

# AS SEEN THROUGH WOMAN'S EYES.

## Is Fear a Disease?

Being afraid is being ill. The specialists in fear can note its symptoms and follow their progress in our organisms just as the fever specialist notes the course of typhoid fever. It is as contagious as measles and as subject to epidemics as the "grip."

Fear acts directly on the nerves and through them on all our faculties, commencing by that of movement. Sometimes it excites the motor nerves to such a degree that the victim must run and flee, no matter what comes; sometimes it makes them tremble convulsively. We are paralyzed, cannot budge.

The capillary vessels which carry the blood to the skin contract or dilate, and the face either pales or blushes. The nerves no longer direct the motions of the heart, which strikes quickly like a clock out of order. A cry escapes your lips despite yourself, a sound which you wish to omit remains in your throat, because the nerves of the respiratory apparatus and those of the vocal organs are affected the same as the heart.

"SCARED TO DEATH" LITERALLY TRUE.

Add to this the facial movements, the coming and going on the features of the grimaces which follow each other, or the strained masklike fixity with the cadaverous air of stupidity and you have the symptoms of fear.

These physiological troubles can be so aggravated that death is the natural end. One man while passing a rough thought some one clutched at his feet. Instantly frightful images assailed his mind: he saw a figure rise from the grave trying to seize him; he died the same night. Another man expired from terror on the day that had been predicted that he would die. Many have fallen rigid while awaiting a death sentence; they die of the fear of death!

Surgeons know this better than any one else; how many times fear and not the knife has been the death of patients on the operating table. The famous Dussault traced on the skin of one of his patients the line along which he would make his incision; the patient exhaled one breath and expired.

One can even die of a hypnotic fear. Some college youths determined to give an unpopular teacher a scare, and conducted him into a dark room, where they had arranged a block and a hatchet. He at first took all as a joke, but when they assured him that nothing could be more serious and that he was to be beheaded on the stroke of the clock, and, finally, when they laid his head on the block he grew serious enough. The appropriate motions were performed, his head was let drop from its rest, and when the handkerchief was removed from his eyes to notice the effect he was found dead.

**FEAR OF THUNDER MOST COMMON.**

Medical dictionaries classify fear diseases as phobias. One of the commonest is the fear of thunder. The prof-

test example of this phobia is about Mme. Saint Hercur, a French dame who immediately made for the underside of her bed when it commenced to thunder, and ordered all her servants to pile on top of it, one above the other, so that should the thunder fall above her it would light upon the servants first and be softened in its descent.

The fear of water is another frequent phobia. There are people to whom it is a material impossibility to cross a bridge. This was the case of the Alsatian enrolled in the German army in 1870, who, rather than put his foot on the bridge, resolutely cast himself into the water, despite the orders of his officers and his subsequent punishment.

Two phobias, opposite in their nature, are equally common in extent—the fear of solitude and the fear of crowds. The latter is what is manifest every day by the country folk freshly arrived in town. The uproar in the streets, the passing of the vehicles startle them; they feel like beating a retreat to the railway station for the first train home.

## QUIET PEOPLE AFRAID OF ACTIVITY.

Others are afraid of travel. There are people even to-day who have never yet consented to enter a railway carriage. Men of studious habits, accustomed to live in the domain of thought, are often alarmed by every variety of action and by contact with reality. It is said of Carlyle that merely the thought of entering a shop made him unhappy. The idea of ordering a suit or of buying a pair of gloves prostrated him, while the thought of travelling alone with his wife after their marriage seemed simply inadmissible.

Perhaps the most curious form of the disease of fear is the disease of disease. A strange and numerous category is that of imaginary patients! They attack the doctors with their grievances and hold consultations without end. Everything to them is suspicious—the milk may be tuberculous, the water may be infected with typhoid germs. How can they enter a cab which might have held an infected person? In epidemics fear claims more victims than the malady proper.

There is a phobia familiar to actors, playwrights, and lawyers; it is stage fright, the fear of appearing before many people. Every dramatic author at his debut, every novice actor experiences it. One lawyer about to make his final grand appeal to the jury could only say: "Gentlemen of the jury, I recommend the accused to your severity!"

**CONTAGION OF FRIGHT EXTENDS RAPIDLY.**

The disease of fear is contagious like all diseases that come from the nerves. It speaks in crowds with an unbelievable rapidity. How many times panics have altered the fate of battles! A cry suffices to displace ranks which bullets could not disband. There are examples of double fight. A Latin historian tells of a battle where both armies turned

their backs at the same time; the one fled, the other decamped.

There are veritable epidemics of fear in besieged villages in times of trouble, of revolutions, of famines. During the siege of Paris in 1870 every figure on the boulevards was a suspect, every candle in a window at night was the signal for an alarm; all was complicity, treason.

It is often said that in certain cases and in the presence of dangers which are real fear is not only excusable but natural and legitimate. It is nothing of the sort. Instead of yielding to fear, which deprives us of our means of defense, better redouble courage in order to defend ourselves; or, if all defense is useless, we can at least face the danger and look at it without lowering the eyes.

## ANTICIPATION WORSE THAN ACTUAL DANGER.

Besides, the idea of the danger is generally more frightful than the danger itself. Note the fact that the better we are acquainted with a danger the less we fear it. "Professional courage" develops in the miner in the mine, the guide on the precipitous mountain path, and similar vocations. Exchange their roles and each will be afraid.

The best time to conquer fear is in childhood. In many excellent families, on the contrary, fear is often actually cultivated in the children. When they are disobedient there is immediate talk of a "boggy man" or the police. Instead, any germs of courage should be encouraged with appeals to dignity, honour, duty, and self-respect.

## Jilted Girls.

A normal woman would not be soured by being jilted. She would only be a little wiser, a little better able to judge between the true and the false afterward. She would not be so ready to trust all men, but would have just as much faith in the one man as ever, should she love again. For faith, hope and love are the natural heritage of the normal woman. These qualities are as much a part of her life as life itself. There are girls, of course, whose natures never recover from the shock of being jilted. The wise girl, however, recognises that it is better to be jilted before marriage than neglected afterward. She may love him dearly, and yet willingly give him up on hearing that his heart has changed toward her. Probably the worst sorrow a girl can know would be hers, with the knowledge that his heart has gone from her to another. But even then, if she truly loves, she would not feel bitterly toward him. She would lose her child-like, gushy trust which led her to believe all men good and noble. She would be better able to distinguish between the false and the true as a consequence. And if she loved again, after time had healed the wound, it would be in the same blind, unreasoning, trusting way, if she was the normal woman.

## How Widows are Successful in Catching Men.

The widow is more anxious to please than to be pleased, and a man can stand the most copious draughts of adulation; in fact, he can be intoxicated by the widow's subtle glances, and in such an intoxication he reveals with a smile of ineffable content.

The widow caters to his whims. She is too wise to argue with him. She knows that arguments are the crypts of friendship and the everlasting doom of love. She understands that when a man leaves his business office he wishes to leave there all cares and perplexities. Consequently she does not try to force her opinions on him.

The widow does not object to tobacco; she knows that a man loves his cigar with a more slavish devotion than he could love any woman, whether it be sweetheart or wife.

The well-bred widow is always gracious. She may or may not care to marry again, but having grown accustomed to a husband's comradeship, she enjoys the society of other men. Her graciousness is charmingly apparent when greeting her friends.

The young girl fancies that indifference is a spur aggravating a man's fancy. The widow knows that a man's vanity is flattered by her gracious reception of him, and when either talking or listening she is animated and interested.

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