

# The Storyteller.

## THE DOCTOR'S COMPROMISE.

YOUNG Dr. Felton, famous, rich, and admired by the circle he moved in, was somewhat uneasy and discontented. Why he should be he himself could not explain, for the world at large served him well. There were no visits to be made to hospital wards no students to accompany to clinics, no fashionable invalids in need of his care, and even the poor wretches of the slums in whom he had become interested had been attended to that morning. So he had promised himself the whole afternoon to prosecute the study of a theory he was developing in which he earnestly hoped to reduce to practice. The best-disciplined minds, however, are at times subject to overpowering moods, and it was one of these that now caused his discontentedness. Probably it was due to a sense of freedom from the thousand duties that usually hedged him in; or shall we charge this unaccustomed state of mind to the faint suggestion of early spring that had stolen across country fields and found him out in his New York flat? Whatever it was, the Doctor's studies were not made that April afternoon.

A retrospective mood, in which memories of the passed welled up in his heart, controlled him. Under its influence, this busy young doctor, the astonishment of the profession, whose firmness and almost womanly gentleness alleviated the fever-racked hospital patient, and whose kindness brightened the life of many a poor factory girl, as his skill satisfied the wealthy society lady, became almost a boy again. It was not his wont to indulge in these memories, for his life was too busy. But now his discontent slipped away as he gave himself up to them. And as he sank down in his easy chair, it was not the walls of his library, the books, the instruments, or the anatomical charts that formed his horizon. He had little thought for his profession that afternoon. It was the little New England town of his birth and his student days he was absorbed in.

He could not be more than 28, but one might read experience in that clever, good-looking young face. Pensive lines marked his features as his thoughts dwelt upon his little home on the hillside, beautified by his mother's flower-beds and clinging vines. There, next door, had been the home of the little girl who had been the best friend a boy ever had, as he used to think in those days. What a refreshing sensation the thought of that little girl brought! and the young doctor smiled unconsciously as he pictured the pranks they played together. The smile faded as his mother's early death came to him, how she had died in her youth and happiness, leaving him with his grief-stricken father. And well he remembered the quiet life they then had led together; the evenings they had spent in the lonely home thinking of her. Sometimes the father would read to his boy, or would tell him the hopes he had of seeing his little lad a physician like himself one day. For the parent had also been a medical man, one of the true servants of God's people, who labors not solely for money, and was, therefore, greatly beloved by his fellow-townsmen.

Then came his father's sudden death, hastened by the unending labors that kept sapping his strength throughout one long dreary winter. Before the young doctor's eyes that scene of 15 years past vividly presented itself. On a wild March day, far unlike the present golden afternoon, he stood in the quaint little churchyard bitterly crying as the cold stones fell with a dull sound upon his father's coffin. And while he knelt among the sympathetic friends, and the good old parish priest prayed fervently for the departed soul of the good man lying there beneath them, his grief rendered him insensible to the sharp cut of the sleet and rain. One thing only had been able to cheer him, and that was his little neighbor, who, as his city aunt led him from the sad place, whispered:— 'Willie, don't feel so badly. Your papa is in heaven, and I love you.' But now he could hardly recall her name, so utterly had those old times ceased to interest him. 'Dead as Helen of Troy for all I know,' he said to himself.

His aunt had taken him to New York to live, and there he had met one of his father's college friends, a man high up in the medical profession. For his friend's sake this man interested himself, and observing the boy's bright clever ways, he trained him under his own eyes in all the mysteries of medicine. Carefully watching as the boy grew up to young manhood, he discovered rich traits that promised to reward systematic development. When it was time, therefore, he sent the boy abroad to have the advantage of the ripest knowledge in Europe. He studied at Paris under the famous savants there. And after several years spent profitably he went to Berlin. It was to the German student-life he owed much of his character, for he had loved that life with its excitement, its duels, its singing, and the clear-headed men he met. When he left there and came back to America he was a brilliant, masterful man, almost a genius, and not hampered, as he told himself, by too many religious convictions. He was not positively irreligious, not at all a cynic, but, like the Germans whom he had known, one who considered all the obligations fulfilled when the mandates of honor and duty are observed. Still he acknowledged that the faith of those poor wretches whom out of philanthropy he often visited, was the one sunny spot in their gloomy existence. But for himself, he was wont to tell the young Catholic priest who used to meet him at the hospitals, and who had interested him in the poor, that to do right by one's fellow-men, be charitable, and admit the existence of God was sufficient. And then Father Ryan, who saw the nobility of the young doctor's heart, endeavoring to convince him of his mistake, would be told that nothing short of a tangible scientific experiment could be of any avail as an argument.

Such was the nature of Dr. Felton's reveries, and he might have continued them had he not thought of Father Ryan. When the priest entered his mind, he remembered a promise he had made to

visit him. This afternoon was his opportunity. He had given up all his plans of study that day, and besides he felt that the company of the sincere young clergyman would do him good. So, still possessed by recollections, he got up and went out of the house into the street.

After a short walk he arrived and was admitted into the parlor of the pastoral residence by the neat, elderly housekeeper. In the interval of waiting he occupied himself by admiring the exquisitely carved ivory crucifix that hung above the door. A slight smile played over his mouth as he looked at the tokens of Catholic faith around the room, for to him they were little better than instruments of superstition, and it somewhat puzzled him that his priest-friend could so implicitly believe in the usefulness of such things. His meditations were broken off abruptly by the appearance of Father Ryan, who took him up to his own room. He was delighted to have this busy young doctor pay him a visit, and especially since his leisurely manner promised a long, pleasant talk with him.

The doctor was still full of memories, and of these he appeared desirous of talking. Father Ryan, therefore, sympathised enough to set the smouldering fire of these memories ablaze, and soon he was listening to the story of his friend's life. To him this explained very much and also encouraged him greatly. It was no slight interest he had in the young doctor who was so clever, good, and honorable, but whose religious views pained him deeply. He had often wondered at the familiarity his rationalistic friend showed with Catholic observances whenever they had visited together the sick poor of his flock. Where could he have acquainted himself so well as to know when candles and holy water were necessary? He ventured to say accordingly:

'Doctor, pardon me, but it strikes me, after hearing you dwell so on your life, that you once were a Catholic, and still have the faith, despite your apparent indifference.'

'Not at all, Father, not in the least,' rejoined he, 'although you have rightly guessed that I was born in your faith. There is no use, I am convinced, in tying oneself down to those unreasonable ceremonies of religion. You know my profession of belief, and I think it a good one.'

'Well, I know your mind too thoroughly to argue with you on that point,' the priest answered; 'but tell me, are you not greatly influenced by these recollections of your childhood when they come back to you?' The other nodded assent. 'Then I may venture to say that by them you will be led back to the faith in which you were born.'

The doctor was now getting merry, as he saw his friend becoming so earnest, and rallied him by declaring that no power on earth could make him believe otherwise than he did, unless it was the proof based on scientific data he had before mentioned.

'We shall see,' said the priest.

'If ever it does come to pass otherwise,' answered the doctor, 'I'll devote myself more than ever to your poor, Father.'

A knock at the door interrupted their conversation. Opening it, Father Ryan was handed a letter stamped specially to hasten its delivery. The rather unconcerned glance he at first cast on the envelope suddenly vanished, and a look of interest and great anticipation succeeded. Excusing himself, he broke the seal and found his interest justified, for it was from an old priest who had been a great friend of his, and whom he had not heard from in years. The letter informed him that his friend had a parish in a little New England town, and the reason of his writing was to request a favor.

Evidently Father Ryan thought the doctor might like to hear what the letter contained, for, asking him to listen, he read the following excerpt:

'Knowing that your circumstances bring you into daily contact with the best medical men in the city, I beg of you by any means possible to persuade some specialist in brain diseases to come up here immediately. The patient is a young lady, the only child left a widowed mother. The local physicians are mystified at the case, and declare a cure impossible. But I would not accept that decision without making a great effort to secure someone who could speak more authoritatively. Let no fear of expense retard you.'

'If you can do this favor for me you will secure my lasting gratitude, besides a mother's blessing.'

'Believe me,

Yours sincerely in Christ,

'THOMAS BERKELY.'

Turning to the doctor, the young priest inquired if he had not deeply investigated disorders affecting the brain.

'It has been my favorite study,' he replied.

'Well, then, would you not be willing to take up this case which so puzzles the village doctors?'

'If you wish it, and I can accomplish the journey so as to return to-morrow morning, I am willing. But you have not mentioned where you wish me to go, have you?'

'True. The name of the town is Brassville, in Connecticut, on the New York, New Haven, and Hartford Railway, not far distant from Hartford, I believe.'

'Brassville is a name I never heard of in Connecticut, which is my own home, Father, and I was born in the vicinity of Hartford; but I suppose, since I've forgotten so many things, I've also let slip the names of towns; but if you say I can get there and return in the limited time at my disposal, I shall be very glad to do whatever lies in my power for the young lady.'

'Then, doctor, it's settled, and I'll telegraph to Father Berkely to meet you to-night at the station. Now you must hurry your preparations, for your train will leave in about an hour. Good-bye and on your journey reflect upon the things I've said to you this afternoon.'

This parting shot brought a smile to the doctor's face as he left the house and hastened towards his own home. Arriving there he selected the necessary articles and was off directly for the Grand Central Station. And as he went along he was once again plagued