

A DOCTOR'S MISSION

BY EMILY THORNTON

Author of "ROY RUSSELL'S RULE,"
"GLENROY," "THE FASHIONABLE MOTHER," ETC.

CHAPTER XII.—(Continued.)

Thrusting the pistol quickly in his pocket, the young man sprang towards her so suddenly that she could not defend herself, and clasping her slight form tightly in his strong arms, he lifted her at once to the waiting conveyance, placed her in it, then leaping to her side, seized the reins, and drove rapidly off, while the poor girl was in almost a fainting condition, from displeasure and fright.

After a few moments of intense stillness, broken only by the clatter of the horse's hoofs, as he bounded on, Robert turned to her with laughing triumph in his eyes and exultingly exclaimed:

"You see, my charming young friend, that when I say I will do a thing, I intend to do it. Now I decided this afternoon to have you for a companion on a little drive, and you see I have carried the day, and here you are, seated cozily by my side, while we are dashing away in grand style. Confess now, is not this just splendid?"

"It is not, Sir, I think your conduct ungentlemanly and cruel in the extreme."

"Not at all! I assure you, I regard you as the cruel one, when you declined to favor me with your company. Why you treat me so strangely is an enigma! You ought to feel honored to be allowed to ride with so well-known, wealthy and kind-hearted a man."

"It is no honor, sir, but a deep insult, to be thus forced to do what is disagreeable."

"I suppose it would be very disagreeable also to have me kiss you?"

"Sir!" was the indignant exclamation that fell upon his ear.

"Well, disagreeable or not to you, it would be extremely agreeable to me. I tell you candidly, I would like to do it; you are so sweet and beautiful, but I will refrain, and deny myself that pleasure, if you keep perfectly quiet, and just try to enjoy this ride while you have the chance. If you do not—if you make the least fuss, I vow I will do it!"

Ethel made no reply. She realized fully that the eccentric individual beside her had her in his power, therefore acknowledging to herself that it was best under the circumstances to make no further resistance, she sank back in her seat and remained silent and motionless.

As they flew over the long and lonely road, passing brooks, ponds, trees, rocks, indeed everything but houses and inhabitants. During the whole drive not one word more was spoken by either victor or vanquished.

Ethel's face was deadly pale, however, during the hour that ensued before the head of the horse was turned homeward, while Robert's was illuminated by a glow of intense satisfaction and triumph.

When at length the shades of evening began to gather, they once more neared Glendenning Hall. Stopping the horse before they reached the place, in a sheltered and obscure spot, Robert jumped out, then turned to assist Ethel from the vehicle.

Springing past him to the ground, Ethel darted away. Breathing a prayer of fervent thanksgiving for her safe release when she had once more reached her room, the poor girl brushed away the tears that had relieved her excited feelings as soon as she had entered, and then with a sinking dread at her heart at once repaired to the sick man's room.

A volley of spiteful, hard words saluted her entrance from the irritable invalid, and it was some time before she could utter one word in her own defense. When at last he gave her an opportunity to speak she informed him truthfully of the outrageous conduct of his wife's nephew.

"Robert! Did you say Robert did so insolent a thing? Was he guilty of so unpardonable an act?" exclaimed the astonished baronet.

"Do not believe her, uncle," immediately interposed Belle, who had made it her business to be present. "What she says is utterly false. I do not doubt but that she spent the time riding with some beau; but, I assure you, it was not with my brother, for he was with me the entire afternoon. She is a wicked girl to impose such a falsehood upon so sick a man."

As Belle uttered this cruel fabrication she glanced spitefully, yet with ill-concealed triumph, towards the amazed Ethel, who was not at all prepared for such an artful and malicious attack.

"Sir Reginald, I assure you I speak only the truth. It was Robert Glendenning who forced me into his carriage, and thus detained me against my will."

"You know better," roared Sir Reginald. "I will never believe it. Leave the room instantly. I do not wish to see your face again until morning."

With a cold, dignified bow Ethel left at his bidding—left, too, without another word, knowing well that contradictions would only enrage and excite the passionate and unjust person before her.

After she had disappeared Belle also at once took her departure, chagrined that her uncle had not instantly dismissed her rival from his service and house. She did not know that this his lordship would on no account do, as he had intrusted to her keeping a secret which made her services far too valuable to be easily dispensed with. He might be enraged, and so dismiss her for a night; but no fault she might be guilty of would induce him to part with her while all went well in the concealed room.

CHAPTER XIII.

The next afternoon, Ethel felt that she could safely start to the village, to make a few purchases for herself, as at the lunch table Robert had told Lady Constance he should leave home at two that afternoon to visit a young friend, and should remain away until noon the next day.

As she had not ventured beyond the grounds of the Hall since her arrival, except on this afternoon, before, she did not know in which direction the places of business lay; therefore, seeing Sandy Staples, the lodge keeper's son, just beyond the place, she stopped and inquired of him.

"Oh, yes; I can tell you, certainly. Go straight forward, pass Dr. Elfenstein's cottage, when you will come to a grove of willows; pass that, and then the railroad track, and about one quarter of a mile beyond, you will see a row of houses; that is the commencement of the real village proper, and there you will find several stores."

Thanking the boy, Ethel opened her parasol, for the afternoon was warm and sultry, and followed the path pointed out. When she reached the cottage, her eyes wandered over its small flower-bordered garden, its pretty vine-covered porch, and open windows, with their bowed blinds, just revealing the dainty, cool-looking, lace curtains within, that wafted back and forth, gently, in the faintest of all breezes.

"How differently Dr. Elfenstein impresses me, with his manly bearing, his open countenance, and kindly eyes, even though his manners are reserved and quiet, from that vain, egotistical Robert Glendenning," she thought. "I cannot understand exactly why I detect that person so thoroughly, nor why I admire the young physician so much. One thing, perhaps, influences me; I always loved usefulness in a man; Dr. Elfenstein labors for the welfare of others; young Glendenning is an idle spendthrift, living merely to gratify the pleasures of his own handsome self. One, constantly doing good, the other—I should judge by his looks and acts, evilly disposed, and reckless in all his ways."

While thus thinking she passed the willow grove, and the railroad track, and soon reached the stores, where the purchases were made to her entire satisfaction. Then she retraced her steps, walking slowly, in order more fully to enjoy a cooler breeze that was springing up; but as she neared the railroad she quickened her steps, for she knew that a train was nearly due.

Soon the place was reached, and in stepping over it, to her horror she found the heel of her shoe fastened tightly in one of the frogs. With a desperate haste she strove to loosen it; in vain! Every struggle only made it, as it seemed, more firmly wedged.

Hark! What was that rumbling? With palpitating lips and trembling form, she heard a distant whistle tell of the swiftly coming train.

In despair, she stooped to unbutton the shoe; but it was a new one, and therefore hard to manage, while her trembling fingers sought to undo the fastening, but she found them powerless to accomplish the task.

On, on came the engine. She could feel the rails vibrate with their motion, and still her foot was fast and she could not move. Then, one wild shriek of terror rang out upon the air, and even before it died away a man's feet came running to the spot.

"Be calm! I will save you! Do not struggle—stand perfectly still!" said a voice in her ear.

On came the cars; even then they could be seen in the distance. One moment more and she would be under the fearful wheels; but a strong hand caught the foot, wrenched open the buttons, then, as the hot breath of the engine was almost upon her, she was drawn from the perilous position and knew no more.

When she opened her eyes, she was lying on the green grass, a short distance from the spot, while her head reclined upon some gentleman's shoulder, and the same person was gently fanning her with a folded newspaper. Looking up, she met the earnest eyes of Dr. Elfenstein bent upon hers, and saw that he was thus kindly supporting her.

"It is all right now, Miss Nevergail. You are safe, and will be yourself in one moment," he said.

"Oh, but that was terrible, terrible!" she murmured, with a shudder, as her eyes closed again, at the mere remembrance.

"It was, truly! While I got to you in time, thank heaven, there was not a second to spare!"

"Oh, doctor, I can never thank you, for I know now that it was you who saved me!"

"Do not try, Miss Nevergail; I will not be thanked. My fright, I assure you, was nearly equal to your own."

"How did you get the shoe off?" she asked, at length, as she raised herself from his arm, and glanced at her foot.

"I never can tell; it was so stiff and tight it took all my strength. But now, since you are better, I will see what has become of that obstinate little boot."

In a few moments, he smilingly returned with its dilapidated remains in his hand.

"You will scarcely know your own property," he remarked, "it is so crushed

and torn. The action of the heavy train loosened it, and thus I came off with the spoil."

"My poor, poor shoe," said Ethel, a faint smile hovering around her pale lips. "Well, it may better be crushed than my foot; but, really, though scarcely wearable, I must put it on;" and she reached out her hand for the torn object.

"Nay, allow me to restore it to its place," said the doctor, kneeling beside her. "My poor child, you have scarcely strength enough yet for such a task."

With the greatest tenderness and care, he drew the boot over one of the smallest little feet he had ever seen supporting a woman, and as he finished buttoning the very few buttons that remained, he arose, and begged her to keep seated until he brought hither his horse and gig, as he told her he should insist upon carrying her home, as she was, he knew, still weak from fright.

Looking around, Ethel saw, for the first time, his horse standing quietly by the roadside, a short distance from the track, where he had left him, to rush to her assistance.

Bringing the animal and conveyance to her side, Ethel turned, and before she fairly understood his intention, gathered her in his arms from the ground, and lifting her into the seat, sprang lightly to her side.

"You must not be startled at my presumption, Miss Nevergail. Remember physicians have privileges others have not. You are my patient now, and until I see the color re-established on your lips and cheek, I am in duty bound to care for you. You are not offended?"

He bent to gaze into her eyes as he asked the question, and his earnest look brought the tell-tale blood back to her cheeks.

"Oh, no, no! That would be ungrateful indeed!" was the low reply.

The ride really revived her, and as the doctor took her quite a roundabout way, in order to prolong it, assuring her it would be beneficial to do so, she was able to give a natural spring as he held out his hands to assist her to the ground, when at length they drove up to the entrance of Glendenning Hall.

There was a happy smile still upon her lips as, after thanking and bidding her kind friend adieu, and seeing him lift his hat as he drove off, she ran up the piazza steps to pass to her room.

But the smile vanished instantly as Belle came forward from behind the heavy screen of vines, and with an angry look in her eyes, exclaimed:

"What does this mean? I wish to know if Sir Reginald pays you a salary to ride around the country with young men? I shall inform him of this ride."

"As you please, Miss Glendenning. It certainly is not my intention to keep secret the fact that I have just narrowly escaped death by being crushed by the cars. As Dr. Elfenstein risked his life to drag me from danger, and then employed his skill to bring me from a dreadful swoon, he certainly thought it no harm to restore me safely to your uncle's aid as I was too weak from fright to walk."

So saying, Ethel passed on, leaving the angry, but astonished girl to her own reflections. That these were not of a very pleasant nature, the following whisper gave evidence:

"It is always the way. Wish to keep one person away from another, and something is sure to happen to bring them together. One thing I am determined, however, he shall never marry Ethel Nevergail, if I can possibly prevent it!"

CHAPTER XIV.

Ethel did not entirely recover from the effects of her fright, until after the night's sleep had served to calm her nerves, and all the evening that followed she was excited and scarcely able to control herself.

When she bade the family good night and locked herself into her room, in order to proceed to her nightly task, it was with a dazed feeling, and an aching head. Nerving herself for her duty, however, as well as she could, she proceeded to light her candle, and taking the indispensable knife, she passed through the wardrobe and passageway, into the corridor beyond.

Possessing herself of the basket of food, she remembered to fasten the door with the iron hook, a precaution the baronet had charged her always to observe, that by no possibility could she be surprised while accomplishing her task, then passing onward, she opened the panel as usual, and placed the plate of food upon the shelves.

As she did so she heard distinctly a movement on the other side, which, being rather unusual, for silence alone ordinarily reigned, startled her already excited nerves so much that she gave the shelves the required shove, and just as they whirled away, she saw, to her horror, when too late to stop them, that she had dropped the knife from her hand, and it had gone around with the food.

Breathlessly she waited for the return movement, hoping that the creature within would not observe it, and that it would come back with the plate.

As she waited, a singular loud, shrill noise or cry came from within. The next moment the shelves had revolved, and the plate alone appeared.

Appalled with her own carelessness, and fancying she knew not what as the result, the terrified, half frantic girl, could only draw to the panels, with all the expedition possible, and then hastily return the basket, fasten the door and seek the safety of her own apartment.

What was now her duty? Should she immediately seek the baronet, who was probably asleep by this time, and telling him the mishap, ask what was to be done?

No! she could not think this course a wise one. The baronet was an exceedingly passionate man. Such a tale, at this hour, would throw him into a whirl of nervous anger that might cause damage to the broken hip, the bones of which, all hoped, had by this time commenced to unite.

(To be continued.)

THE SKIN LIKE A SPONGE

Some of the most stubborn diseases enter into the system through the pores of the skin. Like a sponge, it absorbs poisons of various kinds, which are taken up by the little blood-vessels beneath the surface of the body, and emptied into the great current of the blood. The juices of poison oak and other noxious wild plants percolate through the skin like water through a sponge, are taken into the circulation; breaking out afresh each season, and lingering on for years unless antidoted and driven out of the system.

Dye Poisoning among the employes of dye houses, and from wearing colored under-clothing and hosiery, is of frequent occurrence and dangerous to health, causing boils and sores and other eruptions.

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The diseases that enter the system by absorption or through the pores are as deep-seated and dangerous as any brought on by internal causes, and cannot be reached by washes, salves, soaps or other external remedies. The blood must be purified and a healthy circulation established before getting permanently rid of the disease. S. S. S. acts upon the blood, ridding it of the original poison and restoring it to a healthy, normal condition.

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Whyness of the Wherefore.

"I suppose," said the scanty haired man, "you have never given marriage a thought."

"Oh, yes I have," replied the bachelor.

"Then why are you still single?" asked the other.

"Because I gave marriage a thought," answered the advocate of single blessedness.

It Wasn't Strange.

Old Jilson (in the hotel lobby)—Well, well; if there isn't young Slicker. I never expected to see him again on this earth, and here he is alive and well.

Jobkins—What's been the matter with him?

Old Jilson—Went to the hospital for an operation.—Cleveland Leader.

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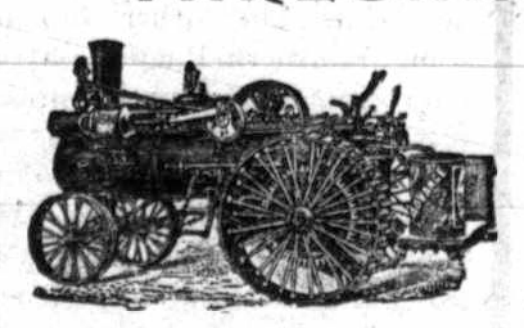
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