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STOLEN FROM THE GRAVE.

—OR—

The Doctor's Wife.

CONTINUED.

"O SIR! we poor nuns are not able to see how the glories of earth are brighter than those of heaven: or what advantage a gay and frivolous woman of the world, who spends her time in the pursuit of her own selfish pleasure, has over one who lives a retired, humble, and innocent life,—watching her heart that no sin may enter, instructing children, and forming their minds to virtue, accepting and using her life all for God. We are happy and at peace here, and we know that the world has snares. Here every day we say God chastens those whom he loves, and in our crosses, if any are imposed, we see our Father's predilection; in the world we might forget that, and fall under the burden."

Doctor Thayer was a man of the world and though familiar with noble thoughts and sympathizing with all high and generous sentiments, still, in many things he thought the world's thoughts. He could appreciate the lofty purity of the stand the woman took; but the feelings was not familiar to him. Possibly he had heard similar sentiments from the pulpits; but they had been from the lips of men who had fine, or at least comfortable houses, who had families, and freedom to go where they would, to whom society and nearly all its pleasures were open. But here was one who practiced what she preached.

"But Rose may not become a frivolous woman of the world. You have educated her here to a nobler life; let her now go out and exercise her influence to purify this society which you fear so much. We want such women."

The superior sighed. "It is for her to choose," she said. And, going to the door, she directed a sister who stood in the hall to ask Sister Blanche to come to the parlor.

The doctor was too much agitated to ask why she should be called sister, and breathlessly watched the door by which his former charge was to enter. It opened presently, and a slender figure glided in, and, bowing to him, but without lifting her eyes to his face, went and stood by the superior.

A tremor of surprise and delight ran over the man, as he stood up, involuntarily, at sight of that vision. Blanche she was,—pale of face, but with that milky pallor of a flower that has grown in the shade, and still paler from the black of her coarse robe and veil. For though her noviciate had not yet commenced, she had anticipated the dress as much as was allowed. Ah, the tranquil sweetness of that unspeakably lovely and delicate face! the gliding grace of her motions; the indescribable air of beauty and holiness that hung about her!

"Blanche," the superior said, "this gentleman is Doctor Thayer he has come to see you."

A faint red bloomed in the girl's cheeks at the sound of his name, and her brilliant eyes flashed full in his face, and dwelt there an instant, then dropped, suffused with tears. She whispered a word to the superior, and, receiving a nod in answer, timidly advanced toward him, with her hand extended.

"You are welcome," she said, with the direct earnestness of a child, letting her hand remain a moment in his clasp. "My one earthly wish was to see you."

"If I had suspected that!" he ex-

claimed, reddening deeply. "I supposed that I was not expected to call here: and never dreamed that I was desired." "You know I could never forget you," she said, emphasizing the last word—then timidly withdrew to the superior's side, and sat with her eyes downcast, waiting for them to speak.

"Doctor Thayer brings news for you," the superior said gently. "Relatives of yours have sought you out, and a large fortune is at your disposal."

"Relatives!" repeated the young recluse, lifting her eyes again. "Have I relatives?"

Her manner was perfectly tranquil, but there was a faint tremor in her voice.

The doctor immediately explained that the relative who instituted the search was now dead. "Mr. Walter Stanley," he said.

"Walter!" she repeated. "Then it was he who gave mamma this watch." She drew it from her belt as she spoke and opening it, pointed to the words engraved inside; "Rose, from Walter."

The doctor, a little impatient at the superior's slowness in explaining, took the matter on himself, and in a few forcible words defined her circumstances, the relationship of Mrs. Burkhardt, her ownership of the Hall, and the position she was called to take in the world.

She heard him with surprise, but no appearance of elation; there was even an expression of trouble in her face, she looked thoughtfully down for a moment without speaking.

"I could give the money all away," she said presently, as if seeing a way out of some difficulty. "You could see to it, Sister Veronica," to the superior. "Because, you know, since I am to commence my noviciate next week, I would not wish to have to think of such things."

The superior glanced triumphantly at their visitor. Here was a beautiful young girl who would willingly turn away from all the glories of earth, even when they were at her feet.

"But, my dear," exclaimed the doctor, "you are not going to be a nun?"

The girl raised her white and startled face, and looked from him to the superior.

"That is," he added, "not till you've chosen again, from your new position. You have now other duties and responsibilities, which your conscience should not allow you to renounce. The superior will tell you that your noviciate must now be indefinitely postponed, if not finally abandoned. You are, of course, too inexperienced to understand your duties fully. You would not wish to cast opprobrium on your friends here by allowing the world to say that they enriched themselves at your expense."

The shaft flew, as he had meant that it should.

"Doctor Thayer," said the superior, with quiet dignity, "I would gladly take this girl penniless, as I thought to receive her. But you are right in one thing: Blanche has no experience. I perceive that her noviciate must be indefinitely postponed. If, on fully realizing her new position, she shall still be of the same mind, I shall rejoice; if she should change, I hope to be resigned."

"There will be some legal formalities to go through with," the gentleman continued; "and of course it would not be agreeable, nor, indeed, possible, for the business to be transacted here. It seems to me best that Rose should go to my house. I will send my sister for her at any time you may designate. It was the request of Mr. Samuel Markham, who was appointed her guardian by Mr. Stanley. The will provides that she shall be under guardianship one year after she is found."

Sister Veronica looked with a sad smile at her young friend.

"You see, my dear, that you must submit," she said. "I have no authority, and you are independent. I can trust, though, that you will not forget me, nor God."

Rose Paulier had taken the superior's hand and clasped it to her bosom, and, while the two were speaking, had stood looking intently at each, a new expression coming into her face and form. She seemed to grow taller, her head was lifted, the sweet lips were pressed a lit-

tle more closely together, the dark eyes were open, and brilliant with what looked like the first stirrings of pride and will, and her pale cheeks began to show a faint pink which gradually deepened into a vivid crimson. She was indescribably beautiful and imposing. In that few minutes during which she stood there silent, her habit of obedience and entire dependence seemed to slip from her like a garment, and she became a woman capable of thinking and deciding for herself.

"When do you think you would like to go?" the superior asked, watching her attentively.

"I will think about it to-day, and decide in the morning," the girl replied, quietly, giving no sign of a disposition to take advice on the subject.

The interview was becoming constrained and awkward.

Doctor Thayer rose to go.

"I will send Mrs. Coolidge to call on you in the morning, and you can make any arrangements you see fit with her. I shall be happy to have you, under her protection, make my house your home till a more suitable place is made ready for you. It was Mr. Stanley's desire that you should live at the Hall; but there may be some delay in obtaining possession of that. However, I merely called on you as a friend, to announce to you the news of which I was the messenger; the business is entirely in the hands of your guardian and all your wishes are to be expressed to him."

Whether by some subtle sympathy she detected the wounded pride and feeling which he veiled carefully under a tone of friendly courtesy, whether she shrank from being completely in the hands of a stranger on her first entrance into the world, or whether her old fondness for and dependence on him was striving in her heart—for whatever reason, the young girl's countenance changed. An earnest softness took the place of its absorbed look, the eyes looked up into his imploringly and timidly.

"Will not you even advise me?" she asked.

Whenever you may think fit to ask my advice, I shall be most happy to give it, as far as I am able," he replied, smiling, and turning to take leave of the superior. But the smile was not a heart-felt one, and it woke no answer in that sensitive face.

To his surprise, Rose followed him to the door.

"I do not want to go out of here, if I am not to be near you, and have you kind to me," she said, when he turned, aware that she was beside him.

He had only bowed on taking leave of her; now, with a real smile, which her face reflected, he took her hand.

"If you choose it, I shall be glad," he said.

"And I want all the advice, except in my religion, to come from you," she said. "There is no one in the world who has a right to command me save you."

He did not choose to say a word, in reply to an appeal which so entirely suited him, in presence of any one else. He only smiled again, clasping her outstretched hand once more took his leave.

But it was hardly a happy face which Doctor Thayer wore, as he drove down the avenue.

A whisper arose in the town of Saxon—a rumor too wild and strange to be true; yet every one was anxious to know how such an absurd story could have been started. The gentleman pook-pooed it, the ladies doubted and buzzed, and meantime it became evident that something was really the matter.—Mrs. Burkhardt was not at home to visitors; and the servants, when questioned, merely looked mysterious, and said that their mistress was very much engaged. Next it was ascertained that Doctor Thayer's sister-in-law, Mrs. Coolidge, was at his house, making her yearly visit a month than earlier usual; and, in the bright moonlight evenings, passers by the cottage saw a slight figure walking in the gardens or on the piazza, sometimes accompanied by Mrs. Coolidge, sometimes by the doctor, or perhaps by both. Then Mr. Markham, whom everybody soon found out to be an attorney from England, called at the cottage every day.

Finally the whole astonishing story

came out—the heiress marrying against her father's wishes, and discarded in consequence; the long, vain search of her early lover; the strange, sudden death of the lady; the still more strange apparent death and real resurrection of her child, and all the romantic circumstances of her hiding. It was known that Mrs. Burkhardt utterly refused to believe the girl anything but an impostor, and threatened to contest the case.—But scarcely had a deeper and more sinister buzz arisen, with such a question as "Did she know who Mrs. Paulier was?" "What did the woman die of?" "Was the pretended death and the hiding for the child's safety?" and others similar, before it was announced that the mistress of the Hall was convinced that the case was not an imposture, and had acknowledged her young relative, and invited her to become her guest till she could give up the house to her sole occupancy. Her carriage had been standing at the gate of the doctor's cottage. But no one saw the face of the lady as she came down the walk, and, stepping into the carriage with the brief order, "Home!" was driven rapidly away. Her veil was pulled too closely, not only for scrutiny, but for recognition.

Mrs. Burkhardt had had a hard time. One would think it hard enough to be obliged to give up this magnificent estate, and the prospect of a still more magnificent fortune, without doing so under such humiliating circumstances.

"Madam," Mr. Markham had said, when she took a high hand with him, "you may say you do not believe in the identity of the child; but you must have known her mother. If we have to contest this matter, inquiries will have to be made into the manner of Mrs. Paulier's death. It took place at your house and was very sudden. I find that the disease was called cramps, a very vague and unsatisfactory definition."

"My God, sir!" the lady exclaimed, "do you suppose that I murdered the woman?"

"By no means," was the ready reply. "But can you prove that you did not? The circumstances are very awkward, and, preposterous as such an accusation would be, can you prove it to be false? Your position and character would be no screen. You must know, madam, that no one can stand so high but scandal and suspicion may touch them."

"And so," she cried, "I have got to give up, without a word, a home which has been mine for twenty-six years, and take a young adventuress by the hand, and acknowledge her as a relative, for fear that rabble may accuse me of crimes which never entered into my heart to commit!"

Mr. Markham rose, took his hat and gloves, and made a very stiff bow to the lady.

"We will put to the proof my ward's title to be called an adventuress," said he coldly.

The end of the matter was, that Mrs. Burkhardt was suddenly convinced by the proofs shown her, and was devoured by impatience to embrace her young relative, whose natural protectress she was. Why should Rose be in the house of those people, who were nothing to her? But Rose had put a stop to all that.

"I do not know any friends but Doctor Thayer, Mrs. Coolidge, and my guardian," she said; "and I am perfectly comfortable here. Do not hurry about leaving the house. I have no desire to take possession of it for some time. Please stay there this summer if you like."

Rose had tried to be cordial, but had succeeded very poorly. She was really afraid of this woman with the pale, smiling lips, and the hard eyes, and an inadvertent remark of her guardian had given her feelings of vague, incredulous horror toward her.

"The fact that Mrs. Paulier died at her house will be a vise on her," Mr. Markham had said, then, with a glance at Rose, had checked himself.

She did not know, she would not know, what he might learn; but she shuddered at the thought of the woman, and, in spite of herself, had received her advances in the most freezing manner.

"I trust, Mrs. Coolidge," the lady said, as she rose to go, "that you will

try to impress on Miss Paulier an idea of the vulgarity of family quarrels. Her circumstances are already so peculiar that good taste requires an avoidance of anything that may attract future attention.

"The young lady, in accordance with her cousin's will, has assumed the name of Stanley," said Mrs. Coolidge, haughtily, not deigning to take any further notice of the other's insulting speech.

Of course such a reception could not be very agreeable to the lady of the manor, and the parting had been as icy as possible, the visitor hastening to hide her face behind her veil.

This unlucky visit of the mother did not, however, prevent any civilities from the family. That very evening, Mr. Frederick Clarence Lenox Burkhardt opened the gate of the doctor's garden, and walked easily up to where a small party sat on the piazza, enjoying the bright moonlight and the cool, flower-scented breeze. He had time to scan the company fully, as he approached them, for the clear light revealed their positions to him. Doctor Thayer and Mr. Markham sat together at the end of the veranda; and Mrs. Coolidge, with her little girl leaning on her lap, sat at the other, the child asking her mother some of those puzzling questions which nobody can answer, the mother calling up all her wisdom to satisfy the child, and prevent her guessing, prematurely, that there are some things which even a beautiful and beloved mother does not know. Pacing the veranda between these two, was a young man who bent his head to catch the low-spoken words of a slender girl who looked up ever and anon to meet his look.

"Confound him! he's on the trail!" muttered the approaching visitor, as he recognized Charles Wilson.

"Doctor, I hear that I've got a cousin in your house. May I have the honor of being presented to her?" said the young man, when the doctor rose to meet him.

Mr. Clarence Burkhardt was rather a gay fellow, and, since there was no pecuniary necessity for his adopting a profession or going into trade, he had lived merely a life of pleasure, and on his father's death had sold out of his business; this last an unfortunate step, which had caused the following comment in the late Mr. Stanley's will:

"Since Mr. Clarence Burkhardt does not think it necessary to engage in business, or study a profession, he must be in circumstances which will render any bequest from me unnecessary."

But, after all, there were worse young men than this indolent pleasure-seeker, and Rose Stanley's friends were glad to see him. It looked better that some relative should be on friendly terms with her, and they had nothing against Clarence on her account.

He found himself cordially received by the family and by Rose, who gave him her hand, and called him Cousin Clarence. He watched her closely in that soft light, and became every moment more satisfied with this programme which his mother had marked out for him.

"If I lose the money, you may win it," she had said. "They will take possession of her, and marry her to that Charles Wilson, if nobody interferes.—They have some story of her having taken sick at the Wilson's, and Charles having carried her in his arms to the poor-house, and catching the fever from her, and nearly dying in consequence.—They'll make the most of it; but a mere dry-goods trader will have no chance, unless you let him. Now is your chance,—before she goes into society and gets her head turned."

Mrs. Coolidge had persuaded Rose to wear white, which was the only color for which the girl would exchange her black robe; and, plain and nun-like as her nansook robe was, she could bear it without losing her claim to beauty. Only one skirt, with a hem unadorned by either lace or ruffles, long sleeves fastened about the wrists, and a high bodice buttoned closely to her round throat, certainly made a toilet quite severe enough. The loose, rich hair of sunny brown was untwined from the stiff braid into which the little nun had made it, and arranged by Mrs. Coolidge's artistic hands in shining coils about a small jet comb.

She needed no ornament to set off her