

DOCTOR ZAY.

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Published by special arrangement with Messrs. Houghton, Mifflin & Company, Boston, Mass.,
Proprietors of the Atlantic Monthly.

III.

She came at once. She stepped before him at the bedside, and stood there, without moving. She let him look at her as long as he would. It was not long. He felt very ill. He regarded her confusedly. He perceived a woman of medium height, with a well-shaped head. He saw the dress and carriage of a lady. His eye fell upon her hands, which were crossed lightly on the edge of the little table where his medicines stood. Sick as he was, he noticed unusual signs of strength in her fingers, which were yet not deficient in delicacy. Yorke had always judged people a good deal by their hands. He repeated his nervous phrase:—

"I am in a woman's hands!"

She spread them out before him with a swift, fine gesture; then made as if she put something unseen at one side from them.

"Let me send for the man I spoke of. You are irresolute. You are losing strength and time. This is a mistake as well as a misfortune. I can't help being a woman, but I can help your suffering from the fact."

"No,—not yet. No. Wait a moment. I wish to speak with you. Will you pardon me if I ask—a few questions?"

"I will pardon anything. But they must be very few. I shall not stand by and see you spend your breath unnecessarily."

"Are you an educated physician, madam?"

"Yes, sir."

"A beginner?"

"I have practiced several years."

"Do you think you understand my case?"

"I think I do."

"This old man you speak of,—this other doctor,—what is he?"

"His patients trust him."

"Do you think I should trust him?"

"No, sir."

"Are you the only homoeopathist in this region?"

"There is one at Cherryfield; others at Bangor; none within thirty miles."

"Can you get a consultation?"

"I have already telegraphed to Bangor for advice; there is an eminent surgeon there; he will come if needed. I know him well."

"How much am I hurt?"

"A good deal, sir."

"Where are the injuries?"

"In the head, the foot, and the right arm."

"What are they?"

"I do not wish you to talk of them. I do not wish you to talk any more of anything."

"Just this,—am I in danger?"

"I hope not, Mr. Yorke."

"I see you can tell the truth."

"I am telling the truth."

"I begin to trust you."

She put her finger on her lip. He stirred heavily, with an ineffectual attempt to writhe himself into another position.

"I cannot move. I did not know my arm was hurt before—Ah, there!"

As he spoke, blood sprang. The doctor made towards him a motion remarkable for its union of swiftness with great composure. Her face had a stern but perfectly steady light. She said calmly:

"Lie still, Mr. Yorke," and with one hand held him down upon the pillow. He perceived then that a bandage had slipped from a deep wound just below the shoulder, and that a severed artery was oozing red and hot. He grew giddy and faint, but managed to keep his wits together to watch and see what the young woman would do. She quickly bared his arm, from which the sleeve was already cut away.

"Mrs. Butterwell," she called quietly, "will you please bring me some hot water?"

During the little delay which ensued on this order—a momentary one, for Mrs. Isaiah Butterwell was one of those housekeepers whose conscience would admit of a lukewarm sanctification sooner than a lukewarm boiler—the doctor gently unrolled the bandage from the wound, which she then thoroughly sponged and cleansed. The patient thought he heard her say something about "secondary hemorrhages," but the words, if indeed she used them at all, were not addressed to him. The hot water did not stop the blood, which seemed to him to be sucking his soul out.

"Hold this arm, Mrs. Butterwell," said the young lady—"just so. Keep it in this position till I tell you to let go. Do you understand? There. No, stay. Call Mr. Butterwell. I want two."

She drew her surgical case from her pocket, and selected an artery forceps. She opened the wound, and instructed Mr. Butterwell how to hold the forceps in position while she ligated the artery. She bandaged the arm, and adjusted it to suit her upon a pillow. She had a firm and fearless touch. Her face betrayed no uneasiness; only the contraction of the brows inseparable from studious attention.

The patient looked at the physician with glazing eyes.

"Write to my mother," he said weakly.

"Don't say you are not a man. Only say you are not an allopath—and that I have given my

case unreservedly to you. Tell her not to worry. Give her my love. Tell her"—

And with this he fainted quite away.

This faint was the prelude to a hard pull. Days of alternate syncope and delirium followed.

Short intervals of consciousness found him quiet, but alarmingly weak. His early anxiety had ceased to manifest itself. He yielded to the treatment he received without criticism or demur. In fact, he was too ill to do anything else. This condition lasted for more than a week.

One day he awoke, conscious and calm. It was a sunny day. There seemed to be a faint woody perfume in the room, from some source unknown. A long, narrow block of light lay yellow on the stiff-patterned brown carpet; it was by no means, however, a cheap carpet.

There was an expensive red and gold paper on the walls, and marble-topped furniture. There were two pictures. One was a framed certificate setting forth the fact of Mr. Butterwell's honored and honorable career as a Freemason. The other was an engraving of the Sistine Madonna.

Yorke had hardly noticed the contents of his room before. He observed these details with the vivid interest of a newly-made invalid, wondering how long he was likely to lie and look at them. As his eye wandered weakly about the room it rested upon the bureau, which stood somewhat behind him. A vase of yellow Austrian glass was on the bureau; it held a spray of apple-blossoms.

While he lay breathing in their delicate outlines like a perfume, and feeling their perfume like a color, the half-opened door pushed gently in, and a woman—a lady—entered with a quick step. She was a young lady; or at least she was under thirty. She stopped on seeing that he was awake, and the two regarded each other.

She saw a very haggard-looking young fellow, with a sane eye and a wan smile. He saw a blooming creature. She had her hat on and driving-gloves in her hand. Her face was sensitive with pleasure at the change in the patient. She advanced towards him heartily, holding out her hand. He said,—

"Are you the doctor?"

"Yes, sir."

"What is—excuse me—but, madam, I don't know your name."

"My name is Lloyd. You are better to-day?"

"Infinitely! Wait, please. . . . I have seen you before. Where have I seen you?"

"Three times a day for a week, without counting the nights," said the young lady, with mischief in her voice. She had a pleasant voice. She spoke a little too quickly, perhaps. She stood beside his bed. She stood erect and strong. Her hair was dark, and she had rather large, dark blue eyes. He thought it was a fine, strong face; he did not know but it might be safe to call it beautiful. She wore a blue flannel dress.

"I know!" he said suddenly. "You are the caryatide."

"What, sir?"

"You are the blue caryatide—Never mind. I am not deranged again. Have I been very crazy?"

"Sometimes," said the lady gravely. Her expression and manner had changed. She sat down beside him and opened her medicine-case, which she laid upon the table. He smiled when he saw the tiny vials. She either did not observe or did not return the smile. Her face had settled into an intent and studious form, like a hardening cast. He thought, She is not beautiful.

She took out her note-book, and began to ask him a series of professional questions. She spoke with the distinct but rapid enunciation which he had noticed before. She wrote down his answers carefully. Many of her questions were more personal than he had expected; he was not used to what Mrs. Butterwell called "doctoring." This young lady required his age, his habits, family history, and other items not immediately connected in the patient's mind with a dislocated ankle.

"Now your pulse, please," she said, when she had reached the end of her catechism. She took his wrist in a business-like way. The young man experienced a certain embarrassment. The physician gave evidence of none. She laid his hand down again, as if it had been a bottle or a bandage, told him that she was greatly gratified with his marked improvement, prepared his papers, and, drawing the little rubber clasp over her medicine-case, gave him to understand by her motion and manner that she considered the consultation at an end.

"One powder in six tablespoonfuls of water; one tablespoonful every four hours," she said, rising. "Are you quite able to remember? Or I will speak to Mrs. Butterwell myself as I go out. She will be with you soon, and I have directed that some one shall be within call whenever you are left alone. You do not object to being alone somewhat?"

"I like it."

"I was sure of it. I prefer you to be alone as much as you can bear now. But you will not be neglected. I will see you again to-night."

"I should like to talk with you a little," stammered Yorke, hardly knowing what was the etiquette of this anomalous position. "Can not you stay longer?"

She looked at her watch, hesitated, and sat down again.

"I can give you a few minutes. I have a busy day before me."

"Did you write to my mother," began the patient, "and what has she answered?"

"If you go on improving at this rate, you may read your letters to-morrow, Mr. Yorke."

"Not to-day?"

"No."

"You are arbitrary, Miss—Dr. Lloyd."

"She gave him a cool, keen look."

"That is my business," she said.

"What has been the matter with me?" persisted the young man. "What are my injuries? I wish to know."

"A dislocation of the ankle; a severed artery in the arm; and concussion of the brain,—besides the minor cuts attendant on such an accident as yours. Each of these is doing finely. You have now no cause for alarm. It was a beautiful dislocation!" added the physician, with enthusiasm.

"Have I been dangerously ill?"

"Yes."

"Have you had a consultation?"

"By telegraph every day, your worst days; by letter when I have thought you would feel easier to know that I had it."

"How soon shall I be about again?"

"I cannot promise you anything at present. You are doing remarkably well. But you will have occasion for patience, sir."

"I must have seemed very rude—or—dis-trustful of you, at the first."

"On the contrary, Mr. Yorke, you have shown me every reasonable confidence,—far more than I could have expected under the circumstances. I have appreciated it."

The sensitiveness had come into her face again; she gave him a direct, full look; and he thought once more that she was a beautiful woman.

"Believe," he said earnestly, "that I am grateful to you, madam."

She smiled indulgently, bowed, and left him. He heard her quick step in the hall, and her voice speaking to Mrs. Butterwell; then he heard her chirrup to her pony, and the sound of wheels. She drove rapidly, and was soon gone.

The day passed in the faint, sweet, hazy way that only the convalescent knows. No other creature ever gets behind that glamour. Returning life comes towards one so solemnly that the soul would keep upon its knees, were it not so weak; one dares not pray; one ventures only to see the frolic in the eyes of the advancing power, and dashes into joy as bees into rhythm, or as flowers into color. Waldo Yorke was very happy. He thought of his mother; his heart was full. He looked at the block of yellow light upon the carpet; at the apple-blossoms in the vase; at the patch of June sky that burned beyond that one open window. Life and light, he thought, are here.

Mrs. Isaiah Butterwell, however, was there, too. She was extremely kind. She entertained the young man with a graphic account of his accident and its consequences. Mr. Butterwell himself came in, for a moment, and briefly considered it (although the Bangor horse was killed) a lucky thing.

"When he brought you home," observed the lady, "I said, 'He's dead.' I must say I hoped you were, for I said to my husband, 'He'll be an idiot if he lives.' It always seems to me as if the Creator was thinking he hadn't made enough of 'em, after all, and was watching opportunities to increase the stock. But our doctor has been a match for him this time!" added Mrs. Isaiah, with a snap of her soft eyes.

"Why,—Sar-ah!" rebuked her husband, gently.

"Well, she has!" insisted Sarah; "and I don't see the harm. He made her, too, I suppose, didn't he? I think he ought to be proud of her. I've no doubt he is,—not the least in the world."

"Why, Sarah!" repeated Mr. Butterwell. He had the air of being just as much surprised by these little conversational peculiarities in his consort as if he had not wintered and summered them for better and worse for forty years. This amused the invalid. He liked to hear them talk. He was so happy that day that Mrs. Isaiah seemed to him really very witty. He drew her out. She dwelt a good deal on the doctor. She explained to him her difficulty in concealing the fact of the physician's sex from him those first few days.

"I would not tell a fib for you, Mr. Yorke, even if you did die. And when you ran on so about seeing the doctor, I could not say 'he,' and I would not say 'he,' for I would not say 'he,' for she was not a 'he,' now, was she? Once I got stuck in the middle of a sentence; and Mr. Butterwell was here, and I said, 'Sh—Isaiah!—he'; so I cut the word in two, don't you see? Only I spelled it with an extra h. But I'd rather sacrifice my spell than my conscience. And Isaiah asked me afterwards what I should him up for, when he had not opened his mouth. He did not open it very often while you were sick, Mr. Yorke. But he spoke about your uncle, and was blue enough. I had to make up my mind to do the talking for two, when I married Mr. Butterwell. What time did Doctor Zay say she should look in again, Mr. Yorke?"

"Doctor Zay?" repeated the young gentleman blankly.

"Oh, we call her Doctor Zay. You see there were two of them, she and the old man; and, as luck would, they must have the same name. I suppose he was ashamed of his,—Admiral; I don't blame him. At any rate, there's the sign, 'Dr. A. Lloyd.' And she has some kind of a heathen name herself; I never can pronounce it; so she takes to 'Dr. Z. A. Lloyd,' and that's how we come by it. Everybody calls her Doctor Zay. But she spells it with a 'y' herself. We love the sound of it," added Mrs. Butterwell gently. "So would you, if you'd been a woman Down East, and she the first one, of all you you'd read about and needed, you'd ever seen."

"But I'm not a woman," interrupted the patient, laughing. "I can't call her Doctor Zay. The young lady has done admirably by me; I'll admit that. How much I must have troubled her, to come here so often!"

"I would not waste your feelings, sir," observed Mrs. Butterwell, dryly. "Feelings are too rich cream to be skimmed for nothing. Doctor would have done her duty by you, anyhow; but it's been less of a sacrifice, considering she lives here."

The subsiding expression of weariness on the sick man's face rose to one of interest. He repeated, "Lives here?" not without something like energy.

"Yes, I've had her a year. She was starving at the Sherman Hotel, and I took her in. I used to go to school with some connections of her's, so I felt a kind of responsibility for her. And then I'm always glad of society, as I told you when I took you. I'm social in my nature. I suppose that's why Providence went out of his way to marry me to Mr. Butterwell. If my lot had been cast in Portland, or Bangor, I'm afraid I should have been frivolous, as I said to Doctor Zay, the first time I saw her,—it was child's play; I thought I could trust her; I didn't know her then, you see. Do you mean to say you didn't notice her sign? Then, if she'd got sick at the hotel, they'd have said she was a woman. I had the cause to consider," added Mrs. Butterwell, solemnly.

The physician came again at night, as she had promised. She was later than usual. Yorke listened for her wheels, and got restless. It made him nervous when the country waggons rolled up, and rumbled by. He had flushed with the end of the day, and was feverish and miserable. He attended to his sensations anxiously. He wished she would come. It was quite dark when the low wheels of the phaeton came smoothly and suddenly to a stop in the great back yard; he heard the doctor's voice speaking cheerily to her boy. "Handy," she called him. Handy took the horse; a light step passed the corner of the house, and vanished. "She must have gone on to the office door," thought Yorke. He found himself absorbed in a little uneasiness; he wondered if she would take her tea first.

She did not. She came to him directly. Her things were off; her hair smoothly brushed; she stood beside him, her pleasant figure, in its house-dress, cut against the light that fell through the open door. She began at once:—

"There are patients in the office,—I am late; I was detained by a troublesome case. I can give you five minutes now, or come back when they are gone. Let me see!" She went out and brought the lamp, scrutinized his face closely, sat down, and felt his pulse; she did not count it, but quickly laid his hand aside.

"Please come by-and-by," urged the young man. Already he felt unaccountably better.

"I can wait." She hesitated a moment, then said, "Very well," and left him. She was gone half an hour.

"Have you had your supper?" asked Yorke, when she came back.

"Oh, my supper is used to waiting," said Doctor Zay, cheerfully. "You have waited quite long enough, sir. Now, if you please, to business."

"The note-book, the pencil, the medicine-case, and the somewhat stolid, studious look presented themselves at once. Yorke felt half-amused, half-annoyed. He wanted to be talked to, as if she had been like other women. He thought it would do him more good than the acorn pellets which she prepared so confidently. He was just enough better to begin to be homesick. He asked her if he might try to walk to-morrow. She promptly replied in the negative.

"I must walk next week," urged the patient, setting a touch of his natural imperiousness against her own. She gave him one of her composed looks.

"You will walk, Mr. Yorke, when I allow you," she said, courteously enough. She looked so graceful and gentle and womanly, sitting there beside him, that all the man in him rebelled at her authority. Their eyes met, and clashed.

"When will that be?" he insisted, with a creditable effort at submission.

"A dislocated ankle is not to be used in ten days," replied the doctor, quietly. "It is going to take time."

"How much time?"

"That depends partly on yourself, partly on me, a little on"—

"Providence!" interrupted Yorke.

"Not at all. God made the ankle, you dislocated it, I set it; nature must heal it."

"Mrs. Butterwell might have said that."

"Is it possible," said the young lady, with a change of manner, "that I am growing to talk like Mrs. Butterwell?"

This was the first personal accent which Yorke had caught in the doctor's voice. Thinking, perhaps, to pursue a faint advantage, which he vaguely felt would be of interest to him when