

# The Doctor's Wife

BY MISS M. E. BRADDON

## CHAPTER XX.—(Continued.)

There was no omnibus to take Mrs. Gilbert back to Graybridge after the service at Hurstonleigh; but there had been some Graybridge people at church, and she found them lingering in the churchyard talking to some of the model villagers, enthusiastic in their praise of Mr. Colburn's eloquence.

Isabel's friends left her at the gate. She had done nothing to redeem her character in Graybridge by her frequent attendance at Hurstonleigh Church, which was as patent to the gossips as ever her visits to Thurston's oak had been. She had been cured of running after Mr. Lansdell, people said. No doubt George Gilbert had discovered her goings-on, and had found a means of clipping her wings. It was not likely that Graybridge would credit her with such virtue of repentance. Graybridge regarded her as an artful and presuming creature, whose goings-on had been stopped by marital authority.

She went into the parlor and found the tea things laid on the table, and Mr. Gilbert lying on the sofa, which was too short for him by a couple of feet, and was eked out by a chair, on which his clumsy boots rested. Isabel had never seen him give way to any such self-indulgence before; but as she bent over he told her that his head ached, and he was tired, very tired; he had been in the lanes all the afternoon—the people about there had been bad—and he had been at work in the surgery since coming in. He put his hand in Isabel's, and pressed hers affectionately. A very little attention from his pretty young wife gratified and made him happy.

"Why, George," cried Mrs. Gilbert, "your hand is as hot as a burning coal!" "Yes, he was very warm, he told her; the weather was hot and oppressive; at least he had found it so that afternoon. Perhaps he had been hurrying too much, walking too fast; he had upset himself somehow or other.

"If you'll pour out the tea, I'll take a cup and then go to bed," he said; "My regular play-out."

He took not one cup only, but four cups of tea, pouring the mild beverage down his throat at a draught; and then he went up to the room overhead, walking heavily, as if he were very tired.

"I'm sure you're ill, George," Isabel said as he left the parlor; "do take something—some of that horrid medicine you give me."

"No, my dear; there's nothing the matter with me. What should there be amiss with me, who never had a day's illness in my life? I must have an assistant, Izabel, my work's too hard; that's what is the matter."

Mrs. Gilbert sat in the dusk a little while after her husband left her, thinking of that last look which Roland Lansdell had given her in the church. Heaven knows how long she might have sat thinking of him, if Jefferson had not come in.

After the lights had been brought Isabel took a book from the top of the little chiffonier by the fire place. It was a religious book. Was she not trying to be good now, and was not goodness incompatible with the perusal of Shelley's poetry on a Sunday? She sat thus, until she was startled by a cautious single knock at the door. She started from her seat at the sound; but she went bold to the door.

There was a knock common in a late evening at the doctor's door—some one from the lanes wanted medicine, no doubt, the people in the lanes were always wanting medicine. Mrs. Gilbert opened the door, and looked out into the darkness. A man was standing there, a well-dressed, rather handsome looking man, with broad shoulders, bold black eyes, and a black beard that covered all the lower part of his face. He did not wait to be invited to enter, but walked across the threshold like a man who had a right to come into the house, and almost pushed Isabel on one side as he did so. At first she only stared at him with a blank look of wonder, but all at once her face grew as white as the plaster on the wall behind her.

"You!" she gasped in a whisper; "you here?"

"Yes, me! You needn't stare as if you saw a ghost. There's nothing so very queer about me, is there? You're a nice young lady, I don't think, to stand there shivering and staring. Where's your husband?"

"Upstairs. Oh, why, why did you come here?" cried the doctor's wife, piteously, clasping her hands like a creature in some extremity of fear and trouble; "how could you be so cruel as to come here? How could you be so cruel as to come?"

"How could I be so—fiddlesticks!" muttered the stranger, with supreme contempt. "I came here because I had nowhere else to go, my lassie. You needn't whimper; for I shan't trouble you very long—this is not exactly the place I should care to hang out in—if you can give me a bed in this house for to-night, well and good; if not, you can give me money and I'll find one elsewhere. While I am here, remember my name's Captain Morgan; and I'm in the merchant service."

## CHAPTER XXI.

George Gilbert was something more than "played out." There had been a great deal of typhoid fever among the poorer inhabitants of Graybridge, and the neighboring villages lately—a bad infectious fever, which hung over the

narrow lanes and little clusters of cottages like a black cloud; and the parish surgeon, working early and late, subject to sudden chills when his work was hottest, exposed to every variety of temperature at all times, fasting for long hours, and altogether settling at naught those very first principles of health, in which it was his duty to instruct other people, had paid the common penalty to which all of his profession are, more or less, subject. George Gilbert had caught a touch of the fever. Mr. Pawkatt, seizer, called in early on Monday morning, summoned by poor, terrified Isabel, and spoke of his rival's illness very lightly, as a "touch of the fever."

"I always said it was infectious," he remarked; "but your husband would have it that it wasn't. It was all the effect of dirty habits and low living, he said, and not any special and periodical influence in the air. Well, poor fellow, he knows now who is right. You must keep him very quiet. Give him a little toast-and-water, and the lime draughts I shall send you."

Unhappily for the patient, it was not the easiest matter in the world to keep him quiet. "I dare say Pawkatt likes to see me laid by the heels here, Izzie," he said to his wife, "while he goes interfering with my patients, and bringing his old-fashioned theories to bear. He'll shut up the poor wretched little windows of all those cottages in the lanes, I dare say; and make the rooms even more stifling than they have been made by the builder. He'll frighten the poor women into shutting out every breath of fresh air, and then take every atom of strength away from those poor wretched creatures by his drastic treatment. It's no use talking, my dear, I'm a little knocked out, but I've no more fever about me than you have, and I shall go out this evening. I shall go round and see those people. There's a woman in the lane behind the church (a widow with three children, lying ill; and she seems to believe in me, poor creature, as if I was Providence itself. I can't forget the look she gave me yesterday, when she stood on the threshold of her wretched hovel, asking me to save her children, as if she thought it rested with me to save her children. I can't forget her look, Izzie. It haunted me all last night. And when I think of Pawkatt pouring his drugs down those children's throats, I—I tell you it's no use, my dear, I'll take a cup of tea, and then get up and dress."

It was in vain that Isabel pleaded; in vain that she brought to her aid Mrs. Jefferson, the vigorous and outspoken, who declared that it would be nothing short of self-murder if Mr. Gilbert insisted on going out that evening; equally in vain the threat of summoning Mr. Pawkatt. George was resolute; these quiet people always are resolute, not to say obstinate. He was wanted yonder among his patients, and he must go. Isabel and Mrs. Jefferson retired in melancholy resignation to prepare the tea, which was to fortify the surgeon for his evening's work. George came downstairs half an hour afterward, looking, not ill, or even weak, but at once flushed and haggard.

"There's nothing whatever the matter with me, my dear Izzie," he said, as his wife followed him to the door; "I am only done up with very hard work. I feel tired and cramped in my limbs, as if I'd caught cold somehow or other. I was out all day in the wet last week, you know; but there's nothing in that. I shall just look in at those people at Briargate, and come back by the lanes; and then an hour or so in the surgery will finish my work, and I shall have an assistant, my dear. The agricultural population gets very thick about Graybridge, and unless some one takes pity on the poor people, and brings about some improvement in the places they live in, we may look for plenty of fever."

He went out at the little gate, and Isabel watched him going along the lane. He walked a little slower than usual, and that was all. She watched him with a quiet affection on her face. There was no possible phase of circumstances by which she could have been ever brought to love him; but she knew that he was good, she knew that there was something praiseworthy in what he was doing to-night—this resolute visiting of wretched sick people.

It was not the knightly sort of goodness she had adored in the heroes of her choice; but it was good, and she admired her husband a little, in a calm, unenthusiastic manner—as she might have admired a very estimable grandfather, had she happened to possess such a relative. She was trying to be good, and all the sentimental tenderness of her nature had been aroused by George's illness. He was a more agreeable person lying faint and languid in a shaded room, and requiring his head constantly bathed with vinegar and water, than when in the full vigor of health and clumsiness.

She finally walked out into the lane, waiting for her husband's coming. Two or three people went slowly by at considerable intervals; and at last, when it was growing quite dark, the figure of a slouching country-built lad, loomed out of the obscurity.

"Be this Muster Gilbert's the doctor's?" he asked of Isabel.

"Yes; do you want him?"

"I don't want him; but I've got a letter for his wife from a man that's staying up at our place. Be you she?"

"Yes; give me the letter," answered Isabel, putting her hand over the gate.

She took the missive from the hand of

the boy, who resigned it in a slow, unwilling manner, and then slouched away. Mrs. Gilbert put the letter in her pocket, and went into the house. The doctor's wife seated herself at the little table, and took the letter from her pocket and tore it open. It was a very brief and unceremonious kind of epistle, containing only these words:

"I've found comfortable quarters, for the nonce, in a little crib down in Ness-brough Hollow. I suppose you know the place; and I shall expect to see you in the course of to-morrow. Don't forget the sinews of war; and be sure you ask for Captain Morgan."

There was no signature. The letter was written in a big, dashing hand, which had sprawled recklessly over a sheet of old-fashioned letter paper; it seemed a riotous, improvident kind of writing, that gloried in the wasted space and squandered ink.

"How cruel of him to come here!" muttered Isabel, as she tore the letter into a little heap of fragments; "how cruel of him to come! as if I had not suffered enough already; as if the misery and disgrace had not been bitter enough and hard enough to bear."

She rested her elbows on the table, and sat quite still for some time, with her face hidden in her hands. Her thoughts were very painful; but, for once in a way, they were not entirely devoted to Roland Lansdell; and yet the master of Mordred Priory did figure in that long reverie. George came in by and by, and found her sitting in the attitude into which she had fallen after destroying the letter. She had been very anxious about her husband some time ago; but for the last half hour her thoughts had been entirely removed from him; and she looked up at him confusedly, almost startled by his coming as if he had been the last person in the world whom she expected to see. Mr. Gilbert dropped heavily into the nearest chair, like a man who feels himself powerless to go one step further.

"I'm very ill, Izzie," he said; "it's no use mincing the matter; I am ill. I suppose Pawkatt is right, after all, and I've got a touch of the fever."

"Shall I send for him?" asked Isabel, starting up; "he said I was to send for him if you grew worse."

"Not on any account. I know what to do as well as he does. If I should happen to get delirious by and by, you can send for him, because I dare say you'd be frightened, poor girl, and would feel more comfortable with a doctor pottering about me. And now listen to me, my dear, while I give you a few directions; for my head feels like a ton-weight, and I don't think I shall be able to sit upright much longer."

The doctor proceeded to give his wife all necessary instructions for the prevention of infection. She was to have a separate room prepared for herself immediately; she was to fumigate the room in which he was to lie, in such and such a manner. As for any attendance upon himself, that would be Mrs. Jefferson's task.

Mr. Pawkatt was summoned to his rival's bedside early on the following morning. George's case was quite out of his own hands by this time; for he had grown much worse in the night, and was vain to submit to whatever people pleased to do with him. He was very ill. Isabel sat in the half-darkened room, sometimes reading, sometimes working in the dim light that crept through the curtain, sometimes sitting very quietly wrapped in thought—painful and perplexing thought. She was very foolish—she had been very wicked—but there was a deep fount of tenderness in that sentimental essentially feminine breast; and I doubt if George Gilbert was not more lovingly watched by his weak young wife than ever he could have been by a strong-minded helpmate, who would have frozen any lurking sentiment in Mr. Lansdell's breast by one glance from her pitiless eyes. The doctor's wife felt a remorseful compassion for the man who, after his own matter-of-fact fashion, had been very good to her.

Mrs. Gilbert sat all day in her husband's room; but about 5 in the afternoon George fell into a deep slumber, in which Mr. Pawkatt found him a little after 6 o'clock. Nothing could be better than that tranquil sleep, the surgeon said; and when he was gone, Mrs. Jefferson, who had been sitting in the room for some time, anxious to be of use to her master, suggested that Isabel should go downstairs, and out into the garden to get a breath of fresh air.

"Yes; I should like to go downstairs a little, if you think that George is sure to sleep soundly for a long time; and I know you'll take good care of him. I want to go out somewhere—not very far; but I must go to-night."

"I should have thought, if you was the greatest gadderabout that ever was, you'd have stayed quietly at home while your husband was lying ill, Mrs. Gilbert," she said, sharply; "but of course you know your own business best."

## (To be continued.)

### The Hare Ran Home.

The Rev. J. Kirkpatrick, a famous old cricketer of Kent, England, was out shooting one day, and found a hare sitting. Instead of putting it up and shooting it, he said to himself:

"No, I will give it a fair chance, cricketer distance."

So, turning round, he deliberately measured out twenty-two yards. But on facing about in order to have his shot, all he saw of his hare was a small form scudding miles off.

### Latest Thing at a Wedding.

Mrs. Knicker—Was it a fashionable wedding?

Mrs. Bocker—Yes, indeed; the bride was attended by a divorcee of honor. —New York Sun.

Sometimes a man pretends to be fooled for the purpose of fooling others.

## TOPICS OF THE TIMES.

### A CHOICE SELECTION OF INTERESTING ITEMS.

Comments and Criticisms Based Upon the Happenings of the Day—Historical and News Notes

Killing in the name of sport ought to belong solely to the dark ages.

When life insurance stockholders disagree will the policy-holders get their dues?

The "kissing album" is the rage in London. In this country no album is required for such things.

Mr. McCurdy found it easier to resign after his salary had been cut in two. Most of us would.

The Isle of Pines, although settled by Americans, seems to have become anything but de-Latinized.

Persons who live in brick houses, on the contrary, seem to be amply justified in throwing bricks at the brick trust.

When a railroad sends an accommodation train ahead of an express, it is not hard to guess which will fare the worse.

They have discovered a plumbers' trust in Canada. What better proof could be given of unexampled prosperity in the Dominion?

As to which of the sexes is the more courageous, it is, after all, hard to decide, for so often as a man marries, a woman marries likewise.

Tolstoy's declaration that the situation in Russia is not serious gives rise to a hope that no situation he would regard as serious may arise.

What has become of the people who formerly declared that the Russians were too deeply steeped in ignorance to ever engage in a general revolt?

J. P. Morgan says he was cheated in a recent railroad deal. The other fellow might almost be justified in fixing up dates for the purpose of going out to lecture about it.

Hall Caine says it's harder for a rich man than a poor man to be good. It certainly is in this country. The poor folk are always causing the rich to lose their tempers.

With six and a half billions of dollars to their credit, the American farmers probably realize the meat combine didn't get all the money in the country last year, after all.

A vagrant kindly treated by a Denver policeman got a new start and left his benefactor \$32,000. No policeman ever won such a dividend as this by using his club on a park sleeper.

Iceland has a record which entitles it to the respect of the nations. In ten years the number of fishing vessels has increased from seventy to three hundred, and in twenty years the consumption of alcohol is only one-half what it was.

According to statistics, women have during the past twenty-five years increased in stature two and one-half inches, while men have grown that much shorter. If this thing keeps up for a century or two mere man will need a stepladder when he desires to whisper the glad word in her ear.

The North German Lloyd Steamship Company is to name a new 17,000-ton ship Washington, after the first American President. Why not? Americans have been naming their ships, their hotels and their country residences after various European persons and places for so many years that it is about time the Europeans returned the compliment.

It has come to pass that higher education, advancing with the rest of civilization, now offers special inducements to young men in the choice of methods of death. Formerly the student had to take what he could get or what was given him, but to-day he may make his selection between the football eleven, the fraternity and the prize ring. Each has special advantages to recommend it to the candidate and to the parents ambitious for the future of their boys, and each seems to be equally effective. Verily variety is the spice of death as well as of life.

Viewed from all sides, farming is a great business. And it is as a real, live, substantial and serious business that the farmers should regard and conduct their affairs. Fortunately, system is rapidly revolutionizing the business. In the golden northwest the successful farmers are managing their estates like great manufacturing plants. There are no leaks, no slipshod methods. They are piling up magnificent crops and are making fortunes. Down through Kentucky and the South, too, the farmers are be-

ginning to look upon their occupation as a sure-enough business and not as a speculative pastime.

"Everybody Works But Father" was the name of a song which caught our eye in a shop window the other day. "Go On and Coax Me" stood next to "Keep a Little Cozy Corner in Your Heart for me," and "Come Along, Little Girl, Come Along," was the neighbor of "She Waits by the Deep Blue Sea." We are never quite sure whether to smile at these unsophisticated expressions of humor or yearning. Such sentiments, whether expressed with crudity or refinement, are the side of nature on which the world is most alike. "One touch of vulgarity," said Whistler, "makes the whole world kin," and Sir Edward Fry said the other day that "whatever popularizes vulgarizes." It is true that an audience full of Aphrodites is moved to tears by such a phrase in a melodrama as "Death before dishonor." A gallery of thieves could be made to applaud sincerely "Honesty is the best policy." Lothario can feel his heart expand at "There's only one girl in the world for me." But the greatest artists also appeal to these universal yearnings as strongly as to the discrimination of the few. The Greek dramatists pleased the ordinary man, and Shakespeare's tragedies are stronger with the gallery than with the stalls. There is nothing more popular in the world than familiar moral sentiment, but it loses none of its popularity by having distinction and beauty added to familiar truth. Vulgar, after all, in one of its older meanings, signified merely what was common to us all, and to accept that and turn it with its beauty to the light is the highest thing that art can do.

The national civil service commission finds the great defect in the federal service in the lack of opportunity for ambitious, well educated young men. There is not sufficient inducement, it is said, for the most capable men to work for the government, as they can do better by seeking employment in large corporations, where they can in time command higher salaries than they can hope to get from the government. It would not be dignified or profitable for the national government to begin a competition with the corporations or trusts for the services of men who are ambitious to make money. If it comes to a mere matter of money, the corporations will be able to offer the most. When they see a capable man on the bench or in any other department of public life whom they think they want they will offer him a salary that Congress would be reluctant to give to the incumbent of any office. There are capable men whose ambition is not centered on the accumulation of wealth and who deem it more of an honor to serve the United States than to serve the United States Steel Corporation. They feel more pride in being identified with the national government, even in a comparatively humble position, than in being counted among the employees of a trust, where their tenure of office, save in the case of exceptional ability, is often quite uncertain. The man who has risen to the presidency of a great railroad system may be discharged as summarily by the financier who controls it as a section hand is by his boss. There are hosts of capable, well educated men who draw back from the fierce competition which accompanies the struggle for the prizes to be had in the field of private endeavor. They would rather have a government position, with a small salary and reasonable permanency of tenure, than strive madly for money rewards which they may be unable to get. They are willing to let men no abler than themselves, but more strenuous, have the good things which corporations and trusts offer to those who will be of peculiar service to them. The national government pays low salaries on the average and does not promise swift promotion to men of marked capacity. Yet it gets and holds the services of a large number of persons of no mean ability who are competent to attend to its business. If it were competing with the trusts and corporations in transportation, manufacturing, banking, and merchandising it would need a class of men it does not need now, and would have to bid against its rivals to get them. Let the corporations have ambitious and forceful men who see no greater object in life than a high salary paid for doing the creditable or discreditable work of a wealthy employer. The national government will continue to be able to get men who will administer its affairs with fidelity and competency even if it does not hold out greater inducements than at present. Occasionally there will be grafters among them, but big salaries do not banish grafting. It prevails among the high salaried presidents of great insurance companies.

## MISCELLANEOUS.

Dis world is sholy funny,  
Dey doesn't run it right;  
White man hab de money,  
While I's got de appetite.

—Washington Star.