“I know there are risks,” said the Doctor, “but all discoveries involve risk. I am determined to find out the laws by which this faculty works. Every branch of knowledge is interesting and lawful too, just because it is knowledge—not quackery. Who can say what good may result from the study?”

“Don’t try to study!” cried Grizel. “My dear, you are my sister’s youngest son, and I always liked you above all the others, but if it is coming to this, that you are to see what mortals can’t see and keep their judgment, I had rather you died while you sit in that chair beside me.”

“Oh, hush, Aunt Grizel!” said the Doctor. It isn’t canny to say such things.”

Then he laughed; her anxiety being so exaggerated in his opinion as to make laughter necessary in order to establish equilibrium.

“The power came without my seeking,” he continued. “I still hold that it is a power.

“No, a *disease*,” repeated Grizel.

She died shortly after this interview, and a great deal of wisdom died with her. The Doctor roamed the earth as before, and never gave any further thought to her advice. He was the rolling stone that gathers no moss, but moss in his case meant money, for which he cared less than most people. He was always turning up in strange places. The day he heard that cholera had broken out in Naples he went there as if pulled by a magnet, and stayed until the epidemic was over, when he came, very tired and jaded, to the Italian lakes to recruit.

In the same hotel as himself on Lake Como three people were living who interested him deeply. One was a girl of two-and-twenty, Diana Fleetwood, the others her mother and stepfather. The link between Diana and these beings seemed extraordinary. She was unlike them in appearance, in character, in tastes. Mrs. Dyer, the mother, was a nervous woman with furtive eyes and a disagreeable habit of giving little forced laughs at the conclusion of every sentence. Colonel Dyer, the stepfather, possessed a surly temper and ill-natured expression. The pair were evidently on strained terms, though pride forced them to conceal their squabbles as much as possible. In the Colonel’s mind Malcolm read superficial half-jealous dislike of himself, and deep anxiety concerning money. His thoughts were nearly always busy with a book of tangled accounts, through which they wandered as if in a labyrinth, coming back perpetually to the same spot. Then the word *ruin* would rise up very large and black, and the Doctor saw no more. Perhaps he had already seen too much.

Mrs. Dyer’s duplicity baffled even such an experienced judge of character as himself. He could not fathom her thoughts or motives in the least. One day, as he was coming down-stairs prepared for an excursion, she passed him and looked slyly at his equipment.

“You are partial to long walks, Dr. Mackenzie. So is Diana. But there are few opportunities. I cannot take her myself. My walking days are past. Then she loves boating. I am unable to venture in a boat. It is sad, very sad, for both of us.”

“If Miss Fleetwood would accept my escort,” said Malcolm, “I shall be only too delighted.”

“Oh, you are very good, but she has a sick headache to-day,” replied Mrs. Dyer, laughing. “Diana has such constant headaches. The medical man we consulted in Paris considered them very serious.

She laughed once more after relating this adverse opinion, and walked to the door of her room. Malcolm continued his way, but just as he reached the foot of the stairs he heard her voice calling to him.

“Dr. Mackenzie, if you really *would* be kind enough to take Diana on the lake some afternoon, I am sure she would enjoy it. But the Colonel must never guess. He is foolishly anxious about boats.”

The usual laugh finished the sentence.

“What does the creature mean?” thought Malcolm, and hurried off, but in the hall he met Diana blooming with health and as busy as possible.

“Mrs. Dyer tells me you have a headache,” said Malcolm.

The girl looked startled.

“Mother fancies things,” she replied after a pause. “I had one yesterday. This morning I am going to sketch from a boat.”

Malcolm felt completely puzzled, and each day as the family enigma grew more difficult to solve, his interest in solving it increased. Diana’s character was transparent enough. She had lovely grey eyes, which met the Doctor’s keen gaze unflinchingly, and a laugh so cheerful he forgot her mother’s unpleasant cachinnation while listening to it. By degrees they became intimate. He learnt that Colonel Dyer had gambled away all his own fortune and half his wife’s; Diana’s he had not yet attempted to touch, but Malcolm felt sure they drew upon her for current expenses whenever need came or opportunity offered. In the event of her dying unmarried all she possessed would belong to her mother, and she told her new friend that this was matter of regret, as the Colonel might be tempted to repeat his folly and attack the capital.

Malcolm did not fancy what he heard. Diana confided in him and trusted him. His strong kind face seemed to inspire her (as it did most people) with instinctive liking; besides, the loneliness of her position was terrible, and justified an attempt to seek counsel from one so competent to advise. Mrs. Dyer never tried to check their growing acquaintance. On the contrary, she attempted, in her weak underhand way, to further it. Once Malcolm overheard her telling the Colonel that Diana had been indoors all morning prostrate with headache, when the facts were far otherwise. Diana and he, accompanied by an Italian woman, Mrs. Dyer’s maid, had gone out together and enjoyed themselves very much; Francesca, the maid, being tactful and anxious to keep in the background.

“You must not judge poor Mother sharply,” said Diana. “She has learnt deceit in a school of unkindness. Her nature is as honest as the day.”

That night, after the Doctor had gone to his room, he had a strange experience. No doubt he was accustomed to strange experiences, but this one by its singularity threw all others into the shade. The house was perfectly quiet, and he was reading by the light of two candles when he heard Diana’s voice calling in terrible distress—

“Oh, Mother, help me, help me, I am hurt!” The door of his room opened on a wooden gallery which ran round the inside of the house, and from which he could look down into a court planted with trees. Diana’s bedroom was a long way off, in another part of the hotel. To reach it he must cross the gallery and go up two staircases. Reason told him her voice could not have traversed such a distance. Was she perhaps in the garden below? He went down and searched, but without any result, and returned to his room full of misgivings. Two nights later, at precisely the same

hour, the cry was repeated, and in the interval it had grown more distinct. For one brief second Malcolm fancied that every living creature in the house, or near the house, would be awakened by such a piercing scream—"Oh, Mother, help me, help me, I am hurt!" Until now predictions of coming events had always, in his case, assumed the form of visions. It seemed ominous of evil to hear a voice, and only to hear, never to see.

Mrs. Dyer had kept her room for several days, pleading illness. The weather too had changed for the worse, becoming wild and stormy, so the Doctor was astonished when, late the next evening, he encountered her in the gallery.

"I was searching for a Banksia rose," she said. "I love these little yellow roses with no scent. Don't you, Doctor?"

The Doctor could not say he preferred them to other flowers.

"Diana thinks she will have a headache to-morrow," continued her mother, laughing. "Very sad, these headaches! Her father was subject to them. He died quite suddenly of pneumonia.

Malcolm could not see any occasion for the laugh by which this prediction was followed. He wondered if Diana's mother were very nervous or very cunning. Probably a mixture of both.

"My daughter has had several offers of marriage," said Mrs. Dyer, still laughing, "but she refused to leave me. I could get on very well alone though. Now, Dr. Mackenzie, don't you think I *could* be trusted to live alone?"

The Doctor thought she might.

"With such a good kind husband," persisted Mrs. Dyer, giggling harder than ever. "Only a little jealous! He loves Diana and me so much. It makes him exacting. No, exacting is not the word. *Expecting*, that is what I meant to say." She disappeared round the corner of the gallery but soon came back. "The Colonel is not very well, just now, Doctor. He seems upset. I think he is hurt because Diana has neglected him, not much, you know, just a little. Young people have whims. He is going to take us all off to Cadenabbia the day after to-morrow. He must have us to himself. So natural! But I am a little bit sorry, just a little bit, for Diana, you know. Her sketches not finished, and this headache coming on. Good-night, Doctor, good-night." Malcolm went his way looking rather grim. He felt sure that the sooner Diana were removed from the custody of these remarkable guardians the better. Colonel Dyer's jealousy was evidently taking active shape, and his wife's rambling statements were meant to emphasize the fact. The next day the girl came down in her normal health, and he ventured to express surprise.

"Why does Mrs. Dyer think you have headaches when you are quite well?"

Diana blushed scarlet.

"You must have guessed," she said, after a pause, "that our home life is often a stormy one. Some years ago it was even more trying than now, and I used to find it better to shut myself up in my room until the worst scenes were over. I was too young then to have any influence, and my mother kept appealing to me, which the Colonel could not bear. We brought forward my headaches as an excuse, generally a true excuse. But now, when the occasion is past and the headaches too, my mother cannot forget her old habit. It seems as if she had learnt to live in fear and to practise little tricks of deception, like a hunted animal. She thinks it is safer to say I am going to be ill, lest to-morrow I should wish for quietness. Don't condemn her! Indeed it is not her nature to be false. Misery has driven her to deceit."

"But is it true that you are both to be taken away?"

"Yes, it is true. First only as far as Cadenabbia. Then to a villa among the Apennines, a very isolated place. Mother seems to dread it. We shall be so cut off."

Malcolm scarcely heard the last words, for as she spoke, the deep blue of Lake Como and the lovely outlines of the hills changed before him. Instead, he saw a large bare room containing a long table and one or two wooden benches. The hour seemed to be late, for an old brass lamp which hung from the ceiling was lit. A peasant wearing a blue blouse and leather belt came into the room, carrying a very slight, girlish figure. Her face was covered with a handkerchief, but Malcolm recognized the hands. A few dark streaks stained the handkerchief and the cloak in which she was wrapped. Various people appeared to be present, flitting about. He only saw them through mist, and just discovered that they were gesticulating and talking in great distress. The girl's figure was fearfully distinct. He knew why the face was covered, and grasped the meaning of those helpless hands falling powerless on either side.

At this moment some church bells began to chime, and the sound dispelled the trance. He recovered his normal perceptions with a shivering sense of cold.

“What is the matter?” asked Diana. “Your face has changed all in a moment. Tell me. Are you ill?”

“I will tell you as soon as I can,” said Mackenzie, taking her hand.

He had never dared to do this before, but she did not draw it away.

“Will you believe me if I warn you? Will you listen while I say that some dreadful danger threatens your life?”

“How do you know?” cried Diana, looking at him in bewilderment.

“By certain signs,” said Malcolm. “I am never deceived. Oh, would to God I might be this time, but it is too much to hope for. The visions are never false. I *know* your life is threatened, and there is scarcely a moment to lose.”

“Tell me what you have seen,” said Diana.

“Can you bear to hear?”

“I am calmer than you.”

“Twice over, between eleven and twelve at night, I have heard your voice calling for help. I went out in the gallery to look; it was so distinct. I could not believe at first there was no actual sound. Then, just now I saw—”

“Go on. Pray go on.”

“I saw you lying unconscious in a room I could describe. It was not an English room. The people round you were not English. One of them wore a blue smock, which is not the English labourer's dress. You had been terribly hurt. Diana, believe me, your life is in danger.”

“What do you advise me to do?”

“I advise you to escape. Invent some pretext. Go out with Francesca and never return.”

“But my mother! She would be left to bear everything alone, and I shall not save myself by running away. If there is any truth in second sight, your revelations point to facts already decided. If they were not actually a part of the world's history you would not see them. This is why no warnings have ever been of use. I must not listen, I must do my duty, and duty requires me to stay here.”

“Think a moment,” said the Doctor. “By going you may prevent a crime.”

Diana turned pale.

“It would be too horrible,” she said. “I have done him no harm.”

“You have what he needs,” replied Malcolm.

“Oh, don't say so!” cried the girl, springing up. “Don't *think* it. Life becomes too ghastly if we admit such thoughts. I have never suspected any one of deliberate evil. Perhaps I do wrong in suspecting now. He is jealous of you. He is destroying himself by this mad passion for

excitement. But in his own strange way I feel sure he has an affection for me. It can't be that he is planning to hurt me.

"Not *planning*," said Malcolm. "We cannot tell what may happen if in a moment's rage—"

"Oh, don't go on," said Diana, putting up her hand, "don't say another word. You remind me of one miserable scene when my mother . . . But he was so sorry, he said he wished he had never been born. And it has not happened again. I have always kept an influence. If now, after all these years, I begin to show distrust, he may sink into deeper ruin."

"I implore you to lose no time in argument," said Malcolm. "Every second is of value."

Diana threw off her cloak as if the weight distressed her, and went a few steps away from him.

"Tell me," she said, coming back, "have you ever succeeded in changing the course of events by the help of what you saw?"

"Never. Once I was afraid to tell the people concerned. Once I was not believed. Often the visions relate to mere trifles."

"Yet you hope to succeed now?"

"The faculty has developed so strangely. It has worked contrary to all rules. Usually I never see when I am deeply interested. To-day I have. Usually I *only* see. This time I have heard as well. I cannot help hoping! We are two together. In all former trials I have fought with Destiny alone."

"I shall do as you wish me," said Diana.

"Thank God!" said Malcolm.

"Take care. Don't be glad too soon. I feel as if it would be wrong to stay after what you have told me. But I go with terrible doubts."

"I have no doubts," replied the Doctor. "In England you will be—you *must* be safe."

He made his preparations rapidly, and Francesca, called into council, agreed to do her part. Diana decided to travel as far as Cadenabbia with her mother and step-father, then to leave the hotel with the maid and go as quickly as possible to London, where she had relations who would gladly receive her. Malcolm intended to make the journey by another route, arriving, if all went well, in England on the same day.

This part of the programme he could not follow. His anxiety was too deep. He made a feint of doing so, but quickly returned on his steps and was at the station in Milan when Diana and Francesca reached it. Francesca saw him and gave a mute sign of recognition, but he had cautioned her to secrecy, and Diana was too much pre-occupied to observe faces in the crowd. He would not for worlds have distressed her by the knowledge of his presence. It was joy enough to know that she had so far made good her escape. Turin came next, and again he saw her, but kept, as before, strictly in the background. They passed through the tunnel and went speeding on towards Paris.

No foreboding of evil disturbed his peace. The diseased faculty lay asleep. Often and often it had warned him of trifling events, let him know that his horse would cast a shoe, that his coffee would be burnt. He had discovered that his next-door neighbour must lose a front tooth, and seen the wedding of a bride for whom he cared not a straw. Strange that he should foresee such trifles as these and remain perfectly tranquil when every moment brought nearer the most awful crisis of his life.

Nine o'clock. They had left Macon behind. Ten. He looked out of the window and saw the Scorpion stretching across the southern sky with Antares flaming like a red jewel in its side. Eleven. There was a grating noise as if the train were moving over pebbles, followed by a gigantic crash. For a second the danger seemed past. Then the carriages rushed on and struck against the engine, which had fallen across the line.

When Malcolm next became conscious a man was flinging water in his face, and he knew that his left arm hurt horribly. Diana, where was she? He struggled to his feet and leaned, dizzy with the effort, against a railing. The accident had happened on a lonely part of the road. People were running about with torches; groans reached his ear from every quarter. He saw the *débris* of the huge engine, and observed one carriage standing literally on end, while several others were broken to pieces.

“Where is she?” he kept asking. “Not hurt, surely not hurt!” and the kind peasant who had come to his aid made signs of ignorance, and flew to rescue others.

Malcolm went up and down searching, while each minute seemed as long as ten. He found those whom he sought at last. Francesca had quickly been released and taken into a cottage. Diana was lying on the bank half sensible. As he came near he heard her moan, “Oh, Mother, help me, help me, I am hurt!” She never regained full consciousness. A peasant carried her to an old *château* close by, and laid her in the empty *salle à manger* which Malcolm had seen in his vision.

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The true motive of Diana’s midnight journey was never suspected. Those who imagined they knew thought she had been obliged to leave home because Coloner Dyer objected to her marriage with the Doctor. They all blamed her step-father, and said it was shocking she had submitted to his tyranny so long. Malcolm found himself regarded as her successful lover, as the man who would have been her husband had she lived. True, and yet he wished he had heard the avowal once from her own lips. The feeling which caused him to say little of his personal hopes and desires during their last interview was as honourable as his own nature. He feared to take her at a disadvantage; to cast a shadow of doubt over the integrity of his motives. It was sad, but in the earthquake which followed, when everything he cared for lay in ruins at his feet, one pang more or less seemed of small consequence.

Three months after the accident he met Mrs. Dyer. She looked thinner than ever, and gave him a sidelong glance.

“I miss Diana dreadfully,” she said, and laughed.

Then, as he did not reply at once, she continued to speak, still with that running accompaniment of hideous mirth—

“The Colonel is terribly broken. He was wrapped up in Diana. As long as she lived he used to make an effort. He doesn’t make any efforts now. My life is very sad, Doctor—he, he, he!”

Malcolm went away shivering, though the day was warm. What had he done? . . . Sent Diana to her doom! But she would have died had she remained at home, for the visions never told falsehood. . . . There might have been no vision; what would have happened then? . . . Was her death the result of his foreknowledge? Do we fashion our own Destiny, or does Destiny play pitch-and-toss with us?

He flung his thoughts backwards and forwards in vain. They rebounded like balls against glass. No answer to the problem was forthcoming. Grizel’s words often flew to his memory during those wretched months and years.

“If you are to see what mortals cannot see and keep their judgment, I had rather you died in that chair as you sat beside me.”

He wished he had died there and then, if, by this means, Diana's young fresh existence might have escaped. One source of consolation was his. The shock he had undergone in some subtle way altered his mental constitution. He never obtained a glimpse into Futurity again.