

AD Double Victory

by HARRIET PRESCOTT SPOFFORD

D was unmarried because he had never met any woman worth while to marry. As for love, no idea of it had entered his comprehension.

He lived alone, with man and maids, relinquishing his profession, in which he had attained eminence, and pursuing certain researches, which his excellent income allowed.

On one side of his estate was a river, deep, but hardly wider than a creek; and the land went back through glades and gardens to the farm. His house, in his mother's day beautiful, was interesting now, with faded velvets whose scarlet was silver, with old portraits and ivories, and Marna's immaculate house-keeping. Yet, when he considered, it seemed desolate. But he had little time for considering; his laboratory occupied him within doors, and when he walked abroad it was chiefly with a view to the examination of his frames ranged under glass for the action of the sun. He congratulated himself on the quiet. "This is perfect," he said. "So remote, so still—"

"As often in the purple night
Some bearded meteor trailing light
Moves over still Shalott."

You can then imagine Dr. Lloyd's feelings when, one morning, he saw that the Old Place across the river had been taken, busy people were putting it in order, and a horde of children moved in the alleys of the overgrown garden. And although the yellow heads and peachy cheeks were lovely as flowers, to Dr. Lloyd the trollys of underground would have seemed less forbidding. Good-by to still Shalott, to the undisturbed sauntering with thoughts and problems! But, thank Heaven, the river ran between, and there could be no actual contact, let the air be rent as it might.

Of course, there were hours of quiet over in Old Place, although even then the tinkle of a piano, the echo of a song, the wall of a child, made muffled discord. Sometimes he saw a woman, walking in the paths or tying up the roses that had run riot on the gallery, a young woman, often gowned in white, perhaps pretty—at any rate, graceful. No one need object to such a neighbor as that, if it were not for that host of horns about her. There she was now, one at each hand, another pushing between, two running after! And she seemed to enjoy it. But sometimes she sat on the gallery, and an old colored woman combed her long dark hair and mothered her. He could hear her now.

"Dem ar twins 'sponsible for all dese yer 'eadaches, Missy Paula. W'en Miss Bella done die an' lebe yo' dem ar twins an' de lil' gal, wid dare contraptions, she gib yo' dese mis'ries, too."

"There, there, Mammy Rose," he heard a voice of silver.

"To be sho, it's de Lord's will, honey. He do torment dem he lubbs. I reckon he tink dar's de makin' ob an angel in Missy Paula. Dare, yo' shtet yo' sweet eyes."

So her name was Paula; it sounded the way rose-petals feel.

She was singing one sunset on the river bank; the little wretches clamoring for song after song. "Now, Paula, sing 'The Young Chevalier,'" and, "Oh, Paula, darling, 'Si Bleus 'Sez Yeux.'" And her voice seemed to people the place with nightingales.

Well, now and then at nightfall, on the other side of the river, one could not complain. And he was safe on his side. Safe, was he? He went out one morning, and there—two little yellow heads bent over one of his frames, and four audacious hands lifting the cover and working ruin. "What are you about!" he called and so fiercely that, starting to run, they ran directly into his hands. He caught one; but the other in desperation made for the towering old pine, one of whose long, low boughs leaned over the stream. "How did you come here?" he demanded. "We jumped," in one breath. "Then jump back!"

To his horror, for, after all, he was human, the one that had clambered to the end of the big pine-tree bough, suddenly hurled himself through the air with a shout, landing on the other side, which, indeed, the bough almost touched.

"Now you!" said Dr. Lloyd to the other boy. "I—I dassent," he gasped. "We fetched a run and jumped. I—I can't jump standing. Monty can do 'most anything. I—I can't!"

"Then I'll show you how!" said Dr. Lloyd. And suiting the action to the word, he swung the boy back and forth a moment and then let go. Under other circumstances it would have been only a light toss to the soft turf opposite. But the boy squirmed and kicked to such a degree that the toss failed, and he fell on the bank and rolled off into the water. In a moment, of course, Dr. Lloyd was after him. Although boys were holy terrors, you must not drown them. And he brought him up the bank, a dripping, yelling crab, all struggling legs and arms, himself dripping, too, and in an altogether unpropitious condition in which to meet a lovely lady for the first time.

For the shrieks of the two had brought the others as if they sprang out of the ground. "He threw Johnny into the river! Oh, Paula, Paula, he threw Johnny into the river!" resounded the shrill cries. And there, suddenly, towering over them with heightened color and blazing eyes, was Paula. "Go, sir!" she commanded. And bowing, Dr. Lloyd took hold of the long pine bough, regardless of pitch, and swung himself across the water.

The next day Benson told him the bough of the pine-tree, that leaned over the river, had been cut off. The lady across the stream had ordered it, he thought. This was an outrage. And Dr. Lloyd found not only the long bough gone, but the tree

girdled so that it would die. This the lady could not have ordered. The tree, a solitary giant, had been a landmark for ages, although part of it was dry and withered. He felt a pang, as when one hears sentence of death pronounced upon a living soul. But while he looked, Mammy Rose, hatchet in hand, came laboring along the other side, having crossed the stepping stones half a mile above. She stopped and shook the hatchet defiantly.

Dr. Lloyd, obliged to go away the next day, was, on his return, interested in some new experiments, and there was a season of comparative quiet across the stream. This season was broken by the children huddled on the bank, talking and sobbing, the beautiful lady coming down the sward, sweeping them into her arms, and leaving them hurriedly.

The same day Benson said one of the children across the river was very ill, and Dr. Parsley had given him up.

One of those children he had thrown into the water. Good Heaven, if he had been the death of that child! Directly he had looked over his professional appearances, he was at the door of Old Place, speaking with Dr. Parsley. "You say it is hopeless?" he asked. "I fear so," said the old Doctor.

"You give up the case?" Dr. Lloyd said breathlessly.

"Well, practically."

Dr. Lloyd joined her there very shortly. "You must have confidence in me," he said, bending over her where she sat half-stunned. "I promise you the boy's life."

"You tried to destroy it once," she said, looking up with great, tired eyes.

"Do you really think I had such intention? However, you have enough faith in Dr. Parsley to understand he will permit no wrong?"

"Oh, I don't know," she said wearily. "You are tired out. Go to bed, and let me have him. I will not leave him till he is out of danger."

"I must be with him," she said. And then there came a chorus from below. "Hush, hush!" she whispered, running to the balusters.

"No, no, no!" came the cries, four little eager, distracted faces appearing, with the old colored one behind them. "He tried to kill Johnny! He'll kill him now!"

"Mammy Rose," said Dr. Lloyd, "take your mistress and the children away at once, or they will be killing Johnny!" And Mammy Rose, who knew what authority was, swept the protesting rebels down stairs. Paula was already in the sick-room.

The old Doctor left by-and-by. The sunrise was stealing through the dark at last, reddening the world, and the birds were singing, when Dr. Lloyd went round to the other side of the bed and lifted Paula and laid her on the lounge in the adjoining room. "He is going to live," he said. "Now sleep!" And the word "Sleep" on his lips, and the look in his eyes, were all she remembered before deep slumber fell upon her.

Mammy Rose stole into the room presently. He waved her away and followed her out. "Take the children, their clothes and books and toys, to my

"It's the painted-lady!"

"Oh, great heavens, his butterflies! They had the case down and were quarrelling over it—his Vanessa lo, his magnificent Uvanis, like a splendid spirit in a green world!"

But the noises hushed. "We were loving your butterflies," said a sweet voice.

"It isn't true that a white butterfly is a ghost?" said Monty. "If Johnny died—and then they all set up a wail."

"Johnny is getting well," said Dr. Lloyd. "Mammy Rose said that if you didn't kill him you'd cure him," said Mary suavely.

"Do I look as if I killed good little boys?" "Johnny is a bad boy. Paula said so."

"Your mama ought to know." "You're mama's sister. Mama is an angel in Heaven!" "That is," said little Mary, "if she isn't a white butterfly. We were looking for a white butterfly."

"We'll look for luncheon," said the Doctor, and in the dining-room he succeeded in establishing cordial relations. On the whole, although Wilford spilled his milk, and Monty choked and Jo kicked him, and Mary shed tears, on the whole, children were not so bad as Dr. Lloyd had thought. When he returned to Johnny, he left Benson to show them some small chemical doings which seemed like legerdemain.

Paula was still beside the bed, and Johnny was doing very well. He sent her at once to see the others at some distance, and whether of his authority or feeling there should be no discussion there, she went, finding a couple of long beams laid across the stream, with a rope hand-rail stretched from tree to tree.

"Oh, Paula, Paula!" the children cried, running to meet her, nearly as they were allowed, as she came over the grass, "he isn't a monster at all. Benson says he's a very learned man. He's got strings of medals! Benson says, Johnny that day came near destroying something millions of lives hung on a tin pan with a glass cover? Oh, Paula, come here and see Benson burn ice!"

She came back to Johnny's bed, with her arms full of the flowering wild white azaleas, looking a spirit of peace and health. Presently, however, he took the flowers and put them into the next room, smiling at her as he did so. "Johnny is out of all danger now; but he will not meddle with culture germs again. Now I shall leave the case with Dr. Parsley. But Benson and Marna will keep the children till the boy is right, and till they are safe in seeing him. I hope you have forgiven me for Johnny's bath."

To his astonishment she did not reply. She stood there, all at once pale and drooping.

"You mean—," he said. "Shall I continue—"

"Oh, yes!" she sighed. "I am so ignorant. I am so helpless—so young—with all these children to care for!"

"Then I will come till all is well." He stopped a moment. "And thank you for allowing me to do so," he said then.

Oh, Dr. Lloyd, to think that, with all your work impending; you could spare time for this! You were a wise man, but you didn't know what had befallen you! All night he slept and waked by turns, with the alternate vision of the roseate creature with her arms full of the white azaleas, all health and joy, and then of the pale drooping one imploring his aid. The shrill cries of quarrelling birds, the hoarse cooing of doves on the roof, the chirping of an ivied wall full of sparrows, all mingled with his dreams when he awoke. Once it would have seemed maddening. This morning he could not move swiftly enough to make a part of it.

"Paula, says we're to beg your pardon for what we said," they cried, as he came into the breakfast-room. "She says it's no wonder you were mad when Johnny upset the frame. She says Johnny'd be a deader if it wasn't for you."

There were ups and downs in Dr. Lloyd's sensations the following weeks, but the ups predominated; and the ups were very up indeed on the days that Paula came over as far as the barrier he had placed, and talked with the children at a safe distance. He himself was out of sight, although not beyond seeing, at these moments, and the thoughts that swept through him were past his own reading.

But when at last it was safe for the children to return to Old Place a certain consternation seized him. No glad or sorry calling and crying, no singing, no pattering of storming feet, no forgiving or confiding caresses—the house dreary as a tomb, the grounds deserted—and the grassy spot across the stream full of gaiety and life and sweetness. And, more than all, no Paula! No slender, white-gowned figure moving down the lawn, no voice like a melody saluting the children crowding joyously as near the barrier as they might, no swift, gracious smile for himself—nothing, but ghastly loneliness.

Fancy his delight, his fright, too, when Marna, having brought them out to Paula, and Johnny with Mammy Rose was standing at the other end of the bridge to welcome them—little Mary shrunk back and, turning to him, exclaimed, in sudden tears, "Oh, please, please, we'd rather stay!"

"Marry" cried Paula. And the little wretch fled and hid her face in her aunt's gown.

"You can come back every day and all day long," said Dr. Lloyd.

"And look in the symmetroscope?" "You can take it with you."

"That glorious possibility dissipated their grief. There was a race back to the house, and for a feat and a torn bit of flower. "Now, look, Paula!" they cried. "You will see orchids? You will see butterflies, and stars and angels' wings, and everything!"

As for Dr. Lloyd, with that dark head bent over the boy, in the curve of that long, fair neck, in the rose that dyed the half hidden cheek, he saw something more than angels' wings. "Paula," he heard them saying, as she led them away, "perhaps he wouldn't like to have Mammy Rose—she killed the tree, you know, and see, it's quite, quite dead! But all the rest of us might stay if you come, too!" And just then they began to run and, crossing the bridge, fell on Johnny like bees upon a comb.

What a blank it was for Dr. Lloyd after that morning. Books, frames, laboratory work, nothing contented him. He was listening for the hubbub of the children, seeing the face of Paula, with its dark beauty, the grace of her slow movement, the tall, slim figure. He stayed so, till she came with the children to take him home with them.

Science was badly neglected in this long summer. Dr. Lloyd, a sort of tutor of the children, took them on his tramps, Paula usually along. But when the last leaf was wondered over, he found himself looking into the face of Winter with something like horror. If—if they were only one family! A thought came as if an angel had stooped into the room and irradiated it with gleaming gold. Then all was dark again. That preposterous vanity, for one second, made it seem possible that a perfect young creature like Paula—no old, already grizzled! He was really very old—yet forty—the gray in the blonde curls close to the head possibly a suspicion.

And even were she willing, for the sake of the children, to make such a sacrifice, it would be criminal to accept it. He felt a faint of guilt.

There had been a faint of guilt. Thanking him, he had gone over to Old Place and brought Old Place back bodily with him; and there had been a pudding in blue flames; and he had taken out his collection of gems, among them a ring of wonderful workmanship. "The marriage ring of some old princess gone to dust," he said.

"It could have been Paula's marriage ring, if we had let her marry you," said Wilford. "Married people wear rings. But married people go away from their own folks, and we couldn't spare Paula. Mammy Rose asked us how we would like it. And we said not at all. And that settled it." Just then the tray of jewels slipped, and in the scramble after the runaway treasures no one but the Doctor saw Paula's face grow like ivory; no one but Paula saw the Doctor's purple, and the jewels being recovered, the children were hustled homeward out of hand.

"Paula was mad with us," Monty told the Doctor next day. "and we asked her why. Mammy Rose said she wanted you to marry her. We told her that married people loved each other, and we asked her if she loved you. Of course, we knew that you loved Paula, because every one loves Paula. But she grew so angry she ran right out of the room. We love you; but that's different. You can't marry all of us. And you know we couldn't lose Paula. We couldn't do without her." The Doctor was helping Benson fit their skates just then; he was teaching them to skate, a stretch of cold weather without snow having made the river, broadening below, a sheet of ice. By Christmas time they were too absorbed in the joy of their winged feet to care even for a Christmas tree. Mammy Rose and Paula, however, had their own plans.

It was before the sunset of a cloudy Christmas Eve that Dr. Lloyd went over to Old Place to bring the children to a festivity Marna and Benson had prepared. "Hucum dem ar chilluns ain' come in an' done hab deif faces," said Mammy Rose was saying. "Dey's deas nat'ally gone wild ober fallen from a nest; and then another and another. 'Pears like I ain' yeered 'em racketin' dis yer long time. 'Marse Monty! Marse Johnny! Oh, Mammy!' And her voice, ringing out like a bell, came back like an echo, no other sound replying.

"Oh, Mammy Rose," cried Paula, flinging down her needles, "you don't believe—oh, Dr. Lloyd—"

"My gracious, Missy Paula, you don't reckon dey's in de ribber? Sho, chile, de ribber's done froze stiff to de groun! Dem limbs is more bodder to me dan all my money! Marse Johnny!" And her voice rose to concert pitch.

But no Marse Johnny replied; nor were any children in sight when, catching up cloaks and hoods, they ran outdoors, where it was already twilight with the coming storm.

"They have probably gone down the river," said the Doctor, "or, could they have gone up?" And he looked about him anxiously; for up-river was the pond with its air-holes, and down-river was the big stream where at the junction, there was sure to be broken ice and trouble. "I am going after them," said the Doctor. "It will be pitch dark in half an hour. Benson shall go up stream, and I will go down. In the meantime let us have a torch that will throw light as far as light flies!" And when he came back with his skates, two of the farm hands followed, their arms full of kindling stuff, with which they made a pile at the base of the dead pine tree. "As soon as it is fired," he said, buckling his last strap, "take burning brands and fire the branches." And then he was off one way, and Benson the other, calling as they went. And Paula and Mammy Rose stood shuddering and shivering on the bank, calling, too.

"Yo' come in, chile," said the old Mammy. "Tain' no use addin' to trouble an' reskin' yo' self sick; w'en dem limbs o' mischief comes home, dey'll need us bofe, I reckon. Yo' come in along o' Mammy."

Dr. Lloyd had not skated far down the bends and reaches of the little stream before he saw how bewildered children might become. Suddenly, through the stillness following one of his stentorian cries, from far off, round the bend of the shore beyond the Long Wood, came a trail pipe like that of a bird fallen from a nest; and then another and another. The Doctor never stopped to listen; he put fresh force to his strokes and sped on to find the little people at last huddled together in mortal terror.

"Oh, we knew you'd come," piped one, as he approached, hearing, if not seeing, him. "Only we were afraid," whispered another, "and we got turned about. We didn't know which way to go!" And very truly, the Doctor felt, as he rose from comforting them a moment. He, himself didn't know which way to go. He had given his last match, too, to Marna with the farm-hands, and he could not even see the face of the compass on his watch-chain. He waited, seeking something that might seem familiar. But all was still and blank. Out here, with these children, all night in a storm. His heart failed him. And then a great glow shone in the sky. "Come!" he cried quickly. "That is the way home!" And as they rounded the bend a pillar of fire came from the darkness blench before it.

"Oh, who did it?" cried Monty.

"You did it!" said Wilford.

"God did it," said Jo.

"I guess this is a Christmas tree," said little Mary.

It was the next morning, the storm blown away, that Dr. Lloyd saw the procession of little people carefully crossing the slippery beams and coming up his snowy lawn. Paula was with them, in the cloak hurriedly thrown on at their demand. "We haven't told Paula!" they cried, as soon as they were in the wide hall down whose depths the fire blazed, "because we thought she might make a time. But we came to wish you a Merry Christmas—and make you a Christmas present—you gave us the big Christmas tree, last night—"

"And it was glorious!"

"And it saved our lives!"

"And we want to give you the best thing we've got—"

"And so we're going to give you Paula!"

And part of them fell upon Paula, slipping off the cloak, and part of them upon the Doctor. "You're going to stay here now, Paula," they said. "We'll come over every day."

"And all day long."

"You may marry her, if you like!"

"May I, Paula? May I?" whispered Dr. Lloyd. "She's your Christmas present!" they went on. "We will try to do without her!" and the lips began to tremble, the voices to falter, the heroes to cry.

"It is a present I have wanted very much. But Paula herself must give it. Paula!"

She stood there flushed, beautiful, appealing, downcast. But for one moment she raised her luminous eyes to his, and there he read it all; and he took her in his arms and doubted if he were not dreaming some dream of heaven.

"I think," he said presently, still holding Paula, "we will have a wedding here to-day. And then you won't have to do without Paula. For you will stay, too."



"WE CAME TO WISH YOU A MERRY CHRISTMAS—AND MAKE YOU A CHRISTMAS PRESENT—YOU GAVE US THE BIG CHRISTMAS TREE, LAST NIGHT—AND IT SAVED OUR LIVES AND SO WE'RE GOING TO GIVE YOU PAULA."

"Have you tried the new remedy?"

"No, I haven't you younger men's faith in new remedies. And there is none to be had."

"Would you mind taking me in consultation?"

The old Doctor's face brightened, and then gloomed again. "Well," he said "If I can't—"

"I can't either, you mean. Try me."

And compelled, against his will, Dr. Parsley turned about with him. Through a distant door he saw the children's faces in an angry cluster, as he went up the stairs.

"Dr. Lloyd," said the old Doctor, after a quick introduction, "is a noted bacteriologist; and thinks he may succeed with a new remedy. I confess—"

"I cannot have experiments tried here," said the beautiful lady beside the bed.

"Believe me," said Dr. Lloyd gently, "it is no experiment. The child has, I fear, but a few hours otherwise. It is his only chance."

"True," said Dr. Parsley. "He shall die in peace then," said the lady. "Then," said the Doctor, looking at her steadily with his steel-blue eyes, "I shall proceed without your permission." And she never knew how it happened that she found herself outside the door.

house," he said. "This disease is contagious. They may escape that way. Remain with them." And he returned to Johnny. Later, Dr. Parsley relieved his watch while he went for a bath and his coffee, coming back quickly. And Paula waked, bewildered, and, slipping away, reappeared refreshed and with a sort of subdued radiance about her. As she came in the door the blaze of day came in with her.

"The boy will pull through," said Dr. Lloyd. "And I will see him again at noon."

She hesitated, half wavering toward him. "You have given him back to life," she said. "And I—I ordered you off my grounds!"

"Well!" he said, looking down at her with a smile.

"I can—can only ask you to come back." And she extended her hand.

"I shall come back!" he said, an electric thrill sweeping through him at the touch of her hand. And as she saw him, tall and large and bright above her, she could think only of the sun-god with healing in his staff. His head was in a whirl; he walked in a rosy cloud.

When he opened the door of his own house, after changing his clothes in the fumitory, was it all the fims of Pandemonium let loose—or was it all the birds of Eden? In his singular frame of mind he could hardly have said which.

"It's the Camberwell beauty!" cried one voice.