

THE DOCTOR'S COMPROMISE.

Young Dr. Felton, famous, rich, and admired by the circle he moved in, was somewhat uneasy and discontented. Why he should be he himself could not explain, for the world at large served him well. There were no visits to be made to hospital wards, no students to accompany to clinics, no fashionable invalids in need of his care, and even the poor wretches of the slums in whom he had become interested had been attended to that morning. So he had promised himself the whole afternoon to prosecute the study of a theory he was developing and which he earnestly hoped to reduce to practice. The best-disciplined minds, however, are at times subject to overpowering moods, and it was one of these that now caused his discontentedness. Probably it was due to a sense of freedom from the thousand duties that usually hedged him in; or shall we charge this unaccounted state of mind to the faint suggestion of early spring that had stolen across country fields and found him out in his New York flat? Whatever it was, the Doctor's studies were not made that April afternoon.

A retrospective mood, in which memories of the passed welled up in his heart, controlled him. Under its influence, this busy young doctor, the astonishment of the profession, whose firmness and almost womanly gentleness alleviated the fever-racked hospital patient, and whose kindness brightened the life of many a poor factory girl, as his skill satisfied the wealthy society lady, became almost a boy again. It was not his wont to indulge in these memories, for his life was too busy. But now his discontent slipped away as he gave himself up to them. And as he sank down in his easy chair, it was not the walls of his library, the books, the instruments, or the anatomical charts that formed his horizon. He had little thought of his profession that afternoon. It was the little New England town of his birth and his student days he was absorbed in.

He could not be more than 28, but one might read experience in that clever, good-looking young face. Faint lines marked his features as his thoughts dwelt upon his little home on the hillside, beautified by his mother's flower-beds and clinging vines. There, next door, had been the home of the little girl who had been the best friend a boy ever had, as he used to think in those days. What a refreshing sensation the thought of that little girl brought! and the young doctor smiled unconsciously as he pictured the pranks they played together. The smile faded as his mother's early death came to him, how she had died in her youth and happiness, leaving him with his grief-stricken father. And well he remembered the quiet life they then had led together, the evenings they had spent in the lonely home thinking of her. Sometimes the father would read to his boy, or would tell him the hopes he had of seeing his little girl a physician like himself one day. For the parent had also been a medical man, one of the servants of God's people, who labored not solely for money, and was, therefore, greatly beloved by his fellow-townsmen.

Then came his father's sudden death, hastened by the unending labors that kept sapping his strength throughout one long dreary winter. Before the young doctor's eyes that scene of 15 years past vividly presented itself. On a wild March day, far unlike the present golden afternoon, he stood in the quaint little churchyard bitterly crying as the cold stones fell with a dull sound upon his father's coffin. And while he knelt among the sympathetic friends, and the good old parish priest prayed fervently for the departed soul of the good man lying there beneath them, his grief rendered him insensible to the sharp out of the sleet and rain. One thing only had been able to cheer him, and that was his little neighbor, who, as his white arm led him from the sad place he whispered—“Willie, don't feel so badly. Your papa is in heaven, and I love you.” But now he could hardly recall her name, so utterly had those old times ceased to interest him. “Dead as Helen of Troy for all I know,” he said to himself.

His aunt had taken him to New York to live, and there he had met one of his father's college friends, a man high up in the medical profession. For his friend's sake this man interested himself, and observing the boy's bright clever ways, he trained him under his own eyes in all the mysteries of medicine. Carefully watching as the boy grew up to young manhood, he discovered rich traits that promised to reward systematic development. When it was time, therefore, he sent the boy abroad to have the advantage of the ripest knowledge in Europe. He studied at Paris under the famous savants there. And after several years spent profitably he went to Berlin. It was to the German student-life he owed much of his character, for he had loved that life with its excitement, its duels, its singing, and the cheer-headed men he met. When he left there and came back to America he was a brilliant, masterful man, almost a genius, and not hampered, as he told himself, by too many religious convictions. He was not positively irreligious, not at all a cynic, but, like the Germans whose he had known, one who considered all the obligations fulfilled when the mandates of honor and duty are observed. Still he acknowledged that the faith of those poor wretches whom out of philanthropy he often pitied, was the one sunny spot in their gloomy existence. But for himself he was wont to tell the young Catholic priest who used to meet him at the hospitals, and who had

interested him in the poor, that to do right by one's fellow-men, be charitable, and admit the existence of God was sufficient. And then Father Ryan, who saw the nobility of the young doctor's heart, endeavoring to convince him of his mistake would be told that nothing short of a tangible scientific experiment could be of any avail as an argument.

Such was the nature of Dr. Felton's reveries, and he might have continued them had he not thought of Father Ryan. When the priest entered his mind, he remembered a promise he had made to visit him. This afternoon was his opportunity. He had given up all his plans of study that day, and besides he felt that the company of the sincere young clergyman would do him good. So, still possessed by recollections, he got up and went out of the house into the street.

After a short walk he arrived and was admitted into the parlor of the pastoral residence by the neat, elderly housekeeper. In the interval of waiting he occupied himself by admiring the exquisitely carved ivory crucifix that hung above the door. A slight smile played over his mouth as he looked at the tokens of Catholic faith around the room, for to him they were little better than instruments of superstition, and it somewhat puzzled him that his priest-friend could so implicitly believe in the usefulness of such things. His meditations were broken off abruptly by the appearance of Father Ryan, who took him up to his own room. He was delighted to have this busy young doctor pay him a visit, and especially since his leisurely manner promised a long, pleasant talk with him.

The doctor was still full of memories, and of these he appeared desirous of talking. Father Ryan, therefore, sympathized enough to get the smoldering fire of these memories ablaze, and soon he was listening to the story of his friend's life. To him this explained very much and also encouraged him greatly. It was no slight interest he had in the young doctor who was so clever, good, and honorable, but whose religious views pained him deeply. He had often wondered at the familiarity his rationalistic friend showed with Catholic observances whenever they had visited together, and the sick poor of his flock. Where could he have acquired himself so well as to know when candles and holy water were necessary? He ventured to say accordingly:

“Doctor, pardon me, but it strikes me, after hearing you dwell so on your faith, that you once were a Catholic, and still have the faith, despite your apparent indifference.”

“Not at all, Father, not in the least,” rejoined he, “although you have rightly guessed that I was born in your faith. There is no use, I am convinced, in tying oneself down to those unreasonable ceremonies of religion. You know my profession of belief, and I think it a good one.”

“Well, I know your mind too thoroughly to argue with you on that point,” the priest answered; “but tell me, are you not greatly influenced by these recollections of your childhood when they come back to you?” The other nodded assent.

“Then I may venture to say that by them you will be led back to the faith in which you were born.”

The doctor was now getting merry, as he saw his friend becoming so. Excusing himself, he broke the seal of his right hand, and found that it was from an old priest, who had been a great friend of his, and whom he had not heard from in years. The letter informed him that his friend had perished in a little New England town, and the reason of his writing was to request a favor.

Evidently Father Ryan, thought the doctor might like to hear what the letter contained, for, asking him to listen, he read the following excerpt:

“Knowing that your circumstances bring you into daily contact with the best medical men in the city, I beg of you by any means possible to persuade some specialist in brain diseases to come up here immediately. The patient is a young lady, the only child left a widowed mother. The local physicians are mystified at the case, and declare a cure impossible. But I would not accept that decision without making a great effort to secure someone who could speak more authoritatively. Let no fear of expense retard you.

“If you can do this favor for me you will secure my lasting gratitude, besides a mother's blessing.”

Believe me,
Yours sincerely in Christ,
THOMAS BERKELY.

Turning to the doctor, the young priest inquired if he had not deeply investigated disorders affecting the brain.

“It has been my favorite study,” he replied.

“Well, then, would you not be willing to take up this case which so puzzles the village doctors?”

“If you wish it, and I can accomplish the journey so as to return tomorrow morning, I am willing. But you have not mentioned where you wish me to go, have you?”

“True. The name of the town is Brassville, in Connecticut, on the

New York, New Haven, and Hartford Railway, not far distant from Hartford, I believe.”

“Brassville is a name I never heard of in Connecticut, which is my own home, Father, and I was born in the vicinity of Hartford; but I suppose, since I've forgotten so many things, I've also let slip the names of towns; but if you say I can get there and return in the limited time at my disposal, I shall be very glad to do whatever lies in my power for the young lady.”

“Then, doctor, it's settled, and I'll telegraph to Father Berkeley to meet you to-night at the station. Now you must hurry your preparations, for your train will leave in about an hour. Good-bye and on your journey reflect upon the things I've said to you this afternoon.”

This parting shot brought a smile to the doctor's face as he left the house and hastened towards his home. Arriving there he selected the necessary articles and was off directly for the Grand Central Station. And as he went along he was once again plunged into the thoughts that had possessed him all the afternoon. How singular it was that after the hours he had given to his childhood's home that day he should now be on his way to the vicinity of which that home was! How twisted are threads of life, he mused.

He bought his ticket and passed out through the guards. Seating himself comfortably in his seat, he gave himself up to the congenial memories and the words of Father Ryan. He was going to a town called Brassville, and if this town was near Hartford it was not far from where he himself had passed his early days. He, however, could not recollect any such place. His own town bore the old Indian name of Mattatuck. But as he did not remember the names of all the places he once knew, his inability to recall the very modern name of Brassville didn't cause him much uneasiness. So he told the conductor to notify him should he be asleep when the train arrived at his destination, and closing his eyes he leaned back in the seat, the servant of alternate naps and dreams.

It was the prettiest place in the town this changing home of Mrs. Sayton. Set back on a broad lawn and surrounded by walks that pandered bordered all through the summer time, the old-fashioned white house stood at the top of the long, high village street. Down below the busy main thoroughfare the community spread itself out, and along the river that seemed to cut the distant northern hills apart the familiar New England scene of numerous clustering factories met one's eye. In front, two tall butanah trees stood like giant sentinels, and on the side, row of elms forced a boundary between the lawn and a narrow country lane. Rose bushes climbed over the house and ran around the windows, and a honeysuckle vine curtained the long verandah. It was the beginning of spring, and everything had begun to feel the season's influence. The buds were swelling on the shrubberies and trees, and the fragrance of fresh earth upturned in the gardens mingled with the invigorating odor that came from fields and near-by woods.

People passing by on this April evening, however, missed the sense of serenity that had seemed to be long to the place. Little groups of women had been coming and going all the afternoon, and the anxiety expressed by their audible sighs seemed to hover around and attack whomsoever chanced to pass the gate. A fight for life was going on in one of the rooms around whose windows a rose bush had wound itself. Mary Sayton, the only child of her widowed mother, was slowly dying, about to fade away when the beautiful springtime that she loved so much was bringing back the days of sunshine and flowers, and the pleasures she deemed so sweet. Beside her bedside the poor mother, worn out by sleepless nights and the terrible strain, struggled to keep back the feeling that threatened to overcome her.

A fortnight ago and Mary had been full of life and happiness. Her charity lit up and cheered several poor homes, and Mrs. Malone, “always ailing,” daily declared that the sweet girl's visits made her forget her pains. It was therefore it that a deed of mercy should have occurred, the accident which now it seemed was to result in her untimely death.

A reckless driver would have run over little Tommy Hafferty, whose mother was too busy to keep him from playing in the middle of the public street, had not Mary run out in time to snatch the little fellow up. But as she lifted him from under the horse's feet a projecting piece of wood in the swiftly-moving wagon struck her on the head, leaving her senseless with the scared youngster safe in her arms. Tommy's father and some fellow-laborers in the near-by mill had seen the accident, and running out they lifted the young lady they all admired, and tenderly bore her to the house on the top of the hill. Her brain had sustained a grave injury, and since then the periods of consciousness had been few and brief.

The kind old family doctor moved around administering soothing medicines. The case puzzled him and the fellow-physician whom he had called into consultation. And now as he turned towards the heart-broken parent, who already felt the awful loneliness and desolation of death, his own eyes were full of suffering and pity. He also loved the pure, bright girl, and it pained him, who was so used to benevolence, to see the fair young treasure of scarcely twenty and twenty years leave the world in her bloom, and he utterly powerless to help her. His voice was almost broken as he told the stricken mother to resign herself to the inevitable.

The poor woman could no longer restrain her pent-up emotion, and she sobbed out: “Oh, I cannot lose my Mary and be left alone in the world! Oh, my darling girl! Speak to me, Mary? Oh, let me have the consolation of talking with you once more!”

But no response came. There was no intelligence in those sweet blue eyes, and the beautiful face that lay on the pillow, shrouded in luxuriant brown hair, was vacant of all knowledge of its surroundings. Then the mother sank down and buried her face in the bedclothes.

The delirium seemed to increase, and some of Mary's friends in the adjoining room could hear wild, incoherent sentences uttered with appalling vigor. How long her nerves could have withstood it was doubtful, and all were glad when they heard of her going to the old parish priest. Some person was with him, and as they passed through into the sick girl's chamber the girls noticed the stranger's youthful appearance.

When the old family physician was called in, he found that the young confere was one of the ablest men in the profession, he looked upon him somewhat sceptically. And who would blame this experienced practitioner of thirty years' standing for thus looking on one who seemed hardly as great an age as he. The clean-shaven face and the crisp, dark-brown hair that clustered on the high forehead indeed were almost typical of a boy; but the experience that showed in those serious eyes, the firmness of his slender, well-knit body marked him as one who well knew his purpose and pursued it to the end always. Gradually the older man found himself admiring the manner in which he inquired the circumstances, and the firmness and decision with which he examined the patient.

The girl was still in a delirium, which, instead of abating, grew much worse. Something had to be done immediately, for it seemed as though the end was approaching. First, the young doctor prevailed upon the distracted mother to leave the room, and so she was led out and the girl took her in charge. Then seeing the urgency of the case, he considered what was best to be done. To his mind there was only one thing that was to change the delirium to some state of mind in which pleasant ideas might predominate. Soon the patient showed the success of the young doctor's skillful treatment. Gradually the mood came, and a calmer mood came to speak on something that have been very dear to her. To the doctor it was nothing but the coming back of memories that had for years lain dormant in brain cells. But he listened because he was ever a student.

What she said would hardly offer food for scientific consideration, but his attention was undivided as she was saying:

“Willie, let's go down by the stone wall and gather flowers for the May altar. Father Berkeley says he's going to have a pretty altar in honor of Mary, Queen of May.” “Are you going to be a doctor like your father, Willie?” “Oh, won't you be happy on your first Communion day? I know you'll be a good man like your father, and have the priest say of you, as Father Berkeley says of your father, that he's a Christian Catholic gentleman.” “Don't cry so, Willie, your papa is in heaven, and I love you.”

Thus she wandered on in a happy state of mind, saying things that made the young doctor start. His own name was William; his father had been a doctor, and he had a dim recollection of once having heard the last words somewhere once said to him. But now there was no time to spare for such thoughts. Consulting awhile with his older associate, he prepared for a delicate operation, upon the success of which he could not be certain. But risks were equal. Then in that chamber a gallant fight those two men made against death, and finally the light of hope came into both their eyes. The young doctor had triumphed, and the older man grasped his hand in one whose pressure conveyed a glad testimony to his genius. And as the morning came he instructed the older doctor in what was to be done thereafter, and as he was required at home as soon as possible he hurried from the house, barely having time to assure the overjoyed mother that all might soon be well, and with her blessings in his ears he got into a carriage and was driven to the morning train.

When he had asked his friend to undertake the case of the young lady suffering from brain-trouble, Father Ryan little suspected the turning-point he was affecting in that one life. The next day he met him at the hospital as calm and gentle with

the patients as ever, yet with a pre-occupied, almost absent-minded expression upon his features.

The spring passed away, and as the early summer came on the doctor began to feel uneasy. He was much preoccupied at times; he was less genial than he had been, too, but a not unbecoming gravity had settled over him. He became more thoughtful, but he guarded his thoughts, and even Father Ryan had no inkling that the patient he had visited on that April night was responsible for this change. Such was the fact, however. After returning from her he had felt a great longing to visit the home of his boyhood, to look at the old house in which he was born and lived a happy childhood, and to see the graves of his parents. Often he would call up the words the girl had said, words which seemed to have once been said to him: “Willie, let's go down by the stone wall and gather flowers for the May altar,” he heard as distinctly as upon that night over a month ago, and they made him think of another stone wall where he used to pick violets with—Willie, with his little neighbor next door. How tangled it all seemed to him! His mind was made up. He would go back to his old home and see the places again, and—

The doctor's decision surprised himself, and he laughed like a boy at it. Yes, he would take the vacation he had not had since entering upon his profession. Father Ryan was not taken by surprise, for he had been watching his friend daily. He promised himself some interesting developments of this vacation. When he bade the doctor good-bye he banteringly told the doctor not to fall in love while away. He had touched the mark nearer than he knew.

It was a very dark night when Doctor Felton came home to his birthplace. In the next station he looked around as if he expected to meet old friends, and when it occurred to him that 15 years must have lifted them out of his recognition he laughed quite sadly. Everything around him was new. The station he was in looked familiar, but that was not extraordinary, because it was just like many others built by the same railway company. The hotel he was directed to was as smart and new. Indeed he expected to find an entirely renovated town next morning when he awoke. That night he went to bed filled with happy anticipations of meeting his old friends and school companions. And pleasant it would be to visit the old home and then go into the home next door where she lived as he used to when they were boy and girl.

He awoke early and eagerly dressed. Then he went out to see the place before the people began to stir about the streets. It happened to be Sunday morning, and as he went out everything was very quiet. The hotel was in a new part of the town, the modern appearance of which attested its quite recent growth. There were more factories than there had been, but as he went along he recognized the old landmarks.

Returning to his hotel he met a rural-looking person who casually asked him if he was a “stranger.” Nothing loath to enter into a conversation, the doctor told him he had been absent from the place a long time.

“Wall,” interjected his questioner, “the place has changed mightily to you, I guess. Then new factories are causing it. Some say the summer resort folks 'll fight shy of the place now; but they want of some of us hev anything to say. Enterprise's all right when it don't spile bizness, but when it comes to changing a picture, ask name that the town giv the place it's runnin' too far. The's what them boomers did. Why, they led a town meetin' and changed the name to Brassville, because they 'lowed it would draw the summer people, and so, another town meetin' was assembled, and we put old Bill Johnson chairman, so's the name became Mattatuck again. The factory people swar that it wouldn't have been done if some of the farmers hadn't filed a good many voters with hard cider that day. But I'll swan that's none of my bizness.”

“What do you say, sir? Did you really change the name of the place to Brassville?”

“That's what they did, but we bet them and changed it back again.”

The farmer curiously watched the look of perplexity that overspread his questioner's face. But the other smiled and commended the farmers for their shrewdness, and as he went into breakfast the rural Yankee chuckled out:

“Swan it was a good joke 'bout the hard cider.”

It was no wonder the doctor was so deeply perplexed, for in Brassville the name of the place was one, and the same, then he had unknowingly visited his old home that April night, and the young lady he had operated upon lived there. He speculated, whether she had entirely recovered, as he had not heard of her since. And

so he sat in the hotel window revolving the vexing problem in his mind.

Presently bells began to ring and people were passing by on their way to church. Father Ryan's letter had come from Father Berkeley, he recalled. Father Berkeley had been parish priest when his father lived, and his father's friend. It would do him good to see the kind old priest now, and so he decided to join the crowd of church-goers that filled the street.

The little church had not changed much, but the faces were strange ones. Mass was almost a forgotten fact with him, and he determined to stay in the rear of the church that he might better see the face of Father Berkeley and try to tell who were present as the congregation came out at the end of the service. He remained in his seat as the people filed out after Mass, and it gladdened him when he found himself able to recall many faces. And as he studied the passing congregation he felt himself absorbed in a tall, beautiful girl who came down the aisle alone. Those blue eyes he could not forget. It was the girl whom he had attended.

He left the church and watched her as she came up to some friends and went off chatting with them. But the little girl who used to be his neighbor—she of course was a young lady now—he hadn't seen anyone who resembled her. His interest, however, was now centered in the young lady whom he had watched come down the aisle. Of course he would like to visit his one-time playmate and talk over their early pranks. It would be pleasant, but not just the same as he had imagined it during the last several weeks.

The churchyard was but a short walk away and he bent his steps in that direction. He stood under the shade of a tree, and he thought of melancholy thoughts. He had been what his mother would have so loved to see him, a good man? Would his father feel proud of him? Were he now alive? There came back to him those words heard in delirium:

“I know you'll be a good man, and have the priest say of you, as Father Berkeley says of your father, that he is a Christian Catholic gentleman.”

They rang through his head, and he dropped to his knees there on his parents' grave and prayed.

“Buffalo is a model Catholic city,” says an exchange. “It has thirty-seven Catholic churches, ten chapels and nine convents, besides its many Catholic colleges, schools, hospitals and libraries.”

“I have used SURPRISE SOAP since I started house and find that it is longer and is better than other soap I have tried.”

Frederick, N.E. Dec. 18th, 1899. Having used SURPRISE SOAP for the last ten years, I find it the best soap that I have ever had in my house and would not use any other than I can get SURPRISE. Mrs. T. Mary Troup.

I have to wash for three brothers that are in the railroad, and SURPRISE SOAP is the only soap to use. We tried every other kind of soap, and I tell every body my overall is as clean as good color. Mandie Logan.

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It was no wonder the doctor was so deeply perplexed, for in Brassville the name of the place was one, and the same, then he had unknowingly visited his old home that April night, and the young lady he had operated upon lived there. He speculated, whether she had entirely recovered, as he had not heard of her since. And

“The's what they did, but we bet them and changed it back again.”

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