The Doctor's Dilemma

By Hesba Stretton

CHAPTER XXII.—(Continued.)

That same evening I received a note, desiring me to go and see him immediately. He was looking brighter and better than in the morning, and an odd smile played now and then about his face as he talked to me, after having desired Mrs. Foster to leave us alone together.

"Mack!" he said, "I have not the slightest reason to doubt Olivia's death, except your own opinion to the contrary, which is founded upon reasons of which I know nothing. But acting on the supposition that she may be still alive, I am quite willing to enter into negotiations with her. I suppose it must be through you."

"It must," I answered, "and it cannot be at present. You will have to wait for some months, perhaps, while I pursue my search for her. I do not know where she is any more than you do."

A vivid gleam crossed his face at these words, but whether of incredulity or satisfaction I could not tell.

"But suppose I die in the meantime?" he objected.

"I do not know that I might not leave you in your present position," I said at last, "it may be I am acting from an over-strained sense of duty. But if you will give me a formal deed protecting her from yourself, I am willing to advance the funds necessary to remove you to purer air, and more open quarters than these. A deed of separation, which both of you must sign, can be drawn up, and receive your signature. There will be no doubt as to getting hers, when we find her. But that may be some months hence, as I said. Still I will run the risk.'"

"For her sake?" he said, with a sneer.

"For her sake, simply," I answered; "I will employ a lawyer to draw up the deed, and as soon as you sign it I will advance the money you require. My treatment of your disease I shall begin at once; that falls under my duty as your doctor; but I warn you that fresh air and freedom from agitation are almost, if not positively, essential to its success. The sooner you secure these for yourself, the better your chance."

Some further conversation passed between us, as to the stipulations to be insisted upon, and the division of the year's income from Olivia's property, for I would not agree to her alienating any portion of it. Foster wished to drive a hard bargain, still with that odd smile on his face; and it was after much discussion that we came to an agreement.

I had the deed drawn up by a lawyer, who warned me that if Foster sued for a restitution of his rights they would be enforced. But I hoped that when Olivia was found she would have some evidence in her own favor, which would deter him from carrying the case into court. The deed was signed by Foster, and left in my charge till Olivia's signature could be obtained.

As soon as the deed was secured, I had my patient removed from Behringer street to some apartments in Fulham, near to Dr. Senior, whose interest in the case was now almost equal to my own. Here I could visit him every day. Never had any sufferer, under the highest and wealthiest ranks, greater care and science expended upon him than Richard Foster.

The progress of his recovery was slow, but it was sure. I felt that it would be so from the first. Day by day I watched the pallid hue of sickness upon his face changing into a more natural tone. I saw his strength coming back by slight but steady degrees. The malady was forced to retreat into its most hidden citadel, where it might lurk as a prisoner, but not dwell as a destroyer, for many years to come.

There was no triumph to me in this, as there would have been had my patient been any one else. The cure aroused much interest among my colleagues, and made my name more known. But what was that to me? As long as this man lived, Olivia was doomed to a lonely and friendless life. I tried to look into the future for her, and saw it stretch out into long, dreary years. I wondered where she would find a home. Could I persuade Johanna to receive her into her pleasant dwelling, which would become so lonely to her when Captain Carey had moved into Julia's house in St. Peterport? That was the best plan I could form.

CHAPTER XXIII.

Julia's marriage arrangements were going on speedily. There was something ironical to me in the chance that made me so often the witness of them. We were so merely cousins again, that she discussed her purchases and displayed them before me, as if there had never been any notion between us of keeping house together. Once more I assisted in the choice of a wedding dress, for the one made a year before was said to be yellow and old-fashioned. But this time Julia did not insist upon having white satin. A dainty tint of grey was considered more suitable. Captain Carey enjoyed the purchase with the rapture I had failed to experience.

The wedding was fixed to take place the last week in July, a fortnight earlier than the time proposed; it was also a fortnight earlier than the date I was looking forward to most anxiously, when, if ever, news would reach Tardif from Olivia.

Dr. Senior had agreed with me that Foster was sufficiently advanced on the road to recovery to be removed from Fulham to the better air of the south coast. We required Mrs. Foster to write us daily, three times a week, every variation she might observe in his health. After that we started them off to a quiet village in Sussex. I breathed more freely when they were out of my daily sphere of duty.

But before they went a hint of treachery reached me, which put me doubly on my guard. One morning, when Jack and I were at breakfast, Simmons, the cabby, was announced. He was a favorite with Jack, who bade the servant show him in.

"Nothing amiss with your wife or the boats, I hope?" said Jack.

"No, Dr. John, no," he answered, "there ain't anything amiss with them, except being too many of 'em p'raps, and my old woman won't own to that. But there's something in the wind as concerns Dr. Dobry, so I thought I'd better come and give you a hint of it."

"Very good, Simmons," said Jack.

"You recollect taking my cab to Gray's Inn Road about this time last year, when I shawed up so green, don't you?" he asked.

"To be sure," I said.

"Well, doctors," he continued, "the very last Monday as ever was, a lady walks slowly along the stand, eyeing us all very hard, but taking no heed of any of 'em, till she catches sight of me. The lady comes along very slowly—she looks hard at me—she nods her head, as much as to say, 'You, and your cab, and your horse are what I'm on the lookout for;' and I gets down, opens the door, and sees her in quite comfortable. Says she, 'Drive me to Messrs. Scott and Brown, in Gray's Inn Road.'"

"No!" I ejaculated.

"Yes, doctors," replied Simmons. "'Drive me,' she says, 'to Messrs. Scott and Brown, Gray's Inn Road.' Of course I knew the name again; I was vexed enough the last time I were there, at showing myself so green. I looks hard at her. A very fine make of a woman, with hair and eyes as black as coals, and a impudent look on her face somehow. She told me to wait for her in the street; and directly after she goes in there comes down the gent I had seen before, with a pen behind his ear. He looks very hard at us, and me at him. Says he, 'I think I have seen your face before, my man.' Very civil; as civil as a orange, as folks say. 'I think you have,' I says. 'Could you step upstairs for a minute or two?' says he, very polite; 'I'll find a boy to take charge of your horse.' And he slips a arf-crown into my hand, quite pleasant."

"So you went in, of course?" said Jack.

"Doctors," he answered solemnly, "I did go in. There's nothing to be said against that. The lady is sitting in a office upstairs, talking to another gent, with hair and eyes like hers, as black as coals, and the same look of brass on his face. All three of 'em looked a little under the weather. 'What's your name, my man?' asked the black gent. 'Water,' I says. 'And where do you live?' he says, talking me serious. 'In Queer street,' I says, with a little wink to show 'em I were up to a trick or two. They all three larfed a little among themselves, but not in a pleasant sort of way. Then the gent begins again. 'My good fellow,' he says, 'we want you to give us a little information that 'ud be of use to us, and we are willing to pay you handsome for it. It can't do you any harm, nor nobody else, for it's only a matter of business. You're not above taking ten shillings for a bit of useful information?' 'Not by no manner of means,' I says."

"Go on," I said impatiently.

"Jest so, doctors," he continued, "but this time I was minding my P's and Q's. 'You know Dr. Senior, of Brook street?' he says. 'The old doctor?' I says; 'he's retired out of town.' 'No,' he says, 'nor the young doctor neither; but there's another of 'em, isn't there?' 'Dr. Dobry?' I says. 'Yes,' he says, 'he often takes your cab, my friend?' 'First one and then the other,' I says, 'sometimes Dr. John and sometimes Dr. Dobry. They're as thick as brothers, and thicker.' 'Good friends of yours?' he says. 'Well,' says I, 'they take my cab when they can have it; but there's not much friendship, as I see, in that. It's the best cab and horse on the stand. Dr. John's pretty fair, but the other's no great favorite of mine.' 'Ah!' he says."

Simmons' face was illuminated with delight, and he winked sportively at us.

"It were all flummery, doctors," he said. "I jest see them setting a trap, and I wanted to have a finger in it. 'Ah!' he says, 'all we want to know, but we do want to know that very particular, is where you drive Dr. Dobry to the oftenest. He's going to borrow money from us, and we'd like to find out something about his habits. You know where he goes in your cab.' 'Of course I do,' I says; 'I drove him and Dr. John here nigh a twelvemonth ago. The other gent took my number down, and knew where to look for me when you wanted me.' 'You're a clever fellow,' he says. 'So my old woman thinks,' I says. 'And you'd be glad to earn a little more for your old woman?' he says. 'Try me,' I says. 'Well, then,' says he, 'here's a offer for you. If you'll bring us word where he spends his spare time, we'll give you ten shillings; and if it turns out of any use to us, we'll make it five pound.' 'Very good,' I says. 'You've not got any information to tell us at once?' he says. 'Well, no,' I says, 'but I'll keep my eye upon him now.' 'Stop,' he says, as I were going away; 'they keep a carriage, of course?' 'Of course,' I says; 'what's the good of a doctor that hasn't a carriage and pair?' 'Do they use it at night?' says he. 'Not often,' says I; 'they take a cab; mine if it's on the stand.' 'Very good,' he says; 'good morning, my friend.' So I come away, and drives back again to the stand."

"And you left the lady there?" I asked, with no doubt in my mind that it was Mrs. Foster.

"Yes, doctor," he answered, "talking away like a poll-parrot with the black-haired gent. That were last Monday; to-day's Friday, and this morning there comes this bit of a note to me at our house. That's what's brought me here at this time, doctors."

He gave the note into Jack's hands; and he, after glancing at it, passed it on to me. The contents were simply these words: "James Simmons is requested to call at Gray's Inn Road, at 6:30 Friday evening." The handwriting struck me as one I had seen and noticed before. I scanned it more closely for a minute or two; then a glimmering of light began to dawn upon my memory. Could it be? I felt almost sure it was. In another minute I was persuaded that it was the same hand as that which had written the letter announcing Olivia's death. Probably if I could see the penmanship of the other partner, I should find it to be identical with that of the medical certificate which had accompanied the letter.

"Leave this note with me, Simmons," I said, giving him half a crown in exchange for it. I was satisfied now that the papers had been forged, but not with Olivia's connivance. Was Foster himself a party to it? Or had Mrs. Foster alone, with the aid of these friends or relatives of hers, plotted and carried out the scheme, leaving him in ignorance and doubt like my own?

I crossed in the mail steamer to Guernsey, on a Monday night, as the wedding was to take place at an early hour on Wednesday morning, in time for Captain Carey and Julia to catch the boat to England. The ceremony was to be solemnized at seven. Under these circumstances there could be no formal wedding breakfast, a matter not much to be regretted.

Captain Carey and I were standing at the altar of the old church some minutes before the bridal procession appeared. He looked pale, but wound up to a high pitch of resolute courage. The church was nearly full of eager spectators, all of whom I had known from my childhood. Far back, half sheltered by a pillar, I saw the white head and handsome face of my father, with Kate Daltrey by his side. At length Julia appeared, pale like the bridegroom, but dignified and prepossessing. She did not glance at me; she evidently gave no thought to me. That was well, and as it should be.

"OFF WITH HIM TO THE CARRIAGE."

Yet there was a pang in it—reason as I would, there was a pang in it for me. I should have liked her to glance once at me, with a troubled and dimmed eye. I should have liked a shade upon her face, as I wrote my name below hers in the register. But there was nothing of the kind. She gave me the kiss, which I demanded as her cousin Martin, without embarrassment; and after that she put her hand again upon the bridegroom's arm and marched off with him to the carriage.

A whole host of us accompanied the bridal pair to the pier, and saw them start off on their wedding trip, with a pyramid of bouquets before them on the deck of the steamer. We ran round to the lighthouse, and waved out hats and handkerchiefs as long as they were in sight. That duty done, the rest of the day was our own.

It was almost midnight the next day when I reached Brook street, where I found Jack expecting my return. A letter was waiting for me, directed in queer, crabbed handwriting, and posted in Jersey a week before.

It had been so long on the road in consequence of the bad penmanship of the address. I opened it carelessly as I answered Jack's first inquiries; but the instant I saw the signature I held up my hand to silence him. It was from Tardif. This is a translation:

"Dear Doctor and Friend—This day I received a letter from mam'zelle; quite a little letter with only a few lines in it. She says, 'Come to be. My husband has found me; he is here. I have no friends but you and one other, and I cannot send for him. You said you would come to me whenever I wanted you. I have not time to write more. I am in a little village called Ville-en-bois, between Granville and Noireau. Come to the house of the cure; I am there.'

"Behold, I am gone, dear monsieur. I write this in my boat, for we are crossing to Jersey to catch the steamboat to Granville. To-morrow evening I shall be in Ville-en-bois. Will you learn the law of France about this affair? They say the code binds a woman to follow her husband wherever he goes. At London you can learn anything. Believe me, I will protect mam'zelle, or I should say madame, at the loss of my life. Your devoted TARDIF."

"I must go!" I exclaimed, about to rush out of the house.

"Where?" cried Jack.

"To Olivia," I answered; "that villain, that scoundrel has hunted her out in Normandy. Read that, Jack. Let me go."

"Stay!" he said; "there is no chance whatever of going so late as this. Let us think for a few minutes."

But at that moment a furious peal of the bell rang through the house. We both ran into the hall. The servant had just opened the door, and a telegraph clerk stood on the steps, with a telegram, which he thrust into his hands. It was directed to me. I tore it open. "From Jean Grimont, Granville, to Dr. Dobree, Brook street, London." I did not know any Jean Grimont of Granville; it was the name of a stranger to me. A message was written underneath in Norman patois, but so misspelt and garbled in its transmission that I could not make out the sense of it. The only words I was sure about were "mam'zelle," "Foster," "Tardif," and "a l'agonie." Who was on the point of death I could not tell.

(To be continued.)

WASPS BENEFIT THE FIGS.

Insects Are Necessary to the Fruit's Successful Cultivation.

The long-continued effort to produce the Smyrna fig of commerce in California has been crowned with success. The history of the experiment is interesting. It began over twenty years ago with importation of cuttings from Asia Minor. Figs have been produced from these and other imported cuttings, but they were not the famous white fig of commerce. The credit of producing the latter in California belongs to Geo. C. Roeding of Fresno. Until this summer every true Smyrna fig tree planted in California which bore fruit failed to mature it; the figs were unfertilized and withered and dropped. It was finally discovered that the fertilization of this fig depended upon the service of the blastophaga wasp, whose habitat is in the capri, or wild fig. The latter was imported and thrived amazingly, but the blastophaga did not accompany it.

Special importations of the wasp followed, but it thrived only for a season on the capri fig and then disappeared. It was assumed that it could not survive our winters. Last year the Department of Agriculture took the matter in hand. A fresh consignment was imported and its care intrusted to Mr. Roeding. Last April the young insect colony emerged in full force from the first capri cot, entered the second, emerged again, and then took possession of the Smyrna fig trees, the fruit on which was ready for fertilization. Mr. Roeding reports that this experiment has been perfectly successful. A ton of the fruit has been picked from his trees and the entire crop will yield five or six tons more. Mr. Roeding believes that the blastophaga has come to stay and he expects that California will be enriched soon with another industry.

Rogues of Wall Street.

The rogues of Wall street flourish. They are thieving brokers, promoters of mining schemes and disreputable speculators. Said a thieving broker on one occasion: "If the Postoffice Department would let me alone I would have to hire a cart to carry down my money-laden mail. All you have to do is to appeal to the cupidity of the public. Promise 6 per cent dividends on a first-class security and you can't do business; but promise 56 per cent on a fake and you can get rich." Investigation proved this statement to be true. He is of the same class as the tipster fraud who advertises that he knows exactly which stocks will advance and those that are going to decline.

For $5 a week he will tell you precisely how to make a fortune. He advertises in strange ways, using a ridiculous code. For example: "Hit Kangaroo for a jump of 20 points," etc. This interpreted means buy a certain stock for an advance of $20 a share. Such men are swindlers. Quite as contemptible as the man with a fake gold, silver, zinc, copper or oil mining scheme. He first buys a mining prospect for say $2,500 and then organizes a $500,000 or $1,000,000 company under the laws of New Jersey or West Virginia for say $2,500 more. The shares have an alleged par value of $1 each, but he offers them for 37c each from an elaborately furnished office where he poses as the fiscal agent. The rogue, who selects the broker as his victim is more plentiful than the brokers are willing to confess.—World's Work.

Tulkinghorn's House to Disappear.

Yet another famous house has to make way for street improvements. It is the mansion in Lincoln's-inn-fields adjoining Sardinia street, and was built from the designs of Inigo Jones for the Earl of Lindsey. The right-hand room on the first floor of the house was chosen by Dickens for the scene of the assassination of Mr. Tulkinghorn, Sir Leicester Dedlock's lawyer, in "Bleak House." Already, however, the painted ceiling, with the Roman soldier pointing his truncheon to the body of the dead solicitor, has disappeared under a coat of whitewash, wickedly applied a few years ago.—London Globe.

His Words Indorsed.

It was the worst domestic storm they had ever encountered.

"You don't deserve even hanging," he said as he left the house.

"I deserve it better than you do!" she sent after him as a parting shot.—Philadelphia Times.

A Monument for Virgil.

Mantua, after nearly twenty centuries, has remembered that it is the birthplace of Virgil, and set to work to erect a monument to its great poet. The sum of $20,000 has been raised and artists are called on to send in plans in competition.

London's Cemeteries.

London has twenty-one municipal cemeteries, and ten which are owned by private companies.

A CHINESE EDITOR'S IRONY.

How One of the Craft Got Even with the Captious Critics.

In China as well as in other more favored countries the editor finds his pathway strewn with brambles. One member of the craft in the celestial kingdom is experiencing what it is to have friends who are expending much time and labor in correction and godly admonition. He is the editor of a native paper, whose robust reform proclivities are offending against the immutable laws of his land. Driven at length to defend himself, the harassed journalist addressed to his critics a brief editorial, of which the following translation gives an idea of the Chinese conception of sarcasm, erroneously declared to be nonexistent by many travelers. After a preliminary acknowledgment of fallibility the article proceeds:

"In future nothing which may be described as new will appear in these columns, and thereby prevent people's understandings from being enlightened. None but bigoted members of the conceited literati will ever be called to assist upon the editorial staff. We shall confine ourselves to the affairs of the last dynasty, carefully avoiding all reference to the family that now rules in China. We shall give our special attention to fortune-telling, witchcraft and kindred subjects of truth, of which no one has any doubt. A place of supreme importance will be given to the revered teachings of geomancy and we shall show that a man's good luck or misfortune is controlled by the stars. We shall respectfully beg his majesty to observe the old customs and that the mandarins follow their excellent and time-honored methods of transacting business. We shall resist with all our strength every attempt to introduce reforms, and lest we should be tempted to record any current events we resolve from this time forward to dispense with the service of all reporters as a useless waste of money. We hope in this way to earn the good will and support of all our readers, firmly believing that if we faithfully do according to this honest and admirable advice the benefit will be manifested to all."

Highbinder's Coat of Mail.

A coat of mail formed by the interweaving of thousands of small tempered steel rings, each of which passes through six others, is the object of much curiosity at the Baltimore central police station. The coat, which is said to be absolutely bullet-proof, was exhibited to the men of the district by Captain Schleigh. It had formerly belonged to a Chinese highbinder of the Western Pacific slope, and was brought to the station for exhibition by Sheriff R. E. Bevan, of Marysville, Yuba County, Cal., who has been attending the Foresters' convention in Baltimore.

The coat weighs about thirty-eight pounds, and is a load that a man of ordinary muscular development would not care to carry for any length of time. It is made like a sleeveless jacket, and is long enough to cover a portion of the lower limbs and the arms half-way to the elbow. Its history is most interesting. Several years ago the authorities of Yuba County received word that a meeting of the Highbinders (Chinese cutthroats and blackmailers) was to be held, and they surprised the yellow-skinned plotters in a cabin. The lights were put out as the sheriff and his deputies approached, and a desperate battle ensued. The Chinese were captured, says the Baltimore American, and from the body of a dead Chinaman the coat of mail was taken, it being beneath an ordinary blouse. The Chinaman had died from a bullet wound in the head. In the room were found a number of balls which had flattened against the coat of mail.

Teaching His Wife a Lesson.

David Garrick, one of the greatest actors that ever lived, had one fault in the eyes of his wife—he was too fond of playing low characters to a common audience, rather than grand characters to a select audience. She went one night to see him in Richard III., and was highly pleased with the local applause which his acting drew from all parts of the house. Mrs. Garrick then desired to go home, but her husband asked her to wait a little, because he had some business to attend to. So she saw the next piece—a farce in which a farmer gave his neighbors some notions of the wonders he had witnessed during a visit to London. To Mrs. Garrick's dismay, this character was greeted with applause louder, if anything, than what had been bestowed upon Richard III., and she did not quite like it. By and by she noticed her little spaniel trying to get over the balcony which separated the box from the stage, and then the truth suddenly dawned upon her. Garrick was the farmer; but while the dog had known its master, she had not recognized her husband. She did not lecture him so often afterwards about his preference for vulgar characters and vulgar audiences.

Count Tolstoi's Father.

In a recent article Count Tolstoi draws a portrait of his father. He was a large and handsome man, who always wore clothes of a fashion different from that of others. He had a great contempt for the younger generation. His greatest passion was gambling. He won millions and lost them again. Moral principles he seemed to have none. He had his sentimental moods, and when he read aloud from a book his voice would tremble and his eyes moisten at a pathetic passage. He was fond of ordinary music—romances, gypsy melodies, operatic tunes—but frankly confessed that Beethoven put him to sleep.

A lie is a handle that fits many tools.

No Use for Such a Prize.

Goodheart—"I've got you down for a couple of tickets; we're getting up a raffle for a poor man of our neighborhood."

Joakley—"None for me, thank you. I wouldn't know what to do with a poor man if I won him."—Christian Register.

Money Saved, Money Earned.

Mrs. Climber—"My dear, Mrs. Highup has had her portrait painted by a celebrated artist, and I haven't a thing but common, ordinary, everyday photographs to show."

Husband (a wise man)—"Hub! The idea of advertising to the whole world that her complexion is so bad it won't stand the camera!"

A Good New Year's Resolution.

I have never been much of a hand at making resolutions; still less at keeping them; but if I were to throw some of my ideals into that form for a New Year's gift to my friends, I suppose it would run something like this: Resolved, To live in the active voice, intent on what I can do, rather than what happens to me in consequence; in the indicative mood, concerned with what is, rather than what might be more to my liking; in the present tense, with concentration on immediate duty, rather than regret for the past or anxiety for the future; in the first person, critising myself, rather than condemning others; in the singular number, obeying my own conscience, rather than the demands of the many.—William De Witt Hyde, in Boston Congregationalist.

Chip off the Old Block.

Mrs. Howells—Your baby resembles his father very much, don't you think?

Mrs. Growells—Yes, in both looks and actions. Why, he even makes a specialty of crying for the moon in the daytime instead of at night just for the sake of being contrary.—Chicago Daily News.

The deadly Foot Ball Game.

The two men were struggling to get past each other at the crowded entrance to the football park.

"I ought to go in first!" exclaimed the one with the leather case under his arm. "I'm a surgeon!"

"That doesn't cut any court-plaster with me!" panted the other. "I'm an undertaker!"—Chicago Tribune.

Why They Don't Marry.

Miss Leftover—You are a woman hater, I hear.

Mr. Slimpurse—That is a mistake. I merely cannot afford to marry.

Miss Leftover—Cannot you support a wife?

Mr. Slimpurse—Oh, yes, I could support a wife easy enough, but I haven't income enough to support the two or three other women she would need to wait on her.—N. Y. Weekly.

It Spread.

Patience—"Did Peggy advertise an announcement of her engagement in the newspapers?"

Patrice—"No, she didn't have to; she told all her girl friends that it was a secret.—Yonkers Statesman.

Gave Him a Cold.

Doctor—"How did you take such a cold?"

Chappie—"I don't know, weally. I haven't stirred from the fire for a week, don't you know. But, bah Jove, now I wemember! Yesterday awfter-noon me man wead me an article in the papah about Peary's Awctic expedition."