

DOCTOR ZAY.

BY ELIZABETH STUART PHELPS.

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NOTE.

BELMONT, October 28, 1881.

DEAR MISS PHELPS.—I am glad to learn from you that your story is soon to see the light; and I avail myself of the opportunity you give me to notice publicly that coincidence of some of its outlines with those of my novel, Dr. Breen's Practice, of which we have already spoken together. When you first mentioned your plot to me, I heard you quite through before I told you that I had already written and partly in type a story dealing with the same situations and the same characters in a certain degree; and then I strongly urged you to go on and complete your work, assuring you, as Editor of the *Atlantic*, that I should be all the more eager to publish it because of that coincidence. It seemed to me at that time, as it now seems to Mr. Aldrich, that this would give it an additional attraction with those interested in the problems touched; and that no one would suppose you to have borrowed any feature of your plot from so poor a contriver of such things as I am.

I shall fall back upon my good intention if, in the course of your story, this voluntary statement of mine appears, as I fear it may, a quite gratuitous impertinence. Yours sincerely,

W. D. HOWELLS.

I.

"To my nephew, Waldo Yorke, of Beacon Street, Boston, Massachusetts, all such properties of mine as are vested in shipping, timber, or lumber, in the town of Sherman, in this State."

This was vague, but the more stimulating. What can compare with the bewitchment of arduous pursuit for uncertain privilege? There is an Orphean power well known to reside in testamentary documents, whereby the most insignificant legacy will draw the most imposing fortune to dance attendance upon its possession. But it is doubtful if Waldo Yorke, of Beacon Street, Boston, Massachusetts, would have found himself inspired to a personal investigation of his departed relative's kind intentions concerning himself, but for a certain constitutional sensitiveness to this allurement attending the pursuit of unknown results.

"Send a lawyer, Waldo." His mother had said this over the coffee for which she delicately prescribed the proper Yorke admixture from the Sèvres creamer. She spoke with the slightly peremptory accent which certain mothers retain, either from force of habit or from intrinsic delight in the sound, long after the expectation of filial submission has become a myth of the Golden Age. Mrs. Yorke, although quite lame, was a handsome woman, who wore *point appliqué*.

Her son had reminded her that in sending Waldo Yorke he really was not far from doing the precise, if remarkable, thing of which she spoke.

"Quite true," said the lady. "I had forgotten. Your having a profession so seldom occurs to one, Waldo. And cousin Don would have been glad to go, now the season is over at the Club. He has nothing else to do."

"I am somewhat overborne with that calamity myself, mother," the young man had said, coloring slightly. "I don't think we will discuss the thing. I am going to hunt up Uncle Jed's legacy."

Mrs. Yorke had not discussed the thing. Although not yet even indulgently talked of as "rising" in his profession, this idle, strong-limbed, restless son of hers had incisive preferences, with which she was familiar, as well as with his somewhat sturdy methods of executing them. And although they had only each other to be "beholden to" in all the world,—that is to say, in Beacon Street,—they were accustomed to yield one another the large liberty of assured affection. A summer of separation was to be expected, when one was the lame old mother of a nervous young man. Mrs. Yorke had kissed her son good-by royally, and here he was.

Here he was, lazily riding at the laziest hour of the sleepy noon,—he and the senescent horse he had been so fortunate as to find in Bangor for the trip. He had been alone with the pony and his own thoughts, through the magnificent Maine wilderness, for now two long, memorable days. An older traveller than young Yorke would have found them valuable days. He had chosen the land route, seventy-two miles from Bangor. He had a certain kind of thirst for solitude, which comes only to the city born and bred; most keenly to the young, and most passionately to the overtaken. Waldo Yorke had never been overtaken in his life. He leaned to the splendours through which he journeyed, enthusiastically, but criticised Nature, like an amateur, while he drank.

He had chosen the land route partly, perhaps, in deference to faint associations with wild tales of it, told him years ago by that myth of a dead uncle, in course of the only appearance he ever made in Beacon Street,—Uncle Jed, whom his mother, somehow, never urged the child's going to visit, while never distinctly discountenancing

iteither. Poor Uncle Jed was a good man, but had never had papa's advantages, my son. But my son had conceived a passing chivalrous fancy for an uncle at a disadvantage, and remembered sitting in his lap, and stroking his grizzled cheek with the soft pink palm of first one little hand, and then the other, and asking him why he hadn't any little boys, and if God left them in heaven, or forgot to send them down. Poor Uncle Jed was a bachelor, as well as a myth.

So this was the wilderness where the good old myth had lived, loved,—did he ever love? his nephew wondered. Lived, loved, died. No: lived, loved, got rich, and died, as you chose to put it. What a place to live and die in! Or to get rich in. Or to love in, either, for that matter.

The young man leaned against the cushions of the covered buggy, which seemed to arouse as much bewildered effort of the perceptive faculties in the stray natives whom he met as if it had been a covered mill-pond, and indulged in that hazy reverie which is possible only to ease and youth. What were his visions? What are the thoughts of a distinguished-looking young man, with one foot swinging for very luxury of idleness over the buggy's edge against the step, the reins thrown across one muscular arm, and both gloved hands clasped behind a rather well-shaped head! A young man with well-born eyes, and well-bred mouth; and he seems to stoop to vices who carries just such a fashion of the nostril and the chin.

The route that young Yorke had chosen led him into the unparalleled deserts and glories of the wild Maine coast. Sudden reserves and allurements of horizon succeeded each other. They were finely contrasted, like the moods of a woman as strong as she is sweet, and as sincere as she is either. Forest and sea vied to win his fancy. At the turning of a rein he plunged into impenetrable green, cool solitude. He became, perforce, a worshipper in Nature's cathedrals. Arch beyond arch, they lifted stately heads. Density within density, hung shadows in which it seemed no midday light could see to find a target. Welcome chills came from these shadows that struck upon the feverish cheek. Dry, unrecognized perfumes fled across them, clean and fine. Above, the dome of ether quivered with the faint, uncertain motion of hot air upon a summer noon. Drops of light fell through, upon the neutral-tinted shade that broke the sienna color of the winding road. As far as eye could see, the forest-locked mighty arms before the traveller, as if to hold him to its heart forever.

Then swiftly at the tripping of a cypress, at the surrender of an oak, at the fleeing of a rank of pines, at the shaking of a ghostly beard of moss, behold! the solemn barricade has given way. You have but turned a corner, yet the forest lets you go angrily, desperately, and yields you to the sea.

Now the straight noon sunshine palpitates before, behind, about you. The road sweeps, yellow and lonely, past a dreary little hut, a solitary farm. The ruts worn by the daily stage, passed an hour before you, begin to grow distinct in the white heat. Rocks loom, a mass of wealthy outline against unbroken sky, and curved and curious beaches kneel to wet their lonely foreheads in the sea.

Your cathedral has turned you out-of-doors utterly. Galleries of wonder beckon you on. Irregular sculpture starts, half-moulded, from the wild, gray cliffs. Sketches which Nature seems to have begun, but never cared to finish, unfold before you, vast, imperfectly interpreted, evanescent. Music, sweet from the now unseen birds in the deserted forest, sad from the waves upon the untrodden beaches, pulsates through the vivid air. It seems to the rider that the butterflies keep time to it; that the daisies in the gentle fields are nodding to it. Motionless cattle in the pastures, stray, solitary children on the fences, idle smoke from desolate chimneys, pass him by rhythmically. His thoughts, still busy with the forest, receive from all these things little else than vague consciousness of the presence of life and light.

Life and light! The words have a familiar and solemn sound.

Are they snatched from some forgotten sentiment of Holy Writ? John perhaps! John, the golden-lipped, happy-hearted young enthusiast! What a poet that fisherman was! No wonder that modern dispute centres battling about the authenticity of the Forth Gospel. *Life and light*. In all the universe, those only were the two words that could interpret the summer-noon meaning of this virgin State of Maine.

In all the universe—

Nonsense!

Yorke remembered that he was hungry, and would have his dinner. In all the universe,—what then? Heaven knows! It was some mad fancy about womanhood, or youth,—love perhaps, if the truth must out; how a woman sometimes came to a man's life—suddenly, thoroughly, as upon the reserve of the forest had flashed the glory of the sea. Meanwhile, a man must have his dinner; a matter not to be ignored in dealing with ideal wilderness or ideal woman. He pulled the rein smartly over the nervous pony, reflecting, with the hardened

cynicism of a bachelor of twenty-eight, that he would like to see the woman who would be Life and Light to him! I think, though, if we stop to look at it, that the young fellow preserved, after all, for his sacred metaphor something of the reverence which is native to all delicate natures; and that in the innermost of all consciousness, which we hide even from ourselves, the words held under covert of a sneer, the fugitive of a prayer.

With the fall from heaven to earth, discovering that he was hungry, the young man cherished a mild suspicion that he had strayed a little out of his way. Surely, the last reduced but hopeful sign-board had explicitly "arriren to explain" that it was six miles and a half to the town of Sherman. If he had traveled six miles and a half he had travelled ten since then, and of other guide-boards those *ignes fatui* in which he confided with the touching faith of youth and inexperience, there were none to be seen. Two, indeed, he had passed, valorously guarding a cart-path, but wind, weather, or fate had long since decapitated them. Over against their corpses one patient fellow stood on duty in a whortleberry thicket, for what concrete or abstract purpose no mortal could divine, with his head, from which all recognizable features were washed away, held rakishly under his arm. Another, apparently a drunken, disorderly officer, seemed to have gone upon a spree, and tumbled face-down into a brook. But neither of these sources of Maine enlightenment had directed the dense Massachusetts mind to the town of Sherman.

Bringing the entire force of the Massachusetts mind now to bear upon the non-appearance of any visible means of dining, a process in which the Maine pony showed a sympathy above all provincialism, the traveller accosted the first native he happened to meet, and something like the following conversation took place:

Yorke: "Can you tell me how far it is to Sherman, sir?"

Native: "Hey!"

Yorke: "Would you oblige me by saying how near I am to the town of Sherman?"

Native, interrogatively: "Sherman?"

Yorke, decidedly: "Yes; Sherman."

Native, reflectively: "Sherman."

A pause.

"Travellin' fur?"

"From Bangor to Sherman."

"Oh!"

"I fear I have got out of my way. I hope you can direct me."

"Wall. You said Sherman?"

Yorke, emphatically: "I certainly did!"

Native, cheerfully: "Wall. If it's Sherman you're goin' fur, I sh'd ventur' it might be a matter of eight mile—to Sherman. Hancock's nigher. So's Cherrytown."

Yorke, explosively: "But I do not wish to visit Hancock or Cherrytown!"

"Oh, you don't. Wall."

Native's wife, coming to the door, and standing with heavy hand raised, gaunt forefinger stretching down the road: "That's the way to Sherman: down that there gully, and take your second left and your first right, and then foller the wind. But it ain't no eight mile."

Yorke, lost in thinking how much she looks like a Maine sign-post: "Thank you, madam. How far do you call it to Sherman?"

"It ain't a peg over six—Sherman ain't."

Native's boy, pushing between his parents, and appearing vivaciously in the foreground: "It's three mile'n a half, mister! And you don't take your second left. You just foller your nose, an' you'll make it. Folks hain't ben thar sence the old boss died. I went one winter. I belong to the Sherman Brass Band."

"It's true," said the woman, apologetically, "me and Mr. Bailey don't get to Sherman very often. But Bob,—he don't know a mile from a close-pin."

A prolonged pause.

"Is there a hotel in this—this metropolis?" asked Yorke, looking vaguely about the beautiful wilderness.

"Sir?"

"Is there a tavern in this village?"

"No, Sir."

"Do you ever accommodate hungry travellers with a dinner in your family?"

"Wall, no; we never hev. They mostly go to Nahum Smiths."

"Can I get anything to eat, in this desert, of Mr. Smith or any other of your acquaintance?"

"Wall, mebbe you might. Might ask. Nahum Smith is a gentleman as puts up."

Yorke, reviving: "A gentleman that puts up! That sounds hopeful. How far is it to this gentleman's?"

Native: "Two miles."

Native's wife: "It's two'n a quarter."

Native's boy, disrespectfully and musically: "Tain't ami-i-ile!"

Yorke turned away, with such gratitude towards this enlightened family as he could muster into expression, and set out grimly in search of the gentleman that put up.

The woman ran after him for some distance through the dusty, blazing, blinding noon. He reined up, and she called kindly, gesticulating with her lean arms. "If you come across a woman ridin' in a little frisky wagin with an amberl atop, just you ask her. She'll know!"

It was one of those coincidences which make, according to one's temperament, either the poetry or the superstition of life, that young Yorke, in the course of twenty minutes' savage and unsuccessful pursuit of the gentleman that put up, coming sharply to the top of a glaring

hill, saw at the foot of it, dimly through the dust, a sight as foreign to the Maine wilderness as a sleigh to Florida or a barouche to Sahara. It was a pony phaeton. It stood before a gray old farm-house door, and the clean-cut, slender gray mare who drew it was tied to the crumbling fence. It was a basket phaeton, with a movable top of a buff color,—a lady's phaeton evidently.

Yorke was, as yet, too inexperienced a traveller "across country" to know that in three cases out of five it is from a woman one will get most accurate geographical directions. He might have passed the pony phaeton with scarcely a serious remembrance of the advice he had received, but just before he reached the farm-house the owner of the carriage came suddenly out.

She came suddenly out and down the grass-grown walk, with the nervous step natural to a person in habitual haste; but a healthy step, even and springing. Yorke noticed as much as this in the instant that he balanced in his mind the advisability of addressing the lady.

For it was, unmistakably, a lady.

The young man,—being a young man,—looked in with subtle swiftness a sense of her youth, for she was young: of her motions which were lithe. Of her face his impressions were hazy. It might have been fine, or not. He seldom suffered himself to acquire an opinion of a woman's face at first sight: he had so often learned to hold such impressions as frauds on his intelligence. Her dress, he thought, was blue, or black, or blue-black, or black-and-blue. What did it matter! She was already escaping him, and with her, apparently, his only mortal hope of dinner. What superhuman power could do for a man even in the Maine wilderness he would not dogmatically decide, but his confidence in human assistance was at that faint ebb produced by prospective starvation; and Mr. Nahum Smith, or any other gentleman that put up, he had begun to locate with other interesting and amusing myths with which his education had made him familiar.

(To be continued.)

MUSICAL AND DRAMATIC.

A "SMOKING Concert Society" is being formed in Boston.

GILBERT and Sullivan's new opera will be produced at the Standard, New York, the Globe, Boston, and the Lyceum, Philadelphia, on the same night.

The death of Mrs. Sullivan, mother of Dr. Arthur Sullivan, took place in London on the 27th of May.

The new hall and club house of the Loder-krans Society will be opened with a fancy fair on October 1st.

GILBERT and Sullivan's new opera will be produced at the Standard Theatre on the 15th of September. The principal parts will be sung by artists quite new to the New York stage.

AN "International Brass Band Concert" is arranged to take place in Cincinnati, on June 19th, 20th, and 21st. Already three hundred applications have been made by bands desiring to enter the lists.

WAGNER will not give his consent to a French performance in Paris of his "Lohengrin." He says that the opera is essentially German, and that the "frankling" ways of Gallic artists would spoil his work.

The composer of "Uncle Tom" opera is revising his work, with a determination to produce it as New York, where he thinks, but why he does not explain, it will have a better chance of success than at Philadelphia.

SIGNOR PASQUALE FAVALLE, of Naples, died in March last, and his will was proved in London recently. Among his bequests is his "most cherished work," a tragic opera—"Algora"—which he leaves to Her Majesty the Queen, with the hope that the royal lady will see to its immediate production and expend the "profits" on charity.

NEWS OF THE WEEK.

The suspects still imprisoned number 263.

POLITICAL disturbances have occurred in Serbia.

COUNT Tolstoy's return to office has created a panic in Russia.

The state of siege in Leipzig has been extended for another year.

The House of Commons has passed up to the 10th clause of the Repression Bill.

The military party in Egypt will petition the Khedive to abdicate.

FRANCE is opposed to armed intervention by England in Egypt.

THERE has been a change of ministry in the Sandwich Islands.

GEN. SMURLEV has been appointed military governor of Wilna.

ARABI PASHA has issued a declaration concerning his future course in Egypt.

THE Home Rulers have decided not to offer any systematic obstruction to the Repression Bill.

THE House of Lords has refused a second reading to the Deceased Wife's Sister's Bill by a majority of 4 votes.

THE Irish judges have passed resolutions protesting against trials being held by a Commission of Judges without a jury.

OBSERVATIONS at Dudley, N. Y., Observatory of the Wells comet have led to the discovery that the comet possesses a perfect nucleus.

SEVERAL riots occurred in Alexandria lately between hostile natives and Europeans. Several persons were killed. The British Consul was severely hurt by a gunshot wound, and the engineer of H.M.S. *Superb* was killed.