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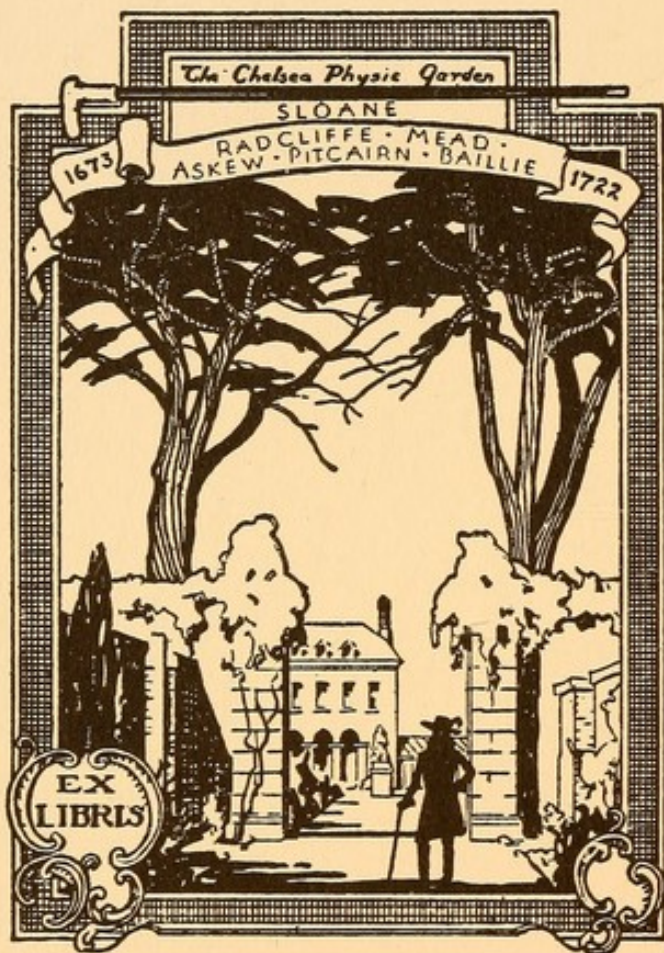


# CLAIRE

A ROMANCE OF NURSEHOOD

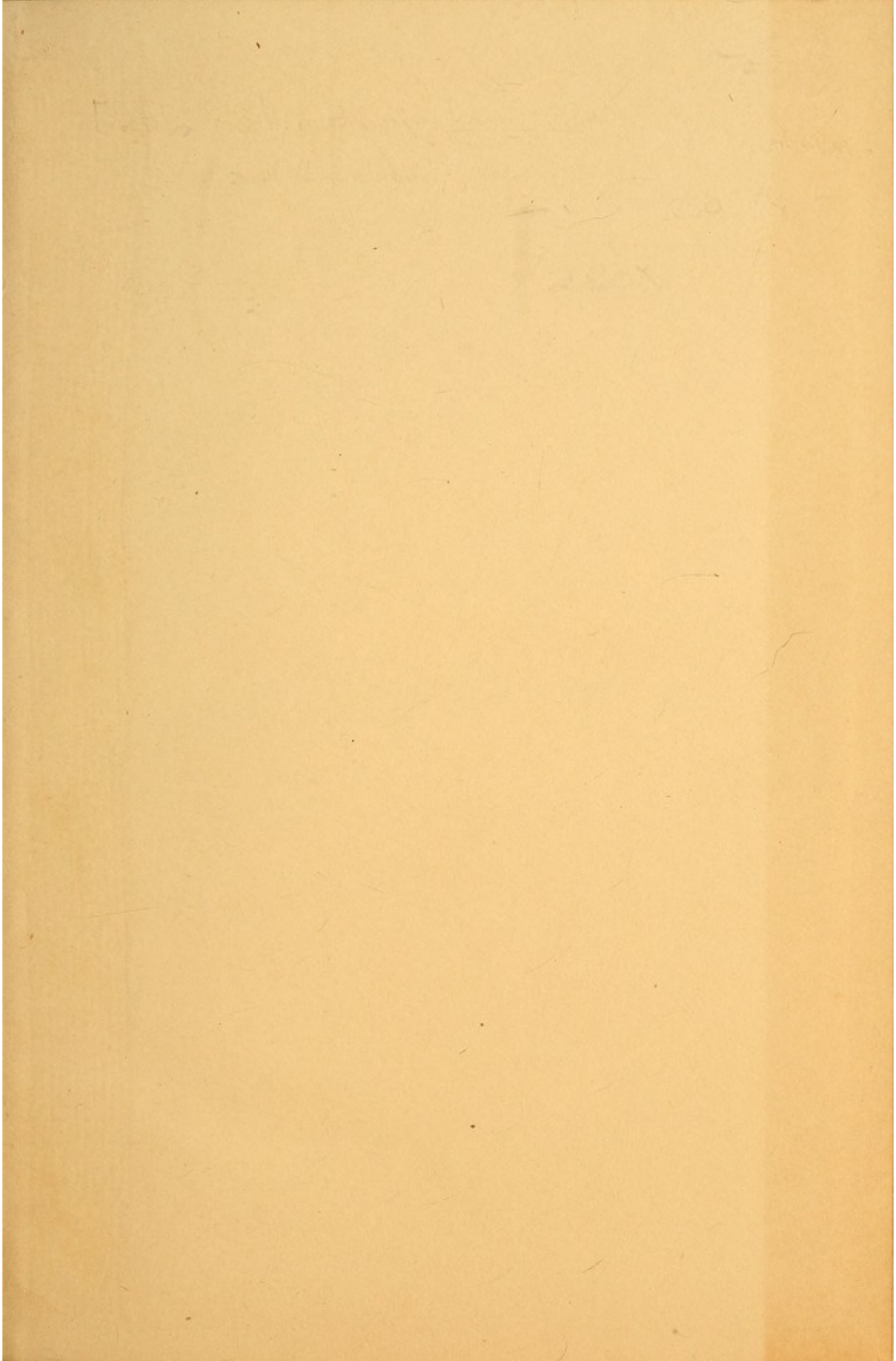
EDWIN KIRKMAN HART



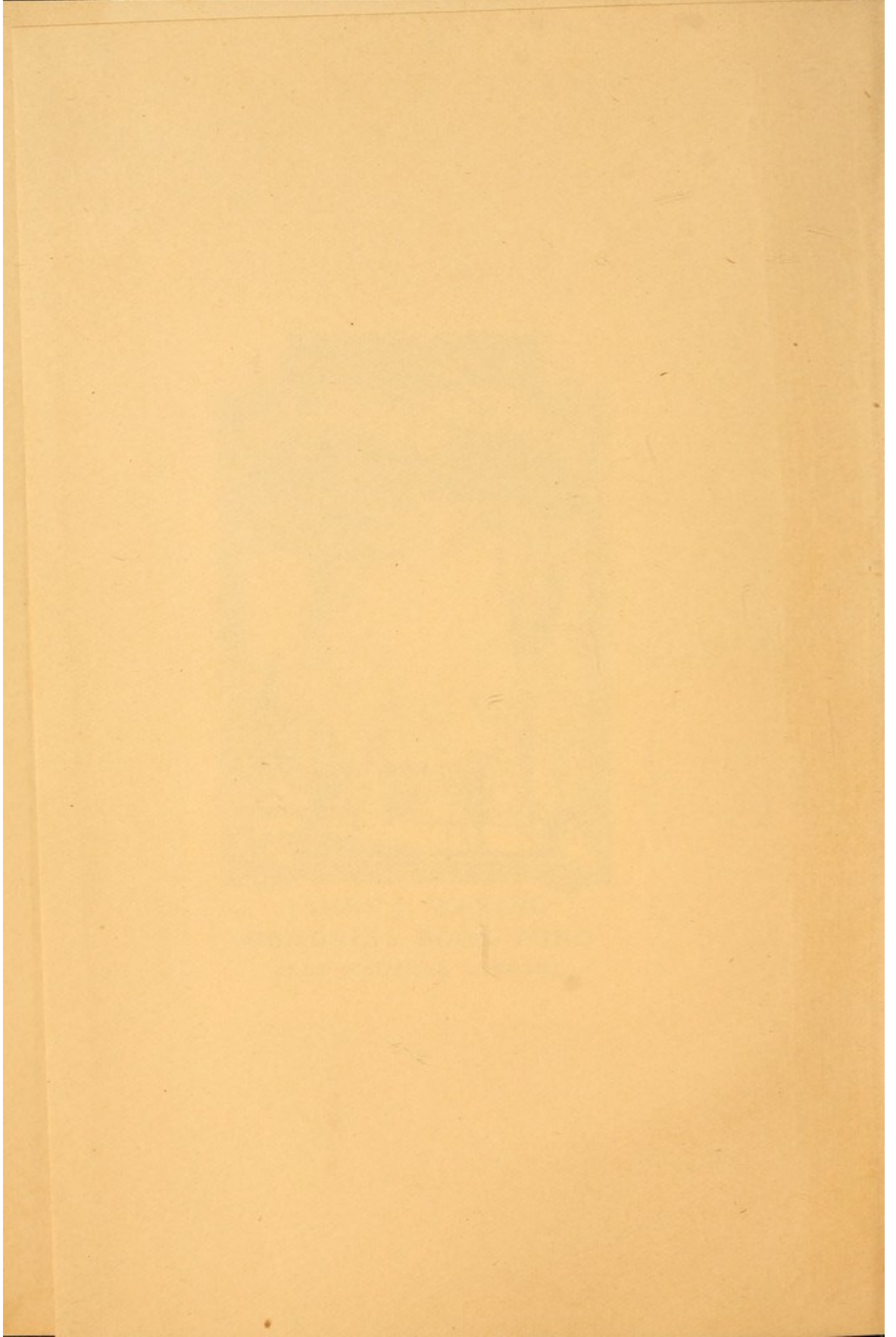


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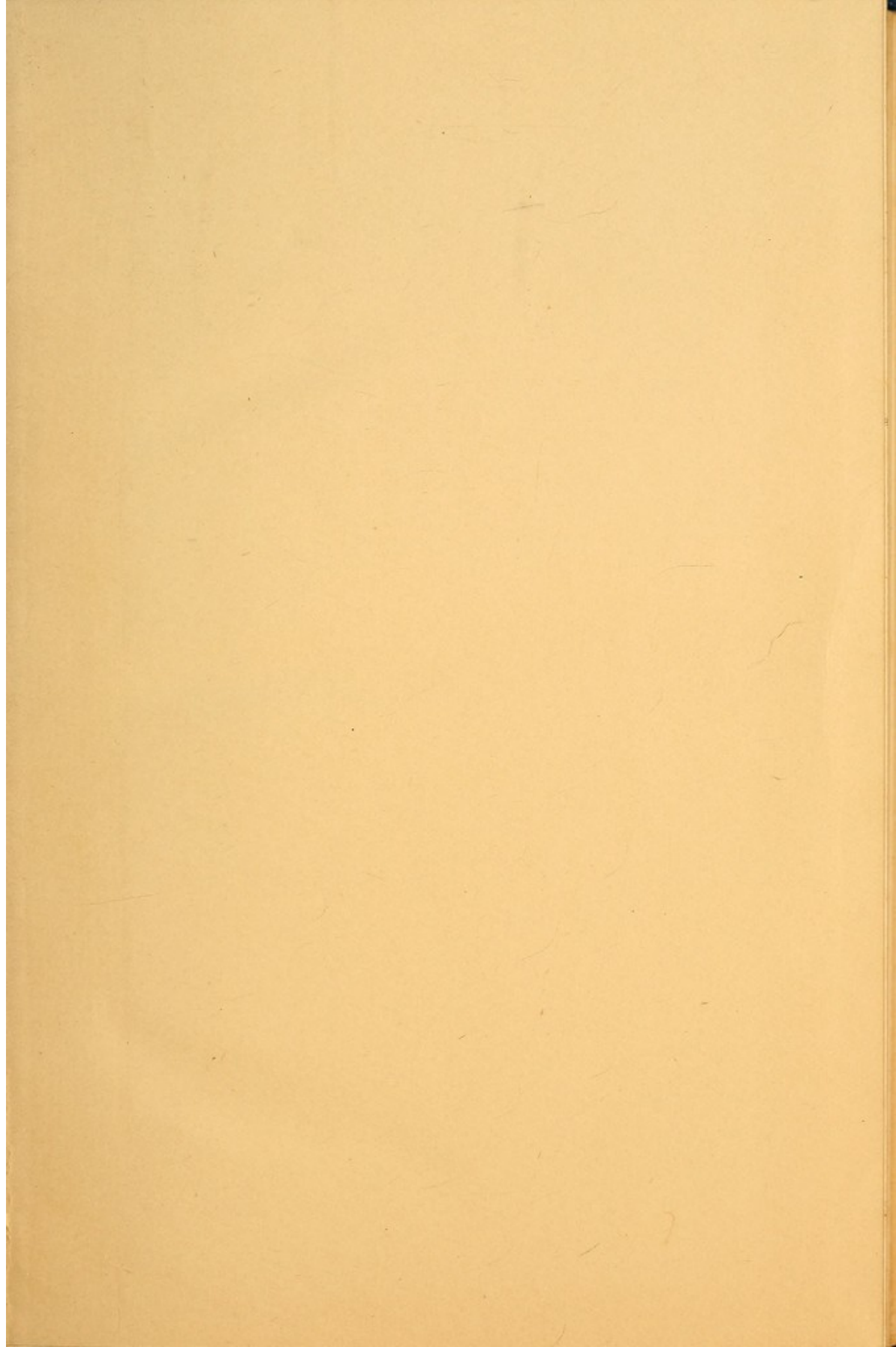




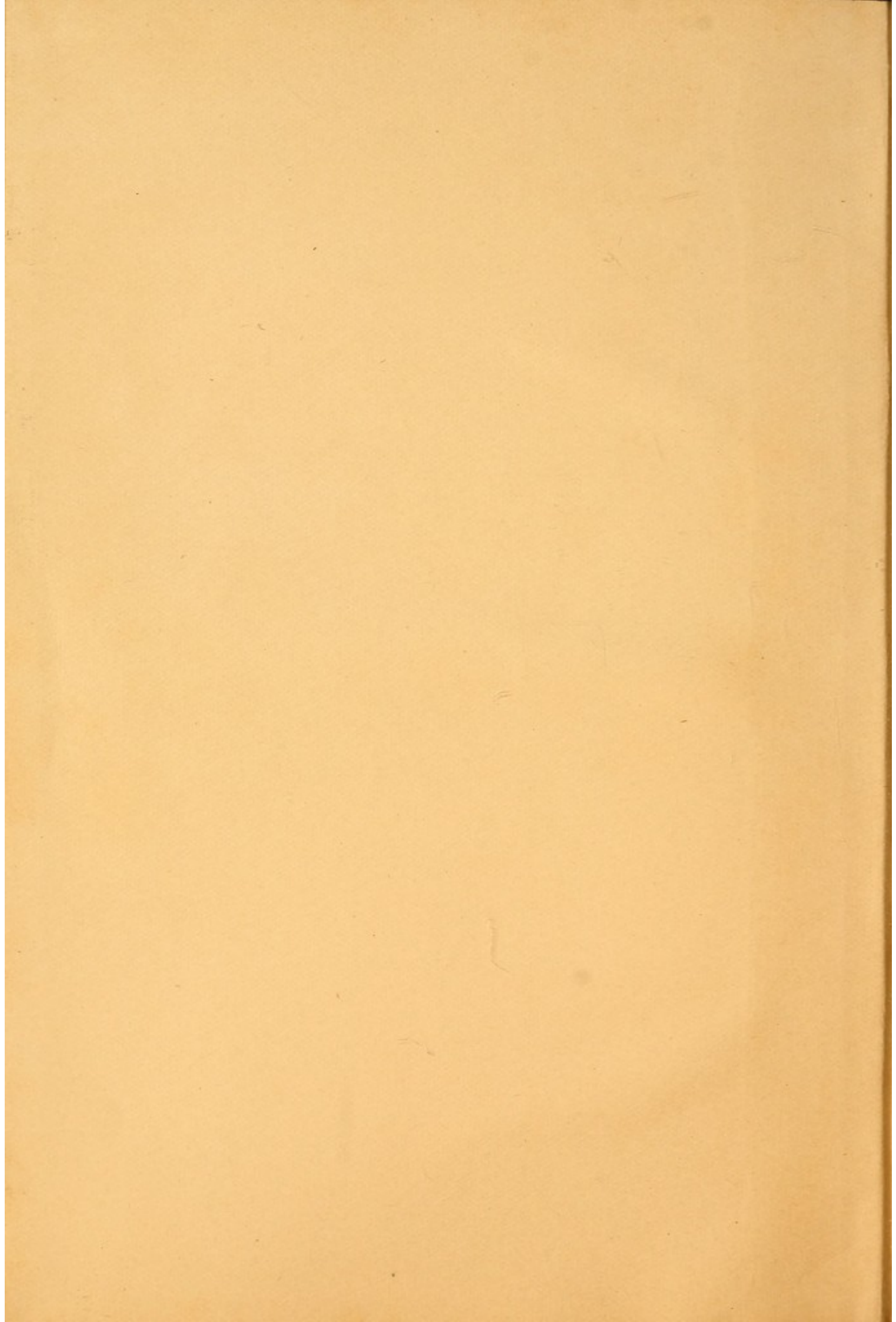


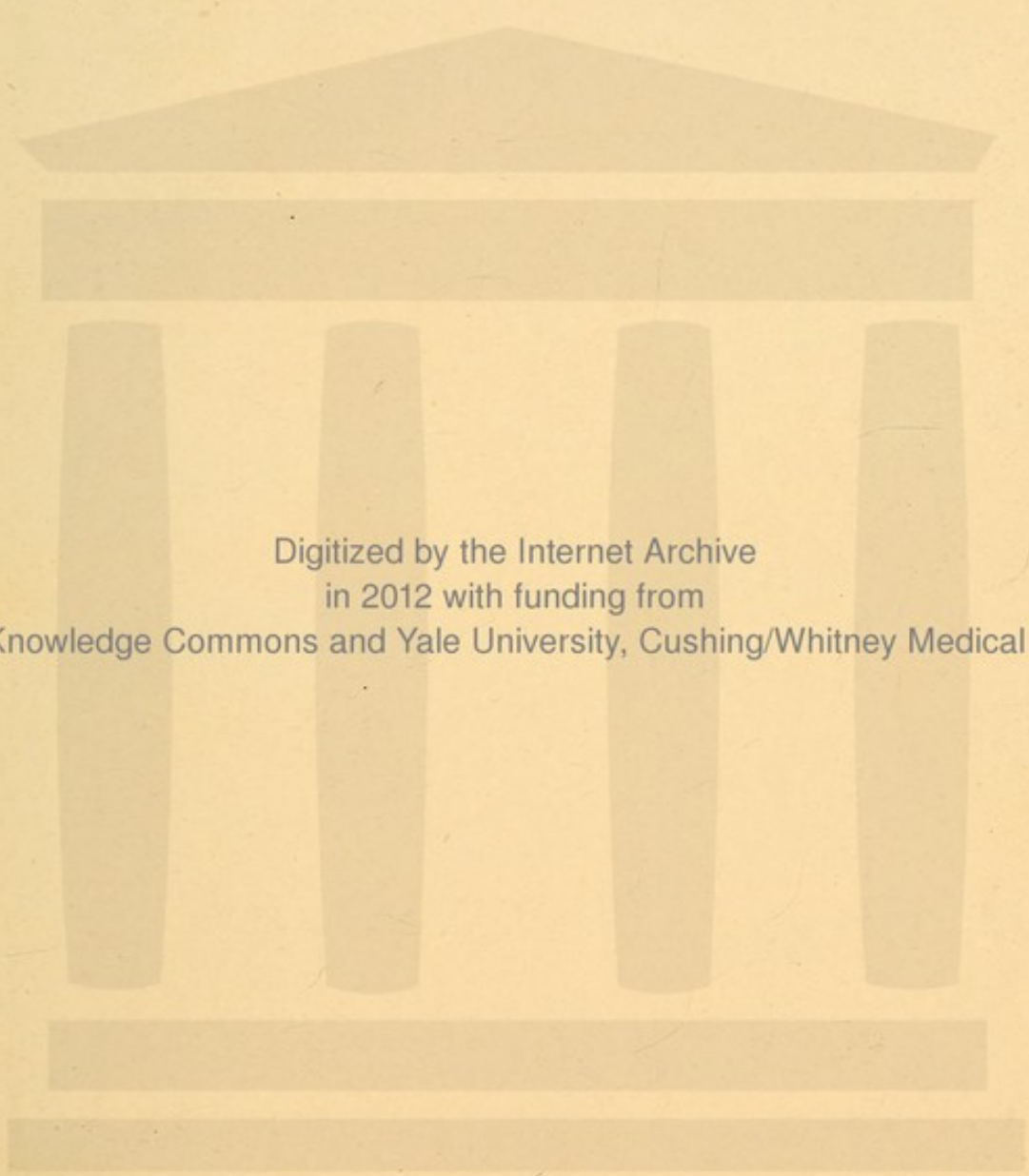












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"IT IS ALL LOVE."

# CLAIRE

A Romance of American Nursehood

EDWIN KIRKMAN HART

Author of "The Sleeping Sentinel of Valley Forge," "Our Republic and Its Perils," "Eagle Rock," etc.

Director Pennsylvania State Hospital Exhibit, World's Fair,  
St. Louis, 1904

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## THE GREATEST OF THESE IS—LOVE.

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No feature of American life to-day is more striking and impressive than the wonderful sympathy everywhere manifested in behalf of those who have fallen by the wayside. This applies alike to individuals and communities. The great ocean of charity broadens and deepens. It blesses mankind in a thousand ways and in none more effectively than through the merciful work of those who so faithfully care for the sick, the injured, the helpless. Within the past few years there has been developed a passion for self-sacrifice which sheds a beautiful halo above many devoted lives. The people in general are only beginning to note this marvellous outcoming of genuinely practical Christianity. A vast number are daily reaping the benefit without fully realizing the real source of the inspiration to do good things without hope of worldly applause.

It has been my privilege, in the course of many years' editorial study of men and passing events, to come into very close contact with those who care for the neglected, the needy and the erring, and my admiration was intensified during the



work assigned me as Director of what proved to be the greatest exhibit of the kind ever seen, at the recent World's Fair, at St. Louis. My own cup of sympathy was full to overflowing; hence this simple little panorama of touching scenes as they passed before my glistening eyes, daily, almost hourly, for months. In a quiet little cottage by the sea, with the ever uplifting music of the breakers and the morning and evening greetings of the happy little songsters in the tree tops, of whose presence we never grow weary, the dear friends who had been so zealously laboring with me again passed quickly by, in the performance of their exalted duties. They came very near. I could hear their subdued but earnest voices, look into their bright and loving eyes, see their tender ministrations, feel the throbbing of their great hearts—hearts of gentleness, yet when needful hearts of oak—equal to every emergency. They silently spin the thread of life, often reuniting it when seemingly severed. Small wonder if Claire, Louise, Amy, the devoted physicians of the body and the soul, the heroic young minister, his anxious mother and her dear friend, Uncle John, black Mammy Jane, little Brownny, Big Jim and all the rest became so much a part of my life that they will live with me forever.



It will not be worth any one's while to try to find the originals of these good people; there are too many of them. The confusion would be endless. They may be found in and about every house of mercy throughout this broad land. They are the noble ideals who have created themselves in my own mind, revealed their own intense feelings, illustrated their own psalm of life. That such devoted lives should find the supreme happiness which crowns mutual love is but the natural sequel that works itself out in the old sweet way, "Like music from above." A goodly number of professional experts and severe critics have had the opportunity to inspect these portraits of their fellow workers and with one accord they have kindly pronounced them most lifelike. If the beautiful lessons taught by such consecration to humanity shall bless other lives and move them to higher, broader and deeper sympathies, the author will be abundantly rewarded.

EDWIN KIRKMAN HART.

PHILADELPHIA, May 17, 1905.



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## THE STORY AS TOLD

CHAPTER.	PAGE.
1. LOVE IN A CANOE—DOLLIE'S DREAM.....	13
2. COMING OF SOPHIE SUNSHINE.....	24
3. THE SINGING PROBATIONER.....	35
4. WINNING HER CAP—SAVING A LIFE.....	45
5. COMING CLOUDS—A PRECIOUS LEGACY.....	55
6. TO MINISTER TO THOSE IN NEED.....	62
7. A TRIAL OF FAITH.....	68
8. FACING THE TEMPTER.....	72
9. LOVING IN SECRET—THE CONFESSION.....	79
10. A LOVING HEART'S REVELATION.....	86
11. THE ROCK OF TRUE FRIENDSHIP.....	94
12. ST. ANN'S UNCROWNED QUEEN.....	98
13. A STRANGE VACATION.....	103
14. THE SUFFERING VIGIL OF LOVE.....	108
15. A MESSAGE OF SORROW.....	115
16. BACK FROM THE BORDERLAND.....	121
17. THROWING THE LIFE LINE.....	127
18. INTO THE BRIGHT SUNLIGHT.....	135
19. MINISTRY OF LOVE—CLAIRE'S VISION.....	143
20. IN PERIL OF FLAMES—THE RESCUE.....	151
21. INSPIRATION OF TRUE LOVE.....	159
22. HOSPITAL LIGHTS AND SHADOWS.....	167



CHAPTER.	PAGE.
23. A MODERN PLAGUE—THE REMEDY.....	176
24. FACING A NEW PERIL—SELF-SACRIFICE.....	180
25. INTO THE VALLEY—ANOTHER HEROINE.....	186
26. FAITHFUL IN PERIL.....	192
27. BROWNY'S HAPPY DAY—HOME AGAIN.....	202
28. JOYOUS DAYS AT HARLEY.....	207
29. MERCIFUL CARE OF LITTLE ONES.....	214
30. THE MISSION OF NURSEHOOD.....	219
31. LOVE'S AWAKENING.....	228
32. CUPID'S JOURNEY—LOVING WELCOME.....	236
33. A TIE THAT BINDS IN THE LABOR WORLD.....	243
34. THE GAME OF HEARTS—THE SURRENDER.....	250
35. LOVE'S TRIUMPH—THE MINIATURE.....	258
36. THE REWARD OF FAITH.....	265
37. INTO THE HARVEST FIELD ANEW.....	271
38. THE UNION THAT NONE CAN SEVER.....	276



## CHAPTER I.

### LOVE IN A CANOE—DOLLIE'S DREAM.

“Miss Claire first! Miss Claire first” was the glad cry of half a score of little girls—a symphony in white—dancing about on the grassy bank of the mill-dam at Harley. The happiest day in all the year in the monotonous life of the village, picturesquely nestling amid the foothills of Bald Mountain, had dawned bright and clear. In the annual June festival everybody joined, including many farmers’ families from the surrounding country. A beautiful grove beside the creek was the place of assemblage and by ten o’clock hundreds of people were on the grounds, others coming later. The mills always “shut down” upon this occasion and even the post office was closed part of the day, in



order that the store-keeper, Uncle John Williams, as every one called him, who was the long-time genial Sunday School Superintendent, could be present as a sort of master of ceremonies.

The venerable rector of St. David's, the only church in the vicinity, Rev. George Woodley, was particularly happy as this was a sort of celebration of the home coming of his son, Robert, who had just graduated from the Divinity School at Birmingham, and who was to be ordained to the ministry on the following Sunday. At school the young man had displayed those unselfish and lovable qualities which always marked his conduct and his class-mates had presented him with a little canoe, which was now to be launched on the placid waters of the big dam. A college friend, who had graduated from the Medical Department of the University, had come up from the city with him to enjoy the picnic.

When Robert and Dr. Brelsford appeared, in their attractive personal outfit, white flannel caps and shirts and white duck pantaloons, carrying the canoe on their stalwart shoulders, they were greeted with a great shout by the boys and girls, every one of whom was expecting a ride in the little craft. By common consent, however, they agreed that the mill owner's pretty daughter,



the daughter of the village, indeed, for not only every one in St. David's but all the people, young and old, loved Claire Randolph, should have the first ride. Many of the young folks had never seen a canoe and they did not know how well behaved they must be to ride therein safely.

Claire modestly protested to Robert and his friends that some of the little ones of her own class should go before herself. But they would not have it so and taking in the situation, Dr. Brelsford led her to the bank and with great care saw her safely in place. Robert quickly paddled out into the stream. The youthful spectators ran along the bank, laughing and shouting and throwing wild flowers after the smiling voyagers, whose happiness was supreme. Claire's eyes danced with delight, while Robert was thrilled with nervous excitement.

Side by side these two had grown up in old St. David's, though for various reasons, during school days, they had been much separated. But this period was now over and both, in the secret longing of loving hearts, were looking forward to the happy crowning of years of mutual devotion. It could not be for a little while, but they were full of joyous anticipation.

An old chestnut tree formed a little island on



the left side of the dam. Amid its half obtruding roots bull-frogs were wont to sun and air themselves. As the canoe gently rounded the island, a big croaker suddenly jumped in.

"Kerchook!" he said, as he dived right under the boat.

A little scream told how Claire had been taken unawares. She involuntarily leaned heavily to one side and her escort, too, in unconscious sympathy, bent that way. It was too much, tho only for an instant. Over they went, with a suddenness that was astonishing and ludicrous.

The water at that point was quite deep and both went out of sight, for the moment. When they came up, sputtering and laughing, the canoe, upside down, was floating down the stream, towards the dam breast, and the paddle, too, for Robert had dropped it in an effort to reach Claire. There was a great outcry of alarm and Dr. Brelsford was about to dash into the stream, to save Claire.

"Never mind! Never mind! don't trouble yourself," said the mill owner, his fat sides shaking with laughter. "She's all right! Here she comes! Here she comes!"

Claire had struck out calmly for the shore and was now gracefully approaching the grassy



bank. Dr. Brelsford gallantly reached out and took her extended hand. With her wet cheeks blushing like peonies, she laughed anew as she turned and saw Robert wading through the soft mud, a rod distant, dragging the canoe after him.

"I'm awfully sorry," she said, running away, as she shook out her skirts. "There's goes Rob's cap," as it floated down the middle of the stream. Her father quickly threw his blue sack coat over her dripping shoulders. Dollie Wheeler, her life-long "chum," the Superintendent's youngest daughter, said:

"You don't need to go home, Claire. Come up to our house and I'll fix you up in one of Bessie's white suits." The latter was an older sister, a fair duplicate of Claire, physically, and also a dear friend.

So "Dollie Dumpling," the pet name given by her doting father, in childhood, carried Claire off to the house on the hillside, a few rods distant. Dollie was a laughing, romping, good natured girl of seventeen, one year younger than Claire, but they had been close friends since babyhood.

"I know I ought to be ashamed of myself," said the bull-frog's victim, laughing again. "It was so absurd! But that big fellow jumped



so suddenly right at me, that I couldn't help it. I forgot how easily you lose your balance in a canoe."

"That young Doctor was scared," observed her friend. "He thought you were gone, sure."

"He didn't think we country girls could swim like ducks, eh Dollie?"

"No, indeed. Isn't he handsome?"

"Very! Why, I believe you're smitten already. Look out, Dollie Dumpling!"

"I think he's just fine!"

When the girls reappeared, Claire's brown hair floating in the wind that it might dry, they found Dr. Brelsford waiting to attend them and during the day he and Dollie had several quiet little strolls and talks together. Dan Cupid was kept busy and before night-fall had nearly exhausted the stock of arrows in his quiver.

Robert's appearance, when he came up out of the water, was ludicrous. His white duck pants were a total wreck for that day, covered with mud to the knees. He went home and, changing his garments, was soon back, ready for more fun.

"Now, who next wants a ducking?" he cried, banteringly.

The canoe was not quite so popular, with the



girls, but a number of boys enjoyed a brief ride.

After luncheon an hour was happily spent in singing familiar songs and hymns, this musical service being greatly promoted through the assistance of the village orchestra. Claire sang several beautiful solos and in the general singing her sweet voice led all the rest. Indeed, in St. David's or elsewhere, a sort of unwritten law forbade any one being heard above Claire Randolph, and there were few who could approach her high, clear notes.

Everybody loved this winsome girl. Her wonderful blue eyes fixed the attention of strangers and won their admiration. She had a pretty habit of throwing her head to one side, with a childlike longing look that was fascinating. Her manner was disingenuous and winning; her voice low and musical. Sweetness and light seemed to be her portion at all times. Her smile was a loving benediction, lingering like the memory of a beautiful dream. She was cheerfulness and hopefulness combined. She kept her lamp of life trimmed and burning and its rays of light brought new courage to many walking in the shadow.

At night-fall the weary picnickers wended their way homeward. Uncle John Williams



called to young Mr. Woodley, as he was sauntering past the post office with the Doctor:

"I say, Rob, when you and Claire start out on the voyage of life, you don't want to upset her like that."

"I'll do better next time," was the laughing reply.

When the stars were all out brightly, Robert and Claire had a little supplemental party of their own, on the lawn, at "Woodlands," while the young Doctor was softly saying sweet things to Dollie, in a dark corner of the porch of her pretty hillside home.

"This is my birthday," she said.

"I hope it has been a happy one," was the earnest reply.

"The happiest in all my life!"

"I wish you many, many happy returns. This is, let me see, June 24. I shall not forget it, Miss Wheeler."

"Thank you," demurely. "When is your birthday?"

"The day before Christmas. You can easily remember that."

"Oh, that is lovely! Indeed, I wouldn't forget it anyhow."

"Will you make me a little promise?"



Dollie's excitement and happiness were at fever heat. "I'll promise you anything! Oh, I didn't mean that, hardly. Excuse me," and she fanned herself furiously. She was glad the young man could not see in the darkness how red her face was. He laughed aloud and leaning forward, in low tones, said:

"I'll remember that, too. But I was only going to ask if we might exchange some trifling birthday remembrances?"

"I shall be very glad to agree to that. Dear me! Just see! I'll have to wait a whole year," and the fan went faster than ever.

"You won't have to wait that long," observed the Doctor. "Christmas comes about half way, you know."

"Oh, yes; and I'll tell you what I would like," facing him eagerly. "That our little gifts should be something made with our own hands."

"That's a delightful suggestion. I'll gladly agree to that." Then, laughing, "I'm not much of a hand with tools or needles. Guess I'll have to make a canoe, eh?"

"How jolly that would be! But you must make one that won't upset," with a merry laugh.

"That will be hard to do. But I'll try. Folks don't upset when they sit right still."



"And keep close together," added Dollie. "Oh, my! I didn't——"

"Oh, yes, you did mean it!" and the young man's laugh could be heard across the mill-dam, at the foot of the wide lawn.

"You seem to be having lots of fun," pleasantly observed Mr. Wheeler, coming around the corner of the porch. "What's the joke, Dollie?"

"Nothing, Papa; nothing much! Don't tell him, Doctor. He's always making fun of me."

"It's you who are always making the fun, I guess," suggested the laughing visitor. "She seems to be built that way, Mr. Wheeler."

"You're right, sir. She is a born streak of sunshine. Ain't you, Dumpling?" leaning over the back of her chair and stealing a kiss.

"Oh, Papa!" pouting. She did not want this handsome young stranger to know her baby "nickname."

"From such a loving father, Miss Wheeler, you must have inherited the always lovable quality of good humor," said the Doctor, rising. "Good-night. I hope I may have the great pleasure of meeting you again, very soon." He held her little fat hand until her heart beat wildly.



"Good-night, sir," she half whispered. "I hope so, too."

"Good-night, Mr. Wheeler."

"Good-night, Doctor. Hope we shall see you often."

"Thank you, kindly."

It was Dollie Wheeler's first experience in love-making. When she went to bed all the world was a rose garden, full of fairies and sweet music. When she met Claire at the post office the next evening she whispered:

"I dreamed last night that I was married and taking a wedding journey, in a canoe!" Then, clapping her dimpled hands, she cried aloud, as she ran away, "and we didn't upset, either."

Claire called to her to come back a minute and in low, earnest tones said:

"I sincerely hope, Dollie, when you do take the voyage of life, it will be under cloudless skies, with every prospect of a long and happy journey."

"And you, too, you dear, sweet Claire," was the loving reply, kissing her friend good-night.



## CHAPTER II.

### HEROINES OF OUR TIME—COMING OF SOPHIE SUNSHINE.

\*“Since the world began it has been the dutiful province of women to minister, with tender and loving devotion, to the wants and sufferings of mankind. Yet it was reserved for the closing years of the nineteenth century to think out and develop a perfected system of professional watchfulness and caretaking that is in every respect the efficient and long-needed handmaid of medical and surgical science. The ties of family affection are so strong that the average man and woman can scarcely be induced to give over the care of a loved one to a stranger, however attractive in person and skillful in her chosen calling. Let the white-robed angel of mercy once enter the



stricken home and with infinite gentleness assume in very large part, as the vigilant and faithful co-laborer with the physician, the task of saving the imperiled life, and with marvelous rapidity she wins her way into the fullest confidence and makes grateful debtors of those who may have looked upon her coming with doubt and fear.

“Trained nurses, through hospital instruction, are taught the invaluable aid of coolness and self control in every emergency. They do not permit fear for their own safety to interfere with the most efficient performance of duty. They bravely steer the frail and almost wrecked human craft once more into port. Their steady hand is always on the helm. With children the trained nurse is a veritable fairy of blessedness, and during convalescence little hearts are knit so closely that the hour of parting, when health is restored, becomes one of pain. Men patients are calmed by the sympathetic touch, the soft and soothing words, of the attentive helpmate of the hour. Women, lying almost hopeless on the border land, are gently brought back to life and home, father, husband, children, friends, and when they realize that the darkness has been swept away and they are safe in the harbor of domestic love, their manifestation of gratitude is



often extremely touching. The romance of nursehood is a golden field of beauty that is filled with the most touching marks of heartfelt appreciation. To recall these tokens of lasting esteem is a pleasure that is ample compensation for many sacrifices and many self-imposed perils."

\*From an original article by the author, published in 1902.

For more than twenty-five years William Randolph's cotton mills had comprised the chief industry of Harley. Their owner, the son of an English cotton spinner, coming to this country in boyhood, had made his own way in the world. He was not now a rich man, but he had managed fairly well to hold his own in the struggle for existence which was the lot of so many small manufacturers. Recently he had met with many losses, through the disastrous failure of two commission houses to whom he had made advances and who also were largely indebted to him for manufactured goods, which they had sold but had made slight return therefor. The double loss had cut deeply into his reserve resources. His beautiful home, "Woodlands," was the apple of his eye, and next to the care of an invalid wife, his chief personal concern was the present and future happiness of his only child, Claire.



Her education had been thorough and practical. She could take care of herself at any time. Sharing her mother's kindly interest in the mill operatives, Miss Randolph had endeared herself to the whole community. She visited the sick, even when a child her great delight being to carry dainties from home to those in need of some pleasant change in diet. She was also master of all kitchen details and presided one day in the week over the preparation of all food, and upon such occasions would surprise her father with dishes that would make him proud of her household accomplishments.

Claire also took much interest in the advance movements of the time, affecting opportunities of usefulness for women, and an event which happened shortly after the festival made a deep impression upon her mind. She had never seen a trained nurse. Mrs. Randolph became quite ill, one Sunday, when a lifelong friend of her husband's was visiting at "Woodlands." This was Francis Brelsford, who was intimately associated with Mr. Randolph in the business world and in philanthropic and religious work. He had been elected President of St. Ann's Hospital, Birmingham, and was deeply interested in the growing work of that great institution.



"Let me send you a good nurse," said he. "She may be the right person at the right time. I'll send you Miss Sophie."

"What do you say, mother?" asked her husband, reporting to her the kindly suggestion.

"Perhaps it would be well," was the languid reply. "I really feel like being nursed. Then Claire will be free to look after your comfort."

"I don't need any care; my only anxiety is for you, dear," fondly patting her pale cheek. "But we will agree to this proposition. I think it will be a good thing. I want to get you out of this as soon as possible." The weather was very warm and the devoted husband was growing anxious.

So it was fixed, and while Claire stayed with her mother, her father went to the station, at noon on Monday, to meet the fair stranger. As she came out of the car, looking sharply about, Mr. Randolph, thinking he knew a live nurse when he saw one, stepped up and very politely said:

"This is Miss ——, I suppose?"

"Yes—Miss Sophie," with a bewitching smile, and that was all any one could get out of her during a whole month at "Woodlands." To every curious attempt to go further, as to her "real name," the bright young woman would fence them off.



"Oh, Miss Sophie will do, please. I like it very much."

"Has a pleasant history, I suppose?" suggested Mr. Randolph one day at lunch, laughing quizzically.

"Yes, indeed it has." But she was provokingly silent as to any particulars.

The moment this quick witted, happy faced, self confident helper came to her bedside, the beloved mistress of "Woodlands" seemed to take on new life.

"I feel better already, father," she said that afternoon, when he came up from the mill, about four o'clock, to see how she was "coming on," adding, "she is wonderfully bright."

At that moment the village Doctor called. He had not yet been notified of the innovation, and this was to be his first experience with the "new fangled idea." As he hitched his horse at the head of the lane, he caught sight of Miss Sophie taking her first spin around the house and grounds. She had just jumped clear the hedge, going up into the air like a sprite.

"What's that? What's that? the Doctor asked of Thomas, the coachman, who had come out to give the tired and thirsty horse a drink.

"Did ye see her jump? That's the new gal



we got to take care of the missus. She's a black eyed darlint, she is. Look! Look!"

Miss Sophie came around the house on a full run, clapping her hands and laughing at the white guinea "rooster" she had flushed and who was scared out of his wits at the apparition.

Seeing the Doctor coming up the pathway, looking in doubt whether to go forward or imitate the "rooster" and run, Miss Sophie stepped down from the porth and extended her soft white hand, which was lost in the big brown fist of the weather beaten man of pills and plasters.

"This is the Doctor, I presume? I'm the nurse, Miss Sophie. Come right up," and she led the way into the house and up the broad stairway, patting her flaming face with her handkerchief.

"I'm glad to see you, Miss," stammered the Doctor. He hoped the recording angel would forget to enter that big fib on his book.

When they entered the sick room, the good old Doctor's expression was so droll, mingled amazement, doubt and disapproval, Mrs. Randolph laughed in spite of herself.

"Mother is doing first rate, don't you think, Doctor?" asked her husband, while his eyes admiringly followed the nimble footed nurse,



as she glided about the room, adjusting the window curtains, smoothing out the wrinkles in the bed coverlet and then affectionately patting down the ruffled ringlets on the patient's forehead.

"She is doing very nicely, don't you think, Doctor?" said the young woman, beaming upon him, as he again looked her over.

"Nothing like cheerful company when you are sick," suggested Mr. Randolph.

"Umph! Umph!" grunted the Doctor. It was the best he could do. It would be dangerous to speak, in his mental condition.

"I'll have her out riding in a day or two. Won't I, dear?" and Miss Sophie's smile caught the old-fashioned practitioner this time.

"Well, this is something new, 'round here, to be sure. But I guess it's all right—if you're satisfied, William?" Dr. Boyd always called men by their first names when he wanted to be severe. He looked up inquiringly.

"Anything to please mother, Doctor, and make her happy, you know," was the genial reply.

"Yes? I'll bring her a bag of mint stick the next time I come. Good-morning." But he stopped and turned around. This veteran medicine man was a gentleman and kindly in his



intercourse with people. It was all so sudden and his mental processes were slow. He was coming around. He sat down again by the side of the bed and told a funny story he had just heard "down the road." It had whiskers—gray whiskers—but this, too, was the best he could do under the circumstances. He was bound to be agreeable. "Where did you come from, Miss?" smiling anew at Miss Sophie.

"Birmingham."

"Yes, yes, of course," rubbing his chin. "But what, I mean."

"St. Ann's."

"Umph! Good hospital. Guess you know your business."

"I hope so," sweetly.

"Beg pardon. What is your name?" making a memorandum in his note book.

"Sophie—Miss Sophie."

"Yes, Miss Sophie," writing. "What?" waiting; "your full name?"

"Oh, just Miss Sophie. That will do. Sophie Sunshine, they sometimes call me," and she ran out of the room.

"What a funny woman! Queer idea! Say, William," softly, "when I came in she was having a regular circus all to herself! She can run like



a colt, and jump, too," and the old Doctor leaned back and laughed so loudly he had to apologize to the patient for making so much unseemly noise. But the invalid was laughing, too, while her husband shook in his easy chair.

"I wonder," the Doctor went on, "if that's part of the regular course at St. Ann's? I've heard some queer tales about these city nusses. But she's bright. She will keep the blues away. I'll give her a ride some day around the country in the gig, when I'm feeling kind of mean. She will stir me up a bit," and shaking hands with Mrs. Randolph and telling her she was doing splendidly, he went down stairs. At the door he stopped and looked about for Miss Sophie, but she was nowhere to be seen and he was much disappointed.

As he climbed into his high sulky, he heard two sweet voices calling in unison, "Good-bye, Doctor," and looking up saw a double vision of white disappear in the front door.

"My! My! Thomas," he said as he drove away, "that angel from town is too much for me. She and Claire will just do me up in about a week."

Miss Sophie's stay at "Woodlands" was the reigning sensation for a month. Her services were invaluable. She soon had Mrs. Randolph



out of bed; in a few more days out of doors. She seemed to understand this case of nerve exhaustion much better than Dr. Boyd, and the physician became her enthusiastic co-worker. She accepted his invitation for an afternoon outing and enjoyed the ride very much, visiting a number of patients. Upon these occasions she left her cap behind. "I only wear it when on duty," she exclaimed. Bare headed she strolled through the woods, galloped over the near-by country roads, on Claire's pony, making the farmers in the harvest fields stare, and paddled around alone in Robert's canoe. When she bade good-bye to "Woodlands," this bright girl was made to feel that she had won a very warm place in the hearts of the Randolph family and of many others. When she was driven to the station by Claire, the mill operatives, amongst whom she had scattered sunshine during a recent visit, waved an adieu from the open windows. She made Claire promise to pay her a visit at St. Ann's at an early day.



## CHAPTER III.

### THE SINGING PROBATIONER.

One afternoon in August Mr. Randolph, while in Birmingham, went out to St. Ann's Hospital, in pursuance of a long standing engagement with President Brelsford. He was wonderfully impressed, and at "Woodlands" that evening gave a glowing account of what he saw. Claire was intensely interested. "And what do you think he suggested, my dear?" he asked, addressing his wife.

"I know," eagerly interrupted Claire. "Pardon me, Mamma."

"Well?" queried her father.

"That I should become a trained nurse."

"Oh, Claire!" exclaimed the fond mother, deprecatingly.



"Well, not exactly that, you know," said Mr. Randolph. "That is, of course he did not mean that she should leave home permanently, to follow even that beautiful calling. Only that she should take the course of study and practice—for emergencies, you know, and—"

His voice was getting tremulous, and his hand shook as he lifted his cup of tea.

"That would be lovely!" cried Claire. "Don't you think so, Mamma, dear?" leaving her chair and throwing her arms around her mother's neck and kissing her.

Mrs. Randolph's lips were quivering and her eyes glistening. "I don't know—how I—could—spare you that long! Two whole years! I am afraid—" caressing her daughter tenderly.

"That won't be long," pleaded Claire. "I'll come home often."

"What do you think, father?" asked the doubting mother.

"Why—perhaps—it might be a good thing," struggling with a lump in his throat. The dear wife did not know what was passing in the troubled man's mind. She could not see the shadows that were even now encompassing him.

After another family conference, the plan was agreed to. Claire was delighted. She had been



wishing for this ever since she fixed her admiring eyes on Miss Sophie. She entered the Nurse Training School at St. Ann's the first week in September. Upon presenting in person the new probationer to the Directress, President Brelsford said:

"Miss \*Laine, this is Miss Randolph, of whom we have recently spoken, you know; the daughter of my dear friend, the owner of Harley mills. I know she will acquit herself splendidly."

"I'm very glad to welcome you," was the cordial greeting. "I hope, indeed, that your stay with us will be mutually pleasant and profitable."

"I know it will be. I am sure I shall do my very best," was the modest reply.

In one brief glance these two young women seemed to come to an understanding. A relationship of confidence and esteem was then and there established which was never to be broken.

"I'll show you to your room and afterwards through the buildings myself," said the head nurse. This, too, was an exceptional thing. Miss Laine was in all respects the personification of official dignity and discipline. Leadership was hers by right and every one bowed to her

\*This name is pronounced La-nay, accent on the second syllable.



imperious will without question. Yet her courtesy was unfailing, her consideration for subordinates generous to a fault. She protected many delinquents from the prescribed penalties of misdoing, when satisfied that the errors were not the result of gross carelessness or indifference. She impressed upon every pupil nurse the need of strict devotion to duty and was ever ready to listen to complaints or requests that were reasonable. In passing through the hospital, Claire noticed how deferential every one was and became deeply impressed with the superior qualities of her "handsome captain," as she called her, in the first letter to her mother.

"Your duties, for the first week or so, Miss Randolph," observed Miss Laine, "will be chiefly to keep your eyes and ears open, to note what others say and do, in the line of duty; and during working hours, all unnecessary or irrelevant conversation is against the rules. Through undivided attention only can one hope to discharge faithfully the sacred responsibilities of nursehood. Whatever the work in hand, preparing food, cleaning utensils, making beds, waiting upon patients, listening to lectures, reading books, observing demonstrations, assisting at operations, administering medicine, placing bandages, giving



baths—whatever it may be, the mind must not wander. A single moment's forgetfulness may be fatal to life itself. This is a serious thought, but it is based upon truth, as you will discover a thousand times. All this, my dear,"—Miss Laine was already being unconsciously drawn by that subtle magnetism that surcharged the very air that always surrounded Claire Randolph—"you will hear many times repeated. But I say it to you now because—I feel a—a strong personal interest in you." Then, facing her earnestly, "I've long been wanting some one here upon whom I could lean in times of special strain—at all times, I may say," with a heavy sigh. "And I am persuaded, something tells me so and it makes me very happy," with a sweet smile that brought tears to Claire's wondering eyes, "that you are to fill this great vacant place in my life here."

"My dear Miss Laine," said Claire, in tremulous tones, "I shall work so hard to serve you faithfully; to serve poor, suffering humanity," looking sympathetically down the ward they were passing. "I trust I may be of some little help to you. It will be my greatest reward. I thank you so much," slipping her hand in the arm of



the Directress and drawing very near, for a moment.

The queenly woman hastily brushed a tear away and smiling anew went on softly, as they walked slowly through the private operating room and in and out of adjoining apartments.

"Life here is not always rose colored; nor is it always a journey in the valley. There is a sweet compensation in the realization that comes to one, at the close of each day, that something has been done to relieve human suffering, to ease the burden of pain, to save life, to give new and brighter prospects to stricken men, women and children. Of course we do not show this feeling much, outwardly. Our lives are one round of vigilant, earnest, and may I say it reverently, consecrated work. Yet the brightening eye, the warm hand clasp of the convalescent, coming up out of the dark valley, the grateful smile of appreciation are the beautiful flowers that bloom along our daily pathway. Really, Miss Randolph," stopping at the door of her office, on the first floor, again, "I don't know when I so much enjoyed a little walk and talk. Come and see me often—very often. Report to Miss Hartman in the morning. Good-bye—for the present."

"Good-bye and thank you very much," said



Claire, throwing her a kiss, which was quickly returned as she slipped away.

Walking across the court yard to the Nurses' Home, Claire stopped to survey the main hospital and the group of lesser buildings that comprised this great house of mercy.

"Here I am at last," she thought. "And what a grand work they are doing, and it will be my privilege to help, in a little while. Over three thousand persons a year cared for in the wards, besides those ministered to, many thousands more, in the dispensary here," as she paused at the open door-way. "I'll go in a minute."

Entering she found a score or more of patients, young and old, sitting in the corridor and in the little side rooms. Some were receiving attention, others patiently waiting. Eyes were being examined by one of the young residents; throats by another; lungs sounded by a third, an older and more experienced member of the staff. Here wounds were being dressed; there a sick child was being prescribed for. An old man came out, on crutches, one foot dragging; a boy with his arm in a sling; a young woman, with her face bandaged; an older woman, pale and weak, on the arm of her anxious looking husband; her days were numbered; a white haired mother



crept out feebly, clutching a little torn shawl about her thin shoulders, though the day was warm. An old soldier stumbled out, with evidences of pain. The wound received at Gettysburg was troubling him again.

It was a very sorrowful sight. "And just to think!" reflected Claire, sadly. "The report says over twenty thousand came last year, about sixty thousand visits in all. What a blessed work it is! What would they do without this help?" She sat down beside a tired mother and took her restless sick baby in her own strong arms and soothed it, till her turn came, when she carried it in and handed it to the young doctor, who smiled as he noticed her gingham dress.

"Just come?" he said. "You will get used to this after awhile."

"Never! never! it is so sad," in a very low tone. "I'm taking my first lesson." She carried the baby out to the gate and slipped a silver coin into the poor mother's wan hand. Then she went to her room and lifted her heart in earnest prayer for all those she had seen suffering in this dark valley.

Later, the newest probationer met quite a company of her future associates, at tea, and in the pretty little sitting room where those off duty



rested awhile before going to their own apartments. An organ in one corner attracted Claire's attention, and quite involuntarily she lightly ran her fingers over the keys.

"Do you play?" asked one.

"Oh, yes."

"And sing?"

"Sometimes."

"Oh, that will be nice! There are only two others in our class who are musical—one plays and the other sings, and they are seldom here together. Play and sing something, won't you?"

"Certainly she will."

And the other girls, four or five, gathered about the smiling stranger.

"You must not expect too much," she protested.

"We all love music and it helps so much, after being at work all day," said the first one who had spoken.

The first piece Claire sang was "Home, Sweet Home," and then she and all the rest had a good cry.

"Oh, my," she said, laughing through her tears, "I didn't mean to make every one so unhappy."

"You didn't," sniffed one. "We love to think



about home—mine is far away—in Illinois, and I won't see it again for a year."

"You dear child," said Claire, sympathizingly, "I'll take you up to my own home, sometime, instead," throwing an arm around her.

"Thank you. Is it far?"

"Only about an hour's ride."

"Let me play something we can all sing," said Claire, "and not cry. Let's be patriotic," and she played and led them in singing a string of National airs.

It was altogether a delightful first night in hospital life, thought Claire. She then played "Rock of Ages," and every one sang with a fervor that filled her own heart with joy. She went up stairs between two of the girls, each with an arm around her, and they kissed her good-night, as though they had known her all their lives.



## CHAPTER IV.

### WINNING HER CAP—SAVING A LIFE.

Claire's first disappointment was to find that her friend Miss Sophie had left St. Ann's to take a place as Superintendent in one of the State hospitals in the mining region. She loved the wild country and could not refuse this call to a field so picturesque.

Reporting to Miss Hartman, the new probationer spent the first day in the big kitchen, taking lessons in preparing food for patients. It was plain sailing here, for she was quite master of this art. But she must learn a lot of things she didn't know, especially as to what foods might and might not be used in a sick room.

Several weeks were devoted to this branch of study. Then there was a transfer to the routine



of cleansing, in the various rooms used by the physicans and their assistants. Practical lessons were given in bed-making, the care of linen, etc., and finally came actual service in the wards and the most trying ordeal of all, the operating room. At the end of the first three months, Claire found she had won her cap, by faithful and efficient service, and was now regularly entered for the full course. She attended the lectures and read the books assigned with great diligence. She frequently saw Miss Laine and their friendship grew apace.

"I'm only waiting my opportunity to advance you," said her good friend. "You are doing splendidly. It is a fine class, but some of the girls are a little slow. If they would only all realize how essential it is to success to be in earnest, to use their brains to the very utmost."

"Don't you think some of the books are a trifle hard?" Claire ventured to ask.

"Yes, they are—needlessly so, I think. But we must keep to the standard, and they are advancing it all the while. St. Ann's will not be excelled by any other institution," and the Directress held her head proudly. "You are distancing some of them because you look, listen and think all the time. That's the way to win. We have no time



here for trifling—or for love,” she added, laughing lightly, her fair face aflame. “That must wait.” The first assistant resident physician had just passed her door, with a smile and a bow that Claire thought was just a little bit more intense than official and professional etiquette demanded.

“Who is that?” she asked.

“That is Dr. Clarke—the smartest—and best,” and again she blushed deeply, “of the house staff. Isn’t he handsome?” eagerly.

Claire laughed outright as she replied: “Dangerously so, I should say.”

Tall, dark, piercing eyes, a strong smooth face, with a winning smile, young Dr. Clarke always attracted attention. Miss Laine toyed with a fancy paper cutter on her desk. “He gave me this on my last birthday,” she said. “And I gave him—a bouquet of American beauties.” Her beautiful brown eyes were dancing. “But we don’t think of these things often, you know,” trying to resume her wonted dignity.

“They leave a sweet odor in the air, all the same,” suggested Claire, “and help the brain as well as the heart.”

“Were you ever in love?” quickly asked Miss Laine, turning again and facing her in great



earnestness, yet with a softness in her eyes that was very bewitching.

"Y-e-s," was the half whispered reply, with averted face.

"You are not thinking much about him now," suggested her friend. "He, too, must wait," and her face took on another flash of red. Her eyes were resting on a cabinet photo lying carelessly in a pigeon hole in her desk. Claire thought she would have given the Kootchie diamond, if she owned it, to see the face there hidden.

"Sometimes we are all dreamers, I suppose," said the Directress. "I guess we can work all the harder afterwards." She had learned her friend's most precious secret and unconsciously given away her own.

The days, weeks and months passed rapidly. Claire was an apt pupil, studious, quick, reliable. Her answers to the professors on quiz days surprised them. She was learning everything—and what was of much more account, remembering it. Her first meeting with Dr. Clarke was an eventful night. A delirious male patient had seized and swallowed a glassful of powerful mixture, thinking it ice-water, which had been left within his reach by the attending nurse only an instant, while she turned to the restless patient in the



next cot. Claire was near and while the nurse, in alarm, ran for the night superintendent and the doctor, she forced an emetic down the big fellow's throat and had his stomach cleared before the physician was within sight. Hurrying in, Dr. Clarke found he had been needlessly disturbed.

"Miss Randolph," he said, with great courtesy, "I've been hearing of you and now I have had my own demonstration of your superior qualities. I want to thank you, on behalf of this poor fellow, whose life you have saved—there was not an instant to lose in his perilous case—and my own, and to congratulate you as well." He looked steadily into her glowing face—she had had a hard struggle with the patient.

"Thank you, Doctor," she said. "I did only my duty."

"Just so! Just so!" was the earnest reply. "But so many forget, in a crisis." He remained at the bed-side half an hour, the while observing Claire's every movement as she looked after the patients on her own side of the ward.

Some weeks after this incident, Claire was attending in the main operating room. It was a delicate and dangerous case. A sudden flow of blood startled and sickened the senior nurse,



standing near the chief surgeon. She did not faint, but was compelled to leave the room. Claire quickly stepped to her place and without a word of instruction performed every office needful, with coolness, precision and accuracy. Dr. Kedward looked his intense satisfaction, and after that Miss Randolph was one of his regular attendants.

"She is in the front rank, if she is a junior," he said to Miss Laine. "And I want her every time."

The Directress was only too glad to grant the request. "My dear," she said to Claire, "the surgeons as well as the physicians think you are just the one thing needful. I sincerely rejoice with you."

From that time until her graduation Miss Randolph was often given responsibilities beyond her station, and she discharged every trust with fidelity and skill.

A pathetic incident occurred during Claire's last month as a pupil nurse. A poor young mother, hopelessly ill, was grieving over her fatherless girl baby, less than two years old. A sister was caring for it, but she had four small children of her own.

"I wish you would care for my baby," she



said, pleadingly, to the sympathizing nurse, one day, as she leaned over the patient, scarcely able to speak at all now. "Won't you find a good home for it?"

"Yes," was the ready reply. "I visited the most lovely home for motherless babies last week. I am sure they will take it and provide for it."

"I'm so glad," sighed the mother. "And I want them to rename it—after you, if you will let them."

"Why, that would give me great pleasure," said Claire. "And I shall visit it often. I will see about the matter this evening."

"You are so kind," was the grateful reply. "You have been so kind. I am so much obliged to you. Won't you please send my sister word to bring the baby to see me? I want to give her to you myself," and the tears trickled down the pale, thin face.

The child was brought as requested, and the next day, and in the presence of Dr. Clarke, it was bequeathed to Claire, who was much affected by this manifestation of loving confidence.

"I will never lose sight of her, Mrs. Marley," she said, taking the little one in her arms and pressing it to her bosom. It looked into her face



with a happy smile and nestled closely all the way to the Home.

"This is my baby, ain't she sweet?" said Claire to the matron. "The little one I told you of; little Claire Marley. I know you will take the best of care of her and see that she gets a good home. I shall want to see her often."

The next day a photographer called at the Home and took little Claire's picture, with the new doll baby her foster mother had bought for her, and several of her associates. She sat in a tiny chair in the foreground, holding her dollie. Miss Randolph took the picture to the hospital, where it delighted the mother. She kept it under her pillow during the remaining few days of life. Little Claire, within the year, was adopted by well-to-do relatives of Dr. Clarke, and her future thus assured.

Miss Randolph stood at the head of a class of twelve bright young ladies. Mr. and Mrs. Randolph and Robert and Mrs. Woodley attended the commencement exercises. President Brelsford was delighted with the fulfillment of his prophecy. His winning smile was intensified when he handed Claire her diploma. The address of the evening, a touching tribute to the nobility of nursehood, was delivered by Rev. Dr. Jamison, of Trinity



Church, in the presence of a large audience, the Bishop presiding. Two of the most interested visitors were Dollie Wheeler and Dr. Brelsford, son of the President, now practicing in a suburb of Birmingham. Dollie was still dreaming of that wedding journey in a canoe.

In bidding Claire good-bye, Miss Laine, with much feeling, said to her: "I know and am glad to know that it is not necessary that you should pursue the calling of a nurse, though to have had you remain here would have been an infinite comfort to me. Yet I trust you may find many ways as you happily journey through the pleasanter walks of life of giving kindly and efficient aid to those walking in the shadows. I hope you will come and see us often and remember us, Claire, dear, in your prayers. I shall think of you every Sunday in that beautiful little wayside church, which to me also was such a great comfort during my convalescence, last summer," referring to a visit of several weeks spent at "Woodlands," and the tears came, in spite of an earnest effort to maintain that professional calmness which characterizes the blessed sisterhood of bedside saints.

"You don't know how your kindly words, quite undeserved, I fear, my dear Miss Laine," replied



Claire, "move me. They almost make me determine to remain right here, or to return and take my place with you. I feel that I, too, must be doing something for those in need. At least I shall not overlook any who may require my services at home. I thank you sincerely for the special interest you have taken in me, and you must come to visit us again during your next vacation."

Her classmates, also parted with Claire with many expressions of tender regard. Little did the gifted young woman think that within the following year she would be one of the regular staff of St. Ann's.



## CHAPTER V.

### COMING CLOUDS—A PRECIOUS LEGACY.

A few weeks after his ordination, Robert Woodley had been called as assistant minister by a large church in a distant town. He served acceptably for some months, resigning on account of his father's illness. The Rector of St. David's was unconsciously nearing the end of his ministry, which suddenly closed while Robert was serving in his stead. The people with one accord seemed to desire the relationship to continue and the young man was regularly installed. The salary was only \$800, and the rectory, with a small piece of ground, mostly planted with fruit trees. When Miss Randolph returned to her home, the young minister renewed his attentions most assiduously, despite the presence of several rivals, and



their engagement was formally announced some months later. Another summer had passed, without special interest. Claire had resumed her place in charge of the church music, assisted by Dollie Wheeler and several other young ladies.

One warm Sunday afternoon, in September, William Randolph led his wife to the edge of the lawn.

"Let us sit out here a little while, mother. I need the air," said the white-haired, pale-faced, weary-looking master of "Woodlands." He silently gazed at the distant landscape, like one taking a farewell look at surroundings hallowed by time and the faithful labors of an earnest life. In the valley, to the right, were the mills, with the village half hidden by bunches of trees on the hillside and along the creek. Directly below, at the end of the long, shaded lane, was the church of St. David, the congregation of which was moving homeward from evensong. For the first time in more than a quarter of a century, save occasional holidays, the great factory bell would be silent on the morrow and for an indefinite time the gates would be closed. No one knew this but the broken hearted owner; not even his beloved wife, now wondering at his strange silence, and she had always shared his confidence;



with whom he had counseled in every trial—and there had been many.

Slowly coming up the lane were Claire and Robert, deeply absorbed in each other. A few rods from the gate, they paused and leaned over the hedge, watching the golden autumnal sunset, that seemed to possess for them an unusual fascination. A great cloud suddenly gathered and shut out every bright ray. It was as though beautiful hopes of life had quickly been shattered.

“I think we should go in,” said Claire timidly, as a flash of lightning darted across the sky. “And there are father and mother out under the trees. He looks so ill! Let us hasten,” and they quickened their steps.

To the gentle companion at his side, the observing father softly said:

“May it be as their loving hearts wish—some day! But it cannot be now! It cannot be now,” the last, regretful, words being scarcely audible, while his lips again moved, as if in prayer. Then he aroused himself, with iron will shook off the spell of depression, and smilingly greeted the young rector, affectionately responding to the embrace of his daughter.

“We enjoyed the service very much, Mr.



Woodley," he said; "didn't we, mother? We were there in spirit, if not in person."

"It seemed," said the fond mother, "as though I could hear Claire sweetly singing 'Softly Now the Light of Day.'"

"You dear, dear Mamma," quickly interrupted the happy girl, smothering further compliments with kisses, "what a wonderful imagination you have!"

"That's just what she was doing," declared Mr. Woodley, enthusiastically. "We had a delightful service—we always have when Claire is there," with a tender glance. He did not observe the heavy sigh, almost a moan, which was the only response his host could make. Claire returned with him presently to the gate. The clouds had passed.

"A few more weeks only, dearest, if all is well, and——"

"I hope so, too," was the half whispered reply. But there was a shadow upon her fair face now which he could not understand.

As she came upon the porch, Claire was led in silence by her father to his little den, around behind the parlor. Seating himself at his desk, he touched the tiny bell, and when the maid appeared said:



"Send Thomas in, please." Turning to his daughter, he handed her a slip of paper to read, observing, with averted face: "You must see that now, in order that you may understand." With eyes filled with tears she read, half aloud:

"These mills are closed, for the present. Due notice of resumption of work will be given.

"Wm. Randolph.

"September 10."

"Thomas," calmly directed the mill owner, as the coachman appeared; "take this to Mr. Wheeler," enclosing the notice in an envelope, with another note to the Superintendent, instructing him to post the notice and call upon him at seven o'clock the next morning. Claire crept to the foot-stool, beside the desk.

"My child, the hour has come. My departure is at hand;" were the strange and startling words that she heard. "I've fought the fight with all my strength and—lost! I've been able to keep back all knowledge of this until the final blow, which only came yesterday, and for that I'm thankful. The clouds have been gathering and settling about me a long while. But the end is near. I had hoped, oh, so earnestly, and even confidently, to at least save enough from the wreck to make sure of mother's comfort and



yours. Alas! my darling daughter, I must leave her a precious charge to you! The dear old home is her's; thank heaven for that; but scarcely a penny beside, if they do as they may and doubtless will. I may rally out of this myself and be of some service to you; but I do not expect it. The burden of sorrow is too great. My last remnant of strength seems to be fading away. Bear up, child, for my sake, for mother's sake! You have been looking forward with unspeakable joy to your union with Mr. Woodley, and I love him, too, as my very own. But it is simply impossible—now. His own position, as you know, with his aged mother, is a struggle. You cannot add to his burden. I never thought it would come to this!" The hot tears mingled with her's as the loving daughter threw her arms around the dying man.

"Father! Father!" she cried. "Stay with me, oh, stay with me, and I'll bear it all! I'll carry all the burden, with willing hands and feet and a loving heart! This will be my daily duty, well and faithfully done. Cheer up, father! Be brave and strong again, for dear mother's sake, for my sake!"

But the broken spirit could not be rallied; the weary brain had lost all its native vigor. The



once strong man was as a helpless child, sinking to eternal rest. They half carried him to his room. He came back, just a little while, long enough to take a sad farewell of the stricken wife and mother, and then came the end, as the dawn of another day was breaking.

Robert Woodley's grief was as sincere and unselfish as it was deep and lasting.



## CHAPTER VI.

### TO MINISTER TO THOSE IN NEED.

The days of trial quickly followed the sudden passing away of the long-time owner of Harley mills. All the estate, except the old homestead, fell into other and unsympathetic hands. The villagers regarded Martha Randolph with child-like affection. She had, indeed, been a mother to many of them in hours of sickness and distress. Her door was open to all; her heart was in unison with theirs. The little church was largely her own gift to the community, and there was pathetic rejoicing when it was learned that she would remain, at least for a time, at "Woodlands." But the announcement that "Miss Claire," who had been devoted to good works in the community since childhood, was going away, to take up life



anew, caused many a heartache in the humble homes wherein her cheery presence had so long been a benediction. The knowledge gained in the training school at St. Ann's Hospital had been put to good use in caring for the sick and injured, and every one said that if she must go out into the world her proper place was the field she had chosen, and earnest prayers followed her departure for the city of Birmingham, when she took leave of her mother and friends one bright October morning. There was a tearful parting with Mrs. Randolph.

"I'll come and see you every fortnight, mother," was the loving promise. "They have agreed to that and I'll hold them to it—unless some poor soul may need me."

"It will be as though the light had gone out entirely, my child," were the broken words of the lonely widow, only now beginning to realize how sad would be her lot. "But I shall bear it bravely, Claire, for I know it is needful and right that you should go. Yet you are none too strong, and I pray that you may be spared from all harm and be enabled to serve suffering humanity faithfully and well."

When President Brelsford informed Miss Laine that Miss Randolph desired to take up work at



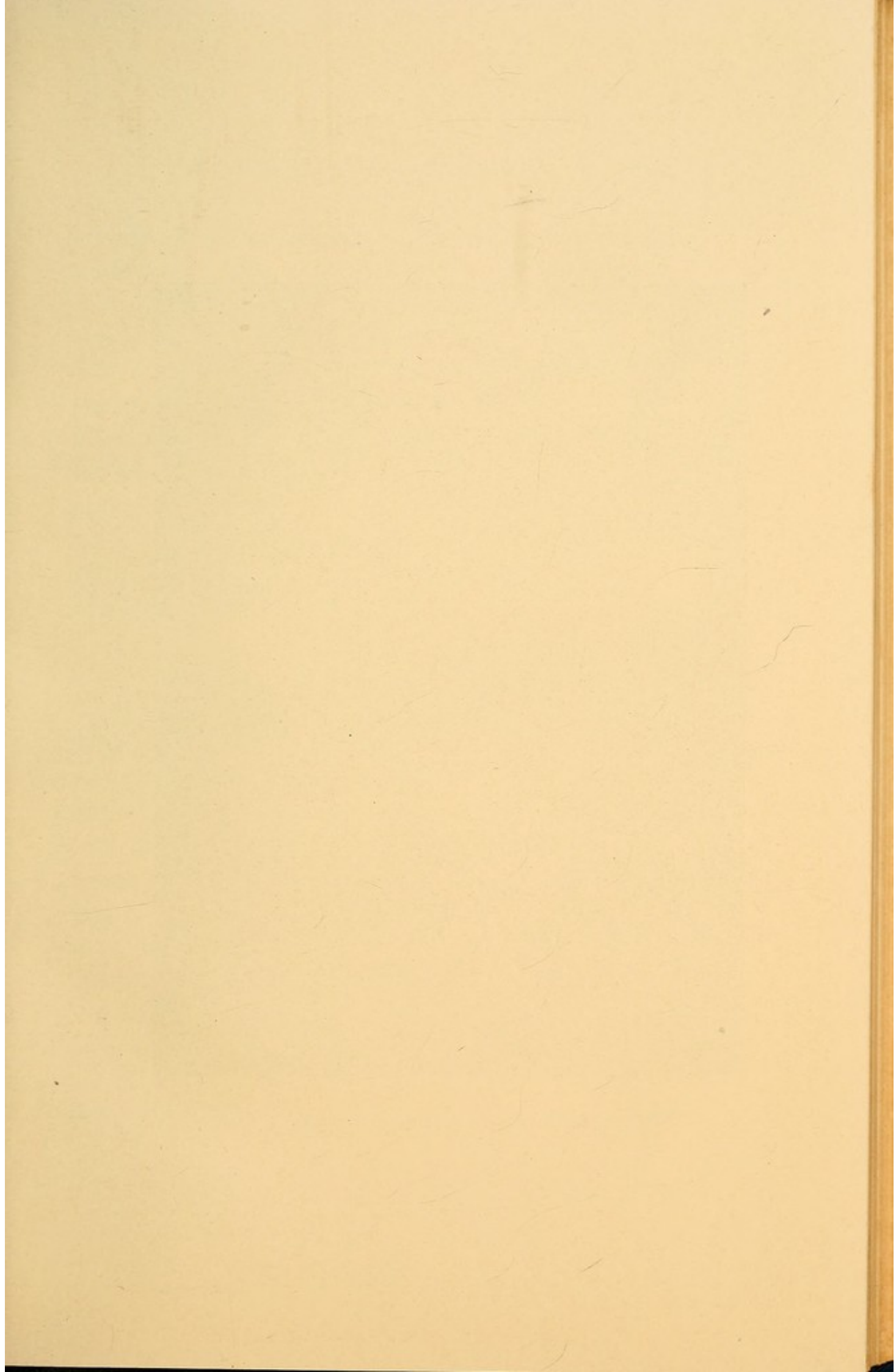
the hospital, if the way was open, rather than enter upon nursing duties outside, the Directress was much gratified, though expressing the deepest sympathy with her friend, in the great affliction which had so unexpectedly come to her. She understood the situation and agreed with the anxious President that the best place possible must be given to Claire.

"And she is not only worthy of it," said Miss Laine; "we all know that she is fully capable. I think it extremely fortunate that she is coming at this time. The night work is very trying and I hope Miss Randolph will not find the strain too great, as the successor of Miss Martin, who is anxious to retire, on account of her health."

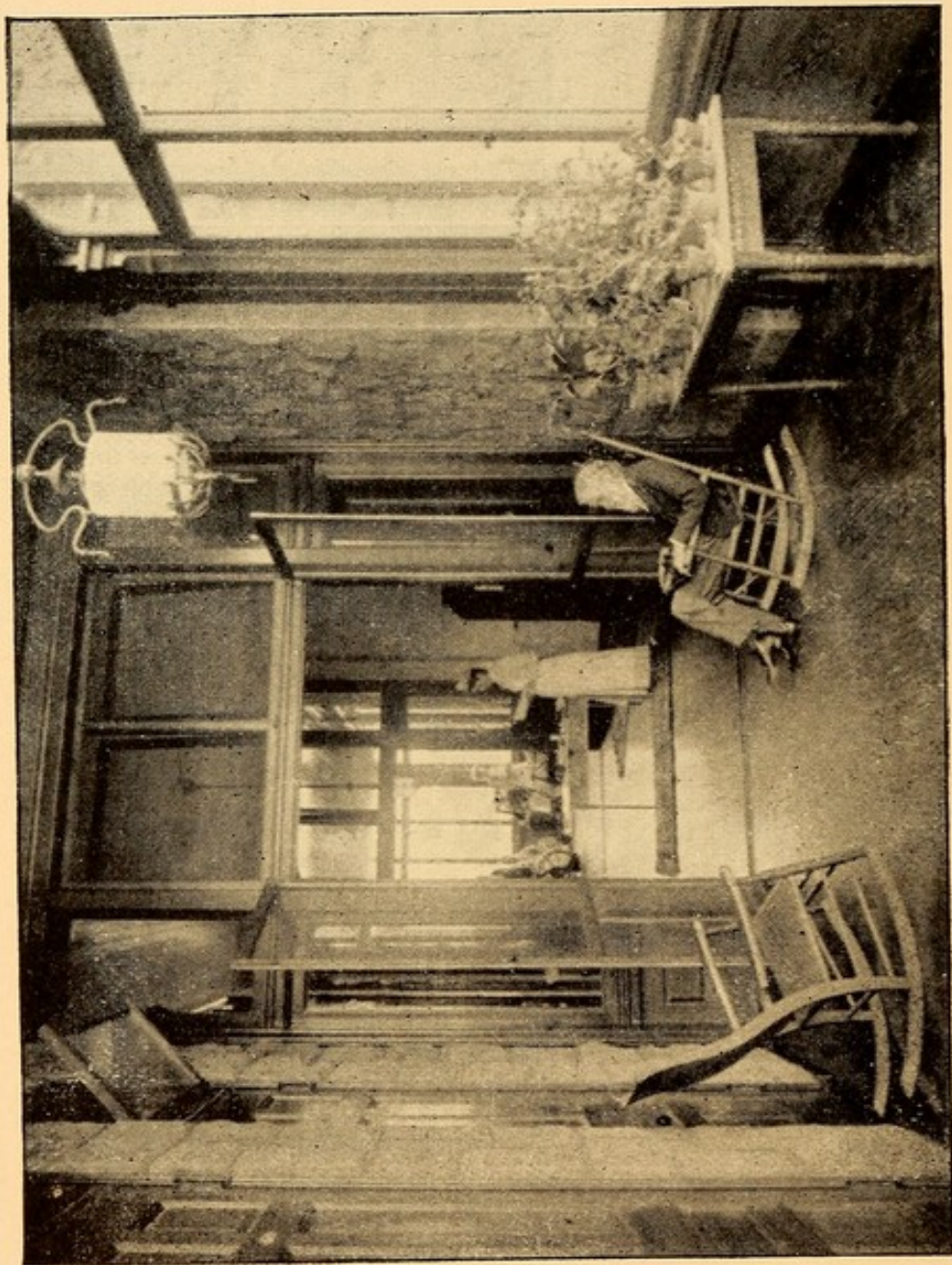
"I am so glad to hear that bright young lady is returning to us," was the earnest comment of Dr. Clarke, now chief resident physician, when he was so informed. When Claire appeared before him, the next day, in her new uniform, his greeting was so cordial she could scarcely reply.

"While no words of mine can be equal to the sorrow I feel at your irreparable loss," said the Doctor, holding her hand in both of his, "I am delighted beyond measure, personally as well as professionally and officially, to see you here," and he held the hand of the new assistant a good deal









A SUN PARLOR.



longer than professional etiquette demanded, while there was a brightness in his big brown eyes that made the cheeks of Claire Randolph look like a pair of Jack roses.

Within a week Claire was fully installed and pursuing her arduous duties. Her hours were from 7 P. M. to 7 A. M.—the day of ordinary toil reversed—and for a time she found it almost impossible to get refreshing sleep. But her physical vigor was equal to the situation, Dr. Clarke enthusiastically declaring to one of his associates that she was “growing handsomer every day.” Silently observing her performing some simple office for a restless patient, he said:

“Now that poor fellow will go to sleep like a baby, forgetting all his pain, for he is suffering greatly. She seems to possess a sympathetic power that is marvelous; and her smile is the reflection of her sweet spirit. See!” as she paused a moment at the foot of another cot, to say “good-night” to a sick lad. “That boy will dream he is in Heaven! Come on!” as he passed quickly down the ward.

Aye! aye, and the handsome young doctor’s was not the only heart in that great house of mercy that beat faster when Claire Randolph appeared. There were patients who welcomed



the coming of night-fall, otherwise to them a trying period, because it brought the brown-haired, blue-eyed ministering angel to their bedside. She regarded it as a sacred part of her duty personally to observe every one, asleep or awake, several times during the night, notwithstanding the presence of the attending junior nurses. She glided about so softly, she never disturbed the lightest slumber. Often patients would open their eyes to find her tenderly leaning over them, her hand perhaps upon a fevered forehead, but the touch so light it would scarcely be known if unseen. Her instructions were in whispered tones. Her watchfulness was ceaseless; her judgment unerring. A doctor was seldom needlessly summoned.

In the children's ward Claire was especially vigilant and energetic. Many little sufferers would reach out wan hands and beg her to sit beside them and tarry awhile.

"Hold my hand, please, miss, and I'll go to sleep right away," would be the touching plea. Her loving grasp would quiet the shaking nerves. It had a magical effect at times.

"I don't want that powder; I want Miss Pretty," would be the protesting words. They invented all sorts of pet names. One would recall



some fairy, in the last tale she had read. Another would speak of her as the little folks' saint. A boy who had lost his leg begged a good-night kiss and he always got it, while he threw his arms around her neck and told her she was "the sweetest lady in all this big world." A little fellow, very ill with fever, would call her name in his delirium, and if she were near she would bathe his head and hold his hand until sleep came again. With the break of day her own nerves were often unstrung, and she would seek her room in the Nurses' Home in a state of exhaustion. But the sleep that came as the well-earned reward of duty faithfully done, was sweetly refreshing. An hour's outdoor exercise, sometimes a ride with Dr. Clarke, and she was quite herself again.



## CHAPTER VII.

### A TRIAL OF FAITH.

And what of Robert Woodley? The fate that had so rudely broken in upon his idyllic dream of life stunned him for a while. It then brought to his bewildered mind the startling query: Was he really consecrated to a higher work, or had he been building a castle of earthly happiness outside of his legitimate sphere? Was his love, so strong, so pure, so all-absorbing, for Claire Randolph greater than his love for his church and its work? He roamed the hills and valleys by day and wandered about the vine-clad old rectory far into the night, trying to solve this impressive problem. The way was dark—from every worldly standpoint. He could not see a single step beyond the present. One moment he was consumed with



desire and determination to follow the sweetheart of his youth. The next he would self-sacrificingly think of the far West, forgetful in his semi-delirium of his aged mother, even now alone in her upper chamber, asking strength and guidance for him.

The blissful memories of those early years, and even the more joyous communion of later days, when all was so bright and beautiful and hopeful! He had expected to celebrate the consummation of his dearest wishes at Thanksgiving. But now! He rebelled fiercely. Then repented sincerely. He would hope. Ah! the anchor that is ever at hand!

Yes, he would resume his studies, he would fit himself for a higher and broader field of usefulness. He would exercise all his powers, in the pulpit and in parish work. The Bishop should hear a good account of him upon his next visitation in the spring. He would labor to bring forward a large confirmation class. He would—and then the Spirit would awaken him and he would condemn himself unsparingly for this seeming debasement of his high calling, making it secondary to worldly happiness.

The struggle was long and bitter and exhausting, and all the more so because Claire had dis-



couraged all communication direct. She thought there should be no correspondence, as it would only increase their mutual unhappiness and perhaps unfit him for his sacred work. She did not always see him upon her visits home. The precious hours of Sunday afternoon—all the time allowed her—were spent with her mother.

“My son,” said Mrs. Woodley, one evening, “you are working too hard. You are thinking too much. You are grieving too much.”

“No! no! mother,” was the earnest response. “This is the only way I can live at all. I’ll conquer presently. I’ll come out all right. I’m beginning to see the light ahead. One step enough for me.”

“The way may be open when you are not expecting it, Robert,” suggested his mother, encouragingly. “But you must not grieve so about Claire. She is doing well, doing nobly. She will be true to you—”

“Oh! mother, do you think so? Do you really think so?” And like an eager boy, he drew his chair closer and put both arms around the mother, who, at that moment, it seemed to him, he had almost forgotten. The thought startled him. He was ashamed, sorrowful, reproachful. He resolved to stand more firmly upon his feet; to



control that consuming passion that had held him in its strange power. He would love Claire Randolph always. No other woman on earth could draw him from her; and more than one fair face was now passing before him; more than one pair of bewitching eyes were looking into his. He had felt their fascination. He had yielded a little on several occasions. Oh, this heart that throbbed day and night with a love that could not be stilled!



## CHAPTER VIII.

### FACING THE TEMPTER.

When Miss Randolph was a student nurse at St. Ann's, Dr. Clarke, then one of the junior residents, had expressed a wish to visit "Woodlands," and in fulfilment of that desire, some months after her return to the hospital, gladly accepted an invitation to spend part of a day there. Claire had been given "a night off," Saturday, and the Doctor agreed to run up to Harley, Sunday afternoon, and bring her to town. It was the best he could do, for his duties were very pressing. She met him at the station, and as the day was fine, they strolled about the country a little while, taking a round about way to "Woodlands." At 4 o'clock the church bells summoned the visitor and his host to the evening service. They were



a little late entering the family pew. From his place at the reading desk, the young rector regarded them with intense interest. He had been informed of Dr. Clarke's coming, and had been kindly invited to meet him at tea, at Mrs. Randolph's, his mother being included in the little company.

That Robert Woodley wished himself a million miles distant from St. David's that mid-winter Sunday afternoon is an unhappy fact that must here be chronicled. He read the service with accustomed self-possession and impressiveness, and a brief address, which the congregation had come to look for regularly at this service, though not required by the rubric, was a thoughtful presentation of some homely truths in connection with the story of blind Bartimeus. The preacher said the common idea concerning this incident and the lessons to be derived therefrom fell far short of the deeper things therein taught.

"There are times," said he, looking quite unconsciously at Dr. Clarke and Claire, "when we are all blind. When we cannot see our way. When the whole world is filled with darkness, moral, mental, spiritual darkness. It was this thought which possessed the great soul of Newman when he gave to the world his immortal sonnet, and it



was the revelation of the Kindly Light which came to him that gave him peace. So we can only find our way when likewise fully surrendering ourselves, our bodies, our hearts and minds, as well as our souls, all that we are and hope to be, to that higher power which only can lead us to safety." At the close, he repeated, most devoutly, the beautiful collect for grace. A close observer would have seen tears running down Claire Randolph's face. She knew the meaning of it all. Her own chastened spirit had been following the spoken words with the utmost longing for the breaking of that brighter day.

A delightful hour was spent at "Woodlands;" that is, such would have been the verdict of a superficial observer. The dear old ladies gave their united benediction to the young people, who vied with each other in saying bright things. Dollie Wheeler was there, too, as full of fun as ever. The Doctor expressed his delight with everything. What a lovely rural retreat! What a magnificent view from the big window! What a glorious spot it must be in summer time! And how these good people were favored with such a talented minister.

"I just want to say, Mr. Woodley," was the frank declaration; "I have not enjoyed any ser-



mon for a year as I did your beautiful little talk this afternoon. It went straight to my heart. It lifted me up. It helped me wonderfully. Some people think we men of pills and surgical tools have no time to think of our souls, of eternity, of the greater problems of life. And yet we are face to face every day with the saddest phases of human existence. I tell you, my good friends, I often wish it were not considered so unprofessional for men of my class to speak of these things. Why, the other night, when a poor fellow lay dying in my presence and the Chaplain engaged elsewhere, I thought I must drop on my knees beside him. But I made it as near right as I could by sending up an earnest petition for him and his poor helpless family, a working man leaving a wife and four little ones in absolute poverty. I hope it was heard. I—”

“No doubt of it, Doctor; no doubt of it, my dear friend,” interrupted the young clergyman, with broken voice. “Yes! yes!” echoed the aged mothers. “Such prayers are always heard. They must be.”

Claire had stolen from the table and was looking out of the window, watching, with glistening eyes, the stars as they came out. Mr. Woodley wanted so much to have just a little talk with



her—alone. But he could see no opportunity and now the time of departure was at hand.

“What time do we go?” asked the Doctor, glancing at the venerable time piece that stood in the corner, slowly ticking away the moments of time.

“At six thirty,” replied Claire, “and we must be getting off at once,” with one full, eager, yes, he fondly believed, longing look at Robert. Then she quickly turned and left the room. “I will accompany you to the station,” said the young rector. “I’ll return for you, mother,” kissing her. Helping the Doctor into his great coat, he offered his arm to Claire, as they stepped out upon the porch. It had been more than four months since she had been so close to him. She said but little, clinging to his arm all the way down the hill.

As the train sped away in the darkness, Robert stood bareheaded in the snow, which had just commenced to fall, while Claire, from the doorway of the rear car, waved a smiling adieu.

“Heaven knows I couldn’t help it!” said the sad-hearted lover to himself, as he walked back up the hill. “And yet I am ashamed of myself, for being jealous. He is a noble-minded, pure-hearted fellow, I know. And Claire—” turning to look back, as there was a distant echo of the



retreating locomotive whistle, "she is just as unhappy as I am! What a miserable, selfish wretch I am, to be sure! Yes, if I knew she would have a good cry before going to bed to-night, I would be glad. Disgraceful thought again! And absurd, too. She don't go to bed at night. She has to say her 'Now I lay me' as the rest of us are getting up. How ridiculous!" And half laughing, half crying, this otherwise strong young man showed the effects of his inward struggle as he slowly walked along.

"My son," said his mother, as she bade him good-night; "Claire is holding her own splendidly. She looks as though hospital life agreed with her. Were you not happy to see her looking so well?"

"Yes and no," was the startling and confused reply. "I'm glad and I'm sorry. I want her to keep well and strong, to be sure, and yet—"

"My dear boy, I understand," soothingly. "But you must look on the bright side all the time. That is what you told us this afternoon, don't you know?"

"Oh, yes, that is all very beautiful; but—Well, it's mighty hard to carry it out, all the time."

"She was very glad to have you at 'Woodlands' again, if not as before, I'm sure."



"Yes, and that is my only comfort. There is no other light in sight."

"The light will come, in due time, Robert. I verily believe."

"With such a dear, good mother I ought to be happy and good. Forgive me and I'll try once more," kissing her good-night.

"Good-night, Robert. Say the collect again as you drop asleep. It will help you in every trial. It has helped me a thousand times."



## CHAPTER IX.

### LOVING IN SECRET—TWIN CONFESSION.

The hour's ride to Birmingham was fruitful of an exchange of confidence between Miss Randolph and Dr. Clarke that cleared the atmosphere and greatly promoted the personal comfort of each.

"I've enjoyed this little outing very much," said the Doctor; "and I shall hope to see more of this beautiful country next summer."

"We shall all be glad to have you spend a longer time with us," was the reply.

"Thank you, very much. And I know I shall have a good time with your friend, Mr. Woodley. I admire him greatly." In the dimly lighted car the Doctor did not notice the effect of his words. "I should like to say something else, Miss



Randolph," he went on, in a subdued tone, leaning a little closer, that no one else might hear. He paused and her eyes met his questioningly.

"Perhaps I might be misunderstood, however, and—"

"What is it?" The query came so eagerly he went on:

"Well, I hope you won't think me presumptuous—I have had an impression, I don't know why, that there is, or was—and I sincerely hope it may continue, a very tender relationship between you and Mr. Woodley. Pardon me, if I am guilty of an indiscretion. I only wanted—"

"You have committed no offence, I am sure."

"I am so glad. Certainly I could not do so, intentionally."

"Don't you think it would be unwise in me to —" the young lady paused, as if in a doubtful frame of mind.

"By no means. No! No! Why, as your good friend, and his, though I have seen so little of him, I am pleased beyond measure to know my divination was correct."

"What made you think this, Doctor?"

"Ah! how can I answer that pointed question! You have caught me squarely. But, somehow I



felt that I was in the atmosphere of a—very sweet affection.”

“Did I misbehave in any way?”

“What a question! As if that were possible, under any circumstances.”

“I have been trying very hard to, if not forget, at least to keep under complete subjection my impulses.”

“And sometimes, my dear Miss Randolph, this is very hard to do. I knew you were doing so. But your eyes were speaking all the while. And the one longing, shall I say it, loving look you gave that dear fellow, made my heart thrill in sympathy, and I know it must have given him unspeakable joy.”

“A sort of wireless telegram, eh?” with a winning smile.

“Yes! Yes! that was just it. Very happily said.”

“I did not mean to do it—that is I did not want him to see me, nor any one else,” half reproachfully.

“But you could not help it. There are times when the heart must speak; it would burst if it did not.”

“Do you think, Doctor, we can make and



receive impressions when absent one from another?"

"I have no more doubt of it," was the earnest reply; "than I have of my own existence. I have been studying that subject for years past."

"So have I," almost in a whisper.

"Yes? And I believe the time will come when we shall clearly understand some of these strange hidden forces of the unseen world. When we shall commune with each other as freely and joyously, though far beyond seeing or hearing, in the physical sense, as you and I are now doing."

"Won't that be delightful?"

"A very heaven on earth to absent, or separated, loving ones."

"Have you ever had any experience of this kind?" looking into his face most earnestly.

"There you are driving me into another corner," protested the young man. "But I must make my confession."

"You made me confess," with a little laugh.

"And all I can do, in extenuation, is to offer my warmest sympathy and express my most earnest wish for your supremest happiness."

"Thank you. Now for your confession?" with a smile that could not be denied.

"I shall have to put you under bonds?"



"Certainly. I understand. But you are not afraid to trust me? I trusted you."

"Never! It is a great joy to let you have a little peep into my own heart."

"Would some one else object?"

"No, I don't think she would. Her confidence in you, her esteem for you, is boundless."

"Oh, then I must know her?"

"Why, of course!"

"And do I meet her every day?"

"You do."

"Oh, Doctor! Is it—my dear friend Miss Laine?"

"Yes! Now see what you have made me confess, even before I have made my confession to her."

"You have never told her?"

"Not in words, that can be spoken. And I have tried mighty hard not to let her know openly."

"Yet you have spoken to her, in other ways?"

"A hundred times!"

"And she has answered you?"

"Every time, in some way. See what you have made me say. No woman ever before held me down like this."



"I'm awfully sorry! Won't you please forgive me?"

"Bless your dear heart, there is nothing to forgive," and he gave her arm a little pat.

"You might have had a lovely time, if I had just sat back here and kept quiet."

"I've had a lovely time, all the same," was the renewed assurance. "It's delightful to confess sometimes, you know; to exchange confidences, in perfect security."

"Isn't it! I'm perfectly happy to know all this, Doctor. You ought to be a very happy man to have won, though only in secret, as yet, the love of Louise Laine."

"That's what I think. And yet she is so thoroughly devoted to her work; so superior even to all her surroundings; so far, seemingly, beyond all the ordinary weaknesses of the rest of us that I can scarcely hope she will ever really permit herself to become subject to the will of any man."

"The heart is supreme all the while, with womankind. If you have a place therein it will be your own fault if you lose it. I wish you every joy possible, my good friend," placing her ungloved hand in his. He held it firmly, without a word, for several minutes and then said, with a joyous smile:



"Instead of being punished for my temerity in speaking to you, I am made happier than I ever was in my life. Yet, for worldly reasons," in earnest tones again, "this hard struggle which we all must meet, I cannot hope to realize my dearest wishes for some time to come, if ever. I must work, and wait—and take my chances."

"And so must I," was the quiet reply.

"This will be a tie that will bind," observed the young man.

"It will give me new strength for all my burdens," said Claire, with a heavy sigh.

"We will work together, in sympathy and confidence," was the final assurance; "and some day, I trust, we will rejoice together."

"Birmingham! all out for Birmingham!"

Dr. Clarke and his fair companion were so absorbed with their own happy thoughts that they found themselves sitting quite alone in the car, until thus aroused by the trainman.

An hour later Claire was walking the round of her wards, while the young physician was calling upon a number of patients whom he felt he must see before going to bed.



## CHAPTER X.

### A LOVING HEART'S REVELATION.

“If you don't let up a little, you will break down. You must throw off the harness now and then, if only for an hour or two, and get some exhilarating fresh air. My Red Dragon is just the thing. I'm coming after you Saturday afternoon, about 3 o'clock, if it is fine, and I want you to be ready.” The speaker was Harry Brown, a college class-mate of Dr. Clarke, now a prosperous young merchant, who boasted of owning the fastest auto flyer in town. Half a score of fines for speeding in the park and on the fine country drives around the city, only seemed to have a stimulating effect upon the daring rider, whose recklessness was the talk of the clubs. He had met with several severe acci-



dents, smashing another machine, in a collision, a bit of exciting exercise for which he had to give his check for five hundred dollars. His friends were becoming afraid to accept his pressing invitations. Ordinarily he ran the machine with his own hands.

When the Red Dragon swung through the big gate at St. Ann's Hospital, stopping in front of the administration building, took aboard Dr. Clarke, there was a blanched face at an upper window, which he did not see. In a moment the machine disappeared. It was too late to make any protest. Louise Laine flung herself upon a couch in her room; she had left her office downstairs for a few minutes. It was the first time the fountain of feeling had given way in a long while. Her distress was extreme, and the 'phone bell rang several times before she could calmly answer it. Learning that she was wanted, she bathed her face and went down stairs, with as brave a front as she could command, and so great was her self-control, no one would have known that anything had happened to cause the Directress any special concern. Two pitiful accident cases demanded her personal attention. She disposed of them with her usual businesslike promptness and careful-



ness. She stood by, in the operating room, while a crushed limb was amputated; visited another ward, giving final directions to those in attendance upon a dying woman; listened to half a dozen queries on the part of her subordinates, giving no sign of the terrible apprehension that tortured her mind and heart during the next two hours.

About five o'clock Miss Laine met Miss Randolph in an upper hall-way. Instinctively the two young women threw their arms around each other and the head nurse led the way to her room.

"You look as if you had had a hard day, my dear. Rest a little," said Claire sympathetically.

"I have—and the worst is to come, I fear," was the strange reply, dropping upon the couch.

"Why, what is the matter? Who is ill? What has happened?" asked Claire in anxious tones.

At that moment the 'phone bell rang.

"Don't get up, I'll answer it," said the assistant. She called:

"Well?"

"Is that Miss Laine?" almost shouted an excited male voice.

"No, but she is here. What is wanted? This is Miss Randolph."



A confusion of sounds followed.

"What's that? What's that?" asked Claire.  
"Who's hurt? Who's been killed?"

"Oh, heaven save me!" moaned the agonized woman, who was listening in terror, as she rolled upon the floor in a dead faint.

Miss Randolph ran to the hall-way and summoned a passing orderly.

"Bring a nurse quickly! Miss Laine is ill," she cried. "And call Dr. Marvin. He is in Ward C., on the next floor below."

Looking out of the window, Claire saw the hospital ambulance coming rapidly in the gate. It did not turn in at the receiving ward, as usual, but came straight on to the administration building. She must see who it was, and yet for a moment assist the two nurses who had responded to her call to give attention to her stricken friend. Dr. Marvin hastened to the scene, and leaving him in charge, Miss Randolph almost flew down the two flights, despising the elevator, to the first floor, where, on a stretcher, she beheld the seemingly lifeless form of Dr. Clarke!

"What does this mean?" she demanded. "How did this happen? Where has he been? This way, quickly, but carefully," and she led the way to a private room near Dr. Kedward,



chief surgeon, rushed in. He had heard of the disaster, by 'phone, and ran from his office, two blocks distant. Dr. James, also, one of the house staff, was summoned. They soon had Dr. Clarke comfortably in bed. He was quite unconscious and evidently had been badly hurt.

"He's coming around. I don't think it is more than a bad shake up, with terrible bruises. A wonderful escape!" said Dr. Kedward, after a hasty examination. "I understand Brown was killed instantly. They ran over the stone wall into the creek, among the boulders. Another passing auto picked them up, but our ambulance happened to be coming down the avenue and they placed Dr. Clarke in and so brought him much more quickly. They have the right of way on the streets, you know."

"This arm seems to be fractured," said Dr. James; "and look at that dreadful cut on the back of his head."

"Yes, that's the worst feature," was the reply. "But he is a strong young fellow and I just feel he is going to come around presently. We can't spare him."

The two surgeons labored with all their skill, being joined by Dr. Marvin. Claire stood by,



with two assistants, rendering every service possible.

"We can spare you," whispered Dr. Marvin. "Go up and stay with Miss Laine. She begged me to send you to her. I'll come up again in a little while. I believe she is in more danger than he. Poor girl! Tell her he is all right—or will be."

"Girls," said Miss Laine, as Claire re-entered the room, "I can excuse you for the present. Don't tell any one I am ill. It is only a passing spell. I was over-wearied. I'll be down presently." Then she threw her arms around her friend and gave way afresh to manifestations of sorrow that she could not control.

"Oh, I knew it was coming!" she cried. "I dreamed of it, last night. You cannot tell me anything. I saw it all. And when I saw him get into that dreadful machine this afternoon, I could have jumped out of the window to save him."

"But he is all right, dear. Yes, the doctors are quite sure of it," was the loving assurance. "No, he has not recovered consciousness. But the signs are all favorable. Dr. Marvin is coming up again to report to you himself."

"Oh! he must not know! No one must know,"



begged the prostrate woman. "No one but you, dear Claire, must ever know. I'm so glad you were here! Now, I must rally out of this and go down stairs. It will never do to act the baby like this. I am feeling stronger. Please let me go. You go with me. We will go down together."

But Claire easily persuaded Miss Laine to remain in her room and not go to her office that night.

"I'll just put on a 'sub' and stay with you," pleaded the sympathetic friend. "Then no one else need come near and none will know. There, now, dear, let me make you comfortable. Take another mouthful of this," handing her the glass. "It will help you greatly. Lie down and rest and all will be well."

"You are a blessed angel of mercy, that's just what you are, Claire Randolph!" sighed the head nurse, yielding herself entirely to the care of her faithful associate.

Dr. Marvin came in softly, as Miss Laine fell asleep. "He's coming around all right," he whispered to Claire. "He recognized us and said he did not think he was much hurt. But the shock must have been terrific. Keep her quiet all night. I'll drop in after awhile."



Sunday morning the head nurse, quite pale and perceptibly nervous, appeared in her office and supervised affairs for a little while, though she allowed the day assistant to look after things in detail and spent most of the afternoon in her room, with Claire, who had gotten bits of rest during the night. Dr. Clarke was doing well, but no one could see him excepting those in attendance. It was promised that he would be himself again in a week or so.



## CHAPTER XI.

### THE ROCK OF TRUE FRIENDSHIP.

Dr. Clarke's convalescence was quite rapid, but he was very much shaken up and felt the need of a bit of rest at some point where his surroundings would be entirely different from those of the hospital. Mr. Woodley had extended a most cordial invitation to his good friend to spend some days at the old Rectory, and the Doctor gladly availed himself of this kindness. During the week that he spent at Harley there was established a friendship that was destined to bless the lives of both these young men. No one observed them riding about in Robert's little phaeton with more satisfaction than Uncle John Williams. Calling for their mail one day he remarked to the Doctor:



"I suppose you city folks will be carrying Robert off one of these days. He's too bright to stay with us long, I know."

"I think it very likely things will turn out that way," was the hearty reply. "At least I hope so, though I know he loves his work here."

"Yes, and we all love him," as Robert modestly wandered to the door. "His father, you know, was our faithful minister for more than twenty-five years. He has been with us over three years now."

"There are lots of churches in town that would be only too glad to have him, if they knew of his talents," observed Dr. Clarke.

"No doubt, and we will have to let him go, as we did Miss Claire. You know her, I suppose? She is in the same hospital where you are, isn't she?"

"Yes, indeed. I know Miss Randolph well, and we think a great deal of her—most as much as my friend does," with a knowing smile, which caused the postmaster to nod and say, "I understand. And it's all right, too."

"I hope it will be, some day, and I'll do what I can to bring it about," was the hearty response.

"Good for you, Doctor, and I hope you may find as good a girl for yourself, some day."



"Thank you, Uncle John, for your good wishes. When I find her I'll let you know."

"And I'm coming to the wedding, sure."

"You will, my dear friend," grasping the old man's hand. I'll not forget that promise, for you and your good wife, too. Pray remember me kindly to her."

"I will, Doctor, and you remember me to Claire. Tell her we are always thinking of her here," in an affectionate tone. "I can never get used to being without her. Good-bye, Doctor."

"Good-bye, Mr. Williams."

That same evening Dr. Clarke, Mr. Woodley and his mother spent a pleasant hour at "Woodlands."

"I want to send by you a special message to Claire's good friend, Miss Laine," said Mrs. Randolph. I want her to visit us real soon. From my daughter's last letter, I fear she is in need of rest and change, and this would just be the place for her. She could keep me company for a few days, Claire coming up at the end of the week. Don't you think you can spare her?"

"That suggestion pleases me very much," heartily replied Dr. Clarke, "and I'll endorse it gladly. I've got so much benefit myself here, I'm extremely grateful. I think I can say that



you may look for Louise—I beg pardon—for Miss Laine very soon,” and the young man blushed like a school boy.

“That will be fine!” said Mr. Woodley enthusiastically, “especially if you can run up with Claire and spend Sunday also.”

“Thank you, my good friend. I’ll try to do that. I shall have to resume my work very slowly.”

So it was arranged and the program carried out, Miss Laine yielding to every suggestion with the happiness of a little child. As she sat in the cosy drawing room at “Woodlands,” the following Sunday afternoon, surrounded by sympathetic and loving friends, pale and weak, for she had not half recovered from the shock of Dr. Clarke’s accident, with trembling lips she said:

“This is a little nearer heaven than I have ever been before.”



## CHAPTER XII.

### ST. ANN'S UNCROWNED QUEEN.

Louise Laine had been at St. Ann's Hospital for nearly five years. During her first year, as an assistant, like her friend, Miss Randolph, she had attracted attention on account of striking characteristics. Tall and commanding in person, with a classic face, dark complexion, beautiful eyes, luxuriant hair and brilliant mental powers, she never failed to make a deep impression on every one she met. After graduation in Brooklyn, she had been offered a post of responsibility at St. Ann's, which she filled with great acceptance. She was ambitious and seriously thought of taking a full medical course; but upon reflection she shrank from this high calling and resolved to devote herself to the care of the sick



and injured, rather than their healing. She was very reserved in demeanor, always dignified and courteous; altogether a woman whom men of discernment and appreciation of genuine merit would distantly admire, but approach more closely with extreme prudence.

"I don't believe she has any heart," was the bitter comment of an indiscreet young assistant resident physician, who had found his attempt to amuse himself at her expense a sad failure.

"That is where you are much mistaken and quite unjust," was the reply of his more observant friend, another member of the surgical staff. "She has admirable self control; but the man who wins her heart will possess something far beyond the ordinary in that respect." And he was pre-eminently right.

Miss Laine knew what the ethics of her profession and the special requirements of her position demanded. Her stately ways elicited the admiration of many, but friends she had few; confidants, until the incident related, none. Yet there were many times when she was heart hungry; when she would sit alone in her little room, wondering if fate ever would be kind to her; ever would send some one who would understand her and fill the measure of her heart's



desire. Dr. Clarke had grown up in the institution by her side. He was now trying to draw away from the hospital; building up a good practice and soon he would doubtless retire and perhaps their ways would diverge forever. They had discovered a twin birthday, November 25, and in a friendly way celebrated it together by an exchange of remembrances. The Doctor was 28; she was 26. Upon several occasions there had been a little sentimental fencing, but this had not made much progress of late. He would often send her flowers. Each was conscious of the fact that every day there was a secret communion of spirit; sometimes early, sometimes late, sometimes at mid-day. They would think of each other in the midst of pressing duties. They seemed to be very near one another. This strange experience brought many seasons of happiness never openly referred to. Miss Laine was conscious of the fact that the smile with which she greeted Dr. Clarke, no matter where or when they met, was different from that which was bestowed upon others; and his presence more and more gave her a thrill of pleasure never felt at other times. Thus these two sympathetic hearts were daily communing with each other. Small wonder that the affair of the Red



Dragon almost shook the life out of Louise Laine. Still she made no sign to her secret lover, and the confidence she bestowed upon Claire was never betrayed. Dr. Marvin was sphinx-like. A brief rest from the strain of daily duties he insisted was necessary, and gladly endorsed Dr. Clarke's suggestion of a visit to Harley. The week spent there put new life into the head nurse.

"Now you are yourself again, and I'm just as glad as I can be," said President Brelsford, welcoming Miss Laine upon returning.

"I feel like a new woman," was the rejoicing reply. "I'm sure I shall be able to go through the summer in fine condition. I thank you very much for your kindness in sending me away."

While the little party were at "Woodlands," Mr. Woodley and Dr. Clarke fell to discussing "slum" work in cities.

"Do you know," said the young minister, "I should very much like to change places with one of your city missionaries for about a month? I think I shall try it this summer. Those poor fellows scarcely know what a breath of fresh air is, like this exhilarating atmosphere in which I live all the year around. Can't you fix this for me?"

"That will be easily enough done," was the



frank reply. "But I shall be taking a great deal of responsibility. Suppose you get sick? It's no child's play."

"I have no fear. See! With all this reserved strength," stretching out his arms and standing erect, "I can defy the very elements, at least for a month, say the month of August. I want to see it at its worst."

"But how about your own vacation?"

"That will be my vacation and I shall enjoy it greatly."

"Strangest idea I ever heard of. You are a moral hero!"

"Nothing of the sort. Say, my good friend, I'm going to rely on you for this. It's all fixed now?"

"Will your dear mother let you go?"

"Ah! I don't think she will object. I'll take good care of myself and you will be at hand if anything happens," laughing, "St. Ann's is right near our mission, you know."

So it was agreed that Mr. Woodley should spend the month of August in one of the most distressful districts of Birmingham.



## CHAPTER XIII.

### A STRANGE VACATION.

The Rev. Michael Fleming thought himself the luckiest man in the town when, on a hot morning in early August, he packed his grip and set out for Harley. He had shown Mr. Woodley how the wheels went 'round, for a couple of days, and the missionary pro tem. entered upon his new work with zeal and enthusiasm. For the next thirty days, if he did not fall at his post, like a soldier amid perils seen and unseen, he was to look upon a new world. He had determined to live at the mission, the superintendent giving him a little room at the top of the house. There was a way open to the roof, and on very hot nights a hammock might be stretched up there.



A service of song and exhortation was held every evening, at which strange scenes often occurred. Poor wrecks of humanity would drift into the mission house and tell their sad story, both men and women. There were hourly applications for aid, money, food, clothing, lodging, medicine. Robert Woodley had heard of these things. Never before had he been brought into close contact with such life; this forbidding arena of poverty, vice, crime, sickness, sorrow, despair, death itself. Every day he was called upon to visit some one very near the end of a sad journey. He entered the wretched abodes about him with fearlessness. He never thought of danger to himself. He only got about four hours restless, unrefreshing sleep.

"Never mind," he would say to himself. "I'm only here for a little while. Think of the noble fellow who is here all the time! How does he stand it? I can go to my home presently and again live in a pure atmosphere. Oh! dear, why should such things be? Why must these plague spots exist? There must be something terribly wrong in a social and industrial system that creates, or even permits, this condition of affairs." Then he would pray earnestly for courage, faith and strength to do his duty.



On Wednesday evening of the second week a familiar face appeared at the door. It was that of Dr. Clarke.

"Well, how are you getting on?" he said, coming forward.

"Oh, I'm holding out splendidly," replied the weary missionary. "But it is hard work, Doctor. It surely would kill me in a very little while. Perhaps it is because I am so sympathetic. I feel so much for these poor people. I suffer with them. I witnessed some scenes this week that I never even dreamed of."

"Are you being careful of yourself?" was the anxious query.

"Oh, yes, I think so. Haven't had any supper, though, to-night yet," with a sad smile. "Been too busy."

"That won't do! That will never do!" urged the physician. "Are you careful about the water you drink?"

"Well, I drink but little. Boil it—sometimes."

"That won't do, either. See here now, my friend, you will go home sick; you will be sick before you go home, if you are not more careful," and Dr. Clarke laid his hand upon his friend's shoulder, adding impressively: "An iron man



could hardly stand it, such a way of living in this place at this season."

But words of medical advice were quickly forgotten. At the end of the week Mr. Woodley was in bad shape, but he would not admit it, to himself nor any one. The superintendent urged him to go over to the hospital and see the doctor; but he said the trouble would soon pass and he would be all right. A few more days and he was hardly able to get about. But he would not give up nor go home. He wrote to Mr. Fleming to stay the full time agreed upon. Dr. Clarke had been closely engaged looking after some very sick people. The superintendent became alarmed. He telephoned the doctor one evening that Mr. Woodley was in bed, or he was trying to keep him in bed, and delirious,, and asked him to come over at once, or send some one.

"There it is!" said the Doctor to Miss Laine, in whose office he happened to be. "I knew how it would be. Mr. Woodley is down with fever—all broken up, I've no doubt, and we will just have a tough job with him," as he hung up the telephone receiver.

"Are you going over?" asked the Directress.

"Right away."

"Had you not better bring him over, at once,



before he gets too ill to be safely moved?" It was raining hard.

"Not to-night, I think. We will see," and the physician hastened to the mission, to be greatly startled at what he saw. The minister looked as though he had been sick a month. The change was alarming. He did not know his friend and was preaching furiously to an imaginary audience. The superintendent told the Doctor he had found him on the floor and thought he had hurt his head in the fall. "What will we do with him?" he asked anxiously.

"Do the very best you can," was the quiet reply. "I cannot take him out in this storm. A chill at this moment might be fatal. I'll send you a nurse. Give him these powders, every half hour. I'll be over early in the morning."



## CHAPTER XIV.

### THE SUFFERING VIGIL OF LOVE.

Returning to the hospital, Dr. Clarke reported to Miss Laine. "What shall we do?" she asked. "Miss Randolph will never forgive us if we do not tell her, and she will insist upon going herself."

"Let her go, to-night," directed the doctor. "I'll have the ambulance take her over. We will see further to-morrow."

Summoning Claire, Miss Laine said: "My dear, I've got some bad news for you; but you will be brave, I know, and do your duty. Mr. Woodley is ill and I am going to ask you to spend the night with him, at the mission. Please get ready quickly and send the orderly for anything you may want. He will accompany you



and remain with you till morning. The ambulance is at the door. Good-night, Claire," kissing her. "Report to me in the morning. I hope it will only be a temporary trouble. He has been working very hard and has broken down, that is all."

Without a word, Claire hastened to her room, got her satchel and was at the mission, near by, almost before she had time to think. "Broken down, that is all," she murmured, sadly, as she climbed the rickety stairway.

The superintendent was infinitely relieved. "I'm so glad to see you, Miss," he said, "for I don't know what to do with him. The powder quieted him a little. He was just wild when the doctor came. Yes, I'll stay with you. I'll not leave you to-night, and if he is quiet you can rest yourself, in the next room."

"No, thank you, I'll watch him and you may go lie down," said the nurse. "I sleep during the day, at the hospital. So I am quite ready for the night's work, while you are very weary, and the orderly will remain near. I'll call you if I need anything."

She sat down at the half-open window and tried to think where she was and what all this meant. It had been so sudden. She knelt down



at the foot of the cot and asked for help. Truly, this was an hour of trial. As she arose in the dim light the sick man awoke with a start and sat up in bed, staring wildly about. Then he shrank back, as though affrighted at the presence of a spirit form. His eyes were wide open, but there was no light of intelligence in them; only the blank look of utter loss of all power of recognition. Claire came around to the head of the bed, and sitting down took the outstretched hand in hers. The patient dozed again; her magnetic touch. His fever was high. His peril evident. There was to be a terrible battle for life, the culmination of all the nerve weakening, brain racking struggle Robert Woodley had been going through during the past year. The change in his appearance was almost beyond belief. A stranger would have thought he had been long ill. Aye, he had been sick, soul sick, a year. What would the issue be? Would the brittle thread of life hold out against such fearful odds? Or would it snap, as in a twinkling, bringing darkness and dismay to loving hearts?

Such a night of terror and suffering had never before been known by Claire Randolph. Several times she found it needful to call to her aid the orderly and the superintendent. The sick man



was not yet so reduced in bodily strength as to be unable to rise in bed, determined to go forth amongst the people whom he imagined were calling upon him from every side. One moment he would be promising help to some sad hearted mother, whose child had wandered far from its miserable home. Then he would be comforting the sick, praying for the dying, and even reading the solemn offices for the dead. He had conducted three funerals within as many days, and half a score since coming to the mission. The medicine administered had but temporary effect, and the worn out nurse watched for the first signs of dawn with increasing anxiety. She knew Dr. Clarke would be there very early, and it was not yet six o'clock when he came up the stairway.

"Good morning, nurse," was the cheery greeting. "Hope your patient has had a fair night?" sitting down and making a searching inquiry into his condition.

"He is very, very ill, Doctor, and has been getting worse all the time," sighed Claire. "I never saw any one go to pieces so fast."

"I don't think we can leave him here," observed the Doctor. "Miss Laine asked me to bring him over right away, unless he was very much better. Yes, she was up and about. I guess she is as



anxious about the poor fellow as either of us."

"I'm very busy mother; but I'll be home soon. These poor people need me. But I want to see you very much. I can't write but a few words to-day. So many things pressing me. Good-bye, lovingly." In half whispered soliloquy the sick man was thus repeating a letter to the dear mother, awaiting his return with so much eagerness, and all unconscious of his peril.

"I do hope you will take him to the hospital," urged Claire. "This is a poor place in which to care for him. And it will be dreadfully hot up in this little room. I think it must have been the heat largely that prostrated him. Don't you think so?"

"Undoubtedly. It is a case of aggravated heat stroke, nerve exhaustion, brain fag and malarial fever, with possible congestion. No typhoid symptoms yet. Then he has been extremely careless about his food and drink. I'll be back with the ambulance, before it gets out on other runs. It was called three times during the night, and the heat to-day will keep it going."

The patient yielded himself like a child to the strong arms of Big Jim, the orderly, who carried him down the crooked stairway, the use of a stretcher being impossible. In the ambulance



Claire took his head in her lap; the Doctor sat by his side, and in a few minutes the hospital doors were reached. Miss Laine had provided a comfortable, airy room, on the first floor, within easy reach of her own office, and a nurse apartment for Claire adjoining. She was, indeed, as much interested in the care of Mr. Woodley as either of her friends.

"That's a sick baby you've got, Miss," observed Big Jim, sympathetically, as, with the help of an assistant, he placed the patient in bed. "But he's in good hands. You and the young Doctor will fetch him around all right. When I get sick I'm going to send for you, Miss."

"Thank you, James," replied Claire. "I hope your prophecy may prove true. I don't want to see you ill; but if ever I can serve you I surely will."

"And will you let me sit with him to-night, so ye can rest a bit?" standing in the doorway.

"Now that is very kind. I'll see if I need you. Many thanks."

"It's little sleep you will be getting while the young man is so sick, I'm thinking. St. Mary bless you, Miss," pausing reverently and murmuring a prayer to his favorite saint.

"Now, my dear," commanded Miss Laine,



when the patient was made entirely comfortable, "here is Miss Blake, for the greater part of the day. After a light breakfast, you must go to bed. You are so tired. We will take the best care of him until you come on again. I will not lose sight of him for one moment. I'm so glad we have him here. He surely would have died in that dreadful place. How these poor people around us live such weather as this I do not know. We shall have a very busy and trying day. About twenty prostration cases came in yesterday, three beyond help."

Alone in her room, Claire gave way for a few moments. Then she found comfort through lifting her heart to the merciful Source of all goodness and strength.

"His poor mother!" she thought. "What will we do? She must know, yet it will almost kill her. But we cannot let her know now."



## CHAPTER XV.

### A MESSAGE OF SORROW.

The over wearied body surrendered itself to rest for five or six hours. When Claire came down, about 3 o'clock, she found Uncle John Williams sitting in the corridor, impatiently waiting, as he said, for Dr. Clarke, who had mysteriously summoned him by telegraph. Handing the message to Miss Randolph, he said:

"I got that about ten o'clock and took the next train for town. I've been here nearly an hour. I don't know what it means. Queer sort of a wedding invitation, isn't it?" and he laughed aloud. "I didn't know whether to bring Malindy with me or not," he went on. "But it said I wasn't to say anything to anybody. So I didn't even tell mother where I was going. But I must



be getting the four o'clock train home. How soon will the Doctor be in? I suppose you like your work here?"

"Oh, yes, I'm trying to." Her voice trembled. "Excuse me one minute, Uncle John; the Doctor will soon be here," and she hastened to the door of Mr. Woodley's room.

"How is he?" she whispered to Miss Blake.

"No better," was the grave reply. "He is very ill. You will have a hard night with him, and I had better stay part of the time."

"No, thank you," said Claire. "If I need you, I'll call. I'll be in presently." She went back to Uncle John, who had been watching the pantomime, and quickly asked:

"Some one very sick, I suppose?"

"Yes, and—oh, Uncle John, I cannot wait till the Doctor comes to tell you!" bursting into tears. "It is Mr. Woodley!"

"What's that?" cried Mr. Williams, jumping to his feet. "Our Rob here, sick? I must see him! That I must!" starting toward the door of the room, at the other end of the corridor.

"No! No! Please don't!" urged Claire. "You cannot see him; no one but the nurse and the Doctor and myself. I'm caring for him. I was resting a little when you came. I was with him



all night, over at the mission."

"And what is the matter with him? Typhoid, I reckon?"

"No; not so bad as that, we hope. He is simply broken down and has a high fever. We hope to have him up soon. I suppose the Doctor sent for you to— Here he is now," as Dr. Clarke hurriedly came forward.

"I'm awfully sorry to have kept you waiting," he said, cordially greeting Mr. Williams. "Come into my office," leading the way. "Come in, nurse."

"I tell you, Doctor," said the old man, "this is mighty sudden and it breaks me all up. If that boy dies it will just kill his poor old mother and go awful hard with the rest of us!"

"You must not be so greatly alarmed, Uncle John," said the Doctor, soothingly. "We hope it won't be so bad as that, and it certainly won't if good nursing can bring him around," tenderly regarding Claire, whose emotion was too great to be wholly controlled. Uncle John was having a good quiet cry to himself, all the same. "I just can't help it," he said; "I'm glad I got in here, where so many people won't see me. And you want me to tell his mother?" bracing up.

"Now, my dear friend, that's just why I sent



for you," declared the Doctor. "I knew I could trust you and rely upon your confidence and judgment. Mrs. Woodley, of course, must know about this, and Mr. Fleming and Mrs. Randolph and all our good friends up your way. I want Mr. Fleming—this is Friday—to stay over Sunday and conduct the service as usual. Then he can return and go up on Saturday. He must not forget the prayer for the sick, at both services. Uncle John, I believe in the power of prayer, when we deserve it. This dear boy deserves it, and we are going to try to deserve it the very best we can, by doing our part. Every one is very much interested and all are eager to serve Miss Randolph's friend."

"Well then, Doctor, I'll be getting right off," looking at his big watch. "I've just got time to make the train. I'll be home in an hour and I'll go straight to the Rectory and do the very best I can. We'll all do the best we can to hold dear old Mrs. Woodley up. She will just be crazy to come right down here, though."

"No, no," interrupted the Doctor. "Tell her for me that this will not be necessary, nor wise. We are giving him every possible attention and care, and if it's needful to send for her, I'll do it. You may promise that for me. Claire will drop



her a little note every day. Good-bye, Uncle John. Thank you for coming down, and so promptly. I knew you were the man I wanted for this emergency," patting him affectionately on the back. "Give our love to them all, and tell them we will hope to have the boy home in a few weeks, and I'll come with him, and Claire, too—beg pardon, Miss Randolph," bowing to the young girl, who beamed upon him through her tears.

"Good-bye, Doctor. Good-bye, Claire," shaking hands. "God bless you both—and Robert! My! How I would liked to have seen him! But I suppose he wouldn't know me and it's best not to."

"Good-bye, Uncle John," said Claire. "It will all be well, I hope," and the trustful old friend departed, taking a longing look at the door of the room at the end of the corridor.

"I think he is doing very well," said Dr. Clarke, hopefully, as he sat a bit, watching the patient, about ten o'clock that night. "There are some trying hours ahead; but there is plenty of help within call, if you need any one."

It was a tearful congregation that met in old St. David's on Sunday morning. The sad news of the pastor's illness had reached the entire com-



munity, and the people as by common consent gathered to unite in earnest prayer in his behalf. Singularly enough, the city missionary had chosen that occasion, some days before, to tell of his work amongst the poor of the great city. This made the story of special interest. He related many incidents of daily life in the "slums," and read a long and touching letter from the superintendent, telling of Mr. Woodley's work. In conclusion he said:

"And now he is prostrated, the direct result of zealous and self sacrificing labors. Let us all heartily pray for his early and complete recovery. I cannot think that anything more serious will be permitted to happen to one so fully consecrated to the service of humanity. That he may be speedily restored to health and strength and to his dear people is surely the prayer of a multitude to whom he has so faithfully ministered."

An audible and impressive "amen" ran through the congregation, supplementing that which had been so fervently united in when the regular service was read.

Although greatly depressed, Mrs. Woodley came into the service, on the arm of Mrs. Randolph. The bond of sympathy that encompassed these two long time friends was a sweet inspiration to young and old.



## CHAPTER XVI.

### BACK FROM THE BORDERLAND.

Robert Woodley's illness and the timely care given him aptly illustrated the hospital life of our time. The stranger within the gates was taken in and every attention shown him, regardless of the prospect of adequate financial return. He was given a private room, but if he had been placed in one of the wards the same conscientious and skilled care would have been his portion. Every hour, day and night, the year round, the gates of this great house of refuge for those sick and injured stand wide open for the reception of those in need. Fully ninety per cent. of this work represents the purest charity. To its dispensaries come multitudes of sick, lame and suffering, and all are ministered to, practi-



cally all this work being free. The spirit pervading St. Ann's is that of human brotherhood in its broadest sense. The zealous young missionary gave all he had to the cause of suffering humanity, and here were a score or more of men of superior skill in the science of medicine and surgery, devoting themselves to the alleviation of human suffering and to the restoration of the sick, aided by more than half a hundred self-sacrificing, noble minded young women, veritable angels of mercy, and scores of other assistants and household attendants. And in this great city there are thirty more such places of refuge in the hour of distress, while throughout the State and many states are to be found well equipped hospitals in every city and large town. A vast amount of money freely given keeps this great relief machinery in motion.

The helpless patient in No. 5 had often thought of these things, and once a year earnestly plead the cause of St. Ann's Hospital, little dreaming that therein would be fought a hard battle for his own life. For more than a week the issue was doubtful. Dr. Clarke held frequent consultations with his associates to make sure that the right course was being pursued in every respect. A new complication had arisen and the need of a delicate operation was feared. The danger, however, passed and the prospect brightened.



During this crisis Claire was calm and confident. She showed wonderful fortitude. It had almost been decided that on account of her personal sympathy, the care of the patient should be left in other hands. But her behaviour was so uniformly commendable the physicians could find no excuse for carrying out this suggestion.

"You are the bravest little woman I ever saw," was the gallant declaration of Dr. Marvin. "He will owe his life to you and your skillful ministrations."

Claire bowed her thanks and said nothing. Her faith had been unshaken from the start. She had clung to the promises of Holy Writ from the beginning, and now the day was breaking.

Yet a new peril was to be met. In a few hours the sick man would come up out of the dark valley of semi-unconsciousness; he would realize, perhaps with painful suddenness, his condition. There must be no excitement, no manifestation of feeling on the part of his care taker, and he must be guarded against himself. Claire vigilantly watched for the first signs of returning reason. False lights gleamed along the shore, as the frail bark glided into safer waters. Hope and fear alternated. He was so weak. Would the needful strength come? Or would the fatal



relapse, always to be feared, suddenly end all? Would the weakened cord loosen its hold forever?

As twilight came, one Sunday evening, the faithful nurse sat close to the bed. The hour had come, she thought. He was so quiet. She seemed to feel the presence of a returned spirit, that had been wandering far from home. Strains of sweet music from the chapel organ floated in through the open windows. Then a voice, soft and low:

“Watch by the sick, enrich the poor  
With blessings from Thy boundless store.  
Be every mourner’s sleep to-night,  
Like infants’ slumbers, pure and light.”

A smile crept over the wan face of the invalid. His lips moved, as if in prayer. Claire leaned over, impulsively, her eyes filling with tears, which she thought he would not see in the gathering darkness. In the faintest tones he clearly repeated the beautiful words of the singer.

Yes, he was coming back! In a moment the little craft would touch the shore again. Oh, if she could but cry out the joy that filled her heart! He was not dreaming. A few moments before she had found his temperature almost normal. Would she speak? Would she call his name, ever so gently? He turned his head, with



perfect ease—strength was coming—and looked her full in the face. The great arc light in the court yard, directly opposite the window at the foot of the bed, flashed a stream of brightness into the room. She could see his eyes, shining like stars—the old light of reason, gentleness, sweetness, love! She held her breath. He reached out his right hand, which she silently clasped in her own.

“Claire,” he said.

“Oh, Robert!” She dropped upon her knees, burying her face in the coverlet.

“Where am I, Claire?” he asked, in a whisper.

“Home! dearest! You have come back to your loved ones once more,” rising and speaking through her tears. “But you must be very quiet and rest now. You may speak to me to-morrow. I’ll waken you very early. Good-night, dearest Robert!”

“Oh, sweet, sweet home!” he murmured. “But where is mother?”

Poor Claire! What could she say now?

“Mother will be here soon,” she promised.

“Is this really home?” he urged.

“It is my home, Robert, and all is well now.”

She held his hand, patting it lovingly.

“All is well!” He murmured the Lord’s prayer,



all of it. His mind is clear. His coming strength assured. "Now I lay me," he said and smiling peacefully, fell asleep.

For more than an hour Claire sat motionless. She dare not disturb him. She needed no light in the room. The door opened very softly. It was Dr. Clarke.

"Well?" he said, anxiously.

"Oh! doctor, he has come back, and so gently, so sweetly! No excitement, no restlessness. I'm so happy!" her trembling voice scarcely audible.

"So am I, my child. So am I," was the hearty exclamation. "I rejoice for your sake, as well as his. Now for great watchfulness for a few days and we will have him beyond the danger line, I trust."

"Yes! yes! Surely it will be so," murmured Claire.

The Doctor went out as quietly as he came in, leaving the rejoicing girl supremely happy.



## CHAPTER XVII.

### THROWING THE LIFE LINE.

Several times during the night Robert wakened. But he was very dutiful. He gave intelligent heed to every direction. For the first time since his illness began, he did not seem to crave cooling drink. The fever was gone. He rested so quietly that Claire became anxious at times. Then she would laugh at her foolish fears. The Doctor came in early.

“Well, well, my dear boy,” was his hearty greeting. “I’m glad to see you’ve got back. We are all glad to see you, I’m sure. Yes, yes, Mr. Woodley, you have been very ill, but the turn in the lane has been reached, and I rejoice with you. No pain anywhere? Not in the head? No? Nothing to do but to lie very still and let



this good angel take the best of care of you. She has hardly slept at all for more than a week. You must do better to-day, nurse," as Miss Blake came in.

"Yes, Doctor," promised Claire, "I'll have a good sleep to-day."

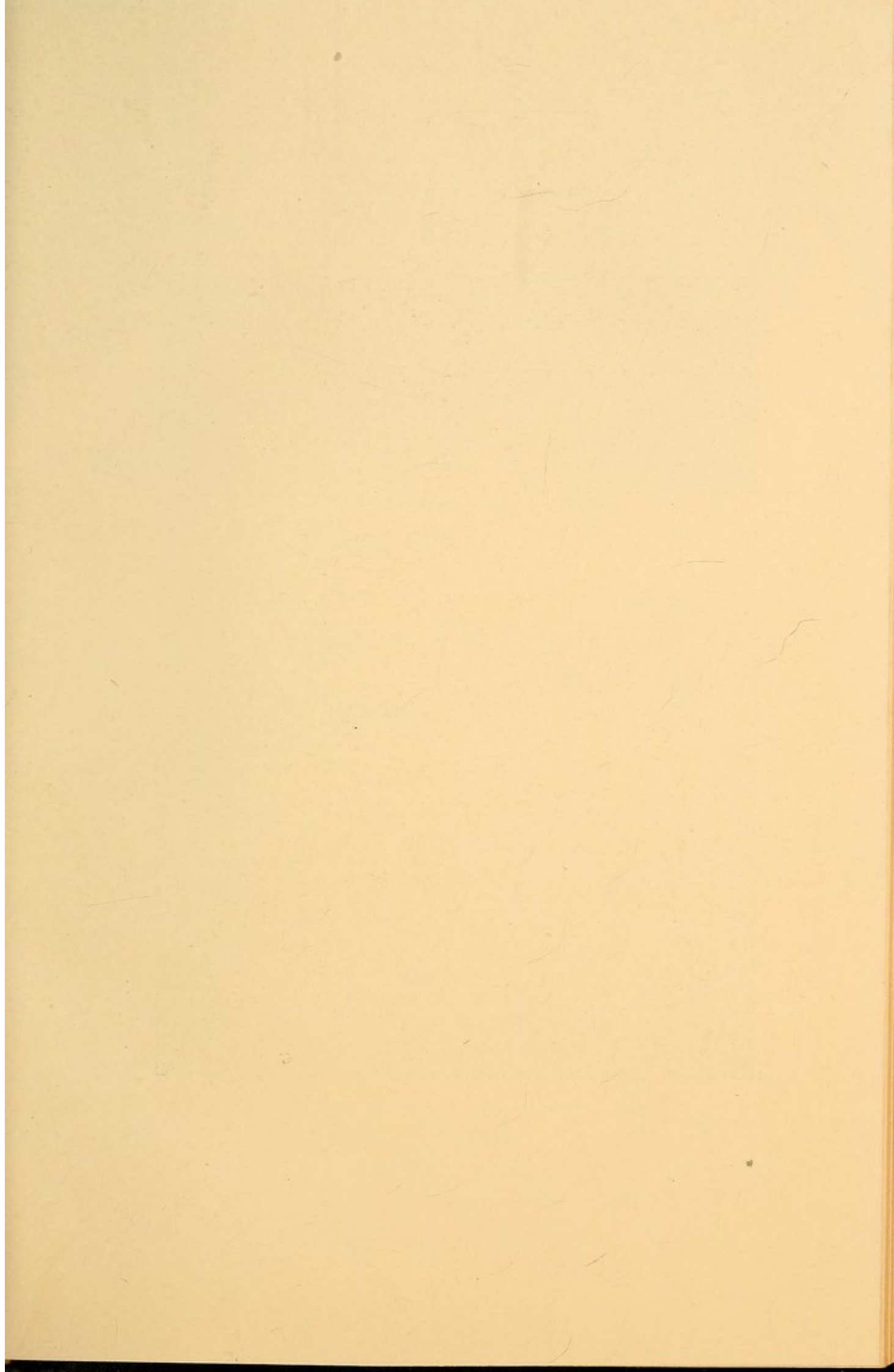
"That's right," and looking steadily into the smiling face of the patient, he said, "It is all right." Soon as he reached his office he sent this telegram to John Williams, at Harley:

"Go right down, with your biggest smile, and tell Mother Woodley her boy is safe in the harbor once more. His recovery will be rapid. Give her and Mrs. Randolph my love, and the same from Claire.

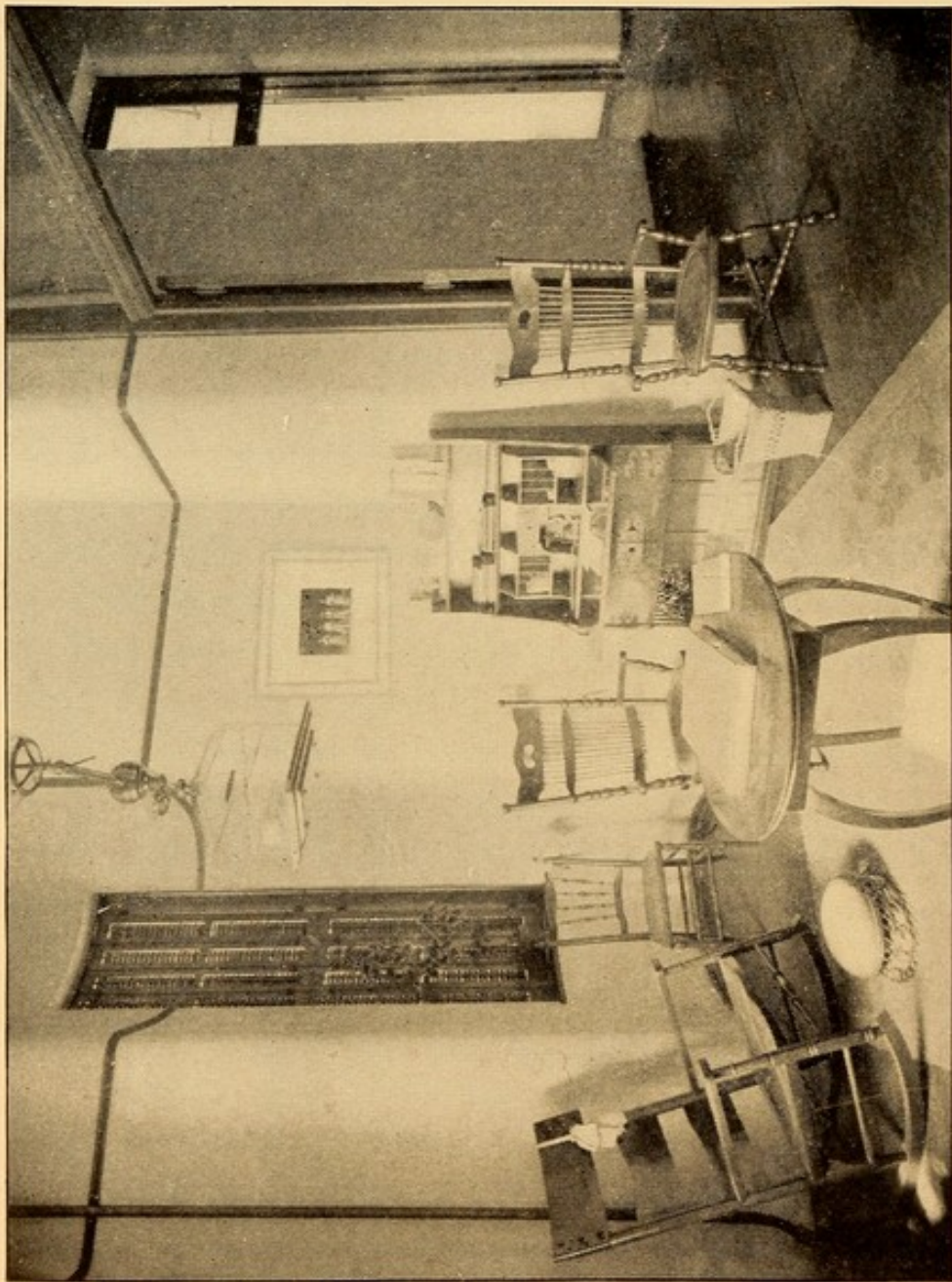
"Walter Clarke."

In St. David's, the next Sunday morning, when the visiting minister read the prayer of thanksgiving for recovery from illness, the congregation remained with bowed heads for several minutes. Every one was trying to conceal the emotion felt. After the service, Mother Woodley was surrounded by her loving people, all wishing to show their happiness over their pastor's hopeful condition. It was expected that he would be with them a fortnight later, if not able to conduct the service.









A SITTING ROOM.



The young minister's recovery was even more rapid than had been expected. His fine constitution had not been undermined. There had been no public notice of his illness, and few of his brethren knew of it. When the Bishop returned to the city, he made an early visit to St. Ann's, as was his wont, and was much surprised to learn of the incident.

"This simply shows," he said, in his hearty way, "that all the heroes did not go down at Balaklava nor at Gettysburg. No indeed! We have as brave men to-day as ever lived, and I'm proud of them. My dear brother, I rejoice greatly to see you on the way to health again. And what a fine thing it was that St. Ann's was right here, to care for you. Ah! the people do not know the great work our hospitals are doing. They are the handmaids of the church, grandly illustrating the true principles of Christianity. I think the press ought to give more space to recording these things; the effort we are making to save men, women and children for this life as well as to insure them a peaceful hereafter."

"I've expressed myself in that way many times," said President Brelsford. "I think we shall adopt some plan whereby these facts may become more widely known, to the end that our



needs may be more fully provided for."

"How many annual reports do we print?" asked Dr. Clarke.

"About five hundred," replied the Superintendent. "And we can hardly pay for that small number."

"It ought to be five thousand, at least," emphatically declared the Bishop. "There are a great many current facts that I should think would be of great public interest, if we could have them presented concisely."

The result of this informal discussion was the preparation and wide publication of a paper which turned the light on, showing the great hospital work of the time. From this impressive paper we quote the following:

"A comparatively small number of our people realize what a Hospital is; what it does, and what it must have to accomplish satisfactory results, and what it costs to maintain it. A Hospital is essentially a charity. It is an institution the main object of which is not the making of money, nor the advancement of science, but rather the cure of the sick, the feeble, the injured. It aims to bring the benefits of the most advanced medical science, the most



skillful nursing, and the most favorable material and moral conditions to the relief of the suffering of all classes. It gives a well-appointed temporary home to those whose own homes lack appliances favorable to recovery, and it adds some appliances which the most luxurious homes cannot furnish. It is thus a public charity, a benefit to all in every class who may need its help. But it is an expensive charity—one of the most expensive known to modern civilization. The permanent investment in grounds, buildings, furniture, instruments and all arrangements for securing the most perfect sanitary conditions, is necessarily large. The current expenses are heavy. As a matter of fact no institutions are more liable to financial straits, because of the natural tendency of Hospital Directors to extend to suffering humanity a larger charity than their means will permit. One of the largest and richest Hospitals in this State last year came out of its heaviest year's work \$20,000 behind. The Hospital doors are open to all patients, foreign and native born, of all classes and conditions, rich and poor, charity patients, county patients and pay patients alike.

“Within the past fifty years this Hospital has



cared for nearly 70,000 house patients. In the dispensaries nearly 600,000 have been treated. The single ministrations, to dispensary patients alone, have approximated 3,000,000. Ordinarily there are less than ten per cent. pay patients in the Hospital, while the dispensary yields, from voluntary offerings of over 20,000 patients a year, an average of three cents a visit. Within one hundred and ten Hospitals in this State during the last year reported the number of house patients cared for approximated 80,000, over twenty-five per cent. of these being treated free. In the dispensaries, including a number of institutions which cannot house patients, but wherein they are served, most efficiently, without charge, 415,000 persons were treated, the number of single ministrations reaching the enormous total, 1,400,000. All of this great service is practically free, the volunteer offerings amounting to less than ten per cent. It is not possible even to estimate the cost of this self-sacrificing work, either as to time, money or human wear and tear; the strain is never-ceasing; the records kept fragmentary only. The cry for help in the hour of distress is always answered. It requires over \$6,000,000 to maintain these Hospitals. The



money invested in their erection, equipment and endowment exceeds \$25,000,000; and in almost every case continual extension of facilities and needful increase of receipts from voluntary contributions and the State is the story told in annual reports. The number of Hospitals has more than trebled within twenty-eight years; the expense account is more than five times what it was during the Centennial year.

“The President of a Hospital in a Western city has well called attention to the suggestive fact that these places of refuge have become indispensable to our people to-day. It is scarcely realized that the streets of an American city are more dangerous to life and limb than the jungles of India or the wilds of Africa. Observers of other lands frequently say that we are the most reckless people in the world; and surely there never was a time when human life was so cheap; when safety in the home, on the streets, and while at work was so lightly regarded. In one hundred and ten Hospitals within our own State, within a single year, over 110,000 persons, victims of accidents, were ministered to. And this does not include all the hurt people in the industrial and domestic arena. And of course it does not



include the fatalities. Thousands are cared for in their own homes. Yet the number given, as taken to the hospitals, represents more than were killed and wounded, on either side, during any one year of the greatest civil war the world ever saw."



## CHAPTER XVIII.

### INTO THE BRIGHT SUNLIGHT.

The days of convalescence in the hospital comprised a rejoicing period for Robert Woodley and all his good friends. Miss Laine was in high spirits. "We will send you home stronger than ever," she said, one evening, when Big Jim had wheeled the invalid out to the lawn.

"And my chance to return your great kindness will come, I trust, by and by," he suggested, smilingly.

The Directress pretended she did not understand the meaning of this significant sentence. "If you promise me as good a time at Harley as I had during my last visit, that will square the account," she said, gaily.

"Yes, and I'll do more than that," persisted



the grateful minister, "without money and without price."

Miss Laine escaped further teasing by retreating to her office, her fine face aglow with the reflection of the rainbow of promise. A little later she and Dr. Clarke sat together, under the old oak tree, in the South corner of the hospital court yard. Dan Cupid cannot be cheated of his opportunities, even in an atmosphere of human suffering and loyal devotion to the highest dictates of humanity.

Claire had returned to her regular routine of duty at night and saw little of Robert. But there were occasional chance meetings, during this last week at St. Ann's. Each knew what was in the other's heart. Claire had been deprived of her vacation on account of his illness, and now her two available substitutes were away. The minister earnestly hoped some way would be opened whereby he could be accompanied home by the one dearest to him. He thought he would speak to Dr. Clarke, yet that seemed presumptuous. He was saved the trouble. The Doctor came to him on Friday evening and said:

"Well now, Rob,"—they had become such close and fast friends that this familiarity seemed natural—"are you ready to go home to-morrow?"



"Indeed I am, my dear friend," was the grateful reply.

"You will have to put up with my company," went on the Doctor.

"That will be delightful, I am sure. I had not expected such a treat."

"That isn't all of it, either. I shall have to ask you to bear with me again. I have a friend I want to take with me."

"Certainly. Why not? We have plenty of room and mother will be delighted, too."

"All right! Good-night. We will go up in the afternoon train. I must return the next evening," and as he turned to go, the happy Doctor did not see the sudden shadow that gathered upon Mr. Woodley's face.

"Well, of course," he sighed, "I was foolish to think of it. She cannot be spared now. Yet the dear child needs a rest as badly as I do." A happy surprise awaited him.

The Doctor caught Miss Randolph in an upper ward. "See here, little girl," he said, catching her by the arm, "I want you to go to your room and get a good night's sleep. You don't sleep much during the day, this weather. We are going on a picnic to-morrow and you want to be in good condition, you know. I've fixed it



with Miss Laine. Miss Blake will take your place."

"A picnic?" echoed Claire, wonderingly. "Where?"

"Up the road a piece," was all she could get out of him. "Be ready in time."

"You must go with me, too," urged the Doctor, when he arranged it for Claire with the head nurse. "We will come back the next evening. You poor, tired thing!" stroking her beautiful hair. "I wish I could run away with you—for about six months!"

"And get two columns in the papers," calmly observed Miss Laine. "I think you are getting a bit flighty, Walter—Dr. Clarke—pardon me," and she turned quickly to her desk, her face aflame, while the Doctor stood by with a smile that was good for a century run, at least.

"Good-night—Louise," he said, and then with mock gravity and bowing very low, "I beg pardon—Miss Laine."

It was a gay party that set out from St. Ann's, on Saturday afternoon, for Harley.

"I wish we could go in the ambulance all the way," said Miss Laine. "Wouldn't that be jolly?"



"Harley would have a fit," suggested Dr. Clarke.

It was a great day for Robert Woodley. He was still quite weak and sank back in his seat in the car, with Claire beside him.

"Will the brass band be out to receive us, Mr. Woodley?" asked Miss Laine, eagerly.

"I don't know, I'm sure. The Doctor is master of ceremonies. I expect he and Uncle John will have a shindy of some sort," smiling contentedly.

"I'm going to ring the bell to-morrow," said the happy Doctor, like a boy home from school. "I'll wake up the whole country."

"Mother don't know I'm coming," said Claire to Robert. "Won't it be a happy surprise?"

"Those dear old souls will be just about ready for translation," was the reply.

The Doctor had sent a telegram to Uncle John to have "a coach and six," and the happy old man was at the station, with his big carryall. He threw his arms around Robert and almost carried him from the car. He insisted on embracing Claire and Miss Laine.

"I always kiss the girls," he said, dancing about in the merriest fashion.

Mrs. Randolph was at the Rectory to join his mother in welcoming her boy, and her own hap-



piness was intensified when she saw Claire jump out of the wagon, the first one, running to meet her.

A string of neighbors followed the wagon from the station. "They think this is a wedding party," laughed Miss Laine.

"Well, so it is!" cried Uncle John. "We'll have the ceremony, two of them, a little later. And I'm going to be one of the best men, eh, Doctor?"

"Sure," was the laughing response. "I'll let you hold my gloves while I prepare for the fight."

"Here we are, Mother Woodley!" shouted Uncle John and the Doctor in unison, as they came up to the Rectory.

"Here's this blessed boy of yours," added Mr. Williams. "A little pale, but none the worse for his campaign with them city varmint."

"Dear Mrs. Randolph!" murmured Miss Laine, as she fell into the arms of Claire's mother.

"My dear child, how glad I am to see you again!" was the heartfelt reply.

Mrs. Woodley embraced the blushing Doctor, after she had received Robert, kissing him on both of his big red cheeks. "How can I ever thank you," she said, "you and dear Claire, for your loving care of my son? Truly the Lord



has been good to us all, and may he bless you greatly!"

It was a great night, first at the Rectory, where all had supper, and then at the big house, on the hill. Dollie Wheeler was there, filled with joy. The brass band was out, sure enough, and it blew and pounded and thumped as though it was celebrating the glorious "fourth." Miss Laine's enjoyment of the occasion was intense. When every one had retired, at a late hour, she slipped down stairs and into the parlor. To a servant, locking up the house, she whispered, "Wait for me a minute, please!"

She sat down at the open piano and softly sang the song of her heart. Quite forgetting herself, she raised her voice, until the last two lines rang out clear and strong. Then, half frightened, she ran up stairs.

The next morning Dr. Clarke, whose room was over the parlor, and whose window was wide open, caught Miss Laine at one end of the porch.

"What was that you were singing last night?" he earnestly inquired.

"Only a litle ditty of mine," was the laughing reply, as she ran away. And that was all he could get; but the sweet words:



“Two lives forever blest,  
Two hearts in faith entwined,”

rang in his ears all day and for many days.

Sunday morning the Doctor kept his promise, ringing the old bell, as some one said loud enough to disturb the sleepers beyond the stone wall. The little church was not half big enough to hold the crowd that assembled, and after service, the returned minister, almost overcome with this manifestation of the love of his people, sat in a chair by the gate and shook hands with them, as they passed out, each one giving a hearty personal welcome. The visiting minister improved the occasion to speak most impressively upon the assurance that comes from true devotion to Christian truth and the highest faith in the promises given to those who trust sincerely in divine goodness and mercy.

Dollie Wheeler and Claire sang a duet during the offertory, to the renewed delight of all the people.



## CHAPTER XIX.

### MINISTRY OF LOVE—CLAIRE'S VISION.

The next fortnight comprised the happiest period Robert Woodley had ever known. The loving heart he tenderly cherished became so closely knit to his that never again did he waver in his confidence in its loyalty.

In anticipation of the Rector's return and his daily need, Uncle John Williams had caused the little phaeton to be overhauled by the village wheelwright. The harness, too, had been shined up by one of his own boys until it looked like new, while gentle old Larry had done nothing but eat, sleep and be lazy. The visiting minister spent most of his vacation lying on his back, in a capacious hammock, under the big chestnut tree. He told his hostess he was not used to horses. So



everything was ripe for long drives through the cool shaded country side.

On Monday Robert divided the day between his library and the big easy chair on the porch. At sunset Claire slipped down to the rectory, to see how her charge was coming on, for she now regarded herself wholly responsible for his care.

"I must be nurse, doctor—and sweetheart, combined," she said to herself, as she pushed open the gate, half hidden by rose bushes, which were still in bloom, this soft September day. A string of flowers brushed her cheek and the thorns tangled the stray strands on her forehead. She plucked a white rose and placed it in her hair and put a red beauty in her corsage.

"I'm so glad you came down," said Robert, as she came into view around the corner of the porch, the most beautiful picture, in her snow white gown, he thought he had ever seen. "I was afraid I was not going to see you again to-day," drawing her to a little rocker, very near to him.

"You know I always go on duty at sunset," she said, with mock seriousness.

"Yes! Yes! but none of that trying work here. Instead, nothing to do but rest—and be happy!" looking wistfully into her laughing eyes.



"And have you had a happy day?" laying her hand upon the arm of his chair.

"The birds in the trees could not be happier," his face shining with a new light.

"And will you promise me something?" regarding him with great eagerness.

"I'll promise you anything, Claire," seizing her hand and caressing it with the other; "and keep the promise, too. What is it?"

"That you will not be unhappy any more."

The reproachful look smote him. Did she know all? Had she felt his cruel misgivings? Could she have heard those sad confessions to his mother? Was her spirit present when he grieved unbelievably?

"Yes, Claire," in earnest tones; "I'll promise that gladly. It is more than I deserve to be allowed to make the promise. I—"

"I did not ask you to say that."

"Did mother tell you?"

"No, my heart told me."

"Did I show it in my conduct? Forgive me, Claire, Oh, forgive me!" and he bowed his head upon the hand that he held, kissing it warmly.

"I know it has been hard to bear, this separation and uncertainty. But we must trust, have



faith in each other, Robert, as well as in the future."

"It seemed to me, dear Claire, that you were lost forever. My mind was hopelessly discouraged. I could see no light ahead. I know it was weak, but I hope you will forgive me."

"Is the light shining now?" drawing still nearer.

"It never shone so brightly! I can bear any thing now," and he drew her to him in a close embrace.

The twilight deepened into darkness while they thus let their hearts speak.

"I must be going," said Claire presently. "Mother will be glad to know you are feeling so well," rising.

"I will go with you," he said. "The walk will do me good."

After greeting Mrs. Woodley briefly, Claire took his arm and they slowly ascended the hill. "To-morrow," he said, as they approached the house; "we will have a ride up the valley. Good-night."

"Good-night, Robert. Remember the promise."

The next day and each fair day following, lazy old Larry jogged along, half asleep, pulling to one side of the road every little while to rest himself



under a tree. He would look around and blink, in the drollest manner, as if to say :

“Well, now get out and I’ll take a nap.” No matter how far they wandered, down the ravine or up into the woods, a favorite resting place was Eagle Rock, high on the wooded hill above the mill dam, the faithful old carrier would be just where they left him, unhitched, when they returned. He seemed to know all about it. Claire would break off tender shoots and pluck bits of grass and give Larry, and he would look unutterable things, she declared. She would put her pretty bare arms around his neck and pat him, while he would lean his head against her bosom and rub his nose against her face.

“Dear old Larry!” she would say; “you love me, too, don’t you?” and he would bob his head as if understanding every word and answering as well as he could. He traveled with more spirit when the young mistress took the reins, holding his head up quite gaily and stepping along as though proud of the privilege accorded him. Before starting out each morning he whinnied for his candy and begged a piece for lunch. Robert would laugh at his intelligent ways and say he was the funniest old chap that ever stood on four legs. He came to the rectory, full of



youthful vigor, the gift of an admiring friend of the elder Woodley, the same year as the present master, and was still good for several years of mild usefulness.

One evening the happy young people upon their return home found a telegram from St. Ann's. It simply asked:

"How is the picnic coming on," and was signed "Doc. & Co."

Claire wrote this reply and sent it from the office at the station:

"Greatest success ever known. Gained five pounds a week. Rob & Co."

Viewed from every standpoint, this twin recreation was a most exhilarating success. The young minister's strength came back to him with wonderful rapidity and force, and his spirit of healthful enjoyment of life grew with his physical recuperation. Every one marveled at the change wrought within these two weeks. And Miss Randolph also had entered into new life. The strain of hospital work for the year had been very severe and this being supplemented by Mr. Woodley's illness and her care of him, had taxed her strength to the utmost. Now she was stronger than ever, weighing one hundred and forty pounds and ready to take up her duties with enthusiasm. The Sun-



day night before her intended departure for Birmingham, she said:

"I must tell you of my dream last night."

"A pleasant one, I hope."

"I would not try to remember or to recall any other kind," she went on. "The Bishop stood in the chancel of St. David's. Before him there were two couples. He married one and then the groom went into the vestry and emerging in clerical vestments, read the service that united the other man and woman for life. He quickly resumed his former attire, returned to the rail, and after the Bishop's blessing, all left the church together. Wasn't that singular?"

"Yes, and very beautiful. But who were they?" eagerly.

"I do not know. In dreams faces seldom appear distinctly."

"Sometimes they do," he said. "I saw yours last night much plainer than I do now, in this dim twilight."

"Where was I and what was I doing?"

"Standing on the bank of the river, beckoning me to come over to you."

"And did you come?" she whispered, clinging to his arm, as they stood at the edge of the porch at "Woodlands."



"I don't know. You vanished as I awoke."

"Let us so live, dearest," was the trembling admonition, "that we shall be worthy to cross the river of life when our work here is done."

"Beautifully and truthfully said, Claire," was the fervent response.



## CHAPTER XX.

### IN PERIL OF FLAMES—THE RESCUE.

The mills at Harley, taken over at first by the creditors of their long time owner, were now being conducted by a vigorous company and were run to their utmost capacity, double turn; not an hour was lost. The night hands, on Sunday, reported at twelve o'clock. A short time after midnight, the village was startled by the fierce blowing of the whistle and the clanging of the great bell. As the people rushed from their beds, they saw the sky lighted up by flames and heard the awful cries of imperiled operatives. A large proportion of these were children and young people a few years older. Those on the lower floor escaped quickly, and through jumping from a back window, at the side of the hill, the sec-



ond story hands also. On the third floor, with no opening toward the hillside and fully thirty-five feet from the ground, were nearly half a hundred of the younger operatives. Some of these, near the only stairway, rushed down, through smoke and flames. Others managed to make their way across the bridge, the only fire escape, to the other building. Others jumped from the windows, at the risk of their lives in every instance. A boy was killed and a girl was fatally injured. Two others were terribly hurt.

"Don't jump! Don't jump! Wait a minute! We'll save you!" was the appeal and command that came from a bare-headed man, who suddenly appeared in the bewildered crowd. "Where is the ladder?" he asked. "Get it quickly!" and he rushed into the machine shop end of the mill, which the flames had not yet reached. He groped about, plainly seen by the awe-stricken crowd. Emerging with a good-sized piece of iron, a ball of twine and a coil of rope, he was recognized as Robert Woodley. A great shout went up and men rushed forward to obey his every command.

"Go around the other side, some of you!" he said, tying the bolt to the end of the twine. He stepped some distance from the mill and cleared a space. "Stand back!" he cried, and swinging



the cord, as he had done in sling-shot playing when a boy, he sent the bit of iron whirling over the mill. Not another man in the crowd could have done that. His strength seemed super-human. Connecting the cord and the rope, the willing hands behind the mill pulled away and held fast.

"Up with the ladder!" commanded the minister. He ran to the top, just below the second story window, then seizing the rope, "shinned" up like a cat. The two hundred men, women and children looking on in amazement and joyful relief, yelled their delight and encouragement.

"Don't jump, Harry!" cried an agonized mother. "He will save you!"

"Don't jump, Mary!" was the hoarse appeal of an aged father, scarcely able to stand upon his feet.

"He's coming! He's coming! Hold on! You will all be saved!" and many other messages were carried to the upper windows.

About a dozen terrified forms could be seen, gathered in one place, at the end of the mill. The flames were leaping toward them. In a few minutes every young life would be blotted out. Their cries for help were pitiful. But they saw the rescuer coming and cheered each other.



"Let the girls go first, boys!" commanded Johnny Mills, himself a cripple. "I'll go last. I'm not much account anyway."

"You'll go first, Johnny!" cried the girls, with one voice. "Here, Mr. Woodley, take Johnny Mills first," and before the lame boy could realize it, he was swinging in the air, the rope around his body, under the arms. He was let down quickly, the other boys helping Mr. Woodley. Up went the rope.

"Now, Mary!" said the elder girls, and the youngest, only thirteen last birthday, and in the mill less than a month, was let down.

"Oh, there comes Mary!" was the joyous cry of the poor father, who reached up to grasp her in his arms before she touched the ground.

It was quick work and perilous. The smoke was blinding, the flames all around the little group and the clothing of the last girl was ablaze as she came down. Women tore off their skirts and men their shirts to wrap around the half-conscious victim. They smothered the flames in an instant. The boys came rapidly in turn, each one more or less burned.

"Hurry, Mr. Woodley! Hurry! You'll be lost! God save him! God bless him! There he comes! Oh, he has fallen back! Up, somebody,



up, quick," and half a dozen men started up the ladder, at the peril of their own lives, to save the heroic young minister.

"There he comes!" was the glad cry, as with painful effort and in great weakness, the brave rescuer climbed out of the burning window. Cinders were falling all around him from the roof. The rope would break in a minute. It was evident that he was terribly burned. He grasped the rope and slid down, half way, then fell back, exhausted, struck the ladder on his shoulders and with it came to the ground all in a heap.

An awful groan came from the crowd.

"Oh, he is killed! He's killed! Go tell his mother! No, don't. That will kill her, too! God save him!" and a hundred other wild expressions of fear, grief, hope and prayer mingled.

The crowd had not noticed one silent female figure, standing very close to the mill, for some minutes during the exciting rescue. No cry escaped her trembling lips, moving in earnest prayer all the while. Tears ran down her cheeks, burning with the fierce heat of the fire, now driving every one back far out into the road. Claire Randolph was the first to reach Robert Woodley. As he struck the ladder she rushed forward, with uplifted arms, seeking to save him all she could.



Stalwart arms carried the unconscious, burned, blackened and bruised form out of the mill-yard and across the road to the nearest house. A settee was quickly brought out. The night was oppressive, and here Claire's every command being obeyed by a score of eager hands, the injured man was ministered to.

"I'm not much hurt, dearest," said Robert presently, opening his eyes. "I'm so glad you were here. Let them take me home. You go first and tell mother I'm not much hurt."

"Oh, Robert, how thankful I am to be here!" sobbed the girl, now giving way for the first time. Dollie Wheeler was by her side. She bathed his face and caressed the dreadfully burnt hands, which she had wrapped in oil-soaked cotton, brought by Uncle John Williams from his store. "It was a wonderful escape for you," Claire said. "And think of what you have done! Saved all these young lives at the peril of your own!"

"Would not He have done as much, dear Claire?" he whispered, in muffled tones, for his face was covered with bandages.

They bore him home, on the settee, six big fellows, John Williams in the lead, every one rubbing his eyes with his sleeve all the way, and a



hundred sorrowing, rejoicing, sympathizing people following all the way to the rectory gate. There they stood bare headed, in silent prayer, as the men entered the house.

Claire was there first and Mother Woodley, with wonderful fortitude, was calm, proud and cheerful. Ah! her dear boy had shown the spirit of the Master whom he so zealously served. He had made a record over which angels in heaven would rejoice. He would be saved to her. She was sure of that. When he was comfortably in bed, she knelt down beside him, and with Claire and Dollie they murmured a united prayer of thanksgiving.

The village doctor had been absent during the fire, visiting a very sick patient, several miles distant. Upon his return, after ministering to the injured operatives, he hastened to the rectory.

"I don't suppose I'm needed, with this brave girl here," he said. "But I must come to pay my respects to the noblest man in Barnes County."

Yes, he was very much needed, with his medicine chest, for other remedies were required, and Claire had just discovered that Mr. Woodley's left shoulder blade was surely broken. The doctor, with her ready and skillful assistance, set the fractured member. He would put it in a cast at



once, and hurried to his home for the material. Upon his return he remained at the rectory the rest of the night, and when he left, at sunrise, scores of people on the highway stopped him to inquire about Mr. Woodley. He said to them:

“He will be all right, in a little while. But he is terribly shaken up and badly burned about the face and hands. And just to think! Home here recovering from the hospital in Birmingham, where his life had almost been despaired of! He is a noble and true man, is Robert Woodley.”



## CHAPTER XXI.

### INSPIRATION OF TRUE LOVE.

Dr. Clarke had been very busy during Claire's last week at home, and he was counting the days until her return. "Miss Randolph will be with us to-morrow morning, I suppose," he observed to Miss Laine, on Sunday evening. "I shall be extremely glad to see her."

"So will I," replied the head nurse. "Her presence in the sick wards at night will be a great relief to me. I hope she will come back to us strong—and happy," looking earnestly at the Doctor, whose eager eyes also met her's questioningly.

As he entered his office early Monday morning, an orderly met the resident physician at the door. "Telegram, sir." The message read:



HARLEY, September 29.

"Mr. Woodley badly injured at the fire. Doing well. Cannot come to-day. See papers.

"CLAIRE RANDOLPH."

The ambulance was standing at the door. The Doctor rushed out, picking up a morning paper from the hall table.

"Quick, quick, Mike!" he commanded. "Central station! Go it, now!"

The big bays pricked up their ears as though understanding the order. They dashed out of the gate and galloped up the street, swinging into the avenue. St. Ann's "big black baby," as the boys called it, rolled, rattled, bounced and slid along at a wild rate. Policemen raised their batons and wagons pulled out to the right and left. Mike pulled up with a jerk at the side entrance to the great station. Leaping out, Dr. Clarke shouted:

"Give this to Miss Laine" (handing him the telegram). "Tell her I'll be back at eleven. Meet me here," and he went up the steps, three at once. "No time! Here!" thrusting his card at the gate keeper, demanding his ticket. He swung on to the steps of the last car, as the 8.30 train pulled out.

"Now," he said to himself, panting, as he



dropped into the last seat, "Let us see what all this is about," and he spread out the Gazette. Right on the first page was a brief but thrilling account of the fire at Harley mills. The headlines, among other things, said:

HEROIC CONDUCT OF A YOUNG MINISTER.

HE SAVES HALF A SCORE OF LIVES,  
AT THE RISK OF HIS OWN.

REPORTED BADLY INJURED BY A  
FALL AND SERIOUSLY BURNED.

"There he is, at it again!" murmured the Doctor. "And hardly able as yet to take care of himself. I'm afraid this affair may finish him. But no it won't! Heaven takes care of such heroes. I'm so glad I made this train. Perhaps I can be of some use." He tore a leaf from a memorandum book and wrote a telegram to Uncle John, asking him to be at the station with his wagon. It was sent from the next stopping place. The hour's ride seemed like ten hours to the anxious physician and friend.

"Another terrible trial for Claire! Dear girl, what a fortunate thing she was there! And his poor old mother! Dear me, dear me," and the Doctor talked to himself as the train sped along.

Uncle John was there, with his light store



wagon. "Glad to see you, Doctor," was his cheery greeting. "We've had a great night up here. How's the boy? Oh, he's all right; that is, he will be all right. We can't spare him yet. It was the noblest thing you ever heard of," and he gave a stirring account of the fire and rescue of the operatives, as the wagon bounced along to the rectory.

"And Claire?" asked the Doctor.

"She is in the right place, right there with him and his mother. The dear girl was at his side when he was hurt and fixed him up as good as you could have done, I reckon."

"No doubt of it. No doubt of it. She is equal to any of us."

"Did she send for you? Is she afraid he's going to die?" asked Uncle John, in alarm.

"No, no. But I could not stay away, at such a time; though I'm very much needed at the hospital. Had two important operations set for this morning. I thought I must see him, if only for a half hour. Want you to run me right back, in the next train."

"All right. Here we are. There is Claire, looking like the angel she is!"

"So kind of you, Doctor," said the grateful girl, coming forward to greet him. "He is doing



well, but will be glad to see you; and Mother Woodley, too."

"What a blessed thing you were here!" was the earnest reply, putting his arm around her waist, as they went up the steps of the porch. "I rejoice with you greatly that he has escaped serious harm. Well, now, my boy," he went on, as they entered the down stairs alcove bed room, where the injured man lay, propped up, smiling a cordial greeting the best he could, with his face nearly concealed; "so you have been giving us another glorious chapter in your gospel of humanity!"

"Glad I was here, to help a little, at such a time," were the muffled words of the injured man. "I did not do it in my own strength, I assure you."

"I should think not! Why, the whole thing seems like a miracle."

"In His name and for His sake we can do all things, dear friend."

"Yes! Yes! And your good angel here has brought you around all right. What a precious jewel she is!" with a look of admiration that stirred the blood in the veins of Claire Randolph as no words of Walter Clarke had done before. A thrill of alarm sent her into the next room, to



recover her wonted calm. A few moments later, pretending to examine some medicine, Dr. Boyd had left, the visitor whispered:

"I beg your pardon. I'll behave myself hereafter." But this only deepened her color and increased the fear the warm words had begotten in the loyal heart.

In half a hundred ways this handsome, brilliant, lovable man had shown his almost unconquerable admiration and affection. Was there peril ahead? Oh! if Louise Laine would not keep the door of her great heart so securely barred! If she would only let it speak as it might! As for herself, it had been a struggle from the beginning, not that her love for Robert Woodley ever weakened or grew faint. It was now stronger than ever. But in many respects Dr. Clarke was an ideal that could not be driven out, and he was brought in close relationship with her every day. She slipped away and in a little room up stairs, next to that where Robert spent many of his study hours, sought strength to be good and true; strong and pure, in heart and mind. When the Doctor ran out and jumped in the wagon, she avoided shaking hands with him, but waved an adieu with quiet dignity. He understood and sighed within himself: "If Louise was only more



like her, with her own great qualities. She is the sweetest girl that ever lived, and I'll always think so! Robert, Robert, how good fate has been to you!"

Uncle John chattered all the way to the station and wondered what made his companion so quiet. During the ride back to town, the young physician determined he would never again let go of himself—for her sake as well as his own and Robert's, and Louise, too, he thought to himself. "I've loved her ever since I first saw her, and I'm going to love her, and her alone, with all my heart—if she will let me. How queenly she is! What a magnificent wife for a professional man! What a superb creature when she is her real self; when she throws off the garb of her hard place and lets her real nature assert itself. That night she swung me around the porch at "Woodlands" brought me a revelation that was most exhilarating. Yes, I love Louise Laine! Wish I was with her now!" When the hospital was reached, he sought out the beautiful woman, who seemed to read his thoughts at a glance, and who greeted him with a smile that took him right off the earth.

"Louise—my—" he stammered, as her face became scarlet. "I'm so glad to get back—to you



—to work,” as though he had been away three years instead of three hours! He held her willing hand fully five minutes, while he quickly related the story of Robert’s thrilling experience. Suddenly turning, they beheld Big Jim, standing in the doorway, “grinning like a hyena,” as Miss Laine afterwards told Claire. The orderly awkwardly delivered his message and turned away, saying to one of his associates, whom he met in the hall:

“We’ll be having a double wedding before long, I’m thinking. I believe I’m beginning to get a soft place in my own bosom for that fine pair of black eyes in the linen room. I guess it must be in the air! Sure, and it’s an epidemic!”



## CHAPTER XXII.

### HOSPITAL LIGHTS AND SHADOWS.

During the long, hot summer, St. Ann's had made a notable record. Located in the midst of a dense population of working people, with several over-crowded colonies of that class of foreigners of recent importation who have such sadly erroneous notions concerning American ways and the privileges of every one claiming the right of residence in a free country, its managers often found themselves face to face with serious problems.

"Many of these new people," said the Superintendent, at a meeting of the house committee one day, "seem to think that everything is and ought to be free; further, that we are under some sort of obligation to wait upon them, care for them,



minister to them and serve them in every possible way. It is just the reverse with the average self-respecting native or naturalized American citizen of different characteristics. Many of these will suffer greatly before even asking help. It seems to me the time has come when we should protect the institution from the imposition of unjust burdens. We are all willing to do our part, but there are many who are abundantly able to do their part, too, and who simply do nothing but lay right down on us the year round."

"What sort of a system can we adopt," asked President Brelsford; "to improve this state of things?"

"That's a hard question to answer," replied the Superintendent. "But here is a report I have received, as the result of a very indifferent sort of an inquiry, the object being to find certain leading facts. This relates to a score or more of cases coming before us from one near by section, within the past three months. I have omitted names and residences, and for our present purposes simply tabulated the statement. Here are a few specimens:

"No. 714. Bed patient, in sick ward 'C.' Here five weeks. Employed by a city contractor, at good wages. Loses but little time. Has three



children, one of them at work. Wife also takes in washing. Has interest in a corner grocery store. Paid nothing.

"No. 715. Accident ward No. 2. Admitted with broken leg. Here two weeks. Sent home in ambulance. Single, brick paver. Gets lodge benefits. Said he was too poor to pay anything.

"No. 716. Bed patient in sick ward 'C.' Fever, here six weeks. Single, laborer. Employed at sugar refinery. Never sick before. Member of beneficial association. Paid nothing.

"No. 717. Bed patient, rheumatism, sick ward 'H.' Widow, about 50. Lives with brother, who owns house he lives in. Is a boss carter. She is a dressmaker, earning good wages. Paid us \$10 for seven weeks' service.

"No. 718. Accident case, ward 2. Mill worker, crushed foot. Here three weeks. No family. Lodge member. Paid \$5.

"No. 719. Bed patient, ward 'C.' Street cleaner. Operated upon for appendicitis. Here five weeks. Has an account in the Roma bank. Paid nothing.

"No. 720. Sick patient, fever ward 'C.' Has cigar store and newspaper route. Here six weeks. Paid eight dollars."

"Here is \$23 for seven patients, equalling board



and care of one person for thirty-four weeks, with one major operation, medicine and nursing. The hospital is out on these seven cases over \$150 actual expenses, and they are quite typical of many."

"And in the dispensaries it is much worse?" suggested the President.

"Very much worse. A great many impose upon us all the while."

"Well, what are we going to do about it?" asked a manager who seldom complained of anything.

"Accident cases cannot be turned away without treatment," said the Superintendent. "But we can furnish a blank and insist upon its being filled up. If there is no response, we can make our own inquiry and act accordingly. We can pursue the same course with regard to sick people, for whom application is made. The attending physician, or some one, must answer the questions put, and if unfairness is apparent, a bill can be rendered and payment insisted upon."

"That's fair, I think," observed the President. "But our current expenses will be increased through making these inquiries."

"Not very much," promised the Superintend-



ent. "We will systematize the work in all departments."

"But the line must never be drawn against the deserving who are really helpless," declared Mr. Brelsford.

"Certainly not, and it will not be, under my direction. On the contrary, saving where we may save, will enable us to do more for those in distress than we do now. The fact is, the people who are bereft of resources are the most reluctant to apply for aid. They often delay seeking it, especially in the sick wards, or even in the dispensary, until it is too late. Then there is nothing more pathetic than the daily inquiry of our information bureau. I often wonder how the telephone operators at that desk get through their trying tasks. Here is a transcript I made during one of the day girl's busy hours yesterday, and they are all the same, from morning till night and until midnight. They are furnished with the ward records, you know, every day, so they can answer directly. They have no end of trouble with people who can only say a word, or two of the English language, and many others get excited and can scarcely talk, or even hear intelligently. The people go to the nearest paying 'phone office and make their inquiries; we cannot



have them crowding upon us here all the while. This is the way the inquiries run:

"How is my husband, Joseph Gollatta, to-day?"

"Not so well."

"What does the Doctor say?"

"That is what he says."

"And isn't he going to get well?"

"We hope so."

"Is that St. Ann's?" a childish voice now.

"Yes."

"How's my papa?"

"Name, please?"

"Oh! 'scuse me. Mr. Henry Smith."

"He is a little better."

"I'm so glad! Give him my love, won't you, and a kiss, too, for Margie."

"How's Jennie Dixon?"

"Sorry to tell you, she died at four."

A great cry of distress at the other end of the 'phone.

"Please tell me, mam, how my wife, Mrs. O'Reilly is?"

"Not any better. Hardly as well as yesterday."

"Dear! Dear! May the blessed —"

"Mrs. Marty would like to hear from her husband."



"He was operated upon to-day and is very low."

"Will he get through it, do you think?"

"Joseph Doran, miss, how is he?"

"The boy is doing well. The Doctor thinks he will recover."

A mother's cry of joy is heard.

"Is my sister any better, Mary Dorsey?"

"Not any better."

"Is she worse?"

"Yes, she is much worse—she can hardly live through the day."

"Can I see her?" in piteous tones.

"Yes, if you hurry."

"How is my little boy, Johnny Wilson? He was run over by the trolley, you know."

"Johnnie's sufferings are all over, Mrs. Wilson."

A wail of anguish is heard.

"Is my mother any better, Mrs. Wood?"

"Yes, much better. You can see her to-morrow, during the morning hours."

"Oh, thank you, thank you! Please tell her I'll be up."

"Has James Williams survived the operation?"

"Yes, but he is very low."

"Will he get over it?"



"They cannot tell yet."

"Is Tommie Dix doing well now? I hope so. I'm his mother."

"Not so well, Mrs. Dix."

"Is he worse, mam? Do tell me the truth!"

"Yes, Mrs. Dix. He is very low."

Another heart-breaking cry.

"How long could any of you stand that, gentlemen?" asked the Superintendent, in a broken voice.

"It would drive me mad in about one day," said the veteran President of St. Ann's, wiping his eyes. "After all, Mr. Banes, if we are taken advantage of by a few thoughtless and ignorant people, think of the world of good we are doing! What would become of these poor creatures, so many of them, too, utterly unable to help themselves, if St. Ann's did not stand by, in these awful hours of trial. God bless St. Ann's! God bless these poor, sorrowing, suffering souls; and especially those of whom we have just heard. Oh! we won't complain any more—at present! My heart is very sad, though I knew it all before and I've heard it and witnessed it all, as a member of this board for so many years. But I never can get used to it. My heart bleeds in sympathy with theirs!" And bending beneath the weight of



human woe, Francis Brelsford slowly passed out.

“And there we are!” sighed the practical and wearied Superintendent. “That’s the way it always is. And so it must go on. But perhaps Mr. Brelsford is right; better help a dozen unworthy than turn away one who is needy and really deserving. But St. Ann’s is doing her share in caring for the sick and suffering in this great city.”



## CHAPTER XXIII.

### A MODERN PLAGUE—THE REMEDY.

St. Ann's Hospital is noted for its success in the treatment of that dreaded malady of our time, typhoid fever. Over five hundred cases a year come to its capacious and well ordered wards, where skillful physicians and faithful nurses render an account of their high stewardship second to no great hospital in the country. The proportion of cures approximates ninety per cent. At times there is earnest discussion here, as amongst men of medical science everywhere, over this modern plague. To a leading editor, who had called to visit a friend sick with the fever, Dr. Clarke vigorously declared:

"I think it about time the people of this country understood that every case of typhoid fever is a



disgrace to our civilization; that in every instance somebody is directly or indirectly responsible and is to be censured; that this hateful and destroying disease is preventable; that it is spread through families and communities by foulness; that corrupted water and milk supply, as well as tainted solid food, brings suffering and mourning to multitudes, burdening our hospitals and causing infinite misery in countless homes."

"The filtration system being so generally adopted, ought to relieve us, don't you think?" asked the editor, who had been vigorously supporting this idea in his paper.

"Only partly so. This remedy is not wholly effective. There is but one thing that kills the typhoid germ and that is heat, and it is time all the people knew it. Our medical societies should come out into the open and say authoritatively what their well informed members all know and say amongst themselves, namely, that all surface water in this populous country used by our cities and towns, and a vast amount used by rural families from wells, is unfit for use."

"Why cannot the people protect themselves? The remedy seems very simple and easily applied."

"Just so. They can and should protect them-



selves. Ordinarily the fault lies with the community in which the disease occurs, though many victims of this perilous disorder imbibe its germs when away from home, often while sojourning in the country, or at ill-managed health resorts, visiting cities on business, etc. It has been proven beyond all possible doubt that the poison is taken in food or drink. Epidemics have repeatedly been traced to the water or milk supply, the latter being adulterated with foul water. Solid foods may also be infected in the same way. In addition to thorough watchfulness, safety can only be found through the sterilizing of suspected milk and the boiling of every drop of drinking water, in town and country. In the rural districts thousands of cases of typhoid occur every year, through polluted wells, though the water is clear and sparkling and seemingly absolutely pure. The growth of population and consequent increasing pollution of streams make it needful that all surface water particularly should be boiled, all the year around. Then it should be cooled through outward contact with ice only; the effect of sterilizing is often neutralized by the use of impure ice. Freezing only preserves the typhoid germ; it does not kill it. This important fact should always be borne in mind."



"It seems to me, Doctor, the press ought to be better informed upon this vital subject than it appears to be."

"The newspapers allow themselves to be led astray. What we need is a tremendous campaign of popular education. As I have said, our medical associations must take the lead. In ten years typhoid fever might practically be wiped out, if the American people would go to school a little while and believe and practice every day and all the time, what they are taught. There are over 5,000 cases of fever in this city every year; over 25,000 in the state. There should not be one. You newspaper men, in town and country, should be up and doing. Save the people, save yourselves, from this destroying scourge of our time."



## CHAPTER XXIV.

### FACING A NEW PERIL,—SELF SACRIFICE.

As Dr. Clarke feared, the nerve reaction, or reprostration, so to speak, threw Robert Woodley down hard. He seemed to lose all the strength he had gained during his fortnight's happy recreation at home. The village doctor became quite alarmed and begged Claire to ask Dr. Clarke to run up and see the patient. He did so and was much depressed at the prospect, especially as it involved the continued loss of Claire to St. Ann's, where she was greatly needed. But she would not think of leaving her present charge and their professional mutual friend said she must remain with him for the present. Two weeks more elapsed before Mr. Woodley was able to be up and about with reasonable comfort. The weather



was now quite cool and he felt his strength returning.

"I can spare you now, Claire," he said, "though it will be hard to let you go. But I know there are others needing your tender ministrations more than I do. I only hope you will not fall a victim of too great devotion to duty. You must remember, little girl," holding her close to him, as they stood on the porch in the twilight, "you have your limitations as well as I have mine. May Heaven keep you in safety, always!" He bent over her in silence.

"Robert," she said softly, "you stood on the river bank; remember your dream. And I was permitted to come to you—twice. If I need you I know you will come to me, too," throwing her arms around his neck.

"Around the world, my dear, loving Claire, would I hasten, if needful, to be by your side. To meet and endure danger or suffering for your sake, would be sweet; would be an inspiration!" Little did either think how sadly prophetic the words of this sacred covenant were!

Claire was met with open arms by Miss Laine. "I'm so glad you've come back to us, my dear," she said, embracing her again and again. "I've



something sweet to tell you, by-and-by," she whispered.

"That will add to my happiness, indeed, very, very much," replied Claire.

The juniors were rejoiced, and every one else, to see Miss Randolph. Big Jim came boldly forward to welcome "the lost lamb of the flock," as he gallantly observed, bowing and blushing like a big school boy. "Sure Miss and the sun will be shining again now in old St. Ann's, with your smiling face to greet us every day. And how is Mr. Woodley?" he asked.

"Doing nicely, James. I thank you very much for your kind words." He seized her satchel and took it to her room, where she spent a few minutes in private devotion. Never before had she felt so much the need of divine strength.

"There is another great trial ahead," she said to herself. "I cannot see my way! I can only pray for guidance and help—and for mother!" The tears came in spite of every effort. She made a hasty tour of the wards and prepared for duty that night. Dr. Clarke and Miss Laine had arranged to give her day work soon. "She has had her share of this midnight tramping," said the Doctor, and the Directress fully agreed with him. Claire was to have full charge of the



children's wards, and she was delighted to learn this. She assumed her new duties the following week.

"I love these little ones so," she said to Dr. Marvin, as he passed through. "I shall be very happy to be here."

"And you bring happiness wherever you appear," was the hearty reply. "These tots are to be congratulated. But some of them are very sick, and I had quite a scare yesterday. I thought we had a case of scarlet fever; but I guess I was mistaken; I hope so. We now have an isolated ward, you know, so if we keep a sharp lookout we can't have much trouble."

"I'm sure I will be diligent, for their sakes," said Claire. Then she trembled, just a little. Was this the shadow that had been so strangely encompassing her? She lifted her heart in silent prayer.

"This is the child," said the Doctor, as they stopped before a restless little patient. "Please watch her closely. I'll be in about four o'clock. I'm extremely anxious. The fever seems to be coming again," laying his hand upon the little girl's forehead and then taking her wrist. "Pulse is too wild," he said.

By nightfall the Doctor's fears were confirmed,



and the patient was at once removed to a little room, across the high bridge, set apart for such contagious cases.

"I will go with her myself, if Miss Laine will permit me," said Claire to the Doctor.

"That is hardly needful, nor wise, I think," he replied. "One of the juniors can take care of a single case. We need you here."

"But they will all be afraid, and I am not," and her white face showed how she was struggling to control herself. Miss Laine did object, strenuously, but the juniors also. With one accord they begged to be excused, inquiry revealing the fact that none was immune.

"Please let me go," urged Claire. "No harm will come to me."

"You dear, brave, good girl!" said Miss Laine, impulsively. "God bless and keep you!" She did not see her friend again for more than five weeks, but there was never an hour when she was not thinking of her and praying for her. The bond of a very sweet friendship was uniting these two young hearts.

It was a short but desperate battle, the case of this golden haired little motherless child, who succumbed to the disease within four days. Just before the end, another victim was brought in



from the children's ward, and still others were showing signs of infection. Every possible precaution was taken, but it was evident the poisonous germs had been scattered in some way. At the end of the week, Claire had three very sick patients, with one helper, a brave-hearted colored charwoman, who had volunteered to stay with her, and whose presence was a great comfort to the already wearied nurse, who had hardly slept six hours in as many nights. Her fortitude was wonderful.

"I hope we are through the worst of it, Miss Randolph," said Dr. Marvin, a few days later. The little patients were not so seriously attacked as the first victim and were all doing well. Claire rested quite often, in an adjoining room, while "Mammy Jane" looked after "dese kids," as she called them. "You go lie down, chile," she would often say. "You must get all de sleep you can, to make up for los' time."



## CHAPTER XXV.

### INTO THE VALLEY—ANOTHER HEROINE.

Claire was now sleeping too much. As her little wards came up out of the valley of danger, she went down into it. Dr. Marvin looked at her flushed face when he came in and exclaimed in alarm:

“You are ill, Miss Randolph! You must go to bed, at once. Don’t be frightened,” as his hand rested affectionately upon her forehead. “We will take care of you,” with tremendous emphasis on the pronoun. He helped Mammy Jane to put the nurse to bed. He gave her medicine and sat beside her for a half hour, talking cheerfully. He did not tell her what she had already divined for herself. He said she had taken cold, was



"worn out," nervous and all that, and would soon be about again. After he had gone, saying he would be in again in a little while, the sick girl crept out of bed and knelt on the bare floor. She was comforted anew and smiled at Mammy Jane's queer talk, as she fussed about, tucking in the coverlet and smoothing her pillows.

"You dear chile," said the sympathizing old helper, "just see what I'se got to do now! If you get real down sick, I'll never forgive myself. It's all my fault anyway! Ought to kept you in bed moah. Then you wouldn't a got this awful cold. 'Spect the Doctah blames me, too."

"No, no, mammy," said Claire; "you have been so good to me and the children. I don't know what I would have done without you. I'll be better to-morrow, I hope."

"Yes, yes, chile. We all hope so. Now I'll go and get dem noisy young 'uns quiet," as they romped in the other room.

When Dr. Marvin returned, he found Claire's temperature was reaching the danger point. He communicated with Dr. Clarke and Miss Laine, through the house 'phone.

"Miss Randolph is very ill," he said, "and we must have some one else here at once."



"What shall we do, Doctor?" said the head nurse. "The girls are demoralized already." Three of the seniors were out of immediate reach, on belated vacations. Miss Barnes was imperatively needed as Claire's substitute in charge of the children's wards. Others were likewise at important posts of duty.

"We must find some one quickly," said Dr. Clarke. "Poor Woodley! I must send him word, must keep my promise."

Fear is contagious, amongst ordinarily strong men. One of the charging lines at Fredericksburg was startled by rattling teeth and quaking legs. Hearts were true, but human nature weak. So it was here, at this moment. St. Ann's corps of nurses was the equal in courage and self sacrifice of any hospital staff in the city. That very day one of the white faced group now standing before Miss Laine had calmly eased the pain of a dying man. Two others assisted the surgeons in a perilous operation upon a delicate woman, now hovering in the shadow. Two others had held a convulsive child and another stood calmly at her post while a crushed limb was removed. No one had faltered. They were faithful and true. But St. Ann's had been in a



tremor of excitement over the fever for several days. An exaggerated account of the epidemic had appeared the evening before, in one of the papers, which said: "Miss Randolph, one of the senior nurses, has been stricken with the disease and lies in a serious condition."

"Girls," said Miss Laine, "our dear friend, Miss Randolph, is ill; we hope not seriously so. Some one must go to her. I am loath to command any of you, in such a case. You know what it may mean, as none of you is immune, I understand. I must have a volunteer, or go myself, and I have never had it, either." She looked anxiously at the little company, while Dr. Clarke stood silently by.

"I will go, Miss Laine," said Miss Cook, almost in a whisper, as she stepped forward. The Doctor smiled approvingly.

"I knew we should find another heroine—you are all heroines—pardon me," and he bowed low.

"Are you not afraid?" queried Miss Laine.

"Yes," was the frank answer, in clear and firm tones. "I am afraid. But that is no reason for not going—when I am needed."

"Bravo Amy! Bravo Amy!" cried the others, as they kissed her good-bye and wished her well.



The fragile, plain faced young woman awaited instructions.

"You know in whom to trust, Miss Cook," said Miss Laine. "Communicate with me constantly." Then turning to the 'phone, she called:

"Miss Cook is coming, Dr. Marvin."

"Just the one I wanted. Tell her so!" was the quick reply.

Amy smiled gratefully as the kindly message was repeated to her. She went to her room, got needful clothing, and in a few minutes stood on the "Bridge of sighs," as the nurses called the overhead passage way to the isolated ward. She paused and looked down at the court yard. Big Jim was passing. He stopped, took off his cap and waved her adieu. He knew what it all meant, having witnessed the scene from the door of the head nurse's office, as he waited with a message. With bowed head he breathed a prayer for the brave girl's safety.

"I'm glad they ain't all cowards, Miss," he said to Miss Laine, as he again passed her door, a moment later. Placing her fingers upon her lips and shaking her head, the head nurse admonished him he must not speak that way.

"I beg their pardon, Miss, and yours, too," he said humbly. "But if I can be of any use to



that sick angel up there, I hope ye will command me."

"Thank you, James. I'll let you know," and Miss Laine gave him one of her sweetest smiles.

"I'd be scolded fifty times to get one like that again," he said, as he bowed himself away.



## CHAPTER XXVI.

### FAITHFUL IN PERIL.

When Robert Woodley picked up the Birmingham Gazette, one morning early in October, the first thing he saw was a sensational account of the fever at St. Ann's.

"Oh, mother!" he cried. "See this!" and in a trembling voice he read the account of Claire's illness. "What will I do, mother?" he asked. Dr. Clarke promised to let me know if anything happened. I'll telegraph at once for the truth." At that moment a boy entered the gate. The message he brought read:

"Miss Randolph is ill, but we hope not seriously so. Will keep you advised."

Robert's eyes never closed in sleep that night. A dozen times he fell upon his knees and



besought help. But he must see Claire. Yet, he would not be admitted if he went to Birmingham. The rules would not permit. It was a time of renewed mental suffering; of intense anxiety.

"You must not worry so, Robert," said his mother, herself sorrowful beyond measure. She had spent the night with Mrs. Randolph, trying to comfort her.

When that portion of the service was read, on Sunday, in St. David's, reciting the beautiful pleading prayer for the sick, the minister's voice sank into a sob and the whole congregation was melted in sympathy. The responsive "amen!" betrayed the emotion of every heart. Uncle John Williams could not conceal open manifestation of his grief.

In her weakened state, worn out by watching and nursing, the fever took violent hold of Claire. Dr. Clarke broke through the rules and visited her twice every day, with Dr. Marvin. His anxiety was pitiful. To his associate, on Monday afternoon, he said:

"I promised to keep Mr. Woodley advised. He ought to see her, delirious as she is. He may never see her again, if we don't send word soon.



What shall I do?" And the tears streamed down his manly face.

"Let him come," was the sympathetic answer, "and stay right here. He will be glad to. He can occupy that other little room. If we do not, and anything happens, he will never forgive us, poor fellow! Poor little girl! I'll never forgive myself!" It had been a long time since this gray haired, stern visaged hospital "regular" had been seen to reveal emotion like this. He was St. Ann's old "stand-by." He preferred hospital work to private practice. His admiration of Miss Randolph he made no effort at any time to conceal. He had never married. He had never known the love of womankind, in the ordinary sense. Now he felt as though the earth was about to open and swallow up his chief joy in life.

"We must save her, Doctor!" he said in great earnestness. "We will save her! God help us! Send for Woodley, right away!"

"Yes, mother, I must go," said the young minister, when he read Dr. Clarke's telegram, about four o'clock. At seven he was sitting beside Claire's cot, holding her fevered hand and bathing her head. The physicians did not expect her to



survive the night. They had done their duty and must leave the rest with the All Wise giver of life, who could renew and strengthen the slender and vibrating thread of life. Neither went to bed, and each visited the sick room several times. Robert sat at his post, with Miss Cook in attendance also, and faithful old black Mammy Jane refused to leave the room. Her tender and loving offices were continuous as she moved about as needed. Big Jim was up at break of day and stopped Dr. Clarke as he came out of the corridor.

"I've been praying to the blessed Mary all night, I have," he said, rubbing his red eyes.

The nurses, as they came on duty in the morning, anxiously asked for news from the fever ward. As Dr. Marvin came down to an early breakfast he met Miss Laine, who eagerly sought information. She had gone to bed, at one o'clock, never expecting to see her dear friend again. She had scarcely slept, and several times determined to break the rules and go to the sick room.

"I think the crisis is passing," said Dr. Marvin. "She is very, very ill. But her strength is wonderful, almost miraculous. If she lives through the day and night I shall expect her to recover."



Miss Laine was overjoyed, and quickly passed the news to every part of the great institution. There was not a nurse, charwoman, laundress, messenger boy, orderly or any employe who did not rejoice in hope. Patients who had learned of the incident also were glad. The little children whom Miss Randolph had left three weeks before, who yet remained, clapped their hands when told the "good news." The spirit of loving gratitude and faith pervaded the whole great house of mercy. Dr. Clarke's belief and hope were shared by his associates, as they came to clinic. He excused himself for the day, resting in his room, going to the upper ward a round about way several times. He sent a hopeful message to Uncle John Williams for Mother Randolph and Mother Woodley and patiently awaited the issue.

As night came on the patient was perceptibly improved. She was very quiet and seemed to be gaining strength. Robert had scarcely left his post. He was persuaded to lie down, and in his exhaustion he slept until the sun came streaming into his little room. He had not undressed, and came quickly into the sick room, ashamed to think of what he had done.

"It's all right, Mr. Woodley," said Miss Cook, with a smile. "She is ever so much better."



"The Lord be praised!" was his fervent and reverent exclamation. "Please tell them to send word to mother and to her mother."

When he had made his toilet and partaken of a light breakfast which Miss Cook had sent to his room, the happy minister was permitted to come in and take her place, a little while. Claire was sleeping like an infant.

"Will she know me to-day?" he whispered.

"Oh, yes; she was quite rational during the night. But you must be very quiet."

He sat down, with his head in his hands, in a spirit of profound gratitude, waiting in patient hopefulness. It was two days before the sick girl was out of danger. No complications appeared. Her throat escaped without severe ulceration and every vital organ seemed to be unimpaired. Convalescence would be slow, but steady and sure. Robert's happiness increased every hour, as he sat quietly by the bedside, all day long, taking his turn also at night with Miss Cook.

On Monday morning a new alarm was sounded in the children's ward. It was proposed, after thorough disinfection and purification, and in spotless garments, to discharge three children



remaining in the fever ward, who had only been slightly ill, and no further trouble was feared. Suddenly another patient was discovered, a beautiful, brown eyed little fellow, fatherless, whose mother had brought him to the hospital to be treated for a stubborn inward ailment. He was quite recovered when stricken down by the fever, almost without an hour's warning, the disease manifesting itself in the night. The child in the adjoining cot was also very restless and before the day was over she, too, a pretty little girl of only six years, was removed to the isolated ward. Both cases developed with alarming rapidity. Miss Cook bravely prepared for the ordeal, and Mammy Jane, raising her fat hands, in dismay, said:

"Now we's in fo' moah of it! Bless you, my chile, I'll stay with you. They couldn't drive me away now, and Marse Woodley, he can take care of de angel," referring to Claire.

But "Marse Woodley" did not propose to be shut out of the scene of new peril and duty. "You must let me help, what I can, please," he said, when the physician looked in at Claire that afternoon. "She can spare me now, a little," with an affectionate glance.



"Yes, Doctor," was the approving suggestion. "I need but little attention. I'm so sorry for Miss Cook, and Mr. Woodley can relieve her greatly. He loves children and will do all he can. He is not afraid. Are you, dear?" reaching out her hand.

"No! No! I would be ashamed to be afraid to trust after all that has been done for us. I must help to save those two little ones, and then no other nurse need come into the ward."

The doctor looked at him admiringly. "I shall appreciate your valuable services, Mr. Woodley," he said, "and the recording angel will set down another beautiful chapter to your credit. It all counts, by and by, you know."

"And it will be a big book that tells the story of your devotion to suffering humanity," was the earnest tribute of the unselfish young minister to this faithful servant of the sick.

During the next six days Robert Woodley never took off his outer garments, and he scarcely slept at all. The two children required constant attention. He nursed them like babies and treated their inflamed ulcerated throats with tender skill. Never once did he even think of his own danger, for he had escaped the fever in childhood. His



throat was his one weak spot, as he told the doctor after the little patients recovered.

"Had I known that I should have guarded you," said the physician.

"I didn't want you to know it. One knew it who is mighty to save and strong to deliver," was the reverent reply.

"Yes, and I wish I could always have your faith," said Dr. Marvin.

Some of the more cynical friends of Robert Woodley had thought him more or less of a weakling. They said he was too sympathetic, too emotional. He often made them feel "all broken up" when he preached on tender themes. He sometimes made them cry, and they resented this unintended revelation of their feelings. It was not "good form." They wanted to appear a bit "tough," or at least firmly self controlled. One half-educated upstart even said the young minister was a "molly-coddle." When this same person got into an accidental encounter with a man of his size, he "flunked" on the spot, making a pitiable exhibition of his real self, as that kind generally do. Men—even strong men—sometimes forget the solid truth that as the greatest truths are the simplest, so are the greatest men; that



the bravest and the strongest are the gentlest, the tenderest, the most loving and lovable.

"Mr. Woodley is as brave and true as he is tender hearted," was Dr. Marvin's verdict, a sentiment which every one who knew him heartily endorsed.



## CHAPTER XXVII.

### BROWNY'S HAPPY DAY—HOME AGAIN.

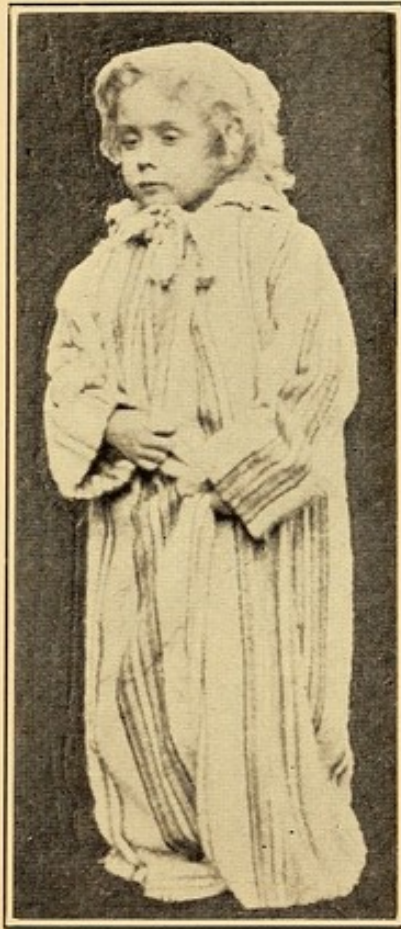
The young minister had been in the hospital nearly three weeks, "and now we will have to keep you here about two weeks longer," said Dr. Clarke.

"All right," was the cheery answer. "I'll stay all winter, if any more of these little folks need me," as he sat, with "brown eyes," as he called him, on his lap. "You don't want me to go, do you, Brownny?" hugging the child.

"No, thir," was the lisping and loving reply. "Not till my movir tums."

"Well, you shall see your dear mamma very soon now," promised the Doctor, patting his cheek, not so red now as it was during the days just past.





BROWNY READY FOR BED.







"Will she be here to-day?" was the eager question.

"I'll see. Nurse," he continued, "I'm going to let Mrs. Dixon come up to the bridge to-day and see Brownie at the window, just a little bit. She mustn't come in yet."

The rejoicing mother appeared on the bridge a little later and Mr. Woodley held the happy little fellow up in his arms, close to the window.

"Dere's mamma! Dere's mamma!" he cried, clapping his white, thin hands and throwing her a whole lot of kisses. She nodded and smiled back at him, through her tears of joy and called to him to be a good boy and she would see him again soon. The girl baby's mother was allowed the same privilege, when she came to make her daily inquiry.

Everything progressed happily, and in a few days, after thorough purification, all the children were discharged and Mr. Woodley began to take outdoor exercise, first on the bridge and later on the roof garden, in the evening, when no one else was there. Mammy Jane begged to stay till the very last.

"Somefin' might happen to dis here deah chile, yon know, if Mamma wasn't here," she said, and they humored her, only too gladly. When Claire



made her first appearance on the bridge, leaning on the arm of Mr. Woodley, the inmates of the main children's ward, who were able to be up, set up a shout of joy. Some had come in during her illness, but all had heard about her, and they all wanted to send her greeting. When at last, the day she went away, she walked through the ward, every little hand was outstretched and many were the expressions of endearment.

Mr. Woodley had only one request to make. When he was told he might go the following day, he said to Dr. Clarke:

"I must take Claire with me. May I?"

"Why, certainly!" was the hearty reply. "Do you think I would let you go without her, my boy?"

"I'm so glad and thankful!" he said. Claire looked the joy that she felt.

"I'm going to put on a sub this time. I'm going to ask Dr. Marvin to go with you."

"Oh, that will be fine!" cried the happy girl. "I had hoped—." The beaming doctor knew what she meant. "But Dr. Marvin has been so good and kind, and mother will be so glad to see him."

"And my mother, too, sis. Don't forget her," put in Robert, at which sally they all laughed.

Big Jim stood at the door when the little party



came out, the next morning. "Good-bye, Miss," he said. "We're glad you are able to go, but sure we won't be happy till ye come again."

Claire pressed his hand warmly and gave him a smile that he said would last till she came back. Miss Laine took loving leave and expressed her joy and good wishes most sincerely. Miss Cook also, who had promised to visit "Woodlands" some time in the near future.

Dr. Marvin was like a boy again. He jumped about, doing everything for Claire with his own hands. Helping her in the carriage, he gently placed another wrap around her shoulders and in the car took the seat beside her. Robert looked on delightedly. He could well afford to surrender Claire, for this hour, to the man who had been so zealous and faithful first in his care and later so devoted to her.

It was a happy ride. Uncle John Williams was at the station, in response to Dr. Clarke's telegram, with his "coach and six," his big carryall. At the rectory there was a joyful reunion of mother and son, and then the Doctor and Claire were taken up to "Woodlands," where Mother Randolph received her dear child as one returned from beyond the dark river. Dr. Marvin remained at the mansion two days. He needed a bit of rest



and fresh air as much as anybody, and immensely enjoyed himself, looking after Claire constantly. But he must return to his post. St. Ann's, without this veteran servant of the sick, was not quite itself.



## CHAPTER XXVIII.

### JOYOUS DAYS AT HARLEY.

When Claire wandered down the hill to the rectory, several mornings after her arrival home, she went out to the little red barn and opening the door called:

“Larry!”

At the sound of her voice, the good old horse raised his ears, looked around, stamped his foot and talked, in his own way, at a great rate. Entering his stall, Claire put her arms around his neck, saying:

“Dear old Larry! Now you’ve got to tote me around some more.” He rubbed his nose against her face, tugging at his halter, and when she left him looked around eagerly, as though expecting the young master and saying:



"Why don't you hitch me up?" He was soon standing quite impatiently at the front gate, and when Claire took the reins he started off up the road with every evidence of intense satisfaction. He was ready to play his part again with all his strength.

The long rides in the fresh, crisp, December air, well wrapped up, brought the roses out again, and soon the happy girl looked like herself once more. Mr. Woodley, too, was refreshed and strengthened. His parish work was greatly behind, so he combined pleasure, health-seeking and church visiting. It seemed quite natural to have Claire with him. They often stopped for dinner, on the way, for the membership of St. David's was scattered over five or six miles of the country side. The people were closer to him than ever. On every fair Sunday the church was filled and his labors were bearing much fruit.

During her convalescence Claire had the frequent companionship of Dollie Wheeler. The Superintendent's daughter had almost taken her place at "Woodlands" as the comforter of the lonely mother. Her invariable brightness made her presence a constant joy. Many times she would stay over night and Mrs. Randolph had seriously thought of asking her father to let her



live there for a season. She would play and sing and talk so cheerfully, the old house was a far happier place when she was about.

One day Claire and Dollie drove away together, leaving Mr. Woodley with some important work on hand. It was a delightful ride for both.

"Does Dr. Brelsford write to you often, Dollie?" asked Claire.

"Yes, every week. And just the nicest letters! Oh, he's lovely!"

"How often does he come to see you?"

"Hasn't been here for three weeks now, because he is very busy, taking care of another doctor's practice during his illness."

"Has anything happened?"

"N-o—not—yet. Father told me he had asked permission to propose when he felt he could afford to marry. Wasn't that odd? But I think he is awful slow," with a pretty little pout.

"But that is sensible, is it not?" asked her friend.

"I suppose so," with a big sigh.

"He loves you all the same?"

"Well—he—has—never told me so. That is,—"

"In words, you mean, Dollie?"

"Why, of course."



"But in other ways he has told you?"

"Yes, indeed! He stole a kiss one night and then he spoiled it all by begging my pardon and saying he would not do it again! Wasn't that silly!" and her merry laugh echoed through the woods.

"It was perfectly proper, I'm sure."

"Oh, pshaw! Didn't Rob ever kiss you?"

"Not till we were engaged."

"Dear me! Go 'long there, Larry!" and she whipped up the old horse, who was lazily listening to this conversation and evidently much astonished to be "cut" that way. He looked around as though greatly grieved.

"Don't take it out of poor Larry!" cried Claire, laughing. "He was enjoying your little story as much as I am."

Dollie laughed and clapped her dimpled hands, singing softly:

"I know that he loves me,

"My heart tells me so."

"What's that?" demanded Claire eagerly.

"Oh, I made that up myself."

"It's very pretty, Dollie, and true, too."

"I know it is! Say, Claire; if he don't say something soon, I'll propose to him! This is leap year, you know?"



"Then you will lose him sure," was the quick reply.

"Why?"

"Because Edward Brelsford is a very sensible young man, and don't like girls who are—are— Well, he likes old-fashioned girls, Dollie, like you and me," and Claire laughed and looked out of the side of the phaeton to hide her own blushes.

It was a very sweet little talk these girls had. Their young hearts were united by a bond of sympathy that never would be broken.

At the end of two weeks Claire felt strong enough to return to the hospital.

"I know I am needed," she said to her mother. "I'm feeling real strong again, and I can take work quite easily for a time. Miss Laine is so kind and considerate and every one so good to me. I'll be home for Christmas."

"And our loving hearts will be with you all the while," said the affectionate mother.

Robert Woodley bowed to the inevitable. After the light went out again—that was the way he always felt about it—he groped in darkness for a while. He could not see the way out. But he would hope. Perhaps the turn in the lane might not be so very far ahead, after all. It was



not so hard to bear now, this separation from Claire, because loving messages passed every week. He would bear it all, as well as he could. The Bishop was looking out for him, and although he did not know it, Dr. Clarke and President Brelsford also.

The thanksgiving service at St. David's was two weeks later than the ordinary, and partook of the nature of a harvest home. The offering for the day was for St. Ann's, and the Rector quite appropriately devoted part of his sermon, after reading the Bishop's appeal, to a most interesting account of the work of the hospital, especially in behalf of the poor.

"This great house of refuge for the sick and injured," he said, "never carried such a burden as during the past year. What the people in its vicinity would do without it I do not know. It is a singular and most suggestive fact, that only about twenty per cent. of its beneficiaries belong to our own communion. The poor in the different denominations and of every creed and race, come to its wide open doors and they are never turned away while a single empty cot remains. Located in the centre of a great manufacturing district, with over four hundred factories within a radius of one mile, injured men, women and



children are constantly brought in, suffering from all manner of injuries, as well as sickness. The accident cases number over eight thousand a year. Think of what that means! The bed patients, over three thousand. In the dispensaries, upwards of twenty thousand are ministered to. Think of the inestimable amount of good thus accomplished. Think of the suffering assuaged, the lives saved. Then, all the year around, with the beautiful chapel as the centre of work, religious activities of St. Ann's mark it as a house of prayer, as well as a house of mercy. Its chaplain consoles the sick and injured and ministers to the afflicted in every way. Our beloved Bishop may well appeal to our unselfish generosity."

The offering amounted to nearly three hundred dollars, a large contribution for a country parish, that had lost its only rich member a year before. The people took this means of expressing their sympathy with the unfortunate and their gratitude for what had been so generously done for their own beloved pastor.



## CHAPTER XXIX.

### MERCIFUL CARE OF LITTLE ONES.

Miss Randolph was warmly welcomed when she returned to duty. "We will try and take better care of you this time," said Miss Laine. "I have arranged for sufficient help so that you will not be overburdened again."

"I'm sure you did everything possible for me," the assistant replied, "and I mean to show my gratitude by more faithful and efficient service than ever."

"And that would be simply impossible," observed Dr. Clarke, who had followed Claire into Miss Laine's room, to extend a hearty greeting, and again he held her ungloved hand in his, while he gazed into her blue eyes until her temples



burned. Her embarrassment was becoming painful.

"There is only one thing needful to make me perfectly happy," she said, quickly and gaily, throwing off the spell; "and that I'm going to wish for with all my heart," looking affectionately at Miss Laine and then slyly at the Doctor.

"Hope it will come to pass," said he, quickly retreating, with an earnest, searching glance into the inquiring eyes of the head nurse.

"My dear," said Claire, turning to the blushing Directress, "you said when I came back the last time, you had something sweet to tell me. I'm just dying to know what it is—right now!"

"Guess you will have to wait a little while longer," was the embarrassed reply, turning to a junior who had come in and giving some instructions.

"What shall the harvest be?" thought Claire, as she went to her room, unpacked her grip, put on her uniform and prepared for duty.

There were now three children's wards, including the isolated ward. This branch of work at St. Ann's had grown rapidly. Over five hundred patients, under sixteen years of age, had been cared for the previous year. The responsibility of over-seeing all this was not a light thing. The



ever present possibility of a repetition of the outbreak of contagious diseases made this post one of continual and unusual care. Many little patients required surgical skill. There was a special operating room for them on the third floor. The anxiety of parents was a trying thing to deal with. To permit uncontrolled visitation was impossible, and it was not an easy task always to judge accurately the proper time. Denial meant tearful protest, and the knowledge of aching hearts added to the daily burden borne by the nurse in charge, who must unite the loving watchfulness of a mother to that of professional care-taker. Then these children, coming from humble homes, many of them, must be trained to habits of obedience and taught the fundamental laws of health. Their restlessness must be controlled, their spirits kept up, all their manifold wants looked after. Claire took a personal interest in every child committed to her care. She remembered its name and had something pleasant to say to each one. Often she would have a full dozen little convalescents around her, listening to their childish chatter and numberless wishes. She visited every cot before retiring for the night, and made the round again immediately upon rising. If there was a very



sick patient, she would make special provision for its care through the night.

In Birmingham there are now children's wards in nearly every one of the thirty hospitals, and five children's hospitals. One of the latter has been in existence over fifty years, within that long period caring for over 16,000 patients in its wards and ministering to nearly 200,000 in its dispensary, at an aggregate expense of nearly \$700,000. The originator and principal founder of this hospital was a leading physician, whose greatest pleasure was to mingle with the grateful little beneficiaries every day. They would hail his coming with cries of delight, would gather about him on the roof garden and on the lawn, at the country branch, in summer time. A tablet to his memory, erected by the nursing staff, now adorns the hallway of the hospital.

Two other children's hospitals in Birmingham, located where the poor abide in great numbers, and where scores of thousands of work people have their homes, are rendering blessed service to infantile and youthful humanity. In the one over five hundred ward patients are treated every year, and in their own homes more than twice as many are cared for. In the dispensary 8,000 are ministered to, all of this work, practically, free.



In the other, in twenty-eight years of its beneficent existence, nearly 6,000 children have been treated in the house and over 116,000 in the dispensary. During the sickly heated term scores of very sick babies are brought to its door. Then it sends many little convalescents to the seashore and the country, to get a new grip on life. Thousands of anxious and worn out mothers and grateful fathers will ever remember these burden bearing institutions, so beautifully illustrating, at all times, the spirit of the good old saint, Christopher, carrying in their loving arms helpless little children.

Claire Randolph truly felt that she was doing work in the vineyard of humanity when she was toiling every day, and often far into the night, caring for the sick and injured children of the worthy poor of the St. Ann's district.



## CHAPTER XXX.

### THE MISSION OF NURSEHOOD.

The monthly meetings of the Birmingham Civic Club are occasions of great interest to many thoughtful men and women. The November assemblage was a sort of general reunion, after the summer scattering to seaside and mountain and foreign lands. The formal proceedings concluded, the company broke into little groups of congenial spirits, discussing various things. Problems of the times were threshed out vigorously. In one corner of the library, quite by chance, there met President Brelsford, Superintendent Banes and Dr. Clarke, of St. Ann's Hospital; Dr. Janet Wheeler, Superintendent of the Western Hospital; Editor Harvey, of the Gazette, and Judge Adams, a leading philanthropist,



greatly interested in one of the nurse visiting societies.

The paper of the evening had been read by Dr. Wheeler, "the most commanding woman in the profession and one of the most successful," said Dr. Clarke, when he invited his newspaper friend to hear her address on "The Quality and Mission of Nursehood."

"I was very much interested in your brilliant paper, Doctor," said the editor, upon being presented. "You have quite inspired me."

"Thank you. I hope the inspiration will bear rich fruit, in your paper. It can do great things for us," was the frank reply.

"It will, I assure you. I have made that resolve already."

"I sometimes fear," observed Superintendent Banes, "that we make too much of our nurses; that we idealize, if we do not idolize them, rather than seek to improve their methods. The equation of womanhood blinds us to some very palpable faults. Don't you think so?" turning to Dr. Clarke.

"I know what you mean," was the evasive reply. "I realize that we younger men especially are apt to lose our heads—as well as our hearts,"



at which frank confession there was a hearty laugh.

"Don't be alarmed, Doctor," was the jovial assurance of Dr. Wheeler. "That won't do you any harm."

"I notice," said the venerable President of St. Ann's, "that our good and faithful friend here," referring to his Superintendent, "is always looking out for the weak spots in our hospital system, and that is a good habit. I leave all that work to him, don't I, Doctor?" smiling at Dr. Clarke.

"That great heart of yours won't let you do anything else."

"Old men for counsel, young men for war—and matrimony," gallantly remarked Judge Adams. "I confess that I need a little more backbone sometimes. These noble-minded, heroic women have my unceasing admiration. I can't find fault with them, even when I want to."

"And why should you want to, Judge?" queried Dr. Wheeler, sitting down beside him.

"Well, now, they have their weaknesses. That we must admit; at least some of them."

"How many?" was the unexpected point thrust at him.

"I know what you're after, you handsome torment," laughed the Judge. "I suppose if you



caught me in a corner, I would have to admit about one per cent."

"Of faults or nurses?" asked Editor Harvey.

"Both," was the quick response.

"The outside world does not know, of course, what we know," said Mr. Banes. "But many people are beginning to comment rather sharply upon what they unfairly, I think, term the mercenary feature of this business."

"Utterly unjust."

"Absurd."

"Undeserved criticism," and other quick interpolations showed the Superintendent he was on rocky ground.

"Of course, of course; I agree with you," he resumed. "These women are as much entitled to their hire as the rest of us. They can't live on air, or empty praises—"

"Or love," interjected Dr. Clarke, absent-mindedly, at which there was another laugh all around. The Doctor escaped, carrying his blushes with him.

"One of the noblest men that ever lived," said Dr. Wheeler, looking after him admiringly.

"I understand our good brother," remarked Judge Adams. "Our girls sometimes are charged with being selfish. But no one can calmly and



intelligently study the subject, especially from the inside, as some of us are doing, and not see how unjust is this reflection. And there is one most important point that these short-sighted critics overlook, namely, the probable life of a nurse. This, is the unknown problem. I do not believe the average service can be very long. The strain on the nerve system is too great. It is terrible. More than half a score of our girls broke down, for a time, last year, and we have several sick now."

"Yes," said President Brelsford, "and those who voluntarily remain in our hospitals, after graduation, are shining examples of self-sacrificing womanhood. Look at what occurred in our own place recently, with the fever epidemic. They are always ready for any service, in the sick room or the operating room. Our surgeons are leaning on them more and more every day. Their fortitude is marvelous. Their quickness and correctness of judgment is invaluable."

"I observed, in passing down Grand Avenue, the other day," said Mr. Harvey, "the wide invitation above the open doorway of St. John's Hospital, offering admission to all patients, without regard to race, creed or color. I took off my hat,



in grateful acknowledgment of this noble spirit of the highest humanitarianism."

"Yes, and they are true to that motto, all the while. They are doing a wonderful work in that part of the city," was the ready tribute of Superintendent Banes. "Of course the same spirit is observed by all hospitals."

"The Sisters are, indeed, faithful servants of the Master, whose example they so zealously follow," was the enthusiastic declaration of Dr. Wheeler. "They are dear friends of ours. We often have delightful little talks over the phone, sympathizing with one another, in times of special anxiety. The other day Sister Irene called me up to kindly ask about one of our nurses, in whom she was particularly interested and who was quite ill. They are noble-hearted women."

"A sympathizing visitor one day suggested to the Sister Superior," remarked Mr. Banes, "that their share of charity patients must be a great burden. Her instant reply was characteristic. 'No! No!' she said, earnestly. 'That is what we are here for, to care for God's poor.'"

"A splendid thought, beautifully expressed!" fervently murmured Judge Adams.

"And so like the good Sister," added Dr. Wheeler.



"And all this benevolent work of nurses has sprung up within the past ten years," mused the editor.

"Most of it within half that time," added Dr. Wheeler. "At the Chicago Exposition hardly a nurse face was to be seen. At St. Louis, in the Pennsylvania exhibit alone, the number exceeded five hundred, attracting great attention and very much favorable comment."

"Then, every nurse who goes outside, in the homes of the people, is a missionary and educator," observed the Judge. "They teach the members of households, by example and precept, how to care for the sick and injured. They show the necessity and value of coolness, vigilance, intelligence and faith. They come like angels of mercy, leaving their blessings behind them."

"Judge, we will canonize you, by and by," earnestly declared Dr. Wheeler.

"I don't think I would make a very good saint. I'm too much disposed to have my own way. I'm afraid St. Peter would have trouble with me."

"Not while your big heart throbs as it does for the poor, the sick, the halt, and the dying," laying her hand gently upon his shoulder and looking steadily into his glistening, sympathetic eyes. "This has been a delightful experience meeting,"



rising. "I feel ever so much stronger for my work, for the good things I have heard. Every one here to-night seems to be imbued with the same beneficent spirit of human brotherhood—and sisterhood," and with a winning smile and gracious adieu, she withdrew.

"With such women to lead them, I do not wonder the noble army of nurses are marching on, conquering all before them," was the admiring observation of Editor Harvey. In his dress suit he went straight to the office. The next morning the Gazette had a tribute to nursehood which elicited the warmest comments in philanthropic circles.


The secret of Judge Adams' earnest defence of nurses was to be found in his thorough knowledge not only of the character of these devoted women, but of the inestimable service which a certain and increasing proportion of them render. A little while ago it was virtually impossible for those unable to pay liberally to secure the assistance of competent and reliable young women, trained to serve efficiently in the sick room. They were monopolized by the hospitals and the well-to-do classes, the latter only too glad to take advantage of the new idea, at any price. Now, in every large American city, organizations are appearing,



the object of which is to utilize this beneficent plan for the benefit of those unable to provide it at their own expense. Here is a branch of charitable work that must highly commend itself to the friends of suffering humanity everywhere.

One of the nurse visiting societies of Birmingham has a notable record for sending its ministering angels into darkened homes, bringing hope and renewed life, strength and happiness. Less than a score of these young heroines, in one year, attended 2,800 cases, making 32,000 visits, an average of over 1,800 each, or six a day, exclusive of Sundays. Of the patients visited, a little over three-fourths paid from ten cents a visit to fifty cents per hour, aggregating \$2,200, or about one-fifth the yearly expense, the balance coming from voluntary contributions and endowments.

The scenes and incidents attendant upon this kind of service are often most pathetic. Without the timely help thus received, many would fall by the wayside. The nurse missionaries carry with them the light of the gospel of humanity and leave behind them rays of sunshine that bless a multitude of struggling lives.





## CHAPTER XXXI.

### LOVE'S AWAKENING—A MIDNIGHT MESSAGE.

“Love comes like a summer sigh,  
Love comes and you wonder why.”

It had been a long time since Eric Marvin had first heard these beautiful and magical words. He was then a young man of three and twenty—too young, he said, to let them lead him into serious thinking and still more serious feeling, though he had a little struggle with himself, for there was some one very sweet and attractive right beside him, intensely enjoying the little opera. Her eyes had met his several times during the evening, and for a month afterward he dreamed of her. She had returned to her distant home and he had resumed his studies, with a determination to thoroughly fit himself for the profession he had



chosen. Besides, he had a vow upon him. He had resolved not only that he would not marry while his widowed mother lived—she must look to him for support, in her declining years—but he would not even permit love for any woman meanwhile to enter his heart. For ten years he found it an almost hopeless task to keep within the spirit of this covenant with himself, and this was the secret of his burying himself out of social reach within a great hospital. His good mother lingered, very happy in his devotion, not knowing of his resolve, and thinking he was constitutionally averse, or at least indifferent, to matrimony. An only sister had married and later, becoming widowed, returned to her home, childless.

Mrs. Marvin had been beyond the river a little over two years, yet the Doctor made no sign of changing his mode of life. He was five and forty, but his set and serious manner made him seem much older. Suddenly, to his own great surprise and fluttering delight, the flames began to burn in his heart. The coming of Claire Randolph to St. Ann's had given him a new vision and new realization of womanhood. He found his line of professional duty, as we have seen, bringing him into very close contact with "the brightest young woman we have ever had here," he said to Dr.



Clarke one day, during Claire's last year as a pupil nurse. He was delighted when she returned for permanent work. His admiration was intensified during Mr. Woodley's illness, and when she played such an heroic part during the fever visitation, his feelings threatened to get beyond his control. But Eric Marvin was a man of such strong sense of honor he could not think of letting any one know, much less Miss Randolph herself, of the struggle going on in his heart.

And then came the happy deliverance. Amy Cook had only been with St. Ann's a few months when she so bravely came to the rescue of Claire. She was a woman of seven and twenty, and a nurse for five years past, but in looks and ways was so girlish that the juniors regarded her most affectionately as one of them. She was quiet, gentle and unselfish in the highest degree. Golden haired, a face that in repose was almost sad in expression, but which lighted up with a smile that was captivating; a small, slight figure, graceful in every movement, Miss Cook possessed a peculiar magnetism that was working wonders in Dr. Marvin's heart. He found himself lingering needlessly in her presence, engaging her in unnecessary conversation and even making excuses to himself to get in her way. He had invited her to



his home a number of times, where she had quite captivated his sister. Those weeks of mutual danger and devotion in the fever ward brought about a situation that was likely to lead to mutual happiness.

The day following his return from Harley, Dr. Marvin sought Miss Amy out immediately. "Now, Miss Cook," he said, trying to be very calm and business like; "I think it's your turn. You should take a week off, at least. You need the rest and change very much; though—I—shall miss you—very much. I—"

Dear, dear! No one had ever seen this cool-headed professional in such a funny plight. He was conscious of the fact that he looked very silly and he had said something which he feared might be resented. Venturing to look up again, he saw a very red face before him—and a very beautiful one, he thought. Amy stood there, tapping the window pane, evidently too happy to say anything.

"If you will let me," renewed the Doctor, coming a little nearer, his voice sounding so queer he was glad no one else could hear it, "I'll speak to Dr. Clarke and Miss Laine. They will endorse my suggestion, I know. But you musn't stay long, you know."



"You are so kind, Doctor," said the little nurse; "I would like to go home, for a few days. Yes, I'll be back soon. I could not stay away long," and she turned half way around, to hide the blushes which she knew were making her face crimson.

"That's right! That's right! I'll fix it, Amy—please—I didn't mean to be rude."

"Certainly not. I'll go with you to see Miss Laine. May I?" with the prettiest smile.

"Just the thing! She won't turn us both down. Come on, Amy," and he caught her by the sleeve, and this time did not apologize for using the name he had been calling many times in his sleep lately; once so loudly that his sister, passing the half-open doorway, teasingly reminded him of it the next morning.

"You say it very sweetly, too," she added, with a merry laugh. Margaret Benton made no concealment of the fact that she had the greatest admiration and warmest feeling for Miss Cook.

As the Doctor and "little golden hair," as every one called her, she was so petite and charming in manner, passed Dr. Clarke's door, he was just coming out.

"Hello!" he said. "What's up? Court martial? What's the prisoner been doing now, eh?"



"Nothing! Nothing!" was Dr. Marvin's embarrassed reply. He still had hold of Miss Cook's arm and looked extremely foolish. Then turning sharply about and bracing up, he said:

"I'll tell you what's the matter, Doctor. I think—our good friend here ought to have a bit of rest, too. She has been greatly burdened lately, and I have persuaded her to run down home to see the folks, in ole Virginia, you know—provided you and Miss Laine are agreeable?"

"I shall say 'yes' to that proposition with all my heart," was the cordial reply, and crossing the hall he led the way to Miss Laine's room. The Directress was only too glad to arrange it accordingly.

"I am sure we all appreciate Miss Cook's brave and faithful services," she said. "I hope you will have the loveliest kind of a time."

"Thank you very much," said Amy, "and both you gentlemen, also. You have all been so kind."

Dr. Marvin insisted upon going to the station the next morning, and when he bade Miss Cook good-bye his deep feeling was manifest.

"Don't stay too long! I shall miss you—so much—every day," he said.

"I wish you were going along," was the half-whispered reply. "Next time—maybe," and she



hastily entered the car, to avoid further evidence of confusion. The Doctor lingered around and waved good-bye from the platform, as the train pulled out.

Miss Cook's home was in Lynchburg, her father a prosperous merchant in that thriving and picturesque mountain city. She loved the wild scenery of her girlish days, and often talked glowingly about it. She told the Doctor, on the way to the station, that she proposed spending part of a day at the Natural Bridge, near Lexington, some thirty miles from her home.

"I've climbed the rocks in the ravine many a time," she declared, enthusiastically, "and I can do it again!"

Three nights later Dr. Marvin, dozing on the lounge, in the sitting room, seemed very restless. He sat up and said to his sister:

"Margie, I don't know why it is, but I have felt strangely depressed all day, and I know I can't go to sleep."

"What is on your mind? Some very sick patient?"

"No, it is not that. I fear something has happened to Amy—to Miss Cook."

"I should hardly think so. You know she is



amongst her friends, and surely will be well cared for," was the kindly suggestion.

"That may be all true. But I must know," and he got up and started to leave the room.

The big clock in the lower hallway slowly struck eleven. "I'm going out. I'll be back soon. I'm going to the telegraph office," and in less than twenty minutes he had filed a message to Lynchburg, accompanied by instructions not to be delivered during the night, but the very first thing in the morning. "At break of day," he said to the operator. This was the anxious inquiry:

"To Miss Amy Cook,  
"Court St., near 7th,  
"Lynchburg, Va.

"Has anything happened? Pardon my anxiety. Will explain. Pray answer, to St. Ann's.

"ERIC MARVIN."

He went back home, but only to sleep fitfully, and was in his office at the hospital at seven o'clock, nervous and anxious.



## CHAPTER XXXII.

### CUPID'S JOURNEY—A LOVING WELCOME.

"Here, Billy! wake up," said the night operator to the brightest boy of the force. "Deliver this before you go home. Git now! Get an answer. Some fellow up in Birmingham is in a bad way about Miss Cook. I guess she is all right."

Billy ran along Main street and turned for the Court House climb. He ascended the ninety odd steps to the brow of the hill as fast as his tough little legs could carry him. Stopping to get his breath, when he reached the top, he took off his cap, as loyal sons of the South are wont to do, under such circumstances. Then he stood for a minute, facing the beautiful little monument erected by the Daughters of the Confederacy, which most vividly represents the typical Confed-



erate soldier of forty years ago. Erect, brave, alert, at "charge bayonet!" his long hair streaming in the wind, it seemed to the high-spirited Southern boy that here was his soldier ideal.

"If I'd a been here then I'd a stood like that, too! 'Rah for Jackson!" he cried.

Remembering his duty, the little fellow turned quickly and trotted up Court Street. As he approached Mr. Cook's big house, a young lady came out on the porch.

"Guess this is for you, Miss," he said, doffing his cap and handing her the message.

"For me!" she gasped, turning very pale. "I feared as much! That is why I couldn't sleep! What is the matter, I wonder?" With trembling hands she tore open the envelope. Then, smiling through a burst of tears, she told the messenger to wait a minute. Running into the house she hastily wrote this reply:

"Lynchburg, December 10.

"To Dr. Marvin,

"St. Ann's Hospital,

"Birmingham.

"I am all right and very happy. Leave to-morrow morning at eight. Baltimore at 2. Can you meet me?"

"AMY."



"Hurry, now!" she said, slipping a coin into the boy's hand.

"You bet, missy! See me!" and the next minute, running across the street, he dropped to the sleety pavement, at the top of the hill, in a half sitting posture and slid down like a streak.

When this message was delivered, about eight o'clock, Dr. Marvin came out of his office, his face wreathed in smiles, ready for his day's work. An hour later he met Dr. Clarke, in an upper ward and said to him:

"I was just wondering if everything would go on right without me, a little while to-morrow afternoon. What do you think?"

"Why, I guess so. I'll look out for you with pleasure. Going out of town?"

"A little ways, only. Will be greatly obliged to you, I'm sure."

"Not at all. What time will you be going?"

"About 11. Will be back at 6."

"All right, my dear boy. Say," turning again, as he reached the hallway, "when will Miss Cook be back?"

"To-morrow—I believe."

"Ah! In the evening? About 6?" The smile that was coming upset Dr. Marvin.

"Why—I—yes—I—guess so," he stammered.



His friend's laugh rang through the corridor. "It's never too late to mend! Good luck to you!" he cried.

"Dear brother, I'm going to look for something that will make me very happy. Give my love to Amy," was the sisterly assurance of Mrs. Benton, as the Doctor slipped away, quite unobserved by others at St. Ann's, the next day. He reached Baltimore a half hour before the northern-bound southern express and waited for it, in a fever of expectancy. As it rolled into Union Station, he saw a window fly up in the parlor car, and from it waved a tiny handkerchief. Waving his hat, he quickly made his way through the gate and received a greeting that filled him with joy. During the next two hours the other passengers shared the happiness that filled the hearts of the occupants of the two chairs in the forward corner.

"I'm going to take you home with me, for supper," said the Doctor. "Margie will be delighted. I believe she loves you as dearly as she does me."

"You don't know how happy it makes me to hear that," said Amy, beaming upon him with increased satisfaction.

"She says you are coming to live with us—some day." He looked out of the window, too much embarrassed to see the effect of his words.



"You ought to be very happy," observed his companion. "If I had a sister as lovely as yours I should be, I think."

"Well," he said impulsively, "she is your sister—that is she will be—if—"

Amy laughed outright. "I do believe you are dreaming again," she said.

"Yes, I dream all the time now," was the reply. Then, in a very low tone, "Sometimes I fear, after all, it will be only a dream; that I ought not—to —"

"Make me happy?" The light in her eyes was his full answer.

"Amy," he whispered, leaning towards her, "the only object of my life now—all I live for, all I shall ever live for, will be to make you happy!" He furtively caught her hand, beneath a wrap, lest any one should see. The silent pressure in return told him all he wanted to know. The train sped on many miles and glided across the great bridge over the Susquehanna, before either spoke again. Her hand lay still in his, while tear drops stole down her cheeks several times. It was a strange time and place for such heartfelt communion. But the strength of a consuming affection was knitting these two lives together very fast.



"Sister," said the Doctor, as she gave them hearty greeting, "Amy is coming to stay with us—all the time—very soon!"

"I'm so glad! I'm so glad, for your sake, for her sake, for my sake," and in her strong arms—for she was greatly the physical superior of the little southern girl—Amy Cook nestled like a child, the tears of joy running down her happy face.

It was a quiet wedding, in the beautiful First Methodist Episcopal Church, a few steps from Amy's home, Lynchburg, three weeks later; but a great number of rejoicing friends of the happy bride greeted her at her father's house, before leaving for her future home, in Birmingham.

Many leading citizens were present, among them a number of grizzled veterans who wore the grey forty years before. These men, however, vied with each other in cordially greeting the stranger from the northern city that had rendered greater service to the Federal Government in its time of trial than any other in the land.

"Those trying times are all in the distant past," said a one-armed manufacturer, "and we are all brothers again!"

"Verily! Verily!" was the hearty response of



Dr. Marvin, "and I have been made to realize that happy fact many times already."

"My father fell at Gettysburg, in the front line of Picket's charge," observed Mr. Cook.

"Indeed!" replied his new-made son-in-law; "and mine fell on Little Round Top!" The two men grasped hands afresh, while tears filled the eyes of both.

"And now," earnestly declared Dr. Marvin, "there are no more loyal defenders of our beloved flag than the gallant sons of old Virginia!"

A thrill of joy ran through St. Ann's Hospital and at the reception, a few days later, at the Marvin home; all the dear friends were present to extend greetings. Claire's delight—it had been impossible for her to attend the wedding—was only equaled by that of the loving sister, who gladly gave first place in her home to "little golden hair."



## CHAPTER XXXIII.

### A TIE THAT BINDS IN THE INDUSTRIAL WORLD.

President Brelsford had a standing invitation from Secretary Brown, of the State Board of Charities, to visit the mining and industrial hospitals of the state, and he determined to make the trip at last.

"I will show you," said the Secretary, "what this great state is doing along special lines in caring for certain classes of workers, exposed to daily and hourly peril in mines and great workshops. You will see the tie that binds in the industrial world."

"And these hospitals have mostly been established within recent years, have they not?"

"Quite a number, but others have been in operation for some time."



The run to Ashland, in the centre of the hard coal field, was made in a few hours. A more rugged and picturesque region could scarcely be imagined. Located on high ground, the hospital overlooks a wild bit of country. An enormous quantity of coal is taken from this section and the workers, beneath and above ground, are numbered by the ten thousand. Five other large hospitals almost entirely devoted to the same kind of work, are within a radius of fifty miles, while there is additional provision on every hand for giving immediate attention and relief to injured men.

"Here is where our former bright assistant, Miss Sophie, is, I think," said the President, as they entered the hospital. "I shall be glad to see her."

"Yes, she is here; in entire charge of a corps of nurses. A very capable and charming woman, too."

"Why, Mr. Brelsford and Mr. Brown, I'm so glad to see you! How are all my good friends at St. Ann's?" said the head nurse, greeting the distinguished visitors in the hallway.

"All well and often thinking of you. How fine you look! This mountain air must agree with you," was the hearty response. "It adds to my



pleasure very much to meet you once more," and the President entered the Superintendent's office upon her arm.

Dr. Brindle was always delighted to have wide-awake men visit his establishment. After luncheon he showed them around, giving the Secretary a special account of his recent stewardship. "Our report for this year," he went on, as they returned to the office, "will show a steadily increasing amount of work and increasing effectiveness, too, and I am specially proud of the latter fact. My associates have been faithful and successful in a wonderful degree.

"You have to rely upon yourselves, away up here," observed Mr. Brelsford. "You have no big fellows near, to summon by 'phone in a crisis."

"That's just it. We are thrown upon our own resources entirely, a most significant fact to be remembered in reviewing our work. Since our opening, twenty years ago, we have treated over 33,000 cases, about half of these in the wards. Our last biennial report covers nearly 4,500 cases, all being injuries sustained while at work in the mines, shops and other industrial places and along the railroads. We had over 3,000 operations, with only about 3 per cent. mortality."



"A wonderful record, truly!" observed the veteran hospital President.

In the office were hanging two large photographs, showing views of the wards during the holidays, now approaching, when handsomely trimmed with evergreens.

"And is this an annual custom?" asked Mr. Brelsford.

"Oh, yes," replied Miss Sophie, who had come in to renew her chat. "We will have the whole place handsomely trimmed up again next week. I wish you could be with us at that time and see our offerings."

"I wish I could. A very beautiful custom, indeed. And how it must warm the hearts of these poor fellows, to be remembered in this kindly way. It is another touching chapter in what our friend, the Rev. Mr. Woodley, calls the gospel of humanity."

"Yes," observed the Secretary, "and they all do it. Every patient is a recipient of some token of regard."

"Now you must see our latest innovation and curiosity," said Dr. Brindle. "I have two important operations for this afternoon, and you will have to excuse me. But Miss Sophie will repre-



sent me. She will fix you up for the underground trip."

In great rain coats and top boots, the visitors were fitted out for the novel journey. Miss Sophie, too, wore a mackintosh and led the way to the big breaker, on the opposite hillside. The little party entered the cage and went rapidly down the shaft, more than five hundred feet. When they reached the open gangway, they were conducted a short distance by a guide with a miner's lamp on his cap. He stepped to one side and opened a heavy door.

Entering, the explorers found themselves within an underground hospital. "Here, you see," explained Miss Sophie, "are all kinds of needful things for emergencies. The instant any one is hurt he is hurried in here. The men are instructed in first aid to the injured, and learn to help one another with wonderful skill. Here are the stretchers and rubber blankets, with which to bring them in, the big tables, bandages, linen, liniments, splints, etc. Meanwhile, the district surgeon is summoned by 'phone, there being one within reach of every large mine, as the law requires, and soon the patient is in our care; or taken to the nearest hospital. These emergency



rooms all fully equipped, are now to be found throughout this whole region. Isn't it a wonderful and beneficent idea?"

"Truly so! Truly so!" answered President Brelsford. "Surely, the spirit of humanity is abroad in our land and our great state is setting a splendid example to all others."

The visitors groped their way along the dimly-lighted passage some distance, the brave-hearted nurse in the lead, next to the guide, observing mining operations at first hand.

Returning to the hospital, the Secretary and his companion set out by the evening train for a neighboring town, and on the way Mr. Brown further explained the industrial hospital idea, giving many facts of interest. He spoke of the new hospital in another mining town, recently erected, being founded by a large-hearted friend of humanity, whose honored name it bears, his descendants and their able co-adjutors zealously carrying out his kindly wishes. From year to year fully eighty per cent. of its beneficiaries are faithful workmen. Another great institution of the same kind, within sixteen years, has dressed nearly 28,000 wounds, a larger number than were received by the men of both armies on any one



day at Gettysburg. The establishment of industrial hospitals of this character is one of the forward movements of the times, which must have a most beneficent effect in establishing kindly relationship in the labor world.



## CHAPTER XXXIV.

### THE GAME OF HEARTS—THE HAPPY SURRENDER.

Towards the close of the hospital year, Dr. Clarke felt warranted in carrying out a long-cherished design. He had fathfully served St. Ann's ever since his graduation, six years previously. As a junior he had early won the confidence of his superiors and had been advanced until he filled the place of great responsibility. He had been building up a good private practice in the western part of the city, where he had prepared a modest but comfortable home. He wished to continue with the hospital, as a member of the general staff, but no longer so closely connected, as chief resident physician. The



change was reluctantly assented to by the managers and his associates. One pair of brown eyes glistened, when this decision was made known. Louise Laine did not know whether to be glad or to be regretful. What might this change mean to her? Nothing, perhaps. She would not reveal her hopes nor her fears to any one. She held her queenly head higher and more firmly upon her broad shoulders than ever.

"I'm sure I can wish you the very largest possible measure of success—and happiness," she said to Dr. Clarke, without looking up from her desk. She did not dare look into his eager eyes. She scratched away on scraps of paper, while he stood there wonderingly, making out fictitious orders and putting papers in and out of pigeon-holes nervously. This self-poised woman had never been really off her guard but once, in his presence; that night at "Woodlands." The young Doctor knew she was only making believe that she was so everlastingly busy.

"Thank you, very much," he said, surprised at the queer tone of his own voice, and he backed out of the little office as awkwardly as a gawky boy.

"I'll never try it again!" he muttered to himself, dejectedly.



The heart-aching Directress locked the door of her room, with a tag outside, "here in ten minutes." Then she threw herself on the little wicker lounge in the corner, upon which she sometimes rested briefly, and buried her face in the big silk-covered pillow, the only superfluous luxury her work-room had ever contained. Dr. Clarke had given it to her, as a birthday present, two years before. It was soon wet with her hot tears. The door was not opened for half an hour, despite repeated knocks by those who did not notice the tag.

One little "tat-tat" brought Miss Laine to her feet. She opened the door and there stood Claire. "Come in," said her friend, in a trembling voice, slamming the door to again, with the dead-latch down. The tag fell on the floor, but Miss Laine forgot all about it.

"Oh, Claire, I am the most wretched woman alive!" she cried, throwing her arms around the astonished girl's neck.

"And it's all your own fault—and his," was the unexpected comment.

"I know it, Claire! I know it. But what can I do? The big booby!" and she laughed through her tears. "My! I never thought I could be quite



so silly over any man. I'm just ashamed of myself!"

"You ought to be," added her friend, decisively.

"Now, don't talk that way, dear," protested Miss Laine. "You don't mean it?"

"Well, I mean this; there is no need of it. Why don't —"

"Of course! Of course! That's it. Why don't he—say something—or do something—or quit." And she laughed again. "Just look at my face," surveying herself in the little hand mirror that lay on the desk. "I shall be fit for nothing again this day."

"My dear," said Claire, "just let go, next time."

"Let go of what?"

"Of yourself."

"Guess I had better practice a bit," with a grim smile.

"No, indeed! You have been practicing too much already. That's the trouble."

"I think he will quit, after this last attempt."

"Indeed he won't! He can't."

"Do you think so, Claire?" with great eagerness.

"Why, Louise Laine, I have known it all for



nearly a year, ever since I came back from Harley with him that night, last February."

"You have—known it—all?"

"Yes, I have known that Walter Clarke loves you with all his heart and soul."

"Why doesn't he tell me so?" and the bewildered woman looked as if she did not know whether to be pleased or angry at this sudden revelation.

"He is one of the noblest of men, my dear friend, but he fears you don't return his love, and he is simply afraid to tell you of his."

"What can I do?"

"Nothing, my dear, but just love him with all your great heart and let it tell itself, in its own sweet way, the very next time you meet, no matter where, or who is present. You can tell him and make his big heart thump like a trip hammer."

"Say, Claire," with the eagerness of a school girl, "is that the way you did?"

"Yes, and no. That is—" blushing deeply. This was a different story. The tables were turning now. "I let my eyes tell him. They never deceive, no matter how much we may try."

This is delightful!" and she snuggled up to Oh, this is so sweet!" and she snuggled up to her friend, with both arms around her. They



talked very low, for impatient voices were outside.

"Let them wait!" said the head nurse. "I'm not here. I'm in paradise now! Go on, Claire!"

"I could hardly tell you. It just happened; that's all," and Claire looked very foolish, adding: "When your time comes that's the way it will be with you."

"And you were so happy? He is such a noble, lovable man, Mr. Woodley. Say, if Walter Clarke fails me, you had better look out!"

"I'm not afraid of either thing happening," and Claire laughed heartily.

"No, I love you too much, dear Claire," was the loving assurance.

A big fist hit the door and both women jumped to their feet.

"That's he!" whispered Miss Laine. "I know his knock!" blushing deeply. "Something is the matter."

"Let me get out, first," begged Claire, gliding close to the door.

"Oh, don't!" but she shot out, as Walter Clarke timidly stepped in, resolutely closing the door behind him.

"Louise," he stammered, "I beg pardon—Miss Laine—I've come to say—"



"No you haven't, Walter, and you shan't!" and she fell into the outstretched arms, which, with infinite astonishment and joy he quickly extended.

She looked up at him with steadfast gaze. "What do you see?" she softly asked.

"The open doorway to the heart that is mine," and he held her fast.

"And which has been yours, you big booby, all this while and you were afraid to ask for it!"

"Because I feared I was so unworthy of it."

"Now we will say it together, Walter."

"What's that?"

"What you were going to say. We will say 'good-bye' to this dear old place, so dear because I found you here—the dearest spot on earth to me; we will say it together, Walter."

"Yes! Yes!" and he sealed the covenant many times before he let her go. As he left the office with a face that looked like fire, when he met Big Jim, just outside, Miss Laine snatched the 'phone.

"Miss Randolph, please, quickly."

"Yes?" came a soft voice.

"Say, Claire, I've just let go!"

"You dear, happy girl! I'm coming right down to get another big hug—if you have one left!" And down she went and got it, too, with interest. As she ran back upstairs she met Dr.



Clarke in the hallway. He tried to avoid her, in confusion.

"I know it all," she cried. No one was near. "And I'm so happy!"

"You blessed little angel!" he stammered. "We owe it all to you, I know," seizing both her hands.



## CHAPTER XXXV.

### LOVE'S TRIUMPH—THE MINIATURE.

On Thursday afternoon of this same week, Dr. Clarke said to Miss Laine, as he met her in the corridor.

"I want you to go out home with me this evening and look at some pretty pictures I bought this morning. You will like them, I know, one in particular."

"I shall be delighted to go," was the happy reply. "I hope they include that gem we saw at Brown's galleries."

"It is there; and one finer than that," smiling and taking her arm.

"Yes?"

"Be ready at eight. Oriental," as he passed on.

"All right," and Miss Laine turned into her office.



"Oriental" meant a magnificent black silk gown which Dr. Clarke had raved over upon many occasions. He told Miss Laine whenever she wore it she looked like an Oriental queen, ready to ascend her throne.

As they tripped lightly into the little parlor, a few hours later, Miss Laine's great, dark eyes, flashing with delight, she exclaimed:

"How delightful! And what is this?" suddenly facing a splendid crayon portrait of herself, as the Doctor whirled her about.

"That is my queen," said he, proudly. "The painting will come later. I could not get that until you had more leisure." This picture had been made by the best artist in the city, from a cabinet photo of recent date. It represented the beautiful woman just as she stood there, admiring it, with loving glances at her future husband, her eyes glistening. The little "gem" was there, too, a fine water color sketch that had been an object of mutual fancy, and several other choice pieces of artistic work.

"Dear Walter," said the happy young woman, "I do not deserve the happiness which has come to me."

"A thousand times more. Come!" leading her



to the piano. He sat down close beside her. "Now?" he said.

"Yes! Yes! I'll sing it now!"

Without notes or words before her, Louise Laine filled her lover with new joy as there fell upon his ears the sweetest music he had ever heard, the song the last words of which had been echoing in his heart since that night at "Woodlands," three months before, the first and last half stanza of which we quote, as follows:

\* THE SONG OF MY HEART.

"My heart's a-thrill with love;  
The words I long to hear,  
Like music from above,  
Come not my soul to cheer."

\* \* \* \* \*

"In his dear arms I'll rest,  
Oh, love and joy divine!  
Two lives forever blest,  
Two hearts in faith entwine."

\* "The Song of My Heart," by Edwin K. Hart. Published by J. W. Pepper, Philadelphia.

Embracing the joyous singer again and again, the Doctor asked, "Where did you get those beautiful words?"

"Right here, dearest!" with both hands upon



her bosom. "It is, indeed, the song of my heart."

"And the melody?"

"The loving tones of your own voice, when you speak to me."

"And where did you first see 'the light of love?'"

"In your dear eyes, the first time they looked into mine. Do you remember?"

"I shall never, never forget that moment! And ever since it has been shining brighter and stronger every hour!"

"And I have been singing this song to you all this while—in my heart!"

"And while I seemed to hear your loving call, yet I feared I was deceiving myself. Such a hope seemed beyond realization. Then you held me away off from you, until I quite despaired."

"There was a reason for that. You did not know my history."

"I never gave that a single thought. You were my ideal, my all, and now you are to be queen of my heart, my home, my life!" with a long and loving embrace. "But tell me, Louise, dearest, if you want to. Everything which concerns your past, present and future is of intense interest to me."

With her head against his shoulder, she told



her story, of which he had heard only shadowy fragments. "My father," she said, "was a rich Cuban planter, my mother an American lady of excellent birth and attainments, a member of the Schuyler family, of New York. She died, in Cuba, where I was born, when I was a little girl, and my father also, while I was at school in this country, a few years later. I was looked after by an aunt, now deceased. Shortly before I became of age, my entire fortune was lost, through the combined unwisdom and dishonesty of my executor. Thrown upon my own resources, I entered the Training School of the Brooklyn Hospital; you have seen my diploma. My only sister is married to a wealthy New York merchant, proud and exclusive, and I could not feel at home with them, nor be under obligations to them, nor continue in my chosen calling and have it known amongst their social friends. My brother-in-law has a foolish pride. He said it was a reflection upon him. I thought differently and so came to Birmingham, where every one has been so good and kind to me, especially at dear old St. Ann's, and where my joy has been made full by your love. I wanted you to know all this, Walter, and I ought to have told you sooner—perhaps."



"And it would simply have increased my admiration and intensified my affection," was the earnest response. "This revelation explains many things. We all could see the superior traits you inherited and were content to admire, without knowing whence they came. Have you a good portrait of your dear mother?"

"One that is always with me," and she gave him the locket at her throat. He had never seen her without it.

"What a wonderful likeness!" he cried. "What sweetness, dignity, nobility of character and purity of soul! Oh, Louise, you must part with this long enough to have a large painting made." The dress was the same gown the daughter now wore.

"I have one," she said, with a happy smile.

"I'm so glad! We will hang it right there," pointing to a vacant place above the piano, "where her beautiful face will smile upon us when you sing to me."

When they returned to the hospital, Miss Laine threw open the door of her little sitting room, adjoining her office, a sacred precinct where no man's foot had entered during her five year's residence at St. Ann's, and let her future husband look with delight upon her greatest treasure,



with its companion piece, a fine portrait of her handsome father.

As they stood there for a moment, Dr. Clarke said: "The great mystery of dear old St. Ann's is joyously solved at last. The entire force, from our lovable and venerated President to Big Jim, every doctor and every nurse, would be pleased beyond measure to know what I know, to see what I see. They will think I should be the happiest man in the world. And they will be right, too! Good-night, Louise, dearest."

"Good-night, Walter, my beloved!" with her arms around his neck, for one blissful moment.



## CHAPTER XXXVI.

### THE REWARD OF FAITH.

Rev. Dr. Jamison, the venerable rector of Trinity Church, at the close of the morning service on the first Sunday in January, stepped to the chancel rail and surprised his congregation by making this announcement :

“For upwards of forty years it has been my precious privilege to minister here, with what measure of success I must leave it to others to judge, and to the records of the Great Assize above. It is with feelings which no words of mine can fitly describe I must now say to you, dearly beloved, that I feel the time of my departure is drawing near ; that my usefulness as your pastor cannot much longer continue. I sincerely trust the great Head of the Church will speedily



send you a wise and good shepherd, and when such a one has been chosen, I shall feel it my duty to say a most reluctant farewell."

These touching words deeply affected every one, and for more than an hour some lingered, first to express their personal sorrow to their beloved rector, and then to talk with each other. It was all so sudden, though just what might have been expected at any time.

Dr. Clarke was an active member of the vestry. His heart was thrilled by the words of the retiring pastor. When he met with the vestry, at the regular meeting the following evening, he begged permission to supply a minister the following Sunday, and this was readily granted. The daily papers published the announcement of Dr. Jamison's resignation, and the next Sunday a larger congregation than usual was present. It was supposed a candidate would appear, but there had been no public mention of any one.

Trinity was one of the oldest parishes in the city, having a large membership of plain people mostly, but the revenue was sufficient to pay a \$3,000 salary, with rectory. There was a fine field to cultivate anew, on account of the long time rector's inability, for some years back, to keep up with the work. Yet, having a vigorous



old man's pride, he objected strongly to an assistant.

Dr. Clarke kept his secret well. "I want you girls both to go to church with me to-morrow," he said to Miss Randolph and Miss Laine, Saturday afternoon, finding them together, and adding, "Heads together as usual—more mischief hatching."

Comfortably seated in a front pew, directly beneath the high, old fashioned pulpit, Claire almost jumped when she saw Robert Woodley walk into the chancel with Dr. Jamison. The rector opened the service and then let the young stranger take the reading desk. Later he ascended the pulpit, looking down into two pair of wondering eyes. Claire began to understand, or at least to hope. Perhaps he was coming here as an assistant, and her loving heart rejoiced. Announcing his text, the young minister forgot everything but the burning message he had to deliver. It was not written—he seldom used manuscript. It was an earnest, loving plea for the higher life as the only true life; for pure thinking, right living, true work in the gospel vineyard. He seemed to make but little effort. The words came as though rushing out of a well of spiritual knowledge and experience. His



listeners sat entranced. Trinity had seldom of late heard this kind of a sermon. It came from the heart and went straight to every heart. The concluding hymn, "How Firm a Foundation," was sung with a fervor that almost drowned the choir.

As the congregation passed out, they found the young minister standing at the tower entrance, in cassock, ready to greet them. He gave them a chance to look closely into his strong, handsome face; to feel the grip of his warm, firm hand; to hear his pleasant voice, in brief greeting. He had not expected to hear, in return, a tenth part of the words of gratification which so freely came to him.

Dr. Clarke lingered with his companions until nearly every one else had gone, and then they came forward, Miss Laine first.

"I'm so glad to see you here, Mr. Woodley," she said, "and I do hope and believe you will come here to stay. Your beautiful sermon touched my forgetful heart," and she bit her lip.

"Claire," he whispered, holding her trembling hand. She could not say one word, but the look she gave him lifted him up. He had seen her but once since her return to the hospital.

At the evening service another large congre-



gation, something quite unusual, was present, and again there was evidence of supreme satisfaction. Robert Woodley went home on Monday morning with a light heart.

That evening the vestry again met. "Dr. Clarke," said the rector, presiding, "I hope I shall be pardoned for saying that I think these gentlemen, and the church entire, are deeply indebted to you. I want to express my unqualified endorsement of our dear young brother and to say I profoundly believe he has been sent here to take my place."

"Those are my sentiments, Dr. Jamison," said the next oldest member of the vestry.

"And mine."

"And mine."

"Guess we'll make it unanimous," said the next.

"Certainly, and a vote of thanks to Dr. Clarke," said another, good humoredly.

It was a very happy meeting. The call was extended, Dr. Clarke being authorized to carry it to Mr. Woodley. He performed the joyous mission the next evening, taking Claire and Louise with him. They had a delightful time, returning in the first train on Wednesday.

When they had gone, Robert threw his arms



around his mother's neck and said, "Your faith did it."

"My son," she replied, patting him like she used to when a boy, "I have always believed in you and your future. He who has kept you and guided you thus far, will be with you till the end."

"That it may be so, mother, will be my earnest prayer," was the reverent response.



## CHAPTER XXXVII.

### INTO THE HARVEST FIELD ANEW.

When the people of Harley learned that Rector Woodley had been called to a larger sphere of work, they rejoiced and protested in one breath. Certainly he ought to go—they all realized that. Yet what could they do without him? Uncle John Williams voiced public sentiment, when he declared to a company of sympathizers, at the store one evening:

“It’s a clear case of our loss and their gain. We can’t expect to keep him here, and this is a fine opportunity. I’ve been expecting it. Dr Clarke, whose friendship it at the bottom of the whole business, gave me a hint some time ago about this very church, where he is going. It’s



a big place, with lots of work, and that's just what Robert wants. We will wish him God-speed and do the best we can. He will help us find a good man."

"Then, too," added the President of the Ladies' Guild, "we must think of what this will mean to Claire Randolph. He's only been waiting a suitable opportunity to make her happy, the dear girl! They have loved each other ever since childhood."

"Heaven bless 'em!" echoed Uncle John. "And if they don't get married right here, in old St. David's, we'll never forgive 'em. I tell you, boys," he suggested, laughing, "we will tell Rob that is a condition of our letting him go."

"That's right! That's right! Uncle John," was a chorus of reply.

The following Sunday week each of the retiring ministers preached his farewell sermon.

Trinity Church was filled to overflowing, and Dr. Jamison and his people were much affected. To sever the ties of two score years was like tearing the old parish up by the roots. Many families had never known any other minister. He had held hundreds of children in his arms at the font—a beautiful marble memorial to a former



rector—who were now middle aged men and women, whose children in turn he had received into the church. He had married more than three hundred of those who were now active members, or had gone elsewhere; some were beyond the river. A host of others, members of the church and persons living within the parish, he had visited in sickness and misfortune, and over more than five hundred he had read the burial service. It was an hour when every mind was busy with memories of mingled joy and sadness. The good old man, like a giant oak in the plain, stood alone. The faithful and loving companion of a lifetime had gone before, and all of his three children likewise. At five and seventy he was without near kin, and to leave these dear people was like breaking the very heart strings. He held up bravely until the close of the service, and then he was compelled to retire to the vestry room and close the door. But he was not going to leave them entirely. He had been made rector emeritus, and a promise had been exacted by Mr. Woodley that he would be present in the chancel at least once a month, as long as his health permitted. This comforted him greatly. At a farewell reception at the rectory, over one



thousand persons shook hands with Dr. Jamison, and then he left the old house which had so long been his home.

At St. David's, that same Sunday morning, there was a never-to-be-forgotten scene. The rector's missionary friend, Mr. Fleimng, had come up from Birmingham to stand by and take part in the service. But the sermon was Robert's trial time. It was unusually brief and, to the surprise of every one, wholly written. He could not trust himself otherwise at that time. There were things he wanted to say that he might forget, and the manuscript helped to keep his eyes from the people. It was a most touching review of five years' work and a tribute to the loyalty and love of a congregation that had been an inspiration to him, a source of strength in every trial. He urged united support of a new shepherd when he came, and renewed zeal in all departments of church work. The gospel of humanity and for humanity, in all its needs, was his theme, and when he closed there was a responsive prayer in every heart.

Pending the rejuvenation and refurnishing of the rectory at Trinity, Mr. Woodley remained at Harley, going to Birmingham on Saturday to



hold his first service, the next morning. His greeting was sincerely cordial. The people showed their satisfaction in every way. Instead of holding a formal reception to bid his people farewell at St. David's, he spent an entire fortnight going to every house and saying good-bye. This was his way of manifesting his personal interest to the end.



## CHAPTER XXXVIII.

### THE UNION THAT NONE CAN SEVER.

The story thus far has told itself, dear reader, in its own simple way and you as impatiently await the events of the next few days as did the joyous hearts whose throbbing you have felt all along the pathway of mingled cloud and sunshine. It was a novel little conference, at "Woodlands" one evening, filled with suppressed excitement and eagerness, at which everything was arranged for the happy climax in St. David's, at high noon, on Wednesday, February 4. When the day came, bright and exhilarating, the old church never looked gayer or prettier, the work of a loving group of young people, Dollie and Bessie Wheeler in the lead.

There were no formal invitations—just open



doors for everybody and his wife and children, and they were all there—at least as many as could crowd in and almost as many more outside, to bestow their smiles and heartiest good wishes.

There was one delightful and touching surprise. After the beaming Bishop, assisted by Dr. Jamison and Mr. Fleming, had performed the ceremony which united in sacred bonds Claire Randolph and Robert Woodley, the young minister left the outside of the chancel, went quietly into the vestry, and emerging in clerical vestments, said the words that made Louise Laine and Walter Clarke man and wife. Then resuming his place beside Claire, came the Bishop's benediction; the beautiful vision of Claire wholly fulfilled.

At "Woodlands" all that afternoon there was "open house," and the happiness of the people was boundless. Village merchants and their wives, farmers and their whole families and mill operatives—the mill having "shut down" at noon for this purpose—vied with each other in showering blessings upon the heads of the brides and grooms.

Dollie and Bessie Wheeler assisted Mrs. Randolph in receiving her guests. Dr. Brelsford was there and during the evening Dollie and he



disappeared, for a short time. A little later the rejoicing girl caught Claire in the hallway, and throwing her arms around her friend's neck whispered, through tears of joy:

"We're to be married on the twenty-fourth of June! My birthday! Don't you remember?"

"A thousand blessings on you, Dollie, dear!" murmured the happy young bride, kissing her again and again.

When Mr. Woodley learned this good news, he ran Dollie into the corner of the parlor, seizing both her plump, bare arms and said:

"We'll all be here, sure, you jolly little cherub! And you shall have the canoe, for keeps!"

One of the brightest and happiest guests of the evening was Miss Sophie, who had gladly come more than a hundred miles to greet her dear friends and wish them all the happiness in the world. Among the wedding presents which attracted the most attention, was a big bull-frog paper weight that looked so natural, with its great eyes, that some of the ladies at first were afraid to touch it. In its mouth was a shining silver paddle, and by its side a beautiful little silver canoe. The accompanying card simply bore the name, "Sophie Sunshine." Dr. Marvin



and his wife were also present, reflecting their newly found happiness.

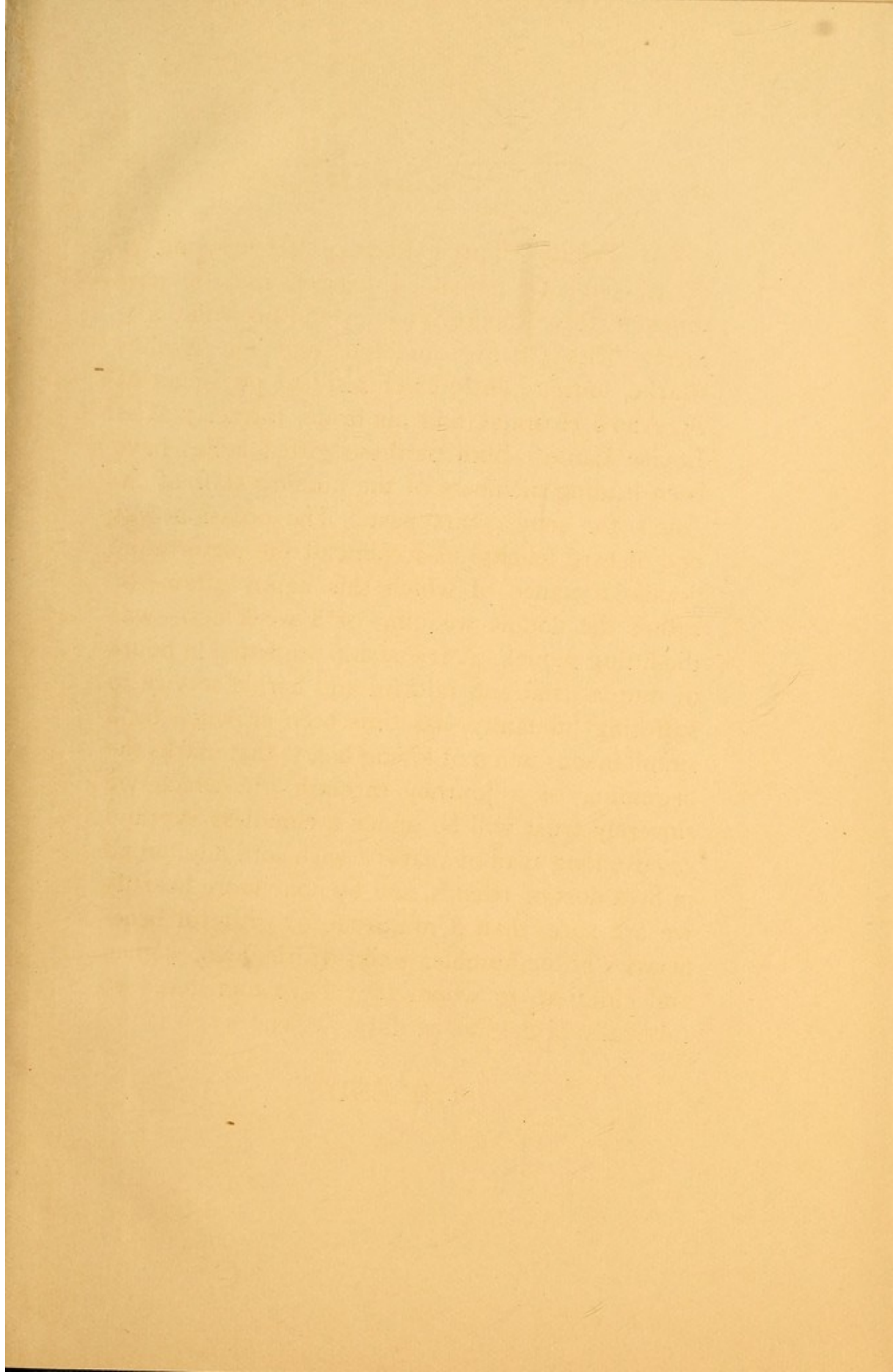
After a week at Old Point Comfort, Richmond and Washington, there was a double reception at Trinity Rectory, Birmingham. The big house could not contain half the people who came; they had to crowd in and out for two hours. President Brelsford had asked permission to furnish specially two adjoining rooms, on the second floor. Within were installed mother Randolph and mother Woodley; the old homestead at "Woodlands" had been leased to the new chief owner of Harley mills, which had been rebuilt. Every member of the staff at St. Ann's got in some time during the evening, taking turns in getting away. The assistants to former Miss Laine and Miss Randolph were there, and all the seniors and juniors also, and every one, by special request, in uniform. Neither Mrs. Woodley nor Mrs. Clarke was ashamed of her former occupation; they were proud of it, and let the fine ladies and gentlemen of the old families of Trinity know it. Big Jim was the proudest of door-keepers. Among the guests was Mr. Harley, editor of the Gazette, who the following morning made this graceful semi-editorial reference to the social event of the evening in Birmingham:



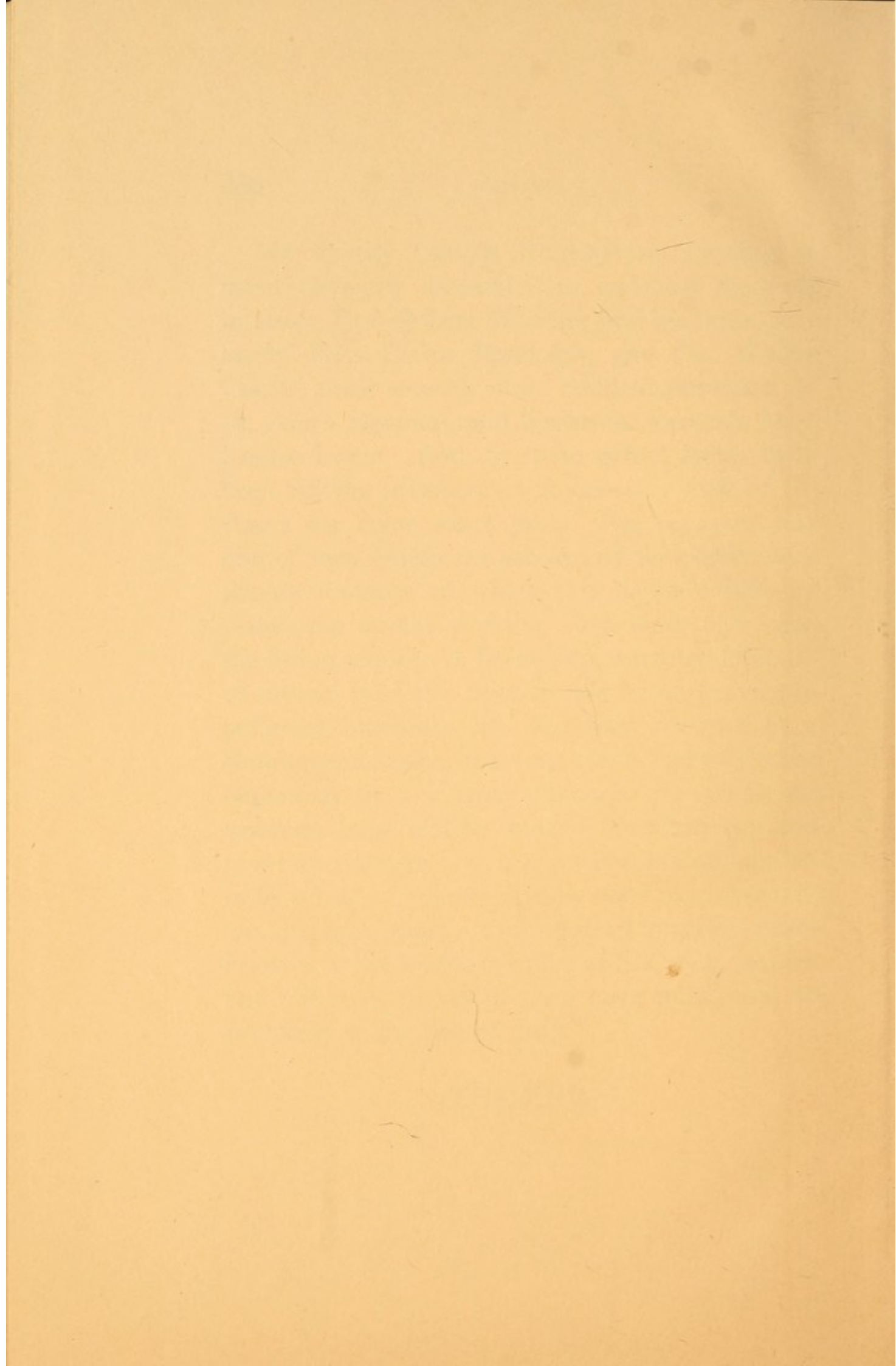
“At Trinity Church Rectory last evening, a great company assembled to welcome the new minister, Rev. Robert Woodley and his bride, formerly Miss Claire Randolph, and Dr. Walter Clarke, until recently chief resident physician of St. Ann’s Hospital, and his bride, formerly Miss Louise Laine. Both of these gifted ladies have been leading members of the nursing staff of St. Ann’s for some years past. The occasion was one of rare felicity on account of the picturesque double romance of which this happy affair—or rather the double wedding of a week ago—was the fitting sequel. A friendship cemented in hours of mutual trial and faithful and heroic service to suffering humanity, has thus been crowned by a simultaneous union of loving hearts that marks the beginning of a journey through life which we sincerely trust will be under a cloudless sky and cover a long span of years; a wish cordially united in by a host of friends, and by none more heartily we are sure, than a multitude of grateful beneficiaries in the humbler walks of life, men, women and children, to whom they have ministered so faithfully in the line of duty.”

THE END.

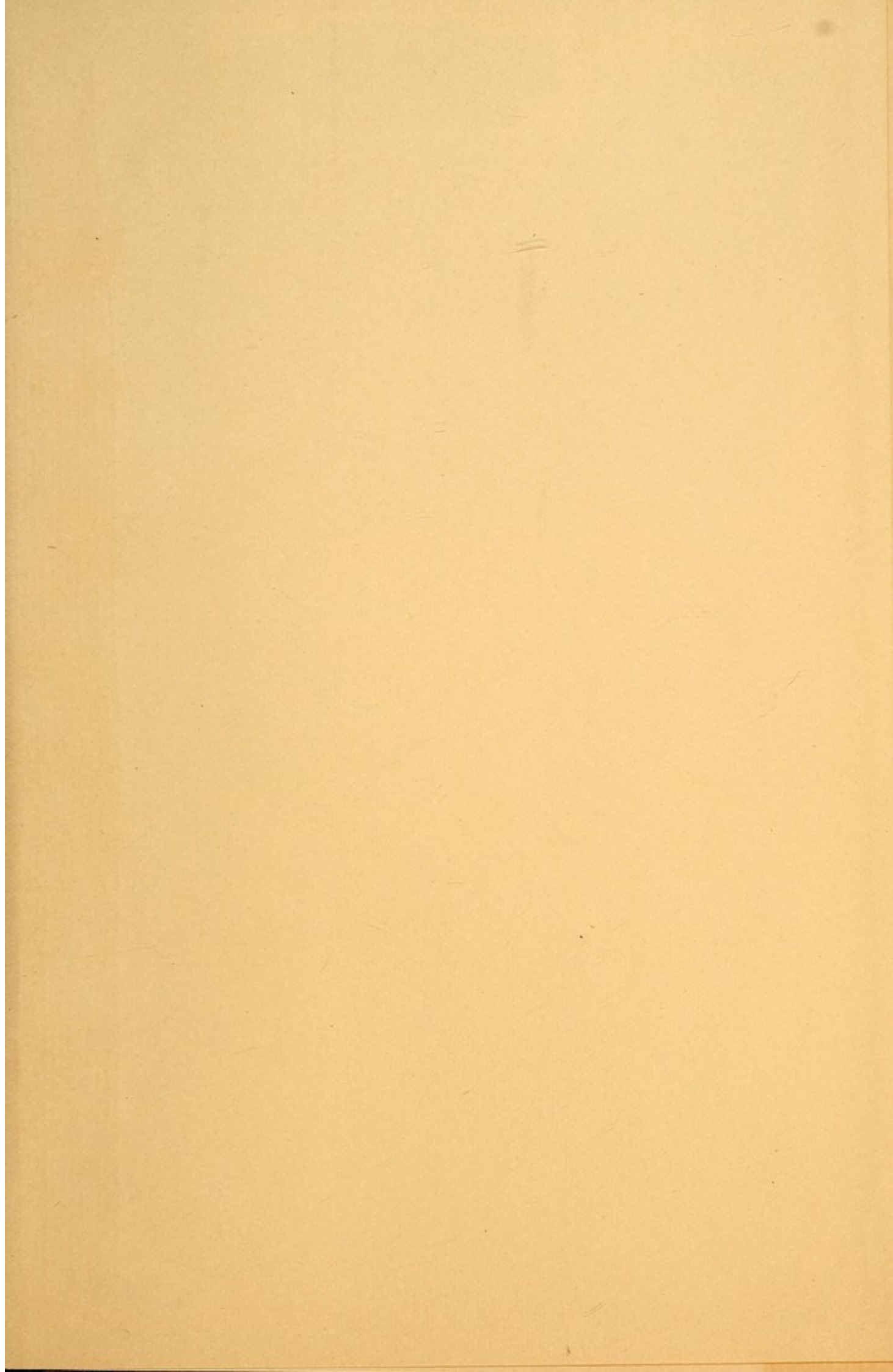


















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