

# The Doctor's Dilemma

By Hesba Stretton

## CHAPTER V.

"Martin Dolores" ejaculated both in one breath.

"Yes, mademoiselle," I said, unrolling the tress of hair as if it had been a serpent, and going forward to greet them; "are you surprised to see me?"

"Surprised!" echoed the elder. "No, we are amazed—puzzled! How could you get here? When did you come?"

"Quite easily," I replied. "I came on Sunday, and Tardif fetched me in his own boat. If the weather had permitted I should have paid you a call; but you know what it has been."

"To be sure," answered Emma; "and how is dear Julia? She will be very anxious about you."

"She was on the verge of a nervous attack when I left her," I said; "that will tend to increase her anxiety."

"Poor, dear girl!" she replied sympathetically. "But, Martin, is this young woman here so very ill? We have heard from the Renaults she had had a dangerous fall. To think of your being in Sark ever since Sunday, and we never heard a word of it!"

"Is that the young woman's hair?"

"Yes," I replied; "it was necessary to cut it off. She is dangerously ill with fever."

Both of them shrank a little towards the door. A sudden temptation assailed me, and I looked on so much by surprise that I had yielded before I knew I was attacked. It was their shrinking movement that did it. My answer was almost as automatic and involuntary as their retreat.

"You see it would not be wise for any of us to go about," I said. "A fever breaking out in the island, especially now you have no resident doctor, would be very serious."

Thus I secured isolation for myself and my patient. But why had I been eager to do so? I could not answer that question to myself, and I did not ponder over it many minutes. I was impatient, yet strangely reluctant, to look at the sick girl again, after the loss of her beautiful hair. The change in her appearance struck me as singular. Her face before had a look of suffering and trouble, making it almost old, charming as it was; now she had the aspect of quite a young girl, scarcely touching upon womanhood.

We sat up again together that night, Tardif and I. He would not smoke, lest the scent of the tobacco should get in through the crevices of the door, and he held his pipe between his teeth, taking an imaginary puff now and then, that he might keep himself wide awake. We talked to one another in whispers.

"Tell me all you know about mademoiselle," I said. He had been chary of his knowledge before, but his heart seemed open at this moment. Most hearts are more open at midnight than at any other hour.

"There's not much to tell, doctor," he answered. "Her name is Ollivier, as I said to you; but she does not think she is any kin to the Olliviers of Guernsey. She is poor, though she does not look as if she had been born poor, does she?"

"Not in the least degree," I said. "If she is not a lady by birth, she is one of the first specimens of Nature's gentleness I have ever come across. Has she written to any one since she came here?"

"Not to a soul," he answered eagerly. "She told me she had no friends nearer than Australia. That is a great way off."

"And she has had no letters?" I asked.

"Not one," he replied. "She has neither written nor received a single letter."

"But how did you come across her?" I inquired. "She did not fall from the skies, I suppose. How was it she came to live in this out-of-the-world place with you?"

"I'll tell you all about it, Doctor Martin," he said, and he related how he had met the young lady in London.

"Tardif," I said, when he had concluded the recital, "I did not know what a good fellow you were, though I ought to have learned it by this time."

"No," he answered, "it is not in me; it's something in her. You feel something of it yourself, doctor, or how could you stay in a poor little house like this, thinking of nothing but her, and not caring about the weather keeping you away from home?"

"There was a curious thing—she had not any luggage with her, not a box nor a bag of any kind. She never fancied that I knew, for that would have troubled her. It is my belief that she has run away."

"But who can she have run away from, Tardif?" I asked.

"Heaven knows," he answered, "but the girl has suffered; you can see that by her face. Whoever or whatever she has run away from, her cheeks are white from it, and her heart sorrowful. I know nothing of her secret; but this I do know: she is as good, and true, and sweet a little soul as my poor little wife was. If she should die, it will be a great grief of heart to me. If I could offer my life to God in place of hers, I'd do it willingly."

"No, she will not die. Look there, Tardif," I said, pointing to the door sill of the inner room. A white card had been slipped under the door noiselessly—a signal agreed upon between mother Renault and me, to inform me that my patient had at last fallen into a profound slumber, which seemed likely to continue some hours.

The morning was more than half gone before mother Renault opened the door and came out to us, her old face looking more I should say than ever, but her little eyes twinkling with satisfaction.

"All goes well," she said. "Your little mademoiselle does not think of dying yet."

I did not stay to watch how Tardif received this news, for I was impatient myself to see how she was going on. Thank heaven the fever was gone, the delirium at an end. The dark gray eyes, opening languidly as my fingers touched her wrist, were calm and intelligent. She was as weak as a kitten, but that did not trouble me much. I was sure her natural health was good, and she would

soon recover her lost strength. I had to stoop down to hear what she was saying.

"Have I kept quite still, doctor?" she asked faintly.

I must own that my eyes smarted, and my voice was not to be trusted. I had never felt so overjoyed in my life as at that moment. But what a singular wish to be obedient possessed this girl! What a wonderful power of submissive self-control!

"I should like to see Tardif," murmured the girl to me that night, after she had awakened from a second long and peaceful sleep.

I called him and he came in barefoot, his broad, burly frame seeming to fill up all the little room. She could not raise her head, but her face was turned towards us, and she held out her small wasted hand to him, smiling faintly. He sat on his knees before her took it into his great, horny palm, and looked down upon it as he held it very carefully with tears standing in his eyes.

"Why, it is like an egg shell," he said. "God bless you, mademoiselle, God bless you for getting well again!"

She laughed at his words—a feeble though merry laugh, like a child's—and she seemed delighted with the sight of his hearty face, glowing as it was with happiness. It was a strange chance that had thrown these two together. I could not allow Tardif to remain long; but after that she kept devising little messages to send to him through me whenever I was about to leave her. Her intercourse with mother Renault was extremely limited, as the old woman's knowledge of English was slight. It

happened, in consequence, that I was the only person who could talk or listen to her through the long and dreary hours.

## CHAPTER VI.

My mother was lying on the sofa in the breakfast room, with the Venetian blinds down to darken the morning sunshine. Her eyes were closed, though she held in her hands the prayer book, from which she had been reading as usual the *Ussulus* for the day. Whilst I was looking at her, though I made no sort of sound or movement, she seemed to feel that I was there; and after looking up she started from her sofa, and flung her arms about me, pressing closer and closer.

"Oh, Martin, my boy, my darling!" she sobbed. "Thank heaven you are come back safe! Oh, I have been very rebellious, very unbelieving. I ought to have known that you would be safe. Oh, I am thankful!"

"So am I, mother," I said, kissing her. "You have come back like a barbarian," she said, "rougher than Tardif himself. How have you managed, my boy? You must tell me all about it."

"As soon as I have had my breakfast, mother, I must put up a few things in a hamper to go back by the Sark cutter," I answered.

"What sort of things?" she asked. "Tell me, and I will be getting them ready for you."

"Well, there will be some medicines, of course," I said; "you cannot help me in that. But you can find things suitable for a delicate appetite; jelly, you know, and jams, and marmalade; anything nice that comes to hand. And a few amusing books."

"Books!" echoed my mother.

I recollected at once that the books she might select, as being suited to a Sark peasant, would hardly prove interesting to my patient. I could not do better than go down to Barbet's circulating library and look out some good works there.

"Well, no," I said; "never mind the books. If you will look out the other things, those can wait."

"Who are they for?" asked my mother.

"For my patient," I replied.

"What sort of a patient, Martin?" she inquired again.

"Her name is Ollivier," I said. "A common name. Our postman's name is Ollivier."

"Oh, yes," she answered; "I know several families of Olliviers. I dare say I should know this person if you could tell me her Christian name. Is it Jane, or Martha, or Rachel?"

"I don't know," I said; "I did not ask."

The packing of that hamper interested me wonderfully; and my mother, rather amazed at my taking the superintendence of it in person, stood by me in her store closet, letting me help myself liberally. There was a good space left after I had taken sufficient to supply Miss Ollivier with good things for some weeks to come. If my mother had not been by I should have filled it up with books.

"Give me a loaf or two of white bread," I said; "the bread at Tardif's is coarse and hard, as I know after eating it for a week."

"Whatever you are doing here, Martin?" exclaimed Julia's unwelcome voice behind me.

"He has been living on Tardif's coarse fare for a week," answered the mother; "so now he has compassion enough for his Sark patient to pack up some dainties for her. If you could only give him one or two of your bad headaches, he would have more sympathy for you."

"Have you had one of your headaches, Julia?" I inquired.

"The worst I ever had," she answered. "It was partly your going off in that rash way, and the storm that came on after, and the fright we were in. You must not think of going again, Martin. I shall take care you don't go after we are married."

Julia had been used to speak out as calmly about our marriage as if it was no more than going to a picnic. It grated upon me just then; though it had been much the same with myself. There was no delightful agitation about the future that lay before us. We were going to set up housekeeping by ourselves, and that was all. There was no mystery in it; no problem to be solved; no discovery to be made on either side. There would be no Blue Beard's chamber in our dwelling. We had grown up together; now we had agreed to grow old together. That was the sum total of marriage to Julia and me.

I finished packing the hamper, and sent Pellet with it to the Sark office, having addressed it to Tardif, who had engaged to be down at the *Croix Harbor* to receive it when the cutter returned.

I was in haste to secure a parcel of books before the cutter should start home again, with its courageous little knot of market people. I ran down to Barbet's. I looked through the library shelves until I hit upon two novels. Besides these, I chose a book for Sunday reading.

Barbet brought half a sheet of an old Times to form the first cover of my parcel. The shop was crowded with market people, and as he was busy I undertook to pack them myself. I was about to fold the newspaper round them, when my eye was caught by an advertisement at the top of one of the columns. "Strayed from her home in London, on the 20th inst., a young lady with bright brown hair, grey eyes, and delicate features; age twenty-one. She is believed to have been alone. Was dressed in a blue silk dress, and sea-skin jacket and hat. Fifty

pounds reward is offered to any person giving such information as will lead to her restoration to her friends. Apply to Messrs. Scott and Brown, Gray's Inn Road, E. C."

I stood perfectly still for some seconds, staring blankly at the very simple advertisement strewn about my eyes. There was not the slightest doubt in my mind that it had a direct reference to my pretty patient in Sark. But I had no time for deliberation then, and I tore off a large corner of the Times containing that and other advertisements, and thrust it unseen into my pocket.

In the afternoon I went down with Julia and my mother to the new house, to see after the unpacking of furniture. I can imagine circumstances in which nothing could be more delightful than the care with which a man prepares a home for his future wife. The very tint of the walls, and the way the light falls in through the windows, would become matters of grave importance, but there was not the slightest flavor of this sentiment in our furnishing of the new house. It was really more Julia's business than mine. I went about the place as if in some dream. The house commanded a splendid view of the whole group of the Channel Islands, and the rocky islets innumerable strewn about the sea. The afternoon sun was shining full upon Sark, and whenever I looked through the window I could see the cliffs of the *Harve Gousselin*, purple in the distance, with a silver thread of foam at their foot. No wonder that my thoughts wandered, and the words my mother and Julia were speaking went in at one ear and out at the other. Certainly I was dreaming; but which part was the dream?

"I don't believe he carries a straw about the carpets!" exclaimed Julia, in a disappointed tone.

"I do indeed, dear Julia," I said.

She had set her mind upon having flowers in her drawing room carpet, and there they were, large garlands of brightly-colored blossoms, very gay and, as I ventured to remark to myself, very gay.

"You like it better than you did in the pattern?" she asked anxiously.

I did not like it one whit better, but I should have been a brute if I had said so. She was gazing at it and me with so troubled an expression, that I felt it necessary to set her mind at ease.

"It is certainly handsomer than the pattern," I said, regarding it attentively; "very much handsomer."

"Julia, my love," said my mother, "remember that we wish to show Martin those patterns whilst it is daylight. Tomorrow is Sunday, you know."

A little tinge of color crept over Julia's tintless face. We then drew near to the window, from which we could see Sark so clearly, and Julia drew out of her pocket a very large envelope, which was bursting with its contents.

They were small scraps of white silk and white satin. I took them mechanically into my hand, and could not help admiring their pure, lustrous, glossy beauty. I passed my fingers over them softly. There was something in the sight of them that moved me, as if they were fragments of the shining garments of some vision, which in times gone by, when I was much younger, had now and then floated before my fancy. I did not know

any one lovely enough to wear raiment of glistening white like these, unless— unless— A passing glimpse of the pure white face, and glossy hair, and deep grey eyes of my Sark patient flashed across me.

"They are patterns for Julia's wedding dress," said my mother, in a low, tender tone.

(To be continued.)

## ABOUT CIGAR BOXES.

Spanish Cedar is the Best Wood, but Comes from Cuba.

There are something like 14,000,000 cigar boxes used in the United States annually, and about nine-tenths of that number are made in this city, where the trade rivals the clothing industry in point of capital invested, and the number of people employed," said a leading cigar-box manufacturer in New York to the writer.

"The material out of which the best boxes are made comes principally from Cuba, and is known as Spanish cedar. The recent war with Spain shortened the supply and increased the price of the article to such an extent that many box makers have been compelled to use a cheaper and less desirable grade of wood for the purpose.

"One New York firm has been experimenting with timber from the unexplored Paraguayan forests, which are said to contain the finest cedar wood in the world. They have, however, experienced considerable difficulty in selling their boxes, as cigar manufacturers and connoisseurs insist that it spoils a fine cigar to put it in any box not made of genuine Spanish cedar. The latter wood always retains the flavor of a good cigar. Indeed, some people claim that it improves the flavor. The reason given is that it grows in the same localities as the best Havana tobacco.

"Attempts made to use cedar grown in the United States for cigar boxes have not been very successful. The Florida and South American cedar contains a peculiar gum that melts when the wood is exposed to the heat of a store or house, and thus the labels and sometimes the cigars in a box are spoiled. Of course, the smokers of cheaper brands of cigars are less particular about the quality of the wood used for their boxes, and a veneered cedar, made from a peculiar sort of cedar that grows in Mexico, is often substituted for the Spanish article. But it cannot be done without the cigar dealers finding it out, and the consequence is that even a good cigar when packed in such a box sells at a disadvantage.—Washington Star.

## A DOUBTFUL STORY.

Too Good to Be True, Though a Sober Man tells it.

"Never had such a shock in my life. I questioned for a few minutes whether I was in my right mind. I was sick, and good and sick at that. I called up a central, and was informed in one of the most pleasant voices I ever heard that they were busy on the line of my regular physician. Just as I was going to cut loose on a string of profanity she said: 'You're sick, sir. I can tell from your voice. I'll call physicians till I get one. Meantime you'd better lie down.'

"Say, nothing but a dead faint would have removed me from that telephone. I listened as I heard her ring for one doctor after another, always quick and pointed in her inquiries, but patient and not a lost note in that flute-like voice. I forgot that I was sick, and I was sorry when she finally found a physician whom she told to hurry to me."

"A little later she called up to know if I needed a nurse. Of course I did, just because I wanted the pleasure of hanging on to that receiver while she pointed up one number after another until the desired article was procured. It was great. When it came to getting drugs she was only one removed from a magician. I ordered dainties that I never eat, just to hear her call for them, for I pretended a degree of weakness that would not permit of my standing too long at the phone. The whole thing was a startling revelation to me. When I'm well the company is going to lose that girl or she'll refuse what a good many mammals regard as a catch."

"Then one of the most desirable eligibles in the town went to the telephone and asked the time, though he had three clocks and a chronometer, all on duty.—Detroit Free Press.

## A Queer Inscription.

A queer sentence closes the inscription on a tombstone in a churchyard in Leigh, England. After announcing the name and other particulars of the lady there buried, these words follow: "A virtuous woman is 58 to her husband."

The explanation is that space prevented "a crown" being cut in full, and the stonemason argued that a crown equals 58.

## A Fellow-Feeling.

Perambulating Pete—Ross, I ain't an ordinary tramp. But every spring, 'bout April, my wife insists upon cleaning me—

Mr. Boerum Place (interrupting him sympathetically)—My poor man! Don't say another word. Here's a dollar!—Brooklyn Eagle.

## A Conservative Claim.

"I suppose you think you have the greatest climate in the country," said the tourist.

"No," said the man who was suffering from a cold. "We don't claim the greatest in that line. But we do claim the largest variety."—Washington Star.

## Cheap Enough.

"Isn't it ridiculous to say 'Talk is cheap?'"

"Oh, I don't know. I could take you to a place where you'd get dead loads of it and a shave thrown in for 10 cents."—Philadelphia Press.



## Tobacco-Curing Attachment.

An appliance much in use by farmers who grow tobacco for the purpose of easily getting the bunches in the desired position will be found useful for curing anything that it is desired to swing from the rafters of the barn.

Figure 2 in the illustration represents a board five feet long and three or more inches wide, which rests on the rafters that are fastened to the rafters. This board should not be fastened, for it is to be moved along on the rails from

place to place, as desired. Figure 1 shows the bar with hooks at either end, on which the bunch of tobacco or other green is placed. Two ropes connect this to the framework, figure 3, which hangs over the five-foot board, figure 2; to either end of the top bar of figure 3, small pulleys are attached, as shown in the illustration. Figure 4 represents the rope by which the appliance is worked.—Indianapolis News.

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