

## CHAPTER VIII

### THE PASTEUR TAKES THE FIELD

In due course Godfrey received an epistle of frigid congratulation from his father upon his accession to wealth which, he remarked, would be of assistance to him in his future clerical career. The rest of the letter was full of complaints against the indignities that had been heaped upon him by Miss Ogilvy's executors and trustees, and also against Godfrey himself for not having furnished him with more information concerning the circumstances surrounding his inheritance. Lastly, Mr. Knight enclosed a paper which he requested Godfrey to sign and return, authorizing him to deal with the income of the legacy.

This Godfrey did obediently, only a week or two later to receive a formal notification from the lawyers, sent to him direct this time as his address had been filled in on the Authority, informing him that he had no power to sign such documents, he being in fact under age, and suggesting that he should refrain from doing so in the future. Enclosed were copies of their first letter to him, and of the other documents which Mr. Knight had not thought it worth while to forward because, as he said, they were heavy and foreign postage was so expensive.

Further the trustees announced that they proposed to allow him £50 a year out of the income for his personal needs, which would be paid half-yearly, and enclosed a draft for £25, which was more money than

ever Godfrey had possessed before. This draft he was desired to acknowledge, and generally to keep himself in touch with the trustees, and to consult them before taking any step of importance, also as to his future career.

All this, with the sense of independence which it gave him, was agreeable enough to Godfrey, as it would have been to any youth. He acknowledged the draft under the guidance of the Pasteur, saying that he would write again when he had anything to communicate, but that as yet he had not made up his mind as to his future, and proposed to stay where he was, continuing his studies, if his father would allow him to do so. Next he took an opportunity to go to Lucerne with the Pasteur, who wished to inspect the Villa Ogilvy and consult the notary as to an inventory of its contents and arrangements for its upkeep.

Godfrey, who was received by the servants with many bows, and requests that they might be allowed to continue in their employment, wandered through the big rooms which looked so desolate now, and stared until he was tired at examples of beautiful French furniture, of which he understood nothing. Then, oppressed by memories of his kind friend into whose death chamber he had blundered, and, as it seemed to him, by a sense of her presence which he imagined was warning him of something, he left the house, telling the Pasteur, who was peering about him through his blue spectacles in an innocent and interested way, that he would meet him at the five o'clock diligence. Indeed, he had business of his own to do, which seemed to him more important than all this

stock-taking and legal discussion. Having plenty of money in his pocket Godfrey wished to spend some of it in presents.

First, he bought a large meerschaum pipe with a flexible stem as a gift to the Pasteur, whom he had heard admire this very pipe in the shop window and express regrets that it was too expensive for his means. Having paid down thirty francs like a man for this treasure, he proceeded to a jeweller's near by. There he acquired a necklace of amethysts set with great taste in local silver work, for Madame to wear, and a charming silver watch of the best Swiss make for Juliette. When he found that these objects involved an expenditure of fourteen sovereigns, he was a little staggered, but again smiled and paid up. There was also a lovely little ring of gold with two turquoise hearts that he bought for £2 to send to Isobel when she wrote to him. But, as Isobel had posted her letter in Mr. Knight's drawer, that ring never reached her finger for many a day.

These gifts safely in his pocket, he began to stroll towards the railway station, whence the diligence started, slowly, as he had plenty of time. As he went he saw, in a shop window, a beautiful stick of olive wood, with an ebony crook. It was marked ten francs, and he coveted it greatly, but reflected with a sigh that having spent so much on others he could afford nothing for himself, for Godfrey was an unselfish soul. Instead he bought a collar of Swiss lace for Mrs. Parsons. Immediately after he left the lace shop he became aware that he was being shadowed. He heard no footfall, and he saw no one, but he

knew that this was so; he could feel it down his back, and in a cold wind which blew across his hands, as it had done always at the Villa Ogilvy séances.

The road that he was following led across some public gardens beneath an avenue of trees, which, of course, at this time of the year, were leafless. This avenue was lighted here and there, and beneath one of the gas lamps Godfrey wheeled round to see Madame Riennes advancing on him out of the gloom. Her stout form padded forward noiselessly, except for the occasional crackle of a dead and frosted leaf beneath her foot. She wore a thick cloak of some sort with a black hood that framed her large, white face, making her look like a monk of the Inquisition as depicted in various old prints. Beneath the blackness of this hood and above the rigid line of the set mouth, stared two prominent and glowing eyes, in which the gaslight was reflected. They reminded Godfrey of those of a stalking cat in a dark room. Indeed, from the moment that he caught sight of them he felt like the mouse cowering in a corner, or like a bird in a tree fascinated by the snake that writhes towards it along the bough.

"Ah, mon petit," said Madame, in her thick, creamy voice, that seemed to emerge from her lower regions, "so I have found you. I was walking through the town and a notion came to me that you were here, a--what you call it?--instinct like that which make the dog find its master.

Only I master and you dog, eh?"

Godfrey tried to pull himself together, feeling that it would not be wise to show fear of this woman, and greeted her as politely as he could, taking off his hat with a flourish in the foreign fashion.

"Put that hat back on your head, mon petit, or you will catch cold and be ill, you who are much too precious to be ill. Listen, now: I have something to say to you. You have great luck, have you not? Ah! sweet Sister Helen, she go to join the spirits, quite quick, as I tell her a little while ago she will do, and she leaves you much money, though to me, her old friend, her sister in the speerit, she give not one sou, although she know I want it. Well, I think there some mistake, and I wish to talk to Sister Helen about this money business. I think she leave me something, somehow, if I can find out where. And you, dear petit, can help me. Next Sunday you will come to my rooms of which I give you address," and she thrust a card into his hand, "and we will talk with Sister Helen, or at least with Eleanor, your little friend."

Godfrey shook his head vigorously, but she took no notice.

"What have you been buying," she went on, "with Sister Helen's money? Presents, I think. Yes, yes, I see them in your pocket," and she fixed her eyes upon the unhappy Godfrey's pocket, at least that is where he felt them.

"Oh! very pretty presents. Necklace for the fine Madame, of whom I can tell you some stories. Watch for pretty Mees, with the red, pouting

lips, so nice to kiss. Pipe for good old Pasteur, to smoke while he think of heaven, where one time he sit all day and do nothing for ever; lace for someone else, I know not who, and I think a charming ring for one who will not wear it just yet; a big girl with a pale face and eyes that flash, but can grow soft. One who would know how to love, eh! Yes, not a doll, but one who would know how to love like a woman should. Am I right?"

The confused Godfrey babbled something about a shop, and was silent.

"Well, never mind the shop, my leetle friend. You come to my shop next Sunday, eh?"

"No," said Godfrey, "I have had enough of spirits."

"Yes, perhaps, though the speerits have been your good friends, taking Sister Helen, who has left something behind her. But those dear speerits, they have not had enough of you; they very faithful souls, especially that pretty Eleanor. I tell you, Mr. Godfrey, you will come to see me next Sunday, and if you not come, I'll fetch you."

"Fetch me! How?"

"Look at my eyes, that's how. I put you to sleep many times now, and I have power to make you come where I want and do what I wish. You do not believe me, eh? Well, now I show you. Come, mon petit, and give your

dear godmamma a kiss," and she smiled at him like an ogress.

Now the last thing in the whole world that Godfrey wished to do was to embrace Madame Riennes, whom he loathed so that every fibre of his body shrank from her. Yet, oh horror! a wild impulse to kiss her took possession of him. In vain he struggled; he tried to step backwards, and instead went forwards, he tried to turn his head away, but those glowing eyes held and drew him as a magnet draws a needle. And as the needle rolls across the table ever more quickly towards the magnet, so did the unwilling Godfrey gravitate towards Madame Riennes. And now, oh! now her stout arm was about his neck, and now--he was impressing a fervent embrace upon her dome-like brow.

"There! What did I tell you, you nice, kind, little Godfrey," she gurgled with a hollow laugh. "Your dear godmamma thanks you, and you must run to catch that diligence. Au revoir till Sunday afternoon. Do not trouble about the hour, you will know exactly when to start. Now go."

She made a movement of her big, white hand, with the result that Godfrey felt like a spring which had been suddenly released. Next instant, still pursued by that gurgling laughter, he was running hard towards the diligence.

Fortunately the Pasteur was so full of talk about the house and his business with the notary, that there was no need for Godfrey to speak

in the coach, or indeed at dinner. Then after the meal was finished he produced his presents, and with blushes and stammers offered them to the various members of the family. What rapture there was! Madame was delighted with her necklace, which she said and truly, was in the best of taste. Juliette kissed the watch, and looked as though she would like to kiss the donor, as indeed was her case. The Pasteur examined the fine pipe through his blue spectacles, saying that never had he expected to own one so beautiful, then at once filled it and began to smoke. After this they all scolded him for his extravagance.

"You did not buy anything for yourself," said Juliette, reproachfully.

"Oh! yes, I see you did," and she pretended to perceive for the first time the little red case containing the ring, which inadvertently he had pulled out of his pocket with the other articles, although in truth she had observed it from the beginning. "Let us learn what it is," she went on, possessing herself of and opening the case. "Oh! a ring, what a pretty ring, with two hearts. For whom is the ring, Monsieur Godfrey? Someone in England?"

Then Godfrey, overcome, told a lie.

"No, for myself," he said.

Juliette looked at him and exclaimed:

"Then you should have told the jeweller to make it big enough. Try and



you will see."

He turned red as a boiled lobster. Mademoiselle stood opposite to him, shaking her pretty head, and murmuring: "Quel mensonge! Quel bête mensonge!" while Madame broke into a low and melodious laughter, and as she laughed, looked first at the ring and then at Juliette's shapely hand.

"Make not a mock of our young friend," said the Pasteur, suddenly lifting his glance, or rather his spectacles from a long contemplation of that noble pipe and becoming aware of what was passing. "We all have our presents, which are magnificent. What then is our affair with the ring? Pardon them, and put it in your pocket, Godfrey, and come, let us go to the observatory, for the night is fine, and by now the stove will be warm."

So they went, and soon were engaged in contemplation of the stars, an occupation which absorbed Godfrey so much that for a while he forgot all his troubles.

When the door had shut behind them Madame looked at Juliette, who with her new watch held to her ear, observed her out of the corners of her eyes.

"I find him charming," said Madame presently.

"Yes, Mamma," replied Juliette, "so bright and even the tick is musical."

"Stupid!" exclaimed Madame. "When I was your age--well."

"Pardon!" said Juliette, opening her eyes innocently.

"Child, I meant our young English friend. I repeat that I find him charming."

"Of course, Mamma--after that necklace."

"And you--after that watch?"

"Oh! well enough, though too grave perhaps, and fond of what is far off--I mean stars," she added hurriedly.

"Stars! Pish! It is but because there is nothing nearer. At his age--stars!--well of a sort, perhaps."

She paused while Juliette still looked provokingly innocent. So her mother took a long step forward, for in truth she grew impatient with all this obtuseness in which, for reasons of her own, she did not believe.

"If I were a girl of your age," mused Madame as though to herself, "I

do not think that ring would go to England."

"How, Mamma, would you steal it?"

"No, but I would make sure that it was given to me."

Now Juliette could no longer feign not to understand. She said nothing, but turned as red as Godfrey had done a little while before and stood waiting.

"I find him charming," repeated Madame, "though he is so young, which is a fault that will mend," and she fixed her eyes upon her daughter's face with a look of interrogation.

Then Juliette gave a little sigh and answered:

"Good. If you will make me say it, so do I also, at least, sometimes I think so, when he is not dull," and turning she fled from the room.

Madame smiled as the door closed behind her.

"That goes well, and should go better," she said to herself. "Only, for whom is the ring? There must be some girl in England, although of her he says nothing. Peste! There are so many girls. Still, she is far away, and this one is near. But it could be wished that she were more experienced, for then, since she likes him well enough, all would be

sure. What does a man count in such a case--especially when he is so young? Pish! nothing at all," and Madame snapped her fingers at the empty air. "It is the woman who holds the cards, if only she knows how to play them."

Now all these things happened on a Wednesday. When Godfrey went to bed that night uncomfortable memories of Madame Riennes, and of the chaste embrace which she had forced him to impress upon her expansive forehead, haunted him for a while, also fears for the future. However, Sunday was still a long way off, so he went to sleep and dreamed that he was buying presents at every shop in Lucerne and giving them all to Madame Riennes.

On Thursday he was quite happy. On Friday he began to suffer from uneasiness, which on Saturday became very pronounced. It seemed to him that already waves of influence were creeping towards him like the fringes of some miasmatic mist. Doubtless it was imagination, but he could feel their first frail tentacles wrapping themselves around his will, and drawing him towards Lucerne. As the day went on the tentacles grew stronger, till by evening there might have been a very octopus behind them. If this were so that night, he wondered what would happen on the following day, when the octopus began to pull. On one point he was determined. He would not go; never would he allow Madame Riennes to put him to sleep again, and what was much worse to make him kiss her. At any rate that spirit, Eleanor, was beautiful and attractive--but Madame Riennes! Rather than forgather with her again in this

affectionate manner, much as he dreaded it--or her--he would have compounded with the ghost called Eleanor.

Now, although like most young people, Godfrey was indolent and evasive of difficulties, fearful of facing troubles also, he had a bedrock of character. There were points beyond which he would not go, even for the sake of peace. But here a trouble came in; he was well aware that although he would not go--to Madame Riennes to wit--there was something stronger than himself which would make him go. It was the old story over again set out by St. Paul once and for ever, that of the two laws which make a shuttlecock of man so that he must do what he wills not. Having once given way to Madame Riennes, who was to him a kind of sin incarnate, he had become her servant, and if she wished to put him to sleep, or to do anything else with him, well, however much he hated it, he must obey.

The thought terrified him. What could he do? He had tried prayers, never before had he prayed so hard in all his life; but they did not seem to be of the slightest use. No guardian angel, not even Eleanor, appeared to protect him from Madame Riennes, and meanwhile, the fog was creeping on, and the octopus tentacles were gripping tighter. In his emergency there rose the countenance of Miss Ogilvy's dying counsel, welcome and unexpected as light of the moon to a lost traveller on a cloud-clothed night. What had she told him to do? To resist Madame Riennes. He had tried that with lamentable results. To invoke the help of religion. He had tried that with strictly negative results; the

Powers above did not seem inclined to intervene in this private affair. To appeal to the Pasteur. That he had not tried but, unpromising as the venture seemed to be, by Jove! he would. In his imminent peril there was nothing to which he would have appealed, even Mumbo-Jumbo itself if it gave him the slightest hope of protection from Madame Riennes.

Accordingly, when they went to the observatory that night, instead of applying his eye to the telescope in the accustomed fashion, Godfrey rushed at the business like a bull at a gate. At first the Pasteur was entirely confused, especially as Godfrey spoke in English, which the preceptor must translate into French in his own mind. By degrees, however, he became extraordinarily interested, so much so that he let the new pipe go out, and what was very rare with him, except in the most moving passages of his own sermons, pushed the blue spectacles from his high nose upwards, till they caught upon the patch of grizzled hair which remained upon his bald head.

"Ah!" he said, answering in French, which by now Godfrey understood fairly well, "this is truly exciting; at last I come in touch with the thing. Know, Godfrey, that you furnish me with a great occasion. Long have I studied this, what you call it--demonology. Of it I know much, though not from actual touch therewith."

Then he began to talk of gnosticism, and witchcraft, and Incubi, and Succubi, and the developments of modern spiritualism, till Godfrey was quite bewildered. At length he paused, relit the new pipe, and said:

"These matters we will study afterwards; they are, I assure you, most entertaining. Meanwhile, we have to deal with your Madame Riennes. All right, oh! quite all right. I will be her match. She will not make me kiss her, no, not at all, not at all! Be tranquil, young friend, if to-morrow you feel the impulse to go, go you shall, but I will go with you. Then we will see. Now to bed and sleep well. For me, I must study; I have many books on this subject, and there are points whereon I would refresh myself. Be not afraid. I know much of Madame Riennes and I will leave her flat as that," and with surprising alacrity he jumped on a large black beetle which, unhappily for itself, just then ran across the observatory floor to enjoy the warmth of the stove. "Wait," he added, as Godfrey was leaving. "First kneel down, I have memory of the ancient prayer, or if I forget bits, I can fill in the holes."

Godfrey obeyed in a rather abject fashion, whereon the old Pasteur, waving the pipe above his head, from which emerged lines of blue smoke such as might have been accessory to an incantation, repeated over him something in Latin, that, owing to the foreign accent, he could not in the least understand. It ended, however, with the sign of the cross made with the bowl of the pipe, which the Pasteur forgot still remained in his hand.

Fortified by the accession of this new ally, Godfrey slept fairly well, till within a little while of dawn, when he was awakened by a sound of rapping. At first he thought that these raps, which seemed very loud

and distinct, were made by someone knocking on the door, perhaps to tell him there was a fire, and faintly murmured "Entrez." Then to his horror he became aware that they proceeded, not from the door, but from the back of his wooden bedstead, immediately above him, and at the same time recollected that he had heard similar noises while sitting at the little table in the Villa Ogilvy, which the mystics gathered there declared were produced by spirits.

His hair rose upon his head, a cold perspiration trickled down him; he shook in every limb. He thought of lighting a candle, but reflected that it was on the chest of drawers at the other side of the room, also that he did not know where he had put the matches. He thought of flying to the Pasteur, but remembered that to do so, first he must get out of bed, and perhaps expose his bare legs to the assault of ghostly hands, and next that, to reach the chamber of Monsieur and Madame Boiset, he must pass through the sanctuary of the room occupied by Juliette. So he compromised by retiring under the clothes, much as a tortoise draws its head into its shell.

This expedient proved quite useless, for there beneath the blankets the raps sounded louder than ever. Moreover, of a sudden the bed seemed to be filled with a cold and unnatural air, which blew all about him, especially upon his hands, though he tried to protect these by placing them under his back. Now Godfrey knew something of the inadequate and clumsy methods affected by alleged communicating spirits, and half automatically began to repeat the alphabet. When he got to the letter



I, there was a loud rap. He began again, and at A came another rap. Once more he tried, for something seemed to make him do so, and was stopped at M.

"I am," he murmured, and recommenced until the word "here" was spelt out, after which came three rapid raps to signify a full stop.

"Who is here?" he asked in his own mind, at the same time determining that he would leave it at that. It was of no use at all, for the other party evidently intended to go on.

There was a perfect rain of raps, on the bed, off the bed, on the floor, even on the jug by the washstand; indeed, he thought that this and other articles were being moved about the room. To stop this multiform assault once more he took refuge in the alphabet, with the result that the raps unmistakably spelt the word "Eleanor."

"Great Heavens!" he thought to himself, "that dreadful spirit girl here, in my bedroom! How can she? It is most improper, but I don't suppose she cares a sou for that."

In his despair and alarm he tucked the clothes tightly round him, and thrusting out his head, said in trembling accents:

"Please go away. You know I never asked you to come, and really it isn't right," remarks which he thought, though, like all the rest, this

may have been fancy, were followed by a sound of ghostly laughter. What was more, the bedclothes suddenly slipped off him, or--oh horror! perhaps they were pulled off. At any rate, they went, and when next he saw them they were lying in a heap by the side of the bed.

Then it would seem that he fainted, overcome by these terrors, real or imaginary. At any rate, when he opened his eyes again it was to see the daylight creeping into the room (never before had he appreciated so thoroughly the beauties of the dawn) and to find himself lying half frozen on the bed with the pillow, which he was clasping affectionately, for his sole covering.

At breakfast that morning he looked so peculiar and dilapidated, that Madame and Juliette made tender inquiries as to his health, to which he replied that his bedclothes had come off in the night and the cold had given him a chill "in the middle." They were very sympathetic, and dosed him with hot café-au-lait, but the Pasteur, studying him through the blue spectacles, said, "Ah, is it so?" in a kind of triumphant tone which Madame designated as "bête." Indeed, to those unacquainted with what was passing in M. Boiset's mind, it must have seemed particularly stupid.

When breakfast was over he possessed himself of Godfrey, and led him to the observatory, where the stove was already lit, though this was not usual in the daytime, especially on Sundays.

"Now, my boy, tell me all about it," he said, and Godfrey told him, feebly suggesting that it might have been a nightmare.

"Nightmare! Nonsense. The witch Riennes has sent her demon to torment you, that is all. I thought she would. It is quite according to rule, a most clear and excellent case. Indeed, I am a lucky student."

"I don't believe in witches," said Godfrey, "I always heard they were rubbish."

"Ah! I don't know. Here in the mountains these Swiss people believe in them, and tell strange stories, some of which I have heard as their Pasteur, especially when I held office among the High Alps. Also the Bible speaks of them often, does it not, and what was, is, and shall be, as Solomon says. Oh! why hesitate? Without doubt this woman is a witch who poses as an innocent modern spiritualist. But she shall not send her pretty female devil after you again, for I will make that room impossible to her."

"Please do," said Godfrey. "And as for Madame Riennes, it is certainly strange that she should have known about the things I had in my pocket the other day, although of course, she may have followed me into the shops."

"Yes, yes, she followed you into the shops, she or her demon, though perhaps you would not see her there. What did you tell me? That in the

villa you thought that the dead Mademoiselle was warning you against something? Well, perhaps she was, for she was a good woman, though weak and foolish to trust to spiritualism, and now, without doubt, she sees all, and would protect you of whom she is fond."

"Then I wish she had done it a little better," said Godfrey. "Oh! listen, there's a rap!"

A rap there was certainly, on the hot iron of the stove, a resonant, ringing rap. The Pasteur advanced and made an examination, and while he was doing so there came another. What is more, in a most inexplicable fashion his blue spectacles flew from his nose. Very solemnly he found and replaced them and then, with the utmost dignity, addressing himself to the stove, he cursed and exorcised that article of domestic furniture in his best mediæval Latin. Apparently the effort was successful, for there were no more manifestations.

"Listen, my boy. You do not part from me this day. Presently we go to church, and you sit under me where I can keep my eye on you. If you make one movement towards the door, I descend from the desk or the pulpit, and take you back there with me."

"I don't want to move," said Godfrey.

"No, but there are others who may want to move you. Then after church we dine, and after dinner we take a nice walk through the woods arm in

arm. Yes, perhaps we go as far as Lucerne and pay a little visit there, since this afternoon I have arranged that there is no service."

So Godfrey went to church and sat under the cold, blue glare of the Pasteur's spectacles, listening to a really eloquent sermon, for his preaching was excellent. He took his text from the story of Saul and the witch of Endor, and after dwelling on it and its moral, opened up the whole problem of the hidden influences which may, and probably do, affect the human soul. He gave a short but learned account of the history of demonology throughout the ages, which evidently he had at his fingers' ends. He distinguished between good and evil spirits, and while not denying the lawfulness of such research, pointed out the peril that the seeker ran, since in his quest for the good he might find the evil. Finally, he demonstrated that there was a sure refuge from all such demoniacal attacks, which those who suffered from them had but to seek.

Madame dozed during this sermon. Juliette wondered what had sent her father down that road, and the little congregation, those of them who understood, thought it a pleasant change from his usual discourse upon their sins, since they at least had never practised demonology. But to Godfrey, to whom, indeed, it was addressed, it brought much comfort, for in the Pasteur and his pure and beautiful doctrine, he saw a rock on which he might stand secure, defying Madame Riennes and Eleanor, and all the hosts of hell behind them.

Then came dinner. It was towards the middle of this meal that Godfrey began to feel very ill at ease. He fidgeted, he looked towards the door, he half rose and sat down again.

"Do you perchance wish to go out?" asked the Pasteur, who was keeping him under constant observation.

"What of it if he does?" interrupted Madame. "Did not Monsieur Godfrey inform us that he was unwell? Go then, Monsieur Godfrey."

"No, not so," said the Pasteur. "Remain seated. In one minute I will be ready to accompany you."

"Mon Dieu! what for?" exclaimed Madame. "Never did I hear of such a thing," while even Juliette looked amazed.

Meanwhile Godfrey had risen and was making for the door, with a fixed and sickly smile upon his face. The Pasteur swallowed down his vin ordinaire and rushed after him.

"He is ill," said Juliette, with sympathy, "all day he has looked strange."

"Perhaps," said Madame. "That sermon of your father's was enough to turn anybody's stomach, with his talk about devils and witches. But why cannot he leave him alone? A doctor in such a case perhaps, but a

clergyman----! Mon Dieu! there they go, the two of them walking towards the woods. What a strange idea! And your father has Monsieur Godfrey by the arm, although assuredly he is not faint for he pulls ahead as though in a great hurry. They must be mad, both of them. I have half a mind----"

"No, no, Mother," said Juliette. "Leave them alone. Doubtless in time they will return. Perhaps it has something to do with the stars."

"Silly girl! Stars at midday!"

"Well, Mamma, you know they are always there even if one cannot see them."

"Nonsense, child. They only come at night. The question is--where are those two going?"

Juliette shook her head and gave it up, and so perforce did her mother.