

The half-frantic woman seized the other by both arms, and would have kissed her had not Peter thrown her back.

"You hag," he said, "is this my thanks for saving your miserable life?"

He turned to the other.

"You!" he exclaimed; "you!"

"Yes," replied Edith, "it is I."

"Oh! Edith, what brought you here? Why do you risk your life like this?"

"I have the same right as you have to do so."

"I am a doctor, and my duty is here to be done, but you are a woman——"

"Give me your arm," she said, "and lead me out of here. I am faint."

Peter did so, and they escaped from the wondering crowd.

It is not easy to tell which was the more affected. Peter's superhuman efforts had almost exhausted his wonderful strength, while Edith's recent encounter had unnerved her.

She looked up into his face and said—

"You are ill. You are killing yourself with work."

"No," he replied sadly; "I would die if I did not work. There are more woes within a heart than without it."

Then he added—

"But what brought you there? You must promise me never to expose yourself again to such dangers."

"I heard you were ill," she said, simply.

The blood surged into Peter's cheeks.

"You came for my sake?" he faltered.

"Why not? I know it is through me you are where you are, and what more could I do than see that you wanted for nothing in your illness?"

"Edith!"

"You are not ill, so I will leave you. But you will send me if the worst happens!"

"Edith! can I hope you have forgiven me?" he cried.

But she was gone.

He turned to seek his lodgings, when he met the woman who had attacked Edith.

"You here?" he said. How dared you follow us?"

She sank upon her knees in the roadway.

"I came for pardon," she wailed. "You were so good to me, doctor. How could I know it was the lady who loves you!"

He caught at the words.

"The lady who loves me!" he repeated, bitterly; "there is no love for me there."

The woman understood him, and replied—

"She worships the ground you tread. I saw her blench when your hand touched me. She was more afraid of your falling sick than for herself."

"Go!" said Peter, "I forgive you, unless something happens her. If it does," he said, hoarsely, "I will strangle you!"

The plague continued unabated for some weeks more, and Peter grew more and more fatigued. Yet he gloried in his sufferings, and the blessings of the poor were to him so many more stepping-stones to

Edith's favor. He did not meet her again, but every morning sent a bunch of roses to her house, knowing she would understand from them that he was well.

She did so understand the gift, and while no one else in the house knew whence the roses came, she knew, and kissed them many times when, in the secrecy of her room, she threw off the pride that had so long ruled her.

At last her father asked her whence the roses came. In that house there had never been a secret, and she told him.

"My child," he said, "you do not hear of him as much as I. He has been doing noble work, and I am again growing proud of him."

"But, father, that stain?"

"My daughter," Mr. James replied, "I do not wish to influence you; but every brave warrior has his scar, and every shield its dint."

One morning the roses did not come. Edith was very anxious, but did not make up her mind what to do. The next morning was the same, and the last roses she had received fell to pieces in her hand as she moved them to put fresh water in the vase. She was not superstitious, but her nerves were so unstrung that she could not refrain from crying out.

Idleness was bitter to her, and she sought her father and asked him to make enquiries about Peter. He did so, and returned with the information that Peter was, indeed, ill.

"I am going to him," she said.

"You cannot," her father replied. "I will not permit you to risk your life like this."

Edith smiled.

"I am going," was all she said, and her father saw that she was in earnest.

"Then I am going also," was his reply, and the two set off together.

They had been preceded, however, first, by the poor people among whom Peter had lived so long; and, secondly, by trained nurses from the hospital, sent to him by his confrères.

He was unconscious. His malady was not the terrible disease itself, but typhoid fever. He was to be moved that morning to the hospital, for the doctors had declared his recovery in that district well-nigh impossible.

Edith at once took quiet command, and her father acted as a passive lieutenant. She ordered the immediate removal of Peter to her father's house, which most delicate work was safely performed without allowing him to catch cold, and she and her mother, assisted by the nurses, took charge of him. For many days he hovered between life and death, and for many days the house was surrounded by the scum of the city, who read the little bulletins it was necessary to post up, and wept or laughed as these were hopeful or not. Then it was, with Death's arm interposed between her lover and herself, with the blessings of the poor falling upon his head, that Edith felt the strength of love, and was vanquished.

On the night of the turn of his illness, the poor people formed a guard about the house, and permitted no carriage to pass at a rapid pace, nor would they permit the slightest disturbance.