The Doctor's Dilemma

By Hesba Stretton

CHAPTER XXI.

I went out late in the evening to question each of the omnibus drivers, but in vain. Whether they were too busy to give me proper attention, or too anxious to join the stir and mirth of the townspeople, they all declared they knew nothing of any Englishwoman. As I returned dejectedly to my inn, I heard a lamentable voice, evidently English, bemoaning in doubtful French. The omnibus from Falaise had just come in, and under the lamp in the entrance of the archway stood a lady before my hostess, who was volubly asserting that there was no room left in her house. I hastened to the assistance of my countrywoman, and the light of the lamp falling upon her face revealed to me who she was.

"Mrs. Foster!" I exclaimed, almost shouting her name in my astonishment. She looked ready to faint with fatigue and dismay, and she laid her hand heavily on my arm, as if to save herself from sinking to the ground.

"Have you found her?" she asked, involuntarily.

"Not a trace of her," I answered.

Mrs. Foster broke into an hysterical laugh, which was very quickly followed by sobs. I had no great difficulty in persuading the landlady to find some accommodation for her, and then I retired to my own room to turn over the extraordinary meeting which had been the last incident of the day.

It required very little keenness to come to the conclusion that the Fosters had obtained their information concerning Miss Ellen Martineau where we had got ours, from Mrs. Wilkinson; also that Mrs. Foster had lost no time in following up the clue, for she was only twenty-four hours behind me. She had looked thoroughly astonished and dismayed when she saw me there; so she had had no idea that I was on the same track. But nothing could be more convincing than this journey of hers that neither she nor Foster really believed in Olivia's death. That was as clear as day. But what explanation could I give to myself of those letters, of Olivia's above all? Was it possible that she had caused them to be written, and sent to her husband? I could not even admit such a question without a sharp sense of disappointment in her.

I saw Mrs. Foster early in the morning, somewhat as a truce-bearer may meet another on neutral ground. She was grateful to me for my interposition in her behalf the night before; and as I knew Ellen Martineau to be safely out of the way, I was inclined to be tolerant towards her. I assured her, upon my honor, that I had failed in discovering any trace of Olivia in Noireau, and I told her all I had learned about the bankruptcy of Monsieur Perrier, and the scattering of the school.

"But why should you undertake such a chase?" I asked; "if you and Foster are satisfied that Olivia is dead, why should you be running after Ellen Martineau? You show me the papers which seem to prove her death, and now I find you in this remote part of Normandy, evidently in pursuit of her. What does this mean?"

"You are doing the same thing yourself," she answered.

"Yes," I replied, "because I am not satisfied. But you have proved your conviction by becoming Richard Foster's second wife."

"That is the very point," she said, shedding a few tears; "as soon as ever Mrs. Wilkinson described Ellen Martineau to me, when she was talking about her visitor who had come to inquire after her, I grew quite frightened lest he should ever be charged with marrying me whilst she was alive. So I persuaded him to let me come here and make sure of it, though the journey costs a great deal, and we have very little money to spare. We did not know what tricks Olivia might do, and it made me very miserable to think she might be still alive, and I in her place."

I could not but acknowledge to myself that there was some reason in Mrs. Foster's statement of the case.

"There is not the slightest chance of your finding her," I remarked.

"Isn't there?" she asked, with an evil gleam in her eyes, which I just caught before she hid her face again in her handkerchief.

"At any rate," I said, "you would have no power over her if you found her. You could not take her back with you by force. I do not know how the French laws would regard Foster's authority, but you can have none whatever, and he is quite unfit to take this long journey to claim her. Really I do not see what you can do; and I should think your wisest plan would be to go back and take care of him, leaving her alone. I am here to protect her, and I shall stay until I see you fairly out of the place."

I kept no very strict watch over her during the day, for I felt sure she would find no trace of Olivia in Noireau. At night I saw her again. She was worn out and despondent, and declared herself quite ready to return to Falaise by the omnibus at five o'clock in the morning. I saw her off, and gave the driver a fee to bring me word for what town she took her ticket at the railway station. When he returned in the evening he told me he had himself bought her one for Honfleur, and started her fairly on her way home.

As for myself I had spent the day in making inquiries at the offices of the local custom houses which stand at every entrance into a town or village in France, for the gathering of trifling, vexatious taxes upon articles of food and merchandise. At one of these I had learned that, three or four weeks ago a young Englishwoman with a little girl had passed by on foot, each carrying a small bundle, which had not been examined. It was on the road to Granville, which was between thirty and forty miles away. From Granville was the nearest route to the Channel Islands. Was it not possible that Olivia had resolved to seek refuge there again? Perhaps to seek me! My heart, bowed down by the sad picture of her and the little child leaving the town on foot, beat high again at the thought of Olivia in Guernsey.

At Granville I learned that a young lady and a child had made the voyage to Jersey a short time before, and I went on with stronger hope. But in Jersey I could obtain no further information about her; nor in Guernsey, whither I felt sure Olivia would certainly have proceeded. I took one day more to cross over to Sark, and consult Tardif; but he knew no more than I did. He absolutely refused to believe that Olivia was dead.

"In August," he said, "I shall hear from her. Take courage and comfort. She promised it, and she will keep her promise. If she had known herself to be dying she would certainly have sent me word."

"It is a long time to wait," I said, with an utter sinking of spirit.

"It is a long time to wait!" he echoed, lifting up his hands, and letting them fall again with a gesture of weariness; "but we must wait and hope."

To wait in impatience, and to hope at times, and despair at times, I returned to London.

CHAPTER XXII.

One of my first proceedings, after my return, was to ascertain how the English law stood with regard to Olivia's position. Fortunately for me, one of Dr. Senior's oldest friends was a lawyer of great repute, and he discussed the question with me after a dinner at his house at Fulham.

"There seems to be no proof of any kind against the husband," he said, after I had told him all.

"Why!" I exclaimed, "here you have a girl, brought up in luxury and wealth, willing to brave any poverty rather than continue to live with him."

"A girl's whim," he said.

"Then Foster could compel her to return to him?" I asked.

"As far as I see into the case, he certainly could," was the answer, which drove me frantic.

"But there is this second marriage," I objected.

"There lies the kernel of the case," he said. "You tell me there are papers, which you believe to be forgeries, purporting to be the medical certificate with corroborative proof of her death. Now, if the wife be guilty of framing these, the husband will bring them against her as the grounds on which he felt free to contract his second marriage. She has done a very foolish and a very wicked thing there."

"You think she did it?" I asked.

He smiled significantly, but without saying anything.

"But what can be done now?" I asked.

"All you can do," he answered, "is to establish your influence over this fellow and go cautiously to work with him. As long as the lady is in France, if she be alive, and he is too ill to go after her, she is safe. You may convince him by degrees that it is to his interest to come to some terms with her. A formal deed of separation might be agreed upon, and drawn up; but even that will not perfectly secure her in the future."

I was compelled to remain satisfied with this opinion. Yet how could I be satisfied, whilst Olivia, if she was still living, was wandering about homeless, and, as I feared, destitute, in a foreign country?

I made my first call upon Foster the next evening. Mrs. Foster had been to Brook street every day since her return, to inquire for me, and to leave an urgent message that I should go to Bellringer street as soon as I was again in town. The lodging house looked almost as wretched as the forsaken dwelling down at Noireau, where Olivia had perhaps been living; and the stifling, musty air inside it almost made me gasp for breath.

"So you are come back!" was Foster's greeting, as I entered the dingy room.

"Yes," I replied.

"I need not ask what success you've had," he said, sneering. "'Why so pale and wan, fond lover?' Your trip has not agreed with you, that is plain enough. It did not agree with Carry, either, for she came back swearing she would never go on such a wild-goose chase again. You know I was quite opposed to her going?"

"No," I said incredulously. The diamond ring had disappeared from his finger, and it was easy to guess how the funds had been raised for the journey.

"Altogether opposed," he repeated. "I believe Olivia is dead. I am quite sure she has never been under this roof with me, as Miss Ellen Martineau has been. I should have known it as surely as ever a tiger scented its prey. Do you suppose I have no sense keen enough to tell me she was in the very house where I was?"

"Nonsense!" I answered. His eyes glistened cruelly, and made me almost ready to spring upon him. I could have seized him by the throat and shaken him to death, in my sudden passion of loathing against him; but I sat quiet, and ejaculated "Nonsense!" Such power has the spirit of the nineteenth century among civilized classes.

"Olivia is dead," he said, in a solemn tone. "I am convinced of that from another reason; through all the misery of our marriage, I never knew her guilty of an untruth, not the smallest. She was as true as the gospel. Do you think you or Carry could make me believe that she would trifle with such an awful subject as her own death? No. I would take my oath that Olivia would never have had that letter sent, or written to me those few lines of farewell, but to let me know that she was dead."

There was no doubt whatever that he was suffering from the same disease as that which had been the death of my mother—a disease almost invariably fatal, sooner or later. A few cases of cure, under most favorable circumstances, had been reported during the last half century; but the chances were dead against Foster's recovery. In all probability, a long and painful illness, terminating in inevitable death, lay before him. In the opinion of my two senior physicians, all that I could do would be to alleviate the worst pangs of it.

His case haunted me day and night. In that deep undercurrent of consciousness which lurks beneath our surface sensations and impressions, there was always present the image of Foster, with his pale, cynical face and pitiless eyes. With this was the perpetual remembrance that a subtle malady, beyond the reach of our skill, was slowly eating away his life. The man I abhorred; but the sufferer, mysteriously linked with the memories which clung about my mother, aroused my most urgent, instinctive compassion. Only once before had I watched the conflict between disease and its remedy, with so intense an interest.

It was a day or two after a consultation that I came accidentally upon the little note book which I had kept in Guernsey—a private note book, accessible only to myself. It was night; Jack, as usual, was gone out, and I was alone. I turned over the leaves merely for listless want of occupation. All at once I came upon an entry, made in connection with my mother's illness, which recalled to me the discovery I believed I had made of a remedy for her disease, had it only been applied in its earlier stages. It had slipped out of my mind, but now my memory leaped upon it with irresistible force.

I must tell the whole truth, however terrible and humiliating it may be. Whether I had been true or false to myself up to that moment I cannot say. I had taken upon myself the care and, if possible, the cure of this man, who was my enemy, if I had an enemy in the world. His life and mine could not run parallel without great grief and hurt to me, and to one dearer than myself. Now, that a better chance was thrust upon me in his favor, I shrank from seizing it with unutterable reluctance. I turned heartsick at the thought of it.

Yes, I wished him to die. Conscience flashed the answer across the inner depths of my soul, as a glare of lightning over the sharp crags and cruel waves of our island in a midnight storm. I saw with terrible distinctness that there had been lurking within a sure sense of satisfaction in the certainty that he must die. I took up my note book, and went away to my room, lest Jack should come in suddenly and read my secret on my face. I thrust the book into a drawer in my desk, and locked it away, out of my sight.

It seemed cruel that this power should come to me from my mother's death. If she were living still, or if she had died from any other cause, the discovery of this remedy would never have been made by me. And I was to take it as a sort of miraculous gift, purchased by her pangs, and bestow it upon the only man I hated. For I hated him; I said so to myself.

But it could not rest at that. I fought a battle with myself all through the quiet night, motionless and in silence, lest Jack should become aware that I was not sleeping. How should I ever face him, or grasp his hearty hand again, with such a secret weight upon my soul? Yet how could I resolve to save Foster at the cost of dooming Olivia to a lifelong bondage should he discover where she was, or to lifelong poverty should she remain concealed? If I were only sure that she was alive! It was for her sake merely that I hesitated.

The morning dawned before I could decide. The decision, when made, brought no feeling of relief or triumph to me. As soon as it was probable that Dr. Senior could see me, I was at his house at Fulham; and in rapid, almost incoherent words laid what I believed to be my important discovery before him. He sat thinking for some time, running over in his own mind such cases as had come under his own observation. After a while a gleam of pleasure passed over his face, and his eyes brightened as he looked at me.

"I congratulate you, Martin," he said, "though I wish Jack had hit upon this. I believe it will prove a real benefit to our science. Let me turn it over a little longer, and consult some of my colleagues about it. But I think you are right. You are about to try it on poor Foster?"

"Yes," I answered, with a chilly sensation in my veins.

"It can do him no harm," he said, "and in my opinion it will prolong his life to old age, if he is careful of himself. I will write a paper on the subject for the Lancet, if you will allow me."

"With all my heart," I said sadly.

The old physician regarded me for a minute with his keen eyes, which had looked through the window of disease into many a human soul. I shrank from the scrutiny, but I need not have done so. He grasped my hand firmly and closely.

"God bless you, Martin!" he said, "God bless you!"

I went straight from Fulham to Bellringer street. A healthy impulse to fulfill all my duty, however difficult, was in its first fervid moment of action. Nevertheless there was a subtle hope within me founded upon one chance that was left—it was just possible that Foster might refuse to be made the subject of an experiment; for an experiment it was.

I sat down beside him, and told him what I believed to be his chance of life; not concealing from him that I proposed to try, if he gave his consent, a mode of treatment which had never been practiced before. His eye, keen and sharp as that of a lynx, seemed to read my thoughts as Dr. Senior's had done.

"Martin Dobree," he said, in a voice so different from his ordinary caustic tone that it almost startled me, "I can trust you. I put myself with implicit confidence into your hands."

The last chance—dare I say the last hope?—was gone. I stood pledged on my honor as a physician, to employ this discovery, which had been laid open to me by my mother's fatal illness, for the benefit of the man whose life was most harmful to Olivia and myself. I felt suffocated, stifled. I opened the window for a minute or two, and leaned through it to catch the fresh breath of the outer air.

"I must tell you," I said, when I drew my head in again, "that you must not expect to regain your health and strength so completely as to be able to return to your old dissipations. But if you are careful of yourself you may live to sixty or seventy."

"Life at any price!" he answered.

"There would be more chance for you now," I said, "if you could have better air than this."

"How can I?" he asked.

"Be frank with me," I answered, "and tell me what your means are. It would be worth your while to spend your last farthing upon this chance."

"Is it not enough to make a man mad," he said, "to know there are thousands lying in the bank in his wife's name, and he cannot touch a penny of it? It is life itself to me; yet I may die like a dog in this hole for the want of it. My death will lie at Olivia's door, curse her!"

He fell back upon his pillows, with a groan as heavy and deep as ever came from the heart of a wretch perishing from sheer want. I could not choose but feel some pity for him; but this was an opportunity I must not miss.

"It is of no use to curse her," I said; "come, Foster, let us talk over this matter quietly and reasonably. If Olivia be alive, as I cannot help hoping she is, your wisest course would be to come to some mutual agreement, which would release you both from your present difficulties; for you must recollect she is as penniless as yourself. Let me speak to you as if I were her brother. Of this one thing you may be quite certain, she will never consent to return to you; and in that I will aid her to the utmost of my power. But there is no reason why you should not have a good share of the property, which she would gladly relinquish on condition that you left her alone."

(To be continued.)

TRADE IN LATIN AMERICAS.

Why the United States Does Not Secure Its Share Thereof.

Minister Loomis maintains that the United States does not have, in any part of Latin America, the share of trade which its productivity and proximity entitle it to. The Germans, the English, the French and even the Spanish exhibit a higher degree of commercial intelligence than we do in dealing with the Latin Americans.

Our merchants and manufacturers are loath to understand that in order to succeed in Central or South America they must conform to the business methods to which centuries of usage have given the force and prestige of national customs. If we want to do business with the South Americans we must, in a large measure, do business in their way, and not try to force our methods upon them, though we may be convinced that our manner of conducting commercial affairs is superior to theirs.

The Latin-American merchant is accustomed to long credit. Six months is the usual period, but sometimes it is a year. He will pay, but he must have time in which to pay, for it is the custom of the South American trader to be a banker as well as a merchant, and he has to make large advances in money and supplies to the owners of coffee and other plantations to enable them to pay their laborers, and the merchant does not expect repayment until the coffee crop is harvested and sold, once a year. So it will be seen that long time in making his own payments is essential to him.

The European merchants and manufacturers understand this, and arrange to give the South American merchant ample time in which to meet his obligations. The Europeans make a careful, comprehensive systematic study of the conditions and necessities of the Latin-American market, and then set to work in an intelligent way to meet and satisfy those conditions and needs. —Success.

The Salad Had Preference.

American social leaders are more interested in the Kaiser of Germany than they ever were in any crowned head, outside of the English rulers. Probably it is because the Kaiser is fond of Americans, and shows as keen a desire as his uncle, the King of England, to meet charming Americans and talk to them. In Berlin and Homburg he has met many of the rich social set of America and they are loud in their praise of the Emperor.

He is described as having the most fascinating personality in Europe today. It is said of him that he has that great quality which made the wife of President Cleveland one of the most notable women who ever presided at the White House. That is, the gift of making a visitor or auditor think that he is the one person in the world whom the great one desires to meet.

A woman, who is of high social distinction in America, was presented to the Kaiser at some dinner that was not attended with royal state. She was talking to him when she was offered a famous German salad. It was handed on her right and the Kaiser was on her left, which put her in a predicament.

She did not dare turn her face from the Emperor to help herself to the salad. The situation was too much for her. The Emperor, seeing the condition at a glance, looked at her for an instant and laughed, as he said: "A Kaiser can wait, but a salad cannot."—Philadelphia Post.

Vegetables Will Become Valuable.

Two Melbournеites claim to have discovered a new motive power, "lighter than air, more powerful than dynamite, very simple and nominal in cost." Byronite (named after one of the inventors) is a fine powder alleged to be made from cheap vegetables, and generates, it is said, when specially treated, a gas which supplies the actual motive power.—Sydney Bulletin.

Blisters by Suggestion.

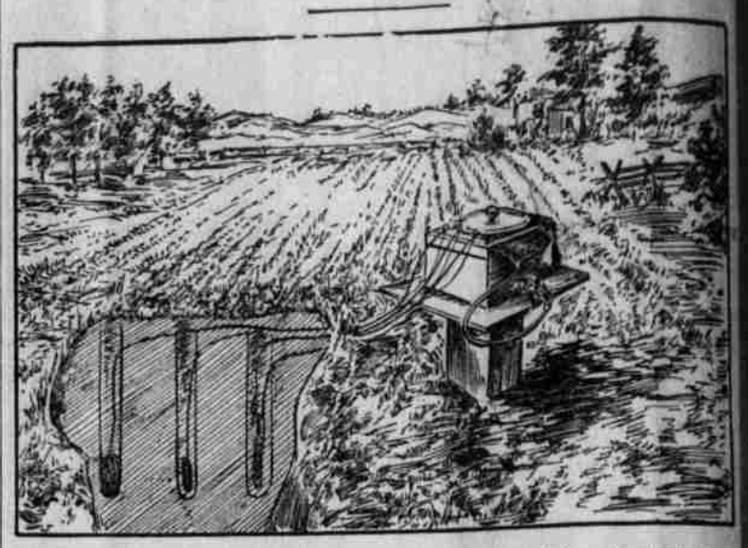
Hypnotic suggestion enables us to control processes which are ordinarily beyond the reach of the will. For instance, blisters have been produced in highly sensitive subjects by simply touching the part with the finger or some inert substance and suggesting the presence of a strong irritant.—Journal of Physical Therapeutics.

Molly—My little sister's got measles.
Jimmie—Oh, so has mine.
Molly—Well, I'll bet you my little sister's got more measles than yours has.—London Tit-Bits.

You can always tell a nice girl by the manner in which she uses the telephone.

It's better to bow your head than break your fool neck.

INGENIOUS INSTRUMENT FOR MAKING SOIL EXPERIMENTS.



The division of soils of the United States Department of Agriculture has just described a new instrument now in use for investigating the properties of soils. This is a great time and labor-saving apparatus, giving accurate and reliable results, which otherwise would require months to obtain.

The physical properties of soils are recognized by plant physiologists to be of the greatest importance in plant economy. Even in the consideration of climatic conditions it is now generally considered that for most plants the conditions of the soil hold equal rank with atmospheric conditions. A high temperature in the soil under favorable conditions promotes extensive root development; a high atmospheric temperature under equally favorable conditions favors a heavy growth of foliage. A deficiency in water of either air or soil is attended with distress.

The new apparatus as devised by the division of soil is an electric affair. It registers a half-dozen or more various soil properties. This method depends upon the principle that the resistance offered to the passage of an electric current from one carbon plate to another buried in the soil depends upon the amount of moisture present between the carbon plates or electrodes. This resistance is measured.

The illustration shows the instrument as used in the field, with the carbon electrodes and temperature cells in place. The carbon electrodes and temperature cells may be buried in the soil at the beginning of the season and remain undisturbed throughout the year. The moisture record obtained consequently deals with the variation in moisture contents in the same portion of soil. This is one of the advantages of the method, since it has been shown that the moisture contents of a seemingly uniform soil may vary as much as 4 per cent within an area of one square rod. Consequently in order to obtain a consistent record of the change in water it is necessary to deal with the same sample of soil, which can only be done by this electrical method.

The scale of the instrument is arranged on a decimal plan, so that the various soil properties can be determined directly upon the scale of the instrument.

It was observed by Prof. Whitney that soil areas of the Connecticut Valley were practically identical as regards texture and water content with certain areas in Florida upon which the finest of cigar wrappers are being raised from Sumatra seed. Experiments were accordingly made on one of the Connecticut areas, using the same seed and methods of cultivation and curing employed in Florida, with the most satisfactory results.

Should the more extensive experiments now in progress support the earlier work, as there is every reason to expect, the result will be to increase greatly the area adapted to the growth of the finest quality of cigar wrappers known, and there will be raised in this country tobacco now imported to the amount of $6,000,000 annually.

THE NEGRO MOSES.

Booker T. Washington's Career from Slavery Up.

Brooker T. Washington, whose entertainment by the President created nation-wide comment, is a fine example of that much abused term, the self-made man. He was born at Hall's Ford, Va., about 1858. He was a slave until freed by the emancipation proclamation and never knew who was his father. He was named Booker Taliaferro, probably because there were many prominent people in the commonwealth by that name, but the name Washington he took after he became free. As a child he was buffeted about in drudgery and want. As the property of the Malden family he probably had more comfort in the "nigger quarters" than in the poorhouse to which his mother took him in West Virginia. There as a mere child he worked in the salt furnaces and then in the mines. While working in the mines and furnaces the child had a chance to get a few months of schooling every year, but he secured employment with a New England woman and had an opportunity to attend night school, and then and at odd times "between jobs" he worked and studied until 1871, when he started for Hampton School, of which he had heard much. Out of the $6 a month which the woman for whom he worked paid him for his services his savings were small, and when he reached Richmond on his way to Hampton he had to go to work to get enough money to make himself presentable at the institution. But he became the star pupil of the place, and was graduated with honors, although he worked his way through. After spending a little while in his old home and teaching school he returned to Hampton as a teacher, and then started the institution at Tuskegee, Ala., which will always be a notable monument to his energy and his helpful work in the interest of his race.

The college was started in 1881 in a shanty. The idea of a higher school for blacks in that part of the country caused amusement. But to-day the Tuskegee College has 46 buildings on its 2,300 acres of land, and 1,200 pupils, representing 27 States, are being taught in the institution. A new hospital is building, a Carnegie library is under way and a new dormitory, the gift of John D. Rockefeller, will soon become a part of the institution. The students receive instruction not only in the ordinary school branches, but in 28 industries, each pupil selecting the one for which he is bested fitted or toward which he has the greatest inclination.

"I formed a resolution," Washington says in one of his writings, "that I would try to build up a school that would be of so much service to the country that the President of the United States would one day come to see it. This was a bold resolution, and for a number of years I kept it hidden in my own thoughts, not daring to share it with anyone." This dream was realized, and the visit of President McKinley and his Cabinet to the school in December, 1898, is the brightest spot in the history of the institution. In 18[illegible] Harvard University conferred a degree on him and among those similarly honored then were Gen. Miles and Bishop Vincent.

BOOKER T. WASHINGTON AND FAMILY.

Ingenuous Answer.

"Excuse me," he said to the applicant for the typewriter's position, "but I would like to know your age?"

The young woman looked astonished.

"May I ask what that has to do with my fitness for the place?" she inquired.

"Nothing," he promptly answered. "You see, it's my wife that wants to know."

"In that case," said the applic[illegible] who was pretty as well as young, "[illegible] her I am 47."

And the smile that followed [illegible] genuous statement brought out four de[illegible] lightful dimples.—Cleveland Plain Dealer.

A Dangerous Man.

"Papa has forbidden you to come t[illegible] the house. He says you are a dangerou[illegible] man."

"Dangerous! What can he mean?"

"He says you are the kind of a man who will hang around a girl all her life and never marry her."—Life.

Wanted Sub[illegible]tial Inducement.

Proud Mother—Tommy, won't you say that little speech of yours for the gentleman?

Tommy—I will if the gentleman has a penny.—Ohio State Journal.

The Russian Fur Trade

Most of the world's supply of furs comes from the Russian Empire. The hunters of Russia and Siberia annually capture 3,000,000 ermines, 16,000,000 marmots and 25,000,000 squirrels.

There are more thorns than roses on the path that leads to a woman's heart.