The Doctor's Dilemma

By Hesba Stretton

CHAPTER XXV.

"I will send the child to you in a cab on Wednesday," the woman said, as I rose and made my way towards the hall; "you have not told me your address."

I paused for a moment. Dared I tell her my address? Yet my money was paid, and if I did not, I should lose both it and the refuge I had bought with it. Besides I should awaken suspicion and inquiry by silence. It was a fearful risk to run; yet it seemed safer than a precipitous retreat. I gave her my address, and saw her write it down on a slip of paper.

In the afternoon the little girl arrived quite alone, except that a man had been hired to carry a small box for her, and to deliver her into my charge. This was a great relief to me, and I gladly paid the shilling he demanded. The child was thinly and shabbily dressed for our long journey, and there was a forlorn loneliness about her position, left thus with a stranger, which touched me to the heart. We were alike poor, helpless, friendless.

"I'm so glad!" she said with a deep-drawn sigh of relief; "I was afraid I should never go, and school is such a heavenly place!"

The words amused yet troubled me; they were so different from a child's ordinary opinion.

"It's such a hateful place at Mrs. Wilkinson's," she went on, "everybody calling me at once, and scolding me; and there are such a many people to run errands for."

"What is your name, my dear?" I asked, sitting down on my box and taking her on my lap. Such a thin, stunted little woman, precociously learned in trouble! Yet she nestled in my arms like a true child, and a tear or two rolled down her cheeks, as if from very contentment.

"Nobody has nursed me like this since mother died," she said. "I'm Mary; but father always called me Minima, because I was the least in the house. He kept a boys' school out of London, in Epping Forest, you know; and it was so heavenly! All the boys were good to me, and we used to call father Dominie. Then he died, and mother died just before him, and he said, 'Courage, Minima! God will take care of my little girl.' So the boys' fathers and mothers made a subscription for me, and they got a great deal of money, a hundred pounds; and somebody told them about this school, where I can stay four years for a hundred pounds, and they all said that was the best thing they could do with me. But I've had to stay with Mrs. Wilkinson nearly two months, because she could not find a governess to go with me. I hate her; I detest her; I should like to spit at her!"

"Hush! hush!" I said, drawing her head down upon my shoulder again.

"Then there is Mr. Foster," she continued, "he torments me so. He likes to make fun of me, and tease me, till I can't bear to go into his room. You'd hate Mr. Foster, and Mrs. Foster, if you only knew them."

"Why?" I asked in a whisper. My voice sounded husky to me, and my throat felt parched. The child's impotent rage and hatred struck a slumbering chord within me.

"Oh! they are horrid in every way," she said; "they frighten me. He is fond of tormenting anything, because he's cruel. But they are very poor—poor as Job, Mrs. Wilkinson says, and I'm glad. Aren't you glad?"

The question jarred in my memory against a passionate craving after revenge, which had died away in the quiet and tranquillity of Sark. Ought I to do anything for him? Was there anything I could do to help him?

"He is ill, too," pursued the child; "I heard him say once to Mrs. Foster, he knew he should die like a dog."

Ill! dead! My heart beat faster and faster as I pondered over these words. Then I should be free indeed; his death would release me from bondage, from terror, from poverty—those three evils which dogged my steps. I had never ventured to let my thoughts run that way, but this child's prattling had now forced them into it. Richard Foster ill—dying! what ought I to do?

There was one thing only that I could do, only one little sacrifice I could make for him whom I had vowed, in childish ignorance, to love, honor and cherish in sickness and in health, until death parted us. A home was secured to me for twelve months. I had enough money still to last me until then. My diamond ring, which had been his own gift to me on our wedding day, would be valuable to him. Sixty pounds would be a help to him. I set the child gently away from me, and wrote my last letter to my husband. Both the letter and the ring I enclosed in a little box.

A great thump against the door brought a host of fears upon me. But before I could stir, the insecure handle gave way, and no one more formidable appeared than the landlady of the house, carrying before her a tray on which was set out a sumptuous tea, consisting of buttered crumpets and shrimps. She put it down on my dressing table and stood surveying it and us with an expression of benign exultation.

"Those as are going into foring parts," she said, "ought to get a good English meal afore they start. And this, my master says, is a testimonial to you."

I could hardly control my laughter, and I could not keep back the tears. It was a long time now since any one had shown me so much kindness and sympathy as this. The dull face of the good woman was brightened by her kind-hearted feeling, and instead of thanking her I put my lips to her cheek.

The next morning found us in France. From Honfleur to Falaise warm, genial sunshine filled the air. The slowly moving train carried us through woods where the autumn seemed but a few days old. We passed through miles upon miles of orchards, beneath which lay huge pyramids of apples. Truck-loads of them stood at every station. The air was scented by them. Children were pelting one another with them. It was almost like going into a new world, and I breathed more freely the farther we traveled down into the interior. At Falaise we exchanged the train for a small omnibus, which bore the name "Noireau" conspicuously on its door. At length we started off on the last stage of our journey.

Finally our omnibus was jolting and rumbling down some steep and narrow streets, lighted by oil lamps swung across them. Only at the inn where we stopped was there anything like life. I woke up Minima from her deep and heavy sleep.

"We are here at Noireau!" I said. "We have reached our home at last!"

The door was opened before the child was fairly awake. A small cluster of bystanders gathered round us as we alighted, and watched our luggage put down from the roof. Minima was leaning against me, half asleep. A narrow vista of tall houses lay to the right and left, lost in impenetrable darkness. The strip of sky overhead was black with midnight.

"Noireau?" I asked in a tone of interrogation.

"Yes, madame," responded a chorus of voices.

"Carry me to the house of Monsieur Emile Perrier, the avocat," I said, speaking slowly and distinctly.

The words, simple as they were, seemed to awaken considerable excitement. The landlady threw up her hands, with an expression of astonishment. Was it possible that I could have made a mistake in so short and easy a sentence? I said it over again to myself, and felt sure I was right. With renewed confidence I repeated it aloud, with a slight variation.

"I wish to go to the house of Monsieur Emile Parrier, the avocat," I said.

But whilst they still clustered round Minima and me, giving no sign of compliance with my request, two persons thrust themselves through the circle. The one was a man, in a threadbare brown great coat, with a large woolen comforter wound several times about his neck; and the other a woman, in an equally shabby dress, who spoke to me in broken English.

"Mees, I am Madame Perrier, and this is my husband," she said; "come on. The letter was here only an hour ago; but all is ready. Come on; come on."

She put her hand through my arm, and took hold of Minima's hand, as if claiming both of us. A dead silence had fallen upon the little crowd, as if they were trying to catch the meaning of the English words. But as she pushed on, leading us both, a titter for the first time ran from lip to lip. I glanced back, and saw Monsieur Perrier, the avocat, hurriedly putting our luggage on a wheelbarrow, and preparing to follow us with it along the dark street.

I was too bewildered yet to feel any astonishment. We were in France, in a remote part of France, and I did not know what Frenchmen would or would not do. We stopped at last opposite the large, handsome house, which stood in the front, in the photograph I had seen in London.

"It is midnight nearly," said Madame Perrier, as we came to a standstill and waited for her husband, the avocat.

He passed through the garden gate and disappeared round the corner of the house, walking softly, as if careful not to disturb the household. At last he reappeared round the corner, carrying a candle, which flickered in the wind. Not a word was spoken by him or his wife as the latter conducted us towards him. We were to enter by the back door, that was evident. She led us into a dimly lighted room, where I could just make out what appeared to be a carpenter's bench, with a heap of wood shavings lying under it.

"MADAME UNLOCKED THE DOOR."

"It is a leetle cabinet work of my husband," said Madame Perrier; "our chamber is above, and the chamber for you and leetle mees is there also. But the school is not there. Come on, mees."

We went down the broad gravel walk, with the pretty garden at the side of us, where a fountain was tinkling and splashing busily in the quiet night. But we passed the front of the house behind it without stopping at the door. Madame led us through a cart shed into a low, long, vaulted passage, with doors opening on each side; a black, villainous looking place, with the feeble, flickering light of the candle throwing on to the damp walls a sinister gleam. Minima pressed very close to me, and I felt a strange quiver of apprehension; but the thought that there was no escape from it, and no help at hand, nerved me to follow quietly to the end.

The end brought us out into a mean, poor street, narrow even where the best streets were narrow. A small house stood before us; and madame unlocked the door. We were conducted into a small kitchen. There was an oil lamp here. Madame's face was illuminated by it. There was not a trace of refinement or culture about her, not even the proverbial taste of a Frenchwoman in dress. The kitchen was a picture of squalid dirt and neglect. The few cooking utensils were scattered about in disorder. The stove before which we sat was rusty. Could I be dreaming of this filthy dwelling and this slovenly woman? No; it was all too real for me to doubt their existence for an instant.

She was pouring out some cold tea into two little cups, when Monsieur Perrier made his appearance, his face begrimed and his shaggy hair uncombed. He stood in the doorway, rubbing his hands, and gazing at us unflinchingly with the hard stare of a Norman peasant, whilst he spoke in rapid, uncouth tones to his wife. I turned away my head, and shut my eyes to this unwelcome sight.

"Eat, mees," said the woman, bringing us our food. "There is tea. We give our pupils and instructresses tea for supper at six o'clock; after that there is no more to eat."

We had the same vaulted passage and cart shed to traverse on our way back to the other house. There we were ushered into a room containing only two beds and our two boxes. I helped Minima to undress, and tucked her up in bed. She put her arm round my neck, and drew down my head to whisper cautiously into my ear.

"They're cheats," she said earnestly, "dreadful cheats. This isn't a splendid place at all. Oh! whatever shall I do? Shall I have to stay here four years?"

"Hush, Minima!" I answered. "Perhaps it is better than we think now. We are tired. To-morrow we shall see the place better, and it may be splendid after all. Kiss me, and go to sleep."

I was awakened, while it was yet quite dark, by the sound of a carpenter's tool in the room below me. Almost immediately a loud knock came at my door, and the harsh voice of madame called to us.

"Get up, mees, get up, and come on," she said, "to the school. Come on, quick!"

The air was raw and foggy when we turned out of doors, and it was so dark still that we could scarcely discern the outline of the walls and houses. The school, madame informed me, was registered in the name of her head governess, not in her own; and as the laws of France prohibited any man dwelling under the same roof with a school of girls, except the husband of the proprietor, they were compelled to rent two dwellings.

"How many pupils have you, madame?" I inquired.

"We have six, mees," she replied. "They are here; see them."

We had reached the house, and she opened the door of a long, low room. There was an open hearth, with a few logs of green wood upon it. A table ran almost the whole length of the room, with forms on each side. A high chair or two stood about. All was comfortless, dreary and squalid.

But the girls who were sitting on the hard benches by the table were still more squalid and dreary looking. Their faces were pinched, and just now blue with cold, and their hands were swollen and red with chilblains. They had a cowed and frightened expression, and peeped askance at us as we went in behind madame.

"Three are English," said madame, "and three are French."

She rapped one of the swollen hands which lay upon the table, and the girl dropped it out of sight upon her lap, with a frightened glance at the woman. Minima's fingers tightened upon mine. The head governess, a Frenchwoman of about thirty, was now introduced to me.

Breakfast was being brought in by one of the pupils. It consisted of a teacupful of coffee at the bottom of a big basin, which was placed before each of us, a large tablespoon to feed ourselves with, and a heaped plateful of bunches of bread. I sat down with the rest at the long table, and ate my food, with a sinking and sorrowful heart.

As soon as madame was gone, Minima flung her arms around me and hid her face in my bosom.

"Oh!" she cried, "don't you leave me; don't forsake me! I have to stay here four years, and it will kill me. I shall die if you go away and leave me."

"We must make the best of it, Minima," I whispered to the child, through the hum of lessons. Her shrewd little face brightened with a smile that smoothed all the wrinkles out of it.

"That's what father said!" she cried; "he said, 'Courage, Minima. God will take care of my little daughter.' God has sent you to take care of me. Suppose I'd come all the way alone, and found it such a horrid place!"

(To be continued.)

THEIR LUNGS KEEP SOUND.

Butchers Are Immune from Consumption in Any Form.

"Butchers never die of consumption." The big man with his sleeves rolled up wielding the cleaver at the block said this as he threw a beefsteak on the scale.

It sounded more like a trade superstition than a fact, but so far as diligent inquiry has been able to discover it is true, although not generally known outside of the meat chopping craft.

Butchers are no longer lived than men in other walks of life. They are subjected to all the other ills that human flesh is heir to, but consumption they do not have. So far as a reporter was able to learn, not a single case is on record of a butcher in this city being afflicted with the incurable wasting of the lungs which claims its hundreds of thousands of victims annually.

The fact is well known among butchers and has been often the subject of their comment, although none of them can give a reason for it.

"No," said a man who has swung sides and rounds in Washington market for the last twenty years, "I have had rheumatism and typhoid fever and lots of other things, but nothing has ever been out of gear with my lungs and the same is true of every other butcher in this town. I know nearly all of them and I never heard of one of them having consumption. They don't drink blood or take any especially good care of themselves either. I don't know why it should be so, unless it's because the continual inhaling of an atmosphere of fresh meat is strengthening.

"I have often thought when hearing of consumptives going to Colorado and Egypt that I know of a climate nearer home that would do the business just as well. If they would stay in this stall for a while and swing meat they would get well quite as quickly as they would on the top of Pike's Peak."—New York Mail and Express.

Marriage Age in Various Lands.

In Germany a "man," in order to marry, must be at least 18 years of age. In Portugal a boy of 14 is considered marriageable, and a "woman" of 12. In Greece the "man" must have seen at least 14 summers and the "woman" 12. In France the "man" must be 18 and the "woman" 16. In Belgium the same ages. In Spain the intended husband must have passed his fourteenth year and the "woman" her twelfth. In Switzerland "men" from the age of 14 and "women" from the age of 12 are allowed to marry. In Austria a "man" and a "woman" are supposed to be capable of conducting a home of their own from the age of 14. In Turkey any youth and maiden who can walk properly and can understand the necessary religious service are allowed to be united for life.

How He Passed It.

Pat—I say, Mike, I have a threepenny piece with a hole in it which I cannot get rid of at all—at all. What shall I do with it, begorra?

Mike—Sure, Pat, you must do the same as I did oncst—an excellent plan was mine, indade.

"And phwat was it at all, Mike?"

"Oh, it was fine, Pat, I tell you. That threepenny-piece had bothered me a long toime, entirely. Nobody would have it; so at last I melted down a sixpence and filled up the hole. Begorra, it went the very next day, my bhoy."—London Spare Moments.

Cost of Being an Army Officer.

A British army officer who has a close acquaintance with both the French and the German army, has been endeavoring to arrive at the average amount per annum which it costs a subaltern in Great Britain, France and Germany to live in the army. The figures he gives are: France, £80; Germany, £140; Great Britain, £220.

Better a prudent enemy than a friend without discretion.

HOLD MOCK TRIALS.

A NOVEL ENTERTAINMENT FOR CLUBS AND SOCIETY.

Legal Proceedings Gives Opportunity for Dramatic Display—Culture Club Hears Divorce Case Unrestrained by Bailiffs.

Seekers after novel entertainment for winter evenings have caught upon the mock trial, which is consequently doing its turn at popular favor. Fortunately the trial adapts itself to any company and may be just as amusing or just as educational as its managers care to make it. It gives opportunity for a play of wit which livens the monotony of the regulation court proceeding and it gives plenty of room for such personal touches as will add to the entertainment of an audience composed of friends of the players. Moreover, as a large part of the company can be subpoenaed for the trial the interest will be most unflagging. From the impanneling of the jury to the final verdict the audience will receive enthusiastically every stage of the trial's procedure.

A ridiculous charge is brought against a member of the party; often this is a club meeting. A young lawyer or law student is chosen for judge, as he can at the same time direct the conduct of the trial. The greatest care is taken to have everything in strict accordance with the legal custom and the slightest deviation from the regular order of trial is zealously guarded against. The lawyers appear with a burden of gilfaled leather-bound volumes, which they consult frequently and with ridiculous effect. The dignity of the judge is boldly overdrawn and his peremptory rulings intensified until the figure becomes a laughable caricature. Primed for the occasion, the questions and answers of the lawyers and their witnesses are intentionally mirth-provoking and the stupidity of the jurymen is meant to add to the fun.

MOCK TRIAL FOR WINTER EVENINGS.

Although some of the most difficult problems of law are given an airing, a criminal case is most free of greater interest to a community. J. Brown is [illegible] of his sisters [illegible] testing witnesses a[illegible] the assertion. At [illegible] hours of earnest, [illegible] clears himself by producing the cat, which has yowled all evening from its hiding place under J. Brown's chair. All of this gives plenty of opportunity for fun at the expense of Brown and the members of the court and it also gives an opening for a display of dramatic ability, which is another thing the public is fond of.

Gives Play for Dramatic Ability.

Perhaps the most commendable feature of the mock trial is the fact that it gives opportunity for theatrical ability or the sensibility of the average person. Everyone likes dramatic opportunity if it is not overwhelming, as is so often the case with the out-and-out amateur theatricals. Everyone likes the play of imagination which the trial makes possible and the dramatic incidents which its development produces. As a spectacular performance it pleases the dramatic sense of everyday people without displeasing their sense of congruity in their own actions.

A trial appeals to the imagination and to people who know nothing of them has a fascination and mystery. For this reason, perhaps, as much as any other, the mock trial has gained its present popularity. In the rush for the mysterious which is overwhelming everyone nowadays the mock trial has found its place at the head of the list of entertainments. It has taken its place as a clever means of home entertainment and as a pleasing novelty for clubs.

At an evening gathering where some other form of amusement is the prearranged entertainment a mock trail is often interspersed with the greatest satisfaction. The members of the company assume the various roles easily and if ready of wit can find good opportunity for fun-making. When conducted in this way the trial soon becomes a battle of jokes in which the cleverest is bound to be the victor. And besides furnishing the most satisfactory entertainment for those engaged in the repartee it is the greatest fun for the listeners, who perhaps can appreciate a joke even though they cannot make one.

TIMBER INCREASING IN PRICE.

Product Becoming More Inaccessible and Therefore More Costly.

In an interesting report on the trade of Riga, the British consul writes that "as regards the wood trade of the world in general, one broad fact is ever before us. It takes from sixty to seventy years to grow an average convertible tree and two minutes to hew it down. Thus each year the supply of timber is diminished, the forest fringe recedes further and further from the ways and means of transport; each year the expense of working out the forest is increased by the extra distance the logs have to be carried. Then, owing to the nature and manipulation of the trade, consumption and supply cannot keep pace with each other; one is continually catching up the other, and the consequences are rises and depressions.

"But, in the opinion of all who know anything about timber and have studied the great question of supply, there must be a steady increase in the price of every description of wood goods, and each wave of higher prices will attain a higher level than its predecessor.

"As far as the Riga sawing trade is concerned, the forests which furnish the timber are now so far away from the rivers which carry the logs that Riga cannot be supplied unless prices are fairly high. If 70 per cent of the cost price of a log in Riga consists of the expense of bringing it down from the forests, it is clear that a reduction can only be made on the remaining 30 per cent.

"By the remarks I have made I do not intend to imply that the supply of timber is reaching its end. There is still plenty of timber, but it is becoming comparatively so inaccessible that in many parts it can only be worked out when prices rule high. Higher prices will always render accessible for supply those forests which it was not considered worth while to work at low rates. It is much the same, in fact, as with coal and the working of deeper levels."

ARGUMENT THAT FAILED.

How Admiral Kirkland Squelched a Would-Be Son-in-Law.

Apropos of the marriage of an impecunious ensign in the navy a short time ago, some of the veterans at the navy yard recall this story of Rear-Admiral William Kirkland, who was affectionately known in the navy as "Red Bill."

"A young ensign hesitating found his way into the admiral's cabin one day, and with a great deal of circumlocution and coughing finally let it be known that he loved the admiral's daughter and would be the happiest man on earth if he had her parents' consent to marry her.

"No, sir!" thundered the admiral. "No, siree. Not now, anyhow. No pauper of an ensign is going to marry my daughter. You'd better wait until you are promoted and are able to support yourself before you think of marrying."

The young officer astounded the admiral by not retiring precipitately. He even ventured the reminder that the admiral himself had married when he was but an ensign, and that his married life had been a happy one.

"Red Bill" Kirkland glared at the presumptuous speaker for a moment, says the New York Times, and then thundered:

"I know I married when I was an en[illegible] My father-in-law supported me for several years, too, but I'll be hanged if you will!"

VICY STYLES FOR WOMEN.

This Is Not Good Enough for Lady Henry Somerset's Prototypes.

Lady Henry Somerset, who has advised her young women proteges in an English industrial school so to perfect themselves that nobody can say of them, "Oh, they do very well for women," is probably the foremost leader of the feminist movement in Great Britain.

LADY SOMERSET.

She is the daughter of the Earl and Countess Somers, and is now just 50 years old. In 1890 she first achieved considerable importance by her election to the Presidency of the British Woman's Temperance Association, now the largest company of its kind in England. In 1892 she was elected Vice President of the World's Women's Christian Temperance Union, and in 1898, on the death of Miss Frances Willard, she succeeded that famous woman as President of the International Association, which numbers over 500,000 members in various parts of the world.

She founded the Industrial Farm Colony at Duxhurst, which has grown to remarkable dimensions. She succeeded to her father's vast estates in Hertfordshire, Worcestershire, Surrey, London, and since 1884 she has used her wealth for the good of her fellowmen.

A Belated Concert.

Mme. Nordica and her husband, Zoltan Dome, were spending the last summer in a little village in the Black Forest. For six weeks in summer the hotel is full, but the guests during this particular season had no great love for music.

One day some strolling musicians announced a concert, but when they took their places in readiness an audience of only two, besides Mme. Nordica and Mr. Dome, put in appearance. Fifteen minutes passed in waiting, and then Mr. Dome disappeared.

In half an hour a procession was seen coming up the street; he had awakened the villagers, and on strength of an invitation to be his guests they dressed themselves and came to the concert, which, as a result, was begun by the comforted musicians at about the hour it should have ended.—Philadelphia Post.

Her Greatest Mistake.

The infant of the household was in its cradle. The head of the house was at home, peevish and faultfinding. At length he became unendurable. "You've done nothing but make mistakes to-night," he growled.

"Yes," she answered, meekly; "I began by putting the wrong baby to bed."—Detroit News-Tribune.

Queer.

The prosaic individual who has outlived romance finds it hard to understand how two people can dawdle away hours and at their conclusion feel morally certain that only minutes have taken flight.

Early Marriages.

Miss Budd—"Do you approve of early marriages?"

Mrs. Malaprop—"Not too early. I should say not before high noon."

Lots of people are known as wicked because the towns they live in happen to be small.

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7:30 a.m	1:34 p.m	Biggs	11:25 a.m	3:40 p.m
8:00 a.m	1:59 p.m	Gibsons	11:00 a.m	3:12 p.m
8:20 a.m	2:14 p.m	Wasco	10:45 a.m	2:56 p.m
8:45 a.m	2:22 p.m	Klo'dyke	10:36 a.m	2:40 p.m
8:58 a.m	2:32 p.m	Summit	10:25 a.m	2:32 p.m
9:08 a.m	2:45 p.m	Hay C Jc	10:15 a.m	2:12 p.m
9:17 a.m	2:48 p.m	Melo'ldz	10:12 a.m	2:08 p.m
9:28 a.m	3:00 p.m	DeMoss	10:00 a.m	1:52 p.m
9:50 a.m	3:09 p.m	Moro	9:50 a.m	1:40 p.m
.....	3:19 p.m	Erskinvl	9:39 a.m	.....
10:50 a.m	3:44 p.m	G's V'y	9:15 a.m	1:00 p.m
.....	4:06 p.m	Bourbon	8:55 a.m	.....
.....	4:26 p.m	Kent	8:40 a.m	.....
.....	4:40 p.m	Wilcox	8:30 a.m	.....
.....	5:20 p.m	Shaniko	8:00 a.m	.....

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