

***CHARLES
READE***



A SIMPLETON

Charles Reade

A Simpleton

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PREFACE.

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It has lately been objected to me, in studiously courteous terms of course, that I borrow from other books, and am a plagiarist. To this I reply that I borrow facts from every accessible source, and am not a plagiarist. The plagiarist is one who borrows from a homogeneous work: for such a man borrows not ideas only, but their treatment. He who borrows only from heterogeneous works is not a plagiarist. All fiction, worth a button, is founded on facts; and it does not matter one straw whether the facts are taken from personal experience, hearsay, or printed books; only those books must not be works of fiction.

Ask your common sense why a man writes better fiction at forty than he can at twenty. It is simply because he has gathered more facts from each of these three sources,—experience, hearsay, print.

To those who have science enough to appreciate the above distinction, I am very willing to admit that in all my tales I use a vast deal of heterogeneous material, which in a life of study I have gathered from men, journals, blue-books, histories, biographies, law reports, etc. And if I could, I would gladly specify all the various printed sources to which I am indebted. But my memory is not equal to such a feat. I can only say that I rarely write a novel without milking about two hundred heterogeneous cows into my pail, and that “A Simpleton” is no exception to my general method; that method is the true method, and the best, and if on that

method I do not write prime novels, it is the fault of the man, and not of the method.

I give the following particulars as an illustration of my method:

In "A Simpleton," the whole business of the girl spitting blood, the surgeon ascribing it to the liver, the consultation, the final solution of the mystery, is a matter of personal experience accurately recorded. But the rest of the medical truths, both fact and argument, are all from medical books far too numerous to specify. This includes the strange fluctuations of memory in a man recovering his reason by degrees. The behavior of the doctor's first two patients I had from a surgeon's daughter in Pimlico. The servant-girl and her box; the purple-faced, pig-faced Beak and his justice, are personal experience. The business of house-renting, and the auction-room, is also personal experience.

In the nautical business I had the assistance of two practical seamen: my brother, William Barrington Reade, and Commander Charles Edward Reade, R.N.

In the South African business I gleaned from Mr. Day's recent handbooks; the old handbooks; Galton's "Vacation Tourist;" "Philip Mavor; or, Life among the Caffres;" "Fossor;" "Notes on the Cape of Good Hope," 1821; "Scenes and Occurrences in Albany and Caffre-land," 1827; Bowler's "South African Sketches;" "A Campaign in South Africa," Lucas; "Five Years in Caffre-land," Mrs. Ward; etc., etc., etc. But my principal obligation on this head is to Mr. Boyle, the author of some admirable letters to the Daily telegraph, which he afterwards reprinted in a delightful volume. Mr. Boyle has a painter's eye, and a writer's pen, and if the

African scenes in “A Simpleton” please my readers, I hope they will go to the fountain-head, where they will find many more.

As to the plot and characters, they are invented.

The title, “A Simpleton,” is not quite new. There is a French play called *La Niaise*. But *La Niaise* is in reality a woman of rare intelligence, who is taken for a simpleton by a lot of conceited fools, and the play runs on their blunders, and her unpretending wisdom. That is a very fine plot, which I recommend to our female novelists. My aim in these pages has been much humbler, and is, I hope, too clear to need explanation.

CHARLES READE.

A SIMPLETON.

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CHAPTER I.

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A young lady sat pricking a framed canvas in the drawing-room of Kent Villa, a mile from Gravesend; she was making, at a cost of time and tinted wool, a chair cover, admirably unfit to be sat upon—except by some severe artist, bent on obliterating discordant colors. To do her justice, her mind was not in her work; for she rustled softly with restlessness as she sat, and she rose three times in twenty minutes, and went to the window. Thence she looked down, over a trim flowery lawn, and long, sloping meadows, on to the silver Thames, alive with steamboats ploughing, white sails bellying, and great ships carrying to and fro the treasures of the globe. From this fair landscape and epitome of commerce she retired each time with listless disdain; she was waiting for somebody.

Yet she was one of those whom few men care to keep waiting. Rosa Lusignan was a dark but dazzling beauty, with coal-black hair, and glorious dark eyes, that seemed to beam with soul all day long; her eyebrows, black, straightish, and rather thick, would have been majestic and too severe, had the other features followed suit; but her black brows were succeeded by long silky lashes, a sweet oval face, two pouting lips studded with ivory, and an exquisite chin, as feeble as any man could desire in the partner of his bosom. Person—straight, elastic, and rather tall. Mind—nineteen. Accomplishments—numerous; a poor French scholar, a worse German, a worse English, an admirable dancer, an inaccurate musician, a good rider, a

bad draughtswoman, a bad hairdresser, at the mercy of her maid; a hot theologian, knowing nothing, a sorry accountant, no housekeeper, no seamstress, a fair embroideress, a capital geographer, and no cook.

Collectively, viz., mind and body, the girl we kneel to.

This ornamental member of society now glanced at the clock once more, and then glided to the window for the fourth time. She peeped at the side a good while, with superfluous slyness or shyness, and presently she drew back, blushing crimson; then she peeped again, still more furtively; then retired softly to her frame, and, for the first time, set to work in earnest. As she plied her harpoon, smiling now, the large and vivid blush, that had suffused her face and throat, turned from carnation to rose, and melted away slowly, but perceptibly, and ever so sweetly; and somebody knocked at the street door.

The blow seemed to drive her deeper into her work. She leaned over it, graceful as a willow, and so absorbed, she could not even see the door of the room open and Dr. Staines come in.

All the better: her not perceiving that slight addition to her furniture gives me a moment to describe him.

A young man, five feet eleven inches high, very square shouldered and deep chested, but so symmetrical, and light in his movements, that his size hardly struck one at first. He was smooth shaved, all but a short, thick, auburn whisker; his hair was brown. His features no more then comely: the brow full, the eyes wide apart and deep-seated, the lips rather thin, but expressive, the chin solid and square. It was a face of power, and capable of harshness; but relieved by

an eye of unusual color, between hazel and gray, and wonderfully tender. In complexion he could not compare with Rosa; his cheek was clear, but pale; for few young men had studied night and day so constantly. Though but twenty-eight years of age, he was literally a learned physician; deep in hospital practice; deep in books; especially deep in German science, too often neglected or skimmed by English physicians. He had delivered a course of lectures at a learned university with general applause.

As my reader has divined, Rosa was preparing the comedy of a cool reception; but looking up, she saw his pale cheek tinted with a lover's beautiful joy at the bare sight of her, and his soft eye so divine with love, that she had not the heart to chill him. She gave him her hand kindly, and smiled brightly on him instead of remonstrating. She lost nothing by it, for the very first thing he did was to excuse himself eagerly. "I am behind time: the fact is, just as I was mounting my horse, a poor man came to the gate to consult me. He had a terrible disorder I have sometimes succeeded in arresting—I attack the cause instead of the symptoms, which is the old practice—and so that detained me. You forgive me?"

"Of course. Poor man!—only you said you wanted to see papa, and he always goes out at two."

When she had been betrayed into saying this, she drew in suddenly, and blushed with a pretty consciousness.

"Then don't let me lose another minute," said the lover. "Have you prepared him for—for—what I am going to have the audacity to say?"

Rosa answered, with some hesitation, "I MUST have—a little. When I refused Colonel Bright—you need not devour my hand quite—he is forty."

Her sentence ended, and away went the original topic, and grammatical sequence along with it. Christopher Staines recaptured them both. "Yes, dear, when you refused Colonel Bright"—

"Well, papa was astonished; for everybody says the colonel is a most eligible match. Don't you hate that expression? I do. Eligible!"

Christopher made due haste, and recaptured her. "Yes, love, your papa said"—

"I don't think I will tell you. He asked me was there anybody else; and of course I said 'No.'"

"Oh!"

"Oh, that is nothing; I had not time to make up my mind to tell the truth. I was taken by surprise; and you know one's first impulse is to fib—about THAT."

"But did you really deceive him?"

"No, I blushed; and he caught me; so he said, 'Come, now, there was.'"

"And you said, 'Yes, there is,' like a brave girl as you are."

"What, plump like that? No, I was frightened out of my wits, like a brave girl as I am not, and said I should never marry any one he could disapprove; and then—oh, then I believe I began to cry. Christopher, I'll tell you something; I find people leave off teasing you when you cry—gentlemen, I mean. Ladies go on all the more. So then dear papa kissed me, and told me I must not be imprudent, and throw myself away, that was all; and I promised him I never would. I said

he would be sure to approve my choice; and he said he hoped so. And so he will."

Dr. Staines looked thoughtful, and said he hoped so too. "But now it comes to the point of asking him for such a treasure, I feel my deficiencies."

"Why, what deficiencies? You are young, and handsome, and good, and ever so much cleverer than other people. You have only to ask for me, and insist on having me. Come, dear, go and get it over." She added, mighty coolly, "There is nothing so DREADFUL as suspense."

"I'll go this minute," said he, and took a step towards the door; but he turned, and in a moment was at her knees. He took both her hands in his, and pressed them to his beating bosom, while his beautiful eyes poured love into hers point-blank. "May I tell him you love me? Oh, I know you cannot love me as I love you; but I may say you love me a little, may I not?—that will go farther with him than anything else. May I, Rosa, may I?—a little?"

His passion mastered her. She dropped her head sweetly on his shoulder, and murmured, "You know you may, my own. Who would not love you?"

He parted lingeringly from her, then marched away, bold with love and hope, to demand her hand in marriage.

Rosa leaned back in her chair, and quivered a little with new emotions. Christopher was right; she was not capable of loving like him; but still the actual contact of so strong a passion made her woman's nature vibrate. A dewy tear hung on the fringes of her long lashes, and she leaned back in her chair and fluttered awhile.

That emotion, almost new to her, soon yielded, in her girlish mind, to a complacent languor; and that, in its turn, to a soft reverie. So she was going to be married! To be mistress of a house; settle in London (THAT she had quite determined long ago); be able to go out into the streets all alone, to shop, or visit; have a gentleman all her own, whom she could put her finger on any moment and make him take her about, even to the opera and the theatre; to give dinner-parties her own self, and even a little ball once in a way; to buy whatever dresses she thought proper, instead of being crippled by an allowance; have the legal right of speaking first in society, even to gentlemen rich in ideas but bad starters, instead of sitting mumchance and mock-modest; to be Mistress, instead of Miss—contemptible title; to be a woman, instead of a girl; and all this rational liberty, domestic power, and social dignity were to be obtained by merely wedding a dear fellow, who loved her, and was so nice; and the bright career to be ushered in with several delights, each of them dear to a girl's very soul: presents from all her friends; as many beautiful new dresses as if she was changing her body or her hemisphere, instead of her name; eclat; going to church, which is a good English girl's theatre of display and temple of vanity, and there tasting delightful publicity and whispered admiration, in a heavenly long veil, which she could not wear even once if she remained single.

This bright variegated picture of holy wedlock, and its essential features, as revealed to young ladies by feminine tradition, though not enumerated in the Book of Common Prayer writ by grim males, so entranced her, that time flew

by unheeded, and Christopher Staines came back from her father. His step was heavy; he looked pale, and deeply distressed; then stood like a statue, and did not come close to her, but cast a piteous look, and gasped out one word, that seemed almost to choke him,—“REFUSED!”

Miss Lusignan rose from her chair, and looked almost wildly at him with her great eyes. “Refused?” said she, faintly.

“Yes,” said he, sadly. “Your father is a man of business; and he took a mere business view of our love: he asked me directly what provision I could make for his daughter and her children. Well, I told him I had three thousand pounds in the Funds, and a good profession; and then I said I had youth, health, and love, boundless love, the love that can do, or suffer, the love that can conquer the world.”

“Dear Christopher! And what COULD he say to all that?”

“He ignored it entirely. There! I'll give you his very words. He said, 'In that case, Dr. Staines, the simple question is, what does your profession bring you in per annum?'"

“Oh! There! I always hated arithmetic, and now I abominate it.”

“Then I was obliged to confess I had scarcely received a hundred pounds in fees this year; but I told him the reason; this is such a small district, and all the ground occupied. London, I said, was my sphere.”

“And so it is,” said Rosa, eagerly; for this jumped with her own little designs. “Genius is wasted in the country. Besides, whenever anybody worth curing is ill down here, they always send to London for a doctor.”

"I told him so, dearest," said the lover. "But he answered me directly, then I must set up in London, and as soon as my books showed an income to keep a wife, and servants, and children, and insure my life for five thousand pounds"—

"Oh, that is so like papa. He is director of an insurance company, so all the world must insure their lives."

"No, dear, he was quite right there: professional incomes are most precarious. Death spares neither young nor old, neither warm hearts nor cold. I should be no true physician if I could not see my own mortality." He hung his head and pondered a moment, then went on, sadly, "It all comes to this—until I have a professional income of eight hundred a year at least, he will not hear of our marrying; and the cruel thing is, he will not even consent to an engagement. But," said the rejected, with a look of sad anxiety, "you will wait for me without that, dear Rosa?"

She could give him that comfort, and she gave it him with loving earnestness. "Of course I will; and it shall not be very long. Whilst you are making your fortune, to please papa, I will keep fretting, and pouting, and crying, till he sends for you."

"Bless you, dearest! Stop!—not to make yourself ill! not for all the world." The lover and the physician spoke in turn.

He came, all gratitude, to her side, and they sat, hand in hand, comforting each other: indeed, parting was such sweet sorrow that they sat, handed, and very close to one another, till Mr. Lusignan, who thought five minutes quite enough for rational beings to take leave in, walked into the room and surprised them. At sight of his gray head and iron-gray eyebrows, Christopher Staines started up and looked

confused; he thought some apology necessary, so he faltered out, "Forgive me, sir; it is a bitter parting to me, you may be sure."

Rosa's bosom heaved at these simple words. She flew to her father, and cried, "Oh, papa! papa! you were never cruel before;" and hid her burning face on his shoulder; and then burst out crying, partly for Christopher, partly because she was now ashamed of herself for having taken a young man's part so openly.

Mr. Lusignan looked sadly discomposed at this outburst: she had taken him by his weak point; he told her so. "Now, Rosa," said he, rather peevishly, "you know I hate—noise."

Rosa had actually forgotten that trait for a single moment; but, being reminded of it, she reduced her sobs in the prettiest way, not to offend a tender parent who could not bear noise. Under this homely term, you must know, he included all scenes, disturbances, rumpuses, passions; and expected all men, women, and things in Kent Villa to go smoothly—or go elsewhere.

"Come, young people," said he, "don't make a disturbance. Where's the grievance? Have I said he shall never marry you? Have I forbidden him to correspond? or even to call, say twice a year. All I say is, no marriage, nor contract of marriage, until there is an income." Then he turned to Christopher. "Now if you can't make an income without her, how could you make one with her, weighed down by the load of expenses a wife entails? I know her better than you do; she is a good girl, but rather luxurious and self-indulgent. She is not cut out for a poor man's wife. And pray don't go and fancy that nobody loves my child but

you. Mine is not so hot as yours, of course; but believe me, sir, it is less selfish. You would expose her to poverty and misery; but I say no; it is my duty to protect her from all chance of them; and, in doing it, I am as much your friend as hers, if you could but see it. Come, Dr. Staines, be a man, and see the world as it is. I have told you how to earn my daughter's hand and my esteem: you must gain both, or neither."

Dr. Staines was never quite deaf to reason: he now put his hand to his brow and said, with a sort of wonder and pitiful dismay, "My love for Rosa selfish! Sir, your words are bitter and hard." Then, after a struggle, and with rare and touching candor, "Ay, but so are bark and steel; yet they are good medicines." Then with a great glow in his heart and tears in his eyes, "My darling shall not be a poor man's wife, she who would adorn a coronet, ay, or a crown. Good-by, Rosa, for the present." He darted to her, and kissed her hand with all his soul. "Oh, the sacrifice of leaving you," he faltered; "the very world is dark to me without you. Ah, well, I must earn the right to come again." He summoned all his manhood, and marched to the door. There he seemed to turn calmer all of a sudden, and said firmly, yet humbly, "I'll try and show you, sir, what love can do."

"And I'll show you what love can suffer," said Rosa, folding her beautiful arms superbly.

It was not in her to have shot such a bolt, except in imitation; yet how promptly the mimic thunder came, and how grand the beauty looked, with her dark brows, and flashing eyes, and folded arms! much grander and more inspired than poor Staines, who had only furnished the idea.

But between these two figures swelling with emotion, the representative of common sense, Lusignan pere, stood cool and impassive; he shrugged his shoulders, and looked on both lovers as a couple of ranting novices he was saving from each other and almshouses.

For all that, when the lover had torn himself away, papa's composure was suddenly disturbed by a misgiving. He stepped hastily to the stairhead, and gave it vent. "Dr. Staines," said he, in a loud whisper (Staines was half way down the stairs: he stopped). "I trust to you as a gentleman, not to mention this; it will never transpire here. Whatever we do—no noise!"

CHAPTER II.

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Rosa Lusignan set herself pining as she had promised; and she did it discreetly for so young a person. She was never peevish, but always sad and listless. By this means she did not anger her parent, but only made him feel she was unhappy, and the house she had hitherto brightened exceeding dismal.

By degrees this noiseless melancholy undermined the old gentleman, and he well-nigh tottered.

But one day, calling suddenly on a neighbor with six daughters, he heard peals of laughter, and found Rosa taking her full share of the senseless mirth. She pulled up short at sight of him, and colored high; but it was too late, for he launched a knowing look at her on the spot, and muttered something about seven foolish virgins.

He took the first opportunity, when they were alone, and told her he was glad to find she was only dismal at home.

But Rosa had prepared for him. "One can be loud without being gay at heart," said she, with a lofty, languid air. "I have not forgotten your last words to HIM. We were to hide our broken hearts from the world. I try to obey you, dear papa; but, if I had my way, I would never go into the world at all. I have but one desire now—to end my days in a convent."

"Please begin them first. A convent! Why, you'd turn it out of window. You are no more fit to be a nun than—a pauper."

Not having foreseen this facer, Rosa had nothing ready; so she received it with a sad, submissive, helpless sigh, as who would say, "Hit me, papa: I have no friend now." So then he was sorry he had been so clever; and, indeed, there is one provoking thing about "a woman's weakness"—it is invincible.

The next minute, what should come but a long letter from Dr. Staines, detailing his endeavors to purchase a practice in London, and his ill-success. The letter spoke the language of love and hope; but the facts were discouraging; and, indeed, a touching sadness pierced through the veil of the brave words.

Rosa read it again and again, and cried over it before her father, to encourage him in his heartless behavior.

About ten days after this, something occurred that altered her mood.

She became grave and thoughtful, but no longer lugubrious. She seemed desirous to atone to her father for having disturbed his cheerfulness. She smiled affectionately on him, and often sat on a stool at his knee, and glided her hand into his.

He was not a little pleased, and said to himself, "She is coming round to common-sense."

Now, on the contrary, she was farther from it than ever.

At last he got the clew. One afternoon he met Mr. Wyman coming out of the villa. Mr. Wyman was the consulting surgeon of that part.

"What! anybody ill?" said Mr. Lusignan. "One of the servants?"

"No; it is Miss Lusignan."

“Why, what is the matter with her?”

Wyman hesitated. “Oh, nothing very alarming. Would you mind asking her?”

“Why?”

“The fact is, she requested me not to tell you: made me promise.”

“And I insist upon your telling me.”

“And I think you are quite right, sir, as her father. Well, she is troubled with a little spitting of blood.”

Mr. Lusignan turned pale. “My child! spitting of blood! God forbid!”

“Oh, do not alarm yourself. It is nothing serious.”

“Don't tell me!” said the father. “It is always serious. And she kept this from me!”

Masking his agitation for the time, he inquired how often it had occurred, this grave symptom.

“Three or four times this last month. But I may as well tell you at once: I have examined her carefully, and I do not think it is from the lungs.”

“From the throat, then?”

“No; from the liver. Everything points to that organ as the seat of derangement: not that there is any lesion; only a tendency to congestion. I am treating her accordingly, and have no doubt of the result.”

“Who is the ablest physician hereabouts?” asked Lusignan, abruptly.

“Dr. Snell, I think.”

“Give me his address.”

“I'll write to him, if you like, and appoint a consultation.” He added, with vast but rather sudden alacrity, “It will be a

great satisfaction to my own mind."

"Then send to him, if you please, and let him be here tomorrow morning; if not, I shall take her to London for advice at once."

On this understanding they parted, and Lusignan went at once to his daughter. "O my child!" said he, deeply distressed, "how could you hide this from me?"

"Hide what, papa?" said the girl, looking the picture of unconsciousness.

"That you have been spitting blood."

"Who told you that?" said she, sharply.

"Wyman. He is attending you."

Rosa colored with anger. "Chatterbox! He promised me faithfully not to."

"But why, in Heaven's name? What! would you trust this terrible thing to a stranger, and hide it from your poor father?"

"Yes," replied Rosa, quietly.

The old man would not scold her now; he only said, sadly, "I see how it is: because I will not let you marry poverty, you think I do not love you." And he sighed.

"O papa! the idea!" said Rosa. "Of course, I know you love me. It was not that, you dear, darling, foolish papa. There! if you must know, it was because I did not want you to be distressed. I thought I might get better with a little physic; and, if not, why, then I thought, 'Papa is an old man; la! I dare say I shall last his time;' and so, why should I poison your latter days with worrying about ME?"

Mr. Lusignan stared at her, and his lip quivered; but he thought the trait hardly consistent with her superficial

character. He could not help saying, half sadly, half bitterly, "Well, but of course you have told Dr. Staines."

Rosa opened her beautiful eyes, like two suns. "Of course I have done nothing of the sort. He has enough to trouble him, without that. Poor fellow! there he is, worrying and striving to make his fortune, and gain your esteem—'they go together,' you know; you told him so." (Young cats will scratch when least expected.) "And for me to go and tell him I am in danger! Why, he would go wild. He would think of nothing but me and my health. He would never make his fortune: and so then, even when I am gone, he will never get a wife, because he has only got genius and goodness and three thousand pounds. No, papa, I have not told poor Christopher. I may tease those I love. I have been teasing YOU this ever so long; but frighten them, and make them miserable? No!"

And here, thinking of the anguish that was perhaps in store for those she loved, she wanted to cry; it almost choked her not to. But she fought it bravely down: she reserved her tears for lighter occasions and less noble sentiments.

Her father held out his arms to her. She ran her footstool to him, and sat nestling to his heart.

"Please forgive me my misconduct. I have not been a dutiful daughter ever since you—but now I will. Kiss me, my own papa! There! Now we are as we always were."

Then she purred to him on every possible topic but the one that now filled his parental heart, and bade him good-night at last with a cheerful smile.

Wyman was exact, and ten minutes afterwards Dr. Snell drove up in a carriage and pair. He was intercepted in the hall by Wyman, and, after a few minutes' conversation, presented to Mr. Lusignan.

The father gave vent to his paternal anxiety in a few simple but touching words, and was proceeding to state the symptoms as he had gathered them from his daughter; but Dr. Snell interrupted him politely, and said he had heard the principal symptoms from Mr. Wyman. Then, turning to the latter, he said, "We had better proceed to examine the patient."

"Certainly," said Mr. Lusignan. "She is in the drawing-room;" and he led the way, and was about to enter the room, when Wyman informed him it was against etiquette for him to be present at the examination.

"Oh, very well!" said he. "Yes, I see the propriety of that. But oblige me by asking her if she has anything on her mind."

Dr. Snell bowed a lofty assent; for, to receive a hint from a layman was to confer a favor on him.

The men of science were closeted full half an hour with the patient. She was too beautiful to be slurred over, even by a busy doctor: he felt her pulse, looked at her tongue, and listened attentively to her lungs, to her heart, and to the organ suspected by Wyman. He left her at last with a kindly assurance that the case was perfectly curable.

At the door they were met by the anxious father, who came with throbbing heart, and asked the doctors' verdict.

He was coolly informed that could not be given until the consultation had taken place; the result of that consultation

would be conveyed to him.

“And pray, why can't I be present at the consultation? The grounds on which two able men agree or disagree must be well worth listening to.”

“No doubt,” said Dr. Snell; “but,” with a superior smile, “my dear sir, it is not the etiquette.”

“Oh, very well,” said Lusignan. But he muttered, “So, then, a father is nobody!”

And this unreasonable person retired to his study, miserable, and gave up the dining-room to the consultation.

They soon rejoined him.

Dr. Snell's opinion was communicated by Wyman. “I am happy to tell you that Dr. Snell agrees with me, entirely: the lungs are not affected, and the liver is congested, but not diseased.”

“Is that so, Dr. Snell?” asked Lusignan, anxiously.

“It is so, sir.” He added, “The treatment has been submitted to me, and I quite approve it.”

He then asked for a pen and paper, and wrote a prescription. He assured Mr. Lusignan that the case had no extraordinary feature, whatever; he was not to alarm himself. Dr. Snell then drove away, leaving the parent rather puzzled, but, on the whole, much comforted.

And here I must reveal an extraordinary circumstance.

Wyman's treatment was by drugs.

Dr. Snell's was by drugs.

Dr. Snell, as you have seen, entirely approved Wyman's treatment.

His own had nothing in common with it. The Arctic and Antarctic poles are not farther apart than was his

prescription from the prescription he thoroughly approved.

Amiable science! In which complete diversity of practice did not interfere with perfect uniformity of opinion.

All this was kept from Dr. Staines, and he was entirely occupied in trying to get a position that might lead to fortune, and satisfy Mr. Lusignan. He called on every friend he had, to inquire where there was an opening. He walked miles and miles in the best quarters of London, looking for an opening; he let it be known in many quarters that he would give a good premium to any physician who was about to retire, and would introduce him to his patients.

No: he could hear of nothing.

Then, after a great struggle with himself, he called upon his uncle, Philip Staines, a retired M.D., to see if he would do anything for him. He left this to the last, for a very good reason: Dr. Philip was an irritable old bachelor, who had assisted most of his married relatives; but, finding no bottom to the well, had turned rusty and crusty, and now was apt to administer kicks instead of checks to all who were near and dear to him. However, Christopher was the old gentleman's favorite, and was now desperate; so he mustered courage, and went. He was graciously received—warmly, indeed. This gave him great hopes, and he told his tale.

The old bachelor sided with Mr. Lusignan. “What!” said he, “do you want to marry, and propagate pauperism? I thought you had more sense. Confound it all I had just one nephew whose knock at my street-door did not make me tremble; he was a bachelor and a thinker, and came for a friendly chat; the rest are married men, highwaymen, who

come to say, 'Stand and deliver;' and now even you want to join the giddy throng. Well, don't ask me to have any hand in it. You are a man of promise; and you might as well hang a millstone round your neck as a wife. Marriage is a greater mistake than ever now; the women dress more and manage worse. I met your cousin Jack the other day, and his wife with seventy pounds on her back; and next door to paupers. No; whilst you are a bachelor, like me, you are my favorite, and down in my will for a lump. Once marry, and you join the noble army of foot-pads, leeches, vultures, paupers, gone coons, and babblers about brats—and I disown you."

There was no hope from old Crusty. Christopher left him, snubbed and heart-sick. At last he met a sensible man, who made him see there was no short cut in that profession. He must be content to play the up-hill game; must settle in some good neighborhood; marry, if possible, since husbands and fathers of families prefer married physicians; and so be poor at thirty, comfortable at forty, and rich at fifty—perhaps.

Then Christopher came down to his lodgings at Gravesend, and was very unhappy; and after some days of misery, he wrote a letter to Rosa in a moment of impatience, despondency, and passion.

Rosa Lusignan got worse and worse. The slight but frequent hemorrhage was a drain upon her system, and weakened her visibly. She began to lose her rich complexion, and sometimes looked almost sallow; and a slight circle showed itself under her eyes. These symptoms were unfavorable; nevertheless, Dr. Snell and Mr. Wyman accepted them cheerfully, as fresh indications that nothing

was affected but the liver; they multiplied and varied their prescriptions; the malady ignored those prescriptions, and went steadily on. Mr. Lusignan was terrified but helpless. Rosa resigned and reticent.

But it was not in human nature that a girl of this age could always and at all hours be mistress of herself. One evening in particular she stood before the glass in the drawing-room, and looked at herself a long time with horror. "Is that Rosa Lusignan?" said she, aloud; "it is her ghost."

A deep groan startled her. She turned; it was her father. She thought he was fast asleep; and so indeed he had been; but he was just awaking, and heard his daughter utter her real mind. It was a thunder-clap. "Oh, my child! what shall I do?" he cried.

Then Rosa was taken by surprise in her turn. She spoke out. "Send for a great physician, papa. Don't let us deceive ourselves; it is our only chance."

"I will ask Mr. Wyman to get a physician down from London."

"No, no; that is no use; they will put their heads together, and he will say whatever Mr. Wyman tells him. La! papa, a clever man like you, not to see what a cheat that consultation was. Why, from what you told me, one can see it was managed so that Dr. Snell could not possibly have an opinion of his own. No; no more echoes of Mr. Chatterbox. If you really want to cure me, send for Christopher Staines."

"Dr. Staines! he is very young."

"But he is very clever, and he is not an echo. He won't care how many doctors he contradicts when I am in danger. Papa, it is your child's one chance."

"I'll try it," said the old man, eagerly. "How confident you look! your color has come back. It is an inspiration. Where is he?"

"I think by this time he must be at his lodgings in Gravesend. Send to him to-morrow morning."

"Not I! I'll go to him to-night. It is only a mile, and a fine clear night."

"My own, good, kind papa! Ah! well, come what may, I have lived long enough to be loved. Yes, dear papa, save me. I am very young to die; and he loves me so dearly."

The old man bustled away to put on something warmer for his night walk, and Rosa leaned back, and the tears welled out of her eyes, now he was gone.

Before she had recovered her composure, a letter was brought her, and this was the letter from Christopher Staines, alluded to already.

She took it from the servant with averted head, not wishing it to be seen she had been crying, and she started at the handwriting; it seemed such a coincidence that it should come just as she was sending for him.

MY OWN BELOVED ROSA,—I now write to tell you, with a heavy heart, that all is vain. I cannot make, nor purchase, a connection, except as others do, by time and patience. Being a bachelor is quite against a young physician. If I had a wife, and such a wife as you, I should be sure to get on; you would increase my connection very soon. What, then, lies before us? I see but two things—to wait till we are old, and our pockets are filled, but our hearts chilled or soured; or else to marry at once, and climb the hill together. If you love me as I love you, you will be saving till the battle is

over; and I feel I could find energy and fortitude for both. Your father, who thinks so much of wealth, can surely settle something on YOU; and I am not too poor to furnish a house and start fair. I am not quite obscure—my lectures have given me a name—and to you, my own love, I hope I may say that I know more than many of my elders, thanks to good schools, good method, a genuine love of my noble profession, and a tendency to study from my childhood. Will you not risk something on my ability? If not, God help me, for I shall lose you; and what is life, or fame, or wealth, or any mortal thing to me, without you? I cannot accept your father's decision; YOU must decide my fate.

You see I have kept away from you until I can do so no more. All this time the world to me has seemed to want the sun, and my heart pines and sickens for one sight of you.

Darling Rosa, pray let me look at your face once more.

When this reaches you I shall be at your gate. Let me see you, though but for a moment, and let me hear my fate from no lips but yours.—My own love, your heart-broken lover,

CHRISTOPHER STAINES.

This letter stunned her at first. Her mind of late had been turned away from love to such stern realities. Now she began to be sorry she had not told him. "Poor thing!" she said to herself, "he little knows that now all is changed. Papa, I sometimes think, would deny me nothing now; it is I who would not marry him—to be buried by him in a month or two. Poor Christopher!"

The next moment she started up in dismay. Why, her father would miss him. No; perhaps catch him waiting for