

## "AHEAD OF TIME."

"Now I'm going to show you why I struck out for myself."

I had been driving a mile or two with my cheery friend, Dr. Mary Stedman, and until that moment was unaware of any motive for the ride other than the usual one of pleasure to us both.

"I have a warm place in my heart for my native Vermont," she went on; "and knowing how I love it, I am sure you have often wondered why I did not remain here instead of seeking a home and a profession for myself among strangers."

I had often speculated on this very subject, but there was no time to confess it, for at that moment my companion reined up suddenly, and with a shriek "Here we are!" jumped from the carriage.

"This," pointing to a weather-beaten but still comfortable-looking house, "is the homestead. Since the death of our parents my eldest brother has lived here. You needn't be at all disturbed," as I naturally hesitated about intruding among strangers, "for my sister-in-law expects us."

"How cool! how neat! how shady and comfortable!" were my first exclamations as I followed my leader into the old-fashioned parlor.

"Just so," she responded drily. "And, my dear, you might search from cellar to garret of this great house, and though you stood upon ladders, and peered with a microscope on your hand and knees, you would never be able to find a fly."

Mrs. Stedman looked at her sister-in-law had described her—"like a very sad and troubled ghost." She was painfully thin and haggard, and at least a dozen times during our short call I noticed her mournful eyes fill with tears.

"Well, Sarah," said the doctor, "you are as busy as ever, I suppose?"

"O, yes," our hostess replied; "there is never any end to work."

"Been making butter to-day?"

"I made a little over forty pounds this morning."

"Before breakfast, I suppose?"

The doctor's tone was somewhat crisp. "I churned at four, and I have just worked my butter over. I don't mind so much when churning doesn't come washing-days; and, you see, cream has got to be attended to whenever it is ready."

"Been washing, too?" my friend inquired.

"O, yes! And it did seem as if I had every garment in the tub that there was in the house."

"So you've made forty pounds of butter," said the doctor, "washed—and what else?"

"Not much else beside the regular work. I picked some beans for dinner and made a few pies; that's all!"

At this point my friend, much to my surprise, turned the conversation into other channels, as we after we took our leave.

"It seems to me you have neglected an opportunity," I remarked, as soon as we had driven away.

"I supposed you'd think so," my companion answered; "but you can form no conception of the amount of breath I have wasted on that very case. I am regarding it now solely from a scientific standpoint. I think I can calculate the length of that woman's days within a fraction of time."

"I should think your brother wouldn't allow his wife to work so," I remarked.

"What does he know about it?" said the doctor. "He comes into the house for the three meals that are prepared for him, and when night comes he goes to bed and to sleep, or he drives over to the village and spends his evenings with his friends. My brother works hard, but he works out of doors, and that saves him. Sarah has an excellent reputation as wife and housekeeper all over the county. She has helped my brother to 'lap up'—in Vermont vernacular—several thousand dollars. It doesn't take a prophet to see that another wife will have the benefit of this one's toil; though it is probable, if she comes from this section of the country she'll not have sense enough to be benefitted by anything."

"If your sister-in-law would only have a servant," I suggested.

"A servant! Why, what a greenhorn you are!" said the doctor. "Do you think my brother and his wife are strong enough to bear the finger of scorn that would inevitably be pointed at them should they employ a servant? It is far better, my dear, to work one's self to death than to be called lazy and shiftless and extravagant. If this were not the case they would not think they could afford a servant. My brother is dominated, soul and body, by the spirit of economy, and his wife is his reflection. Here we are again," my friend continued, coming to a stop before the door of a more modern and more pretentious house. "My youngest sister lives here. It seems singular, doesn't it, that I have never introduced you to my relatives before? The truth is, you and I are only perplexities to these good people. We turn them out of their beaten tracks for a while, with no other result than to add to their hard work and anxieties. Ten years ago my sister Anna was as healthy a girl as there was in Vermont, and the

brightest and wittiest one of the family. I had some hopes that she would keep out of the treadmill, and, if she did marry a farmer and settle down here that she would furnish an example of common sense to her neighbors; but she is just like the rest, worse, perhaps."

All this as the doctor hitched her horse, and we walked up the long gravelled walk.

Sister Anna was scolding one of her children when we enter the house, and we were upon her before she had finished her loud-pitched harangue.

"I don't believe any one ever had such contrary youngsters as I have got!" she remarked, apologetically. "They do worry me sometimes that it seems to me I should enjoy myself in my grave."

"Send a couple of them to me, Anna, whenever you feel like parting with them," said the doctor.

"I would in a minute if their father was willing," the lady replied. "I don't know how to bring up children," she added, "and if I did know how, I haven't any time. To tell the truth, I have such a pain in my side all the time that I'm not fit for anything. I wish you'd give me some of that medicine, Mary, that you gave me last summer."

"I suppose you work just as hard as Anna," as though you hadn't a pain in your side," the doctor remarked.

"Of course I do," was the somewhat irritable response. "Who else is there to do it if I give it up?"

"Where is the pain, Anna, and how long have you had it?"

The doctor's tones were even, and her manner so calmly professional that I had at the time no suspicion that any of it was assumed.

"It is under my left shoulder blade," her sister replied, "and I haven't breathed a long breath since last November. Sometimes it is worse than others, and I am conscious of it every minute."

The doctor drew a chair to her sister's side, and took her hand in hers.

"Dear me, Mary, my pulse is all right!" said the invalid, doing her best to make light of the situation.

"How many men does your husband hire this summer, Anna?" the doctor inquired as she prepared some medicine.

"Only six this year."

"And you cook and wash for them, I suppose?"

"Of course."

"How many cows have you?"

"Fourteen."

"And you make butter for market?"

Sister Anna smiled as she answered this question.

"I average about sixty pounds a week."

"What time do you get up in the morning?"

"About four o'clock."

"What time do you go to bed?"

"Anywhere from ten to twelve," and then with a glance in my direction, "you see, farmers have to keep ahead of time. If they didn't manage to do this they couldn't lay up anything, to save their lives."

"Anna," said the doctor, taking no notice of the above remark, "I intend to stay in Vermont a month, unless I am needed in New York. Would you like me to take charge of your case during that time?"

"My case!" her sister repeated, in great perplexity. "I don't suppose I shall need anything more than that medicine."

"I will gladly do all I can for you, Anna," the doctor resumed, "and when I am compelled to go back I will leave you in good hands; but it must be on condition of the most perfect obedience on your part. You have hard coughing spells every morning, do you not?"

"Yes, Mary, but how in the world did you know that?"

"No matter how I know it. That I do know it is sufficient. To begin with, Anna, your husband must find other places for his workmen, and some one must be found immediately to do your housework. You must go to bed every night at eight o'clock and remain in bed till after breakfast. You must have all sorts of nourishing food, and pork, and codfish must be eliminated from your bill of fare."

"Mary, what do you mean?"

There was a look of terror in the poor woman's eyes, and her lips quivered painfully.

"I mean, if you do exactly as I tell you you may get well; if not, it is impossible," the doctor replied. "If you think I am exaggerating, or don't know what I am talking about, send for any reputable physician you please and ask him to tell the truth."

"O Mary! There isn't any way of doing the things you speak of. Clarke feels awfully poor this summer, and I have been trying harder than ever to make the ends lap over."

"Where is Clark?" the doctor inquired.

"He's down at the creek, haying."

"I will drive down and have a talk with him right away," said my friend, making ready to leave.

"O! Mary! Don't you think there is any other way?"

The poor woman had broken down completely now, and the doctor held her for a moment in her strong arm and caressed her fondly.

"No other way, sis," she replied; "but we will do the best we can. There's no telling what a good rest and careful nursing may do for your poor tired-body, my dear."

"I was going to take you to some other place," the doctor remarked, as we drove away, "but it would have been the same old story; work, work, work, without rest or change, from year's end to year's end. My mother killed herself by her attempts to get ahead of time. Two sisters have traveled the same road that Anna has started on, one of them absolutely dropping dead in her kitchen in the midst of her work. This is the kind of thing I could not endure to see go on. I knew it was all wrong as soon as I knew anything, and when I became old enough to have a voice in my own education I persisted in taking a different course. My sister Anna has tried to get so far ahead of time and make things 'lap over' that she has abused and probably killed herself, besides criminally neglecting and mismanaging her children. I don't suppose she has averaged over five hours' sleep out of the twenty-four during the last five years, and think of that amount of rest for a woman whose brain and muscles are forever in use! Every year I come up here and find things going from bad to worse among my relatives and most of my friends, and the horrible part of it is that nothing one can say or do will ever have the slightest effect."

"Don't you think your very natural anxiety about your sister may have colored your diagnosis a little?" I inquired.

"Not in the least," my companion answered. "Anna's pulse was one hundred and twelve. The respiration was labored and ominously frequent. There is no mistaking such signs."

"How could she keep at work with such a pulse as that?" I asked.

"By the exercise of will power," said the doctor. "In our family will power is direct inheritance. If it could only have been put to a good use how much might have been accomplished! My dear, this will power eats salt pork when good beef and the most nutritious foods are absolute necessities. It makes all its cream into butter that the cash may 'lap over.' It drinks skim milk, and works nineteen hours out of twenty-four."

Soon after this the doctor dropped me at my boarding-house.

"Now you know all about it," she remarked in parting, "and if any one ever asks you why Mary Stedman did not remain among her relatives you can say that she declined to live among criminals and suicides."

Five months after the above incident sister Anna died, and one year from that date the widower married again. The second wife is a duplicate of the first, working night and day and "laying up" for a future which it is more than likely she never will enjoy. [Eleanor Kirk in Christian Union.]

## THINGS TO TRY.

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From Foote's Health Monthly.

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Try cranberry for malaria.

Try sun bath for rheumatism.

Try ginger ale for stomach cramps.

Try clam broth for a weak stomach.

Try cranberry poultices for erysipelas.

Try gargling lager beer for cure of sore throat.

Try eating fresh radishes and yellow turnips for gravel.

Try swallowing saliva when troubled with sour stomach.

Try a wet towel to the back of the neck when sleepless.

Try buttermilk for removal of freckles, tan and butternut stains.

Try eating onions and horseradish to relieve dropsical swellings.

Try the croup tippet when a child is likely to be troubled in that way.

Try a hot fannel over the seat of neuralgic pain, and renew frequently.

Try snuffing powdered borax up the nostrils for cerebral "cold in the head."

Try hard cider—a wine-glassful three times a day—for ague and rheumatism.

Try taking your cod-liver oil in tomato catsup, if you want to make it palatable.

Try taking a nap in the afternoon if you are going to be out late in the evening.

Try breathing the fumes of turpentine or carbolic acid to remove whooping cough.

Try a cloth wrung out from cold water put about the neck at night for sore throat.

Try an extra pair of stockings outside of your shoes when traveling in cold weather.

Try walking with your hands behind you if you find yourself becoming bent forward.

Try a silk handkerchief over the face when obliged to go against a cold, piercing wind.

Try planting sunflowers in your garden if compelled to live in a malarial neighborhood.

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