

She had discovered the boy's condition by chance.
(Tribune Studio photos.)

Death Speaks Its First Part in the Drama

INSTALLMENT IV.

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MARCH 13.—Everybody has a shattering experience at some time, but real tragedies are rare. It is now five days afterward and I have recovered sufficiently to enter a record in my diary of the terrible drama that unrolled itself in my offices. I must pull myself together and get it all down in order. I have wondered if I were dreaming, but when I pass my examination room, which I have not since entered because of the horror, I have no doubts any more as to its reality. Days like last Saturday will never fade from one's memory.

Eberhard arrived at 7 o'clock from the university in a state of great excitement. Though it was still light out and he was worried about being seen, he was so anxious to see me that he had taken the chance rather than wait another half hour.

Naturally I was intensely curious as to what had moved him to make this unexpected trip back from the university, but I received him calmly and asked him to sit down. He was pale and his eyes were blood-shot as if he had been weeping. He took the chair that my patients always occupy, but instead of speaking out directly to me he began to whimper.

"Hardie, my boy, what is the trouble?" I asked. "You need not hesitate to tell me. You need not keep anything back."

I took the miserable boy by the arm and brought him into the examination room, which lies towards the rear of my apartment. I was shocked when I came to look him over. He had an advanced syphilitic ulcer with badly indurated edges, surrounded by a purplish, congested area with inflammation.

"Eberhard," I cried, "how did you come to get this?"

He could not answer—only sob and shake his head.

"Tell me, Eberhard," I said firmly. "It is important that I should know."

He sobbed more violently and remained silent. Suddenly he blurted out: "Mademoiselle!"

Scales fell from my eyes. It is always that way. We think experience has made us observant in these matters, and we overlook the most obvious. Now I remembered her enthusiasm for the *beau et innocent garçon*, and the transparent lace waists, the broad, sensual mouth, and the lecherous eyes.

"Now, Eberhard, you must tell me all. How did she go about it to get you?"

He wiped away the tears and told—first hesitatingly, then with increasing assurance.

"She liked to help me with my exercises and always sat close to me so that her elbow would press against my side as if by accident. Often she would stroke my hair—because I had done the exercises so well, as she said. And later on she would give me a kiss as a reward. Two

weeks before she left, some of my friends from school and I celebrated our graduation. Father had gone to Dresden.

"I can't hold much and must have been a little tight. I was so jolly and happy. I don't remember everything exactly—only that I came home late. Whenever I go up to the tower room where I sleep I have to go past mademoiselle's bedroom. That night the door was half open, and the room was light, and she was standing there dressed in something white—I remember that much. She laughed and said I couldn't walk straight and she would help me up to bed. Papa's valet was asleep long ago. I was in pretty high spirits and let her take my arm and go with me. She went with me into the bedroom and helped me off with my coat. What happened after that I don't remember so exactly—but when I awoke I had a terrible headache and then was sick for two days. Then father came home. I didn't see her after that. I hated her. A couple of days before mother returned father sent her away."

So it was by the ordinary old-fashioned method that she had seduced him. I assured him I would not tell his parents—at least for the moment—and in any event not without his permission. He took up his coat and hat quietly. The confession had done him good.

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Just after he had left I suddenly heard a trampling on the stairs, as if several persons were coming up in a hurry close together. Then in strode Beau Eugene, foaming with rage and grasping Eberhard, who was white as chalk, by the arm. I was really scared for a moment.

"There! Gaze on this brat! Now I want to know how my son, who is supposed to be off at the university, comes to show up here visiting you! I happened to pass entirely by chance and saw him sneaking out. I thought I didn't see straight, but it was he, all right. Well, what's the meaning of it?"

Some hypocrite, I thought!

The truth is, his conscience hurts him because he was on his way here himself.

He looked at me questioningly, then at the boy. I was too astonished to say anything; but, as Eberhard said nothing either and remained pale as death, I spoke: "Eberhard, I guess it's best we tell your father all about it. You see, there is nothing more to hide. And it will be for your good. Then we can all three settle everything for the best. What do you say?"

But he said nothing—only continued to stare at me stonily. "Shall I talk it over with your father?"

He nodded. So I told Beau Eugene that Eberhard had got an infection, and what the na-

ture of it was so far as the examination had as yet disclosed. I was explaining how he had been seduced, but the instant Beau Eugene heard the word "seduced" he interrupted scornfully: "I won't listen to that bunk! A fine limb of the family you are. Beginning early—what! I'm going to tell mother, of course—let her know the sort of fine, innocent boy she has brought up."

"No, father! Father! Not mother!" cried the boy, hoarse with terror; and, rushing up, he virtually assaulted his father, grasping him spasmodically by both arms.

"Father, father, don't tell mother! Punish me any way you want to. Take Flock! [a pet dog he had taken with him to the university]. Cut down my allowance—take it all back! But—O, father, father, please, please don't tell mother!"

"No, she has got to know it. It's precisely she that must know it," he insisted relentlessly, barbarously.

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I had the feeling that he was getting a sort of malicious satisfaction out of announcing this new misfortune. Then he turned to me.

"In my opinion it is best to let her know immediately. I'll telephone for her. Then we can determine what's best to be done with him."

"I think it would be best, baron, if you settled that at home and broke it to the baroness gradually—especially since she has just been so ailing."

"No, you will have the treatment in hand, and she will be sending for you anyway. So why the nuisance of having the three of us suddenly appearing at our house? Think of the servants and the sensation when my excellent son, who is supposed to be at the university, suddenly returns and is at home for weeks and months with a mysterious sickness. And the society gossips! I won't have Eberhard in the house for the time being. So you see it's best I telephone her."

He turned and made for the hall, where the telephone was. But Eberhard intercepted him by the door, pale as bleached linen. The look in his eyes was one of resolution. He resembled a frightened stag that the dogs have cornered and that sees his end and prepares desperately for the last fight.

"Father, you must not tell mother!" he cried in a harsh voice, his back to the door. "No, not mother. I could never come near her again. I'll run away forever; you don't need to believe me. Don't do it! I warn you, father, it will bring a calamity!"

His voice was half smothered in rising sobs, but he mastered it. "Childish, immature babble!" cried Beau Eugene, shoving him aside as he went out.

The boy collapsed in the chair. I tried to reassure him. I said I would manage everything and urged him to rely on me. But he only stared past me at nothing as if half-witted; did not hear me and did not answer. Out in the hall I heard Beau Eugene talking and went out there. He handed me the receiver and stood aside. The baroness asked excitedly what was the matter; she had not understood clearly what her husband said.

"Eberhard has met with a slight mishap," I said into the telephone transmitter, "and is up at my place. Nothing dangerous."

"My God!" I heard her cry; then, "I'll start at once."

Beau Eugene and I returned to the consultation room. Eberhard still sat there with the same unseeing stare.

"Come, Eberhard, into the examination room till I have prepared your mother. Don't be afraid. It will come out all right."

I pushed him out ahead of me. He seemed as if in a trance and moved like a mechanical doll. I placed a chair for him and saw him lean back in it. Beads of perspiration stood out on his chalky forehead. I feared a fainting spell and had Ludovica, my housekeeper, bring him a glass of water. He gulped it by a sort of instinct, but retained the same rigid stare as if lost to everything. I returned to his father, who was striding up and down excitedly.

"Believe me, doctor," he began, "there is no other way. We must settle this matter here. You probably know how changed

The Doctor's Diary

Foreword The Doctor's Diary is based on an original translation by H. C. Peterson (Ph. D., Leipzig) of "Die Gottesgeißel" (The Scourge of God). In earlier instalments this remarkable journal of a doctor's fight against syphilis introduced us to the author, who had his own fearful days when infection threatened; Baron Eugene von L—, "Beau Eugene," handsome playboy, involved with a little seamstress; the baroness, tragically innocent victim of the baron's philandering; Eberhard, their son, who has been learning French from flirtatious Mademoiselle and now is hurrying to the physician to tell of some trouble he is in.

Because of the widespread interest in the subject of the diary, readers may wish to comment in letters. These should be addressed to the Editor of the Graphic Section and should be brief, so that the best of them can be printed.

"Dear lady," I began, "a small mishap. You know how young people are. Eberhard has been seduced and has acquired a slight trouble—such as one so often acquires—"

"So that's it! He also! Is it syphilis?" She asked this harshly and abruptly, regarding me keenly.

"That I cannot say yet for certain. We will hope not. But precautions are always in order."

"By your leave, doctor, you helped deceive me once most thoroughly at the time this wretch infected me. A second attempt would be wasting time. When we women are to be tricked the men stand together."

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So she knew it all. Her husband became embarrassed and said nothing.

Then she burst into tears, rocking from side to side where she sat.

"My boy—my beautiful boy!"

"So it's the talk you are worrying about. Strange! When did you ever consider what people would say about your debaucheries? And now so concerned about the family name!" Her eyes were dry and her voice had become rasping.

"And now I wish to tell you something—I really ought to tell it in private, but we are done with each other—that you will realize. You infected me knowingly; that was a deliberate crime. I did not suspect anything until I met Countess von B— in Egypt. She told me her story. It was like mine. She has the same sort of husband that I have. I haven't been married to a man, but to a lecherous beast. You never dreamed I knew what a skirt-hound you were. I always forgave you, because I thought you would get over it with years. I forgave you even when you brought back gowns from Paris by Poiret, Redfern, and Paquin at 500 francs each and gave them to

the apartment, so that Beau Eugene and I already had found the boy when she came back.

"Hardie, Hardie! What is it?"

She threw herself on the floor beside him and took his head in her arms and scrutinized him anxiously but intelligently. He was unconscious and groaning horribly.

Beau Eugene and I carried him into my bedroom and placed him on the bed. He was in a complete coma. His eyes were half open and the irises were turned up under the eyelids. Then an attack of retching set in. Ludovica switched on the big ceiling light and I saw a yellowish streak running down the left corner of his mouth across his chin. I forced his mouth open and found the mucous lining yellow and corroded. I had a terrible intuition.

"Ludovica," I cried, "some eggs! Break them and separate out the whites."

I bade the parents stay with the boy, who was twitching in convulsions, and went into the examination room and began looking around. And there it lay in the corner—the bottle which contained poison—empty! Its label was uppermost, and the red skull grinned at me from between its crossbones.

All was clear. In terror and despair, hearing the altercation out in the waiting room, he had seized the fatal bottle and drained it. And now Ludovica was back, out of breath, with a coffee cup of egg white. The poison will form an insoluble compound with albumen.

"My poor boy! Don't you know me, Hardie? It's your mother, Hardie. O! Speak only one word."

She again had taken his head in her arms. The premonition of death was in her face. I floated several teaspoons of the egg white into his mouth, but he could not swallow. Instead his convulsions grew worse. His pulse became weak and thready. There was no hope.

"It would be best we brought him home," I suggested. "It may be days before the end comes."

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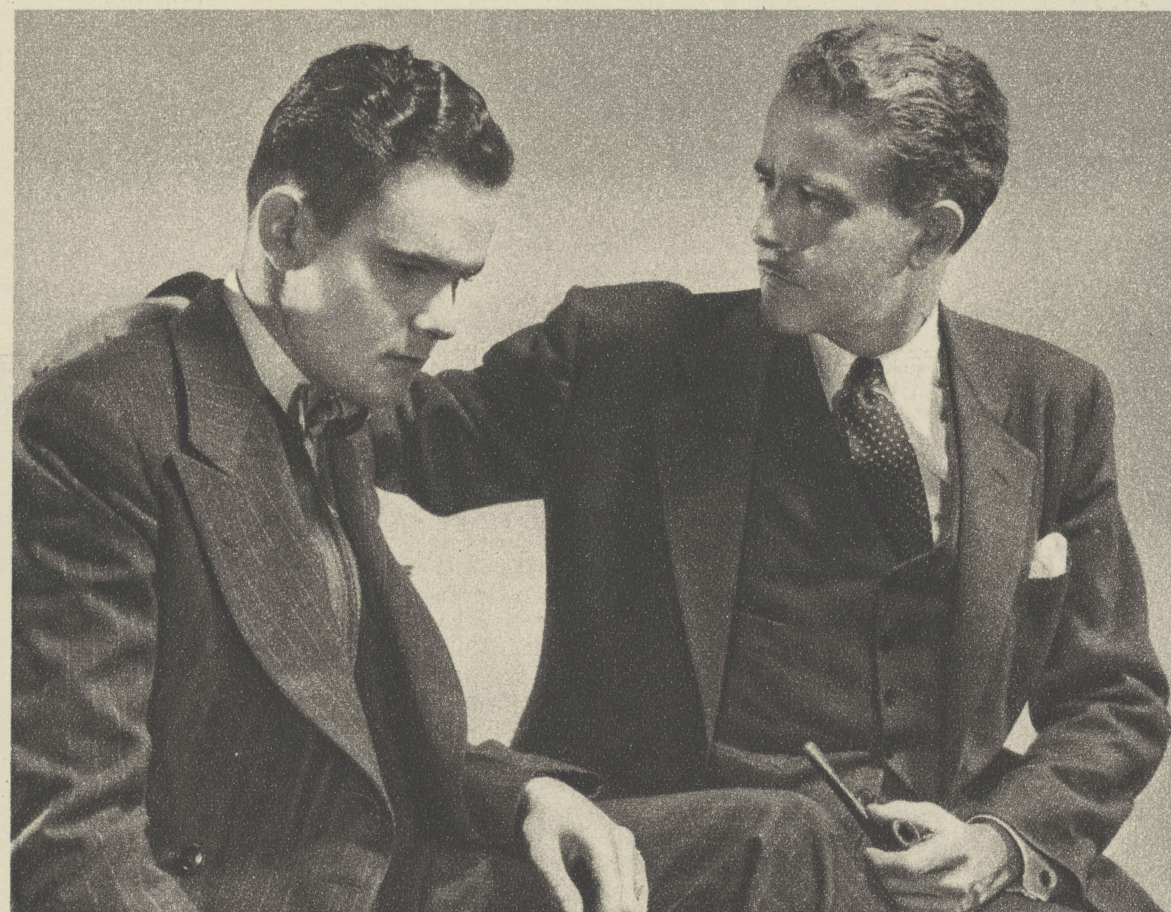
There were blankets in the sedan, and Ludovica found pillows and additional coverings. And I asked the baron to summon another physician in consultation. He was absolutely crushed. He said nothing. His face bore a look of hideous bewilderment.

It is not possible for me to narrate in detail what happened during the next six hours. I seem to remember only two moments. The first was when we were home and had laid the dying lad on his mother's bed. She came up to me and said in a voice that was veiled in tears: "Doctor, I treated you shabbily this evening. Do not hold it against me. You cannot imagine what I have been suffering. You shall treat him if you succeed in saving him from this. And you will save him, I am sure. You can't know what it would mean to lose an only son."

The other moment that I recall came at 3 o'clock that morning. The consulting physician and I had worked in vain by means of various injections to keep life going. It was dreadful to see that healthy body writhing in its battle with death. Add to this the terrible groans, which could be heard even in the rooms below. At 3 o'clock it was over. I see the baroness yet, kneeling there till dawn, his head in her arms and her cheek against his. I tried a kindly phrase or two. She did not hear me; only looked up once with tearless, distorted face. I bade her husband, who sat weeping quietly, not to leave her. He mentioned the address of her parents and requested me to inform them tactfully by telegraph and ask them to come. I did so and went home, where I found Ludovica waiting up for me.

Two days later we buried him. The baroness did not shed a tear; did not seem able to. Gossip had already started. It was given out that he died of an internal hemorrhage. They say she is going to sue for divorce as soon as possible, and that she refused to see those who called to express condolence and has spoken to no one but her parents.

(THE END.)



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his son. And my instinctive feeling that the son's misfortune would never have occurred had he not had a father who was given to ruthless indulgence was to be borne out a few days later when Beau Eugene, filled with remorse, confessed to me that it was he who had infected mademoiselle. In truth, he had enabled the woman to pass on his own venom to his son.

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Suddenly we heard the shriek of brakes down in the street. I was surprised to have her arrive so soon. She must have urged her chauffeur into breakneck speed. Then the car door slammed and footsteps came hurrying up the stairs. The baroness suddenly stood there before us. She had on neither coat nor hat. A wad of colored embroidery silk hung from an apron pocket. She was even carrying the silky gold-yellow automobile robe of vicuna skin convulsively under one arm. Her nostrils quivered and her eyes were wide open in fear.

"Where is he? What is wrong with him?" she panted. "Give me a chair—my knees—I can't stand."

I took the robe gently from her and set out a chair. Then she looked at her husband, indicating that he should speak, but he shrugged and gesticulated toward me.

"Speak! Why don't you speak? This fear is making me sick."

Poisoned, too! O, God! What have I done that you should punish me like this!"

I attempted a bit of comfort. "Silence!" she cried. "I'll not believe a word you say any more. You knew what my disease was. The time I asked you you deceived me brutally. The healer is as bad as the stealer. I should never have believed that you, with your personality, would lie."

"Dear lady, I considered long and carefully whether I should tell you. I did not refrain just to please your husband. What would have been gained if I had told you? It would only have embittered your mind and poisoned your family life and filled you with despair. If it would have made you well sooner I should not have hesitated. The truth would probably have shattered your nervous system forever, whereas hope and ignorance kept you up. In treating this disease the patient's spiritual balance must not be upset. I did everything in your interest."

"Let your talk be yes, yes, and no, no, says the Bible. That does not lessen your untruthfulness in the least. I shall take the boy home at once. I will not have you treat him, for I have lost all confidence in you."

"Ruth," her husband interrupted, "we can't have him treated at home on account of the servants. I cannot permit that. Talk already will have started from the way you rushed off here."

the mistresses you picked from among the refuse of the city. I have in black and white in my desk the bills and the letters of thanks your women wrote you. And then as a reward for my silence and patience you went and infected me with a disease that decent women hardly know exists, let alone discuss, so that I feel like a leper. It was only the boy that kept me from divorcing you. I am taking him home. I tell you, companionship with you is at an end forever. You shall do nothing, or I will sue tomorrow. The court will give Eberhard to me, you may be sure, and I'll take him now—then let the town know the sort of irresponsible scoundrel you have been."

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At that moment I heard a discreet knock at the door. She was about to go on, but stopped as I held up a finger. She breathed deep and stood measuring her husband with a look of fury.

I opened the door. Ludovica stood there.

"What is it, Ludovica?" I asked.

"Something seems to be the matter with the young gentleman. He fell off the chair and is groaning so terribly," she said, her eyes full of concern.

"Eberhard! Eberhard!" The baroness sped through a door and down the corridor toward the kitchen, where she saw a light, being unacquainted with