

MOTHERLOVE

Dr. Roche removed the leeches from the jar and carefully placed them on the child's hot clammy body. He replaced the cloth on the baby's head with another one. The child was now worryingly still after all his thrashing about. But the doctor remained professional and spoke gently to the child's mother.

"Now the only thing we can do Mrs. Corvierre, is to wait for these little creatures to do their work, then hopefully Georges fever will be lowered."

The mistress of the house stood close to the child's cradle clutching her lace handkerchief to her tear stained face.

A coach and horses had been sent to fetch Dr. Roche two hours past. Baby George's screams had echoed throughout the house before his arrival. The usual comings and goings of a busy household had become subdued, as the crying child had gradually quietened. Voices whispered respectfully in the background.

Captain Corvierre had not yet arrived and Elizabeth Corvierre stood white faced and helpless, whilst on the other side of Georges crib stood the quietly, weeping wet nurse.

They turned towards the door as they heard the commotion of Adam Corvierre slamming the heavy wooden entrance doors shut. His footsteps could be heard running up the grand staircase and along the corridor towards the nursery.

Elizabeth almost collapsed as she lunged towards the Captain,
"Adam, thank god you're here, George has the scarlet throat, he is going to die!"

"Now, now don't fret Mistress Corvierre, I'm sure the little fellow will be fine, he is a strong well nourished little lad and we will take good care of him."

Dr. Roche turned his attention to Captain Corvierre.

"Sir do not be alarmed, we must wait now, the bad blood is being purged from your son's body and all he needs is rest and quiet. I would also like to prescribe this sedation for your wife sir, she also needs to rest she is in shock.

Adam moved towards the crib whilst the doctor gave Elizabeth the medication. He almost recoiled at the sight of the little black creatures moving around gorging themselves on his son's lifeblood. He wanted to pull them off and jump on them they were an abomination. All he could do was stroke the child's burning forehead and quietly pray.

"Come Elizabeth we will return later, George is in good hands!" He put his arms around his wife's shoulders and ushered her from the nursery; she was still in her nightgown and cap.

"I can't leave him what if he wakes?"

“Flora will come and get us, won’t you my dear!”

“Yes sir, madam.” Flora curtsied before they left the room. She then moved closer to her charge and picked up his tiny hand. Her youngest brother had died recently of the scarlet throat, but he had been weak and frail to begin with.

She knelt by the crib and prayed for young George, whom she treated like her own child who was now being looked after by her mother and sisters. Flora was able to bring some money to the household by being George’s wet nurse.

Dr. Roche removed the swollen leeches and replaced them with some more, he turned to the young woman and said,

“I will leave you and return in one hour, do not touch him or remove him from the crib, but if he wakes send one of the maids to fetch me. I will take supper with the captain then return to see how the child is. It is going to be a long night I’m sure.” He then left the room hoping that there would be a positive outcome because it could go either way.

Flora either knelt and prayed or stood and lightly stroked the child, humming gentle lullabies to him. After a few hourly visits by the doctor with no change, he removed the leeches. Then the captain came in and checked on his son, and pulled a chair over for Flora to sit on.

It was the one she normally used whilst feeding George. She thanked him and kept her vigil until she dozed into a light sleep.

She jumped up suddenly when she woke and looked into the crib at George, he was awake and gave her his gummy smile. She looked around to check no one was there, then picked him up and cradled him to her breast; he suckled for a short while as she stroked his baby hair. Then he closed his eyes and breathed his last short breath. She hummed one more lullaby and placed him back into the crib; she bent down and kissed him on the cheek then she called one of the servants to fetch the doctor.

“Did he cry out or did he move about or anything Flora?” Dr. Roche asked whilst examining the child.

“No sir!”

“You didn’t pick him up or move him did you?”

“No sir!”

“This is a sad, sad day, now I will have to break the news to the Captain and Mrs Corvierre she will be devastated. Elizabeth adored that little boy she was such a wonderful mother!”

“Yes Sir!”