

The Doctor's Wife

BY MISS M. E. BRADDON

CHAPTER XIV.—(Continued.)

"I mean to appropriate Mrs. Gilbert for the whole of this day," he said, cheerily; "and I shall give her a full account of Waverly, looked upon from an archaeological, historical and legendary point of view. Never mind your flowers now, Roland; it's a very charming bouquet, but you don't suppose Mrs. Gilbert is going to carry it about all day? Take it into the lodge yonder, and ask them to put it in water; and in the evening, if you're very good, Mrs. Gilbert shall take it home to ornament her parlor at Graybridge."

The gates were opened, and they went in; Isabel arm-in-arm with Mr. Raymond.

Roland placed himself presently on one side of Isabel; but Mr. Raymond was so very instructive that all Mrs. Gilbert's attention was taken up in the effort to understand his discourse, which was very pleasant and lively, in spite of its instructive nature.

It was a very pleasant morning altogether. There was a strangely mingled feeling of dissatisfaction and annoyance in Roland Lansdell's mind, as he strolled beside Isabel, and listened, or appeared to listen, to Mr. Raymond's talk. He would like to have had Isabel's little hand lying lightly on his arm; he would like to have those wandering black eyes lifted to his face; he would like her to have heard the romantic legends belonging to the ruined walls and roofless banquet chambers from him. And yet, perhaps, it was better as it was. He was going away very soon, and it was better not to lull himself in soft delights that were so soon to be taken away from his barren life. Yes, his barren life.

He had come to think of his fate with bitter repining, and to look upon himself as, somehow or other, cruelly ill-used by Providence.

The sun was low when they left the ruins of the feast. The moon had risen, so pale as to be scarcely distinguishable from a faint summer cloud high up in the clear opal heaven. Mr. Raymond took Isabel up by a winding staircase to the top of a high turret, beneath which spread green meads and slopes of verdure, where once had been a lake. Roland went with them, of course, and sat looking out at the still night. Soon the voice of George Gilbert sounded from below, deeply sonorous among the walls and towers, calling to Isabel.

"I must go," she said. "I dare say the fly is ready to take us back. Good night, Mr. Raymond; good night, Mr. Lansdell."

"But I am going down with you to the gate," said Roland; "do you think we could let you go down those slippery stairs by yourself, to fall and break your neck, and haunt the tower by moonlight forever afterward, a pale ghost in shadowy muslin drapery? Here's Mr. Gilbert," he added, as the top of George's hat made itself visible upon the winding staircase; "but I'm sure I know the turret better than he does, and I shall take you under my care."

He took her hand as he spoke, and led her down the dangerous winding way as carefully and tenderly as if she had been a little child. Her hand did not tremble as it rested in his; but something like a mysterious winced creature that had long been imprisoned in her breast, seemed to break its bonds all at once, and float away from her toward him. She thought it was her long-imprisoned soul, perhaps, that so left her, to become a part of his. If that slow downward journey could have lasted forever! But the descent did not last very long, careful as Roland was of every step; and there was the top of George's hat bobbing about in the moonlight all the time.

"Remember to-morrow," Mr. Lansdell said, generally, to the Graybridge party as they took their seats. "I shall expect you as soon as the afternoon service is over. I know you are regular churchgoers at Graybridge. Couldn't you come to Mordred for the afternoon service, by the bye?—the church is well worth seeing." There was a little discussion; and it was finally agreed that Mr. and Mrs. George Gilbert and Sigismund should go to Mordred church on the following afternoon.

Mr. Lansdell and Mr. Raymond walked along the lonely road under the shadow of the castle wall, and for some minutes neither of them spoke. Mr. Raymond was rather puzzled how to commence the conversation; when he did begin, he began very abruptly, taking what one might venture to call a conversational header.

"Roland," he said, "this won't do."

"What won't do?" asked Mr. Lansdell coolly.

"Of course, I don't set up for being your mentor," returned Mr. Raymond, "or for having any right to lecture you, or dictate to you. The tie of kinship between us is a very slight one; as far as that goes. Heaven knows that I do if I were your father. But you are doing mischief; you are turning this silly girl's head. It is no kindness to lend her books; it is no kindness to invite her to Mordred, and to show her brief glimpses of a life that never can be hers. If you want to do a good deed, and to elevate her life out of its present dead level, make her your almoner, and give her a hundred a year to distribute amongst her husband's poor patients. The weak, unhappy child is perishing for want of some duty to perform upon this earth, some necessary task to keep her busy from day to day, and to make a

link between her husband and herself. Roland, I do believe that you are as good and generous-minded a fellow as ever an old bachelor was proud of. My dear boy, let me feel prouder of you than I have ever felt yet. Leave to-morrow morning. It will be easy to invent some excuse for going. Go to-morrow, Roland."

"I will," answered Mr. Lansdell, after a brief pause. "I will go, Raymond," he repeated, holding out his hand and clasping that of his friend. "I suppose I have been going a little astray lately; but I only wanted the voice of a true-hearted fellow like you to call me back to the straight road. I shall leave to-morrow, Raymond, and it may be a very long time before you see me back again."

The watchdog's honest bark—or rather the bark of several watchdogs—made the night clamorous presently, when Mr. Lansdell drew rein before the porch; but there was no eye to mark his coming, and he brighter when he came; unless, indeed, it was the eye of his valet.

"You may set to work at once with my portmanteaus, Jadis," he said, when he met his servant in the hall. "I must leave Mordred to-morrow morning in time for the 7 o'clock express from Warnclyffe. You can go to bed when you've finished packing. I've some letters to write, and shall be late."

The letters which he had to write turned out to be only one letter, or, rather, a dozen variations upon the same theme, which he tore up, one after another, almost as soon as they were written. He was not wont to be so fastidious in the wording of his epistles, but to-night he could not be satisfied with what he wrote. He wrote to Mrs. Gilbert, yes, to her! Why should he not write to her when he was going away to-morrow morning—when he was going to offer up that vague, bright dream which had lately beguiled him, a willing sacrifice, on the altar of duty and honor?

"Dear Mrs. Gilbert—I much regret that circumstances which only came to my knowledge after your party left last night, will compel me to leave Mordred early to-morrow morning. I am, therefore, compelled to forego the pleasure which I anticipated from our friendly little dinner to-morrow evening; but pray assure Smith that the Priory is entirely at his disposal whenever he likes to come here."

"I hope you will convey to Mr. Gilbert my warmest thanks, with the accompanying check, for the kindness and skill which have endeared him to my cottagers. I shall be very glad if he will continue to look after them, and I will arrange for the carrying out of any sanitary improvements he may suggest to Hodgson, my steward."

"The library will be always prepared for you whenever you feel inclined to read and study there, and the contents of the shelves will be entirely at the service of yourself and Mr. Gilbert."

"With regards to your husband, and all friendly wishes for Smith's prosperity and success, I remain, dear Mrs. Gilbert, very truly yours,

"ROLAND LANSDSELL."

CHAPTER XV.

Mr. and Mrs. Gilbert went to church arm-in-arm, as usual, on the morning after the picnic; Sigismund stayed at home to sketch. The day was very fine—a real summer day, with a blazing sun and a cloudless blue sky. The sunshine seemed like a good omen. Mrs. Gilbert thought, as she dressed herself in the white muslin robe that she was to wear at Mordred.

She was thinking of the wonderful happiness that lay before her—an evening among pictures and hothouse flowers and marble busts and trailing silken curtains, and with glimpses of a moonlit expanse of lawn and shrubbery glancing through every open window, when a bell rang loud and shrill in her ear, and looking round suddenly, she saw a man in livery standing outside the garden gate. The doctor's wife turned the key in the lock and opened the gate; but the man only wanted to deliver a letter.

"From Mr. Lansdell, ma'am," he said. She read it very hurriedly twice, and then all at once comprehended that Roland was going away for some years—forever—it was all the same thing; and that she would never, never, never—the word seemed to repeat itself in her brain like the dreadful clanging of a bell—never see him again!

She knew that Sigismund was looking at her, and asking her some question about the contents of the letter. "What did Lansdell say? was it a put-off, or what?" Mr. Smith demanded; but Isabel did not answer him. She handed him the open letter, and then, suddenly turning from him, ran into the house, upstairs into her room. She locked the door, flung herself face downward upon the bed, and wept as a woman weeps in the first great agony of her life. The sound of those passionate sobs was stifled by the pillows amidst which her face was buried, but the anguish of them shook her from head to foot. It was very wicked to have thought of him so much, to have loved him so dearly. The punishment of her sin came to her all at once, and was very bitter.

Mr. Gilbert went upstairs by and by, and finding the door of her chamber locked, knocked on the panel, and asked Isabel if she did not mean to go to church. But she told him she had a dreadful headache, and wanted to stay at home.

Mrs. Gilbert got up by and by, when

the western sky was all one lurid glow of light and color. She got up because there was little peace for a weary spirit in that chamber, to the door of which some considerate creature came every half hour or so to ask Isabel if her head was any better by this time, if she would have a cup of tea, if she would come downstairs and lie on the sofa, and to torment her with many other thoughtful inquiries of the like nature. She was not to be alone with her great sorrow. Sooner or later she must go out and begin life again, and face the blank world in which he was not. Better, since it must be so, that she should begin her dreary task at once. She bathed her face and head, she plaited her long black hair before the little glass, behind which the lurid skies glared redly at her. Ah, how often in the sunny morning she had stood before that shabby, old-fashioned glass thinking of him, and the chance of meeting him beside the mill stream, under the flickering shadows of the oak leaves at Thurston Crag! And now it was all over, and she would never, never, never see him again.

She went downstairs by and by, in the dusk, with her face as white as the tumbled muslin that hung about her in limp and flabby folds. She went down into the little parlor, where George and Sigismund were waiting for tea.

She told them that her head was better; and then began to make the tea, scooping up vague quantities of congo and gunpowder with the little silver scallop-shell which had belonged to Mrs. Gilbert's grandmother.

"But you've been crying, Izzie!" George exclaimed, presently, for Mrs. Gilbert's eyelids looked red and swollen in the light of the candles.

"Yes, my head was so bad it made me cry; but please don't ask me any more about it," Isabel pleaded, piteously. "I suppose it was the p—picnic"—she nearly broke down upon the word, remembering how good he had been to her all through that happy day—"yesterday that made me ill."

"I dare say it was that lobster salad," Mr. Gilbert answered briskly. "I ought to have told you not to eat it."

Sigismund Smith watches his hostess with a grave countenance, while she poured out the tea and handed the cups right and left. Poor Isabel managed it all with tolerable steadiness; and then, when the miserable task was over, she sat by the window alone, staring blankly out at the dusty shrubs distinct in the moonlight.

CHAPTER XVI.

All through the autumn months, all through the dreary winter, George Gilbert's wife endured her existence, and hated it. The days were all alike, all "dark, and cold, and dreary," and her life was "dark, and cold, and dreary," like the days.

Mrs. Gilbert did not forget that passage in Roland Lansdell's letter, in which he had placed the Mordred library at her disposal.

The first visit to Mordred made the doctor's wife very unhappy. Was it not a reopening of all the old wounds? Having broken the ice, however, she went very often to the Priory; and on one or two occasions even condescended to take an early cup of tea with Mrs. Warman, the housekeeper.

One day in March, one bleak day, when the big fires in the rooms at Mordred seemed especially comfortable, Mrs. Gilbert carried her books into an inner apartment, half boudoir, half drawing room, at the end of a long suite of splendid chambers. She took off her bonnet and shawl, and smoothed her dark hair before the glass. She had altered a little since the autumn, and the face that looked out at her to-day was thinner and older than that passionate tear-blotched face which she had seen in the glass on the night of Roland Lansdell's departure. Her sorrow had not been the less real because it was weak and childish, and had told considerably upon her appearance. But she was getting over it. She was almost sorry to think it was so. She was almost grieved to find that her grief was less keen than it had been six months ago, and that the splendor of Roland Lansdell's image was perhaps a trifle faded.

The Priory clocks struck three succeeding hours, but Mrs. Gilbert sat in the same attitude, thinking of Roland Lansdell. The thought of going home and facing her daily life again was unutterably painful to her. Once more Isabel Gilbert floated away upon the wings of sentiment and fancy, into that unreal region where the young squire of Mordred reigned supreme, beautiful as a prince in a fairy tale, grand as a demigod in some classic legend.

The French clock on the mantel-piece chimed the half hour after four, and Mrs. Gilbert looked up aroused for a moment from her reverie.

"Half past four," she thought; "it will be dark at six, and I have a long walk home."

She paused suddenly. The door of the boudoir was ajar; all the other doors in the long range of rooms were open, and she heard footsteps coming rapidly toward her; a man's footstep!

Her heart beat violently, her hands clasped, her lips apart and tremulous. And in the next moment the step was close to the threshold, the door was pushed open, and she was face to face with Roland Lansdell—Roland Lansdell, whom she never thought to see again upon this earth! Roland Lansdell, whose face had looked at her in her dreams by day and night any time within these last six months!

"Isabel—Mrs. Gilbert!" he said, holding out both his hands, and taking hers, which were as cold as death.

She tried to speak, but no sound came from her tremulous lips. She could utter no word of welcome to this restless wanderer, but stood before him breathless and trembling. Mr. Lansdell drew a chair toward her, and made her sit down.

(To be continued.)

GOOD Short Stories

If Nelson was not an author he at least enriched the language with one great, though diversely reported, phrase. He was one day talking to Mrs. Swinburne, of Hamsterly, and the conversation turned on Frenchmen. "I never see a Frenchman, Mrs. Swinburne," said Nelson, "without shivering from head to foot."

A colored undertaker was requested to embalm the body of a colored man. The wife of the deceased asked what the cost would be. He named his usual charge, to which she quickly replied: "I think that's too much." "But it is the regular fee," protested the undertaker. "That may be," assented the widow, "but this ain't a regular corpse. My husband had a wooden leg."

A red-headed man one night raked up enough courage to propose to a girl with whom he was very deeply and sincerely in love. She replied to his suit in a sad voice: "I'm very sorry, George, but I could never marry anyone with red hair." "That is nothing," said her suitor, "my barber tells me that at the rate my hair is falling out I'll be completely bald in two years."

Bishop Bloomfield, of England, discovered one day, as he entered the pulpit, he had forgotten the manuscript of his sermon. He was obliged to preach extempore, taking for his theme the existence of God. As he walked home he overtook one of his congregation, whose opinion of the sermon he inquired. "Well, it were a very good sermon," was the reply, "but I don't agree w' it. I believe there is a God."

The number of Joneses in Wales is illustrated by a story told of a certain Oxford college, much resorted to by Welshmen. A man from another college went into its "quad" in search of a friend, and called "Jones!" All the windows looking on the "quad" flew open. "I want John Jones," said the man. Half the windows closed. "I mean the John Jones who has got a toothbrush." All the windows closed but one.

A Christian Brahmin was preaching the gospel in the Deccan, when a Hindoo in the congregation began vehemently to contradict. In good Oriental fashion the sermon was immediately suspended, and the disputants retired to a garden to settle the point at their leisure. The substance of the debate was this: "You declare God to be infinite," said the Hindoo. "Yes." "What is the meaning of infinite?" "It means limitless." "And what part of speech is good?" "Good is an adjective." "And what is the grammatical function of an adjective?" "To limit a noun." "How then do you apply an adjective to God, calling Him good, and thus limiting the limitless?"

In the early days, when the people set their wisest men to make the public laws, a man of peculiar traits, but of sterling worth, was sent to the State Legislature from a small Eastern town. He wore an old-fashioned rustic costume, which was sadly out of place in the legislative hall, where some of the fastidious statesmen vied with each other in the correctness of their attire. Soon after his arrival one of the representatives called out to him: "Have you no smarter men than you to send to the Legislature from your district?" The man smiled innocently, as he replied: "There's a heap o' smarter men up my way, but the devil of it is they hain't got no clothes good enough to wear down here."

POPULAR BELIEFS.

Ignorance as to the Law in Everyday Occurrences.

It is an American predilection to believe the outre and freakish stories that are based solely on hearsay testimony and to reject often the commonplace matters of fact. A list of the cheerful lies that are commonly believed would fill a volume. Only a few of them are given below:

How often have you been inflicted with the story of the man who was overpaid when cashing a check at the bank, and the cashier telling him that no mistakes would be corrected after the customer left the window? According to the story, the cashier laid down the mandate before he knew the mistake was in his favor. It makes an excellent yarn, but diligent search discloses that it never had any foundation in fact. Banks have no such rule. If a customer is underpaid or overpaid the mistake will appear when the balance is struck at the end of the day's business, and the error will be cheerfully rectified. But the majority of the public believes the fictitious story of "how the fellow got the best of the bank" simply because it is a good story and they like to believe it.

Probably the most common error on the part of the public is the belief that when a dead body is found no one has a right to touch or move the remains "until the coroner comes." There never was any such law, is not now and

probably never will be. The citizen who is of an inquiring turn of mind has a perfect right to examine dead bodies he runs across in the course of his travels, to move the remains and even search the pockets of the deceased, provided, of course, that his motives are honest. That is all that is necessary.

There is also a prevalent belief that a note signed or contract entered into on Sunday is void and that either party can plead the fact of the sacred day to get out of a bad bargain. This is not true. If a man enters into a contract or signs a note on Sunday he is legally bound and can have no defenses that he would not have if the transaction had occurred in the middle of the week.

"I had my back against my own house when I struck this man," says the defendant in police court. He believes that his proximity to his castle gives him more rights than he would have if he were in the street. This belief has been the cause of much cantankerous litigation, and it has ever resulted in the ruling that a man has a right to defend himself in a reasonable manner if he is attacked, whatever may be his geographical position, and the incidental contiguity of his home "cuts no ice" in the case.

Doctors agree that the public is wrong in the popular conception that burglars sometimes chloroform the inmates of a house before committing a robbery. The usual story is that the anaesthetic was squirted into the sleeping room through keyholes. A Kansas City surgeon who has had occasion to administer chloroform or ether 500 times says that chloroform administered in this manner would put a quietus on the burglar, as well as the inmates of a home. Physicians have tried many times to administer chloroform to sleeping persons, and have met with very poor results. The first effect of an anaesthetic is not to lull to insensibility, but to arouse all the mental and physical vigor of the person to whom it is given.

The public has great confidence in the magic No. 3, and without any reasonable basis for the belief. It is commonly believed that if a drowning person sinks for a third time he is gone for good and all. The facts contradict this. Many persons die on the first sinking, and if one has the strength and the vitality to rise to the surface of the water twice it furnishes an excellent presumption that he will be able to do so again. In an eddy or rapidly-moving waters people have sunk from sight a half dozen times and lived to tell the experience to their grandchildren.

Then there is the third congestive chill, commonly believed to be fatal. Most people who die from this cause succumb to the first or second attack. If a man succeeds in weathering two of them the odds are in favor of his coming out victor in the third. Almost every community possesses a citizen who boasts the fact that he has a silver plate in his skull. Surgeons say that very few attempts were ever made at such an operation, and all of them were failures. There does not exist a man who has a silver plate in his skull, although many men honestly believe that they are carrying this species of paraphernalia in their craniums. The bone of the skull cannot live and be healthy in the presence of a foreign body. It is said by surgeons to be a physical impossibility, but this serves in no way to overcome the common and erroneous belief.

The medical fraternity has another false belief to combat in cases of "shingles." The disease consists of a skin eruption always following affected nerves, and commonly appearing on the body. It is a very common belief that if the "shingles" completely surround the body and strike a meeting point the patient will die instantly. The belief is untrue. — Kansas City Journal.

No Smoke For Him.

There is a clever young physician in Philadelphia who has never been able to smoke a cigar. "Just one poisons me," says the youthful doctor.

Recently the doctor was invited to a large dinner party given by a New York friend. At the conclusion of the repast, when the women had left the table, cigars were accepted by all the men except the physician from Philadelphia. Seeing his friend refuse the cigar, the host in astonishment exclaimed:

"What, not smoking? Why, my dear fellow, you lose half your dinner!"

"Yes, I know I do," meekly replied the doctor, "but if I smoked, I would lose the whole of it!"

John Hay's Honor.

It is said that the late John Hay was once the subject of a cane presentation, and stood while the spokesman of the donors made a speech that ran into an elaborate oration.

A friend afterward commented to the diplomatist on the length of the speech.

"Yes," replied Hay, "he didn't want me to have the cane till I really needed it."

Never Judge a woman's beauty by her make-up.