

The New Doctor

By JACOB BROWN

There was a suggestion of the Celt in Cathcart's reddish hair and bluish eyes, and a Yankee keenness in the nasal lines. His chin was set firm, beneath thin lips. He was an American, a Harvard M.D. and an ex-Philadelphia hospital interne, thirty years old. He was a driving, gripping sort of man who drove and gripped himself as well as others; altogether, one equal to his environment in this California foothill town between the belts of grain and gold, its life vigorous from the strength of each.

Now, closing Cyrus Drummond's gate after his first professional visit to the family, he wore a mood of elation. To become the family physician of the Drummonds was to live down the sobriquet, "the new doctor." Hitherto, they had employed old Carver. This time, however, Gavin, the youngster of twelve, having sustained a compound fracture of the left leg, the result of a dare to jump from the barn roof, Carver had been ignored, probably because of his growing fondness for liquor.

Cathcart had done a good job, and he knew it, and he hoped for further recognition. His hope was the more confident in view of the manifest approval which he had read in the little mother's anxious eyes—eyes that focused the whole of an ideally maternal nature—a blending of love and mind and will.

Ten weeks saw the boy again leading his cronies and Cathcart wondering just how big a bill the traffic would bear. Immediate dollars were as large as full moons to him, while the patronage of the Drummonds meant the highest standing in the region. Moreover, Cyrus Drummond and his money, tho he was the richest man in four counties, were notoriously adhesive. Finally he determined that, where the patient could meet it, his services must be taken at his own valuation; and Cathcart was not modest.

Cyrus Drummond was known to him, chiefly by reputation. He was styled "the old man." The expression imported an age of sixty years, witnessed by white hair and flowing beard; a patriarchal dominance in wealth, politics and religion, but no depletion of mental or physical powers; and, from the populace in general, a trace of affection and an abundance of fear. He owned the bank, besides mines, ranches, and roads; he named the Congressmen; he chose and dismissed the ministers of at least one denomination.

A week after the treatment of the boy had ceased, the old man entered the new doctor's office, ignored the offer of a chair, and asked the amount of his indebtedness, his left hand in his pocket proclaiming that he paid cash. "Two hundred and fifty dollars," said Cathcart.

The old man smiled a grim, slow smile, belied by a hardening in the eyes.

"That's altogether too much, young man. I won't pay it."

The Celt in Cathcart began to glow. "That is my charge, Mr. Drummond; I shall not come down."

"As you please, sir. I don't waste words or time. I'll not pay it"; and he turned and started to leave.

Cathcart had a dim remembrance, afterward, of having speculated, for a second, as to whether or not the broad shoulders of the man could go squarely thru the doorway. He was, however, thoroughly angry and he did not hesitate for words.

"You will pay it, sir, and within twenty-four hours, or stand suit."

Cyrus Drummond turned again, confronted by the first man who had defied him in years.

"Young man," he said, the white beard undulating menacingly from chin to tip, "don't you know that I can make or break you?"

"Damn you, sir; you can do neither. Good day, sir!" and Cathcart walked into his private office, where he stayed

until he heard the closing of the outer door.

The next morning he received a check for two hundred and fifty dollars. He did not need to be told that Cyrus Drummond had forbidden his wife to employ Dr. Cathcart again; nor was he surprised when two or three families, including that of one of the ministers, which he had come to regard as his own, reverted to Carver.

He was, however, quite unprepared, a month later, for another summons to the Drummond residence. Gavin brought the message and explained that his sister, Evelyn, had returned from college because of an epidemic of diphtheria, and that she had a very sore throat. On the way to the house, Gavin explained another matter.

"Father doesn't like you a little bit," he said. "He swore you shouldn't come to the house again; but mother told him he could have any doctor he wanted, for himself, but that the family was going to have the best one in town, and that was you. And I think so, too."

Cathcart laughed and said he was glad to have Gavin for a friend; but he

was necessary. Cathcart, however, saw her every day, and often twice and thrice a day, for nearly two weeks.

II

It did not take many days to justify Gavin's prophecy. A strong man knows his own heart, as he knows his mind, without doubting delay. But seeing her there, in the house of her father, forbade that he should show his feeling. Whether or not his conscious effort to regard the restriction was successful, Evelyn alone could tell; he could not.

But she was well now; he had made his last professional visit, and, returning from a long drive to the Sierra mine, where he cared for the sick and injured under contract with the company, he stopped and left his horse tied to a tree while he gathered golden poppies. Farther on, he stopped again and went up a shady little glen, whence he returned with hands full of maidenhair fern. Fortune favored him, and he found Gavin in front of the house. Giving the flowers to the youngster, he bade him take them to his sister; and drove on, chuckling at the lessening of esteem



Then his arm stole around her and he drew her to him.

which had shown in the frank face of his messenger.

A week later Evelyn Drummond entered Dr. Cathcart's office just before the close of his regular office hours. The last patient preceding her had left, and he was glad when he opened the door and saw her, that only she should see his countenance. That she should see it and read it did not embarrass him at all.

Her greeting was unperturbed gaiety; and the mischief in her eyes went well with her tailored suit and summer millinery.

"Don't doctors say 'How do you do?' to people in their offices?" she asked as he stood silent. "You always said it so professionally at the house."

He welcomed the lead.

"I shall never greet you professionally outside of your home, Miss Drummond."

"Well," she countered, "I came to see you professionally. I am returning to college tomorrow; and the faculty requires a physician's certificate from every student who has been ill, to the effect that she has quite recovered."

But Gavin did not soon see his sister again. The sore throat was already a malignant and rapidly developing attack of diphtheria, and rigid isolation

"I'll write it now," he said, entering his private office.

There was a bit of exasperation about her mouth as he retreated, and she followed him and stood at the door, which he had left open.

"May I look in while you are writing?"

"Of course, Miss Drummond; but you will find little to interest you."

She looked about her.

"You haven't a thing on your walls except your old diploma. Harvard men are so conceited!"

He swung around and faced her, reckless admiration in his direct gaze.

"I see a picture wherever I look," he said.

She ignored the remark and made out to read the Latin on his sheepskin.

He finished his paper and gave it to her, noting that all the mischief had left her face and that her eyes had resumed their habitual resemblance to her mother's.

"It was nice of you, Dr. Cathcart, to send me the flowers."

Confusion ruled his features, but it fled as he replied:

"I have to thank you for a reawakening to the existence of flowers."

"I didn't cause you to be thoughtful of your friends. But I must not keep you from your patients. Good-by," and she held out her hand.

He did not deprecate her manner of leaving or seek otherwise to detain her. He did, however, venture a bold stroke as he formally touched her hand.

"May I write to you?" he asked.

She liked his way of ignoring the cheaper opportunities and of risking rebuff by more straightforward, and in reality more courteous, advances.

"I should like to have you; but—I'll ask mother. Good-by."

"Good-by," he said, closing the door after her and returning to his desk.

He thought of the girlish frankness with which she had referred his request to her mother, and he thought of her girlish moods, and he thought of the pictures on his walls and vowed that no others should displace them. How could he endure not to see her, were it not for those visions—the dark, abundant hair and the deep-blue eyes, crowning a face and figure all grace and delicately rounded slenderness?

To his surprise she wrote to him:

"My Dear Doctor Cathcart: Mother says that father would not approve of our corresponding; so I take this means of informing you. One letter cannot make a correspondence."

"But it is very stupid of you to quarrel with father, and I expect you to have made up with him by the holidays. Until then, goodby."

EVELYN DRUMMOND.

"P.S.—It's wrong to fight"—E.D."

In spite of the prohibition, he found the missive very sweet, and he took to carrying it about and reading it now and then when he was alone.

III.

Thus, one day in flaming-leaved October, while on his way to the Sierra Mine, he had just replaced it in his pocket when he came to the beginning of the toll-road, over which lay the last half of his journey. It was his custom to stop and chat a moment with old Tom, the gatekeeper; but this time Tom was talking to Cyrus Drummond, who sat erect in his buggy behind the fast little sorrel he habitually drove. Cathcart kept his horse at a trot. Thinking of Evelyn, however, he was on the watch for a chance to make some advance toward friendliness, and he stopped, readily enough, when the old man threw up his hand in somewhat imperious signal that he should do so.

"How do you do, sir?" said Cathcart.

The answer struck sadly upon the strings of his good intention.

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