

FEBRUARY 28, 1903

CELEBRITY.

Settala, as he was called—just as one says Verdi, Mazzoni, Schiaparelli, or any other leader of arts or sciences—received his patients from 4 to 5 o'clock in the afternoon. Settala was a famous physician.

His reception-room was connected with the entrance of the house by an electric bell, and throughout the whole hour this bell rang continually. An uninvited servant, properly grave and dignified, met each caller at the door, ushered the visitor into the waiting-room of the great man, and quietly announced the name.

There were ladies who had left their carriages at the door, young gallants whose faces gave evidence of the life they led, a celebrated singer, who was the prevailing fad, a banker whose name was a synonym for wealth, a recently elected Deputy, each anxious to have him pass upon his or her case, and yet fearing to have him pronounce it serious.

From time to time the office door would open quietly, and those who waited would catch a few words uttered in a dry, monotonous tone, as the doctor dismissed his patient. The next in turn would pass in, and the door would be as quietly closed.

Reclining upon a couch of green velvet the Countess Narducci, was chatting with a friend. "I have come," said she, "to ask Settala whether I am to go to Leghorn this year, or to Roccaro. If it were not for him, I would make Roccaro my permanent address for the season, for the Fabris and Segris would be there, and they are agreeable and congenial people. But you can not trifle with Settala."

Settala disposed of his patients rapidly, for his time was too precious to waste a moment of it. When the Countess passed out with a triumphant smile on her face, a fragile little girl who until then had remained hidden in a corner, timidly approached the entrance to the inner room. The doctor, standing at the threshold, with his hand on the knob, surveyed her from head to foot and bade her enter.

He sat down in his usual place at the ebony inlaid desk that stood between the windows, while his hand impatiently stroked the beard that hung to his breast. The girl, modestly garbed in black, her poor little cape scarcely holding together, so frequently had it been mended, toyed with the tassel of her umbrella, too nervous to utter a word.

With sudden resolution she moved toward him, blushing deeply, while her timid blue eyes looked questioningly into his expressionless countenance, and said: "It is not for myself I come, but for my mother."

He meant no insult, nor had he spoken harshly; merely in the business-like tones that he used whenever a similar case arose. He remembered too well his own early poverty and the cruel treatment he had received, not to exercise authority now that he had it, and force the world to pay a heavy interest for his former suffering.

She surprised him by the way she received his dictum. With an energy entirely unexpected she recovered from the blow to her sensitivities, arose and said with dignity: "My mother can not go to the hospital. We are poor, but not destitute. Whatever your charges may be they will be paid without comment. When can you come?"

For a moment, but only for a moment, Settala hesitated, his usually immobile countenance showing for that instant the surprise he felt at her manner. Slowly taking a sheet of paper from his desk he said, "Your name?" "Sylvia Foligno," "Sylvia Foligno," "The address?"

She gave it to him, and then repeated her question, "When do you think you will be able to come?" "I have no many matters to attend to that I can not say exactly within the next day or two."

He raised his head and looked into her eyes. Every trace of timidity had disappeared from her face, and she spoke calmly, without a tremor in her voice. Her womanly feelings had been hurt by his suggestion. He had fallen from the pedestal, and she now treated with him as a mere man.

Turning to go out, Sylvia cast a quick, comprehensive glance around the room. It was not like the usual physician's office. It contained not a thing but books and stiff furniture. The spring had come and all the air was full of the fragrance of flowers, but not a flower adorned the frigidly frigidities sought medical and scientific fraternalities sought him as a man, and never a man as a doctor.

With a movement of his head Settala suggested entering another room. Sylvia preceded him into the apartment whose few pieces of furniture revealed the care of a patient hand. She turned toward him, awaiting his opinion. "It is a serious case," said Settala. His voice was as strong as usual, but a softness had crept into it.

She gasped for breath, then asked, "When?" "The day after to-morrow," he answered, and rapidly gave his directions. "Will you save her?" she asked, and all her soul was in the question, the soul of a loving daughter who had suffered much and who, while she hoped, feared.

With many sighs, excited gestures, and languishing looks, she began: "I do not know if you are aware of it, but poor Madam Foligno has a son, a desperate character, a bad man who is worse than a vampire, living upon these poor women. Miss Sylvia is an angel. She teaches all day, and can not work embroidery, but she the expenses fall upon her, and she is a saint."

With a curt nod Settala left her, pressing short of his head, passed rapidly down the stairs. "Well, he is a character," said Madam Eleonora, taken aback. "I am afraid I did wrong to tell him. He did not seem pleased; but then geniuses are all strange. Anyhow it is not the first time they have lost their heads in my presence."

Over the side of a white bed furnished with the best coverings in the house, Settala leaned with a look of intense interest. The shadow of a woman that lay there awoke with a groan of pain as the physician examined her. He questioned her briefly, with the acumen of an experienced practitioner. The sick woman answered in monosyllables, breathing laboriously the while.

Settala sat in his coupé thinking, and the subject of his thoughts was the uselessness of visiting Madam Foligno any more. Nevertheless, putting his head out of the window, he soon found himself at the driver's seat, and he continued to visit her for two months longer.

The vacation had commenced now and Sylvia was always at home, but the trouble and hardship of her life sharpened the little thin face until it seemed like alabaster in its white transparency. One day, out of hearing of the sick woman, Settala said quietly, "It will be necessary for your mother to go to the country. Pure air is the best restorative."

She did not reply. "Do you understand?" said the professor, purposely accenting his words. "I understand, but we can not do it." It was the truth, but it cost her a bitter pang to say it.

He remained leaning against the wall, a far-away look in his eyes. The day before he had gone, in response to a telegram, to another city to perform an operation, although he had returned with a well-filled pocketbook, he had rebuked the people on account of the slight he considered they had put upon him in not asking him to dine, while his conferees obsequiously agreed with him.

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and with a short "good day," passed out. "Well, he will have to speak himself," she said aloud, her energetic nature fully aroused, but in her heart she knew that she was wrong.

A carriage stopped at Madam Foligno's door. Madam Eleonora ran to the window and put out her head, adorned with a double crown of curling papers. "Mersey on us!" she cried, "It is the professor! Whoever would have thought it? It is the first time he ever came so early! I can not show myself to him in this state, Sylvia, greet him for me, and tell him how displeased I am. He knows very well the embarrassment he causes us poor women in coming so early. But the step of Settala precipitated in the hall, and she made a precipitate retreat."

A short visit satisfied the sharp eye of the doctor, and gently shaking the hand of the convalescent woman, he said: "Well, I am, at last, content with your condition." She smiled a thankful acknowledgment, and made a sign to Sylvia, who followed him, somewhat pale and inwardly trembling. In beginning she had recourse to a subterfuge: "Madam Eleonora requested me to give you her compliments," she said.

Settala, his hands clasped behind his back, his mind buried in a brown study, listened to her with half-closed eyes. She continued, nervously herself with the tales she had heard of his implacable mercenaryness.

"Pray tell me how much we—" She could not continue, the words were falling like molten lead upon her heart. A complete change had come over the doctor. Something seemed to be struggling for utterance, something that had been in his mind for some time. He would like to have opened his arms and strained the fragile, pallid little woman to his breast to answer: "Pay me by making me happy! Give me the faith that I need; warm the cold members of this heart of mine; give your pure love to this man who, until now, has loved only celebrity!"

But he resisted the impulse. He still possessed sufficient generosity to refrain from endeavoring to join the unselfish young life of this innocent girl to his ignominiously hard, cold career, to sacrifice her, in her angelic sweetness, to the altar of his egotism.

There is one person, however, to whom Settala raises his hat in respectful salutation, in sunshine and in rain—a demure little woman who prays and labors, struggling bravely with the misfortunes of life. And whenever she hears malicious voices branding Settala as a strange mixture of pretentious genius and narrow-mindedness, Sylvia would like to show them a small sheet of paper which he had sent her the very evening of that day on which he left her and upon which his nervous hand had written a receipt for fifty lire. And as she showed it she might have said that charity so delightfully given did honor to the giver. But this is her secret.

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Mulligans, etc., whom one meets so frequently, and whose forefathers were undoubtedly Catholic? In the early days when Catholic priests and churches were few, many Catholics were lost to the faith, and their children to-day are utterly anti-Irish and anti-Catholic. Even to-day there are leakages from the Church. The world, the flesh and the devil are still (as they have been, and will be) bitter enemies of the soul of men, and are powerful in drawing people out of the Ark of Salvation.

Every little one needs a medicine at some time, and mothers cannot be too careful in making a selection. The so-called "soothing" preparations, invariably contain opiates and other harmful drugs, which stultify the little one, and pave the way to a constant necessity for the use of narcotic drugs.

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CATHOLICS AND PROTESTANTS IN NEW ENGLAND.

The Rev. S. B. Nobbs, writing in the Baptist Watchman on the "Religious Outlook in New England," discusses the change which has come about in the religious complexion of this section of the country.

Mr. Nobbs asserts that in the meeting of Puritan and Catholic, here in New England, there has been less suffering on the Catholic side as well as on the Protestant side. This we believe to be true—else, how account for the Protestant killings,

DE BE CONTINUED.