

MY FRIEND'S STORY.

(Continued.)

"The Prince orders that you be not searched or incommoded in any way, but you and your companion be sent back instantly to Paris. You will be turned over to the nearest videttes of the French under a flag of truce."

Such was the ending of my attempt to leave Paris, and when I walked into the office of the American Minister next morning, and was greeted with a laugh from my kind and genial chief, I felt more than ever sick of the horrible, starving and nearly destroyed city. "No matter," said Mr. Washburne, "the end is coming soon, and then we will have some adventures to tell and some scenes to recount, which we would not have had had we not lingered in Paris during the siege. Have a cigar and forget your disappointment."

CHAPTER XII.

"You are neglecting your patient at the hospital," said Dr. Mortlake, when I met him next morning on the street. "If you are curious in psychological matters he is a good subject of study. His whole past is absolutely blotted out, and he has found a friend in a little French woman who visits him every day and ministers to him. Why not go down with me and see him? I shall keep him in my ward as long as I am in the hospital, and shall care for him and watch his case."

"Who is the little French woman?" I asked.

"I do not know. She will give no name. Attends to her own business, and does well as a nurse, so I say nothing. It is the most touching scene you ever cast eyes on, to see her nursing Smith like a great baby. She talks English or French, and is trying to teach Smith how to talk. She must be some old flame Smith knew in some previous experience. Say, that is woman all over; give her something to pity and coddle and she will love it to death. A man wants to be proud of his wife or sweetheart, but just touch his pride and make him ashamed of the loved object, and, presto! love flies out of the window." And the Doctor snapped his fingers in derision.

"I never heard him say anything of any lady acquaintances, and do not think he had many. In fact, Smith was no lady's man, though he was handsome and might have been," said I.

"Well, come down and see the little touching drama, and I have something I wish to propose to you about this case. You are Smith's nearest friend, and I want your consent to an experiment. But I will speak of this later." And we said no more until we reached the hospital.

When we reached the ward where Smith was now installed, the doctor made a motion with his hand for me to be silent as we passed in.

Napoleon Smith appeared as hearty and strong as ever, and sat in a large easy-chair, and held in his hands some highly ornamental blocks of wood containing the alphabet. A childish smile was on his face, and he was playing with the blocks as an infant might. In another chair in front of him sat a plainly dressed woman, and I never saw such a look of love and idolatry on a woman's face as I saw on hers. She was bending forward and calling the names of the letters, and trying to induce Smith to repeat them. It was the strangest sight I ever saw, and there was something horrible in it. I knew Smith to be a man of powerful intellect, so that now the pitiful sight of this imbecility was a hundredfold worse to look upon than death. Have you ever noticed the dawning of love on a baby's face? The crooning prattle and the stretching out of the hands towards the loved object? In a baby it is beautiful, but in a grown man like Smith, it was something too sad to look upon. As we came forward the woman drew back with a deep blush on her cheek.

"Ah, doctor," she said in French, "my baby is learning to talk. He knows his name, and laughs when he hears my step, and when I sing he claps his hands."

"Did Madame know the Captain before he came here?" I asked.

"I had seen him," she modestly answered.

"The Captain," said I, "was my friend, and I did not know he had any other near friends who would be so kind to him in his trouble. I thank you for your kindness."

"It is nothing. I know once he was brave and strong, and could do brave deeds, and when I found him like this I was willing for sweet charity to nurse him back to health and reason. Do you know," said she eagerly, "the Doctor says he will never know of the past. He will never recall his youth or his history, but will grow up like a child again. In a few years he will grow up to a second manhood. He will learn a new life and begin a new career. Is it not strange?"

"It is very strange, and very pitiful too," I said.

"Do you think so?" said she, with a sparkling eye. "He will make new friends. He will learn to love others whom he never knew in his old life!" And it struck me that this strange woman was founding a hope on this.

"See! already," and she clapped her hands and called, "Napoleon, my brave!" and a smile lit up his face, and he clapped his hands in response.

"Why is it said?" she said again; "there may be scenes in his life he might better never recall. In his new life he will find new friends who would die for him," and a tear stood in her eye.

"Ah, Madame," said I, "but think of the wasted years of his past life!"

"Yes," said she fiercely, as she stood and stroked the dark hair of

Smith, "and may there not be wasted years in other lives? May God not give new opportunities to others to begin lives as well as my baby?" And she stooped down and kissed his forehead, and he seized and held her hand.

"Madame," said I, "I know not why you should thus sacrifice your time to my poor friend, and—excuse me—I know not by what right you exercise this care over him."

"Ah," said she scornfully, "Monsieur, it may be, will take him home and nurse him back to reason, or maybe he will find a mother or a sister to care for the great handsome baby. Is it so?"

I could not answer. Who would be so kind to him as this passionate girl? Where would he go when he left the hospital? Certainly no one could do more for him than she was doing. It was a strange case, and I turned away, saying:

"Pardon me, Madame, or Mademoiselle—I know not how to call you—"

"It makes no difference," said she with a blush.

"I was about to ask your forgiveness for my apparent over-carefulness, but I tell you again, I know his history and am his nearest friend."

"His history is gone!" said she in a tone of triumph.

"Alas!" said I, "too true!"

"Why do you sigh when you speak of this change, this loss of memory?" said this strange nurse. "Because you say he has lost his education, his reason? But how many with rich endowment of reason make a wreck of life and end at the suicide's grave? Education, you say. Well, go down among the *demi-monde*, and do you find only the ignorant and the base? Has education kept the soul pure, or can it bleach away a stain? What has love or reason or education done to stay the tide of sin? Ah, messieurs, many and many a man has prayed to God for an opportunity to do what my baby here will do by force of a bullet—forget the past and begin a new life, free from memory and free from prejudice. Perhaps I would rather win his love and go hand-in-hand with him, and both of us learn the new life in a new world."

I believe I began then to see the drift of her argument. I did not know this woman, and I only remarked her beauty and intelligence; but I could see that in some way their past had run together, and this volcanic woman was basing a hope of Smith's love on his forgetfulness of the past. "Well," thought I, "if Aimee is alive and could see this wreck of a man, this driveling infant, would she still love him?"

"Doubtful," Dr. Mortlake broke in on my musing with his resonant, practical tone.

"It was to speak of something else I brought you here. I have a theory I wish to speak about. First, though, I would ask—did Smith ever have trouble with his head before this last wound?"

"Yes," said I, "often. He fainted in my office once. He was subject to vertigo, resembling apoplexy. Even in health he always carried his head on one side, ever since the wound was received at Gettysburg."

"Good! I am glad to hear it," said the Doctor. "But you never remarked a loss of memory after these attacks?"

"Never; he had a wonderful memory," I answered.

"Then the conclusion is simple and apparent. The operation of the trephine destroyed a faculty of the brain," and the Doctor rubbed his hands with satisfaction.

"Well, I had never thought of that, but, now I think of it, you are right," said I.

"Here is my theory," said the doctor, and he took from his pocket a little box, and in it, packed in cotton, a circular piece of bone. Here is the bone removed from Smith's head. On this underside you remark this spicular bone about one-sixteenth of an inch long. Well, if we could have removed this spicule without trephining we could have effected a cure without injury to a faculty of the brain. We could not do this, so the bone was removed, and a result followed which might not occur again in a hundred cases. I see it now, but it could not be avoided."

"And that was—" said I.

"And that result was the inflamed brain matter, when it had room made by the trephine, forced itself up to fill the circular space, and the pressure paralyzed a convolution of the most sensitive portion of the brain," said the Doctor.

"I see," said I, "and the cure is impossible?"

"And the cure is possible. I have got to be quite a Frenchman in surgery, and I begin to love difficult cases. Now," said the Doctor, "I will make a startling proposition. I propose to reopen that wound, remove the spicule from that bone, and then replace it in Smith's head. No power can so nicely adjust any material as to thickness as this same bone will do. I will replace the material lost by the cutting of the saw, and sew the scalp over that bone, and when the pressure is equalized, I really believe Napoleon Smith will take up his life where he laid it down a few weeks ago, and be not only a well man, but also be in full possession of his faculties. Ah, 'we are fearfully and wonderfully made!' and no writer in physiology or science has got beyond the expression of the psalmist."

While the Doctor explained his project, I watched the beautiful nurse, who sat and held the hand of our hero. As he went on she grew pale, and panted as if she had been running. Then she bent down and kissed the smiling patient. Then a look of fierce anger swept over her face, and she said:

"Why not let him alone? Must you cut and torment him again? I will care for him, and take him away where you need never see him again. He will love me and be my child."

I think the Doctor understood what was passing in her mind, for he smiled and said:

"That is like woman's love. You would keep him a weakling and a