

The Doctor's Wife

BY MISS M. E. BRADDON



CHAPTER XVI.—(Continued.)
"I startled you," he said; "you did not expect to see me. I had no right to come to you so suddenly; but they told me you were here, and I wanted so much to see you—I wanted so much to speak to you."

The words were insignificant enough, but there was a warmth and earnestness in the tones that was new to Isabel. Faint blushes flickered into her cheeks, so deathly pale a few moments before, her eyelids fell over the dark, unfathomable eyes, a look of sudden happiness spread itself upon her face and made it luminous.

"I thought you would never, never, never come back again."
"I meant to stay away, but I changed my mind, and I came back. I hope you are glad to see me again?"

What could she say to him? Her terror of saying too much kept her silent; the beating of her heart sounded in her ears, and she was afraid that he, too, might hear that tell-tale sound. She dared not raise her eyes, and yet she knew that he was looking at her earnestly, scrutinizingly even.

"Tell me that you are glad to see me," he said. "Ah, if you knew why I went away—why I tried so hard to stay away—why I have come back after all—after all—so many resolutions made and broken—so many deliberations—so much doubt and hesitation! Isabel! tell me you are glad to see me once more!"

She tried to speak, and faltered out a word or two, and broke down, and turned away from him. And then she looked round at him with sudden impulse, innocently and childishly, forgetful for a moment of the square-built house in the dusty lane, George Gilbert, and all the duties of her life.

"I have been so unhappy; I have been so miserable; and you will go away again by and by, and I shall never, never see you any more."

Her voice broke, and she burst into tears, and then, remembering the surgeon all in a moment, brushed them hastily away with her handkerchief.

"You frightened me so, Mr. Lansdell," she said, "and I'm very late, and I was just going home, and my husband will be waiting for me. He comes to meet me sometimes when he can spare time. Good-bye."

She held out her hand, looking at Roland nervously as she did so. Did he despise her very much? she wondered. No doubt he had come home to marry Gwendoline Pomphrey, and there would be a fine wedding in the bright May weather. There was just time to go into a consultation between March and May, Mrs. Gilbert thought; and her tombstone might be ready for the occasion, if the gods who bestow upon their special favorites the boon of early death would only be kind to her.

"Good-bye, Mr. Lansdell," she repeated.

"Let me walk with you a little way. Ah! if you knew how I have traveled night and day; if you knew how I have languished for this hour, and for the sight of—"

For the sight of what? Roland Lansdell was looking down at the pale face of the doctor's wife as he uttered that unbidden sentence. But among all the good things ever made the story of a woman's life wonderful, it could never surely come to pass that a dead-god would descend from the ethereal regions which were his common habitation upon her account, Mrs. Gilbert thought. She went home in the chill March twilight, but not through the bleak and common atmosphere which other people breathed that afternoon; Mr. Lansdell walked by her side, and, not encountering the surgeon, went all the way to Graybridge, and only left Mrs. Gilbert at the end of the dusty lane in which the doctor's red lamp already glimmered faintly in the dusk.

CHAPTER XVII.

Mr. Lansdell did not seem in a hurry to make any demonstration of his return to Concord. He did not affect any secrecy. It is true, but he shut himself a good deal in his own rooms, and seldom went out except to walk in the direction of Thurston's oak, whither Mrs. Gilbert also rambled in the chilly spring afternoons, and where Mr. Lansdell and the doctor's wife met each other very frequently, not quite by accident now; for, at parting, Roland would say, with supreme carelessness: "I suppose you will be walking this way to-morrow—it is the only walk worth taking hereabouts—and I'll bring you the other volume."

Roland Lansdell kept aloof from his kindred, but he was not suffered to go his own way unmolested. The road to perfection is not so smooth and flower-bedecked a path as we are sometimes taught to believe. A merciful hand often flings stumbling blocks and hindering brambles in our way. It is our own fault if we insist upon clambering over the rocky barriers, and scrambling through the briery hedges, in a mad eagerness to reach the goal. Roland had started on the fatal descent, and was of course, going at that rapid rate with which we always travel down hill; but the road was not all clear for him. Charles Raymond of Conventford was among the people who heard accidentally of the young man's return; and about a week after Roland's arrival the kindly philosopher presented himself at the gates of the Priory, and was fortunate enough to find his kinsman at home. In spite of Mr. Lansdell's desire to be

at his ease, there was some restraint in his manner as he greeted his old friend.

"I am very glad to see you, Raymond," he said. "I should have ridden over to Conventford in a day or two. I've come home, you see."

"Yes, and I'm very sorry to see it. This is a breach of good faith, Roland."

"Of what faith? With whom?"

"With me," answered Mr. Raymond, gravely. "You promised me that you would go away."

"I did; and I went away."

"And now you have come back again."

"Yes," replied Mr. Lansdell, folding his arms and looking full at his kinsman, with an ominous smile upon his face—"yes; the fact is a little too evident for the basis of an argument. I have come back."

Mr. Raymond was silent for a minute or so. The younger man stood with his back against the angle of the embayed window, and he never took his eyes from his friend's face. There was something like defiance in the expression of his face, and even in his attitude.

"I had better go away, Roland," Mr. Raymond said, looking at his kinsman with a sad, reproachful gaze, and stretching out his hand to take up the hat and gloves he had thrown upon a chair near him; "I can do no good here."

One afternoon late in the month, when the March winds were bleaker and more pitiless than usual, Isabel went across the meadows where the hedge rows were putting forth timid little buds to be nipped by the chill breezes, and where here and there a violet made a tiny speck of purple on the grassy bank. Mr. Lansdell was standing on the bridge when Isabel approached the familiar trysting place, and turned with a smile to greet her.

"I am going to the city, Isabel," he said, after standing by Mrs. Gilbert for some time, staring silently at the water; "I am going to-morrow morning."

"Going away!" cried the doctor's wife, piteously; "ah, I knew you would go away again, and I shall never see you more." She clasped her hands in her sudden terror, and looked at him with a world of sorrow and reproach in her pale face. "I knew that it would be so!" she repeated. "I dreamed the other night that you had gone away, and I came here, and, oh, it seemed such a dreadful way to come, and I kept taking the wrong turnings, and going through the wrong meadows; and when I came, there was only some one—some stranger—who told me that you had gone, and would never come back."

"But Isabel—my—love—my darling!"—the tender epithets did not startle her; she was so absorbed by the fear of losing the god of her idolatry—"I am only going to town for a day or two to see my lawyer—to make arrangements—arrangements of vital importance—I should be a scoundrel if I neglected them, or incurred the smallest hazard by delaying them an hour. You don't understand these sort of things, Isabel; but trust me, and believe that your welfare is dearer to me than my own. I must go to town; but I shall only be gone a day or two—two days at the most—perhaps only one. And when I come back, Izzy, I shall have something that involves all the happiness of my future life. Will you meet me here two days hence—on Wednesday at 3 o'clock? You will, won't you, Isabel? This shall be the last time, Isabel—the last time I will ask you to incur humiliation for me. Henceforward we will hold our heads high, my love; for at least there shall be no falsehood in our lives."

Mrs. Gilbert stared at Roland Lansdell in utter bewilderment. She was almost stifled by mingled grief and indignation.

"I did not think you were ashamed to meet me here sometimes," she sobbed out; "you asked me to come. I did not think that you were humiliated by talking to me—I—"

"Why, Izzy—Isabel darling!" cried Roland, "can you misunderstand me so utterly? Ashamed to meet you—ashamed of your society! Can you doubt what would have happened had I come home a year earlier than it was my ill-fortune to come? Can you doubt for a moment that I would have chosen you for my wife out of all the women in the universe, and that my highest pride would have been the right to call you by that dear name?"

Isabel Gilbert was not a woman of the world. A perfect happiness had come to her—the happiness of being beloved by the right object of her idolatry; nothing could add to that perfection; the cup was full to the very brim, filled with an inexhaustible draught of joy and delight.

Mr. Lansdell stopped to shake hands with Isabel when they came to the gate leading into the Graybridge road.

"Good-bye," he said, softly; "good-bye until Wednesday, Isabel. Isabel—what a pretty name it is! You have no other Christian name?"

"Oh, no."

"Only Isabel—Isabel Gilbert. Good-bye."

He opened the gate, and stood watching the doctor's wife as she passed out of the meadow, and walked at a rapid pace toward the town. A man passed along the road as Mr. Lansdell stood there, and looked at him, as he went by, and then turned and looked after Isabel.

"Raymond is right, then," thought Roland; "they have begun to stare and

chatter already. My poor darling, henceforward it is my duty to protect you from such as these."

Mrs. Gilbert went home to her husband, and sat opposite to him at dinner as usual; but Roland's words, dimly as she had comprehended their meaning, had in some manner influenced her, for she blushed when George asked her where she had been that cold afternoon.

"He will marry Gwendoline," Isabel thought in a sudden access of despair; "and that is what he is going to tell me on Wednesday. He was different to-day from what he has been since he came back to Concord. And yet—and yet—"

And yet what? Isabel tried in vain to fathom the meaning of all Roland Lansdell's wild talk—now earnestly grave—now suddenly reckless—one moment full of hope, and the next tinctured with despair. What was this simple young novel reader to make of a man of the world, who was eager to defy the world, and knew exactly what a terrible world it was that he was about to defy?

CHAPTER XVIII.

Mrs. Gilbert stayed at home all through the day which succeeded her parting from Roland Lansdell. She stayed in the dingy parlor, and read a little, and played upon the piano a little, and sketched a few profile portraits of Mr. Lansdell, desperately inky and sentimental, with impossibly enormous eyes.

From the window she saw a lady in a carriage driving slowly toward the gate. The lady was Gen. Ruysdale's daughter, who, having recognized Isabel at the window, saluted her with a very haughty inclination of the head, abandoned the reins to her attendant, and alighted.

Oh, what a dingy, shabby place that Graybridge parlor was always! how doubly and trebly dingy it seemed to-day by contrast with that gorgeous figure of Gwendoline Pomphrey. Mrs. Gilbert brought a chair for her visitor, and asked in a tremulous voice if Gwendoline would be pleased to sit. Isabel felt that some calamity was coming down upon her; and she stood pale and silent, meekly waiting to receive her sentence.

"Pray sit down, Mrs. Gilbert," said Gwendoline, "I wish to have a little conversation with you. I am very glad to have found you at home and alone."

The lady spoke very kindly, but her kindness had a stately coldness that crept like melting ice through Isabel's veins, and chilled her to the bone.

"I am older than you, Mrs. Gilbert," said Gwendoline, after a little pause, and she slightly winced as she made the confession; "I am older than you; and if I speak to you in a manner that you may have some right to resent as an impertinent interference with your affairs, I trust that you will believe I am influenced only by a sincere desire for your welfare."

Isabel's heart sank to a profounder depth of terror than before when she heard this.

"I am older than you, Mrs. Gilbert," repeated Gwendoline, "and I know my cousin Roland Lansdell much better than you can possibly know him."

The sound of the dear name, the sacred name, which to Isabel's mind should only have been spoken in a hushed whisper, like a tender pianissimo passage in music, shot home to the foolish girl's heart. Her face flushed crimson, and she clasped her hands together, while the tears welled slowly up to her eyes.

"I know my cousin better than you can know him; I know the world better than you can know it. There are some women, Mrs. Gilbert, who would condemn you unheard, and would consider their lips sullied by any mention of your name. There are many women in my position who would hold themselves aloof from you, content to let you go your own way. But I take leave to think for myself in all matters. I have heard Mr. Raymond speak very kindly of you; I cannot judge you as harshly as other people judge you."

"Oh, what, what can they think of me?" cried Isabel, trembling with a vague fear, an ignorant fear of some deadly peril utterly unknown to her, yet close to her; "what harm have I done, that they should think ill of me? What can they say of me? What can they say?"

Her eyes were blinded by tears that blotted Gwendoline's stern face from her sight. She was still so much a child that she made no effort to conceal her terror and confusion. She bared all the foolish secrets of her heart before those cruel eyes.

"People say that you are a trifling wife to a simple-hearted and trusting husband. Do you imagine that you could keep any secret from Graybridge? Do you think your actions or even your thoughts could escape the dull eyes of these country people, who have nothing better to do than watch the doings of their neighbors?" demanded Gwendoline bitterly.

Isabel had been crying all this time, crying bitterly, with her head bent upon her clasped hands; but to Gwendoline's surprise she lifted it now, and looked at her accuser with some show of indignation, if not defiance.

(To be continued.)

Perhaps Justifiable.

A man hopelessly lost in the bush in South Australia, after wandering about for four days, came across the telegraph line between Adelaide and Port Darwin. He had not the strength to go farther, but managed to climb a pole and cut the wire. He then made himself as comfortable as possible and waited. The telegraph repairers were sent along the line, and they came to the wanderer just in time to save his life.

Homer—I hear there was an uprising of street-car patrons in your city.

Comeon—Yes; they insisted on getting a chance to sit down.

WHO SHE WAS

SKETCH OF THE LIFE OF LYDIA E. PINKHAM

And a True Story of How the Vegetable Compound Had Its Birth and How the "Panic of '73" Caused it to be Offered for Public Sale in Drug Stores.

This remarkable woman, whose maiden name was Estes, was born in Lynn, Mass., February 9th, 1819, coming from a good old Quaker family. For some years she taught school, and became known as a woman of an alert



and investigating mind, an earnest seeker after knowledge, and above all, possessed of a wonderfully sympathetic nature.

In 1843 she married Isaac Pinkham, a builder and real estate operator, and their early married life was marked by prosperity and happiness. They had four children, three sons and a daughter.

In those good old fashioned days it was common for mothers to make their own home medicines from roots and herbs, nature's own remedies—calling in a physician only in specially urgent cases. By tradition and experience many of them gained a wonderful knowledge of the curative properties of the various roots and herbs.

Mrs. Pinkham took a great interest in the study of roots and herbs, their characteristics and power over disease. She maintained that just as nature so bountifully provides in the harvest-fields and orchards vegetable foods of all kinds; so, if we but take the pains to find them in the roots and herbs of the field there are remedies expressly designed to cure the various ills and weaknesses of the body, and it was her pleasure to search these out, and prepare simple and effective medicines for her own family and friends.

Chief of these was a rare combination of the choicest medicinal roots and herbs found best adapted for the cure of the ills and weaknesses peculiar to the female sex, and Lydia E. Pinkham's friends and neighbors learned that her compound relieved and cured and it became quite popular among them.

All this so far was done freely, without money and without price, as a labor of love.

But in 1873 the financial crisis struck Lynn. Its length and severity were too much for the large real estate interests of the Pinkham family, as this class of business suffered most from fearful depression, so when the Centennial year dawned it found their property swept away. Some other source of income had to be found.

At this point Lydia E. Pinkham's Vegetable Compound was made known to the world.

The three sons and the daughter, with their mother, combined forces to

restore the family fortune. They argued that the medicine which was so good for their woman friends and neighbors was equally good for the women of the whole world.

The Pinkhams had no money, and little credit. Their first laboratory was the kitchen, where roots and herbs were steeped on the stove, gradually filling a gross of bottles. Then came the question of selling it, for always before they had given it away freely. They hired a job printer to run off some pamphlets setting forth the merits of the medicine, now called Lydia E. Pinkham's Vegetable Compound, and these were distributed by the Pinkham sons in Boston, New York, and Brooklyn.

The wonderful curative properties of the medicine were, to a great extent, self-advertising, for whoever used it recommended it to others, and the demand gradually increased.

In 1877, by combined efforts the family had saved enough money to commence newspaper advertising and from that time the growth and success of the enterprise were assured, until today Lydia E. Pinkham and her Vegetable Compound have become household words everywhere, and many tons of roots and herbs are used annually in its manufacture.

Lydia E. Pinkham herself did not live to see the great success of this work. She passed to her reward years ago, but not till she had provided means for continuing her work as effectively as she could have done it herself.

During her long and eventful experience she was ever methodical in her work and she was always careful to preserve a record of every case that came to her attention. The case of every sick woman who applied to her for advice—and there were thousands—received careful study, and the details, including symptoms, treatment and results were recorded for future reference, and to-day these records, together with hundreds of thousands made since, are available to sick women the world over, and represent a vast collaboration of information regarding the treatment of woman's ills, which for authenticity and accuracy can hardly be equaled in any library in the world.

With Lydia E. Pinkham worked her daughter-in-law, the present Mrs. Pinkham. She was carefully instructed in all her hard-won knowledge, and for years she assisted her in her vast correspondence.

To her hands naturally fell the direction of the work when its originator passed away. For nearly twenty-five years she has continued it, and nothing in the work shows when the first Lydia E. Pinkham dropped her pen, and the present Mrs. Pinkham, now the mother of a large family, took it up. With women assistants, some as capable as herself, the present Mrs. Pinkham continues this great work, and probably from the office of no other person have so many women been advised how to regain health. Sick women, this advice is "Yours for Health" freely given if you only write to ask for it.

Such is the history of Lydia E. Pinkham's Vegetable Compound; made from simple roots and herbs; the one great medicine for women's ailments, and the fitting monument to the noble woman whose name it bears.

READ 135-1206

THIS COUPON IS GOOD FOR \$1.00 ON PURCHASE

FREE Upon receipt of your name

Address _____

Druggist's Name _____

His Address _____

GOOD FOR ONE DOLLAR PURCHASE

And *10c in stamps or silver* to pay postage we will mail you a sample free, if you have never used Mull's Grape Tonic, and will also mail you a certificate good for one dollar toward the purchase of more Tonic from your druggist. Address _____

MULL'S GRAPE TONIC CO., 21 Third Ave., Rock Island, Ill.

YOU WRONG YOURSELF TO SUFFER

from Constipation and Stomach Trouble.

Why suffer or take needless chances with constipation or stomach troubles when there is a perfect, harmless, natural, positive cure within your reach?

CONSTIPATION AND STOMACH TROUBLE

cause blood poison, skin diseases, sick headache, biliousness, typhoid fever, appendicitis, piles and every kind of female trouble as well as many others. Your own physician will tell you that all this is true. But don't drug or physic yourself. Use

MULL'S GRAPE TONIC

the natural, strengthening, harmless remedy that builds up the tissues of your digestive organs and puts your whole system in splendid condition to overcome all attacks. It is very pleasant to take. The children like it and it does them great good.

35 cent, 50 cent and \$1.00 bottles at all druggists. The \$1.00 bottle contains about six times as much as the 50 cent bottle and about three times as much as the 25 cent bottle. There is a great saving in buying the \$1.00 size.

MULL'S GRAPE TONIC CO., 21 Third Ave., Rock Island, Ill.