

The Doctor's Dilemma

By Hesba Stretton

CHAPTER XIII.

In one sense time seemed to be standing still with me after my home return, so like were the days that followed the one to the other. But in another sense those days fled with awful swiftness, for they were hurrying us both, my mother and me, to a great girl which would soon, far too soon, lie between us.

Every afternoon Julia came to spend an hour or two with my mother, but her arrival was always formally announced, and it was an understood thing that I should immediately quit the room, to avoid meeting her. There was an etiquette in her recitation which I was bound to observe.

I had not taken up any of my old patients again, for I was determined that everybody should feel that my residence at home was only temporary. But about ten days after my return the following note was brought to me, directed in full to Dr. Martin Dobree:

"A lady from England, who is only a visitor in Guernsey, will be much obliged by Dr. Martin Dobree calling upon her at Rose Villa, Vauvert Road. She is suffering from a slight indisposition; and knowing Dr. Senior by name and reputation, she would feel great comfort in the skill of Dr. Senior's friend."

I wondered for an instant who the stranger could be, and how she knew the Seniors; but as there could be no answer to these queries without visiting the lady, I resolved to go. Rose Villa was a house where the rooms were let to visitors during the season, and the Vauvert Road was scarcely five minutes' walk from our house. Julia was paying her daily visit to my mother, and I was at a loss for something to do, so I went at once.

I found a very handsome, fine-looking woman; dark, with hair and eyes as black as a raven's, and a clear olive complexion to match. Her forehead was low, but smooth and well shaped; and the lower part of her face, handsome as it was, was far more developed than the upper. There was not a trace of refinement about her features; yet the coarseness of them was but slightly apparent as yet. My new patient did not inspire me with much sympathy; but she attracted my curiosity, and interested me by the bold style of her beauty.

"You Guernsey people are very stiff with strangers," she remarked, as I sat opposite to her, regarding her with that close observation which is permitted to a doctor.

"So the world says," I answered. "Of course I am no good judge, for we Guernsey people believe ourselves as perfect as any class of the human family."

"I have been here a week," she replied, "posting her full crimson lips, and have not had a chance of speaking a word, except to strangers like myself who don't know a soul."

"That, then, was the cause of the little indisposition which had obtained me the honor of attending her. I indulged myself in a mild scream to that effect, but it was lost upon her. She gazed at me solemnly with her large black eyes, which shone like beads."

"I am really ill," she said, "but it has nothing to do with not seeing anybody, though that's dull. There's nothing for me to do but to wait here till the morning and a drive in the afternoon, and go to bed very early. Good gracious! it's enough to drive me mad!"

"Try Jersey," I suggested.

"No, I'll not try Jersey," she said. "I mean to make my way here. Don't you know anybody, doctor, that would take pity on a poor stranger?"

"I am sorry to say no," I answered.

She frowned at that, and looked disappointed. I was about to ask her how she knew the Seniors, when she spoke again.

"Do you have many visitors come to Guernsey late in the autumn, as late as October?" she inquired.

"Not many," I answered; "a few may arrive who intend to winter here."

"A dear young friend of mine came here last autumn," she said, "alone, as I am, and I've been wondering ever since I've been here how she would get along amongst a set of stiff, formal, stand-offish folks. She had not money enough for a dash, or that would make a difference, I suppose."

"Not the least," I replied, "if your friend came without any introductions."

"What a dreary winter she'd have!" pursued my patient, with a tone of exaltation. "She was quite young, and as pretty as a picture. All the young men would know her. I'll be bound, and you amongst them, Dr. Martin. Any woman who let a friend stare at her enough to be known again."

Could this woman know anything of Olivia? I looked at her more earnestly and critically. She was not a person I should like Olivia to have anything to do with. A coarse, ill-bred, bold woman, whose eyes met mine unabashed, and did not blink under my scrutiny. Could she be Olivia's stepmother, who had been the ruin of her life?

"I'd bet a hundred to one you know her," she said, laughing and showing all her white teeth. "A girl like her couldn't go about a little poky place like this without all the young men knowing her. Perhaps she left the island in the spring. I have asked at all the drapers' shops, but nobody recollects her. I've very good news for her if I could find her—a slim, middle-aged girl, with a clear, fair skin and grey eyes and hair of a bright brown. Stay, I can show you her photograph."

She put into my hands an exquisite portrait of Olivia, taken in Florence. There was an expression of quiet mournfulness in the face, which touched me to the core of my heart. I could not put it down and speak indifferently about it. My heart beat wildly, and I felt tempted to run off with the treasure and return no more to this woman.

"Ah! you recognise her!" she exclaimed triumphantly.

"I never saw such a person in Guernsey," I answered, looking steadily into her face. A sudden and gloomy expression came across it, and she snatched the portrait out of my hand.

"You want to keep it a secret," she said, "but I defy you to do it. I am come here to find her, and find her I will. She hasn't drowned herself, and the earth hasn't swallowed her up. I've traced her as far as here, and that I tell you. She crossed in the Southampton boat one drearily stormy night last October—the only lady passenger—and the stewardess recollects her well. She landed here. You must know something about her."

"I assure you I never saw that girl here," I replied evasively. "What inquiries have you made after her?"

"I've inquired here and there and everywhere," she said. "I've done nothing else since I came. It is of great importance to her, as well as to me, that

I should find her. It's a very anxious thing when a girl like that disappears and is never heard of again, all because she has a little difference with her friends. If you could help me to find her you would do her family a very great service."

"Why do you fix upon me?" I inquired.

"Why did you not send for one of the resident doctors? I left Guernsey some time ago."

"You were here last winter," she said, "and you're a young man, and would not be more."

"There are other young doctors in Guernsey," I remarked.

"Ah, but you've been in London," she answered, "and I know something of Dr. Senior. When you are in a strange place you catch at any chance of an acquaintance."

"Come, be candid with me," I said. "Did not Messrs. Scott and Brown send you here?"

The suddenness of my question took her off her guard and startled her. She hesitated, stammered, and finally denied it with more than natural emphasis.

"I could take my oath I don't know any such persons," she answered. "I don't know who you mean, or what you mean. All I want is quite honest. There is a fortune waiting for that poor girl, and I want to take her back to those who love her, and are ready to forgive and forget everything. I feel sure you know something of her. But nobody except me and her other friends have anything to do with it."

"Well," I said, rising to take my leave, "all the information I can give you is that I never saw such a person here, either last winter or since. It is quite possible she went on to Jersey, or to Granville, where the storm was over. That she did not stay in Guernsey I am quite sure."

I went away in a fever of anxiety. The woman, who was certainly not a lady, had inspired me with a repugnance that I could not describe. Surely this person could not be related to Olivia! I tried to guess in what relationship to her she could possibly stand. I felt more chafed than I had ever done about Olivia's secret. I tried to satisfy myself with the reflection that I had put Tardif on his guard, and that he would protect her. But that did not set my mind at ease. I never knew a mother yet who believed that any other woman could nurse her sick child as well as herself; and I could not be persuaded that even Tardif would shield Olivia from danger and trouble as I could, if I were only allowed the privilege. Yet my promise to Julia bound me to hold no communication with her.

I had strolled down some of the quieter streets of the town whilst I was turning this affair over in my mind, and now as I crossed the end of the Rue Haute, I caught sight of Kate Daltry turning into a milliner's shop. There was every reasonable probability that she would not come out again soon, for I saw a bonnet reached out of the window. If she were gone to buy a bonnet she was safe for half an hour, and Julia would be alone. I had felt a strong desire to see Julia ever since I returned home. I had made up my mind to do so. If I found her in a gentle mood she would release me from the promise she had extorted from me when she was in the first heat of her anger and disappointment. It was a chance worth trying. If I were free to declare to Olivia my love for her, I should establish a claim upon her full confidence, and we could laugh at further difficulties. She was of age, and therefore mistress of herself. Her friends, represented by this odious woman, could have no legal authority over her.

I turned shortly up a side street and walked as fast as I could towards the house which was to have been my home. By a bold stroke I might reach Julia's presence. I rang, and the maid who answered let me in. I was in luck. Her friends, represented by this odious woman, could have no legal authority over her.

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"She has seen the girl," continued Julia, in the same husky tone, "and she is convinced she is an adventuress. Johanna says the same. They tell me it is unreasonable and selfish in me to doom you to the dreadful loneliness I feel. It is something like that, but I have promised to do it. I release you from every promise you ever made to me, Martin."

"Julia!" I cried, crossing to her and bending over her with more love and admiration than I had ever felt before; "this is veritable, very generous."

"No," she said, bursting into tears; "I am neither noble nor generous. I do it because I cannot help myself, with aunt's white face looking so imploringly at me. I do not give you up willingly to that girl in Sark. I hope I shall never see her or you for many, many years. Aunt says you will have a chance of marrying her till you are settled in a practice somewhere; but you are free to ask her to be your wife. Aunt wants you to have somebody to love you and care for you after she is gone, as I should have done."

"But you are generous to consent to it," I said again.

"No," she answered, wiping her eyes and lifting up her head; "I thought I was generous. I thought I was a Christian, but it is not easy to be a Christian when one is mortified, and humbled, and wounded. I am a great disappointment to myself; quite as great as you are to me. I fancied myself very superior to what I am. I hope you may not be disappointed in that girl in Sark."

Her hand was lying on her lap and I stooped down and kissed it, as I did the ring I had given her. She did not look at me or bid me good-bye, and I went out of the house, my veins tingling with shame and gladness. I met Captain Carey coming up the street, with a basket of fine grapes in his hand. He appeared very much amazed.

"Why, Martin?" he exclaimed, "can you have been to see Julia?"

"Yes," I answered.

"Recoiled!" he said, arching his eyebrows, which were still dark and bushy, though his hair was grizzled.

"Not exactly," I replied, with a stiff smile exceedingly difficult to force; "nothing of the sort indeed. Captain, when will you take me across to Sark?"

"Come, come! none of that, Martin," he said; "you're on honor, you know. You are pledged to poor Julia not to visit Sark again."

"She has just set me free," I answered; "and out of the fullness of my heart I told him all that had just passed between us. His eyes glinted, though a fine flame came across them which he did not wipe away."

"She is a noble girl," he ejaculated; "a fine, generous, noble girl. I really thought she'd break her heart over you at first, but she will come round again now. We will have a run over to Sark to-morrow."

I felt myself lifted into a cloud of delight at that evening. My mother and I talked of no one but Olivia. The present rapture so completely eclipsed the coming sorrow that I forgot how soon it would be upon me. I remember now that my mother neither by word nor sign suffered me to be reminded of her illness. She listened to my rhapsodies, smiling with her divine, pathetic smile. There is no love, no love at all, like that of a mother!

Swiftly we ran across the next day, with a soft wind drifting over the sea and playing upon our faces, and a long furrow lying in the wake of our boat. It was almost low tide when we reached the island. I found Tardif's house completely deserted. The only sign of life was a family of hens clucking about the fold.

The door was not fastened, and I entered, but there was nobody there. I stood in the middle of the kitchen and called, but there was no answer. Olivia's door was ajar, and I pushed it a little more open. There lay books I had lent her on the table, and her velvet slippers were on the floor, as if they had only just been taken off. Very warm and brown were the little slippers, but they reassured me she had been wearing them a short time ago.

I returned through the fold. All the place seemed left to itself. Tardif's sheep were browsing along the cliffs, and his cows were tethered here and there. At last I caught sight of a head rising from behind a crag, the rough shock of hair of a boy, and I shouted to him, making a trumpet with my hands.

"Where is neighbor Tardif?" I called.

"Down below there," he shouted back again, pointing downwards to the Havre Gosselin. I did not wait for any further information, but darted off down the long, steep gully to the little strand, where the pebbles were being lapped lazily by the ripple of the lowering tide. Tardif's boat was within a stone's throw, and I saw Olivia sitting in the stern of it. I shouted again with a vehemence which made them both start.

"Come back, Tardif," I cried, "and take me with you!"

The boat was too far off for me to see how my sudden appearance affected Olivia. Did she turn white or red at the sound of my voice? By the time it reached the shore and I plunged in knee-deep to meet it, her face was bright with smiles, and her hands were stretched out to help me over the boat's side.

If Tardif had not been there I should have kissed them both. As it was, I tucked up my wet feet out of reach of her dress and took an oath, unable to utter a word of the gladness I felt.

"Where are you going to?" I asked, addressing neither of them in particular.

"Tardif was going to row me past the entrance to the Goulet Caves," answered Olivia, "but we will put it off now. We will return to the shore and hear all our adventures, Dr. Martin. You come upon us like a phantom and take an oath in a ghostly silence. Are you really, truly there?"

(To be continued.)

Thread Used in Surgery.

The modern surgeon employs in his work dozens of different kinds of thread for sewing up cuts and wounds. Among them are kangaroo tendons, horsehair, silk and very fine silver wire. Many of these threads are intended to hold for a certain number of days and then naturally break away.

The short, tough tendons taken from the kangaroo, which are used for sewing severe wounds, will hold for about four weeks before they break away. Silk thread will remain much longer, sometimes six months, while the fine silver wire is practically indestructible.

With the entire outfit a surgeon is able to select a thread that will last as long as the wound takes to heal and will then disappear completely. To accommodate this assortment of threads special varieties of needles are required. Besides the needle craned in different segments of a circle, surgeons use needles shaped like spears, javelins and bayonet points. Some are as long as bodkins, in a point like a miniature knife blade. Others have the sharpened end triangular.

Don't say you work like a slave; slaves do not work very hard.

SHERLOCK HOLMES, JR.

CHICAGO PARODY ON DOYLE'S WONDER DETECTIVE.

An Example of His Marvelous Powers of Deduction as They Strike the Modern Newspaper Writer—History of an Exchanged Umbrella.

Sherlock Holmes, Jr., was seated at his desk with his back toward me as I entered.

"Good morning," he said, writing away without turning his head, "that's a fine umbrella you're carrying."

A queer feeling came over me as he spoke. Surely, I thought, this man must be in league with unseen powers. I carried the umbrella under my arm, and even if I had struck the floor with it, how could he have known that it was not an old, cheap one—or a cane?

"Sherlock," I said, "you cause my hair to rise. I suppose you will tell me you know by deduction that I carry a fine umbrella, but that will not satisfy me. There is nothing to deduce from it. I cannot account for it only on the theory that you have second sight or eyes in the back of your head."

"My dear Watson," he said, smiling and swinging around in his chair, "you are unusually dull this morning. Don't you see that I have the mirror over there hung so that no one can enter the door without passing within the range of my vision, even though my back is turned? I arranged that all myself. Who but the greatest of all deducers would ever have thought of it? Ah, let me examine your umbrella. Yes, it is as I supposed. The man who exchanged with you is blind. Poor fellow! He hasn't been that way long, though. Are you going to return it to him?"

Panting with excitement over the man's wonderful powers, I dropped into a chair and stared helplessly at him for a moment. When I was able to speak again I asked:

"How do you know he is blind and that he has been so but a short time?"

"Fardon me, my dear Watson, if I decline to answer those questions just now. You haven't said whether you intend to return the umbrella or not."

"How am I to return it," I asked, "when I don't know whose it is?"

"That should be easy," he said, reaching for it, and unbuttoning the strap that held it neatly folded. Then he half opened it, exclaiming: "As I guessed. Here is a little silver plate with his name on it."

I was dumfounded at the man's cleverness.

"Holmes," I said, "there is only one man in the world who would ever have thought of doing what you have done. Oh, if I could only deduce as you can. But his name alone is there, you see. It seems to me that we are as far away from him as ever. How are we to find him among the hundreds of thousands of men in this great city?"

"Wait a moment," he replied, as he put on his hat and left the room. In a few minutes he returned, saying:

"He lives at 7043 Paradise road; telephone West 6300."

I had risen as he entered, but I staggered back and fell into a chair again, overcome.

"How do you know all this?" I gasped.

"There is a city directory in the drug store across the street," he calmly replied. "Do you wish to call him up and tell him that you have his umbrella? You can at the same time ask about his blindness."

Almost overcome by the man's uncanny air I permitted him to conduct me across the hall into an office where there was a telephone and he was permitted to use it. It was as he had said. The man who owned the umbrella had suddenly gone blind a little while before, but the doctors were going to operate on him and hoped to restore his sight.

When we had returned to the great amateur detective's room I said, almost shuddering:

"Now, tell me how you knew he was blind and that he had lost his sight only recently."

He smiled half wearily, half in pity, as he replied:

"Ah, my dear Watson, I'm afraid you'll never become much of a deducer. If he could have seen he would never have taken the old umbrella you carry, mistaking it for his own. And men who are long blind develop a delicate sense of feeling that makes it possible for them to know their own by a mere touch. So it was plain that he was blind and that he had not been so long enough to recognize things by feeling them. Don't bother me any more this morning, please. I am working on a very abstruse problem. An Ohio man resigned a public office the other day. I have been commissioned to find out what the matter with him."—Chicago Record-Herald.

SAVED BY HIS WIT.

How One West Point Cadet Avoided Being a "Deficient."

"There was an officer in the regular army who is stationed not a hundred miles away from Governor's Island, this very day," said a West Pointer yesterday, "who would never have graduated at the academy had it not been for his cool nerve plus his quick wit on a trying occasion." And the West Pointer went on to tell of the cause and effect of that nerve and quick wit.

Twenty odd years ago, when he was at West Point, there was a cadet there who "funkt" in his final examination in his fourth year. He was a popular fellow and his classmates felt sorry for him. They were all to do the gray for the blue in a few days and the poor fellow—it had leaked out despite regulations—would be declared on graduation day "deficient"—the only one out of a class of more than 60.

It so happened that a night or two before graduation day Mr. X—let him be called that—was obliged to be on sentry duty. The officer of the guard that night got a sudden idea into his head; the cadet might be neglectful of his duty. He would test him—see if he had "soldier stuff" in him, even though the odds were against his future.

It was a dark, rainy night. The officer of the guard suddenly came across the cadet's post.

The click of steel at the same time warned the intruder that the sentry's eyes were upon him—at least, that his quick hearing had detected the stealthy steps on the wet soil. Then came out in a half muffled voice: "Who goes there?"

This was the moment the officer of the guard had fixed in his mind for a test of the cadet's soldierly qualities. The answer came quickly to the sentry's challenge: "Nobody."

To the amazement of the officer, the cadet came to a "right shoulder shift," as it was called in those days, paced by him and said: "All right, my orders are to let nobody pass, major."

The cadet had recognized the officer. His answer, even if not regular in a military sense, was correct, but it was a tough one on the major. The story was so good it could not keep, and it went to Washington.

"To make a long story short," said the West Pointer, "that answer, under the circumstances, won influence enough for that cadet not to leave the academy as 'deficient,' but merely to be put back for another year's chance. Result? He graduated with high honors in the following June and was my commander in the Philippines six months ago."—New York Journal.

In the Harvest Field.

Frederic Mistral, the Provençal poet, tells a charming story of the first meeting of his father and mother. Like all romances it has its like in a more ancient legend, suggesting, even to the scene, the ever-beautiful story of Ruth and Boaz. Mistral was born at Maillane, a village at the foot of the Alps. He was the child of a second marriage, contracted when his father was about 55, a marriage of pure romance. This was the meeting of the middle-aged man and the girl who became his wife.

One year, on St. John's day, Maitre Francois Mistral was in the midst of his wheat, which a company of harvesters were reaping. A throng of young girls, gleaming, followed the reapers, and raked up the ears that fell. Maitre Francois, my father, noticed a beautiful girl who remained behind, as if she were ashamed to glean like the others. He drew near, and said to her, "My child, whose daughter are you? What is your name?"

The young girl replied, "I am the daughter of Etienne Poullin, Maitre of Maillane. My name is Delaide."

"What! the daughter of the Maitre of Maillane gleaming?"

"Maitre," she replied, "our family is large, six girls and two boys, and although our father is pretty well-to-do, as you know, when we ask him for money, he replies, 'Gloria, if you want money, earn it! And that is why I came to glean.'"

Six months after this meeting, Maitre Francois asked Maitre Poullin for the hand of Delaide, and of that marriage I was born.

Catching Tigers.

Capturing tigers by a novel method is now being adopted in Sumatra, and is proving almost invariably successful. As soon as a tiger's lair has been found, natives are employed to construct a wooden fence nine feet long and four feet wide a short distance away from it, and in this inclosure is then placed a bait dog, which is tied to one of the fence posts. A narrow entrance leads into the inclosure, and there, deftly concealed under earth, leaves and boughs of trees, is placed a strong steel trap, which is so designed that any animal that places its foot on it is certain to be held captive.

This trap is of recent invention, and consists of strong steel plates and equally strong springs. When it is set the plates form a sort of platform, and as soon as the tiger which has been lured thither by the dog sets his foot thereon the springs are released, and the cruel steel grips the leg and holds it fast.

Powerful as a tiger is, he cannot free himself from such bondage, and as those who have set the trap are never