

The Doctor's Dilemma

By Hesba Stretton

CHAPTER XXVII.—(Continued.)
"Hast thou brought a doctor with thee, my brother?" she asked.

"I have brought no doctor except thy brother, my sister," answered Monsieur Laurentie, "also a treasure which I found at the foot of the Calvary down yonder."

He had alighted whilst saying this, and the rest of the conversation was carried on in whispers. There was some one ill in the house, and our arrival was ill-timed, that was quite clear. Whoever the woman was that had come to the door, she did not advance to speak to me, but retreated as soon as the conversation was over.

"Pardon, madame," he said, approaching us, "but my sister is too much occupied with a sick person to do herself the honor of attending upon you."

He did not conduct us through the open door, but led us round the angle of the presbytery to a small out-house opening on to the court, and with no other entrance. It was a building lying between the porch and belfry of the church and his own dwelling place. A fire had been hastily kindled on an open hearth, and a heap of wood lay beside it. Two beds were in this room, one with hangings over the head and a large tall cross at the foot board; the other a low, narrow pallet, lying along the wall of it. A crucifix hung upon the foot, and the wood-work of the high window also formed a cross. It seemed a strange goal to reach after our day's wanderings.

Monsieur Laurentie put the lamp down on the table, and drew the logs of wood together on the hearth. He was an old man, as I then thought, over sixty. He looked round upon us with a benevolent smile.

"Madame," he said, "our hospitality is rude and simple, but you are very welcome guests. My sister is desolated that she must leave you to my care. But if there be anything you have need of, tell me, I pray you."

"There is nothing, monsieur," I answered; "you are too good to us—too good!"

"No, no, madame," he said, "be content. To-morrow I will send you to Granville under the charge of my good Jean. Sleep well, my children, and fear nothing. The good God will protect you."

Minima had thrown herself upon the low pallet bed. I took off her damp clothes, and laid her down comfortably to rest. It was not long before I also was sleeping soundly. Once or twice a vague impression forced itself upon me that Minima was talking a great deal in her dreams. It was the clang of the bell for matins which fully roused me at last, but it was a minute or two before I could make out where I was. Then Minima began to talk.

"How funny that is!" she said, "there the boys run, and I can't catch one of them. Father, Temple Secundus is pulling faces at me, and all the boys are laughing. Well! it doesn't matter, does it? Only we are so poor, Aunt Nelly and all. We're so poor—so poor—so poor!"

Her voice fell into a murmur too low for me to hear what she was saying, though she went on talking rapidly, and laughing and sobbing at times. I called to her, but she did not answer.

What could all the child? I went to her, and took her hands in mine—burning little hands. I said, "Minima!" and she turned to me with a caressing gesture, raising her hot fingers to stroke my face.

"Yes, Aunt Nelly. How poor we are, you and I! I am so tired, and the pain never comes!"

There was hardly room for me in the narrow bed, but I managed to lie down beside her, and took her into my arms to soothe her. She rested there quietly enough, but her mind was wandering, and all her whispered chatter was about the boys, and the dominie, her father, and the happy days at home in the school in Epping Forest. As soon as it was light I dressed myself in haste, and opened my door to see if I could find any one to send to Monsieur Laurentie.

The first person I saw was himself, coming in my direction. I had not fairly looked at him before, for I had seen him only by twilight and firelight. His cas-coose was old and threadbare, and his hat brown. His hair fell in rather long locks below his hat, and was beautifully white. His face was healthy looking, like that of a man who lived much out of doors, and his clear, quick eyes shone with a kindly light. I ran impulsively to meet him, with outstretched hands, which he took into his own with a pleasant smile.

"Oh, come, monsieur," I cried, "make haste! She is ill, my poor Minima!"

The smile faded away from his face in an instant, and he did not utter a word. He followed me quickly to the side of the little bed, laid his hand softly on the child's forehead, and felt her pulse. He lifted up her head gently, and opening her mouth, looked at her tongue and throat. He shook his head as he turned to me with a grave and perplexed expression, and he spoke with a low, solemn accent.

"Madame," he said, "is the fever?"

He left me, and I sank down on a chair, half stupefied by this new disaster. It would be necessary to stay where he was until Minima recovered; yet I had no money to pay these people for the trouble we should give them, and the expense we should be to them. I had not time to decide upon any course, however, before he returned and brought with him his sister.

Mademoiselle Therese was a tall, plain, elderly woman, but with the same pleasant expression of open friendliness as that of her brother. She went through the same examination of Minima as he had done.

"The fever!" she ejaculated, in much the same tone as he. They looked significantly at each other, and then held a hurried consultation together outside the door, after which the cure returned alone.

"Madame," he said, "this child is not your own, as I supposed last night. My sister says you are too young to be her mother. Is she your sister?"

"No, monsieur," I answered.

"I called you madame because you were traveling alone," he continued, smiling. "French demoiselles never travel alone. You are mademoiselle, no doubt?"

"No, monsieur," I said frankly, "I am married."

"Where, then, is your husband?" he inquired.

"He is in London," I answered. "Monsieur, it is difficult for me to explain it. I cannot speak your language well enough. I think in English, and I cannot find the right French words. I am very unhappy, but I am not wicked."

"Good," he said, smiling again, "very good, my child; I believe you. You will learn my language quickly; then you shall tell me all, if you remain with us. But you said the mignonnie is not your sister."

"No, she is not my relative at all," I replied; "we were both in a school at Noireau, the school of Monsieur Emile Perrier. Perhaps you know it, monsieur?"

"Certainly, madame," he said.

"He has failed, and run away," I continued; "all the pupils are dispersed. Minima and I were returning through Granville."

"I understand, madame," he responded, "but it is villainous, this affair! Listen, my child. I have much to say to you. Do I speak gently and slowly enough for you?"

"Yes," I answered, "I understand you perfectly."

"We have had the fever in Ville-en-bois for some weeks," he went on; "it is now bad, very bad. Yesterday I went to Noireau to seek a doctor, but I could only hear of one, who is in Paris at present, and cannot come immediately. At present we have made my house into a hospital for the sick. My people bring their sick to me, and we do our best, and put our trust in God. But this little house has been kept free from all infection, and you would be safe here for one night, so I hoped. The mignonnie must have caught the fever some days ago. Now I must carry her into my little hospital. But you, madame, what am I to do with you? Do you wish to go to Granville, and leave the mignonnie with me? We will take care of her as a little angel of God. What shall I do with you, my child?"

"Monsieur," I exclaimed, eagerly, "take me into your hospital, too. Let me take care of Minima and your other sick people. I am very strong, and in good health; I am never ill—never, never. I will do all you say to me. Let me stay, dear monsieur."

"But your husband, your friends—"

"I have no friends," I interrupted, "and my husband does not love me. If I have the fever and die—good! very good! I am not wicked; I am a Christian, I hope. Only let me stay with Minima, and do all I can in the hospital."

"Be content, my child," he said, "you shall stay with us."

I felt a sudden sense of contentment, for here was work for me to do, as well as a refuge. Neither should I be compelled to leave Minima. I wrapped her up warmly in the blankets, and Monsieur Laurentie lifted her carefully and tenderly from the low bed. He told me to accompany him, and we crossed the court and entered the house by the door I had seen the night before. A staircase led up to a long, low room, which had been turned into a hastily fitted-up fever ward for women and children. There were already nine beds in it, of different sizes, brought with the patients who now occupied them. But one of these was empty. In this home-like ward I took up my work as nurse.

"Madame," said Monsieur Laurentie, one morning, the eighth that I had been in the fever-stricken village, "you did not take a promenade yesterday?"

"Not yesterday, monsieur."

"Nor the day before yesterday?" he continued.

"No, monsieur," I answered; "I dare not leave Minima. I fear she is going to die."

Monsieur Laurentie raised me gently from my low chair, and seated himself upon it, with a smile as he looked up at me.

"Madame," he said, "I promise not to quit the chamber till you return. My sister has a little commission for you to do. Confinde the mignonnie to me, and make your promenade in peace. It is necessary, madame; you must obey me."

The commission for mademoiselle was to carry some food and medicine to a cottage lower down the valley; and Jean's oldest son, Pierre, was appointed to be my guide. Both the cure and his sister gave me a strict charge as to what we were to do; neither of us was upon any account to go near or enter the dwelling; but after the basket was deposited upon a flat stone, which Pierre was to point out to me, he was to ring a small hand-bell which he carried with him for that purpose. Then we were to turn our backs and begin our retreat, before any person came out of the infected house.

I set out with Pierre, a solemn looking boy of about twelve years of age. We passed down the village street, with its closely packed houses forming a very nest for fever, until we reached the road by which I had first entered Ville-en-bois.

Above the tops of the trees appeared a tall chimney, and a sudden turn in the by-road we had taken brought us full in sight of a small cotton mill, built on the banks of the noisy stream. A more mournfully dilapidated place I had never seen.

In the yard adjoining this deserted factory stood a miserable cottage with a middle-aged thatched roof. The place bore the aspect of a post-house. Pierre led me to a large flat stone, and I laid down my basket upon it. Then he rang his hand-bell noisily, and the next instant was scampering back along the road.

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and a thin, spectral figure standing in the gloom within, but delaying to cross the threshold, as long as I remained in sight. In another minute Pierre had rushed back for me, and dragged me away with all his boyish strength and energy.

"Madame," he said, in angry remonstrance, "you are disobeying Monsieur le Cure."

"But who lives there?" I asked.

"They are very wicked people," he answered emphatically; "no one goes near them, except Monsieur le Cure. They became wicked before my time, and Monsieur le Cure has forbidden us to speak of them with reverence, so we do not speak of them at all."

Who were these pariahs, whose name even was banished from every tongue?

A few days after this, the whole community was thrown into a tumult by the death of the cure, who was about to undertake the perilous voyage to England, and would be absent a whole fortnight. He said it was to obtain some information as to the English system of drainage in agricultural districts, which might make their own valley more healthy and less liable to fever. But it struck me that he was about to make some inquiries concerning my husband, and perhaps about Minima, whose desolate position had touched him deeply. I ventured to tell him what danger might arise to me if any clue to my hiding place fell into Richard Foster's hands.

The afternoon of that day was unusually sultry and oppressive. The blue of the sky was almost livid. I was weary with a long walk in the morning, and after our mid-day meal I stole away from mademoiselle and Minima and took myself to the cool shelter of the church.

I sat down upon a bench just within the door. There was a faint scent yet of the incense which had been burned at the mass celebrated before the cure's departure. I leaned my head against the wall and closed my eyes, with a pleasant sense of sleep coming softly towards me, when suddenly a hand was laid upon my arm, with a firm, silent grip.

(To be continued.)

Nice Turkish Customs.
It is said by a correspondent of the London Telegraph that the habits of the Turkish ladies in Constantinople are wonderfully fastidious. When they wash their hands at a tap from which water runs into a marble basin, they let the water run till a servant shuts it off, as to do this themselves would make them unclean. They cannot open or shut a door, as the handle would be unclean.

One of these fastidious ladies was talking to a small niece the other day, who had just received a present of a doll from Paris. By and by the child laid the doll on the lady's lap. She was horrified, and ordered the child to take it away.

As the little girl would not move it, and no servant was near, and the lady would be defiled by touching a doll that had been brought from abroad, the only thing she could think of was to jump up and let the doll fall. It broke in pieces.

The same lady will not open a letter coming by post, but a servant opens and holds it near for her to read. If her handkerchief falls to the ground it is immediately destroyed or given away, so that she may not again use it. Among the men this curious state of things does not exist.

Pope on Women's Clothes.
The Pope has recently manifested a preference in regard to ladies' apparel over and above the strict regulation in regard to ladies who are received by the holy father at the Vatican. A niece of the Pope was about to be married, and her distinguished relative took so great an interest in her trousseau as to stipulate that the young lady should only have white, blue or black gowns, adding that these were the three colors most becoming to young girls. "Gray and brown," remarked his Holiness, "are only suitable for old women, and I do not like any other colors."

Possibly the Pope prescribed white because it is the symbol of purity, blue because it is the color dedicated to the Virgin Mary, and black because it is the time-honored hue of dress for outdoor wear for Spain and Italy.—London Pall Mall Gazette.

Improved Methods in Surgery.
It was in Boston that the first administration of ether for anaesthetizing the patient under the surgeon's knife, and a Boston physician, Dr. W. B. Holden, has perfected an appliance with which the surgeon operating secures the full effects of ether and chloroform without any waste, while the insensible subject breathes in the same amount of pure air with each inspiration as though not using the anaesthetic. The blood is thus kept oxygenated, and the patient is left in the best possible condition for reaction and recovery.

The Speed of the Blood.
It has been calculated that, assuming the human heart to beat sixty-nine times a minute at ordinary heart pressure, the blood goes at the rate of 207 yards in a minute, or seven miles a day, and 61,320 miles a year. If a man 34 years of age could have one single corpuscle floating in his blood all his life it would have traveled in that time over 5,150,000 miles.

Equal to the Occasion.
Livered Menial—"Me lud, the carriage waits without."

His Lordship—"Without what?"

"Without horses, me lud; 'tis an automobile."—Tit-Bits.

Historic British Regiments.
The names of no fewer than 105 battalions are emblazoned on the banners of the various regiments which form the British army.

Fish of the Nile.
The Nile is noted for the variety of its fish. An expedition sent by the British Museum brought home 2,200 specimens

SUPPOSE WE SMILE.

HUMOROUS PARAGRAPHS FROM THE COMIC PAPERS.

Pleasant Incidents Occurring the World Over—Sayings that are Cheerful to Old or Young—Funny Selections that Everybody Will Enjoy.

DeAnber.—This is the landscape I wanted you to suggest a title for.

Critteeek.—H'm! Rather impressionistic. Why not call it "Home?"

DeAnber.—"Home?" Why?

Critteeek.—Because there's no place like it.—Philadelphia Press.

The Two Dear Friends.
Nell. While I was out walking with my pug dog to-day I met Mr. Jollyer, and he said: "Ah! Beauty and the beast!"

Helle.—The ideal! Why, I don't consider pug dogs at all beautiful.—Philadelphia Record.

So Sudden!
He (smoking).—Would you like to see me make a ring?

Miss Hopeless.—Oh! George, this is so sudden.

How It Happened.
Edith. You say you were once in great danger while shooting in Georgia? I suppose you wounded a bear or some other dangerous animal?

Cholly.—Nope! I wounded a dog that the guide thought more of than he did of his mother!—Puck.

Scared Off.
Dusty Roads. Why didn't you go up to that big house and get a handout?

Hungry Hawkes.—Why, I started out, but a minister-lookin' guy gimme a tip not ter.

He sez: "Turn from yer present path, sez he, 'yer goin' ter de dogs."—Philadelphia Press.

Tastes Differ.
Grandma. And Cinderella's fairy god-mother touched the pumpkin with her wand and turned it into a handsome coach.

Johnny.—Huh! If it'd been me I'd rather she turned it into a hundred pumpkins and then turned the pumpkins into pumpkin pie!—Puck.

Almost Past Belief.
"How bald-headed Uncle Henry is, pa!" exclaimed Willie Boorum.

"Yes," responded Mr. Boorum impressively, "to look at him you would never suppose that your Uncle Henry was once a famous football player."—Brooklyn Eagle.

One Resemblance.
"No," said Mr. Meddlergrass to the restaurant man. "No, I'll not say your pie is just like mother used to make, but I'll say this, it's purt' nigh as crusty as she used to git."—Baltimore American.

Walters' Arithmetic.
Willie. I can't take this quartec Uncle Jake. Mamma won't let me.

Uncle Jake. Why not?

"She says in the end it will cost her a good deal more than it's worth."

Economy.
Mrs. Chugwater. What do you buy such cheap shirts for? They are the most expensive in the end. They're all worn out after you have had three washed half a dozen times.

Mr. Chugwater. Then they only come 60 cents for washing, and that's a big saving. You go on with your fruit canning. You can't teach me anything about buying shirts.—Chicago Tribune.

In the Other Life.
Haven't made much progress since yesterday, have you?" remarked the hare.

"Gee whizz, but you're slow."

"Yes," replied the tortoise, languidly; "that's so. I suppose if there's anything in that transmigration theory I must have been a messenger boy at one time."—Philadelphia Press.

Perfectly Safe Then.
"I haven't heard of any of your guides being shot by hunters this year," remarked the amateur sportsman.

"That's easily explained," replied the wise guide. "You see, when we go into the woods we attach antlers to our heads and make up to look like deer."—Philadelphia Press.

A Generous Hostess.
"Our cook didn't break a dish while she lived with us; but we had to buy new ones when she left."

"How was that?"

"Oh, we think that every time any of her friends visited her she gave their souvents."—Detroit Free Press.

Queer Fellow.
"Very fond of dress, isn't he?"

"Yes, and in that respect he's the most peculiar fellow I know, most remarkable, in fact."

"Don't say?"

"Actually, why, he doesn't even kick when he has to spend his good money for a new pair of suspenders."—Philadelphia Post.

A Shameless Va'd.
Miss Highupp. I think Miss Globo-trait ought to be ashamed of herself. She says she found the paintings of the old masters dreadfully stupid.

Miss Wayupp. So do many others.

Miss Highupp. Yes, but she says so.—New York Weekly.

Looking Ahead.
Mamiasot. If her parents didn't object, then why did they elope?

Whitstone. Oh, it was a smart move on his part to get out of having to have his picture taken later standing up with her in their wedding clothes.—Brooklyn Eagle.

Rainy Season.
Nephew. Uncle John, this is your second visit to the beach. I remember last time the tide was way out.

Uncle John. Goory! It must er rained some more'n I calculated!

Accounting for It.
Blanche. It isn't easy to find anything new in wedding presents.

May. No. So many people have been married.—Puck.

A Waste of Effort.
He. Sixty thousand copies of my last book were sold before publication.

She. How nice! Of course your publishers didn't waste time trying to sell any after publication.—Judge.

An Unnecessary Incumbance.
Daisy. I have made up my mind to enter society.

Hardhead. What has your mind got to do with it?—The Smart Set.

Brief Respite.
"Does your daughter sing 'Always'?" asked the guest.

"No; she stops for her meals," replied the long-suffering parent.—Philadelphia Record.

Wherein It Failed.
"Why didn't the tenor sing to-night? He has such a sympathetic voice."

"Well, the reason he didn't sing was that his voice wasn't sympathetic enough to touch the manager for a week's salary overdue."—Philadelphia Bulletin.

Not Required.
Hamlet. Has Wright's new play a villain in it?

Eggbert. No. The play itself is so villainous that a villain would be superfluous.—Chicago News.

She Would Have Had More.
Wife. Seems to me that since we were married you might at least have doubled your income.

"What good would that have done?"

The Fistic at Hand.
"I don't think I'll ever lay any more eggs."

"Why not?"

"The cook's laying for me."

She Knew All About It.
He. You have never known what it really means to be loved, have you? To have all the fervent, passionate, nay, frenzied ardor of a man lavished upon you?

She. Yes, I have, dear, for I cannot deceive you. I was once engaged to a man over 70 years old.

A Polite Refusal.
Willie. I can't take this quartec Uncle Jake. Mamma won't let me.

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WOODLAND HYMN OF PRAISE.

Morning Founda Cause'd the Organist to Forget the Hunt.

Some years ago, during a visit to friends at Sudeley Castle, Gloucestershire, the late Sir John Stainer, the famous organist and composer, joined in a badger hunt which had a most unexpected ending, one that was undoubtedly wholesome both for the badger and his hunters.

The manager of this estate amassed himself by night meets at certain woods where the badgers carbed, and Dr. Stainer—he had not then been knighted—having been told that there was to be a meet at a place called Pinnock Cliff, an extensive woodland in the Cotswold, expressed a desire to take part in it.

At midnight, accordingly, in company with the manager, the Rev. Robert Browne, who was then curate of Sudeley, and a few others, Dr. Stainer started to tramp to the rendezvous, which was about four miles away. The beaters were left at a certain point with instructions to give them their half-hour's start. This being effected, they were quietly waiting the appearance of the badger, who, disturbed on his rambles by the beaters' dogs, would probably ere long charge at the earth. While they waited, the approach of morning was heralded by that mysterious light which at that time of year—it was June—begins to be seen about 2 o'clock.

It was one of the finest mornings possible to imagine. There was no wind, the sky was clear, and the small patches of detached mist obliquely creeping up toward the ethereal blue overhead irresistibly suggested celestial beings winging their upward way.

The birds soon began their morning songs—first the skylark with his trilling notes, then in the far distance the cuckoo, the wood-pigeon, and the dove cooing to his mate, and then the hosts of other birds, one after another, until all the woodland resounded with song. For a few moments the little party stood in silence; then Dr. Stainer, raising his hands, exclaimed:

"All that have life and breath sing to the Lord!" the opening words of Mendelssohn's "Hymn of Praise." The manager caught at it in an instant, and hummed the trombone part. "Do you know it?" asked the doctor.

The manager nodded.

"Let us have the first chorus," said Dr. Stainer.

And so they sang from memory, as well as they could, the first chorus from "The Hymn of Praise." Dr. Stainer taking the treble, Mr. Browne the alto, the manager the tenor, and another the bass.

Naturally they did not get the badger. Never was badger in this humor wooded, and it is easy to imagine the dazed beast, who never could have heard such sounds in all his previous existence, giving his earth a wide berth.

Lord Chatham's Farewell.

No parliamentary farewell was ever so impressive as that of Lord Chatham, when in a final burst of eloquence, he denounced the ill-fated policy of the North administration. A contemporary writer tells us that "he was not like himself; his speech faltered, his sentences were broken, and his mind was not master of itself, but as he proceeded his faculties regained some of their old clearness, his voice some of its old power."

It was a wonderful example of the power of the spirit battling with and overcoming the feebleness of the frame, and the House listened in a solemn silence akin to awe, as the old orator raising one feeble hand from his crutch, and turning his eyes to heaven, spoke his simple and pathetic farewell: "I am old and infirm. I have one foot—more than one foot—in the grave. I am risen from my bed to stand up in the cause of my country, perhaps never to speak in this House."

Within the hour the aged peer, the noblest orator, the ablest statesman of his time, was carried in the arms of his friends from the House he had so often shaken with the thunders of his eloquence, never to return. No scene more dramatic, more impressive, has ever been witnessed in the "Gilded Chamber" of the Lords.

On Another Line.

A porter at a certain station on the Caledonian Railway had been granted leave for the purpose of going to Edinburgh to be married. In addition, he was given the customary return rail way pass.

During his absence a new ticket collector had been put on, who upon Benedict's return, demanded his ticket. Benedict, who had put both pass and marriage certificate in the same pocket, by mistake tendered the latter.

The collector opened and gravely scanned the "lines," then returned them with a slow headshake, and: "Eh, eh, mon, it's a teeket for a vera lang ride, but nae on the Caledonian Railway."—London Spare Moments.

Imitation Leather from Wood.
L. Schwarzhuber of Purkersdorf, Austria, has discovered a process for the manufacture of a leather-like substance from wood veneers, applicable for book covers and other purposes. Starch powder or crushed potatoes are boiled under pressure in an alkali lye. A gelatinous brown, glue-like liquid is obtained, into which the veneers are introduced and steam pressure applied, the process rendering the veneers soft and flexible.

The Main Point.

He—I am afraid my religious views are not the same as yours, dear.

She—That need not necessarily make any difference. We both belong to the same golf club.