

## The Doctor's Dilemma

By Hesba Stretton

### CHAPTER XXIV.

7. Olivia Foster, take up the thread of the story—the world, weary narrative of my wanderings after leaving my island friends.

Once more I found myself in London. I had more acquaintance with almost every great city on the Continent. Fortunately, Tardif had given me the address of a boarding house, or rather a small family hotel, where he had stayed two or three times, and I drove there at once. I went to several agencies, which were advertising for teachers in the daily papers. When a fortnight had passed with no opening for me, I felt it necessary to leave the boarding house, which had been my temporary home. Wandering about the least fashionable suburbs, where lodgings would cost least, I found a bedroom in the third story of a house in a tolerably respectable street.

In this feverish solitude one day dragged itself after another with awful monotony. As they passed by, the only change they brought was that the entry beat grew ever colder, and the long days shorter. Think what a dreary life for a young girl! I was as fond of companionship, and needed love as much as any girl. Was it strange that my thoughts dwelt monotonously upon the pleasant, peaceful days in Sark?

Now and then, when I ventured out into the streets, a panic would seize me, a dread unutterably great, that I might meet my husband amidst the crowd. I did not even know that he was in London; he had always spoken of it as a place he detested. His habits made the free, unconventional life upon the continent more agreeable to him. How he was living now, what he was doing, where he was, were so many enigmas to me, and I did not care to run any risk in finding out the answers to them. Twice I passed the Bank of Australia, where very probably I could have learned if he was in the same city as myself; but I dared not do it, and as soon as I knew how to avoid that street, I never passed along it.

I had been allowed to leave my address with the clerk of a large general agency in the city. Towards the close of October I received a note from him, desiring me to call at the office at two o'clock the following afternoon, without fail. I had a long time to wait. The office clock pointed to half-past three before I caught the clerk's eye, and saw him beckon me up to the counter. I had thrown back my veil, for here I was perfectly safe from recognition. At the other end of the counter stood a young man in consultation with a clerk. He looked earnestly at me, but I was sure he could not know me.

"Miss Elton Martineau?" said the clerk. That was my mother's name, and I had adopted it for my own, feeling as if I had some right to it.

"Yes," I answered.

"Would you object to go into a French school as governess?" he inquired.

"Not in the least," I said eagerly.

"And pay a small premium?" he added.

"How much?" I asked, my spirits falling again.

"A mere trifle," he said; "about ten pounds or so for twelve months. You would perfect yourself in French, you know; and you would gain a reference for the future."

"I must think about it," I replied.

"Well, there is the address of a lady who can give you all the particulars," he said, handing me a written paper.

I left the office heavy-hearted. Ten pounds would be more than the half of the little store left to me. Yet, would it not be wiser to secure a refuge and shelter for twelve months than run the risk of not finding any other situation? I walked slowly along the street towards the busier thoroughfares, with my head bent down and my mind busy, when suddenly a heavy hand was laid upon my arm, grasping it with crushing force, and a harsh, thick voice shouted triumphantly in my ear:

"I've caught you at last!"

It was like the bitterness of death, that chill and terror sweeping over me. My husband's hot breath was upon my cheek, and his eyes were looking closely into mine. But before I could speak his grasp was torn away from me, and he was sent whirling into the middle of the road. I turned, almost in equal terror, to see who had thrust himself between us. It was a stranger whom I had noticed in the agency office. But his face was now dark with passion, and as my husband staggered back again towards us, his hand was ready to thrust him away a second time.

"She's my wife," he stammered, trying to get past the stranger to me. By this time a knot of spectators had formed about us, and a policeman had come up. The stranger drew my arm through his, and faced them defiantly.

"He's a drunken vagabond!" he said, "he has just come out of those spirit vaults. This young lady is no other than my wife than she is mine, and I know no more of her than that she has just come away from Riddle's office, where she has been looking after a situation. Good heavens! cannot a lady walk through the streets of London without being insulted by a drunken scoundrel like that?"

"Will you give him in charge, sir?" asked the policeman, while Richard Foster was making vain efforts to speak coherently, and explain his claim upon me. I clung to the friendly arm that had come to my aid, sick and almost speechless with fear.

"Don't," I whispered; "oh! take me away quickly."

He cleared a passage for us both with a vigor and decision that there was no resisting. I glanced back for an instant, and saw my husband struggling with the policeman. He looked miserably unwell, a gasping, shuddering man, with a well-filled purse, such as he had used to appear. He was shakily and poor enough now for the policeman to be very kind to him, and to prevent him from following me. The stranger kept my hand firmly on his arm, and almost carried me into Fleet street, where in a minute

or two we were quite lost in the throng, and I was safe from all pursuit.

"I do not know how to thank you," I said, falteringly.

"You are trembling still?" he replied. "How lucky it was that I followed you directly out of Riddle's! If I ever come across that scoundrel again I shall know him, you may be sure. My name is John Senior. Perhaps you have heard of my father, Dr. Senior of Brook street?"

"No," replied, "I know nobody in London."

"That's bad," he said. "I wish I was Jane Senior instead of John Senior; I do indeed. Do you feel better now, Miss Martineau?"

"How do you know my name?" I asked.

The clerk at Riddle's called you Miss Elton Martineau," he answered. "My leaving is very good, and I was not deeply grieved in my business. I heard and saw a good deal whilst I was there."

He called an empty cab that was passing by. We shook hands warmly. There was no time for lingering, so I told him the name of the suburb where I was living, and he reported it to the cabman.

"All right," he said, smiling through the window, "the fare is paid and I've taken cabby's number. If he tries to cheat you, let me know. Dr. John Senior, Brook street. I hope that situation will be a good one, and very pleasant. Good-bye."

"Good-bye," I cried, leaning forward and looking at his face till the crowd came between us, and I lost sight of it.

I felt safer when the cabman set me down at the house where I lodged, and I ran upstairs to my little room. I kind

dled the fire. Then I sat down on my box before it, thinking.

Yes, I must leave London. I must take this situation, the only one open to me, in a school in France. I should at least be assured of a home for twelve months; and as the clerk had said, I should perfect myself in French and gain a reference. I should be earning a character in fact. The sooner I left from London again the better, now that I knew my husband was somewhere in it. I unfolded the paper on which was written the name of the lady to whom I was to apply. Mrs. Wilkinson, 19 Bellinger street. I ran down to the sitting room, to ask my landlady where it was, and told her, in my own hopefulness, that I had heard of a situation in France. Bellinger street was less than a mile away. I could be there before seven o'clock, not too late perhaps for Mrs. Wilkinson to give me an interview.

No, it was not difficult to find, and I pulled the bell handle with a gentle and quiet pull. A slight, thin child in evening gown opened it, with the chain quivering, and asked in a timid voice who I was.

"Does Mrs. Wilkinson live here?" I asked.

"Yes," said the child.

"Who is there?" I heard a voice calling shrilly from within.

"I am come about a school in France," I said to the child.

"Oh, I'll let you in," she answered eagerly; "she will see you about that, I'm sure. I'm to go with you, if you go."

She let down the chain, and opened the door. There was a dim light burning in the hall, which looked shabby and poverty-stricken. I had only time to take a vague general impression, before the little girl conducted me to a room on the ground floor.

"I'm to go if you go," she said again. "And, oh! I do so hope you will agree to go."

"I think I shall," I answered.

"I don't be sure," she replied, nodding her head with an air of sagacity; "there have been four or five gentlemen here, and none of them would go. You'd have to take me with you; and, oh! it is such a lovely, beautiful place. See here is a picture of it."

She ran eagerly to a side table, on which lay a book or two, one of which she opened, and reached out a photograph, which had been laid there for security. It was clear, sharply defined. At the left hand stood a handsome house, with windows covered with lace curtains, and provided with Venetian shutters. In the center stood a large square garden, with fountains, and arbors and statues; and behind this stood a long building of two stories, and a steep roof with dormer windows, every element of which was provided, like the house in the front, with rich lace curtains and Venetian shutters. The whole place was clearly in good order and good taste, and looked like a very pleasant home.

"Isn't it a lovely place?" asked the child beside me, with a deep sigh of longing.

"Yes," I said; "I should like to go."

I had had time to make all these observations before the owner of the foreign voice, which I had heard at the door, came in. At the first glance I knew her to be a Frenchwoman. Her black eyes were steady and cold, and her general expression one of watchfulness.

"I have not the honor of knowing you," she said politely.

"I come from Riddle's Agency office," I answered, "about a situation as English teacher in a school in France."

"It is a great chance," she said, "my friend, Madame Perrier, is very good, very amiable for her teachers. She is like a sister for them. The terms are very high, very high for France; but there is absolutely every comfort. I suppose you could introduce a few English pupils."

"No," I answered, "I am afraid I could not. I am sure I could not."

"That of course must be considered in the premium," she continued; "if you could have introduced, say, six pupils, the premium would be low. I do not think my friend would take one penny less than twenty pounds for the first year, and ten for the second."

The tears started to my eyes. I had felt so sure of going if I would pay ten pounds, that I was quite unprepared for this disappointment. There was still my diamond ring left, but how to dispose of it, for anything like its value, I did not know.

"What were you prepared to give?" asked Mrs. Wilkinson, whilst I hesitated.

"The clerk at Riddle's office told me the premium would be ten pounds," I answered; "I do not see how I can give more."

"Well," she said, after musing a little, "in this time, waiting for somebody to take her down to Normandy, I will agree with you, and will explain to Madame Perrier. How soon could you go?"

"I should like to go to-morrow," I replied, feeling that the sooner I quitted London the better. Mrs. Wilkinson's steady eyes fastened upon me again with sharp curiosity.

"Have you references, miss?" she asked.

"An instance told me once by a friend of my mother influenced me very much in the bringing up of my boys," said the still youthful mother of several sturdy sons. "One day, when she felt nervous, she asked her boy not to go out in his salubrious, so to please her he stayed at home, slipped on a banana skin, and injured his spine so that he was laid up for years. How many times must that poor mother have regretted that she did not allow him to 'gang his ain gait,' as every restless, healthy boy should be allowed to do, providing there is no wrongdoing involved?"

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## WOMEN

### USELESSNESS OF WORRY.

CARE killed a cat, says the proverb—the old tradition that the animal has nine lives being probably the reason why it was chosen to express the fatal effects of worry. Although we unfortunately cannot eliminate anxiety from our daily existence, we can certainly do much to prevent it from spoiling our lives. But while every woman realizes the amount of needless suffering that she entails upon herself by fretting over what might happen, but what in ninety-nine cases out of a hundred never does, she rarely makes the effort to conquer a disposition which not only is injurious to her own health and happiness, but exercises a very depressing effect on those about her.

"When I think of the amount of absolutely unnecessary agony of mind I have undergone by worrying," remarked a middle-aged woman recently, "and consider how it must have affected the family and my usefulness, I feel both ashamed and remorseful."

Young mothers are the worst persons in this respect, for they conjure up imaginary dangers to their offspring on all sides, and seem to feel that their feeble strength can shield their children from harm if they only can extend their maternal protection sufficiently in every direction, not realizing that their excessive care is really a species of selfishness to give themselves ease of mind instead of the devotion they suppose it to be, and that by overcaution and restraint they will warp the impressionable natures of the little ones, preventing the natural development of self-confidence and courage, and possibly thereby affecting their whole future lives. Mothers must make up their minds, if they wish their sons to be manly and strong, that they must allow them to take all reasonable risks, comforting themselves with the undoubted truth that (child people are in more danger in an emergency than those who are accustomed to peril, and as we live in jeopardy every hour, as St. Paul says, no care can avert accident).

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mistake to think that in these days men prefer brainless, silly women. On the contrary, they like those who have bright, quick brains, who take an interest in things around them and can talk sensibly on subjects in which they themselves are interested, though if the women possess superior knowledge on any one topic they will do well to keep that fact in the background and play the part of interested listeners.

Irreverent women are an abomination to men. Whatever may be their own religious opinions—if they have any—at any rate, they like to feel that women cling to the faith which they once learned at their mother's knee.

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