

The Doctor's Dilemma

By Mesba Stretton

CHAPTER XXVII.—(Continued.)

"Hast thou brought a doctor with thee, my brother?" she asked.

"I have brought no doctor except thy brother, my sister," answered Monsieur Laurentie, "also a treasure which I found at the foot of the Calvary down yonder."

He had alighted whilst saying this, and the rest of the conversation was carried on in whispers. There was some one ill in the house, and our arrival was ill-timed, that was quite clear. Whoever the woman was that had come to the door, she did not advance to speak to me, but retreated as soon as the conversation was over.

"Pardon, madame," he said, approaching us, "but my sister is too much occupied with a sick person to do herself the honor of attending upon you."

He did not conduct us through the open door, but led us round the angle of the presbytery to a small out-house opening out to the court, and with no other entrance. It was a building lying between the porch and belfry of the church and his own dwelling place. But it looked comfortable and inviting. A fire had been hastily kindled on an open hearth, and a heap of wood lay beside it. Two beds were in this room: one with hangings over the head and a large tall cross at the foot board; the other a low, narrow pallet, lying along the wall. A crucifix hung upon the wall, and the wood-work of the high window also formed a cross. It seemed a strange place to reach after our day's wanderings.

Monsieur Laurentie put the lamp down on the table, and drew the logs of wood together on the hearth. He was an old man, as I then thought, over sixty. He looked round upon us with a benevolent smile.

"Madame," he said, "our hospitality is rude and simple, but you are very welcome guests. My sister is desolated that she must leave you to my care. But if there be anything you have need of, tell me, I pray you."

"There is nothing, monsieur," I answered; "you are too good to us—too good."

"No, no, madame," he said, "be content. To-morrow I will send you to Granville under the charge of my good Jean. Sleep well, my children, and fear nothing. The good God will protect you."

Minima had thrown herself upon the low pallet bed. I took off her damp clothes, and laid her down comfortably to rest. It was not long before I also was sleeping soundly. Once or twice a vague impression forced itself upon me that Minima was talking a great deal in her dreams. It was the clang of the bell for matins which roused me at last, but it was a minute or two before I could make out where I was. Then Minima began to talk.

"How funny that is!" she said, "there the boys run, and I can't catch one of them. Father, Temple Secundus is pulling faces at me, and all the boys are laughing. Well! it doesn't matter, does it? Only we are so poor, Aunt Nelly and all. We're so poor—so poor—so poor!"

Her voice fell into a murmur too low for me to hear what she was saying, though she went on talking rapidly, and laughing and sobbing at times. I called to her, but she did not answer.

What could ail the child? I went to her, and took her hands in mine—burning little hands. I said, "Minima," and she turned to me with a caressing gesture, raising her hot fingers to stroke my face.

"Yes, Aunt Nelly. How poor we are, you and I! I am so tired, and the pain never comes!"

There was hardly room for me in the narrow bed, but I managed to lie down beside her, and took her into my arms to soothe her. She rested there quietly enough; but her mind was wandering, and all her whispered chatter was about the boys, and the dobbie, her father, and the happy days at home in the school in Epping Forest. As soon as it was light I dressed myself in haste, and opened my door to see if I could find any one to send to Monsieur Laurentie.

The first person I saw was himself, coming in my direction. I had not fairly looked at him before, for I had seen him only by twilight and firelight. His coat and socks were old, and rather long, but below his hat, and was beautifully white. His face was healthy looking, like that of a man who lived much out of doors, and his clear, quick eyes shone with a kindly light. I ran impulsively to meet him, with outstretched hands, which he took into his own with a pleasant smile.

"Oh, come, monsieur," I cried; "make haste! She is ill, my poor Minima!"

The smile faded away from his face in an instant, and he did not utter a word. He followed me quickly to the side of the little bed, laid his hands softly on the child's forehead, and felt her pulse. He lifted up her head gently, and opening her mouth, looked at her tongue and throat. He shook his head as he turned to me with a grave and perplexed expression, and he spoke with a low, solemn accent.

"Madame," he said, "it is the fever!"

He left me, and I sank down on a chair, half stupefied by this new disaster. It would be necessary to stay where we were until Minima recovered; yet I had no means to pay these people for the trouble we should give them, and the expense we should be to them. I had not time to decide upon any course, however, before he returned and brought with him his sister.

Mademoiselle Therese was a tall, plain, elderly woman, but with the same pleasant expression of open friendliness as that of her brother. She went through precisely the same examination of Minima as he had done.

"The fever!" she ejaculated, in much the same tone as his. They looked significantly at each other, and then held a hurried consultation together outside the door, after which the cure returned alone.

"Madame," he said, "this child is not your own, as I supposed last night. My sister says you are too young to be her mother. Is she your sister?"

"No, monsieur," I answered.

"I called you madame because you were traveling alone," he continued, smiling; "French demoiselles never travel alone. You are mademoiselle, no doubt?"

"No, monsieur," I said frankly, "I am married."

"Where, then, is your husband?" he inquired.

"He is in London," I answered. "Monsieur, it is difficult for me to explain it; I cannot speak your language well enough. I think in English, and I cannot find the right French words. I am very unhappy, but I am not wicked."

"Good," he said, smiling again, "very good, my child; I believe you. You will learn my language quickly; then you shall tell me all, if you remain with us. But you said the madame is not your sister."

"No, she is not my relative at all," I replied; "we were both in a school at Noireau, the school of Monsieur Emile Perrier. Perhaps you know it, monsieur?"

"Certainly, madame," he said.

"He has failed, and run away," I continued; "all the pupils are dispersed, Minima and I were returning through Granville."

"I understand, madame," he responded; "but it is villainous, this affair! Listen, my child, I have much to say to you. Do I speak gently and slowly enough for you?"

"Yes," I answered, "I understand you perfectly."

"We have had the fever in Ville-en-bois for some weeks," he went on; "it is now bad, very bad. Yesterday I went to Noireau to seek a doctor, but I could only hear of one, who is in Paris at present, and cannot come immediately. At present we have made my house into a hospital for the sick. My people bring their sick to me, and we do our best, and put our trust in God. But this little house has been kept free from all infection, and you would be safe here for one night, so I hoped. The madame must have caught the fever some days ago. Now I must carry her into my little hospital. But you, madame, what am I to do with you? Do you wish to go on to Granville, and leave the madame with me? We will take care of her as a little angel of God. What shall I do with you, my child?"

"Monsieur," I exclaimed, eagerly, "take me into your hospital, too. Let me take care of Minima and your other sick people. I am very strong, and in good health; I am never ill—never, never. I will do all you say to me. Let me stay, dear monsieur."

"But your husband, your friends—"

"I have no friends," I interrupted, "and my husband does not love me. If I have the fever and die—good! very good! I am not wicked; I am a Christian, I hope. Only let me stay with Minima, and do all I can in the hospital."

"Be content, my child," he said, "you shall stay with us."

I felt a sudden sense of contentment, for here was work for me to do, as well as a refuge. Neither should I be compelled to leave Minima. I wrapped her up warmly in the blankets, and Monsieur Laurentie lifted her carefully and tenderly from the low bed. He told me to accompany him, and we crossed the court and entered the house by the door I had seen the night before. A staircase led up to a long, low room, which had been turned into a hastily fitted-up fever ward for women and children. There were already nine beds in it, of different sizes, brought with the patients who now occupied them. But one of these was empty.

In this home-like ward I took up my work as nurse.

"Madame," said Monsieur Laurentie, one morning, the eighth that I had been in the fever-stricken village, "you did not take a promenade yesterday."

"Not yesterday, monsieur."

"Nor the day before yesterday?" he continued.

"No, monsieur," I answered; "I dare not leave Minima. I fear she is going to die."

Monsieur Laurentie raised me gently from my low chair, and seated himself upon it, with a smile as he looked up at me.

"Madame," he said, "I promise not to quit the chamber till you return. My sister has a little commission for you to do. Confide the madame to me, and make your promenade in peace. It is necessary, madame; you must obey me."

The commission for mademoiselle was to carry some food and medicine to a cottage lower down the valley; and Jean's eldest son, Pierre, was appointed to be my guide. Both the cure and his sister gave me a strict charge as to what we were to do; neither of us was upon any account to go near or enter the dwelling; but after the basket was deposited upon a flat stone, which Pierre was to point out to me, he was to ring a small hand-bell which he carried with him for that purpose. Then we were to turn our backs and begin our retreat, before any person came out of the infected house.

I set out with Pierre, a solemn looking boy of about twelve years of age. We passed down the village street, with its closely packed houses forming a very narrow lane, until we reached the road by which I had first entered Ville-en-bois.

Above the tops of the trees appeared a tall chimney, and a sudden turn in the road we had taken brought us full in sight of a small cotton mill, built on the banks of the noisy stream. A more mournfully dilapidated place I had never seen.

In the yard adjoining this deserted factory stood a miserable cottage with a mildewed thatched roof. The place bore the aspect of a pest house. Pierre led me to a large flat stone, and I laid down my basket upon it. Then he rang his hand-bell noisily, and the next instant was scampering back along the road.

But I could not run away. The desolate plague-stricken place had a dismal fascination for me. I wondered what manner of persons could dwell in it; and as I lingered I saw the low door opened,

and a thin, spectral figure standing in the gloom within, but delaying to cross the rustling door sill as long as I remained in sight. In another minute Pierre had rushed back for me, and dragged me away with all his boyish strength and energy.

"Madame," he said, in angry remonstrance, "you are disobeying Monsieur le Cure."

"But who lives there?" I asked.

"They are very wicked people," he answered emphatically; "no one goes near them, except Monsieur le Cure. They became wicked before my time, and Monsieur le Cure has forbidden us to speak of them with rancour, so we do not speak of them at all."

Who were these pariahs, whose name even was banished from every tongue? A few days after this, the whole community was thrown into a tumult by the news that their cure was about to undertake the peril of a voyage to England, and would be absent a whole fortnight. He said it was to obtain some information as to the English system of drainage in agricultural districts, which might make their own valley more healthy and less liable to fever. But it struck me that he was about to make some inquiries concerning my husband, and perhaps about Minima, whose desolate position had touched him deeply. I ventured to tell him what danger might arise to me if any clue to my hiding place fell into Richard Foster's hands.

The afternoon of that day was unusually sultry and oppressive. The blue of the sky was almost livid. I was weary with a long walk in the morning, and after our mid-day meal I stole away from mademoiselle and Minima and betook myself to the cool shelter of the church.

I sat down upon a bench just within the door. There was a faint scent yet of the incense which had been burned at the mass celebrated before the cure's departure. I leaned my head against the wall and closed my eyes, with a pleasant sense of sleep coming softly towards me, when suddenly a hand was laid upon my arm, with a firm, silent grip.

(To be continued.)

Nic Turkish Customs.

It is said by a correspondent of the London Telegraph that the habits of the Turkish ladies in Constantinople are wonderfully fastidious. When they wash their hands at a tap from which water runs into a marble basin, they let the water run till a servant shuts it off, as to do this themselves would make them unclean. They cannot open or shut a door, as the handle would be unclean.

One of these fastidious ladies was talking to a small niece the other day, who had just received a present of a doll from Paris. By and by the child laid the doll on the lady's lap. She was horrified, and ordered the child to take it away.

As the little girl would not move it, and no servant was near, and the lady would be deified by touching a doll that had been brought from abroad, the only thing she could think of was to jump up and let the doll fall. It broke in pieces.

The same lady will not open a letter coming by post, but a servant opens and holds it near for her to read. If her handkerchief falls to the ground it is immediately destroyed or given away, so that she may not again use it. Among the men this curious state of things does not exist.

Pope on Woman's Clothes.

The Pope has recently manifested a preference in regard to ladies' apparel over and above the strict regulation in regard to ladies who are received by the holy father at the Vatican. A niece of the Pope was about to be married, and her distinguished relative took so great an interest in her trousseau as to stipulate that the young lady should only have white, blue or black gowns, adding that these were the three colors most becoming to young girls. "Gray and brown," remarked his Holiness, "are only suitable for old women, and I do not like any other colors."

Possibly the Pope prescribed white because it is the symbol of purity, blue because it is the color dedicated to the Virgin Mary, and black because it is the time-honored hue of dress for outdoor wear for Spain and Italy.—London Pall Mall Gazette.

Improved Methods in Surgery.

It was in Boston that the first administration of ether for anaesthetizing the patient under the surgeon's knife, and a Boston physician, Dr. W. B. Hilden, has perfected an appliance with which the surgeon operating secures the full effects of ether and chloroform without any waste, while the insensible subject breathes in the same amount of pure air with each inspiration as though not using the anaesthetic. The blood is thus kept oxidized, and the patient is left in the best possible condition for reaction and recovery.

The Speed of the Blood.

It has been calculated that, assuming the human heart to beat sixty-nine times a minute at ordinary heart pressure, the blood goes at the rate of 207 yards in a minute, or seven miles a day, and 61,520 miles a year. If a man 84 years of age could have one single corpuscle floating in his blood all his life it would have traveled in that time over 5,159,000 miles.

Equal to the Occasion.

Liveried Menial—"Me lud, the carriage waits without."

His Lordship—"Without what?"

"Without horses, me lud; 'tis an automobile."—Tit-Bits.

Historic British Regiments.

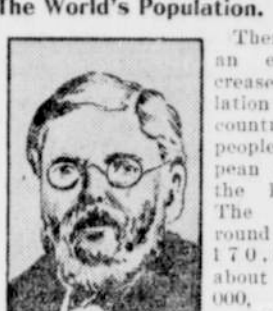
The names of no fewer than 105 battalions are emblazoned on the banners of the various regiments which form the British army.

Fish of the Nile.

The Nile is noted for the variety of its fish. An expedition sent by the British Museum brought home 2,200 specimens,

PAPERS BY THE PEOPLE

The World's Population.



SIR ROBERT GRIFFIN, Ex-President of the British Statistical Society.

There has been an enormous increase in the population of European countries and of peoples of European origin during the last century. The growth all round was from 170,000,000 to about 510,000,000 in 1890, while the growth of the United States was from 25,000,000 to 40,000,000. The first effect necessarily is to assure the preponderance of white peoples among the races of the world.

In the United States, which has immensely greater virgin resources with which to supply its population, it has been noticed that the town population is increasing disproportionately. In the United States, in spite of the magnitude of increase of population, recent growth has not been so fast as earlier in the nineteenth century. Until 1860 the growth in each census period ranged between 33 and 36 per cent. Since then it has been 20 per cent to 1880, and is now about 21 per cent. The obvious suggestion, that possibly immigration has fallen off, as compared with what it used to be, would not account for the diminished rate of increase of the population generally.

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First in ugliness come the fraying, ill-conditioned skirts. Who fashioned and formed these ugly garments? There they are, thousands and thousands of them, daily paraded up and down the sidewalk, lopsided, bedraggled, inefficiently held up by clutched hands, stumbled over and stepped upon by scores of awkward feet. Those skirts—why was I born to see and wonder at them? Next to the abominable trailing street skirt, in ugliness at least, comes a certain cruelly common atrocity in the form of a long cloth sack. A loose, baggy, shapeless, bulging monstrosity which makes the woman who wears it look like an unmanageable, half-exhausted balloon.

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English prose has been developed to the point, however, where it is a finer, more subtle instrument of wider scope than English verse, and poetry's chief excuse for being has been destroyed. Literary truth is truth to nature. Poetry is artificial and bears the deadly brand of insincerity in its form.

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UNCLE SAM'S POISONER

Not Generally Known that This Government Maintains One.

In a little house in South Washington is located a Federal institution without which the Smithsonian Institution and National Museum could not exist. It is the department of the chief poisoner, Joseph Farmer. The office of chief poisoner was not unusual in countries ruled by despots, but it may be a surprise to many to learn that such an

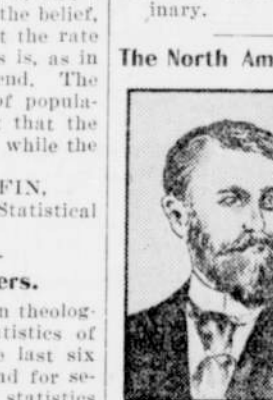


The North American Indians.

If a people invades a strange country in which another people, with its peculiar civilization, has lived for a long time, one of two things usually happens; either the invaders absorb or exterminate the invaded after a certain length of time, or they are absorbed by the original inhabitants. Thus the Romans in ancient times absorbed the numerous peoples which inhabited the Italian peninsula and brought them into the fold of Latin civilization. On the other hand, the Indians of Mexico and South America to a great extent absorbed the conquering Spaniards and Portuguese and lowered their level of civilization.

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In the case of the Indians of North America, however, neither of the two things happened. It has always been a wise rule with the English people in its colonial invasions all over the world never to mix with the inferior races of the invaded countries. That is probably one of the reasons of the invariable success of England's colonial policy. The invasion of North America offers one of the best examples of that policy, if strictly adhered to. The white invaders have fought bloody wars with the Indians, who desperately resisted the forward march of civilization. Periods of bitter strife have alternated with periods of peace and friendly commercial relations. In spite of all that the invaders have not absorbed any considerable number of the Indians. There was no danger at any time that the blood of the millions of white invaders would become debased by the in-



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fusion of the blood of half a million of Indians. However, the Indians have not become assimilated.

Like the other four races, the Indians live within the territory of the American republic, but their life is apart from that of the other races. They stand completely isolated and live, so to say, merely because the white invaders have not utterly exterminated them. A foreigner traveling through the United States will find it rather difficult to convince himself of the existence of Indians on the American continent. The Indians are there, nevertheless. The United States government spends nearly \$10,000,000 a year for their support and education.

Scarcely a century ago the Indians occupied practically the entire territory of North America excepting the Atlantic coast and part of the coast of the Gulf of Mexico. Nearly three millions of square miles of a total of 3,600,000 were occupied by the Indians, who never numbered more than 500,000. Now there are but 236,000 Indians left, the majority of whom live upon reservations. A century ago they were the actual owners of three millions of square miles of territory, while now they are confined to an area of 220,000 square miles.

The number of Indians in the United States is steadily decreasing. The last census shows that it has diminished by 40,000 since 1870. Thus it seems that the Indians are destined to share the fate of the buffalo. Deprived of their hunting grounds and confined to a quiet agricultural life within the narrow limits of their reservations, the Indians live a miserable life like a wild bird in a cage. The lack of proper food and hardening exercise makes them easy victims to tuberculosis and other diseases, and whiskey causes their rapid degeneration. There is but one logical finale to the struggle between the whites and the Indians—the complete extermination of the latter.

FELICE FERRELL, Italian Anthropologist.

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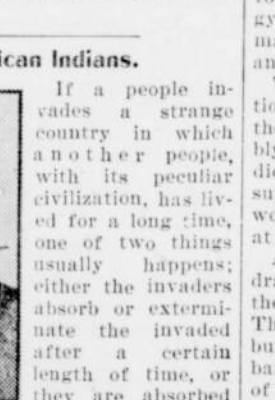


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UNCLE SAM'S POISONER

Not Generally Known that This Government Maintains One.

In a little house in South Washington is located a Federal institution without which the Smithsonian Institution and National Museum could not exist. It is the department of the chief poisoner, Joseph Farmer. The office of chief poisoner was not unusual in countries ruled by despots, but it may be a surprise to many to learn that such an