

The Doctor's Wife

BY MISS M. E. BRADDON

CHAPTER I.

If John Gilbert's only child has possessed the capacity of a Newton or the aspirations of a Napoleon, the surgeon would nevertheless have shut him up to compound tincture of rhubarb and essence of peppermint. Luckily for the boy, he was only a commonplace lad, with a good-looking, rosy face, clear gray eyes, which stared at you frankly; and a thick stubble of brown hair, parted in the middle and waving from the roots. He was tall and muscular, a good runner, tolerably skillful with a pair of boxing gloves, and a decent shot. He was very good; and, above all, he was very good looking. No one had ever disputed this fact; George Gilbert was eminently good looking. No one had ever gone so far as to call him handsome; no one had ever presumed to designate him "plain." He had those homely, healthy good looks which the practical mind involuntarily associates with tenant farming in a small way.

George Gilbert took his life as he found it, and had no wish to make it better. To him Graybridge was all the world. He had been in the city, and had felt a provincial's sense of surprised delight in the thronged streets, the clamor and the bustle; but he had very soon discovered that the great metropolis was a dirty and a disreputable place as compared with Graybridge, where you might have taken your dinner comfortably off any door step, so far as the matter of cleanliness is concerned. The young man was more than satisfied with his life; he was pleased with it. He was pleased to think that he was to be his father's partner, and was to live and marry, and have children, and die at last in the familiar rooms in which he had been born. His nature was very adhesive, and he loved the things that he had long known, because they were old and familiar to him, rather than for any merit or beauty in the things themselves.

The 20th of July was a very great day for George Gilbert, and indeed for the town of Graybridge generally; for on that day an excursion train left Wareham for the city, conveying such roving spirits as cared to pay a week's visit to the great metropolis upon very moderate terms. George had a week's holiday, which he was to spend with an old school fellow who had turned author. The surgeon left Graybridge at 8 o'clock upon that bright summer morning, in company with Miss Burdock and her sister Sophronia, who were going on a visit to an aristocratic aunt, and who had been confided to George's care during the journey.

Wareham is only a hundred and twenty miles from the city, and the excursion train, after stopping at every station on the line, had arrived at the terminus at half past 2 o'clock. It was between 3 and 4 now, and the sun was shining upon the river, and the flags were hot under Mr. Gilbert's feet. He was very warm himself, and almost worn out, when he found at last the name he was looking for, painted very high up, in white letters, upon a black door post—"Fourth Floor: Mr. Andrew Morgan and Mr. Sigismund Smith."

It was in the most obscure corner of the dingiest court that George Gilbert found this name. He climbed a very dirty staircase, thumping the end of his portmanteau upon every stair as he went up, until he came to a landing, midway between the third and fourth stories; here he was obliged to stop for sheer want of breath, for he had been juggling the portmanteau about with him throughout his wanderings, and a good many people had been startled by the aspect of a well dressed young man carrying his own luggage, and staring at the names of the different rows of houses.

A pale-faced young man, with a smudge of ink upon the end of his nose, and very dirty wristbands, opened the door.

"Sam!"

"George!" cried the two young men, simultaneously, and then began to shake hands with effusion.

"My dear old George!"

"My dear old Sam! But you call yourself Sigismund now?"

"Yes; Sigismund Smith. It sounds well, doesn't it? If a man's evil destiny makes him a Smith, the least he can do is to take it out in his Christian name. No Smith with a grain of spirit would ever consent to be a Samuel. But come, dear old boy, and put your portmanteau down; knock those papers off that chair—there, by the window. Don't be frightened of making 'em in a muddle; they can't be in a worse muddle than they are now. If you don't mind just amusing yourself for half an hour or so, while I finish this chapter of the 'Smuggler's Bride,' I shall be able to strike work, and do whatever you like; but the printer's boy is coming back in half an hour for the end of the chapter."

"I won't speak a word," George said, respectfully. The young man with the smudgy nose was an author, and George Gilbert had an awful sense of the solemnity of his friend's vocation. "Write away, my dear Sam; I won't interrupt you."

He drew his chair close to the open window and looked down into the court below, where the paint was slowly blistering in the July sun.

CHAPTER II.

There was very little to look at in the court below the window, so George Gilbert fell to watching his friend, whose rapid pen scratched along the paper in

a breathless way, which indicated a dashing style of literature, rather than polished composition. Sigismund only drew breath once, and then he paused to make frantic gashes at his shirt collar with an inkly bone paper knife that lay upon the table.

"I'm only trying whether a man would cut his throat from right to left, or left to right," Mr. Smith said, in answer to his friend's look of terror; "it's as well to be true to nature. A man would cut his throat from left to right; he couldn't do it the other way without making perfect slices of himself."

"There's a suicide, then, in your story?" George said, with a look of awe.

"A suicide!" exclaimed Sigismund Smith, "a suicide in the 'Smuggler's Bride'! Why, it teems with suicides. There's the Duke of Port St. Martin, who walls himself up alive in his own cellar; and there's Leonie de Pasdebasque, the ballet dancer, who throws herself out of Count Caesar Maraschetti's private balloon, and there's Lilla, the dumb girl—the public like dumb girls—in fact, there's lots of them," said Mr. Smith, dipping his pen in his ink, and hurrying wildly along the paper.

The boy came back before the last page was finished, and Mr. Smith detained him five or ten minutes, at the end of which time he rolled up the manuscript, still damp, and dismissed the printer's emissary.

"Now, George," he said, "I can talk to you."

The young men went out upon the landing. Sigismund locked the black door and put the key in his pocket. They went downstairs.

"You'd like to walk, I suppose, George?" Mr. Smith asked.

"Oh, yes; we can talk better walking."

They talked a great deal as they walked along. They were very fond of one another, and had each of them a good deal to tell; but George wasn't much of a talker as compared to his friend Sigismund. That young man poured forth a perpetual stream of eloquence, which knew no exhaustion.

"And so you like the people of Camberwell?" George said.

"Oh, yes, they're capital people, free and easy, you know, and no stupid, stuck-up gentility about them. Not but what Sleaford's a gentleman; he's a barrister. I don't know exactly where his chambers are or in what court he practices when he's in town, but he is a barrister. I suppose he goes on circuit sometimes, for he's often away from home for a long time together. It doesn't do to ask a man those sort of questions, you see, George, so I hold my tongue. I don't think he's rich, that's to say not rich in a regular way. He's flush of money sometimes, and then you should see the Sunday dinners—salmon and cucumber, and ducks and green peas, as if they were nothing."

It was a long walk to Camberwell; but the two young men were walkers, and as Sigismund Smith talked unceasingly all the way, there were no awkward pauses in the conversation. Mr. Smith conducted his friend by mazy convolutions of narrow streets and lanes, where there was the perpetual sound of clattering tin pails and the slopping of milk, blending pleasantly with the cry of the milkman.

Standing before a little wooden door in the wall that surrounded Mr. Sleaford's garden, George Gilbert could only see that the house was a square brick building with sickly ivy straggling here and there about it, and long, narrow windows considerably obscured by dust and dirt.

It was not a pleasant house to look at. Whatever could be broken in Mr. Sleaford's house was broken; whatever could fall out of repair had so fallen.

The bell was broken, and the handle rattled loosely in a kind of basin of tarnished brass, so it was no use attempting to ring; but Sigismund was used to this. He stooped down, put his lips to a hole broken in the woodwork above the lock in the garden door, and gave a shrill whistle.

"They understand," he said; "the bell's been broken ever since I lived here, but they never have anything mended."

"Why not?"

"Because they're thinking of leaving. Sleaford talks about going to Australia some of these days."

The garden door was opened while Mr. Smith was talking, and the two young men went in.

CHAPTER III.

The garden at the back of Mr. Sleaford's house was a large square plot of ground, with fine old pear trees sheltering a neglected lawn. A row of hazel bushes screened all the length of the wall upon one side of the garden; and whenever you looked, there were roses and sweet brier, apples and tall straggling raspberry bushes, all equally unfamiliar with the gardener's pruning knife.

It was a dear old, untidy place, where the odor of distant pig sties mingled faintly with the perfume of the roses; and it was in this neglected garden that Isabel Sleaford spent the best part of her idle, useless life.

She was sitting in a basket chair under one of the pear trees when Sigismund Smith and his friend went into the garden to look for her. She was lolling in a low basket chair, with a book on her lap, and her chin resting on the palm of her hand, so absorbed by the interest of the page before her that she did not even lift her eyes when the two

young men went close up to her. She wore a muslin dress a good deal tumbled and not too clean, and a strip of black velvet was tied around her long throat. Her hair was black and was rolled up in a great loose knot, from which a long, untidy curl fell straggling on her white throat—her throat was very white with the dead, yellowish whiteness of ivory. "I wish that was 'Colonel Montefiasco,'" said Mr. Smith, pointing to the book which the young lady was reading. "I should like to see a lady so interested in one of my books that she wouldn't so much as look up when a gentleman was waiting to be introduced to her."

Miss Sleaford shut her book and rose from her low chair, abashed by this reproach; but she kept her thumb between the pages, and evidently meant to go on with the volume at the first convenient opportunity. She did not wait for any ceremonious introduction to George, but held out her hand to him, and smiled at him frankly.

"You are Mr. Gilbert, I know," she said. "Sigismund has been talking of you incessantly for the last week. Mamma has got your room ready; and I suppose we shall have tea soon. There are to be some chops on purpose for your friend, Sigismund, mamma told me to tell you."

She glanced downward at the book, as much as to say that she had finished speaking and wanted to get back to it. "What is it, Izzie?" Sigismund asked, interpreting her look.

"'Albermar Mountfort.'"

"I thought so. Always his books."

A faint blush trembled over Miss Sleaford's pale face.

"They are so beautiful!" she said. "Dangerously, I'm afraid, Isabel," the young man said, gravely; "beautiful sweetmeats, with opium inside the sugar. These books don't make you happy, do they, Izzie?"

"No, they make me unhappy; but"—she hesitated a little, and then blushed as she said—"I like that sort of unhappiness. It's better than eating and drinking and sleeping, and being happy that way."

George could only stare at the young lady's kindling face, which lighted up all in a moment and was suddenly beautiful like some transparency which seems a dingy picture until you put a lamp behind it. The young surgeon could only stare wonderingly at Mr. Sleaford's daughter, for he hadn't the faintest idea what she and his friend were talking about.

She shut her book altogether at Sigismund's request, and went with the two young men to show George the garden; but she carried the dingy-looking volume lovingly under her arm, and she relapsed into a dreamy silence every now and then, as if she had been reading the hidden pages by some strange faculty of clairvoyance.

After tea the two young men walked up and down the weedy pathways in the garden, while Isabel sat under her favorite pear tree reading the volume she had been so loath to close. Sigismund talked of what they called old times; but those old times were only four or five years ago, though the young men talked like graybeards who look back half a century or so, and wondered at the folly of their youth.

Isabel went on with her book; the light was dying little by little, drooping down behind the pear trees at the western side of the garden, and the pale evening star glimmered at the end of one of the pathways. She read on more eagerly, almost breathlessly, as the light grew less; for her stepmother would call her in by and by, and there would be a torn jacket to mend, perhaps, or a heap of worsted socks to be darned for the boys; and there would be no chance of reading another line of that sweet sentimental story, that heavenly prose, which fell into a cadence like poetry, that tender melancholy music which haunted the reader for long after the book was shut and laid aside, and made the dull course of common life so disarmingly unendurable.

George and Sigismund talked of Miss Sleaford when they grew tired of discoursing upon the memories of their school boy life.

"You didn't tell me that Mr. Sleaford had a daughter," George said.

"Didn't I?"

"No. She—Miss Sleaford—is very pretty."

"She's gorgeous," answered Sigismund, with enthusiasm; "she's lovely. I do her for all my dark heroines—the good heroines, not the wicked ones. Have you noticed Isabel's eyes? People call them black; but they are a bright orange color, if you look at them in the sunshine. There is a story called 'The Girl with the Golden Eyes.' I never knew what golden eyes were till I saw Isabel Sleaford."

They went across the grass to the pear tree, under which Isabel was still seated. It was growing dark, and her pale face and black eyes had a mysterious look in the dusky twilight. George Gilbert thought she was fitted to be the heroine of a romance, and felt himself miserably awkward and commonplace. The young surgeon enjoyed his first night at Camberwell to his heart's content. It was when the little party was gayest that a shrill whistle from the gate sounded.

"It's your pa, Izzie," Mrs. Sleaford said. "He'll want a light; you'd better take it to him. I don't suppose he'll care about coming here."

Isabel went out into the hall to greet her father. She left the door ajar, and George could hear her talking to Mr. Sleaford, but the barrister answered his daughter with a very ill grace, and the speech which George heard plainest gave him no very favorable impression of his host.

(To be continued.)

Worst Feature of It.

Sillicus—It's positively sinful for a girl to encourage a fellow when she has no intention of marrying him.

Cynicus—Yes; she might change her mind.—Philadelphia Record.

Topics of the Times

Every year the English mint issues over 8,000,000 copper coins.

There are 8,840,789 negroes in the United States, but only 2,577 of African birth.

San Francisco's demand for brick is so great it has created a brick famine in California.

The total number of men in the United States liable to military service is 11,126,750.

There is no meat trust in Australia. There mutton sometimes sells for as little as two cents a pound.

In the copper belt of Shasta County, Cal., ore has been found 250 feet deeper than it has been found hitherto.

The French War Department is experimenting with a machine gun which is to fire 300 bullets in less than a second.

When showing the violet shade, the thickness of the film of a soap bubble is about the one-million two hundred and forty thousandth part of an inch.

Surinam, in Dutch Guinea, has the smallest range of temperature of any place in the world. In summer the average is 78 and in winter 77½ degrees.

The highest paid official in the government service, with the exception of the Viceroy of India, is the Lord Lieutenant of Ireland, who receives \$100,000 per annum.

The exports of olive oil from Algaria during 1904 were 2,150 tons as against 930 tons in 1903. The olive crop for 1903-04 was good, greatly in excess of previous seasons.

Paper car wheels made by pressure from rye-straw paper are usually good enough to take a second set of steel tires after the first set has been worn out by a run of 300,000 miles.

Fraudulent naturalization is under investigation by the San Francisco United States Grand Jury. A sailor has confessed that he received citizenship papers on payment of \$15.

The usual number of tourists have been killed in the Alps this season hunting edelweiss, although any one could "raise edelweiss in his back yard," as a horticulturist remarked the other day.

A log raft 735 feet long, 55 feet wide and 28 feet deep, and containing 10,000,000 feet of lumber was towed into San Francisco Bay recently. It was five and one-half days from the Columbia River.

Statistics just compiled at the Missouri State University show that fully 50 per cent of all its students are dependent on their own resources, and that nearly 25 per cent work daily for their own expenses.

The first telegraphic longitude station in Labrador has been established at Chateau Bay by Dr. Otto Klotz, Dominion astronomer, in conjunction with Sir William MacGregor, Governor of Newfoundland.

Great Britain's government has decided to secure and protect for the nation the ancient ramparts erected by Edward I. around the town of Berwick-on-Tweed. These ruins are of great antiquarian and historical value.

Real destitution is rarely seen in Japan. Though some of its inhabitants are very poor, yet all seem to be fairly well fed, clothed and housed and are invariably cheerful. Nearly all Japanese are of cleanly habits and rarely untidy.

Having reached the conclusion that houseflies are distributors of typhoid fever germs, the Seattle board of health has resorted to very stringent methods for their exclusion from hospital wards and houses in which there are typhoid cases.

Alfred Towns, of Silverton, Ore., returned the other day from a trip into the hills and told his brother Robert that he had shot two deer. Robert is a game warden and at once arrested Alfred for shooting without a license, and Alfred served five days in jail.

A firm of Baltimore architects has drawn plans for a building without any wood in its construction. It will be six stories in height, the entire structure to be of re-enforced concrete and steel. Even the doors, window sashes and door jambs will be of metal.

The man who discovered the diamond mines at Pretoria has come to this country, looking for some more. His first venture is to be among the mint beds down in Kentucky, and if he does not find any diamonds there he is going up in the South Carolina mountains after a few.

A blunder resulted in a sweeping victory at the battle of Minden, August 1, 1759. Ten battalions of British troops, mistaking the order "at sound of drum" for "by sound of drum," suddenly charged and overthrew three divisions of French cavalry—a feat unparalleled in all warfare.

The work of constructing a railway

from Valdes over the coast mountains range to tap the Copper River mining district and give an all-American route to Tanana and the Yukon River has been begun. Among the scenic attractions of the road will be a 700-foot waterfall, in the Copper River canyon.

CIGARS AND PIPES IN NOVELS.

Villains Smoke Former, Heroes Latter—Cigarettes for Ultra-Bad.

As a general rule, only bad men in novels smoke cigars, and ultra-bad men cigarettes; the blameless prefer a pipe, says Pearson's Weekly. Blandis, the amazing villain of "Little Dorritt," is perpetually rolling cigarettes—from which we infer that, with a sense of economy not usual in villains, he made his own. It is one of the bad points of Montague Tigg, on his first introduction to the reader of "Martin Chuzzlewit," that he smells of cigars; and we are carefully told that Bentley Donmarle, in "Great Expectations," comes out of the hotel to have his quarrel with Pip with a cigar in his mouth.

On the other hand, Dickens' good characters, such as Capt. Cuttle and Gabriel Varden, smoke pipes—good, comfortable "yards of clay"—and if there is a Florence Dombey or a Dolly Varden handy to fill and light them, much is made of the pretty incident. Smokers in real life, I am afraid, prefer to fill their pipes themselves, but to a Dickens character all things are possible.

George Warrington, one of the few perfectly blameless characters that Thackeray ever drew, is represented as puffing furiously at a big black pipe, while the young scapegrace Penderennis runs up enormous bills for cigars with the Oxbridge tobaccoist.

This theory of cigars for the sinner and pipes for the pure is carried out by Miss Marie Corelli, notably in "The Mighty Atom." We are told that Mr. Valliscourt, the very bad man of that extraordinary book, "retired to the smoking room with his cigar case and one of the dullest of the evening papers." Contrariwise, the blameless rustic, Reuben Dale, after his frugal midday meal, "filled and smoked a pipe." Robert Hichens is careful to inform us that the decadent heroes of his "Green Carnation" smoke nothing but gold-tipped cigarettes.

On the stage, of course, the cigarette is the hallmark of the villain. William Gillette is addicted to cigars on the stage, one smoke playing an important part in the dramatized version of "Sherlock Holmes." Again, in "Secret Service," Mr. Gillette played almost an entire act without removing from his lips the cigar which he lights a few moments after the rising of the curtain. Comedy characters are generally allotted pipes—witness the imitable pipe-filling scene of Old Ecles in "Caste"—but, as an exception to this rule, Beerbohm Tree smoked a meerschaum on his first entrance as the duke of Guisebery in "The Dancing Girl."

Bertie Cecil, the much-wronged hero of "Under Two Flags," smokes cigarettes in the days of his glory; but when he joins the foreign legion as a private soldier he assumes a short black pipe, as befits his altered fortunes. Naughty little Lady Dolly Vanderdecken in "Moths" is a confirmed cigarette fiend and possesses a jeweled cigarette case of her very own.

Curiosity Saves Two Lives.

The habit of a postoffice official of entertaining himself by reading the postcards that pass through his hands led to the saving of two lives in Hutteldorf, a suburb of Vienna, recently.

The postman in this case read a card which stated that the two writers were about to commit suicide in a neighboring wood. It was apparently addressed to the parents of one of them.

The postman informed the police, who went to the spot named and found a young man and a girl lying unconscious with severe bullet wounds in their heads. A revolver lay beside them.

They were at once taken to a hospital, and are expected to recover. Disappointed love was the reason of their resolution to die together.

Never Anything Else.

"Havana is quite a clean city now."

"Yes, I observe that fact every time I happen to go into a cigar store."

"What do you mean?"

"I never hear it mentioned except as 'pure Havana.'"—Philadelphia Press.

About Vacations.

Unless some people came back with tanned hands and a sunburned nose most of us would never know they had been away on a vacation.—Detroit Free Press.

Tommy Is Enlightened.

Tommy Figgjam—Paw, what is a mollynair?

Paw Figgjam—A man who, under protest, pays tax on \$50,000.—Baltimore American.

Many a man who is too tender hearted to kill a chicken doesn't hesitate a minute when it comes to beating his wife.