

Toxin

By OUIDA.

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CHAPTER VI.

He remained there some minutes whilst the water traffic passed by unmolested and the crowd flocked out from a noxena in the Salute. One of the medicine men whom he had summoned came out to the steps.

"The sisters say the prince is better. He seems so," said his colleague.

"What do they know?" said Damer; and added, in a harsher tone, "It is too early to be able to make sure of recovery; it is a disease which is very treacherous."

"You have more knowledge than I," said the Venetian, who was a meek man, not very wise.

"Come to my laboratory in the Fondamenta, and I will show you something and tell you something," said Damer.

His Italian colleague, flattered, complied with the request.

What he showed him were three animals, two rabbits and a cat-inoculated with a kind of diphtheria; what he explained to him were the theories of Lether and Klebs and the discovery of the antidote by Behring; and displayed to him some serum which he had received from Roux, who was only then at the commencement of his application of Behring's theory.

The Venetian doctor inspected and listened with deep respect.

"Why do you not try this treatment on the prince?" he said, which was what Damer desired and intended him to say.

"I will do so on my own responsibility if he is no better in the morning," he replied. "But you will admit that the responsibility will be great, the theory of the cure being at present unknown to the general public, and no one of his family being at present in Venice to authorize the experiment."

"We are there as your colleagues, and we shall support you," replied the more obscure man, touched and flattered by the deference of one who was in the confidence of French and German men of science.

"If there be no other way," said Damer, as he put the small phial of serum back into a locked case.

The dual meaning which lay in the words was like a devil's laugh in his ears.

When the Venetian doctor had left him he had taken the phial of serum, inoculating and another smaller bottle containing a clear liquid; he had put these together in the breast pocket of his coat. He looked up at the Ca' Laranigra as he passed it; its windows were all dark, and the white lilies had no light upon them save that from the rays of the moon. As he entered the lighted hall of the hotel they handed to him a telegram. It was from the Princess Andreis.

She had received his despatch twelve hours late, as she had been in her summer palace in the mountains; she had left Sicily immediately, and said that she would travel without pause at the utmost speed possible. She added: "I commend my darling to God and you."

Damer crushed the paper up in his hand with a nervous gesture and flung it out, by the open doorway, into the water below.

"Then he ascended the staircase, and entered his patient's room.

The night was very warm; the windows stood wide open; there was a shaded porcelain lamp on the table. One nun watched while the other slept. Andreis lay still on the great bed in the shadow; he was awake, his eyes were looking upward, his mouth was open, but his breathing was easier and less hard. The sister of charity whispered to Damer: "I think he is better. The fungus growth seems loosening. We have given the wine and the meat essence. He could swallow."

Damer said nothing. He was absorbed in meditation. The infliction of death was nothing to him; could he be nothing; he was used to kill as he was used to torture with profound indifference, with no more hesitation than he ate or drank or fulfilled any natural function of his body. What was the man lying sleeping there to him? Only an organism like those which he daily broke up and destroyed and threw aside. Only an organism, filled by millions of other invisible organisms, by a myriad of parasite animals, numerous as the star-dust in the skies.

He sat by the window and looked out absently at the night.

He knew that the nun was right; he knew that the disease was passing away from the sick man; that, if left alone, sleep and youth would restore him to health, to love, and joy.

Should he leave him alone?

The mother of Andreis could not be there before another day, travel as rapidly as she would. His neglect, the effect of affection on the nervous system, and that the sight and sense of a beloved person near often gave to enfeebled frames the power of resistance and recovery. Those emotions were not in himself, but he recognized their existence, and he knew that in Andreis the emotions and the affections were very strong in proportion as the mental powers were slight.

"What thou doest, do quickly," he murmured in words which he had heard in his childhood as he had sat in the old parish church of his native village.

He rose and walked to the bed. Andreis still seemed to sleep, the

breathing was heavy and forced chiefly through the nasal passage; but there was a look of rousing serenity on his features—a look which the man of science in well aware precedes recovery, not death. As surely as anyone can gauge the unseen future, he was sure that if left alone Andreis would recover. He no longer hesitated; he no longer doubted. He went to the adjacent chamber, where the two nuns, still dressed, were sleeping. He awakened them.

"Come," he said gently. "He is worse, but I am about to try the cure of Behring. It may succeed. It will be necessary to hold him. I require you both."

He was well aware that it would be unwise to essay that operation alone—it would rouse comment in the day to come.

"Hold him motionless," he said to the two women. "Do not awake him if you can avoid it."

He filled the inoculating syringe from one of the little phials which he had brought from the Lazzaretto. He stood in the full light of the lamp so that the two sisters could see all that he did.

"Loosen his shirt," he said to them.

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OF WHAT IS THE MAIDEN DREAMING?

Words by ELIZE MARIE DUDLEY.

Music by MARIA STRINBERG-ELMORE.

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He was consistent enough and sincere enough to follow out the theories of the laboratory to their logical sequence without flinching. He honestly held himself without blame.

He called up to his command that power of will which had never failed him; he returned to the bedside as he would have returned to visit a dog dying under atmospheric pressure. Andreis still lay in the same position. About the almost invisible orifice where the needle had punctured there was a slight tumid swelling.

"He seems worse," whispered the nun.

The head of Andreis was thrown back on the pillows; his eyes were closed; his face was pallid and looked

blue around the mouth and about the temples. He was now straining for breath like a horse fallen on the road, blown and broken.

"He is worse," said Damer, gravely. The nun, who had a tender heart, wept. Damer sat down by the bed, which had been the youth, the form, the vitality of Andreis wrestled with death as a young lion tears at the walls of the den which imprisons him. The terrible choking sounds were heard through the air to which his closed throat could not open. Blood foamed

in his canonicals and a boy bearing the Host.

Six months later the man who had killed him would Veronica Laranigra. Her family opposed and her friends warned her to vain; she shrank from him, she feared him, but the magnetism of his will governed her till he shaped her conduct as the hand of the sculptor moulds the clay.

He became master of her person, of her fortunes, of her destiny; but her soul, frightened and dumb, escapes from him, and hides in the caverns of memory and regret.

WEAK MEN YOUR ATTENTION IS CALLED TO

DELAWARE AND HUDSON RAILROAD

SOME DAY

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[The End]

In froth from his lips, which were curled up over the white teeth, and were cracked and blue. Damer ceased to look; almost he regretted.

"He is out of pain," said one of the Venetians.

"He is dead," said Damer. The women crossed themselves. The little bird outside sang loudly. The door opened, and the mother of Andreis stood on the threshold. In the corridor beyond was a priest