

May, 1912

Tipyn o' Bob

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MATHEMATICIAN'S HEAVEN.

FRANCES HUNTER, '12.

The sudden disappearance of Oliver Chadwick made little difference to people in general beyond the three days' wonder common in all such cases. He was a lonely fellow, an Englishman, of the Cambridge Mathematical Tripos, Associate of Mathematics in Columbia; with no near relations as far as we could ascertain. He had been most retiring and had formed few human connections during his three years' residence in America. Besides Eleanor Barton, the daughter of the Professor of Mathematics, and myself, I doubt if there was anyone with whom he had gone further than the mere formalities of polite conversation, in which for a professor of Mathematics, he was curiously adept.

"You think you know poetry, MacKenzie," he used to say to me, "and I know you despise my devotion to curves and abstractions, but there are regions in Mathematics beyond the conception of a poet. Follow a hyperbola, think of infinity! here alone is the spirit of man free of the flesh and able to wander beyond the stars." I had always had a particular aversion to Mathematics in any form,—doubtless because the only sort my mind could grasp was disagreeably connected with the first of the month,—but I quite enjoyed seeing Chadwick get worked up. So, from my position as Professor of English Literature, I egged him on constantly to defend the science of his heart.

I could not understand, however, his liking for Eleanor Barton, for not only was she as totally ignorant of her father's pet subject as most ministers' daughters are of theology, but she also refused to hear any mathematical talk whatever. She was an intensely practical, utilitarian girl, who lived to make other people substantially happy. I think she could never understand her father or anyone else who could live as a scholar in a suffering world.

"If it were history, or sociology, or something human," she used to say, "I could see some good in it but of what earthly use are mathematics to anyone?" I was much surprised therefore when Chadwick told me in his quiet way of his engagement to Miss Barton. And I

was not at all surprised when three months later Miss Barton told me that the engagement was broken. I felt sure that Mathematics meant more to Oliver than marriage, and that Eleanor would not be inclined to follow the example of her mother who had been a silent martyr to the cause of science. Her father was all that was high-minded and unworldly—fine traits—but her mother's attempts to make ends meet on a meagre professor's salary had troubled her life and hastened her death. Eleanor would not have had her father know this for worlds, but it was her firm belief and made her a rather hard young person toward those whom she considered "dreamers."

A week after she told me of her broken engagement, Chadwick absolutely vanished. He had seemed quiet and abstracted all week but not more so than usual. He had met his classes on Monday morning, had cut without giving notice the two following days. Professor Barton and I went around to his apartment house lodgings to see if anything was the matter. We rang and rang, but could not get in. We asked the janitor, who affirmed, with the corroboration of the elevator boy, that the Professor had went up to his rooms Monday at noon and hadn't come out since. "Yes, they would have seen him if he had—maybe he *was* sick but he hadn't rung for nothing!" By this time they were trying the door. It was locked. The janitor went down and got his pass-key, unlocked the door and went suddenly white. "By all that's holy, it's bolted on the inside," he said, and Barton suddenly put his hand against the wall to steady himself. The police were called, the door opened. We went in, fearing what might be there. There was nothing, and my feeling of horror rather increased as I saw a great pile of quiz books written Monday morning and evidently brought there by Chadwick on the day when he was last seen. All the rooms were in order. There were no signs of a struggle. The windows were all bolted on the inside. I noticed a book on the table open as if Oliver had just been reading it. It was Newcomb's "Sidelights on Astronomy" and was opened to the chapter called "The Fairy-land of Geometry" which treats of the Fourth Dimension. A sudden thought flashed through my mind. He had gone into the Fourth Dimension! Of course he was invisible to us who lived only in three. I put the idea out of my head as absurd, however, and made no mention of it to the low-browed police-sergeant. Weeks of search failed to disclose any trace of the missing man. Miss Barton grew

visibly thinner and paler and seemed nervous. Of course all sorts of exaggerated reports were afloat about her relations with Chadwick and the part she might have played in his disappearance as the only woman in the case. His friends, and they were pitifully few, told what they knew of Chadwick before a judge; Miss Barton proved an alibi; and again I said nothing of the Fourth Dimension. I had no desire to see the inside of the lunatic asylum.

Months passed. Eleanor Barton seemed much the same except that she may have treated her father with more consideration. One day I got a letter in the mail. As I saw the handwriting my heart gave a jump, and stopped. It was Chadwick's hand—unmistakable. No one else made letters as he did or spaced so beautifully. I could scarcely open it, but did so at last.

"Dear Mac," it ran, "I am in the Fourth Dimension. I was bored with existence, and found the way. I can't describe it to you. I shan't write to you again, and I can never get back. At first I did not want to, but now I find she wants me and this place is no longer Heaven. I tried to talk to her but I couldn't make her hear. It was terrible. I can't write. She would not believe my letter. Don't tell her or anyone else. They would not understand. But you, read the chapter in Newcomb again and perhaps you may comprehend a little.

"Yours to infinity,
"Oliver."

That was all. He never wrote again. Perhaps he had become adjusted to the Mathematician's Heaven!