



The Family Circle.

LADDIE.

CHAPTER II.

In a quiet, old-fashioned street near Portman square there is a door with a brass plate upon it, bearing the name "Dr. Carter." The door is not singular in possessing a brass plate, for almost every house in the street displays one, being inhabited nearly entirely by doctors and musical professors. I do not attempt to explain why it is so, whether that part of London is especially unhealthy, and so requires constant and varied medical advice, or whether there is something in the air conducive to harmony; or whether the musical professors attract the doctors, or the doctors the professors, I leave to more learned heads to discover, only hazarding the suggestion that, perhaps, the highly-strung musical nerves may be an interesting study to the faculty, or that music may have charms to soothe the savage medical breast, or drive away the evil spirits of the dissecting-room. Anyhow, the fact remains that North Crediton street is the resort of doctors and musical men, and that on one of the doors stands the plate of Dr. Carter.

It was an old-fashioned, substantially-built house, built about the beginning of the last century, when people knew how to build solidly, if not beautifully; it had good thick walls, to which you might whisper a secret without confiding it to your next-door neighbor, and firm, well-laid floors, on which you might dance, if you had a mind to, without fear of descending suddenly into the basement. There were heavy frames to the windows, and small squares of glass, and wooden staircases with thick, twisted banisters—a house, altogether, at which housemaids looked with contempt as something infinitely less "genteel" than the "splendid mansions" of lath and plaster, paint and gilding, which are run up with such magic speed nowadays. We have no need to ring the bell and disturb the soft-voiced, deferential manservant out of livery from the enjoyment of his evening paper in the pantry, for we can pass uninvited and unannounced into Dr. Carter's consulting-room, and take a look at it and him. There is nothing remarkable about the room; a book-case full of medical and scientific books, a large writing-table with pigeon holes for papers, and a stethoscope on the top; a reading-lamp with a green shade, and an india-rubber tube to supply it with gas from the burner above; a side-table with more books and papers, and a small galvanic battery; a large india-rubber plant in the window; framed photographs of eminent physicians and surgeons over the mantel-piece; a fire burning low in the grate; a thick Turkey carpet; and heavy leather chairs; and there you have an inventory of the furniture to arrange before your mind's eye if you think it worth while.

There is something remarkable in the man, John Clement Carter, M.D., but I cannot give you an inventory of him, or make a broker's list of eyes and forehead, nose and mouth. He is not a regularly handsome man, not one that a sculptor would model or an artist paint, but his is a face that you never forget if you have once seen it; there is something about him that makes people move out of his path involuntarily, and strangers ask, "Who is that?" Power is stamped in his deep-set eyes and the firm lines of mouth and chin, power which gives beauty even to an ugly thing, throwing a grandeur and dignity round a black, smoky engine, or a huge, ponderous steam-hammer. Indeed, power is beauty, for there is no real beauty in weakness, physical or mental. His eyes have the beauty of many doctors' eyes, kind and patient, from experience of human weakness and trouble of all sorts; keen and penetrating, as having looked through the mists of pain and disease, searching for hope, nay, and finding it too sometimes where other men could only find despair; brave and steady, as having met death constantly face to face; clear and good, as having

looked through the glorious glass of science, and seen, more plainly the more he looked, the working of the Everlasting Arms, for surely when science brings confusion and doubt, it proves that the eye of the beholder is dim or distorted, or that he is too ignorant to use the glass rightly. But there is a different look in his eyes to-night; pain, and trouble, and weakness are far from his thoughts, and he is not gazing through the glass of science, though he has a paper-knife in his hand to cut the leaves; his eyes have wandered to a bunch of Russian violets in a specimen glass on the table, and he is looking through rose-colored spectacles at a successful past, a satisfactory present, and a beautiful future.

I need not tell my readers that this Dr. John Clement Carter was the Somersetshire boy whom good Dr. Savile had taken by the hand, and whose talents had made the ladder which carried him up to eminence. The kind old doctor liked to tell the story. "I was the making of the man," he would say, "and I'm as proud of him, sir! as if he were a son of my own."

It is quite as difficult to rise in the world gracefully as to come down, but everyone agreed that John Carter managed to do it, and just from this reason, that there was no pretence about him. He did not obtrude his low origin on everyone, forcing it on people's attention with that sidgely uneasiness which will have people know it if they are interested in the subject or not, which is only one remove from the unworthy pride that tries to hide it away altogether. Neither did he boast of it as something very much to his credit, but to anyone who cared to know he would say: "My family were poor working people in Somersetshire, and I don't even know if I had a grandfather, and I owe everything to Dr. Savile." And he would say it with a smile and a quiet manner, as if it were nothing to be ashamed of and nothing to be proud of, but just a fact which was hardly of interest; and his manner somehow made people feel that birth and breeding were after all mere insignificant circumstances of life, and of no account by the side of talent and success. "He's a good fellow, John Carter, and a clever fellow too, without any humbug about him," the men said, and the women thought much the same, though they expressed it differently. Indeed, the glimpse of his early humble country life, so simply given, without any pretence or concealment, grew to be considered an effective, picturesque background which showed up to advantage his present success and dignified position. It was quite true that there was no humbug or concealment about him, that was the very truth he told, and yet, somehow, as time went on, the words lost the full meaning they had to him at first. Don't you know if you use the same words frequently they get almost mechanical—even in your prayers, alas! they are no longer the expression of our feeling, but the words come first and the feeling follows, or does not follow? And then, don't you know sometimes how we hear with other people's ears, and see with other people's eyes? And so John Carter, when he said those simple, truthful words, grew to see the picturesque background, the thatched cottage, and the honeysuckle-covered porch, and the grand old patriarch with white hair, one of nature's noblemen, leaning on his staff and blessing his son; and he gradually forgot the pigsty close to the cottage door, and father in a dirty, green smock and hob-nailed boots, doing what he called "mucking it out," and stopping to wipe the heat from his brow with a snuffy, red cotton handkerchief.

But come back from the pigsty to the violets which are scenting the consulting-room and luring Dr. Carter, not unwillingly, from the *Medical Review* to thoughts of the giver. Her name is Violet too, and so are her eyes, though the long lashes throw such a shadow that you might fancy they were black themselves. It is not everyone—indeed, it is John Carter alone, who is privileged to look straight down into those eyes, and see the beauty of their color; only he, poor, foolish fellow, forgets to take advantage of his opportunity, and only notices the great love for him that shines there and turns his brain with happiness. His hand trembles as he stretches it to take the specimen glass, and the cool, fragrant flowers lightly touch his lip as he raises

them to his face. "Pshaw!" I hear you say—reminding me of my own words, "there is no beauty in weakness, and this is weakness indeed!—a sensible man, past the hey-day and folly of youth, growing maudlin and sentimental over a bunch of violets!" No, reader, it is power—the strongest power on earth—the power of love.

He had been used to say that his profession was his lady-love, and he had looked on with wondering, incredulous eyes at the follies and excesses of young lovers; he was inclined to think it was a mild form of mania, and required physical treatment. And so he reached five-and-thirty unscathed, and slightly contemptuous of others less fortunate than himself; when, one day, a girl's blue eyes, looking shyly at him through dark lashes, brought him down once and for ever from his pedestal of fancied superiority, and before he could collect his arguments, or reason himself out of it, he was past cure, hopelessly, helplessly, foolishly in love. They had been engaged for two days; it was two days since this clever young doctor, this rising, successful man, with such stores of learning, such a solid intellect, such a cool, calm brain, had stood blushing and stammering before a girl of eighteen. If I were to write down the words he said, you would think my hero an idiot pure and simple; the most mawkish and feeble twaddle of the most debased of penny periodicals was vastly superior to what Dr. Carter stammered out that day. But is not this generally the case? Beautiful, poetical love-scenes are frequent in plays and books, but very rare in real life. There is not one love-scene in a thousand that would bear being taken down in shorthand, printed in plain, black type, and read by critical eyes through common-place spectacles. Nevertheless, the feelings are no doubt sublime, though the words may be ridiculous. He was quite another man altogether (happily for him) when he went to Sir John Meredith, and told him plainly that he was no match for his daughter as far as birth went.

"My good fellow," the sensible little baronet answered, "there are only about ten families in England that can put their pedigree by the side of the Merediths, and it don't seem to me to make much difference, if you rise from the ranks yourself, or if your father, or grandfather did it."

"I can scarcely claim even to be a gentleman," the young man went on, feeling pretty sure of success by that time.

"Not another word, my dear boy; not another word! I respect your candor, and I esteem you very highly as an honest man—the noblest work of God, you know, eh?—though I'd like to hear anyone say that you were not a gentleman as well. There, go along! shake hands! God bless you! You'll find Violet in the drawing-room. Sly little puss! but I saw what was coming—and mind you dine with us this evening at seven sharp—old-fashioned folk, old-fashioned hours."

I think the wary baronet also respected Dr. Carter's income, and esteemed very highly his success, and having weighed the advantages of family and birth against success and income, had found that the latter were the more substantial in the worldly scales.

And so Dr. Carter was dreaming rosy dreams that evening in his quiet room, as was fit and proper after two days' wandering in fairyland with Violet Meredith. But as the scent of the violets had led him to think of the giver, so it drew his thoughts away from her again back to springtime many years ago at Sunnysbrook, and the bank where the earliest violets grew in the sheltered lane leading to the Croft Farm. Did ever violets' smell so sweet as those? He remembered one afternoon, after school, going to fetch the milk from the farm, and the scent luring him across the little runlet by the side of the path, which was swollen into a small, brawling brook by the lately-thawed snow. He set down the can safely before he made the venture, and Dr. Carter laughed softly to himself to think how short and fat the legs were that found the little stream such a mighty stride. He was busy diving for the dowers among the layers of dead elm-leaves, which the blustering autumn winds had blown there, when a sound behind him caused him to look round, and there was the can upset, and the young foxhound quartered at the

Croft licking up the white pool from the pebbles. In his anger, and fear, and haste, he slipped as he tried to jump back, and went full length into the stream, and scrambled out in a sad plight, and went home crying bitterly, with a very wet pinafore, and dirty face, and empty milk-can, with the cause of his mishap, the sweet violets, still clasped unconsciously in his little scratched hand. And his mother—ah! she was always a good mother! He could remember still the comforting feeling of mother's apron wiping away dirt and tears, and the sound of her voice bidding him "Never mind! and hush up like a good little Laddie." His heart felt very warm just then towards that mother of his, and he made up his mind that, cost what trouble it might, he would go down and see her before he was married, if it were only for an hour or two, just to make sure that she was comfortable, and not working about and wearing herself out. His conscience pricked him a little at the thought of what a pleasure the sight of him would have been to the old woman, and how year after year had slipped away without his going down. But still a comforting voice told him that he had been substantially a good son, and it was accident and not intention that had kept him away. "Anyhow," he said to himself, "another month shall not pass without my seeing my mother."

At this moment the deferential man knocked at the door and aroused Dr. Carter to the consciousness of how far his wandering thoughts had carried him from his consulting-room and *Medical Review*.

"What is it, Hyder?"

"Please, sir, there's some one wishes to see you. I told her as it was too late, and you was engaged very particular, but she wouldn't be put off nohow, sir."

"What is her name?"

There was a slight smile distorting the usually unruffled serenity of Mr. Hyder's face, as if he had a lingering remembrance of something amusing.

"She didn't give no name, sir, and she wouldn't say what she wanted, though I asked if a message wouldn't do; but she said her business was too particular for that, sir."

"What sort of person is she?"

The corners of the man's mouth twitched, and he had to give a little cough to conceal an incipient chuckle.

"Beg your pardon, sir. She appears to be from the country, sir. Quite a countrified, homely, old body, sir."

Perhaps the odor of the violets and the country memories they had called up made him more amiably inclined; but instead of the sharp, decided refusal the servant expected, "Tell her it is long past my time for seeing patients, and I am busy, and she must call again to-morrow," he said, "Well, show her in," and the man withdrew in surprise.

"Countrified, homely, old body." Somehow the description brought back to his mind his mother, coming down the brick path from the door at home, with her Sunday bonnet on, and her pattens in her hand, and the heavy-headed double stocks and columbines tapping against her short petticoats. The doctor said it to himself, and even while he smiled the door was pushed open, and before him he saw, with a background of the gas-lit hall and the respectful Hyder, by this time developed into an uncontrollable grin, his mother, in her Sunday bonnet and with her pattens in her hand.

(To be Continued.)

AT ANCHOR.

A gentleman was walking on the Parade at Llandudno, and was watching a pretty little vessel with its white sails shining in the sunlight.

"How is it that this ship does not seem to be moving?" he said to a seaman standing by. "Her sails are spread, and there is plenty of breeze, but she seems to make no progress."

"She's anchored, sir; she's anchored!" replied the sailor.

"That's just how it is with many of us," said the gentleman, in answer. "There is everything to help us in our heavenward journey, but we can make no progress at all because we are anchored to something here on earth—some sin indulged in, or some worldliness we cannot give up." Yes, that's the secret; we are anchored.