The Doctor's Joke.

SOFTHE OLD DOCTOR," was what they called him. His mustache was gray, he was past forty-five, and, not being married, was considered solitary .-It mattered little to him. The care of his patients made him bright and active. His profession was sufficient for his wants .-He was the loved and respected physician for half the families in the place, and he never wanted for company and friendship. Why he never married had been the speculation of the village. The subject was now threadbare, and they had ceased to talk of it. He saw much of female society, for he was one of those fine rare natures that make 'brothers to girls.'

His general good nature, and, above all, his ability to keep secrets, made him indeed the brother to all the girls in Wauchusetta. They came to him with their little pains and ills, and their little heartbreakings and love-sorrows. For one he had pills and advice; for the other, a ready ear, counsel, help and confidence.

No wonder Sally Depford came tearful and angry to him in her little difficulty with Sam Barett. A small rage made her the more attractive.

As the doctor heard her woeful tale, he could hardly fail to study her face with ad-

Being twenty years his junior, rather pretty, reasonably well educated, sensible and quite ready for a joke at any time, she preferred the bright side of everything .-Hence her present serrow. She did not wish to be 'bothered' as she expressed it, with a serious love affair. It was a trouble, a vexation, an interference with her pleasure, and-

"Well, there! It's entirely dreadful, and I don't want it, nor him. Just as I was fairly out of school and preparing to have a splendid time with the girls, then this thing comes along, and I don't like it.

"That is so, doctor. Is it not?" The doctor had no immediate reply to make. He would consider the case and her.

There was something so attractive about her face, that it was no small wonder that Sam Barett, the last beaux left in the village, was desperately in love with her.

She frowned. He was so slow. "Come, sir, parade your wisdom. I can pay for your advice, and I want it."

"Go to bed early, get up late, and sleep it off."

"That's very good for bim. Tell him that, please. As for me it does not help me a bit. There it stands. He will pursue me with attentions. I don't want-" "Soub him."

"He's not saubable. Snubbing falls harmless on his good natured temperament. I tried it and it don't work. He took it like a lamb."

"Tell him you're not at home." "Then he leaves his card, and he says he will call again, and be is sure to do so.' "Poor boy. He has it very bad this

time. The symptoms are alarming." "They are, doctor, they are, and I don't like it. It's a nulsance and a bother, and besides that, I hate him. There-" " Feel better, my dear ?"

"Yes; for I'm getting mad. I feel like breaking things, and-

"You do. You do it all the time. Poor boy. I'm not surprised. Here you go about the place, being attractive as po ble, and then you break all our hearts, and soold us for it.'

"It's not my fault. I don't make myself."

"Well-no-not exactly."

"For heaven's sake, doctor, why don't you do something? Advise me."
"Get married."

"Dector, you are too hateful."

"I presume so ; doctors always are. But that's my advice; get married; then he can no longer trouble you." "Now, you're silly, doctor, and I shan't

tell you any more. You don't care a straw for my troubles, after all, and—"

Here she began to be teary, and threatened to have a "good cry."

"My dear, my advice is not so bad. You must admit that if you were engaged he would leave you at ouce."

"I suppose so." "Yes. Then get married; or, if you don't care to go so far, arrange with some young man to be engaged temporarily .-Then your Sam-

"He's not my Sam, thank beaven!" "Then your Sam will take unto himself another wife, and when all is secure you can break your engagement, and all will be serene again."

"What an absurd idea! Jump into the water for the sake of escaping drowning. It'al you I don't want anybody's atten tion. It would be a dreadful trial to be engaged at all, even in self-defense."

"Not if the other party would agree to keep himself away and lend a diamond ring for a while, and play the part of the

distant intended.22 141 don't know, doctor; it is a desperate measure. But it will be effectual." "Of course."

"It would be rather amusing to go home and aurouses that I was engaged, I should have to tell mother how it really It mined. She sent a note to the doctor stood, and father would be, of course, let by a friend the following day, saking him into the secret. The rest need not know, to call for it. He was away-wouldn't be and make us a little call?"

Goodness ! what a scattering there would be, and how all the old ladies would talk."

"You need not care. It would be easy to act your part, and in a few weeks all would be comfortably over and everything would be serene again."

"I declare, doctor, the more I think of it, the more amusing it seems. It is very wicked, no doubt, but then the case is a hard one

"And demands heroic remedies." " Precisely. Now the next step is to get up a good lover. I shall not expect much. Any straw man that's convenient will an-

swer. Do you know of one, doctor-a good one? He must be nice, and all that, or I couldn't endure it." "Well-no-I cannot think of one just

now. There are none living near that are available."

"Doctor, I have an idea,"

"How startling! Bring it forth that I may admire it."

"You be the lover." "All right, I'm willing."

"Then we're engaged." "Yes-for the present."

"In fan, you know." "Oh, of course. Till Sam gets married, r you wish to break it."

"Where's the ring?" " Oh, I have one up stairs an old one I suppose that will answer to cover our little arrangement."

"How splendid of you, doctor." "Now you must go. Old Mrs. Davis is coming with her neuralgia. Shall I tell

"Tell her what?"

"Of the engagement." "Yes. Just hint it, and before night

the town will know it."

And they did. How they anatched up the stray morsel of gossip and stirred it into their tea and their sugar. Fortunate circumstances. It soured on their stomachs-the news, not the tea. Even the sugar and good Bohea dld not save them from expressing with beautiful freedom just what they thought about it.

"Such an old goose to be taken in by that designing Sally Depford. The minx! The little contriving, artful-

Such language. It is not pretty. History like this cannot stoop to report all that was said concerning the last new engagement. As for Sam Barett, he faded beautifully away, and actually disappeared,-He suddenly found a tip-top chance for business, you know in New York. Ought to go right on and fix it up.

His parting with Sally was not particularly affecting. She wouldn't allow it .-That curious, antique, diamond ring flashed in his astonished eyes, and his affection melted softly away into nothing, like the cloud of white steam under which he es caped in the 3:40 p. m. express. The whistle echoed among the Wauchusetta hills, and the gentle Sally heard it without a sigh.

Some of the other girls could hardly forgive her for driving away the only available young man in the place, but they sooth ed their larcerated feelings with the sweet hope, that as the summer vacation was near at hand, a new importation of city visitors from Boston, and New York might make it gay again, and spread wide once more the matrimonial horizon.

The suddenness and complete success of the victory rather surprised the victor .-She find succeeded beyond expectations. Now that it was all over, she would ret the riug, and-well, no, pechaps she might keep it one more night. Cousin Mary Depford was coming to spend the night, and it would be rather amusing to wear the ring a little longer, and let her into the secret. She would return the ring in the morning,

Pleased with this unspoken plan, she set the ring firmer on her finger, and prepared to receive her company.

Cousin Mary Depford was charmed with the ring, and was profuse in her congratulations.

"It's all a joke, you know, dear."

"A joka?" "Yes, dear, a little-well-game, if I may so speak.

Cousin Mary was properly shocked. In the retirement of their own room, she expressed her mind fully, and declared alse would not wear the ring another moment. It was a pretence and a shame to do such

a thing. Sally was startled, and plead the dread-

ful necessity of the case. "He was such a bore, you know, and really-what could I do? It was all in fun. There's nothing serious. I mean to re-turn the ring to-morrow."

"I wouldn't wear it another minute, if I

were you, Sally Depford." Sally laughed and still retained the ring. She would return it to-morrow. She would wear it one more night-for it was, really,

such a handsome ring. The doctor behaved beautifully. He only called once, and didn't even ask her to

ride or walk. He walks so fast, and as for the old chaise-you know how it creaks.

It was a very proper engagement. Rather cool, perhaps. What could you expect? Ho was past forty, if a day, they said. She did not return the ring the next day.

back until Monday. Of course abe must wear the ring one more Sunday; and she did, in spite of cousin Mary Deployd's re-

On Monday she carried the ring still on her finger to the doctor. He was just starting off on a professional tour when she came, and was so merry, and there was so many things to talk about, that she quite forgot the ring. Besides, there stood the widow Bigelow, in the next yard, pretending to bang out her clean clothes on the line, and watching with both eyes.

Gousin Mary Depford was harassing,-They had a little 'spat,' after the manner of girls, and made it up on the strength of a promise from Sally that she would certainly return the ring to-morrow.

On the morrow she started, ring on finger, to duly return it. He was not at home. She went again, just before teatime. He was at tea, and pressed her to take supper with his good old housekeeper and himself. She hesitated a moment, then accepted. She could quietly hand him the ring after supper, and in the meantime she might as well have a 'good time."

The fine old house, the elegant dining room and the cosy table set for three, were charming. The doctor was a good talker, and cultivated and refined in his manners. She had been obliged to bear much wretched gossip for the last week or two. It would be rather amusing to see just how she seemed to be engaged. She might as well have a good time, for it would soon be over. She would return the ring as soon as the housekeeper retired. The housekeeper did nothing of the kind. As soon as tea was over she took her knitting, and sat down by the open window in the parlor, where she could see everything that happened both in the house and in the garden.

The doctor acted his part to perfection. He was not too attentive to attract attention from the housekeeper, nor did he forget for a moment to be watchful of his

guesta happiness. At 10:30 p. m. Sally returned to her own room, looking wonderfully serene and happy. Cousin Mary Depford was silent and watchful. Presently she saw something and said :

"Oh, Sally !" "Well, dear?"

"Where's the ring?"

"Oh, my love! I quite forgot all about it; I did, indeed. I'll take it right back to-morrow."

As for the doctor, he sat up half the night, pacing his room alone and in the dark. At midnight he was called to see some distant patient. He was glad to go. The cool ride through the solemn dark gave him a chance to think.

The next day Sally boldly started for the doctor's to return the ring. He was not at home. Of course she could not leave it with the housekeeper. Besides, why should she take the trouble to carry it to him? It was not her place. He should ask for it.

Cousin Mary fairly raged. For the first time Sally was really unhappy over the matter, and in a little passion she pulled off the ring and threw it in a drawer,

"I'll return it by mail, Mary, Now leave me in peace."

There was no peace. Without a thought she walked up alone to the post office through the village street to get the evening mail. It did seem as if the whole town were waiting for their letters. It was too warm for gloves, and in her haste to get the letters she forgot the absent ring.

Such a lifting of eyebrows and whisperng. Flushed and angry with herself, she darted out of the letter office only to almost run into the doctor's arms.

She hid her hands in the folds of her dress and with a forced smile bade bim good evening. He spoke pleasantly, smiled and passed on. In a moment Sally heard his footsteps behind her as she walked rapidly home. She would not turn nor speak to him on the public road-and that would make matters ten times worse .-What was she to do? It was dreadful! How she wished she had never touched the

To her surprise, he overtook her, and quietly and firmly put her arm in his .-For a moment she experienced a sense of unutterable relief and satisfaction. She leaned upon him for support, and was gratified as he seemed to draw her closer. How good in him to come to her rescue,

"The curtain has not been rung down yet, Miss Depford."

The curtain ! Oh, he was only carrying out the joke. With a forced laugh she took the hint, and in a moment was as merry and chatty as ever. Once the doctor looked at her in a questioning way, and once he was silent for a whole minute.

They walked arm in arm up the village street, and at the sight half the town was damb with astonishment, and the other half whispered the dreadful news about the missing ring.

Little did they care. They walked on and on, and almost before Sally was aware of it they arrived at the doctor's gate. The doctor opened the wicket, and with a smile held it wide open for hez to enter.

She pansed. Was it right? Was she not carrying the joke altogether too far?-The blood mounted to her temples, and she was silent. "Will you not come in, Miss Depford,

"No - I - thank you. Not now." She put out her hand to sustain herself, nd laid her angloved fingers on the top of the gate post. She felt ready to faint with mortification, shame and disappointment. This was the end. It was only a joke-a pretence-and-

11 Miss Depford," said the doctor, in a low voice, "where is my ring?

She snatched her hand away, and, hiding it in her dress, turned away to hide ber

"Pardon me, doctor, pardon me; I am much to blame. I didn't mean any harm, and I hated-hated-" "Hated whom?"

"That-Sam Barett; and I was so glad to escape from him, that I am afraid I've done very wrong-very wrong indeed." 41 How no 911

"In carrying out this, dreadful joke, as you call it. I am well punished for my folly. I took the ring off because I must return it to you!"

"But-Sally-I do not wish you to return it."

She turned around amazed. What did he mean? One glance was sufficient.

"Come in-please-my love." She took his arm without a word, and they walked slowly up the graveled path toward the old mansion. The housekeeper came out and bade them welcome in a grand and impressive manner. The crickets began to chirp in the grass. The air seemed laden with the perfume of summer flowers. The ancient ivy seemed to even vaguely hint of autume, as it hung in motionless festoons from the walls. There was a sober air about the place, far different from her childhood's home. The doctor offered her an arm chair on the wide

How courtly and dignified his manners. His hair was gray-with honorable toil .-He leaned over her and whispered :

"It is an old-fashioned place, and I am such an ancient, solitary-

"Hush! please," she quickly said, and the doctor was sharp enough to see the real state of the case. I may, therefore, as well close my story, by saying that the engage-ment was no longer a joke, but a fact which neither party ever had occasion to regret.

Please Don't.

Don't tell the little one, who may be slightly willful, that "the black man will come out of the dark cellar and carry it off if it does not mind." Don't create a needless fear to go with the child through all the stages of its existence.

Don't tell the little five-year old Jimmy "the school ma'am will cut off his ears."-"pull out his teeth"-"tie him up"-or any of the horrible stories that are commonly presented to the childish imagination. Think you the little one will believe anything you tell him after he becomes acquainted with the gentle teacher who has not the least idea of putting those terrible threats into execution?

Don't tell them they must not eat sugar or sweetmeats, because it will rot their teeth. Pure sugar does not cause the teeth to decay; and sugar with fruits is nutritious and healthy, notwithstanding the 'old saw' to the contrary. The case of city children is often cited as if the cause of their pale faces and slight constitution were an over amount of sweetmeats with their diet, when the actual cause is want of pure air and proper exercise.

Don't tell the sick one that the medicine is not bad to take, when you can hardly keep your own stomach from turning "inside out" at the smell of it. Hetter by far to tell him the simple truth, that it is disagreeable, but necessary for his health, and you desire him to take it at once. Ten to one he will awallow it with half the trouble of coaxing and worry of words, and love you better for your firm, decided manner.

Don't teach the children by example to tell white lies to each other and to their neighbors. Guard Hps and bridle your tongue, if you desire to have the coming generation truthful. Truthfulness is one of the foundation stones of heaven. Remember the old Book says, "no liar" shall member the old Book says, "no liar" shall enter within the gates of the beautiful city. There is no distinction between white lies and those of a darker hue. The falsehood is an untruth, whether the matter be great

Mistakes Will Happen. A rich landholder of La Beauce arrived

with his wife and two daughters at the Grand Hotel in Paris the other day. Room No. 117 was assigned to the father and mother, and No 110 to the young ladies who retired about 11 o,clock on the evening CASSIMERS. of their arival. After they had gone to bed the elder of the girls left her room, wishing to get more air. The hall was lit, but she had no candle. She returned after a few minutes rather sleepy and jumped quickly into bed. "I am frozen," she said to her sister, "warm me up." With pleasure," responded a bass voice. The young girl gave a shrick and bounded from the room. She had entered No. 121, having mistaken it for her own room, No. 119. For the next eight days she did not dare to leave her apartment. Finally, venturing to go down to the table d'hote, she found herself placed by the side of a military gentleman of distinguished appearance The joint was brought and our heroine asked her neighbor, the officer, to pass the salt. "With pleasure," answered the voice she had heard in her night advanture, and she fainted away. Her marriage to the officer will soon take place.

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