

The Great Doctor and the Little Priest

(Translated from the French of Nadar for the Catholic Standard and Times by E. B.)

Baron Dupuytren, a famous French doctor in the latter years of Napoleon's reign, was for a long time surgeon-in-chief at the Hotel Dieu, the principal hospital in Paris, probably in the world, where every morning in the year a free consultation of the most eminent surgeons in existence was held open and free to all, rich or poor, black or white, French or foreigner.

Few men have had a life more busily occupied than Dupuytren. Winter and summer he rose at five, at seven he was in the hospital, which he never left before eleven. He then made his appointed visits through the city, and on his return home usually found his office packed with patients that had come from all directions to consult the famous doctor.

One evening, when the consultation had lasted long beyond the customary hour, the doctor, half-dead with fatigue was retiring for a little rest, when the door of his office suddenly opened and a belated visitor appeared.

He was of a small, stout figure, evidently advanced in years, but regarding his exact age you would have some difficulty in coming to a decided opinion. On a face resembling a net-work of wrinkles you could discern the line of a small mouth and the prominence of a small nose, slightly aquiline. Hands and feet, in miniature, were quite in accord with the rest of the body.

When a child he would have reminded you of one of those plump cherub faces that we see in church pictures, floating on wings around the head of the Madonna. In his blue eyes, in his gestures, in his whole physiognomy there was similitude, a gentleness and a benignity altogether touching. His was one of those fortunate faces on which our eyes can long rest with delighted satisfaction.

Dupuytren's eyes rested on him with a cold, weary, almost forbidding look. "What is the matter with you?" he asked in a harsh voice.

"Doctor," replied the priest gently, "I must really ask your permission to take a seat, my limbs are already rather stiff and pretty weak. Two years ago I felt a swelling in the neck under the left jaw. The health officer of our village—I am the cure of La Madeline, near Nemours—told me at first that it was of no account. But it got worse, and at the end of five months the gathering broke of itself. I kept in bed a long time, but without the trouble of ever getting better. Then I had to get up, because, you see, I am the only priest to officiate in four villages, and"

"Show me your neck." "Not, doctor," continued the old man while dutifully obeying orders—"not that these good people were unwilling to come together every Sunday, the whole four congregations to hear Mass in La Madeline. But I know poor people work hard all the week; they are often sick themselves, and they have only three days for a quiet rest. So I said to myself, 'It is not fair to have so many put to inconvenience on my account.' And, then, you know, doctor, there is the ecclesiastical First Communion. Monsignor the Bishop certainly promised to send me an assistant in a short time, but the parishioners insisted on my coming at once to Paris to consult you. I was pretty slow in deciding, because travelling costs a good bit of money and I have a good many really poor people in my parish. But, having to do as they wished, I took the train, and here is my trouble, doctor," he concluded, showing his neck.

Dupuytren looked at it long and fixedly. The neck showed a hole nearly an inch wide and very deep. It was a gathering of the gland of the under jaw, complicated by an ugly tumor of the artery. The wound was already mortified in many places. It was indeed an serious case that Dupuytren was profoundly amazed at the sufferer's indomitable fortitude in maintaining for any time a standing position.

Itching Skin

Distress by day and night—That's the complaint of those who are so unfortunate as to be afflicted with Eczema or Salt Rheum—and outward applications do not cure. They can't.

The source of the trouble is in the blood—make that pure and this scaling, burning, itching skin disease will disappear.

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to make an ordinary sufferer faint with the agony, but the little priest never winced, though the doctor himself, as he afterwards expressed it, felt the little frame under his hands quivering and convulsed, as if set in motion by wires from an electric battery. The examination over, Dupuytren, still holding the head with both hands, turned it roughly around so as to bring the face opposite to his own, and, looking straight into the two eyes, said in a voice slow and of a sinister tone:

"Well, Monsieur l'Abbe, with such a thing as that, the only certainty is death!"

The priest took up the cloths that he had laid on the chair and wrapped them quietly round his neck without saying a word, Dupuytren eying him sharply the whole time. When the cloths were replaced and the knots carefully tied, the little priest took out of his pocket a five-franc piece wrapped in paper and laid it on the chimney.

"I am not rich, doctor," he said, with a timid smile, "and my poor people are very poor indeed. Excuse me, then, if I cannot pay much better for a consultation with the celebrated Doctor Dupuytren. I am, however, very glad to have to come to see you, and more ready than ever for what awaits me. Only," he added in tones extremely sweet and gentle, "you could have given me this important information without the slightest precaution. I am sixty five, and at such an age you can estimate the full value of life. But, doctor, your announcement has not surprised me the least bit. I expected it long ago, and was getting ready. Good bye, doctor, I am going home now, to die quietly."

Slating, he disappeared, and his steps were soon heard as he slowly and with difficulty made his way up and down the stairs. Dupuytren remained standing in the room, motionless, but full of thought. His iron soul was melting, his brilliant genius was breaking to bits like brittle glass before the simple words of the poor, old, miserable and dying man, whose head he had just now been holding in his large and powerful hands. In that weak little body he had recognized a heart stronger than his own, a will more energetic than his own. He had forgotten a being's stronger than himself.

He started quickly for the stairway, perhaps he was unwilling to acknowledge himself defeated. He soon reached the little priest, who was slowly moving down, carefully clutching the banisters.

"Monsieur l'Abbe," he cried, "won't you please come back?" The priest turned at once and began to ascend.

"There may be a possibility of saving your life," continued the doctor, "if you are willing to undergo an operation."

"My graces," cried the priest, hurrying back to the office, and quickly getting rid of his cloak and cane. "Why, that's the very thing I came to Paris for. Operate, my dear doctor, operate as much as you please."

"But our attempt may be useless. The operation may be long and painful, you know."

"All right, doctor. On the morning after it will be as you say. Thank you."

Dupuytren scribbled a few words on a paper which he handed to the little priest. The patient accepted it most gratefully, and was not long in reaching the great hospital. Almost the whole community at once flocked to welcome him, and they soon had ready a little resting place provided with every comfort. The good Sisters were indeed almost in each other's way, bringing pillows, foot-warmers, night-caps, fruit and other dainties relished by invalids. The little priest felt himself unable to express his gratitude, but rested well that night and all the next day.

On the morning after the medical students, numbering five or six hundred, that attended the clinics of the great master every day were hardly assembled when Dupuytren arrived. Closely followed by the imposing crowd, he went directly to the priest's bed and the operation began.

The operator cut and carved and separated with knife and scissors. His steel forceps, plunged into the depths of the wound, seizing and twisting the fibres, and then he fastened them together. Then the saw cut off with a grating sound, the decayed fragments of the lower jaw.

Next morning, February 8, 1835, Dupuytren summoned the Archbishop of Paris to his bedside. The evening papers of the same date announced the death of the great surgeon. On the day of the funeral heavily piled gray clouds darkened the sky. A thin, persistent rain, accompanied with snow, chilled the immense and silent crowd that made almost impassable the vast spaces surrounding the Church of St. Germain l'Auxerrois and extending along the Louvre.

The little priest was soon at hand. He remained a long time closeted in Dupuytren's room. What they said to each other no living mortal knows, but when the abbe left the room of the dying man, though his eyes were moist, his face glowed with quiet ecstasy.

After the church service the students carried the body of their honored master to the cemetery, the little priest plunged in grief, keeping closest to the coffin.

"(Note by the writer—I tell this story as it was told to me, with no design either to prove or to instruct, but simply because it is true and intimately connected with a great name.—Nadar.)"

The Apostle of Montreal. Father Martin Callaghan, of Montreal, has been thirty-five years a priest and he has a record of almost five thousand conversions, having himself baptized more than three thousand non-Catholics. But eternal youth lingers on his eyes and his warm in his hearty handshakes, says the "Pauis's" Missionary Magazine.

He gave the secret of his marvelous success with non-Catholics in one short sentence: "I positively love them." Probably no one in America has had more results from efforts among the Chinese than Father Callaghan. He has baptized two hundred and sixty of them. The work started with an aged Chinaman in Villa Maria who came to Father Callaghan and pleaded for his countrymen. He complained that they are ignored and abandoned.

"We wish," said he, "to know your religion. Nobody will tell us anything, Teach and baptize us. Many, many Chinamen will come Catholic."

Father Callaghan gave his instructions through interpreters and imported for them catechisms, prayer-books and hymnals in their own language. The condition of the Montreal Chinese has notably altered. They are less socially ostracized, mingle in Catholic worship, lift their hats to the priest, and greet him with smiles. They boldly profess their faith. "If questioned as to his religion," said Father Callaghan, "a convert Chinaman will answer: 'I am not a Chinaman, I am an Irishman.'"

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The Niece (absent-mindedly)—How very disagreeable for you auntie.

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Rate Old Gentleman—I say, that nasty dog of yours has bitten a piece out of my leg!

Dog owner—Now, isn't that a messy shame! And I was trying to bring that dog up a vegetarian, too.

A Sensible Merchant. Mrs. Fred. Laine, St. George, Ont., writes:—"My little girl would cough so at night that neither the nor I could get any rest. I gave her Dr. Wood's Norway Pine Syrup and Dr. Wood's Norway Pine Syrup and am thankful to say it cured her cough quickly."

"So Jagoby, said he quit courting Miss Rip because she gave him a delicate hint that his attentions were unwelcome." "Delicate hint! It was a very strong one." "What was it?" "She married the other fellow."

Sprained Arm. Mary Ovington, Jasper, Ont., writes:—"My mother had a badly sprained arm. Nothing we used did her any good. Then father got Big yard's Yellow Oil and it cured mother's arm in a few days." Price 25c.

Wife—I'm going into town today, my dear, to my bootmaker's milliner's and dressmaker's. What does the paper say about the weather? Husband—Rain, hail and thunderstorms.

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