

TO-MORROW

By LLOYD WILLIAMS

ILLUSTRATED BY W. R. S. STOTT

HE woke with a start as a church clock sounded midnight.

To-morrow had come!

For the first time in his life he had a feeling of fear straining at him; it was more than fear—it was a shrinking from something known, yet outside the range of human experience.

Since the world began, had such a thing happened before?

He had already lived to-morrow in his sleep.

He had lived each hour of the day with the precision of actuality. And while he dreamed, he knew it was to-morrow. Everything that was going to happen—except only one thing—was already known to him.

He stared about in the darkness of his room as if measuring himself against the unknown power that had torn down the veil that hangs between now and presently. Was he quite sane? Was he quite awake?

He switched on the light, looking round at well-known, commonplace objects curiously—the bookshelves, wardrobe, chest of drawers, the golf clubs in the corner, portraits on the mantelshelf, his one or two prints, his clothes tossed down carelessly on a chair, a copy of "Marcus Aurelius" on a table by the bed. Everything was absurdly commonplace. The door leading into the adjoining room, which was bath and dressing-room combined, stood ajar. He slipped out of bed, switched on the light there, too, and looked about him. He wished to assure himself that everything was normal.

"Am I normal?"

That was the question.

The feeling of fear had passed. Whatever to-morrow brought forth, he must face it. But he was standing on the edge of things, between present and future, and he knew both.

If he were to wake up old Petty, who waited on him, and say to him, "Petty, I have dreamed of everything that is going to happen to-morrow," Petty would

regard him as a lunatic. "Would Petty be right?" he asked himself. "Let us look at the thing squarely and sort out the facts."

He lighted a cigarette and propped himself up in bed comfortably. First he looked back over the past day or two, and the time just before going to bed.

He had been a trifle overworked, but there was nothing unusual in that. When a man is on the point of getting married, he presses fortune eagerly; but he was fit and strong, and not at all likely to break down. Last night he had read up one or two law points until about half-past nine; then, after a stroll round the Temple, he went to bed with a copy of "Marcus Aurelius" because secretly he thought him the greatest bore that ever lived, and felt sure of falling asleep at once.

A glance over all that was enough.

Then he turned his eyes to to-morrow.

The church clock struck again; it was one in the morning now. For practical purposes the day would not begin for another six hours, yet he had already lived most of it, and he recalled his dream.

Petty came into the room and turned on the bath water. "A pleasant morning, sir, but I believe we are going to have rain."

Commonplace words enough, and it remained to be seen if, when seven o'clock came, Petty would use that precise form. He remembered taking his bath and shaving; he gave himself a slight cut on the chin. Then he went down to breakfast, and found three letters awaiting him. He remembered glancing at the address of the top one. Someone had misspelt his name, calling him "Basil Charters," instead of "Basil Charteris."

That envelope contained nothing of consequence. He could not remember what it was—probably a circular. The second letter was from an old friend. Purvis was running in to see him that morning. "I want you to do me a favour."

The third letter came from a man making an appointment for golf. The appointment

was registered in his mind—Saturday, at three, on Banstead Downs.

The day was stretched out before him just as if he had actually lived it instead of merely dreaming it. There was a chaffing dialogue with old Petty, who never understood jokes. Then he—

No, steady! Here was a gap. For the next hour he could not fill in what had happened. He had dreamed it accurately, but it had escaped his memory. For some time he fidgeted over it, trying to recall what it was that happened between nine and ten.

At ten Purvis rushed in. His wife had been taken ill, and he wanted Charteris to take over a case he was engaged in that day.

It was a straightforward case, and Charteris could do it "on his head." No, he wouldn't take any denial. Here was the brief. "The affair won't last half an hour, so you'll pick up ten guineas easily," said Purvis.

He disliked this practice of taking briefs without due time for preparation, but there was no denying Purvis. Besides, the matter was simple, and he seized the details of the brief clearly.

He hurried away to Epsom, arriving a little late. He remembered apologising to the judge and telling the man opposed to him, in a whisper, to "cut it short," because it was useless to drag out the case.

Then the unexpected happened. A woman giving evidence blurted out something of which no one had had notice; he found himself embroiled in a dispute with the judge, who wanted to rule it out as irrelevant. The case wore on until late in the afternoon, and he remembered his long cross-examination of a grim-looking individual, who was accounted one of the saints of the town, but was found to be living a double life.

He won his case with difficulty, but he had done more than win a case. He had made a name. When he got back to London, the papers were already dealing with it. They called it "Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde in Epsom." How he laughed! A side-wind, a mere fluke, had done what years of hard work had missed. Henceforth he was a well-known man.

Scarcely had he reached his chambers, when Elsie rushed in. She had read about his triumph, and came with hands outstretched and kisses to congratulate him.

He remembered just how she put it.

"I'm not a bit prouder of you, dear, than I was yesterday, but I'm glad you have come into your own."

It was such an "occasion" that they felt they must have dinner together, and go to a theatre without troubling to book seats or dress. Elsie chose Wyndham's, and his dream gave him just as clear vision of the play as if he had actually seen it. He could have repeated the story and discussed the acting. He lay in bed puzzling over this for a long time. Perhaps he had read a criticism of the piece when it first came out, and memory was merely playing a trick on him; yet it was amazing how well he remembered it.

And so his dream carried him to the last scene of the day—the scene that was unfinished. His cigarette went out, and he found himself gripping the bedclothes tightly as he thought of it.

He had seen Elsie home, but refused to go inside for a sandwich and a cigarette, because he must catch a train back to Town. It was on his way to the station that the unexpected happened.

He became aware that a man was following him. He must have been an absurdly clumsy creature, for he would run a few paces and then stop. On looking round, he saw his pursuer slink into the shadow.

The affair was ridiculous and bordering on cheap melodrama, but it got on his nerves, and at last he stood still and waited.

"Don't hide yourself," he said impatiently. "If you have anything to say, come and say it."

The man seemed to hesitate, but at last he emerged into a ring of light provided by a lamp. He was shabby and wild-looking, and his movements uncertain and furtive.

"Who the devil are you?" asked Charteris.

There was no answer except a kind of foolish chuckle.

Charteris began to grow uneasy. A hint of the truth had come to him. This man was a lunatic, and sometimes madmen. . . .

The man came nearer.

"Perhaps you don't know me," he said.

Charteris peered at him in the doubtful light, wondering if he were someone he knew; but he was a total stranger.

"Why don't you pretend you never saw me before?" said the man.

"There's no pretence about it. I haven't seen you before," replied Charteris. "You have mistaken me for someone else."

But he had a notion that the stranger

was not listening; he was in the frame of mind when words make no impression. He was looking behind him with a childishly secretive air, as if to make sure they were alone. He came closer, and Charteris instinctively drew his fist from his pocket to defend himself.

But no defence was possible, for the attack was too sudden.

"Who wrecked my home?" screamed the man. "Blast you, I'll . . ."

He had drawn a revolver, and before Charteris could seize him and wrench it away, he fired point-blank at his breast.

That was the end of his dream.

He felt himself sinking down—down—down to an unknown depth.

He was dead. He seemed to know he was dead—killed by a

pitiless accuracy about this that dismayed him.

Suppose it came true!

Suppose, when morning came, the day began to arrange itself just as he had dreamed, would he be a foolish coward if he deliberately avoided the possibility of that shot?

It was not till nearly four o'clock that



"Charteris sprang forward, but the other was too quick. The revolver cracked off full in his face, as it seemed, and he fell."

maniac who had obviously mistaken him for another.

He was not afraid to die, but there was something brutally stupid in this. Was he really to be snuffed out by such a disaster?

For some hours he lay awake thinking over his experience.

What should a man do? Dreams are only dreams, yet there was a kind of

he fell asleep, and when he woke, Petty was already in his room.

"A pleasant morning, sir, but I believe we are going to have rain," said the old man.

To-morrow had begun.

II.

CHARTERIS stared at his letters.

The top one was addressed "Basil

Charters," and it contained a circular from a wine merchant with whom he had never dealt. The second was from Purvis, who was calling to ask a favour; the third was a golf appointment.

He laid them by his plate and stared straight in front of him, while Petty hovered about the room fussily. There was something terrifying in this experience, something in-

gap. He may have dreamed it, but it would not come back to him. It was a great relief; he could read his newspaper as he walked, without the feeling that he knew already what it contained. What a blessing this was! When people want to know what is going to happen, they little know what a comfort it is to be in ignorance. At half-past nine, as usual, he returned to



"The madman's arm had been struck aside, at the very instant he fired, by Elsie herself."

human. Scores of stories are told of people "foreseeing the future," but it is no more than a glimpse, a peep at one incident. But here was the case of a man seeing almost the whole of a day. Even the chattering commonplaces of Petty were familiar; he had heard them before midnight.

Breakfast over, he took his usual stroll along the Embankment with a pipe. He remembered that this part of the day was

his chambers, and—found Elsie there. This again was totally unexpected, and it was a delightful surprise.

She had arranged to play golf with a girl in North London, and, finding herself with half an hour to spare, had very sensibly called on her young man.

"I suppose you are frightfully busy, Basil, as usual," she said, submitting to a good-morning kiss with a demureness which

never failed to charm him. "It will do you good if I waste a little of your time. You work too hard, old boy. Are there any cigarettes?"

He produced a box, and they lighted up. Elsie looked at him curiously. "You look a trifle off colour, dear. Anything wrong?"

He told her a portion of his dream, and at first she laughed. Elsie was not in the least fanciful, and looked upon dreams as "all rot."

"I admit it sounds like foolishness," he said, with a smile. "But the exasperating thing is that up to now everything has come true. The test is, will the rest of the day live up to the dream?"

The letter from Purvis made her frown slightly, and when he went on to say that Purvis was going to ask him to take over a brief in the Epsom Court, she looked at him hard.

"I can tell you all about the case," he went on. "And, unless the dream lets me down badly, it will prove to be a bit of luck for you and me."

She listened in astonishment.

"If it happens like that, it will be terrific," she said slowly. "You won't be junior long, Basil, if you make a name. But tell me the rest of the day. What happened afterwards?"

"No, I shan't tell you any more. I will write it down on paper and post it to you. You shall read it to-morrow."

He was curious to see if the after-part of the day would work out according to programme. It rested with her. She would be almost certain to call upon him on her way home. If she proposed a theatre, they would go to one. If she felt tired and wanted to go home at once, he would go down to Wimbledon with her.

But Elsie was still looking at him. Women are curiously susceptible about unknown influences, and although he smiled and imagined he was concealing his uneasiness, she seemed to be aware of it.

"Was there anything unpleasant in the dream, Basil?" she asked.

"It ended like dreams always do—in a vague something or other that isn't easy to recall," he said carelessly. "Don't let us talk about it any more. I shall—There's a knock at the door, and it will be Purvis come to offer me his brief, *Wilkins v. Cheshire*."

"Are you sure you haven't already heard of the case?" she asked uneasily.

"Perhaps he has spoken of it, but you have forgotten."

"I haven't seen Purvis for a week or two. Yes?"

"Mr. Purvis to see you, sir," said Petty.

Elsie left him almost at once, and, just as he anticipated, Purvis had come to insist on his taking over a case. His wife was ill.

"It's as plain as a pikestaff, and won't last half an hour," said Purvis. "You'll be back in Town for luncheon."

Charteris hesitated. He hardly liked to take the brief, because he believed there was more attached to it than Purvis imagined. But when he said as much, and was able to mention the names of the parties without looking at the inscription on the brief, Purvis simply stared at him. Purvis was a downright, matter-of-fact individual, with no more imagination than a sewing-machine.

"Look here, old chap, you don't want to get these cranky ideas in your head," he said. "I'm taking the missus down to Torquay, and the brief is yours. If there's any fat hanging to it, good luck to you. You'll find it all moonshine."

Charteris had to leave for Epsom at once, and must trust to reading the case over in the train. By sheer will-power he shut uncanny ideas out of his mind. When he entered the Court late, and apologised to the judge, exactly as he had apologised in his dream, he felt like a puppet being pulled by invisible strings.

Everything that followed was familiar, yet in the press of argument he was able to shut uneasiness out of his mind. The case was commonplace up to a point, and then a woman witness blurted out something that was unexpected. He knew her face, though he had never seen her before; he knew the sound of her voice. An argument with the judge followed, and a dull case became exciting. Wilkins, the plaintiff, was an unsavoury wretch, and Charteris had him back in the witness-box. The man was a humbug of the vilest kind, and at about three o'clock in the afternoon Charteris had won his case after a tough fight.

He had to endure congratulations—which he hardly liked, though he had fairly earned them—and by the time he reached London, the evening papers were chuckling over his retorts and cross-examination. One of them actually had a placard "Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde in Epsom."

In vain he tried to shake off a feeling of depression; the day was closing down upon him with relentless speed. Another hour or two, and that last scene would happen. He was already giving way to a feeling of Kismet; it had to happen—there was no escape.

In his chambers he sat for a long time thinking it over. He might avoid it. There were fifty things he might do to escape, but he would go straight on. He would follow his fate, no matter where it led. It rested with Elsie. If she voted for a theatre, to a theatre they would go, and he would take her home as usual.

"If I am to be murdered, I'll take it like a man," he muttered. "I'll be hanged if I save my skin because I got the wind up over a dream."

Elsie came rushing in exactly as expected, with the evening paper in her hand. It was curious to watch her attitude, and she used the words he expected. "I am not a bit prouder of you, dear, than I was yesterday, but I am glad you have come into your own."

Yet she was uneasy; he could see it in her eyes. The case had taken the turn he had predicted, and, like himself, she shrank from the feeling that they were caught up in a fate that was unavoidable.

"Look here, I won't have any moping over this business," she said. "You shall take me somewhere to dinner, and then we'll do a theatre. I must 'phone to mother, and tell her I'll be home late."

She used his telephone, while he looked over a few letters, but as soon as she had used it, she turned to him with a new alarm in her face.

"Did you expect me to propose a theatre?" she asked.

He laughed at her. "I'm not going to say anything about it. Here is an account of the latter part of my dream, and I am going to post it now. You will receive it in the morning. I shall be ready to start in five minutes, but no more about dreams, Elsie. We will enjoy ourselves. Where would you like to go?"

"What about the Ambassadors?"

"Nothing I should like better," he said.

The dream had broken down, and he was absurdly relieved. But Elsie was looking at him, and, seeing the smile on his face, she may have imagined that she was unconsciously fulfilling his fate, for suddenly she altered her mind.

"I believe I would rather go to Wyndham's," she said.

From that moment his spirits rose. There is tremendous difference between certainty and uncertainty. Hitherto he had been haunted by a doubt as to how far his curious experience was reliable; now he knew the worst. It was correct. Even Elsie's ingenious attempt to ward off Fate was useless, and he could afford to smile. Let a man know the worst, and he can harden himself to face it. There may even be a grim sort of satisfaction in doing so.

Elsie smiled at the relief in his eyes, and doubtless believed she had broken an uncanny spell. They enjoyed themselves finely at dinner, and she discussed sundry preparations for the wedding.

It was strange how heartily he could enter into it. The feeling that it was not his own wedding was with him, for he would perish that night at the hands of a lunatic, but he would not have spoil her happiness for the world. Her eyes sparkled and her pretty face flushed with excitement even at the thought of it. He was beginning to take a purely detached view of himself and his own fate. He would put up no end of a fight to save himself presently. He had no intention of being snuffed out by a madman for nothing, but it would be useless. Ingenuity would not serve, and nothing could persuade him to run away from his fate. He would face the business as he had faced things before—in Flanders, for instance.

The evening was a happy one, and neither of them felt the presence of a cloud. During the last interval Elsie said she did not think he need take her down home, "It will do you far more good to get to bed, old boy."

"Just as you like, dear," he said, with a smile.

Once more she seemed to fancy that in saying this she was playing into the hands of Fate, for a frown appeared on his forehead. "Well, no, I think I would like you to see me home, Basil," she said. "We shall have a nice long talk in the train."

He nodded acquiescence; the affair was in her hands.

They walked from Wimbledon Station to her father's house—which was on the Ridgeway—at a brisk pace. Elsie took his arm, and he fancied she clung a little tightly, as if she suddenly felt the return of the shadow. But he found it easy to talk

cheerfully, because he was deeply interested in what was to follow.

They parted, Elsie detaining him for a short time in talking over arrangements for to-morrow. She felt obviously nervous. Twice she held up her lips to be kissed.

"You are sure everything is quite all jolly, aren't you, old boy?" she asked.

"Rather! Good night, dear."

The door closed behind her as he reached the gate, and he set off down the hill to the station.

He was listening for the furtive step behind just as he had listened in his dream. Not yet—not just yet! It was not due for several more yards.

If he had not dreamed that dream, he would not have listened for the step; he would not have paused, perhaps, and so the catastrophe might not have happened. It was a curious psychological puzzle, and it interested him so much that he forgot to listen. Perhaps a foreknowledge of trouble only hastens it; he would have liked to discuss the point with one or two men who were interested in such things.

Ah, now!

He heard the step. Someone was running for a few yards with a shuffling uncertain run, and then pausing. He looked round, but saw no one. The figure was hiding in the shadow. A few yards further on, he looked round again, and this time he saw someone.

"Don't hide yourself," he said. "If you have anything to say, come and say it."

They were the exact words of his dream. He had not consciously chosen them; they came from his lips naturally.

The man was standing in the light of the lamp. He was scared-looking and shabby, a person to be smiled at rather than feared.

"Who the devil are you?" asked Charteris.

The man came nearer.

"Perhaps you don't know me," he muttered. "Why don't you pretend you never saw me before?"

Charteris made some reply—possibly the words of his dream—but his mind was busy. If he was to avert his fate, he must be swift.

"Who wrecked my home?" said the man hoarsely. "You . . ."

Charteris sprang forward, but the other was too quick. The revolver cracked off full in his face, as it seemed, and he fell.

* * * * *

"At last! Do you feel very weak, dear?"

Elsie was bending over him. He was lying on a stretcher in a darkish place, and, knowing that he would be perplexed, she explained quickly.

Only a few minutes had passed since the shot was fired, and he was at the police-station, where he had been examined by a doctor. There was little harm done, for the madman's arm had been struck aside, at the very instant he fired, by Elsie herself, and the wound was a trifle.

"How did you come to be there, Elsie?" he asked.

"I was frightened, old boy," she whispered. "And as we entered our gate, I saw a man lurking in the dark not far away. After you left me, I came out again and followed you."

He held her hand and looked up into her eyes gratefully.

"I am thankful to-day is finished," he said. "Are they going to take me to a hospital?"

"No jolly fear," she said. "I am going to have you under my own eye, and I've phoned to mother to say we are coming."

"If only my dream had told me that the day would end up like this, I wouldn't have cared twopence," he said. "But Fate itself cannot get level with a woman when she's the right sort."

