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STOLEN FROM THE GRAVE,

—OR—

The Doctor's Wife.

CONTINUED.

The doctor noiselessly followed his sister-in-law up-stairs, and stopped on the landing for a word before going into the chamber.

"Well?" he said.

"I sent for Doctor Marston this morning," she whispered, "and he says that it's typhus fever. You know fevers are prevalent. He thinks we must be very careful."

In a few minutes the two came down-stairs again.

"How is she?" asked Anne, who was awaiting them at the foot of the stairs.

"As Meeta says, a little feverish," the husband replied, drawing his wife into the dining-room. "And I really wish, Anne, that you could deny yourself the pleasure of seeing her till morning."

She began to exclaim, but he gently stopped her.

"I don't mean to insist, my dear," he said. "But your mother herself advises it, and I agree. It is for you to decide. You have never had this fever, and you are now in such a state that you would be very likely to take it. I wouldn't be so selfish as to keep you from your mother; and in the morning you can go in and take care of her all the forenoon."

"In the morning it will be too late!" the daughter cried. "You are trying to deceive me. I shall go now."

"Well, at least take a cup of tea first," her husband said.

She would not sit, but took the cup of tea her sister poured for her, and drank a part of it. Then her husband led her up-stairs.

The room was darkened, rather than lighted, for more light would have entered from out-doors, had the curtains been lifted, than came from the shaded lamp in the fireplace.

"O mamma! I am so sorry!" cried the young wife, running to throw herself on the bed. "I never dreamed of your being sick. Are you very sick?—Eugene can cure you now he has come. Why hadn't you sent for us?"

The mother tenderly smoothed the tear-wet cheeks that pressed her pillow, and after a little while said:

"I am glad you are come, my darling. But you must not take it so hard. We must be resigned to the will of God."

"But, mamma, Eugene says it is only a little fever," the daughter persisted.—"You will be better to-morrow, won't you?"

"If it is best, I shall," the mother replied gently but faintly.

"Anne, you will tire mamma," her sister interposed. "You had better not make her talk any more."

"You can come in the morning and tell me all about your journey, my dear," her mother said, in the same fainting voice. "But now you had better go and rest."

After much persuasion they got her out, and even succeeded in making her eat something, but it was impossible to inspire her with much courage.

"Something dreadful will happen," she persisted in saying, not being able to bring herself to speak more clearly. If the doctor was anxious, no one would have known it. He had too much professional coolness, and was too adroit in parrying questions to commit himself.

Mrs. Wilson could scarcely be called dangerously ill; but at her age a fever requires careful watching, and the doctor knew that a few days would tell the

story. The sick woman quietly made every preparation for death, and held herself in readiness for whatever might happen.

On the second evening after the return of the young couple, Charles Wilson, who had been out, came into the parlor where his brother-in-law sat alone. "You know little Rose Paulier?" the boy said.

"Yes," the doctor replied, quickly looking up, prepared to hear what was to follow.

"Well, she died yesterday and was buried to-day," Charles went on; and, sitting down by a table, dropped his face to it and burst into tears.

"Why Charlie!" exclaimed his brother, going to him.

"Eugene, is my mother going to die?" the boy asked, wiping his eyes, and looking intently into the doctor's face.

Doctor Thayer took his brother's hand, and looked at him with kind and solemn eyes.

"Charlie, I don't know," he said. "I shall know in a few days. Be a man, whatever happens. There are only you and Meeta to hold up. You know Anne breaks down entirely, poor child! Be a man, Charlie!"

The boy struggled nobly with his emotions, choked and swallowed it down. "I will do the best I can," he whispered, not able to speak louder.

Doctor Thayer went up to the sick-room and left directions for the night with the nurse. He then went to his chamber, and, lying down beside his wife, whom he had persuaded to go to bed, coaxed and petted her a while, winning from her a promise to allow him to go out to see a patient. "I may not be able to get in till late," he said. "And I want you to try and sleep. Your draught will soon work. Mother is comfortable, and when I come in I will step into her chamber again. I think that she will have a good night."

Doctor Thayer, as soon as the arrangements for his marriage had been made, and when it had been decided that he was to board at the Wilsons', had built him an office there. It was a small building, connected with the cottage by a covered passage, and having an entrance on a side street. In the summer-time, when the trees were in full leaf, this office was hardly visible from the house, the windows being still further covered and hidden by a hedge of thorn.

The doctor felt very nervous this evening. Though he would not own it even to himself, his wife's want of self-control was a burden to him. He was also anxious on her account, and on her mother's. It was impossible that he should think of sleep. Besides, fevers were prevailing to an alarming extent, and he had his hands full. Coming down-stairs, he put on his hat and went out, first glancing about, then taking the road towards the poor-house. He was a little doubtful of success in his errand, but it was worth trying. He knew Warren, the poor-house keeper, and that the man was fond of money. The only doubt was on account of the Burkhardts. If they had remained away a little longer, all would have been well; and, as it was, perhaps their coming would make no difference.

He reached the house just in time.—Mr. Warren himself, in his shirt-sleeves, with a lamp in his hand, was going about locking up for the night. The doctor tapped faintly on the side-light of the front-door, and in a moment the man opened the door and came out, knowing what the errand was the moment he saw Doctor Thayer's face.

"Twenty dollars!" said the doctor, in a whisper.

"I don't dare, doctor," the man replied, also in a whisper. "Mrs. Burkhardt might change her mind."

"What does she say?" asked the other impatiently.

"Why, she was sorry the child had not been buried with her mother, but supposed that it was too late now."

"There must be no disinterments in this sickly season," the doctor said decidedly, "and I shall tell the selectmen so to-morrow. Tell your wife to plant a rosebud over the little thing's grave, and it will be all right. Mrs. Burkhardt won't trouble herself if any one will give her an excuse to avoid doing so."

The two men stood for some time

longer talking, then Mr. Warren went into the house again, and the doctor went homeward. But instead of going to the front-gate, he turned into the little street that ran by the side of the cottage, and softly entered his office by means of a key which he carried in his pocket. His first step when there was to close the tight outside shutters. As he drew them, they touched the branches of the trees and flowering shrubs, and shook down showers of heavy dewdrops and set the rich perfumes flowing in fuller clouds.

The night was lovely, fresh, still, and starlight; but he shut it all out, carefully drawing the curtains, and placing screens around a table at the upper end of the office. This done, he lighted an argand lamp that hung over the table, on which, by means of reflectors, he turned the full brilliancy of its clustered flames. Then he brought out a case of instruments, a pair of gloves, a basin, and a towel.

Finally, he went noisily out and walked around the office. Not a ray of light shone from the closely muffled windows. Assured of that, he seated himself on the doorstep and waited.

It might have been two hours before he heard a careful step approaching, and in a few minutes a man came up to the office door, bearing a burden in his arms. Not a word passed between the two as the doctor received in his arms this burden, and going with it into his office, shut the door and locked it behind him. The other man went away as noiselessly as he had come.

Doctor Thayer carried his burden to the table at the upper end of the office, and laid it there. Then, folding back first a dark old shawl, then a veil of white cloth, he revealed the lovely waxen face of poor little Rose Paulier.

"Dear little creature!" he said, an impulse of tender pity stirring for a moment his professional composure. "It was a pity she should die!"

But there was something so pathetic in the face of the child that he could not help pausing a moment to meditate upon it. No mother, no father, no relative, no friend even, to take care of her during her sickness, to smooth the hair when she died, to adorn the small, cold form for its last sleep.

The hands fell at her side as he undid the cloth that wrapped her, and not a ribbon, nor flower, nor bit of lace hid the bareness of the coarse, plain robe in which she was dressed. She was lovely, too. A dead child is almost always lovely, but this child had a beauty of her own, beside the luminous whiteness, the chilly serenity, the inexpressible solemn sweetness which death had brought her. Doctor Thayer was something besides a physician, he was an artist; and for once his profession was forgotten, and instead of searching for knowledge, he paused to admire beauty. How long and curved the dark fringes to those white lips!—With his gaze fixed intently and unconsciously on those closed orbs, he recollected the last time he had seen her, her pretty, shy way, her indignant grief when he had laughed at her, and the tears that had flashed in the beautiful eyes now shut and tearless forever.

It had seemed a trifle to him then, but now he reproached himself with having been heartless and cruel. In a thoughtless moment he had wounded the heart and suffused the eyes of the little one whose whole short life had been a life of sorrow, and he had done it when he was happy; and when she had been doing the little possible to her to serve the one he loved best. Now, as a fitting end to her deserted and friendless existence, her lifeless body, instead of dropping peacefully to dust beneath the turf, was exposed to serve that science which could not serve her, even in preserving a few pitiful years.

"I vow, I hate to touch the poor, forsaken beauty!" the doctor said, rising erect after having bent over her for some time, and drawing a deep breath as he spoke.

He stood a moment looking on the lovely waxen image that lay there in the strong light helpless, in his power, seeming also, by its quietness to trust him, and strange, vague superstitions began to stir his brain, and reach down to his heart. He shrank from touching her with the knife, she was so beautiful, she looked so living. It seemed as if

she would cry out if he should touch her.

"Who would think that hard work would unnerve me so?" he muttered, turning away from the table, and walking up and down the office.

The air was close and warm. He softly unlocked the door, and went out into the night. He did not dare to walk lest his tread should be heard; but he stood on the steps of the office and went through the dumb-bell exercise without the dumb-bells, drawing in full breaths of the pure, dewy air.

It was the wrong way to strengthen his nerves, or silence his imagination; that could have been better done in sight of his bottles, instruments, specimens, and skeletons. The strange, magnetic influence shed from that cold and lovely image from which he had fled, radiated from every object in nature.

He shivered, clenched his hands, and strove to throw off the enervating influence.

"The air is full of death," he thought, "of that which we call death, and which is only a change-working power, dissolving lower organizations in order to form them into higher. Only pure health can resist the potent influence of this atmosphere."

Setting his teeth and clenching his hands in the effort to steel his mind, he returned to the office, locked the door behind him, and stood a moment looking over a book of anatomical plates that lay upon the shelf. Then he stepped decidedly back to the dissecting-table and prepared for his work, but without looking at the subject. Lastly, knife in hand, he approached the body, and bending over it he drew away the coarse robe that veiled its bosom. As he did so, a thrill crept tingling from his finger-tips over his whole body, and every nerve, and every pulse throbbled with a noisy beating that seemed to defeat his sense of hearing.

The child's breast was rising and falling with an almost imperceptible breath and, first the long-fringed eyelids quivered, then they lifted, and dear little Rose Paulier's bright eyes opened, and looked with a bewildered yet earnest gaze into the startled eyes that bent above her.

"My little darling," he whispered, hastily flinging the knife and gloves under the table, "do you know me? Do you feel better?"

She looked at him a moment longer without seeming to comprehend; then a change that was more a brightening of the whole face than a smile, came over her, and stretching both her arms up, before he was aware of her intention, she had clasped his neck, and drawing him down to her, kissed him as a child kisses its father when she welcomes him after an absence. He was both astonished and touched, it was so unlike the shy child, and besides, it seemed such a tender re-assuring after his self-reproaches on her account, and such an unconscious manifestation of gratitude for the life which he had accidentally both rescued and spared.

Anne Thayer was fully resolved that she would not sleep one wink till her husband's return. In spite of his tender care and thoughtfulness, she felt aggrieved, she scarcely could tell why. Besides, she had heard him say that very morning to Meeta:

"Be careful not to do too much, dear. You know you are our sole dependence."

The bride of a week did not like her sister to be her husband's sole dependence.

"I know I am not like Meeta," she said to herself, beginning to cry; "but, then, I"—

Not knowing how to finish the sentence, or think of any possible reason why her husband should not have spoken precisely as he did, Mrs. Thayer cried a little while, and even while crying, fell asleep.

Meeta, after setting out a luncheon for the night-nurse, and seeing that her mother was comfortable, had gone to bed. She was learning that she must take care of herself, and that a weak yielding to grief and anxiety was not only vain, but that it rendered her unfit for the duties of the day. So, resolutely putting all thought from her mind, she closed her mental in closing her bodily eyes, and in a few minutes, by help of a sleeping-draught, was sound

asleep. Charles alone, of all the family, remained up.

"I'm going to wait for the doctor," he said, as Meeta put her head in at the parlor door, and gently urged him to go to bed.

She looked sorrowfully in his face, and with a faltering good-night, left him, not daring to trust herself with a word of sympathy. Poor Charles was trying to be a man, and the effort made him look pale, and prematurely grave. There was not only the fearful looking forward to his mother's possible death, but the pang which he felt on hearing of the death of Rose Paulier, and, also, that gloom and apprehension inseparable from a time of general sickness. Besides, it was now almost a fortnight since the day he had carried Rose, stricken with fever, in his arms, had taken her breath, had felt her burning cheek against his own. If he had caught the fever from her, it would show itself in a few days.

Charles had not mentioned this last subject to his brother-in-law, but he thought if the doctor should not be in haste to go up-stairs on coming in, and should be in a talking mood, he would ask him about it.

The boy tried various ways to divert his thoughts, and watched the clock, wondering what kept Anne's husband out so late. Eleven, twelve, one o'clock, came and went; and just as Charles was thinking that really he had a mind to go out in the front yard and listen for some sign of a step in the street, he heard what seemed to be a knock on the back door. He listened, and it came again, low and cautious, but an unmistakable knock.

"Who in the world can it be?" the boy thought, going out through the kitchen, and from there into the corridor out of which the back door of the house opened. Here he heard the knock for the third time, but not now on the yard door. It was on the door at the end of the corridor which led to Doctor Thayer's office.

For the first time the boy felt a little alarm, but while he hesitated, the knock was repeated, and he heard Doctor Thayer's voice on the other side:

"Charlie, won't you open the door?" Charles immediately unlocked and opened the door, and saw Doctor Thayer there looking very pale and eager.

"Is anybody up but you?" he asked, hurriedly, before coming in.

"No; they're all asleep," was the answer.

At that the doctor stepped into the corridor, and laid his hand on his brother's arm.

"Charlie, I believe that you've got pretty good pluck," he said, "and I'm going to give you a chance to show it. How are your nerves? pretty steady?"

"I'm all right," the boy said, straightening himself up.

"Good! Now you know you told me that Rose Paulier was dead?"

"Yes," the boy said, clouding over a little.

"Well, she isn't dead, it was a mistake, and she is alive and in that office. No matter just how she came there.—Nobody must know it on any account. It would make trouble enough for me if it were known. No one in the house must suspect it, except Meeta, and she I shall tell in the morning. Can you help me? I must be in the house, and the child must not be left alone."

"I'll stay with her," the boy said, eagerly, understanding the whole matter at once. He had read of resurrections, and knew that doctors sometimes got subjects in a contraband manner; and he was far more likely to believe in marvels than one who knew them far better would have been.

Full of excitement, he followed his brother as he hurried back to the office, and stepping in at the open door, saw Rose Paulier lying on the sofa, a shawl wrapped about her, her head pillowed on a cushion, and her wide bright eyes fixed on them. She smiled as they entered, but did not move.

"Now, my little girl, I've got somebody to stay by you," the doctor said, sitting before her, and taking her small hand in his.

She smiled kindly, but without perfect confidence in the boy.

"And I want you, too," contriving with delicate tact to express her prefer-