

# The Doctor's Dilemma

By Hesba Stretton

**CHAPTER XX.**—(Continued.)

"You love her?" said Johanna.  
"Certainly," I answered, "as my sister."

"Better than any woman now living?" she pursued.

"Yes," I replied.

"That is all Julia requires," she continued, "so let us say no more at present, Martin. Only understand that all ideas of marriage between her and my brother are quite out of the question. I will not consent to it, and I would not wish you to consent to it either." I was silent.

"But where is the place?" I inquired.  
"Oh! it is in Normandy—Noireau," he said, "quite out of the range of railways and tourists. There will be no danger of any one finding her out there; and you know she has changed her name altogether this time."

"Did you discover that Olivia and Ellen Martineau are the same persons?" I asked.

"No, I did not," she answered; "I thought you were sure of that. But I was not sure of it; neither could I be sure. He puzzled himself in trying to give a satisfactory description of his Ellen Martineau; but every answer he gave to my eager questions plunged us into greater uncertainty. He was not sure of the color either of her hair or eyes, and made blustering guesses at her height."

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oughly liberal scale. Here is also a photograph view of the place; a charming villa, you see, in the best French style. The lady's husband is an avocet; and everything is taught by professors—cosmography and pedagogy, and other studies of which we never heard when I was a girl. Olivia is to stay there twelve months, and in return for her services will take lessons from any professors attending the establishment. Your mind may be quite at ease now."

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He! he! he! how dull that was, m'lord! An avocet! So he believed that in England! Bah! Emile Perrier an avocet!

"But what is there to laugh at?" I asked.

"Am I an avocet?" he inquired derisively, "an I a proprietor?" am I even a cure? Pardon, m'lord, but I am just as much avocet, proprietor, cure, as Emile Perrier. He was an impostor. He became bankrupt; he and his wife ran away to save themselves; the establishment was broken up. It was a bubble, m'lord, and it burst."

My driver clapped his hands together lightly, as though Monsieur Perrier's bubble needed very little pressure to dispense it.  
"Good heavens!" I exclaimed, "but what became of Olivia—the young English lady, and the child?"  
"Ah, m'lord!" he said, "I do not know. I do not live in Noireau, but I pass to and fro from Falaise. She has not returned in my omnibus, that is all I know. But she could go to Granville, or to Caen. There are other omnibuses, you see. Somebody will tell you down there."

It was nearly eleven o'clock before we entered the town; but I learned a few more particulars from the middle-aged woman in the omnibus bureau. She recollected the name of Miss Ellen Martineau, and her arrival; and she described her with the accuracy and faithfulness of a woman. If she were not Olivia herself she must be her very counterpart.

I started out early the next morning to find the Bute de Grâce, where the inscription on my photographic view of the premises represented them as situated. There were two houses, one standing in the street, the other lying back beyond a very pleasant garden. A Frenchman was pacing up and down the broad gravel path which connected them, examining critically the vines growing against the walls. Two little children were gambolling about in close white caps, and with frocks down to their heels. Upon seeing me he lifted his hat. I returned the salutation with a politeness as ceremonious as his own.

"Pardon, m'lord," he said, "I am an Englishman!" he said in a doubtful tone.  
"From the Channel Islands," he replied.  
"Ah! you belong to us," I said, "but

you are hybrid, half English, half French; a fine race. I also have English blood in my veins."  
It could be no other than the result of the admixing of blood in his own instance, and then proceeded to unfold my object in now visiting him.  
"Ah!" he said, "yes, yes; Perrier was an impostor. These houses are mine, monsieur. I live in the front yard; but I do not go to the place in Basse Normandy, and seeing for yourself whether Miss Ellen Martineau is your Olivia?"  
"How can I?" I asked, attempting to hang back from the suggestion. It was a busy time with us. The season was in full fall, and our most aristocratic gentlemen were in town. The easterly winds were bringing in their usual harvest of bronchitis and diphtheria. If I went Jack's hands would be more than full. Had these things come to perplex us only two months earlier, I could have taken a holiday with a clear conscience.  
"Do not jump at the chance of coming back for a week," replied Jack; "he is bored to death down at Fulham. You must, for my sake, old fellow. You are good for nothing as long as you're so down in the mouth. I shall be glad to be rid of you."

In this way it came to pass that two evenings later I was crossing the Channel to Havre, and found myself about five o'clock in the afternoon of the next day at Falaise. It was the terminus of the railway in that direction; and a very ancient conveyance was in waiting to carry on any travelers who were venturous enough to explore the regions beyond.

I very much preferred sitting beside the driver, a red-faced, smothered-looking Norman, habited in a blue blouse, who could crack his long whip with almost the skill of a Parisian omnibus driver. We were friends in a trice, for my petrels was almost identical with his own, and he could not believe his own ears that he was talking with an Englishman.

The sun sank below the distant horizon with the trees showing clearly against it, and the light of the stars then came out one by one almost cast a defined shadow upon our path, from the poplar trees standing in long straight rows in the hedges. If I found Olivia at the end of that starlit path my gladness in it would be completed. Yet if I found her, what then? I should see her for a few minutes in the dull school of a school, perhaps with some watchful, spying Frenchwoman present. I should simply satisfy myself that she was living. There could be nothing more between us. I dared not tell her how dear she was to me, or ask her if she ever thought of me in her loneliness and friendlessness.

I began to sound the driver, cautiously wheeling about the object of my excursion into those remote regions. I had tramped through Normandy and Brittany three or four times, but there had been no indication to visit Noireau, which resembled a Lancashire cotton town, and I had never been there.  
"There are not many English at Noireau?" I remarked suggestively.  
"Not one," he replied—"not one at this moment. There was one little English man's name—pest!—a very pretty little English girl, who was voyaging precisely like you, m'lord, some—months ago. There was a little child with her, and the two were quite alone. They are very intelligent, are the English man's name. She did not know a word of our language. But that was droll, m'lord! A French demoiselle would never voyage like that."

"The little child puzzled me. Yet I could not help fancying that this young Englishwoman traveling alone, with no knowledge of French, must be my Olivia. As my English teacher in an excellent French school, where the lady is thoroughly acquainted with English ways and comforts. This is the prospectus of the establishment. You see there are extensive grounds for recreation, and the comforts of a cheerfully happy home, the domestic arrangements being in a thorough

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"Do not jump at the chance of coming back for a week," replied Jack; "he is bored to death down at Fulham. You must, for my sake, old fellow. You are good for nothing as long as you're so down in the mouth. I shall be glad to be rid of you."

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I very much preferred sitting beside the driver, a red-faced, smothered-looking Norman, habited in a blue blouse, who could crack his long whip with almost the skill of a Parisian omnibus driver. We were friends in a trice, for my petrels was almost identical with his own, and he could not believe his own ears that he was talking with an Englishman.

The sun sank below the distant horizon with the trees showing clearly against it, and the light of the stars then came out one by one almost cast a defined shadow upon our path, from the poplar trees standing in long straight rows in the hedges. If I found Olivia at the end of that starlit path my gladness in it would be completed. Yet if I found her, what then? I should see her for a few minutes in the dull school of a school, perhaps with some watchful, spying Frenchwoman present. I should simply satisfy myself that she was living. There could be nothing more between us. I dared not tell her how dear she was to me, or ask her if she ever thought of me in her loneliness and friendlessness.

I began to sound the driver, cautiously wheeling about the object of my excursion into those remote regions. I had tramped through Normandy and Brittany three or four times, but there had been no indication to visit Noireau, which resembled a Lancashire cotton town, and I had never been there.  
"There are not many English at Noireau?" I remarked suggestively.  
"Not one," he replied—"not one at this moment. There was one little English man's name—pest!—a very pretty little English girl, who was voyaging precisely like you, m'lord, some—months ago. There was a little child with her, and the two were quite alone. They are very intelligent, are the English man's name. She did not know a word of our language. But that was droll, m'lord! A French demoiselle would never voyage like that."



Pair Dorothea, a goodly mayde,  
From Furtins descended,  
In kirtle, cap and kerchief grayed  
That famine sore be ended.

Though plump and fair albeit she kept,  
She tined of frugal living,  
So prayed she while the elders slept,  
"Lord, send a true Thanksgiving."

The coming lass, she had no lack  
Of gown or ermine tippet,  
Sharp eyes her tricks discover,  
For Mistress Dorothea is vexed  
To miss her soldier lover.

Who, with his bullets, powder, match,  
In forests dense is lying,  
But ah, her secret you have guessed,  
Sharp eyes her tricks discover,  
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