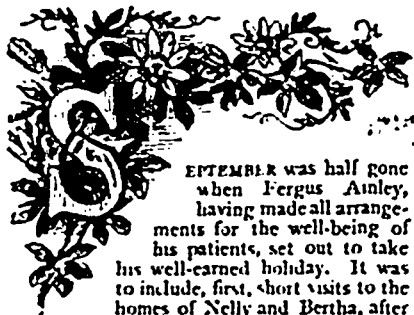


## CHAPTER V



SEPTEMBER was half gone when Fergus Ainley, having made all arrangements for the well-being of his patients, set out to take his well-earned holiday. It was to include, first, short visits to the homes of Nelly and Bertha, after these, a meeting with Madge and her husband, journeyings to and fro with them for a fortnight, and a return home in their company.

The lonely Corner House no longer alarmed Dr. Ainley, for Margery and Frank would be within easy touch, and they would meet frequently.

Before he left home, the doctor had asked Mrs. Wade if she knew the surname of the young lady called Miss Gladys by her late lodger.

"Indeed, doctor, and I always thought that was her outside name. She has been to see me twice, but I don't know where she lives. I hardly thought it would be manners for me to ask. I'm not likely to go to her house."

Often, however, during his wanderings Dr. Ainley had pictured the sweet face of the girl, and called to mind the scenes in which she had been a principal actor, wondering if he and Miss Gladys would meet again.

During his holiday wanderings, Dr. Ainley used all reasonable economy in expending a portion of the money on himself which had been so unexpectedly placed at his disposal. The rest of it was already dedicated in his own mind to the many poor patients whose wants it had ever been his delight to relieve, as far as lay in his power.

"I have fulfilled my promise to the gentle soul who gave it, by taking this holiday. The rest will purchase comforts for many who sorely need them. It is happiness enough to be the armorer of that loving-hearted woman. For myself, I need have no anxiety, and, thank God, my dear ones are otherwise provided for by husbands who loved them for themselves alone. I should like to see that girl once more though," said he to himself.

No need to tell who was meant by "that girl," or to ask whether one sight of Miss Gladys would have satisfied Dr. Ainley.

As it was more convenient for Margery and her husband, Dr. Ainley returned home two days before the end of the time for which he had engaged his *vacation*, and this fact procured him an early meeting with Miss Gladys.

Mr. Quinton, her father, had long suffered from attacks of a complaint which rendered speedy medical aid necessary; but of late he had benefited so much from change of air and most careful diet, that he was beginning to believe in the possibility of a perfect cure.

His daughter was less sanguine. She knew more of the nature of the ailment than it had been thought well for the patient himself to be told. At this time she was in some anxiety owing to the absence of the old practitioner who had attended her father, and who was so fond about to retire from professional life. She always watched Mr. Quinton most lovingly, but not in the manner affected by some, which is calculated to render a sensitive subject uneasy. However, she could not bide from herself that there were symptoms of a recurrence of the old ailment. She had re-

peatedly asked Mr. Quinton whom she should send for in case of need, and he had as often said, "I will think about it. Time enough when the doctor is wanted."

Gladys did not think so. She realised that were a new medical man called in, time would be lost in making him acquainted with what she knew, and in view of this, she wrote down certain particulars as briefly as possible, in addition to a short note asking the immediate attendance of Dr. ——. Only the name and date needed to be filled in whenever the emergency should occur.

Gladys had told her father about Dr. Ainley, and expressed her high opinion of his skill and kindness, half hoping that he would bid her send for him in case of need; but he had not done so.

The dreaded attack came on, and in a paroxysm of pain Mr. Quinton had said, "Call in whom you will." His daughter instantly added the name and address of Dr. Ainley, and bade the coachman wait with the carriage, and bring him back if possible.

This occurred on the evening of Dr. Ainley's return. Fortunately he was at home, and having glanced through the note, he went prepared with remedies suited to the emergency.

On the way he noted the contents more carefully, and read the signature, "Gladys Quinton."

Could this be "Miss Gladys"? There was nothing in the note to suggest previous acquaintance, so Dr. Ainley dismissed the idea of meeting her who had so often occupied his thoughts, in the writer of it; then on his arrival found that it was she indeed.

"I was afraid you might be still absent," she said. "How glad I am you were able to come at once." In a few words she added all the information she could give, and led Dr. Ainley to her father's side.

It is needless to tell how promptly and skillfully the doctor acted, or of the relief that followed.

When quiet rest succeeded to suffering, and Mr. Quinton was sleeping, Gladys had some reassuring words from the doctor, and he, in return, heard her expressions of thankfulness for the change that had taken place so quickly in her father's condition.

"Still, I cannot help dreading the night," she said. "More than once when my father has seemed better there has been a second attack."

She looked wistfully at the doctor, and he replied—

"Would my presence reassure you? If so, I will gladly stay the night here."

"It is what I wished so much, but I was afraid to ask," she said. "I should feel that my dear father was comparatively safe if you were within call. But you may be summoned elsewhere, and then—"

"I have reached home two days earlier than I intended. I made the change in order to travel with my sister and her husband. The gentleman who has attended to my practice during my absence, is still at my house."

So it was settled, to the entire satisfaction of Miss Gladys, and, it may be assumed, of Dr. Ainley also.

Over the supper-table the girl, relieved of immediate anxiety, talked in her usual bright fashion, and asked for details of the doctor's holiday, which he, nothing loth, gave her. In doing this he mentioned Frank Roworth's name, and then it turned out that Miss Gladys and Frank's only sister had been school friends.

"We are constant correspondents now," she said, "though Mary is far away in an Indian home. She married very early, and went out there with her husband soon after she left school, so I did not see much of her. She had no near relation except her brother. I

just knew him, through being at Mary's wedding. It will be a true pleasure to me to become acquainted with your sister in his wife."

Nothing brings comparative strangers into intimacy as quickly as do anxious watchings by a sick bed, and the discovery that they possess mutual friends.

Dr. Ainley would not allow Gladys to watch her father. He took that duty on himself, having at old servant close at hand in readiness to call her if needful.

"I," he said, "am used to being disturbed, and I am now full of vigour after my holiday. You must rest, in order to be with Mr. Quinton when he is awake, and would miss you."

So it was settled. A slighter attack, which occurred in the night, was quickly subdued, and the patient had more sleep, and awoke refreshed to see his daughter's glad face beside him in the morning.

From that time Dr. Ainley was established as the family physician, and he became ere long the valued friend of his grateful patient.

"I always meant to seek your aid, doctor, if I were ill again," said Mr. Quinton, "but immunity from suffering for so long a time had made me a little careless. What Gladys told me of your kindness to poor Alice Walker, made me feel you were the man of all others I should like to take Sir James North's place here. I hope you may succeed him in many other homes."

The wish was fulfilled. When it was known that Dr. Ainley had been called to Mr. Quinton, and had been so successful in his treatment, his patients rapidly increased. A very rich man's recommendation is rarely without fruit, and Miss Gladys and her father were not silent as to their doctor's merits.

Both realised the still higher qualities of the man, and so it fell out that, when Dr. Ainley took his next holiday in leafy June, he did not set out alone. "That girl" of whom he had dreamed the autumn before sat by his side, a happy, living reality, though no longer Miss Gladys. She shares the doctor's surname now, and helps him in many a work of mercy. She and Madge are close friends as well as kindred spirits.

Mr. Quinton could not part with his daughter, but claimed from her husband a son's attentions and presence in return for giving him Gladys, so the same roof covers the family. Already the patter of little feet is heard in the grand mansion, which formerly had but one suitor—that of being too quiet!

Dr. Ainley has not, however, given up his noble profession. As the son-in-law of the rich Mr. Quinton, he has been found to possess qualifications which were not noticed in former days, and his consulting-rooms are well attended. One great pleasure of his life is to help onward and upward able men in his own profession, who are struggling against adverse circumstances, as he once did. Another is to give the benefit of his skill to those who can only repay him "by getting well again," as he puts it. Gladys and Madge second his efforts, and Frank Roworth goes into many a place as pioneer, to find out those whose combined sufferings and poverty need what they are able to give. Both the husbands and wives carry comfort and brightness wherever they go, and are doubly blessed in blessing others.

Fergus Ainley can never forget Alice Walker's words, "God will repay," spoken when he, without thinking of fee or reward, watched by the sick bed of the "broken-down sewing machine." To that act of voluntary kindness he owed his first much-needed holiday, and indirectly, that second one, when God gave him the desire of his heart. As he looked at his sweet wife and true helpmeet, he said, "Truly my cure runneth over."

