

CHAPTER XIX

"I'll see you again," Harry Del Mar told Daughtry, at the end of his fourth conversation on the matter of Michael's sale.

Wherein Harry Del Mar was mistaken. He never saw Daughtry again, because Daughtry saw Doctor Emory first.

Kwaque's increasing restlessness at night, due to the swelling under his right arm-pit, had began to wake Daughtry up. After several such experiences, he had investigated and decided that Kwaque was sufficiently sick to require a doctor. For which reason, one morning at eleven, taking Kwaque along, he called at Walter Merritt Emory's office and waited his turn in the crowded reception-room.

"I think he's got cancer, Doc.," Daughtry said, while Kwaque was pulling off his shirt and undershirt. "He never squealed, you know, never peeped. That's the way of niggers. I didn't find our till he got to wakin' me up nights with his tossin' about an' groanin' in his sleep.--There! What'd you call it? Cancer or tumour--no two ways about it, eh?"

But the quick eye of Walter Merritt Emory had not missed, in passing, the twisted fingers of Kwaque's left hand. Not only was his eye quick, but it was a "leper eye." A volunteer surgeon in the first days out in the

Philippines, he had made a particular study of leprosy, and had observed so many lepers that infallibly, except in the incipient beginnings of the disease, he could pick out a leper at a glance. From the twisted fingers, which was the anaesthetic form, produced by nerve-disintegration, to the corrugated lion forehead (again anaesthetic), his eyes flashed to the swelling under the right arm-pit and his brain diagnosed it as the tubercular form.

Just as swiftly flashed through his brain two thoughts: the first, the axiom, whenever and wherever you find a leper, look for the other leper; the second, the desired Irish terrier, who was owned by Daughtry, with whom Kwaque had been long associated. And here all swiftness of eye-flashing ceased on the part of Walter Merritt Emory. He did not know how much, if anything, the steward knew about leprosy, and he did not care to arouse any suspicions. Casually drawing his watch to see the time, he turned and addressed Daughtry.

"I should say his blood is out of order. He's run down. He's not used to the recent life he's been living, nor to the food. To make certain, I shall examine for cancer and tumour, although there's little chance of anything like that."

And as he talked, with just a waver for a moment, his gaze lifted above Daughtry's eyes to the area of forehead just above and between the eyes. It was sufficient. His "leper-eye" had seen the "lion" mark of the leper.

"You're run down yourself," he continued smoothly. "You're not up to snuff, I'll wager. Eh?"

"Can't say that I am," Daughtry agreed. "I guess I got to get back to the sea an' the tropics and warm the rheumatics outa me."

"Where?" queried Doctor Emory, almost absently, so well did he feign it, as if apparently on the verge of returning to a closer examination, of Kwaque's swelling.

Daughtry extended his left hand, with a little wiggle of the little finger advertising the seat of the affliction. Walter Merritt Emory saw, with seeming careless look out from under careless-drooping eyelids, the little finger slightly swollen, slightly twisted, with a smooth, almost shiny, silkiness of skin-texture. Again, in the course of turning to look at Kwaque, his eyes rested an instant on the lion-lines of Daughtry's brow.

"Rheumatism is still the great mystery," Doctor Emory said, returning to Daughtry as if deflected by the thought. "It's almost individual, there are so many varieties of it. Each man has a kind of his own. Any numbness?"

Daughtry laboriously wiggled his little finger.

"Yes, sir," he answered. "It ain't as lively as it used to was."

"Ah," Walter Merritt Emory murmured, with a vastitude of confidence and assurance. "Please sit down in that chair there. Maybe I won't be able to cure you, but I promise you I can direct you to the best place to live for what's the matter with you.--Miss Judson!"

And while the trained-nurse-apparelled young woman seated Dag Daughtry in the enamelled surgeon's chair and leaned him back under direction, and while Doctor Emory dipped his finger-tips into the strongest antiseptic his office possessed, behind Doctor Emory's eyes, in the midst of his brain, burned the image of a desired Irish terrier who did turns in sailor-town cabarets, was rough-coated, and answered to the full name of Killeny Boy.

"You've got rheumatism in more places than your little finger," he assured Daughtry. "There's a touch right here, I'll wager, on your forehead. One moment, please. Move if I hurt you, Otherwise sit still, because I don't intend to hurt you. I merely want to see if my diagnosis is correct.--There, that's it. Move when you feel anything. Rheumatism has strange freaks.--Watch this, Miss Judson, and I'll wager this form of rheumatism is new to you. See. He does not resent. He thinks I have not begun yet . . . "

And as he talked, steadily, interestingly, he was doing what Dag Daughtry never dreamed he was doing, and what made Kwaque, looking on, almost

dream he was seeing because of the unrealness and impossibleness of it. For, with a large needle, Doctor Emory was probing the dark spot in the midst of the vertical lion-lines. Nor did he merely probe the area. Thrusting into it from one side, under the skin and parallel to it, he buried the length of the needle from sight through the insensate infiltration. This Kwaque beheld with bulging eyes; for his master betrayed no sign that the thing was being done.

"Why don't you begin?" Dag Daughtry questioned impatiently. "Besides, my rheumatism don't count. It's the nigger-boy's swelling."

"You need a course of treatment," Doctor Emory assured him. "Rheumatism is a tough proposition. It should never be let grow chronic. I'll fix up a course of treatment for you. Now, if you'll get out of the chair, we'll look at your black servant."

But first, before Kwaque was leaned back, Doctor Emory threw over the chair a sheet that smelled of having been roasted almost to the scorching point. As he was about to examine Kwaque, he looked with a slight start of recollection at his watch. When he saw the time he startled more, and turned a reproachful face upon his assistant.

"Miss Judson," he said, coldly emphatic, "you have failed me. Here it is, twenty before twelve, and you knew I was to confer with Doctor Hadley over that case at eleven-thirty sharp. How he must be cursing me! You know how peevish he is."

Miss Judson nodded, with a perfect expression of contrition and humility, as if she knew all about it, although, in reality, she knew only all about her employer and had never heard till that moment of his engagement at eleven-thirty.

"Doctor Hadley's just across the hall," Doctor Emory explained to Daughtry. "It won't take me five minutes. He and I have a disagreement. He has diagnosed the case as chronic appendicitis and wants to operate. I have diagnosed it as pyorrhea which has infected the stomach from the mouth, and have suggested emetine treatment of the mouth as a cure for the stomach disorder. Of course, you don't understand, but the point is that I've persuaded Doctor Hadley to bring in Doctor Granville, who is a dentist and a pyorrhea expert. And they're all waiting for me these ten minutes! I must run.

"I'll return inside five minutes," he called back as the door to the hall was closing upon him.--"Miss Judson, please tell those people in the reception-room to be patient."

He did enter Doctor Hadley's office, although no sufferer from pyorrhea or appendicitis awaited him. Instead, he used the telephone for two calls: one to the president of the board of health; the other to the chief of police. Fortunately, he caught both at their offices, addressing them familiarly by their first names and talking to them most emphatically and confidentially.

Back in his own quarters, he was patently elated.

"I told him so," he assured Miss Judson, but embracing Daughtry in the happy confidence. "Doctor Granville backed me up. Straight pyorrhoea, of course. That knocks the operation. And right now they're jolting his gums and the pus-sacs with emetine. Whew! A fellow likes to be right. I deserve a smoke. Do you mind, Mr. Daughtry?"

And while the steward shook his head, Doctor Emory lighted a big Havana and continued audibly to luxuriate in his fictitious triumph over the other doctor. As he talked, he forgot to smoke, and, leaning quite casually against the chair, with arrant carelessness allowed the live coal at the end of his cigar to rest against the tip of one of Kwaque's twisted fingers. A privy wink to Miss Judson, who was the only one who observed his action, warned her against anything that might happen.

"You know, Mr. Daughtry," Walter Merritt Emory went on enthusiastically, while he held the steward's eyes with his and while all the time the live end of the cigar continued to rest against Kwaque's finger, "the older I get the more convinced I am that there are too many ill-advised and hasty operations."

Still fire and flesh pressed together, and a tiny spiral of smoke began to arise from Kwaque's finger-end that was different in colour from the smoke of a cigar-end.

"Now take that patient of Doctor Hadley's. I've saved him, not merely the risk of an operation for appendicitis, but the cost of it, and the hospital expenses. I shall charge him nothing for what I did. Hadley's charge will be merely nominal. Doctor Granville, at the outside, will cure his pyorrhea with emetine for no more than a paltry fifty dollars. Yes, by George, besides the risk to his life, and the discomfort, I've saved that man, all told, a cold thousand dollars to surgeon, hospital, and nurses."

And while he talked on, holding Daughtry's eyes, a smell of roast meat began to pervade the air. Doctor Emory smelled it eagerly. So did Miss Judson smell it, but she had been warned and gave no notice. Nor did she look at the juxtaposition of cigar and finger, although she knew by the evidence of her nose that it still obtained.

"What's burning?" Daughtry demanded suddenly, sniffing the air and glancing around.

"Pretty rotten cigar," Doctor Emory observed, having removed it from contact with Kwaque's finger and now examining it with critical disapproval. He held it close to his nose, and his face portrayed disgust. "I won't say cabbage leaves. I'll merely say it's something I don't know and don't care to know. That's the trouble. They get out a good, new brand of cigar, advertise it, put the best of tobacco into it, and, when it has taken with the public, put in inferior tobacco and ride

the popularity of it. No more in mine, thank you. This day I change my brand."

So speaking, he tossed the cigar into a cuspidor. And Kwaque, leaning back in the queerest chair in which he had ever sat, was unaware that the end of his finger had been burned and roasted half an inch deep, and merely wondered when the medicine doctor would cease talking and begin looking at the swelling that hurt his side under his arm.

And for the first time in his life, and for the ultimate time, Dag Daughtry fell down. It was an irretrievable fall-down. Life, in its freedom of come and go, by heaving sea and reeling deck, through the home of the trade-winds, back and forth between the ports, ceased there for him in Walter Merritt Emory's office, while the calm-browed Miss Judson looked on and marvelled that a man's flesh should roast and the man wince not from the roasting of it.

Doctor Emory continued to talk, and tried a fresh cigar, and, despite the fact that his reception-room was overflowing, delivered, not merely a long, but a live and interesting, dissertation on the subject of cigars and of the tobacco leaf and filler as grown and prepared for cigars in the tobacco-favoured regions of the earth.

"Now, as regards this swelling," he was saying, as he began a belated and distant examination of Kwaque's affliction, "I should say, at a glance, that it is neither tumour nor cancer, nor is it even a boil. I should

say . . . "

A knock at the private door into the hall made him straighten up with an eagerness that he did not attempt to mask. A nod to Miss Judson sent her to open the door, and entered two policemen, a police sergeant, and a professionally whiskered person in a business suit with a carnation in his button-hole.

"Good morning, Doctor Masters," Emory greeted the professional one, and, to the others: "Howdy, Sergeant;" "Hello, Tim;" "Hello, Johnson--when did they shift you off the Chinatown squad?"

And then, continuing his suspended sentence, Walter Merritt Emory held on, looking intently at Kwaque's swelling:

"I should say, as I was saying, that it is the finest, ripest, perforating ulcer of the bacillus leprae order, that any San Francisco doctor has had the honour of presenting to the board of health."

"Leprosy!" exclaimed Doctor Masters.

And all started at his pronouncement of the word. The sergeant and the two policemen shied away from Kwaque; Miss Judson, with a smothered cry, clapped her two hands over her heart; and Dag Daughtry, shocked but sceptical, demanded:

"What are you givin' us, Doc.?"

"Stand still! don't move!" Walter Merritt Emory said peremptorily to Daughtry. "I want you to take notice," he added to the others, as he gently touched the live-end of his fresh cigar to the area of dark skin above and between the steward's eyes. "Don't move," he commanded Daughtry. "Wait a moment. I am not ready yet."

And while Daughtry waited, perplexed, confused, wondering why Doctor Emory did not proceed, the coal of fire burned his skin and flesh, till the smoke of it was apparent to all, as was the smell of it. With a sharp laugh of triumph, Doctor Emory stepped back.

"Well, go ahead with what you was goin' to do," Daughtry grumbled, the rush of events too swift and too hidden for him to comprehend. "An' when you're done with that, I just want you to explain what you said about leprosy an' that nigger-boy there. He's my boy, an' you can't pull anything like that off on him . . . or me."

"Gentlemen, you have seen," Doctor Emory said. "Two undoubted cases of it, master and man, the man more advanced, with the combination of both forms, the master with only the anaesthetic form--he has a touch of it, too, on his little finger. Take them away. I strongly advise, Doctor Masters, a thorough fumigation of the ambulance afterward."

"Look here . . ." Dag Daughtry began belligerently.

Doctor Emory glanced warningly to Doctor Masters, and Doctor Masters glanced authoritatively at the sergeant who glanced commandingly at his two policemen. But they did not spring upon Daughtry. Instead, they backed farther away, drew their clubs, and glared intimidatingly at him. More convincing than anything else to Daughtry was the conduct of the policemen. They were manifestly afraid of contact with him. As he started forward, they poked the ends of their extended clubs towards his ribs to ward him off.

"Don't you come any closer," one warned him, flourishing his club with the advertisement of braining him. "You stay right where you are until you get your orders."

"Put on your shirt and stand over there alongside your master," Doctor Emory commanded Kwaque, having suddenly elevated the chair and spilled him out on his feet on the floor.

"But what under the sun . . ." Daughtry began, but was ignored by his quondam friend, who was saying to Doctor Masters:

"The pest-house has been vacant since that Japanese died. I know the gang of cowards in your department so I'd advise you to give the dope to these here so that they can disinfect the premises when they go in."

"For the love of Mike," Daughtry pleaded, all of stunned belligerence

gone from him in his state of stunned conviction that the dread disease possessed him. He touched his finger to his sensationless forehead, then smelled it and recognized the burnt flesh he had not felt burning. "For the love of Mike, don't be in such a rush. If I've got it, I've got it. But that ain't no reason we can't deal with each other like white men. Give me two hours an' I'll get outa the city. An' in twenty-four I'll be outa the country. I'll take ship--"

"And continue to be a menace to the public health wherever you are," Doctor Masters broke in, already visioning a column in the evening papers, with scare-heads, in which he would appear the hero, the St. George of San Francisco standing with poised lance between the people and the dragon of leprosy.

"Take them away," said Waiter Merritt Emory, avoiding looking Daughtry in the eyes.

"Ready! March!" commanded the sergeant.

The two policemen advanced on Daughtry and Kwaque with extended clubs.

"Keep away, an' keep movin'," one of the policemen growled fiercely. "An' do what we say, or get your head cracked. Out you go, now. Out the door with you. Better tell that coon to stick right alongside you."

"Doc., won't you let me talk a moment?" Daughtry begged of Emory.

"The time for talking is past," was the reply. "This is the time for segregation.--Doctor Masters, don't forget that ambulance when you're quit of the load."

So the procession, led by the board-of-health doctor and the sergeant, and brought up in the rear by the policemen with their protectively extended clubs, started through the doorway.

Whirling about on the threshold, at the imminent risk of having his skull cracked, Dag Daughtry called back:

"Doc! My dog! You know 'm."

"I'll get him for you," Doctor Emory consented quickly. "What's the address?"

"Room eight-seven, Clay street, the Bowhead Lodging House, you know the place, entrance just around the corner from the Bowhead Saloon. Have 'm sent out to me wherever they put me--will you?"

"Certainly I will," said Doctor Emory, "and you've got a cockatoo, too?"

"You bet, Cocky! Send 'm both along, please, sir."

* * * * *

"My!" said Miss Judson, that evening, at dinner with a certain young interne of St. Joseph's Hospital. "That Doctor Emory is a wizard. No wonder he's successful. Think of it! Two filthy lepers in our office to-day! One was a coon. And he knew what was the matter the moment he laid eyes on them. He's a caution. When I tell you what he did to them with his cigar! And he was cute about it! He gave me the wink first. And they never dreamed what he was doing. He took his cigar and . . ."