

## DOCTOR ZAY.

BY ELIZABETH STUART PHELPS.

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

I.—(Continued.)

The young lady had untied her horse (with the quickness of a practiced driver), had swept into the phaeton, had gathered the reins, and was off. If she noticed him at all, it was in a hazy fashion, with the single, quick, abstracted glance usual to strangers in a crowd, in vivid contrast to the Down-East stare. Yorke felt that it was becoming a desperate case. He reined in the Bangor pony.

"I beg pardon, madam!"

The basket phaeton just whirling away, came to a pause unconcernedly.

"I beg pardon for the liberty, but will you direct me to the town of Sherman?"

Somewhat in Yorke's accent of desperation was funny. The young lady's eyes twinkled for an instant. She looked as if she would have laughed if she had dared. But she answered him with grave politeness.

"It is four miles to Sherman."

"Thank you." The young man sat, with his hat raised, hesitating. "I ought to apologize for troubling a lady. But I have met nothing but dislocated sign-posts and admiring natives for ten miles. One gave me as correct information as another. Is Sherman the nearest place where I can get a dinner?"

"I think it is," said the young lady. "Yes, I know it is. If you take your first left below here, you will find it an easy four miles." She spoke with the unconscious ease with which only an American lady could have addressed a stranger met upon an unknown errand on a solitary road; but she gathered her reins as she spoke.

"I am extremely obliged to you," persisted Yorke. "You said the second left?"

"I said the first left. I am going to Sherman. If your horse is not too tired to keep distantly in sight, my phaeton will direct you without further trouble."

She spoke as simply as one gentleman might have spoken to another. Yorke, too profoundly grateful to her to notice this at first, remembered it as the gray mare sped away through the hollow.

How exquisitely it was done! The Beacon street gentleman felt a glow of appreciation of the little scene, viewed purely as a specimen of the religion of good manners. He would have liked his mother to see it. It was the sort of thing she could estimate at its worth.

"Going to Sherman,"—what a divine Christian recognition of the fact that he was a stranger, and that the Maine wilderness had taken him in! Even that though a man, he might yet be a gentleman, out of his way, misdirected, tired, perplexed, and hungry. "If his horse were not too tired,"—what a delicate fashion of comparing the exhausted and now abject-looking Bangor pony with her own sturdy little steed! "Distantly in sight,"—could language more! Faint, swift, manfully afterthought to the kindly impulse! Yorke had wrought himself into rather a glow, perhaps, by dint of present gratitude and promised dinner, but that simple little speech certainly seemed to him, as he thought of it, a classic in its way.

Meanwhile, the "frisky wagon" had tripped along over knoll and hollow, and the bright "amber-lamp" had turned into the thickly-wooded road and disappeared from view. Waldo Yorke whipped up and hurried on.

Distantly in sight, indeed! Was there an innocent sarcasm in that womanly thrust? The gray mare could make her eleven miles an hour easily, if put to it. The Bangor pony begged pitiously now at six. The basket phaeton fled to Sherman. The buggy struggled after. The mare put her head down, and trotted straight and stiff, a steady roadster. The buggy followed by the fits and starts, the turns of elation and depression, the jerks of hope and lurches of despair, familiar to drivers of nervous ponies at the end of a steady pull. Distantly in sight! He should do well, indeed, if he kept a mirage of her in sight.

They had turned now quite away from the coast-line. The scattering farms, the tiny huts with enormous barns attached, the intelligent natives, the heavy stage-track, the dust, the glare, the cliffs, the sea, had vanished. The forest opened its arms again to the travellers, and the world grew green and cool.

Off the stage road here, the density seemed deeper, the shadow more abandoned. Through the impressive solitude the gay little phaeton cover danced along; through it the solemn black buggy top lumbered and climbed. The figure of the dainty driver in the phaeton, erect, slender and blue, sat motionless as a caryatide out of employment. The eyes of the traveller in the buggy vigilantly pursued it: chiefly, it must be admitted, because he wanted his dinner; possibly, in part because he fancied the pose of the caryatide,—any man would.

The shadow deepened as they rode, but not from the darkening of the day. On either hand the solid serried oaks seemed to step out and press against the narrow drive-way; thickets, whose black hearts relieved the various outlines of wild blackberry, sumach, elder, and grape,

netted them-elves more tightly, and grew stiff, looking like bronze; the aspens and pallid birches wooed one another across the narrowing road. Vistas of soft gloom stretched on. There was no light now, but flickering needles, fine as those of the pines, and drifting with them, that with difficulty pierced the opaque green heavens of the over-reaching trees. One looked twice in the low tone of the place even to see what the roadside flowers were. Yorke had almost passed unnoticed an apple-tree in blossom, and it was past the first of June. Nothing could have so vividly presented to him a sense of the painful Maine spring, and the frozen, laggard life that looked out from behind it upon a gentler world.

It occurred to him for the first time, as the depth and solitude of the road made themselves fully manifest, to wonder if the young lady felt no hesitation in trusting herself to drive over it alone. Apparently, he had here some society girl, whose whim it was to be unfashionable, and in Maine, at this unusual season. She was a little intoxicated with Nature's grand unconventionality: had no more fear, it seemed, than a butterfly released from a chrysalis.

He wondered if she did him the credit not to take him for a cut-throat. But a grim glance at the widening distance between the phaeton and the buggy strangled this bit of self-satisfaction at its first breath. Plainly, the case involved not so much a high opinion of the man as a low one of the horse.

Those delicate lovers, the birch and aspen, and the more ardent ones, the oak and hickory, beyond them, were now making themselves obnoxious, as lovers always do to third parties, and swept a fragrant and defiant arch across the way. Swift in the passing, the buff umbrella went deftly down. Slow in the following, the buggy-top groaned back.

The blue caryatide was daintily cut now against the heavy shadow. Fine pencilings of light fell on her: she wore, it might be, a straw hat, which caught them: they struck her hair, too, and her shoulder. She stirred but once. Then she turned to break some apple-blossoms. She picked the flowers at full speed and standing.

Yorke, as he watched her with the half-amused attention of a traveller who has nothing better to do than to "follow the duty nearest him," got the jingle of Lucy Gray into his head:—

"O'er rough and smooth she trips along,  
And never looks behind."

And now Yorke put his case to the Bangor pony, and despairingly relinquished it. The buggy lagged dead at the foot of the hill. The phaeton speeding across the hollow, reached the crossing of the ways, turned a sudden corner, and was gone.

"And never looked behind," sighed the young man, out of temper with the pony, or the jingle, or what not.

"And sang a melancholy song  
That whistles in the wind."

When the Bangor pony panted up to the cross-roads the phaeton had vanished utterly. The caryatide had become a dream, a delusion, a slender and obliging deceiver. Four solitary roads pierced the forest at four separate green angles. A dull sign-board stood in the square, and the traveller hastened gratefully to it. It bore in faded tints, once red and yellow and inspiring, an advertisement of Hooftland's German Butters.

Blue caryatides, indeed! In what hues less intellectually respectable was the young woman perhaps portraying him by this time to the summer people at Sherman, a party of gay girls like herself!

The young man bit his lip somewhat distinctly, for a Bostonian, and stood for a moment irresolute in the heart of the cross-roads, uncertain which of the four narrow wooded ways looked least as if it ended in a cranberry swamp, or a clearing, or other abstractly useful but concretely dinnerless locality.

Suddenly, his eye caught the soft, irregular outline of some small object lying in the dust, a rod or so down the direct road. He drove up to it. As he approached it grew pink, as if it blushed. It was an apple-blossom.

II.

Yorke's faith in woman rallied. If the caryatide meant it,—and a caryatide might be capable of just such a picturesque procedure, it was very delicately done. If she did not mean it, at all events he had got scientifically past the cross-roads on his way, and she had got successfully out of it. He picked up the apple-blossom, and drove on. It could not have been ten minutes before his dumb guide brought him abruptly from the forest almost into the heart of the village.

The little town of Sherman slept peacefully in the afternoon sun. No one seemed to be astir. No glimmer of a phaeton cover shone across the hot, still street. The caryatide was gone,—where, it really did not occur to the young man

to wonder. He and the Bangor pony forgot her with equal rapidity and success, in the leisurely hospitality of the Sherman Hotel.

Sherman, Maine, June 5th.

My dear Mother,—I hope you promptly received the letter I mailed from Bangor. Another went, also, from some indefinite locality in the Maine wilderness: they called it a post-office; I believe it was a town-pump—or an undertaker's; but my memory is not precise on this point.

I am just settled and at work. Uncle Jed's affairs are a mesh as fine as that eternal tattering Lucy Garratt used to bring over to our house, when she was a school-girl. My regards to the Garratts, by the way, when you write.

It threatens to be a process of some weeks to unravel my tattering, and I have taken lodgings with Uncle Jed's executor. I stood the Sherman Hotel for twenty-four hours. I've saved one of their doughnuts for a croquet-ball, to complete your imperfect set. Direct your letters, if you please, care Isaiah Butterwell, Esq.

In Isaiah Butterwell I find a genuine "fine old country gentleman," and Uncle Jed's confidential and devoted friend. He is a man of property, influence, and honor in this place. It is kind in them to take me in. Mrs. Isaiah says she is glad of my society. She, by the way, has an eye like a linnet and a tongue like a Jonathan Crook pocket-knife, and a receipt for waffles which in itself has reconciled me to Sherman society for indefinite lengths.

I seem to be the only member of the family besides the united head. It is a huge house, with wings, dead white, and reminds me of a Millerite robed and wondering why he can't fly. We seem to live a good deal at one side of the house, and one of the wings belongs to me. I have not explored as yet beyond my own quarters and the dining-room. Strain the Beacon street imagination if you can, up to the level of waffles for tea! She asked me, too, if I would have feathers or hair, and did I prefer *woolen* sheets! The house is perfectly still, and altogether delightful. As I write a single sound of wheels breaks the deep, sweet country silence. They roll softly up and past my window to the barn; probably Mr. Butterwell has been to the prayer-meeting, a dissipation to which his good wife endeavored to decoy me. Rather late for a prayer-meeting, too. Mr. Isaiah drives a good horse, I perceive.

Speaking of good horses, I lost my way, coming on, and was piloted through the forest by a caryatide in a basket phaeton. Remind me to tell you about her when I get home.

To-morrow I drive out about twelve miles along the coast, to see a man who knows another man who has heard of a "wilder lady" who stands ready to purchase certain shares of a certain ship which come into poor Uncle Jed's legacy. They launch their ships in salt brooks here, and trustfully tug them out in search of the sea. I shall convert all these wandering investments into cash as soon as possible, at any reasonable sacrifice, for I fancy there can't be more than three or four thousand involved at most. The property is widely scattered, much of it in local loans, like that of most Maine merchants. My share, as you remember, is more concise. Write when you can. Remember me to cousin Don. Don't miss me. It does not pay. Your affectionate son,

WALDO YORKE.

Waldo Yorke had started in search of the post-office to mail his letter, when Mrs. Isaiah Butterwell followed her guest to the door, and stood, while he was gathering the reins over the now gayly-recuperated Bangor pony. Mrs. Butterwell was a well-dressed woman, in the Maine sense of the term. She had a homely, independent face, with soft eyes,—not unlike a linnet's, as Yorke had said. She regarded him closely for a moment, and without speaking.

"What a charming day!" said Yorke, feeling it necessary to be polite even at the expense of originality.

"I'm too busy to bother with the weather," replied Mrs. Isaiah, briskly. "Can't spare the time for that Down East."

"Indeed! That is a frugal sentiment, at all events," Yorke ventured.

"There's no sentiment about it," retorted Mrs. Butterwell. "It's sense; as you'd find out if you lived here. If I'd spend myself noticing weather, I should have been in my grave ten winters ago. Are you fond of young women?"

The linnet put this startling question with gentle eyes, in which it was impossible to capture a ray of satire or of fun.

"As I am of the State of Maine,—with reservations," said Yorke guardedly, visions of Sherman "society" presenting themselves at once.

"Are you fond of an early dinner, then?" pursued Mrs. Butterwell, with the serene air of one who clearly sees the links of her own syllogism.

"Passionately, madam."

"We dine," said the hostess, bowing herself away with a certain dignity, "at half-past twelve."

"I will be at my post," said the guest, smiling, "dead or alive!"

"I would not say that if I was you," urged Mrs. Isaiah Butterwell, returning to the door step, and looking gravely at the young man. "I've always thought, if I'd been God, I'd have been tempted to take people up that way, just for the sake of it. Talk about his tempting folks! Folks throw a terrible lot of temptation in his way. But there it is. It just shows he

isn't made up like other people, after all. How that horse of yours does fuss!"

The Bangor pony was nervous indeed that morning; highly grained, after the journey, in Mr. Isaiah's generous stable. The buggy sped along the village street with emphasis.

It is doubtful if the caryatide would have offered her services as guide to its occupant that day, through the beautiful heart of the forest, four miles deep.

Waldo Yorke, as he clattered through that pleasant representative Maine town, where the meeting-house, post-office, and "store" were the important features, and impressed him chiefly as reminiscences of American novels which he had tried to read and failed at the third chapter, amused himself by a rapid acquaintance with the business signs.

"Goodsell, Merchant." "Cole and Wood, Lumber Dealers." "Dr. A. Lloyd." "Collins, cheap for Cash." "Smith and Jones, formerly Jedediah Yorke,"—and so on. He got these things into his head as he had the rhyme of Lucy Gray, the day before, with that idiosyncrasy which asserts itself in this exasperating form, and which threatens to prove the human intellect more lawless than the passions or the will. He found himself particularly a victim to the cheerful refrain of "Collins, cheap for Cash."

His host overtook him before he had driven far. Mr. Isaiah Butterwell, as Yorke had observed, shared the apparently well-spread Maine appreciation of a good horse. He reined up his heavy, handsome sorrel, and the two men rode abreast for a mile; they chatted, across whorls of horses, the estate and Uncle Jed, and Maine politics, and the price of lumber, and horses again. The Boston boy listened deferentially to the gray Maine merchant; perceiving in him something of the same rugged dignity that Uncle Jed had borne in Beacon Street. Yorke felt that here was a king in his own country; he regarded the hard-worked man with respect, and pleased himself with drawing his points out, and storing them up, so to speak, with a sense of increasing one's knowledge of "types."

"I've got to leave you, to collect some interest," said Mr. Butterwell presently. "That's my turn,—the first right. You keep straight on till you find your man. Drive easy over the bridges. They're plaguely rickety, some of 'em. That pony of yours ain't used to 'em in Bangor. Back to dinner! Hope so. There, now, I wonder if my wife has told you—what? told you about—what, Zach Chandler!—about 'Whoo!'"

"Oh, yes, she told me," called Yorke politely, as the two horses nervously parted company. He looked, laughing, back to watch the old man, thinking how sacred their dinner hour was to these two lonely people; how large all little events must be in lives like theirs. His heart was full of a gentle feeling, half deference, half compassion. Mr. Butterwell's gray hair blew in the wind; he held the reins wound double over his knotted wrist; he sat with left foot forward. Zach Chandler was a long-stepping horse. Waldo Yorke, looking over his shoulder, saw, and long remembered that he saw, these trifling things. Suddenly he felt a thrill in the reins at which his own horse was tugging steadily and sensibly. He turned his head, to see the Bangor pony tremble, rear, and leap; to see the loose yellow boards of a murderously-laid bridge bound up; to see that there was no railing; to perceive a narrow streak of black water, presumably; and to know that he was scooped into the overturned buggy-top, and dragged, and torn, and swept away.

The whole thing may have taken three minutes. All that occurred to the young man quite clearly, as he went down, was, "*Whoo! cheap for Cash!*"

Against the blackness of darkness a blur appears; it stirs; it has extension and intension; it throbs and thrills, and with the eternal wonder of creation moving upon chaos there is light. After all, how easy a matter it was to die! And collins in Maine are cheap for cash. How could a man have believed that a process so abnormally dreaded for nearly thirty years could be, in truth, so normal and so deficient in the extreme elements of agony. To be sure, there was one crashing blow; a compression of some endurance within narrow limits; but he had suffered so much from neuralgia, far more from the prospect of death.

How clearly and distinctly, though slowly, vision returns, in this new condition! There is a handsome old lady in a *post applicable* cap. Like the child of Adah, she "goeth lame and lovely." By the way, will one make the acquaintance of a man like Lamb, in the society to which one is now to be introduced? Yes; still the old lady in the lace cap. She is sitting by the library grate, alone; her crutch has fallen to the floor; a yellow telegraph envelope is on the hearth; she is not weeping, but her face is bowed; she looks very old; the lines about her mouth are pinched; she has a haggard color. It seems easy to speak to her. How easy! Mother! Mother! She does not lift her head. Mother! It is true what we are told, then. The living do not hear. The dead may cry forever. A horrible deafness has fallen upon her. A man would have liked to see her once,—to say good-by, or to have her sit by him a few minutes. Yet it seems there is a woman here. That is a woman's hand which rather hovers over than holds me. How cool it is! How delicate!... Ah, no! Remove your hand! It does not caress; it tears me. Remove your hand! I am in agony. What in the name of life and death has happened to me in this accursed wilderness! Was there anything in those old-fashioned dogmas after