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Tales of the Children's Ward

By
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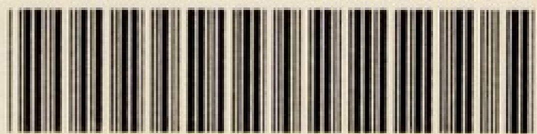
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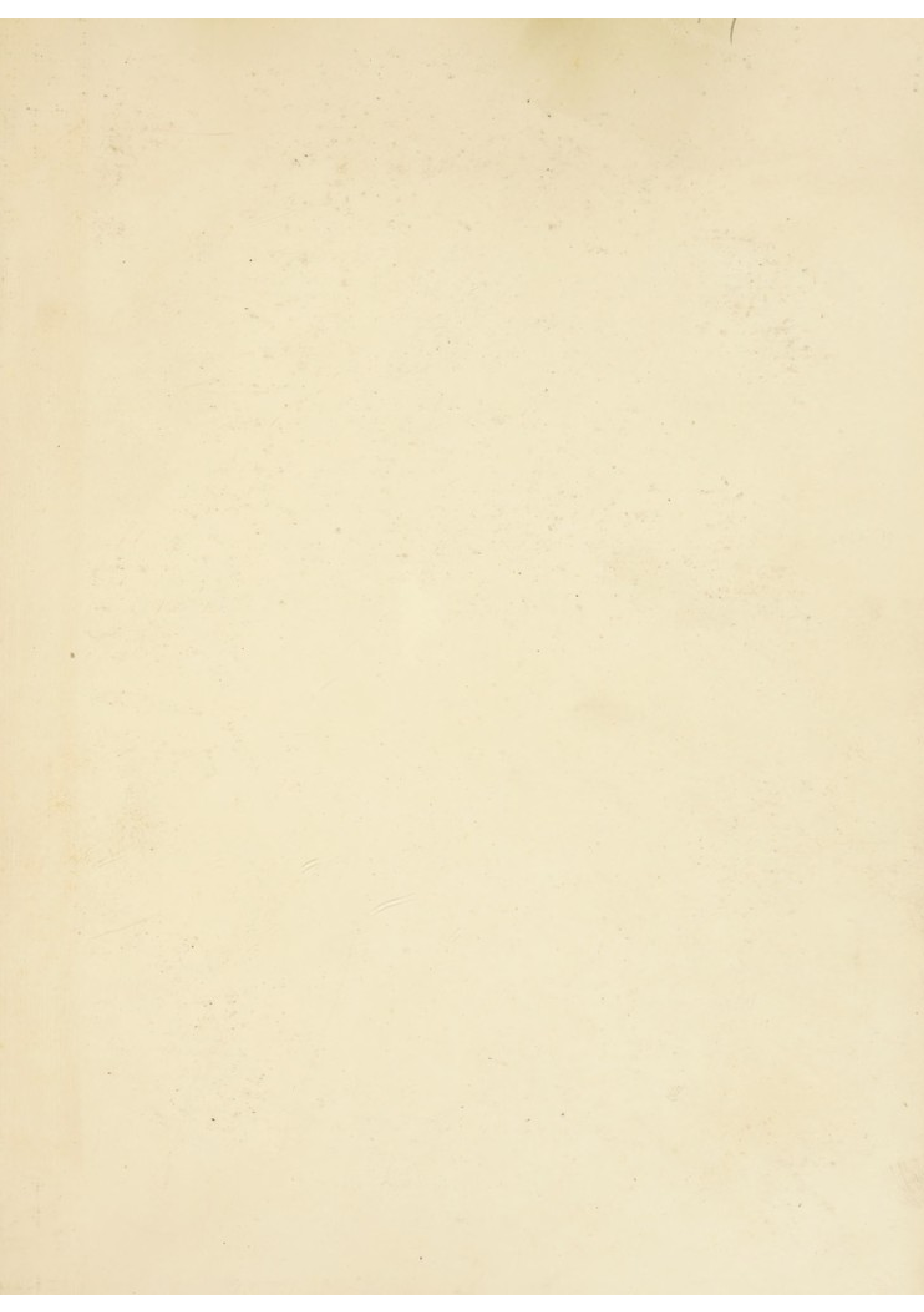

TALES OF THE CHILDREN'S WARD

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TALES OF THE CHILDREN'S WARD

BY

HONNOR MORTEN
Author of 'Sketches of Hospital Life,'
'How to become a Nurse,' etc.

AND

H. F. GETHEN

London
SAMPSON LOW, MARSTON AND COMPANY, LIMITED
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CONTENTS

PAGE

THE WARD, ... 1

THE WARD CAT, ... 6

LITTLE BOW-LEGS, ... 10

IN THE HANDS OF THE LAW, ... 17

MRS. WELLAND'S BABY, ... 25

THE STORY OF A NURSE, ... 28

A WILFUL SCOTCH LADDIE, ... 65

MRS. JONES, ... 73

PETER, ... 77

WILL EVERSLEY, ... 84

AN ORNAMENTAL PROBATIONER, ... 105

WANTED: AN OPERATION, ... 123

CHRIS, ... 128

NOTE.—Thanks are due to the proprietors of *The Graphic* for permission to reproduce 'The Story of a Nurse,' and to the proprietors of *Chambers's Journal* for permission to reproduce 'The Ward' and 'Little Bow-legs.'

THE WARD

TANDING back a little from the noisy street, and rising in grand silence, is a large gloomy building studded with regular rows of long windows. It scarcely needs the inscription—'East-End Hospital; Supported by Voluntary Subscriptions'—running along the front in large letters, to tell us we are standing before one of those tremendous monuments of human suffering, the contemplation of which must cause the hardest heart to ache. There, where the strife and noise of the world are shut out, and the stillness of pain reigns paramount, the grim struggle against death and disease is always carried on. Day and night, though there is never noise, there is ever movement throughout that great building; and, when all the surrounding houses are dark and the traffic hushed, lights still shine from those numerous windows, and the unceasing care of the sick and suffering continues without arrest.

Though the hospital displays a large frontage to the busy street, its full extent is not at once visible to the eye. There are four wings stretching back from the main building, which have been added at different times; and beyond these, again, are various houses appropriated to the use of the matron, chaplain, nurses, and others. The space enclosed by these edifices forms a small sheltered garden, where the patients approaching convalescence can sit and sun themselves; where the students can get a game of tennis, or the nurses stroll beneath the shade of a few sooty limes. The size of the wings just permits of two long parallel wards, connected by open arches, on each floor; and the two wards on the ground-floor of the western wing are those set aside for the treatment of children. They are the brightest wards in all the

hospital: there are more pictures on the walls, more plants in the windows, and gayer quilts on the beds, than in any other part of the building. Fifty little cribs are ranged in rows down the walls, and in nearly every crib a small child, clad in a scarlet jacket, is sitting or lying. Here and there between the tables which occupy the centre of the ward are swinging cradles with red curtains; also a doll's house, a rocking-horse, and reclining or wheel couches break the monotonous line of beds. Altogether, the effect is one of brightness, light, and space: the long perspective of tidy cribs, the nurses in white caps and aprons, and the spotlessness of tables, lockers, and all other articles, appear almost miraculous in contrast with the smuttiness and dirt which pervade most private houses and offices in London.

Though all the small patients are suffering from some injury, the sound of moans or sobs is seldom heard; rather there is a gentle noise of laughter and childish chatter, and the patter of small feet on the boarded floor. Coming into these cool airy wards out of the endless rush and noise of city streets, there is a sense of peace and rest; and one immediately divines that it may be a good thing for many a child to be forced to abide for a while in this atmosphere of cleanliness and order. From hunger and want and dirty overcrowded homes, these little ones, when their misery culminated in some accident or illness, have found their way to this pleasant place, where there is always plenty to eat and lots of light and fresh air; where toys are plentiful, and boxes play music, and a gentle, skilful nurse pays attention to all those small wants, which, too probably, were utterly neglected by a drunken or an overworked mother. We hear so much about 'maternal instinct' and a 'mother's care,' that we are apt to overlook the well-established fact that in the outside community one child in every five dies from improper feeding or carelessness. There is no limit to the indiscretion of an East-End mother; she regards beefsteak and gin as suitable nourishment for a year-old baby; or will shut a child of two up in a room where there is a large fire blazing and no guard. What wonder that one of the 'Sister's' hardest duties is to return the child, her constant skilled care has saved, back to the parents whose heedlessness had wrought the ill; for no woman can tend a child throughout a long period of pain without

learning to love the little mite who turns so naturally to her for comfort and relief. To see a small child, when the surgeons have gone, nestle down in a nurse's arms and smile contentedly with the tears yet wet on its cheeks, makes it evident that though the nursing of children is the most trying work demanded of a woman, yet the reward is proportionately great.

It is a pity that so many of us, as we grow older, forget the trials and troubles of our childhood, and from the standpoint of a developed reason and strengthened body, look with contempt upon the petty sorrows of babes. The grown man may well bear pain with patience if he knows that it is a necessity, and that cure will come with time ; but a child lives only in the present, and has no philosophical reasons for sustaining afflictions with calmness : it only knows that it is miserable, that it is hurt in some way ; and is not in the least relieved by being told that it is all for its good, and that it will be better presently. This is not the way the intelligent nurses in the ward deal with a suffering child : they pick it up, give it the sympathy it craves, and then stopping before the doll's house or the window, point out some object of interest, and divert the small mind from its grief. It is really wonderful to see how these women, who have lived much amongst ailing children, learn to interpret the appealing look or hasty flush aright. Some of us can perhaps discriminate when a child is crying from passion or pain, but a nurse trains her sense of hearing till she knows whether the pain is an ache or a smart, whether the child is hungry or is tired. The language of a cry is plain to her discerning ears, and, when read in connection with the expression of the face and the posture of the body, always leads to a correct conclusion.

Looking down the pleasant ward, where so many cheerful faces can be seen, it is hard to realise that into each of these little lives the tragical element has already entered—that all these children have received a baptism of suffering. Semi-convalescent children will be helping the nurse to arrange the masses of flowers, or will be riding on the rocking-horse, or playing with the doll's house, and those in bed nearly always have toys beside them.

Infants a few days old are not uncommonly received as patients,

'SEMI-CONVALESCENT CHILDREN HELPING THE NURSE TO ARRANGE THE FLOWERS'

and of course they call for a great amount of attention. Forty ailing girls and boys all under seven, and four or five sick babies whose age can be reckoned by weeks, is a family that any woman might dread to have charge of. No wonder the Sister of the Children's Ward has weary lines around her mouth, though you scarcely notice them because of the sweet smile which dwells there. First, one baby has to be picked up and comforted; then a batch have to be packed in the wheel-couch and sent out into the garden; then a boy of five, whose head represents a model of bandaging, has to be given the promised treat of bread-and-butter and sugar in Sister's room, because he rocked the cradle till the 'white baby' fell asleep. This is the highest honour and reward a small patient looks for—to be allowed to sit in Sister's room for a while. There is a small-cushioned chair in the corner by the fireplace, specially devoted to good girls and boys; in the cupboard are some toys; and often a piece of plain cake appears from the same shelf. The small room, full of pictures and flowers and a hundred dainty nicknacks, is such a cosy contrast to the long bare ward, that the children delight to be allowed to enter its sacred precincts. It never occurs to their small minds to regard that room as a woman's chosen home; yet there, in that corner cut off the ward, the Sister lives and sleeps from year's end to year's end, ever in the midst of her suffering charges, and within hearing of the work going on around. If in the night there is the tramp of the surgeon's feet, or an unusual amount of crying, the Sister slips from the small bed and looks to see if she is wanted.

Amusing as well as painful sights can be seen from that door; for instance, there is a young student who has put the wrong side of the strapping plaster to the hot-water tin, with the result that it has firmly adhered to the vessel. As he drags it off, he looks sheepishly around, and is evidently pleased there is no nurse near—knowing nothing of the merry eyes watching him from the curtained door. But the spotless tin is smeared, and will tell tales; the hapless student is seized with a wild idea, and tries to clean it with a piece of cotton-wool. The fluff adheres to the sticky tin, making matters worse, and the desperate student beats a hasty retreat, while the Sister sinks back in peals of laughter.

It is pleasant to see how the students become boyish and gentle on

entering the Children's Ward, and drop the airs they are apt to affect in other parts of the building. Their little patients become very fond of their 'doctors' sometimes; and the powerful young fellows can so easily lift the tiny mites, and move them into more comfortable positions. At Christmas-time, when there is a tree in the ward, and all the cribs have to be turned in one direction, the students use their strong arms with a will; and also stride about from ward to ward, finding out all the children that have for some reason been lodged amongst the adults, and carry them off to be present at the treat. One winter afternoon a tall student came into the ward bearing, perched on his shoulder, a small girl with a pathetic face.

'Sister, Bessie's mother has brought her to the receiving-room, and says she has cried ever since she was discharged yesterday.'

'What is the meaning of that, Bessie?' asks Sister in those severe tones which never seem to awe the children. 'If I let you stay here to tea, will you go home to bed like a good child?'

'Yeth, Thithter,' lisps the pale little thing.

'Then, if you like to put her down in front of the fire for an hour or two, Mr. Smith, you may; only, you must come and carry her home before six.'

'Very well. Only I wonder what you will ask me to do next?'

Sister and Student laugh, and go their own ways, while Bessie lies quiet and contented before the blazing fire.

The rules and regulations are not nearly so strict in this ward as the others; and both house-governor and matron will be conveniently blind to small deviations where the children are concerned. Indeed, it would be a strange thing if all the sympathy and loving-kindness which sickness always calls forth were not doubled in the case of these small sufferers, on whose tiny shoulders such grievous burdens have been bound. The Children's Ward always has been, and always should be, the recipient of all the spare love and charity of those who, rather than gold or honour, would 'win one little child's caress.'

THE WARD CAT

ONG-HAIRED, long-bodied, long-tailed, and a model of discreet behaviour, such was the hospital cat.

She was advanced in years, but healthy, happy, and hungry; and she had a kind of an ever-green air which made one feel that Euphemia might rival in age even Mr. Gladstone himself. She became a hospital cat accidentally, as one might say.

She first saw the light in a cupboard in the nursery, and the nursery was situated in a tall London house. She was an ordinary kind of a kitten, and enjoyed, or at any rate submitted to, a vast amount of popularity from the two-legged inhabitants of the nursery. She learnt many tricks, some of them entertaining and the others rather trying to the grown-up members of the family.

She was addicted to wandering on the stairs, probably she sometimes required a little change from the rather exhausting attentions of the children, but it was an injudicious choice of an airing-ground. Few London staircases are really light, and Euphemia preferred the dark corners of the landings.

One unlucky afternoon in November the kitten had superintended the children's tea, and secured for herself such tit-bits as suited her best, when the opening of the nursery door put an idea into her foolish head. She would stroll downstairs and discover whether cook had remembered to put her supper near the kitchen fender; not that she was hungry, far from it, but still it was always satisfactory to know that the next meal would be waiting whenever she felt an inclination 'to pick a bit.'

On her way to the kitchen she was overtaken by a boy, a heavy-footed creature, who was dashing downstairs in what Euphemia

considered a most undignified fashion; but before she could get out of his way, he trod on her, all his weight falling on one of her hind legs. An awful squeaking followed, and the penitent school-boy hastily caught her up in his arms and dashed back into the nursery, where he brought consternation to the little ones by announcing—

'Here 's your wretched kitten, and I 'm afraid I 've squashed her into jelly!'

Tears, exclamations, and apologies followed, and the eldest son, summoned promptly from the drawing-room, proceeded to examine the victim.

'Fractured thigh,' he pronounced at last. He was a medical student, and rather proud of the deference accorded him by the younger ones, whenever a domestic tragedy threatened. 'I 'll take her to the hospital, baby; don't cry, she 'll soon be all right, and we'll mend her leg ever so neatly.'

Poor Euphemia was put in a basket shortly after, and carried off, and her small leg was set and encased in a plaster of Paris splint.

'I think you might leave her with me for the night,' said the nurse in the Children's Ward. 'She will be quieter here than in your nursery, and I 'll see she has some milk.'

'Thanks, I 'm only too glad, and if you 'll be good enough to be bothered with her for a week, I shall be thankful; for you see my small brothers adore the little brute, and show their affection too demonstratively to be altogether safe at this crisis!' So Euphemia settled down in the nice warm ward, where there was plenty of petting for her when she chose to jump on the cribs, but where there were no aggressively healthy children to tease or chase her.

The week passed away, and the good-natured young fellow arrived with his basket, which contained a fine pot of maiden-hair which was a present, he explained, from 'the kids,' to the nurse who had cured their precious Euphemia. The cat appeared quite resigned to exchanging places with the fern, and on reaching its home it submitted, though somewhat unwillingly, to the young people's caresses; but, when morning came, puss was found to have disappeared.

On inquiry at the hospital later in the day, the young student

discovered the cat contentedly seated in front of the fire in the Children's Ward; and although she was on two successive occasions carried back to her original home, she succeeded in escaping within a few hours. She reached the hospital weary and bedraggled, but visibly triumphant, and she was finally abandoned by the nursery party, who bestowed their affections on another kitten, leaving Euphemia to adopt the congenial *rôle* of a permanent hospital resident.

LITTLE BOW-LEGS

IT certainly was a dreadful day for the middle of March: the sleet was being driven in clouds along the streets by a keen east wind, and roads and pavements were deep in slush. Nurse Grant paused just within the threshold of a small house in Old Road, Stepney, to unfurl her umbrella and gather up her skirts. 'I will call again this evening, Mrs. Evans; but I think the danger is past for the present, and you need not be uneasy.'

'Thank you, Nuss, I 'm sure. Please Gaud things will go better now.'

'Well, I really think she is round the corner; but be sure she takes plenty of nourishment.—Good-morning.'

'O Nuss, I nearly forgot, so I did Will you just call at No. 9 and see Little Bow-legs?'

The Nurse nodded; she was already out in the street, and the wind would have drowned any verbal reply. Her black veil was blown across her face, her umbrella creaked with the strain upon it, and nurse gave a little shiver as she hurried along, pushed on by the wind as by unseen hands. When she reached No. 9, she gave a sharp double rap at the knocker, and then watched a grating in the pavement to the left. A face appeared below it presently, and nurse nodded; a moment after the door swung open, and Nurse dived into the welcome shelter.

'Very dark downstairs to-day, isn't it, Miss Moses?'

'It is so, Nurse; but I 'm glad all the rooms are let.'

'I 'd rather have one upstairs room unlet, I think, and get more light and air. I wonder I don't have you for a patient, living in a cellar like that;' and Nurse shook her head severely and began to climb the stairs. On the second landing she opened a door and entered a low room lit by one small dirty window. There was a bed in one corner of

the room, and a large table covered with crockery, sewing materials, papers, etc., stood in the middle. The walls were hung with bird-cages of every description, some wretched little wooden things, others nice large breeding-cages, and all occupied by birds, who were fluttering and singing and filling the room with noise. Several strings were stretched across the ceiling, from which damp garments were hung; and, diving under these, nurse reached the fireplace, before which a small boy was sitting. He had not heard her enter because of the birds; but directly he saw her, he got up from the floor, and seizing various rags, threw them over the cages from which the loudest songs were trilling, and then pushed forward a chair and said: 'Sit down.' He was a boy of about seven, with a well-shaped head and clear pale complexion; on his face was a grave expression, as of one weighed down by weary experiences.

'He is very ill, Nurse. Do you think he *can* live? He is to be my very own, if he does;' and he held up a wretched-looking canary he had been cuddling under his coat.

'It looks very ill, Jim. Has it caught cold?'

'I b'lieve so. He used to sing beautiful, better nor all the others put together, and now I think he 'll die.'

'I hope not.—But you didn't send for me to see the canary, did you?'

'No, Nurse.' The boy paused and covered up his bird. 'I want to go to the 'orspital.'

'I 'm afraid, dear boy, they can't do anything for you there.'

'Oh yes, they can; they can do 'most anything. Do take me.'

'But, Jim, it would be a horrid operation, and you would have to stay in bed for weeks.'

'I don't care; I don't care for nuffin, so as to be like other boys. Now, I can't run but I tumbles down, and they shout after me everywhere: "There goes Little Bow-legs!"' The boy's voice quivered, and nurse looked distressed.

Just then the door opened, and a woman came in with a black bundle in her arms. 'Bless me, Nurse, is that you? Sure you are good to that boy. I dunno what he would do without the books you lend him, for he can't play like other boys.'

'Is that work, Mrs. Millan?—How are you getting on?'

The woman unpinned the black bundle and threw it on the bed. 'Flannel trousers, Nurse. A nice job to do in a muck of a room like this. The birds sprinkle dirty water over everything.'

'Better than no work; and the birds paid the doctor's bill last year.'

'That 's true too.—How 's Betty Evans?'

'She is much better to-day.—About this boy of yours, Mrs. Millan; he says he wants to go to the hospital to see if they can straighten his legs. What do you wish?'

'Wish! I wish I 'd never married his father. He 's got his father's legs, and he 'll get his father's temper soon, I specs.'

'I don't know anything about his father; but I think Jim is the best and most intelligent boy of his age that I know.—Do you wish him to go to the hospital?'

'As he likes,' replied Mrs. Millan carelessly. 'I don't believe nothing will make those legs straight. 'Taint as though it were an accident; it runs in the family.'

'If anything could be done, it would probably be by breaking the bones of both legs, and the boy would be in bed a month or more.—Could you lie quietly on your back for six weeks, Jim?'

'Yes, or a year, so as I should be like other boys.'

'If he 's set on it, Nurse, he 'd better go, if you can give him a letter.'

'I will give him a letter,' said Nurse, rising. She glanced round the crowded little room, and longed to put in a plea for more space and light; but experience had taught her it was useless. The Millans were very respectable; but the husband was an enthusiastic politician, and his spare time and cash were devoted to the cause of his particular creed. He also had legs so bowed as to be a hideous deformity, and perhaps this had helped to embitter the man's spirit. Poor Mrs. Millan had a hard time of it often with this cantankerous husband of hers; and her speech had grown very sharp, her nature hard, through constant collision with the man she had married from love and pity. She had to work to keep the home together; and small room though that home consisted of, it was often difficult to pay the rent. So Nurse made no complaint

of the untidy close room, but wrapped her cloak around her, and nodding good-bye to Jim, went forth into the storm-driven streets again.

That very afternoon she applied to the matron of the District Nursing Society, and secured an out-patient's letter for Little Bow-legs. She scarcely thought the surgeons would attempt to straighten such crooked limbs; but the boy might become more content were he once persuaded that his burden was inevitable.

Mrs. Millan took Jim to the hospital the next Saturday afternoon. They found many friends in the out-patients' waiting-hall, and Mrs. Millan enjoyed a good gossip before Jim's turn came to enter the surgeon's room. At last the porter passed her in; and a nurse in a white cap and apron came forward and took the letter, and, after glancing at it, stripped off Jim's shoes and stockings and set him on a chair before the surgeon. A few rapid questions were asked, and several of the students examined the legs.

'My boy, do you want your legs put straight?' asked the surgeon at last.

'Yessir.'

'You are quite sure you are willing to bear some pain?'

'Yessir.'

'Give him a ticket for the Children's Ward, Smith.—Next case, Nurse.'

Jim's heart failed him for a moment when he found himself in the long ward with so many curious eyes fixed on him as he walked along in his ungainly manner. Every one seemed very busy; and a nurse whisked a screen round a crib and slipped Jim into bed in no time, and then dismissed his mother, telling her to come again the next afternoon. Jim pulled the clothes over his head and cried a little; but presently a baby-girl in the next crib began crowing at him, and Jim played bo-peep with her through the bars. Gradually he gathered courage to look around. There were such lots of pictures and toys and flowers about in this large bright room, that Jim thought it must be like the fairy palace in the book Nurse Grant had lent him. Presently there came down the ward a tall woman in a dark dress, but wearing a

soft white cap with long floating strings, and a dainty apron. She had the most beautiful face Jim had ever seen, and she was always smiling. There were some people who knew Sister Mona well who said that when she wasn't smiling her face was the saddest face on earth. But Jim never saw Sister without a smile ; and because of the love and compassion which dwelt in her eyes, he always thought she looked like the photograph of the Christ which hung opposite his bed. The sister stood beside his crib while she read his entrance ticket ; then she had a look at the poor crooked legs. She talked cheerfully to Jim all the time, but seemed to understand, as no one else had done, what a grievous affliction is an ever-present deformity. However, the next day when Mrs. Millan came, Sister took her into her own little room and asked her seriously to consider whether she desired her son to undergo an operation before she came to a final decision.

'Bless me, Sister, I brought him here for an operation. I certainly ain't agoing to take him out again. He gave me no peace till I brought him ; now here he must stop till summat 's done.'

Sister turned away and went to question Jim ; but he only reiterated his mother's statements. His one wish was to be like other boys.

It was Tuesday afternoon when the celebrated surgeon, Mr. Macfarlane, came to make a thorough examination of Jim. He was followed by a crowd of students, to whom he pointed out the most remarkable features of the case. He bade them notice the absence of all signs of rickets ; he commented on the strangeness of such a deformity being inherited ; and he told them that the outside world would say osteotomy was a cruel operation, not to be undertaken merely for the cure of a deformity ; yet it was at the express wish not only of the parent, but of the small patient himself, that he was about to perform that operation. And in conclusion he bade the dresser of the case make a cast of the legs as they then were, and told Sister to have Jim in the theatre the next day at three o'clock.

After all, poor Little Bow-legs was only a child, and was very frightened when the time for the operation drew near. But he knew nothing about it. He remembered waking up and feeling very sick, and

his legs pained him, and he cried a great deal. Then he slept again; but when he woke the pain was still there, and his head ached, and he cried again. Then Sister came and tried to soothe him, but he scarcely heeded her till she said: 'Look at your legs, Jim.'

He dried his eyes, and Sister threw off the bed-clothes—and there were two straight legs tightly bandaged up between thin wooden boards, and slung from an iron cradle. He gazed in amazement.

'That 's right, dear; don't cry any more, for you are no longer Little Bow-legs.—Drink some milk, and go to sleep.'

For the next few days Jim was very quiet; his legs were rather painful, and he had to lie flat on his back always. Then gradually he got more cheerful than he had ever been in his life before; he chatted with the other children and played with the toys the nurses gave him, and, whenever his bed was made, he gazed anxiously at those two straight legs in the wooden splints. Did they really belong to him? Should he ever stand upright on them and walk like other boys? Mrs. Millan came constantly to see Jim, for she was a good mother as East-End mothers go. She was never cruel to the boy; she was even kind to him in her own way; but she never dreamed of petting or caressing him.

'How 's my bird, mother?' Jim always asked.

'Oh, it 's all right: ever so much better nor it was when you was always foolin' it about. I reckon you 'd better sell it before next winter, though. You 'd get five shillings for it easy.'

Jim had another plan in his mind, but he kept it secret for the present. At last, after many long days of patient waiting, came the anxious time when the splints were to be removed. The great surgeon himself was there to see the result of his skill; and oh! with what suspense Jim watched while bandage after bandage was unrolled and the bits of wood were taken away. He held his breath while Mr. Macfarlane ran his hand over the thin little legs and then lifted first one and then the other.

'Yes, that 's all right, Mr. Roberts. Wonderfully successful!—Where are those casts?'

Sister fetched the casts of the two little bow-legs out of a cup-board, and Mr. Roberts put them side by side with the two straight

limbs which Jim was eyeing so anxiously. Were they really his legs? He tried to move one, and it felt dreadfully heavy and queer, still it did move a little, and certainly the great surgeon seemed content.

'Splendid! splendid!' he exclaimed. 'We must have a cast of the legs as they are now, and keep both for comparison.—Put a plaster of Paris bandage on now; but before the boy goes out, be sure and take a cast.'

'Is it all right, Sister? Shall I be able to walk on them?' whispered Jim.

'Yes; it is quite right. You shall run races and win them, in a week or two.'

The next time Mrs. Millan came, Jim told her the good news with a smile. The old grave expression was leaving his face, and he was always laughing now.

'I suppose you'll be home soon?' said his mother.

'I s'pose so.—Do you think father would give me a cage for my bird? I've got tenpence here the doctors and people have gave me.'

'Bless me, child, you can keep the bird where it is till you sell it.'

'But it's my very own bird, mother, and I don't want to sell it. I want to give it to the doctor what made my legs straight.'

'You little stupid! he don't want a bird.'

'Please, bring it next time, mother, and let me try.'

Sister was rather dismayed when she found a canary in full song located at Jim's bedside; but when she learnt what was in the boy's mind she was greatly pleased. A few days afterwards she came running down the ward; and none of the children had ever seen Sister run before, so they called out: 'Hi! Sister!'—'Golly! look at Sister running!' But Sister only smiled, and ran on till she reached Jim, who was sitting on a small chair with two crutches by his side. Sister seized the cage and put it in Jim's hand and whisked away the crutches. Just then Mr. Macfarlane entered the ward, followed by the usual crowd of students.

'Now Jim,' said Sister, 'walk to meet him and offer him the bird.'

Jim struggled to his legs and walked down the ward, firmly and uprightly, till he met the great surgeon. 'For you, sir,' said Jim, holding up the cage, ''cause you have cured my bandy legs.'

'IN THE HANDS OF THE LAW'

' OME on, Grace! Do hurry a bit, we're late already, and mother's always fidgety when it gets dark.'

'All wite, Tarley, but I'm deffully tired,' responded the fair-haired sister of four years old, whom Charley had been trusted to take to the park for a half-holiday treat.

He was only seven himself, but a steady little fellow, prematurely acquainted with many of life's problems, for he 'was the only son of his mother,' and she was a poor widow. There was another child of the party, Mary, aged six, and she possessed the high spirits and thoughtlessness natural to her age, and caused more trouble to Charley than the little Grace, who generally followed patiently at his heels. She did so to-night, in spite of her weariness, and the trio trudged on quietly until they reached a street down which they had to turn.

At the corner, Mary, heedless of her steps, came in sharp contact with a big boy carrying a basket, and as he stepped aside to avoid her, she stumbled and fell. She was not hurt, but frightened by the suddenness of the incident, and she began to cry; the big boy stopped, explained that it wasn't his fault, but he'd give her a sweet if she'd 'stop making that row,' which she promptly did, and allowed herself to be consoled.

Charley's anxieties on her behalf thus quickly ended, he turned round to resume his guardianship of wee Grace, when he found to his horror she had vanished! He ran back a little way, then forward again, asking stray passers-by if they had seen the child; and at last, seizing Mary's hand, he started off at a sharp trot, never stopping till he reached

home, when his agonised query, 'Is Grace come back?' was met by his mother's anxious question, 'Where 's your little sister?'

It was a dreadful moment, but happily she knew that Charley could always be trusted to tell the exact truth, and he did so now, in spite of his fright. He explained the way they had come, and described the corner of the street where he had dropped Grace's hand, to succour the prostrate Mary.

Then they all started off and walked backwards and forwards over the whole route, inquiring of almost every person they met if a stray child had been noticed, but alas! nothing could be heard of the wanderer.

'I 'll go straight off to the hospital,' said the mother at last, and she deposited the two children in the charge of a sympathetic neighbour, and went off on her quest, with a heart growing momentarily heavier. Small wonder indeed, at her terror, for the position of a little child quite alone in the streets in the twilight, is surely one of grievous peril.

Horrible stories, heard but little heeded when her own children were safe in her care, returned now to torture her imagination, until the poor woman felt, as she hurried along, that she could even be content to find her little one had been carried to the hospital, 'if so be as she ain't killed or hurt *very* bad.'

When she reached the gates a porter asked her her business, and at once sent her into the Casualty Room, where her inquiry received immediate attention.

'A little girl, four years old, fair, dressed in a light cotton frock, white pinafore, and a sun-bonnet;' so said a young doctor, repeating her description, 'And when did you miss her?'

'Not till about an hour back, or a little better, may be,' responded the mother, 'Oh, please, sir, is she here?'

'No, we have not had a child of any sort brought in since three this afternoon; so I hope you 'll find her somewhere else, ma'am; and for goodness sake, don't break down,' he added, as the poor soul burst into tears, 'She 's sure to turn up presently. Here, Nurse, I know you 've got a kettle boiling, can't you give her a cup of tea and cheer her up?'

The cup of tea was easier of attainment than the 'cheering up,' but the kindness was appreciated, and the poor woman hastened away presently, with 'God bless you for all your goodness!'

'If you don't find her at the Children's Hospital, missis, you'd better try the police station,' said some one, as she went down the steps.

There was no sign of the little maid at the Children's Hospital, and she went to the police station as advised. It seemed odd to her to hear that many children were lost every day; at the present moment, three waited to be claimed, but they were neither of them girls, and the Inspector promised to telephone round to the other head-quarters, and let her know immediately, if he heard of the truant.

He took down all particulars, including her address, and then advised her to go home,—'and perhaps,' he suggested hopefully, 'you'll find the youngster has got back first.'

She tried to take comfort, and went swiftly away, but the anguish in her dark eyes haunted the inspector, used as he was to sorrowful looks and sights.

Mary had cried herself to sleep, but solemn little Charley sat watching on the doorstep, and the moment she saw his poor little white face, the mother knew that Grace had not returned.

Within an hour a policeman made his appearance, saying that a little girl had just been taken to a certain hospital, run over, and from the description seemed likely to be the missing girl. Charley pleaded so earnestly to go with her, that his mother willingly availed herself of the policeman's suggestion, 'All right, missis, he can come along if he'll walk sharp.'

They set off without delay, and the poor woman began to question her guide, and learnt that a little child had been seen by him wandering along the pavement. Thinking her very young to be alone in such a busy thoroughfare, he had spoken to her, but she either could not, or would not, explain who she was, and as she seemed cheerful, and was crooning a little tune to herself, he was fain to let her pass on. He walked to the end of his beat and was returning slowly towards the spot where he had spoken to the small child, when he heard a woman shriek,

and saw a crowd beginning to collect, in the rapid way in which such gatherings always seem to grow, and when he penetrated the throng it was to learn that the little girl had just been 'gone over,' by a brewer's dray. She had evidently changed her mind about passing straight on, and had been seen to trot right across the road at the moment when the heavy dray, somewhat rapidly, dashed down a side street. It was done in a moment! The woman who had shrieked dashed after, but it was all in vain. The frightened driver had managed to turn the horses at a sharp angle, but the wheel had passed over the poor child.

'Is she hurt much?' said the sobbing mother, when the policeman held his peace.

'Well, I don't rightly know, but don't ye take on so, missis; we're just there; and I saw her laid in a beautiful little bed before I come away. They took her straight into the ward, and the porter says to the Sister, "Here's a bad 'run over' case," and the Sister and the Nurse came at once and just opened the bed-clothes and spread a blanket and laid her down, though she was all covered with dust and blood, and they had a warm blanket over her and two or three foot-warmers in the bed before you could look round. I never see anything like those hospital ladies! they are that quick!'

'God bless them!' rejoined the mother; 'but did they say nothing?'

'Well,' said the dignified policeman, with a catch in his breath, suspiciously like a sob, 'the Sister said, "You had better get her friends here as quick as ever you can, for she's bad, *very* bad, I fear, and here are the doctors," and so I went to the station, and found you'd been there, so I came on.'

By this time they were at the hospital, and after a word of explanation the man was told to take the woman up to the ward and to see the Sister. By this time the poor mother's grief was uncontrollable, and her chief thought seemed to be concentrated on subduing sobs, which, for all she knew, might penetrate to the ears of her stricken child.

'She never could abear to see me cry,' she whispered piteously to herself.

The Sister came forward and looked very sad, as she said gently:—

'She has had no pain, she is too badly hurt to suffer; the doctors won't touch her. Poor little baby!'

The mother lifted her tear-stained face, and said meekly, 'I won't cry if you'll let me go to her.'

'Certainly, you shall go to her, and stay with her; her pretty face is not injured, and she may open her eyes presently and know you.'

The policeman and Charley remained near the door, the latter with wide-open eyes gazing at 'all them cots, full of poor little kids, and none of 'em crying, but just as contented and smiling as if they wos all quite well; and heaps o' toys and things to amuse them. I should just like to be ill to get took in there!' he concluded, as he described the scene to Mary next morning.

Meanwhile the Sister had conducted the mother down the ward to a corner cot, where a young nurse was stationed in special charge of the frail little creature who was lying unconscious of all the care which surrounded her. It was a sweet little face, and the expression was calm and peaceful, and save for the exceeding pallor of the lips, her condition might have been mistaken for healthy sleep. The bed-clothes were slightly raised, but the woman little knew what a ghastly injury they concealed, nor did she for a moment imagine that the tender little body was terribly crushed by the cruel wheel which had passed over it, leaving only the head and arms untouched.

The watchful Nurse drew back and motioned to the mother to take her chair beside the dying child's pillow, and she sank into it, with a dazed feeling that she had no strength left to think or act for herself. It was nearly a minute before the sympathising Sister saw the exhausted woman force herself to turn towards the motionless little figure, and then she was startled by a shrill cry, in which hysterical laughter struggled with the ejaculated words:—

'This ain't Gracie! my girl's bigger than this, and her hair's lighter! O the poor little lamb, God help this one's mother; but she ain't my Gracie, and I'm thankful for it!' and she sank back in the chair, covering her face with her hands, and shaking from head to foot with agitation and relief.

As she and Charley left the warm, bright entrance, and stepped into the dark streets once more, they were overtaken by the friendly policeman, who said: 'It was all for the best,' he reckoned, 'some one had just come to claim that child, and there would be no mistake this time, for they knew the clothes.'

Also he had learnt that her mother was dead, and the father ill, and the grandmother had remarked: 'The children were more plague than profit to her, and if there was one mouth less, there would be more food to fill the others.' Some children were 'better out of this world than in it,' remarked the policeman, philosophically. 'You'd better come back to the station with me, and see if there's any news, afore you go home.'

'Thank 'ee kindly, I won't do that; I'm thinkin' I'd better take Charley back and see if there's any message. Your Inspector told me I'd get a message immediately there was any news.'

'All right, missis, please yourself. Poor little chap,' he added kindly, looking down at the weary boy, 'he's about dead beat; better put him to bed.'

'Good-night then, and thank ye again for all your trouble,' and as the woman and child turned down their own street, the former remarked:—

'Everybody's wonderful kind to me to-night, Charley. I've not heard so many comfortin' words since I lost yer father.'

'Nor me,' said the solemn-faced lad, 'its somethin' like goin' to a buryin', ain't it, mother, only there's no hearse,' he added regretfully.

But his ill-omened words fell unheeded on his mother's ears, for she was accosted by a neighbour, who was very curious to learn the details of Gracie's disappearance, and very full of sympathy for her trouble.

Together they entered the house, and wearily climbed up the stairs, but the room had no tenant save Mary, who still slept on, unconscious of others' sorrows.

Charley was soon settled in bed, and promised he'd try and keep his eyes shut if mother'd 'promise faithful' to wake him 'when Gracie

comes home.' She stooped and kissed him, and then turned away her sad face. Ah! when and how would Gracie come home! Was she living or dead? Was she in danger? Was she awake or was she asleep? 'And there, she can't even speak plain, poor little bird! She couldn't never make 'em understand her name. P'raps that 's the trouble. I 'll go round to the station again, and tell 'em that,' and she hastily wrapped her shabby shawl around her, full of fresh hope.

At the door she met another policeman, not her former protector, but a younger man. Asking her name, he said:—

'I thought 'twas you, missis; I was to tell you as there 's a little girl at the station, but it may not be yours after all. She 'd dropped asleep on a doorstep, and a postman picked her up and brought her along. You wos at the hospital, then, and we reckoned you 'd not get back in a minute, but my mate told us you wos back now; he 's gone off duty, and I 've took his place.'

'I 'll come at once,' said the woman tremulously, 'please God its the right one this time. What like is she? Did you see her?'

'Yes, I see her, she wos very tidy; the Inspector sez, "That little 'un's got a good mother," sez he; she 's a rare little doll, I should call her, and as light as a feather in yer hands.'

Before her journey to the hospital, the poor mother would have felt convinced that this was her own lost child, but the shock, disappointment, and subsequent relief, had deadened her sensibilities, until she had but a very limited amount of hope left in her now.

They reached the station very shortly, and she followed the policeman into an office where a strange sight met her anxious eyes.

A tiny, fair-haired girl sat at the table, apparently having her tea. A policeman's cape had been folded into a cushion to raise her a little on the great Windsor chair in which she was perched; her sun-bonnet hung down her back, and a wretched little draggled-looking kitten was held closely in one arm, whilst the free hand was busy with a piece of bread-and-butter.

Although the child's face was stained with tears, recently shed, she was quite happy over her meal. A cup of well-sugared milky tea, and a plate of watercress, completed the feast, and two big 'guardians of the

peace' were waiting on the small guest with a gentleness which had already won her confidence, and which, for the rest of her life, made Gracie consider policemen 'the very nicest gentlemen in the whole world.'

But they were forgotten, and so was her tea, when she looked up and saw her mother watching her; she stretched out her little arms, crying, 'Muvver, muvver, I wasn't naughty, but I ran after the kitty, and she was lost, and I got lost too! and I won't go away again; I don't like being lost,' she concluded with a quivering voice, 'but please let me keep my kitty, for I don't believe she's got any muvver to go looking about for her. I knew *you'd* find *me*, but oh, what a long way I walked!'

MRS. WELLAND'S BABY

BABY was brought to the ward early one morning, suffering from a scalp wound. It was clothed in a long gown, coarse in texture, but rich in common embroidery, whilst the sleeves were tied up with soiled pink ribbons, which exposed its cold skinny little arms! Its poor little face was grimed with dirt, and a streak of dried blood on the forehead and cheek added to the pathos of its appearance.

The poor mite was soon settled comfortably into a cot, with warm blankets and hot-water tins, for it was distressingly cold and exhausted. Presently the gaunt and ragged woman who had brought it in reappeared, and claimed to be its mother, and received willing permission to stay by the bedside.

When the doctors entered, she withdrew, but returned by-and-by to inquire if it 'was dangerous'; and being informed that such an injury was very serious for so young an infant, besides its having suffered from long exposure in very cold weather, she coolly remarked, 'Then I reckon I 'd better go for her mother.' Sister ventured to expostulate on the previous representation made to her, but she only said: 'Why, lor' bless ye, missis, whatever do it matter? I see it done, so what 's the odds, and I live next door any way.'

Shortly afterwards the real mother entered; a younger woman, dark complexioned, and stout, and exceedingly ragged, though she had evidently attempted to improve her appearance by putting on a large, coarse, clean apron.

She set up a dreadful wail when she was warned of her child's danger, but on being remonstrated with, she promised to behave herself quietly, being doubtless influenced by her friend's forcible remark:—

'Hold yer row and shut up, will yer, or they 'll never let you bide in this yer fine place!'

The wretched mother kept her word, and many were the hours spent by her in the ward. She sat by the cot, seldom speaking but watching everything that went on, with her wild black eyes. Moreover, as she generally returned after a short absence considerably excited, and smelling of spirits, Nurse encouraged her not to go away much during the day, and treated her to many cups of tea or coffee, which she liked well.

One day she beckoned Sister to her, and exclaimed in a deep, hoarse voice:—

'Why ever don't 'ee tell that nuss to leather him?'

'Leather who?' said Sister, bewildered by her excited earnestness.

'Why him,' she replied, 'gi' him the strap, *I* would, the little brute in the bed over there.'

'But why!' Sister asked.

'You to ask me "why," like that!' she exclaimed; 'the little wretch have just chucked his biled egg at that other boy, 'cos he dared him to, and o' course its gone to smash, and that fool of a nuss just bust out a laughing and began to sing "Humpty Dumpty," or some such rubbish, just as free and chirpy as you like. Then she sez, quite cheerful like, that she 'd not scold this time, only he 'd have to promise her not to make such a mess again. *I* should leather him, I should,' she concluded emphatically.

Her infant did well, to every one's surprise, taking into account both the nature of the injury and the other circumstances. Sister learnt afterwards that some Irish neighbours had been 'making a night of it,' either on the occasion of a wake or a wedding; the mother and her five weeks old infant were of the party, and when she left, having taken more whisky than was good for her, she slipped on the stairs and fell, the unfortunate baby's head coming in contact with a projecting plank! She was soon picked up and found to be uninjured herself, and at first did not notice the damage done to the child.

Presently seeing the blood, and noting the infant's death-like appearance, she grew alarmed, and so did her friend. The latter offered

to go to the hospital with it at once, but the mother would not hear of it, saying she knew they 'd think it was carelessness, and she 'wasn't a-goin' to be blamed for it; any way it was jest a h'accident.'

Failing to obtain her consent to take the child, the frightened neighbour went alone, and begged the doctor who was on duty to give her something 'to stop bleeding.' Naturally he declined, and bid her fetch the baby at once, before it was too late.

Away the woman went, back to the mother, who was sitting on a doorstep, only half sober, and quite determined not to give up the child. She argued and scolded, but all in vain for some time, until she proceeded to dilate on the consequences to the whole party 'if the brat died afore he 'd been seen to by doctor;' adding, 'and the c'rowner, he 'll make it hot for we too!' The last plea seemed to rouse the woman, and she got up, still somewhat unsteady, but quite eager to set off, and it was well that she did not delay, for the little creature could have hardly borne a longer exposure to the cold night wind.

However, it proved very tenacious of life, and when it began to amend, its progress was rapid, much to the delight and gratitude of the poor woman. Within a month it was well enough to leave, and the mother was told she might bring its clothes and take it out.

The embroidered gown had been a loan, and was not forthcoming again, and the yellowest of old night-gowns appeared to constitute the whole available wardrobe.

However, the father, whose paternal instincts were evidently considerably sharpened up by the baby's recovery, and also by its improved size and general condition, produced his contribution in the shape of a smart, but flimsy shawl. He was complimented on his taste and encouraged in his thoughtfulness by a sympathetic nurse, who also produced a warm flannel gown, and knitted hood to supplement the inadequate outfit.

And so the Welland family passed out of Sister's hands, and only once again did she see them. That was on the occasion of a Sunday visit which was paid to the nurse whose weak-minded indulgence of her charges appeared now condoned by Mrs. Welland, who brought her a large and gorgeous nosegay, which she presented with much pride.

THE STORY OF A NURSE

CHAPTER I

ADY LETHMORE'S dance was drawing to a close; the heated rooms were rapidly emptying, and the few remaining guests were mostly occupied in the supper-room.

'Let us have this waltz together, Miss Lethmore; for the first time to-night there is room to dance. Or, perhaps, you would rather have some supper? You look tired.'

'No; let us dance it; it will be our last waltz, I expect, Major Edis.'

'Why? Are you engaged to a curate who objects to dancing?'

'No; but I am going away to-morrow for two years; and that means for ever in society, doesn't it?'

'But where are you going?'

'I am going to the East-end Hospital to learn nursing.'

'Oh, but your mother won't let you, you know. Who has been trampling on your sensitive feelings, and caused you to dream such a sentimental and impracticable dream?'

Dinah Lethmore laughed. 'Why, Major Edis, the plan is two years old, and all the arrangements have been decided on for the last three months.'

'And you never told me anything about it!'

'No, I didn't want it talked about. I know what people say when a girl goes into a hospital as a nurse; behind her back they say either that she has had a disappointment or is seeking a husband among the medical students; to her face they call her 'a ministering angel.' Now, none of these things would be true about me, so I prefer to slip quietly out of my place here, and into my place at Stepney, without a fuss.'

'But what are your motives?'

'To seek new experiences, I suppose; to escape for a time from the pettiness and monotony of the life I now lead.'

'If this is serious, Miss Lethmore, let us go and sit down in the supper-room, and talk it all over.'

Dinah shrugged her shoulders and submitted. Major Edis was an old friend; in fact, he had been her first admirer when, five years before, as a girl of eighteen, Dinah Lethmore had made her *début* in society. But before Dinah's second season came round he was ordered to India. Two years later he returned to England, having come in for a fortune and retired from the service; and he apparently returned to his allegiance to Dinah, for wherever she went he went, and he was always at hand to offer her small services. Dinah accepted his attentions but never courted them, and so the years drifted by, and these two still seemed content to be merely friends and companions, and people had forgotten to wonder when Major Edis would propose.

'Here is some chicken, and some champagne; you won't get champagne at the hospital. The fact is, you haven't the least idea of what you are attempting, and you will be back home in a few days. I have seen sick and wounded soldiers, and it is not a nice sight at all. And where on earth is the East-end Hospital? I have heard of it, of course, but——'

'It is in the S.E. district; we passed it that day we went down the Thames on the Lawsons' yacht.

'Have you ever been there?'

'Yes, shortly after Tony died.'—There was a pause. Tony had been Dinah's only brother; he was born when Dinah was ten years old, and she had made a great pet of the child, especially as she had lost her father about that time, and there had never been much sympathy between Dinah and her mother. When Tony was eleven, he was drowned while bathing with some schoolfellows.—'Just after Tony died, a telegram came one night for my maid Louise; her little brother had been run over and taken into the East-end Hospital. I went with her to see him. It is strange how we never think of the woes of others till

we have woes of our own; I had never been in a hospital before, but I can never forget what I saw that night. That was two years ago, but the resolve I made then to become a nurse has never failed me, though I have had to fight against many obstacles. Considering the difficulty I have had in obtaining my desire, Major Edis, I don't think I am likely to turn back in a few days.'

'Don't you think your duty is to stay with your mother?'

Dinah turned and looked at Major Edis with a whimsical smile. 'Don't you know that mamma is happiest without me. It is simply comical how uncomfortable we two are if left alone together; we have so few topics in common. And then I have lived her life for five years. Surely I may now claim two short years' freedom from this galling round of driving, dining, and dancing which has become a perfect purgatory to me. I do think a woman has a right to live her own life after she has arrived at years of discretion. Don't you get tired of the society treadmill?'

'Not particularly. I have not your youthful enthusiasm.'

'Well, but look at it from the practical standpoint. We have only threescore years and ten or so to live; surely it is bad policy to waste all this time in one little tiny sphere, whilst outside these narrow bounds the great, varied, passionate human life is beating. Oh! a boy can run away to sea, a man can travel, but a woman'—Dinah broke off with a laugh—'well, it seems to me that the only way in which a woman is permitted to come into contact with the realities of life is to become a nurse.'

'But you can travel.'

'In consort with my mother and my maid, staying everywhere at English hotels, and seeing only with the eyes of a paid courier. No, thank you; books are better than that.'

'Well, I must go. I seem to be almost the last guest; and yet I do not like to say good-bye if it is really for a long period. May I come to see you at the hospital?'

'You may, but you won't. To begin with, you could not find your way. And I shall be out of sight and out of mind. A week hence no one will even wonder why mamma is driving alone

in the Park. Say good-bye, Major Edis. Perhaps my ghost will appear to you two years hence at a dance, and you won't recognise it.'

'Good-night; good-bye.'

Major Edis took a hansom to the mansions at Earl's Court, where he had a flat, but when he had dismissed the cab, instead of entering, he buttoned up his coat and strode away towards Chelsea. He was restless and horribly wide-awake; he would do a tramp over Wimbledon Common in the chill dawn of this February morning. As he walked a vision of Dinah in her ball dress was before him—Dinah, with her queenly carriage and dark, mocking eyes, and those pretty lips which were so mobile and expressive. There had been no disdain or mockery about the face when he had first seen it five years ago—it had been a very bright but earnest face, full of girlish fun and girlish enthusiasm, and the hesitating speech and the ready blush had been very charming. Yes; he had been very much in love with Dinah in those days, but fate stepped in, and he was ordered to India. He did not mean to forget Dinah, but there were so many pretty women in India, and he formed a habit of flirtation there, and got a very distinct impression that marriage was a failure, and a thing to be avoided at all costs. Yet perhaps, thought Major Edis, the young fool who rushed into matrimony in his youth was the wisest, after all; he had his period of Paradise, and even after the glamour was gone there were certain solid advantages remaining. What a quaint face Dinah had! How those great scornful eyes travelled over all within the range of vision, estimating, approving, disapproving. There were not many women so cool-headed, so free from prejudice as Dinah; a restful sort of a woman to know, and an intelligent companion. If ever he married any one it would be Dinah, she would never condescend to domestic bickerings; but, on the other hand, would it ever be possible to be on terms of familiarity with such a queenly creature? O Dinah! Major Edis had reached a gate at the far end of Wimbledon Common; he folded his arms on the top of it, and leant his face on them; his heart was beating rapidly. But the moment of emotion passed; he raised his head again; the small birds were fluttering and twittering in the bushes,

the cold grey ghosts of night had fled, and the warmer yellow of approaching sunlight lay on the Surrey hills. It was seven o'clock.

DINAH REVIEWS HER PAST

Major Edis stood silent awhile, and then strode rapidly down the hill, and took the first train back to town.

And Dinah?—Dinah was sitting still in her own room, her ball dress still on, the candles burning faint in the coming dawn. She had no man's refuge of rapid movement, but as she sat there with downcast eyes, her head resting on her hand, she also looked into the past and tried to gauge the future. Her past was the ordinary tale of a woman's life—girlish enthusiasm, belief and hope, gradually crushed by a knowledge of the world and its ways. She also had acquired the modern abhorrence of marriage. Study had seemed for a time to bring her content, but her physical strength demanded some practical outlet for her energies, and she grew weary of words alone. Sport, travel, flirtation, lectures, Dinah tried them one after another, and found them all vanity and vexation of spirit; at last her glimpse of the East-end Hospital revealed to her the realisation of the dim vision she had cherished in her heart; here was a worthy outlet for the strength God had given her, here was work worth the doing. Dinah was wise and strong; by persistent, patient badgering she at length gained Lady Lethmore's consent to her scheme, and now the time had come when she was to step forth into the path she had chosen for herself, and so taste the fruit of the tree of knowledge. How garish and tawdry looked the torn muslin, the faded flowers and sparkless jewels by the faint light of the dawn! Dinah smiled sadly at these emblems of the world she was leaving, and then tossed her finery aside and went to bed.

The next morning at seven o'clock a probationer nurse, in print gown and severe white cap and apron, knelt before the fireplace of a long bare ward. She paused for a moment with uplifted blacking brush, and a sudden flush and smile swept over her face. The contrast between the two mornings was too much for Dinah's sense of humour, and she laughed gently to herself as she vigorously polished the grate.

Perhaps it is best to say little about Dinah's first few days in the hospital; the experiences of a new probationer are at once too painful and too petty to be dwelt upon. But underneath all the weariness and bitter knowledge there was an undercurrent of surging hope and content—the work was worth the doing. Nor were all the duties menial: there were happy hours when Dinah knelt beside the matron and practised bandaging on a small patient; and other hours, when a small group

of nurses gathered round the house-surgeon while he gave them a clinical lecture on an interesting case. The intellectual as well as the physical

THE FIRST MORNING

qualities were called into play, and Dinah gloried in deciphering the mysteries of a Latin prescription, or in achieving the particularly neat

dressing of a wound. All social distinctions disappear in the nursing ranks, you stand or fall by your own merits, you are yourself: even your name is taken from you, and you pass by that of the ward in which you serve. There was a freedom about all this which filled Dinah with joy and pride; unhindered, unhelped, she set to work to fight the battle before her. 'I will not give in!' she said to herself as she toiled up and down the children's ward with swollen feet, aching head, and tired limbs 'I will not give in!' she repeated to herself as each new disagreeable duty was explained to her; and the reward came in after-days, when she had learnt through humiliation to know that no service rendered to suffering humanity is common or unclean, and that true greatness is to perform little things rightly and with dignity. There were nights which brought Dinah no rest, when dreams repeated the horrors of the day, and when she broke the stillness with a muttered 'Fool!' as some small mistake she had made in the wards fretted on her tired nerves. Dinah's nature was strong and steadfast, she could live through a great deal; she used to set her teeth when an operation was in progress, but she never turned away her head. If others could bear the pain, she could at least bear to look on. The nurses' hours on duty were long, their food was plain and badly served, their work was hard; but though this contrasted strongly with Dinah's former luxurious life, it was only the perpetual sight of suffering from which her overstrung nerves shrank at times. But even though mind and body were weary and harassed, the soul was satisfied. Nor was the ward always a scene of suffering; there were hours when all the patients were comfortable, and the nurses chatted cheerily together as they sat padding splints. Then one of the children in the ward won Dinah's heart. Little Phil had spinal disease and abscesses; she had been a patient for six months, flat on her back the whole time. She was a brave, small child, with masses of brown hair surrounding a pinched, intelligent face; but she was a terrible little heathen. Every morning it fell to Dinah's lot to dress Phil's sores, and the patience with which the small child passed through this daily ordeal roused the passionate sympathy of Lady Lethmore's daughter. Sometimes when Phil had had a bad night silent tears would steal down her face while the dressing was in progress;

sometimes she would cover her face with the sheet, and swear away beneath her breath. For Phil was only a child of the streets, her mother was a very objectionable woman, and occasionally 'had a glass'; at other times she was apt to be untruthful, but amiable, and would address Dinah as 'me dear angel.' Phil's father was also somewhat given to drink, a stolid sort of man, who plodded through life finding it so difficult to gain bread that he had thought for nothing else save to keep life within his body. Phil had always been delicate, and had spent most of her life in the hospital, though the house-surgeon used to discharge her, and send her home sometimes when the wards got very full.

The chaplain tried hard to convert little heathen Phil, and to teach her the doctrines of the Church; and Phil used to appeal to Dinah for confirmation of the chaplain's facts.

'Is it all true about the Lord Christ?' she asked one day.

'Is what true, dear?'

'I dunno; but what sorter man was He?'

'He was always kind, and always sorry for any one in pain; He made the weak strong, and He helped the wicked to be good. And there was a leper, all covered with sores, came to Him, and Christ didn't mind; He touched the leper, and made him well. He seems to have never tired of healing the sick, and He even cared for the sparrows which flew about the streets. And one day a man came to Him, and said, "Lord, have mercy on my son, for he is an epileptic, and suffers grievously, and often he falls into the fire, and often he falls into the water." And Christ healed the epileptic, but, O Phil! there is no one who can cure epileptics now, and no one will care for them so that they shall not fall into the fire!'

'I know,' said wise, wee Phil, nodding in the direction of the next bed, where a sad case lay. 'And is it true that when we've died, we goes either to 'eaven or to 'ell?'

'They say so, Phil?'

'Well, if thet's true you say 'bout Christ, I reckon 'e went to 'ell. If 'e didn't like people to be in pain then, 'e wouldn't like it now; and even if 'e couldn't 'elp them, I believe 'e'd go and stay with them. Yes; I reckon Christ's in 'ell.'

'Oh, hush, Phil!' cried Dinah. 'You must believe what the chaplain tells you, and I won't muddle you any more by my Bible stories.'

'But I like your Bible stories best,' said obdurate Phil.

On Easter Sunday Major Edis actually found his way to the hospital, but he looked terribly out of place and uncomfortable when he was ushered into the ward. Dinah was charmed to find him at a disadvantage, and offered him two umbrellas to hide between while he walked down the ward.

'But, really, Major Edis, I wish you could summon courage to look at some of my patients, for I want your help. See, now, there is a terrible sight in Ten bed; that poor girl was a general servant, subject to epileptic fits; she fell into the fire, and was burnt—terribly burnt; we all expected, we almost prayed, that she would die. But she is recovering, and so terribly disfigured, that apart from the fits, no one would engage her again. Her sole living friend and relative is a sister, who is also a general servant, and earns £16 a year. When that poor wretched remnant of humanity is discharged from here, there is no place for her to go to. Well now, Major Edis, I have discovered two nurses who keep a small home for invalids in Oxfordshire; I want you to go down to see them, and simply buy them over to take in and care for this poor creature. You may offer them any sum you like, I will find the money. Will you do it?'

'Willingly, if you will give me the address; but is there no special home for such cases?'

'No,' said Dinah sadly. 'No one in England seems to pity the epileptics, though I remember in Germany seeing a delightful colony, where they were taken and cared for; and in America they have special institutions for them, and try and cure them.'

'Who is the small girl?'

'That? Oh, that is Phil!' said Dinah smiling, 'and she is in disgrace just now. The chaplain came down and taught her all about Easter this morning, and shortly after he brought round some visitors, and he wanted to show Phil off, so he asked her what festival of the Church was being held to-day, and Phil repeated his teaching of the

morning so well that he went a step further, and asked her what happened on Good Friday. Now he had never taught Phil this, and the child had a grievance of her own connected with that day: so she promptly replied: 'The baker sent along a lot of 'ot cross buns, but the bally nurse went and kep' 'em till they was stale!'

'Oh! Phil, then, is one of the cheerful subjects of the ward?'

'Yes, but Phil is going. The visiting surgeon stood long by her bed yesterday, but in the end he sighed and said she was better and must be discharged. We are going to put her in a Thomas's splint, and send her down to a home at Bushey. The surgeon says if she has a good long spell of good air and food she may possibly get well; and he seemed quite surprised when I said I was prepared to keep her at the home as long as was necessary.'

'Well, now, I like Phil,' said Major Edis, 'and I think I might be allowed to keep her at the home. You are greedy, Miss Lethmore, to wish to keep all the good deeds to yourself.'

'Oh, you shall pay for Phil with pleasure,' said Dinah.

Very carefully and very skilfully did Major Edis use this permission to help Dinah's discharged patients as a bond to keep him in touch with her and her doings. It became an acknowledged thing that he should find out the most suitable convalescent institutions for the difficult cases, and make all the arrangements for all the journeys. The amount of work this entailed was astonishing. It seemed so simple at first sight to get a list of convalescent homes, and then write and find out where there were vacancies. But often there were no vacancies, and every home sent a warning that such and such cases were ineligible. The epileptics were the worst of all.

'Good heavens! Miss Lethmore, what does become of them?' said Major Edis one day, losing patience.

'They go home and fall into the fire again,' said Dinah, somewhat bitterly, 'until at last it comes to pass that they die also.'

'Why don't you start a home for epileptics?'

'It needs time, organisation, money, power. It needs a hundred things I have not got. People who are weak-minded are very terrible to me; I do not think I could work in an idiot asylum or amongst

epileptics. But, oh! it is wicked to say so, for their cases are the very hardest that have ever come under my notice.'

'Well, I will do my best for them. And now to turn to a more cheerful subject. Phil is better; she gets about the garden on crutches.'

'I am so glad, but I suppose she is as wicked as ever?'

'Yes, but the sisters at the home seem sensible women, and quite appreciate the *naïveté* of the child and her patience. Truly, the patience of children is wonderful. When I first went to the home, and saw all those small victims of disease, it got on my nerves. For weeks I went about with a vision of judgment before my eyes, and the judgment was being executed on little children.'

'I know,' said Dinah, 'it is so much worse to see the little ones suffer. Many a time since I came here have I prayed the prayer of Hagar, "Let me not see the death of the child." Ah, me! sometimes I could be coward enough to go and sit a good way off—as it were, a bow-shot.'

'When Hagar did that God sent her back, didn't He, and bade her lift the child in her hand, and then the child recovered?'

'Yes,' said Dinah, smiling; 'Phil has not been discoursing on religion at Bushey, I hope?'

Major Edis laughed and shook his head; he was not going to tell tales about Phil, she was far too great a favourite; he turned the subject.

Dinah was surprised and pleased at the hearty co-operation she got from Major Edis; ever since he had left the army she had been inclined to look on him as a cumberer of the ground, or as one who had put his hand to the plough, and then turned back. He had seemed to have few pursuits save hunting during the winter and riding in the park during the summer, and Dinah, who in her youthful enthusiasm dealt largely in scorn, had mingled contempt with her liking for the Major. He had committed the unpardonable sin once of smiling at her when she had expressed somewhat forcibly her opinion of the degrading life of London society; he had also confessed to finding amusement everywhere, and humanity as interesting in broadcloth as in rags. Dinah's philosophy in those days fell short of universal toleration, and had only reached

universal contempt; now she had reached a higher standard, and understood Major Edis better.

Dinah was bound up in her work, and was proving an excellent nurse; strong, trustworthy, and sympathetic, she toiled on unceasingly, and at the end of her year of probation was presented with a certificate, and promoted to wear a dark blue gown.

CHAPTER II

All this time thoughts of home had been few with Dinah, so deeply was she absorbed in the intensely interesting life of the hospital; but now came a granted holiday, and for one week she had to return to her worldly garb. How soft the chairs were! And how pretty the dining table looked, with its flowers, and fruit, and pretty china! Dinah was like a child; she laughed as she tripped about the house; she got the greatest enjoyment out of breakfast in bed, and she read the silliest novels with gusto.

'Really, Dinah, the sight of suffering seems to have had a very cheering effect on you,' said Lady Lethmore one afternoon.

'Do you know, mamma, we sometimes make puns at the hospital—nay, even play practical jokes; and one of the nurses sings comic songs awfully well.'

'But you are thinner and older-looking than you were a year ago, Miss Lethmore,' said Major Edis, who had dropped in to tea.

'I hope you find it an improvement,' laughed Dinah. 'I cannot say I think you are looking well.'

'I am getting old.'

'And *blasé*,' put in Dinah. 'You had better try my sure cure for all earthly ills, and become a nurse. But I fear that male nurses are not in great request, so perhaps you had better apply to a lunatic asylum to be taken on as an attendant. Why shouldn't there be a gentleman Florence Nightingale to re-organise and introduce more refinement into

the ranks of male attendants? Major Edis, the road to glory lies before you!'

'Unfortunately, I am not fitted to tread it. It is probable that attendants have to get up before the dawn, and wield a broom, and eat rice pudding for supper, and perform a few more of the extraordinary feats included in a nurse's programme.'

'You have left out blacking the stoves and peeling the potatoes,' laughed Dinah; 'though I believe the rice pudding alone would be an insuperable obstacle to you. Yet Father Damien did all these things for the lepers.'

'There is an article in one of the Reviews this month about Father Damien: you ought to read it, Dinah. It shows that he was not so perfect after all—in fact, that he was a very ignorant and bigoted man,' said Lady Lethmore.

'I don't care a bit about that,' exclaimed Dinah. 'He did his best, and died at his post. The most that a man can be on this earth is a martyr. It is not till we get to heaven that we become saints.'

'You don't take infectious cases at the hospital, do you,' asked Major Edis, a new fear flashing through his mind.

'Not as a rule. There is an infectious block at the far end of the garden, but it has not been open for two years. Sometimes we have typhoid and diphtheria cases in.'

'And do the nurses ever catch any of these dreadful diseases?'

'There is always the chance, Major Edis; and it does away with the tedium of safety, and adds a new joy to life.'

'If you wish to come home, Dinah, and forsake this foolish project, you can always break your two years' agreement. A substantial gift to the institution would easily quiet the authorities.'

'Thank you, mamma; but I may as well drain the cup to the dregs, and learn all that there is to know. Besides, I could never come back to the old life again; I could never forget all that I have seen; it is printed on my brain. No woman could work twelve months in a hospital and then go away and forget all about it.'

'And when your second year is finished?'

'"Sufficient for the day." There may be an earthquake or a revolu-

tion before then, or I may be appointed matron of a hospital at Timbuctoo.'

As Major Edis was reading some military magazine at his club that night, he came across the following sentence :—'According to the report of Dr. William Farr, of the Registrar-General's Office, the mortality amongst the nurses of the fifteen largest metropolitan hospitals exceeds the ordinary mortality of the female population of London in the ratio of forty per cent. ; and commenting on this, Professor Erichsen says that a mortality of forty per cent. is tenfold greater than that which is inflicted by the bullet upon any field of battle.' He let the magazine fall, and his thoughts wandered away to a scene at Portsmouth when a batch of troops had returned from active service. The streets were decorated, a crowd were gathered, and shouted itself hoarse with enthusiasm and pride. Mothers wept over the sons who had so bravely chosen discipline and danger abroad to the peace and comfort of home. Faded uniforms were folded carefully away, and the tattered colours were hung in some grand old cathedral aisle. Then there was a great reception, and medals, and honours, and riches, and rewards were showered on those who had returned after perils and privations to well-earned rest and repose. And what, thought Major Edis, of the army of women who daily face death in the hospital wards, who have left their pleasant homes on the equally dangerous mission of saving instead of slaying? It is no battle of a day or a night, or a week, or a month, on which they are engaged ; these frail women stand in the ranks of those who wage perpetual war against death and disease. If they win a victory, there is no one to blazon it abroad ; if they die, there is no one to tell the tale of a life laid down in a great cause. Neither riches nor glory, neither medals nor applause, are for these women, and yet they have their reward.

Major Edis was half asleep, and he saw a vision of the future. There was a great city stretched out before him, full of life and pleasure, and change and joy. All day long its streets were thronged by a hurrying crowd, who searched either for wealth or pleasure. And in the middle of the city, on a hill, was a great lonely temple surmounted by a golden cross. Every now and then some member of the hurrying crowd

grew weary or sick of the rush of the streets, and turned aside and entered the temple. But unless illness or injury overtook them the crowd heeded not the great building in the centre of the city. And when a man went into the temple a sudden hush fell upon him, and he saw before him long aisles, but instead of pews there were rows of beds, and there was no music—the service was conducted in silence, and the ministers were women. It was a 'service' in the common acceptation of the word, for all the sick and weary who were worsted in the struggle without were here tended with love and sympathy, till healing was achieved. The ministers wore white robes, pure and unspotted; and when at rare intervals they went out into the streets, the crowd stood still while they passed, and bowed low before them. They were reverenced as were the Vestal Virgins in Rome. There seemed to be some Great High Priest in the Holy of Holies of the Temple; for when the ministers had done their most to secure healing, and pain and tiredness yet remained, round the bed of the sufferer gathered a kneeling group of the ministers, and a silent shadow shrouded the place, a darkness fell, and when the cloud passed away, and the ministers rose from their knees, the sufferer had also passed away, and gone to the Land of Perfect Health.

It was a strange dream, and peculiarly vivid; Major Edis used to call it his vision of the religion of the future. It enabled him to see the nurses of to-day, not so much as soldiers as priests; and to understand why the rewards of this world were not for them.

Dinah went back to the hospital when her week's holiday was up, and was put in charge of the male accident ward. For a time she was somewhat restless and discontented, but soon the new cases under her charge claimed all her thoughts and sympathy, and she entirely forgot everything else in the all-absorbing work which she found at hand. Perhaps one of her greatest consolations was the better health and quaint affection of Phil, who could now walk without crutches. After nine months of the country, Phil had insisted on returning home, and the old-fashioned mite made her appearance in the ward one day, almost buried beneath great branches of fruit blossom, and boughs of laburnum and lilac. She had utterly refused the neat little round

bouquet of choice blooms which the gardener of the Home had offered her. 'I reckon a bunch of them little flowers won't go far in the ward; give me big bits of that tree there, and jist as many of them def-dils as will fill a milk bowl.' Her choice was quite right—the big boughs lasted longer, and were far more refreshing to eyes weary of the ward walls than any little posy could be.

'There 's a 'eap of children at that 'ome, Nurse; once I 'ad to share my bed with one 'cause they were that put up for room. They wouldn't 'a' kep' me so long, nohow, if you 'adn't stumped up well for me. But, lor; some of the children made an orful fuss what 'ad scarcely anything the matter with 'em. You should jest see the gells and boys in our court, they 've 'most all got crooked backs or bandy legs or sores. Jim says it 's because the water 'ere is clayey, not stoney, that all our boneses wobble so.'

Dinah laughed, though a keen pain shot through her heart. Poor little mites with the wobbly bones! They would be amongst the vanquished in life's race, for they were handicaped from the start.

'Did you like the country, Phil?'

'Oh yes, I like it; it was real good at first, so quiet like; but when I got better and could walk about, I got orful tired of it. They 're an orful lot of softies down there. Lor! I did tell 'em a lot of lies; an' the gardener's boy he just knew nothin'. I 'm glad to be 'ome, Nurse, 'cause I 've so much to tell 'em down our court. They thinks 'eaps of me, 'aving bin away in the country; and I like to come 'ere 'cause there 's allers somethin' goin' on.'

'And now you 've seen how clean the country is, Phil, you 'll try and keep your room and your clothes well washed and nice, won't you?'

'If you like, Nurse, but I dunno as the country is any better'n the court. You make an orful fuss about the bugs and the fleas, but my! the country was jist crawling wi' spiders and erriwigs and squashy caterpillars. And the wums is orful, I think, much worser than fleas.'

'O Phil! but those are all outside things, and the caterpillars are so interesting, they turn into butterflies.'

'No, they wasn't all outside; the erriwigs come in at the windows

where the roses grew, and so did the spiders. An fleas is interesting—I sor some tame ones once that wos orful clever; but the caterpillars is all skin and squash—ugh! I hate 'em!'

'O Phil! you are incorrigible.'

'Maybe, I dunno; but sometimes I may come and see you, Nurse, mayn't I?'

'Whenever you like, Phil, in the afternoon; and mind you tell me if your back begins to ache again.'

'My! 'ow it did ache when I was in the children's ward and you fust come! You was orful green, but you was orful kind, and I just loved you at once. It's when you're real sick that you love folks.'

'You don't love me now, Phil?'

'Not so much; I reckon you don't do so much for me now,' quoth the cynical child.

That summer was a very hot one, and Dinah found her work very trying; in truth, she attempted too much, she was too strenuous in her labours; you cannot give your strength and keep it, you cannot eat your cake and have it. She tried to make a study of each of her patients, and came to the conclusion that she could learn more of human nature by a week in the ward than by years spent in drawing-rooms. A nurse comes face to face with the naked truth; man cannot clothe himself with conventionalities when on a sick-bed, nor control his natural impulses when fever has burnt all his strength away. 'They breathe truth who breathe their words in pain.' The nurse knows the mysteries of birth, she recognises the cry of agony, she sees the eternal parting between friends and foes, she watches the shadow of death descend alike on the good and the evil.

Reality—bitter reality—is hers.

This was the knowledge which Dinah craved, but with custom it had come to be the mere tolling of the cemetery bell, the story of death repeated to monotony, and until the tired ears grew so accustomed to the sound they learnt nothing from it. But all the cases were not serious, nor did they all end fatally. There were glorious moments when, after days of anxiety, the surgeon said, 'It is well,' and the flush of hope crept over the patient's face, and the smile of satisfaction deepened in

Dinah's eyes. One day Dinah sat beside a patient who had just undergone a serious operation; she was waiting for him to recover consciousness after the chloroform. He had been very nervous beforehand. Presently the eyelids flickered and opened; the eyes sought hers.

'Nurse?' he whispered, tremulously stretching out his hand.

'It is all over, Nine; well over. You have nothing more to fear,' said Dinah, grasping the outstretched hand.

A restful smile replaced the former frightened expression.

'Oh, thank you!' murmured the man, pressing Dinah's hand, and Dinah felt fully repaid for all she had undergone in the operation theatre.

Quaint, indeed, were some of the conversations between the patients which Dinah overheard, and strange the glimpses they gave her of the life of the poor. They were almost as callous about death as are the Chinese.

'Good-bye, Bill, I sha'n't be far behind yer, so, "Wait for me at heaven's gate, sweet Belle Mahone,"' was the parting between two dying patients.

'Is your granny dead yet, Jim?' asked a patient of his small visitor one day.

'Not yet, but she's mortal bad.'

'Where's the funeral to be?'

'At Bow, and we're all goin'. There's to be a kerridge, and it's a jolly big one, and the boss says he guesses he can get about eight of us in, and we may as well have a drive when we can. We don't get many outings down our way.'

On another occasion there was a fine old Scotchman in the ward who could not get over the fact that the whisky was administered to him by the spoonful. As he put it to his neighbour, 'Wat the deevil is the use of a wee drap o' whusky like that to go treekling aboot a big body like me!'

One morning Dinah found located in her ward a youth of nineteen with a broken head. He was a nice-looking lad, with good manners and a strong Scotch accent; but his blue eyes had red rims to them, and his hands were tremulous. He was remarkably reserved and silent, though his eyes wandered restlessly, almost angrily, round the ward, and his tightly compressed lips evidently kept back the words behind with

an effort. When the house-surgeon went his rounds, waited on by Dinah, he sat down beside the new patient to take the particulars of the case.

'How came you by these injuries?'

'I wass knocked down.'

'How?'

A slow flush crept over the boy's face and he answered not. Dinah smiled at Mr. Eversley, put down the inkstand and other accessories she was carrying, and went away, leaving the house-surgeon to extract what details he could.

With a strange sense of honour, Dinah never read the notes of the case; as a matter of fact it would not have mattered if she had, for the boy told Dinah the truth later on, though he did not tell it to the house-surgeon that day.

'Would it be possible for me to get a wee bit letter written?' asked the lad during the afternoon.

'Certainly,' said Dinah, 'wait till I have a few spare moments.'

Presently, during a pause in the almost perpetual work of the ward, she seized an inkstand and paper, and sat herself down by the boy.

'Now, Twenty, as quick as you can, please.'

'Dinna put a headin' to it!' cried the lad, leaning anxiously forward, 'an' write round and clear like if ye can.'

'All right.'

'An' just say this:—My dear Mither,—I hae been vera busy this long while, or I wad hae written to ye before. But ye will know better than to fash yoursel' aboot me. I am vera weel, and I hope ye are all weel at home. I send my love to ye all, and to Jessie and Mary. I am hoping to get hame next year. Your affectionate son, ALEC.'

Dinah wrote the letter without a word and sent it to the address given. She forbore to call to Twenty's mind that he had given the name of Tom Smith on entering, and that this letter was signed Alec, and addressed to Mrs. M'Dougall.

Twenty did not do well; the outward injuries seemed slight, but evidently the mind was not at rest. He lay there proud and silent, but the bright restless eyes, baffled and despairing, were never still, and it

was evidently only with an effort that the tightly-compressed lips kept back an occasional groan or exclamation. Dinah dared not try and comfort the boy by words, though she guessed dimly that the day of repentance had come for him, and that the thought of the past was working like madness on his brain. Gradually delirium came on.

'Hang the boy!' said the house-surgeon; 'it looks to me like D. T., and he swore to me he never drank when I taxed him with it.'

'It is not a serious case, Mr. Eversley, is it?'

'It may be. I am afraid of meningitis, and he has neither friends nor relatives.'

'Oh yes, he has. I wrote to his mother for him the first day he came in.'

'More lies!' said the surgeon briefly; 'you had better write to his mother again.'

So Dinah wrote a very guarded letter to Mrs M'Dougall far away in her Argyleshire cottage, with the result that three days later a self-contained upright old woman, with grey hair, and deeply-lined face, walked into the ward, and sat herself down by Twenty bed. Dinah was pleased to note how respectable and dignified the old woman was; she had fancied the lad was of better station than most of her patients, and there was more chance of recovery for him if he inherited the constitution of this noble old Scotchwoman. His father, Dinah discovered, was a sober and honest farmer, but how this lad had drifted away to London so early, and gone so utterly to the bad, Dinah did not learn.

The delirium was severe, and those lips, now beyond all control, told the old, old story of sin and shame, culminating in a drunken row and a broken head, and this serious illness. Mrs. M'Dougall sat silently by her boy, controlling the wandering hands, trying to hush the babbling tongue, and at all times keeping the nurses and patients as far away as possible. She hovered round the bed perpetually, trying nobly to keep others from learning the awful story she was learning herself for the first time.

Mr. Eversley had written 'meningitis' on the diagnosis card above the bed, but the visiting physician had crossed it out, because he did not believe in recovery from meningitis, and it was evident that Alec was

recovering. His temperature dropped suddenly, the delirium ceased, and the wonderful blue eyes gazed with astonishment into his mother's face. There was a long convalescence, and now Mrs. M'Dougall showed herself in another character. She was grateful to the nurses, and wanted to do all their sweeping and hard work for them, and she trotted about from bed to bed, explaining to the patients how her son had been knocked down by a passing cart, and what a good lad he had always been; he had not, of course, known what he was saying when he was delirious—'Folks wi' sair heads just say things contrary-wise, as every intelligent body knows,' she would conclude, and then she would trot back again to sit beside Twenty bed.

Alec was still very silent, but the lips were no longer tightly closed, and the blue eyes were wistful—not proud and despairing. One evening, after his mother had gone, Dinah noticed that Alec had buried his face in his pillow, and that his shoulders were shaking. She drew a screen round the bed, and went swiftly along to Mr. Eversley's room.

'May I give Twenty a small dose of sal volatile?—he is hysterical.'

'Yes; shall I come to him?'

'No, I will send for you if it is necessary.'

Dinah gave Twenty the sal volatile, and left him alone awhile. Then she went to make his bed for the night.

'Can I do anything for you, Alec?' she asked, using his own name for the first time.

'No—no one can do aught for me; I am a fule!' was the reply.

'You are weak just now, Alec, it is only natural you should feel depressed. You will be quite cheerful again as your strength comes back.'

'Havena ye heard it said, Nurse, that a man never gets the better o' the drink?'

'I have heard it, Alec, but it is a lie. If a man wishes he can cure himself. Wait a minute'—she flew to a small kitchen at the end of the ward, and warmed some beef-tea—'Drink that, Alec,' she said; then as he drank she asked, 'Was the craving for drink coming over you this evening?'

'A little; and, oh! I doubt if I can ever keep straight. I have tried before, and have always failed.'

'O Alec, and you not twenty yet! Look here; you will be going home with your mother when you leave here; well, stay at home a month, and all that time take plenty of strong coffee and beef-tea. Never go longer than two hours without food. And I will give you some medicine to take. Before the end of the month you must sign the pledge, Alec, and I promise you, I promise you, you shall be cured.'

'I canna think it's possible.'

'It is quite possible if you will try. Think of the sin and the shame of it, Alec, and try and be a man. Think of your mother. There, go to sleep now, I hear Eighteen calling me, and we will talk no more about this. But if you will promise me to try, Alec, I will promise you that you shall succeed.'

Alec looked long into Dinah's strong, helpful face, then with sudden vigour he said—

'I promise.'

'And I promise,' said Dinah.

Before he left Alec became much more hopeful, much stronger both in mind and body. But at the last moment, on the doorstep, when he looked for the last time into Dinah's face, he clung to her hand as though he feared to pass beyond the reach of its support.

'Suppose I fail,' he said in a low voice.

'You have my promise and I have yours,' replied Dinah. 'Believe me, you shall not fail.'

His mother anxiously drew him away; it was right he should be grateful to the bit lassie who had nursed him, but he need not confess to her any of those terrible secrets he had raved in his delirium. For poor Mrs. M'Dougall was still under the belief that she alone knew her son's shame.

A nurse needs to be a little hard-hearted, a little callous, and Dinah, on the contrary, was becoming more sensitive every day. She was a specimen of the too-good nurse. She threw herself so utterly into the interests of her patients, that there was something almost

'SUPPOSE I FAIL'

vampire-like in the proceedings. It seemed as though they lived and recovered by sucking the very life-blood from her veins.

CHAPTER III

DINAH's second year at the hospital was drawing to a close. Already Christmas was past, and the days were beginning to lengthen; in the end of February would come her release. Somewhat wistfully and with mixed feelings Dinah looked forward to the time. She was both physically and mentally weary, and her beautiful eyes had a very sad expression at times. Yet she never for a moment contemplated completely forsaking the work she had taken up, but it seemed to her that with her wealth and influence she could do more good outside than inside the hospital walls. There were many links wanting in the chain of the care of the sick poor, there were many faults in the nursing system. Dinah could talk jestingly to Major Edis about the necessity for raising the status of asylum attendants, she could laugh at Phil's description of the children with wobbly bones; but these and other subjects seemed to her very serious if only she could have the time to think them out.

It had been a 'green Christmas' and a very unhealthy one—true to the old proverb—and ward duties seemed to Dinah to become more numerous and more pressing every day. There were rumours of typhus in a district near; and then one day, when the nurses were seated in long rows at their simple dinner, the matron came in and stood at the head of the table and rapped with a knife:—

'There is an epidemic of typhus, and the infectious block is to be opened, and cases are to be received at once. I want four nurses to volunteer for work in the infectious block.'

'Take me, Matron!' cried each nurse eagerly—Dinah amongst the number. The matron smiled, and chose four of the volunteers. Dinah was amongst the chosen, and her heart was elate. It is a great honour in the nursing world to be appointed to a dangerous post. These nurses were bidden to assume cotton gowns at once, and each was provided

with a red cape to mark her out as a creature to be avoided. Then, with baskets containing the smallest possible supply of necessities, they went away down the strip of garden and into exile in the infectious block. A cordon of red braid was tied across the garden, and they were cut off from their fellows. They made great fun of it all, in spite of the terrible work which awaited them; and no wards were ever more comfortable, no patients more carefully tended than the victims of the Stepney typhus epidemic.

Major Edis saw an account of the epidemic in the daily papers. He was at Melton Mowbray at the time; but he left his hunters to eat their heads off, and came straight to town. The porter at the hospital met him with the news that Miss Lethmore was on duty in the infectious block, and no one could see her. Major Edis felt inclined to swear, to use force; but he forbore. He could, at least, write to Dinah, and send her flowers and papers. He did this, and then went and sat at his club, and pondered once more on the extraordinary courage of women—Dinah, without one word, walking simply across to the typhus ward, taking her life, her health, her beauty into the pestilence house, and never dreaming that the halo of a saint was around her head.

Dinah was night nurse on the male side. Each evening saw her enter on her duties with darker rims beneath her eyes, for she had not yet acquired the habit of sleeping well by daylight; at most she fell into a succession of short unrefreshing dozes. For the first week her head was heavy, all her being slumbrous, and she dared not sit down in case sleep should steal over her; then, as the days and nights went by, she reached that strange state of wakefulness known only to a nurse, when long watching has banished all desire for sleep. The eyeballs are hot and dry, the eyelids fixed open so wide they could not close if they would, it is pain even to wink; the head now feels light, the brain active, every sense is alert in a strained unnatural manner. Dinah's patients were well tended while she was in this state; her eyes seemed all over the place, and she moved ever swiftly to and fro with intent look and bent brows. Every thought was with the sick under her charge; and they all did well save one—a case complicated with pneumonia. He passed from delirium to stupor, and one night, when Dinah entered the

ward and marked the purple shadows on his face, and the short breathing, her unnatural calm deserted her, and she cried to the day nurse, 'Oh, I cannot stay here alone to-night!'

'Why, Nurse! you are overdone! Shall I send word across to Matron?'

'Oh no; it is nothing,' said Dinah, recovering herself. 'Has the doctor been round?'

'Yes; he says nothing can be done for Four, and the poor fellow has no relatives here we can send for. He was brought up from the Midlands to take the place of some of the strikers. He won't recover consciousness again, or get delirious—surely you are not frightened?'

'No,' said Dinah, in her low weary voice. 'It is very sad, but it can't be helped. Good-night.'

The rain was beating gently against the long windows, and soft gusts of wind moaned round the lonely building. Dinah made up the fire and took a look at each patient; then she sat down beside Four to watch him die. Now and again she moistened his lips with brandy and water, or she moved a fan slowly to and fro before the immobile face. 'Life, Death; Life, Death,' ticked the clock in the lobby, and then the wind broke the silence by a mournful sough.

In the old days Dinah had regarded death with mingled fear and curiosity; she dreaded to see a human being die, and yet she had thought of the stories of the visions which came at the very moment of dissolution, and she had wondered if by watching the dying she could in any way pierce the mystery of the Great Beyond. During the last two years she had seen many people die, and she had learnt that the King of Terrors generally comes softly and gently to close the tired eyes. Sickness withdraws the desire for life, and unconsciousness falls on the sufferer; for Nature has decided that in most cases we should be blindfolded ere we enter the Valley of the Shadow. Dinah thought of all this as she sat beside Four; death was still solemn and mysterious to her, but she had come to regard it as the natural and fitting close to life, even as a night's sleep came after the day's work. Not by any mere watching of birth or death can we learn aught of the whence or whither of the soul; Nature knows how to keep her secrets too well, she leaves

DINAH SAT DOWN TO

no unguarded moment, and if she grants visions of the world to come to the dying, she at the same time seals their lips.

Swifter and shallower grew Four's breathing till, with one last little quivering sigh, it ceased, and the jaw dropped. Dinah rose from her seat and drew the sheet over the face, and put a screen round the bed; then she went across and looked out of the window. Her skull seemed to fit too tightly on her pulsating brain, and she was shivering violently; she knew quite well she was going to be ill, but she meant to hold on till the day nurse came on duty. The rain was over, the dawn was drawing near; great black clouds were blowing hurriedly away and gathering themselves together, while in the east there was a flush of angry pink. The long lines of windows of the hospital stretched away on the left, all faintly alight, and Dinah could see the shadows of the nurses as they passed to and fro. Ward beyond ward, and bed beyond bed, and that only one of hundreds of similar institutions. O God! what a world of pain! Dinah could no longer either think or breathe, she longed to throw open the window and feel the wind on her face, but she could not—dared not. She turned to try and walk to the door, but her strength was gone, and she fell on the floor in a swoon.

Phil knew all about the typhus, and was very scornful because the porter of the hospital would not let her into the garden in these days. ''Garn, ye stupid! Do ye think I dunno all about the typhus? Why, 'eaps o' our people 'a' got it, only they don't tell the orfcer, bless yer; they don't want to be brought to yer bloomin' infectious block.' Phil was very anxious to get word with Dinah, but she had watched in vain to see her come out for her daily constitutional. Phil had the greatest admiration for Dinah, and she wanted to get some hints from her on the subject of typhus nursing, that she might make herself useful in the court if cases escaped the eye of the sanitary inspector. In spite of her weak little body Phil did not know the meaning of the word fear. It so happened that, the night Dinah was taken ill, Phil had a 'bad night,' and when in the morning, somewhere about five o'clock, her mother came and roused her, and bade her get her father's breakfast, Phil used bad language. Her mother struck her, and then Phil bundled out of

the house, and limped hurriedly along the streets in search of a quiet place to cry in. She went straight for the hospital garden, and then remembered that that was forbidden ground. She stamped her foot, and gazed angrily at the big brick wall ; then she spied with glee a small ladder left by some workmen, and she managed by some means to raise the ladder against the wall. Then she climbed over, and dropped on the other side. Triumph killed all thought of tears, and she longed for more difficulties to conquer. She stole away in the direction of the infectious block, and felt fully rewarded when she spied Dinah standing in the gaslight, and looking out at the dreary dawn. Then Dinah turned away, staggered, and fell; without a minute's hesitation Phil ran straight into the infectious block, and knelt down beside her prostrate friend. One of the patients was awake, and was trying to raise himself in bed. 'Lie still,' said Phil, 'I 'll get help.'

She crossed the lobby into the women's ward, and, walking up to the nurse on duty there, told her quietly what had happened. 'If you 'll go to her, I 'll stay here.'

The nurse had no sooner left the room than a delirious old woman tried to get out of bed. 'Be quiet, ye old fool!' said Phil, pressing her two thin little hands on the old woman's chest. 'Lie down, can't yer?' There was a short struggle, from which Phil emerged breathless, but victorious. Then the nurse came back, and insisted on disinfecting Phil, and putting her into fresh clothing, and scolded her roundly for ever having come into the infectious block. 'But you won't catch it, Phil; you 're too wicked; it 's only the good little girls who catch things.' And she was quite right. Phil never contracted the disease in spite of her contact with the delirious old woman, and she crowed mightily over the porter because, in spite of his bit of red braid across the garden, she had found her way into the typhus wards. Dinah was very ill; for three or four days she was just about as ill as she could possibly be, and doctors and nurses looked very grave. But though typhus is a terrible disease, it has this advantage over its younger brother typhoid, that it comes rapidly to a crisis, and the result for good or evil is soon known. Dinah reached, and—while her fellow-nurses waited almost breathlessly—passed the fateful period, her ravings ceased,

and consciousness returned. She was in one of the small rooms built expressly for the nurses, and detached from the infectious wards proper; it was a bare little room, with a modicum of furniture, but there was a fresh bunch of flowers on the table every day. Dinah had gloried in her strength, now she enjoyed her weakness, and lay still, and dreamed the hours away. Lady Lethmore sent down all sorts of luxuries in tremendous profusion to Dinah, and the patients in the wards enjoyed them very much. The epidemic was practically over, and the new cases were few and seldom.

One afternoon Dinah was lifted on to a deck chair which had been sent by some anonymous friend, and wheeled out into the verandah, and there stood Major Edis. He only stayed a few minutes to congratulate Dinah on her progress towards recovery, and then left; but this was only the first of a series of daily visits which were ever increasing in length. Indeed, it had become impossible to keep Major Edis away any longer. He had gone to the physician and told his tale in such a manner that the physician had not the heart to debar him from sitting beside Dinah's couch. Dinah took it all as a matter of course. Her interest in the outer world was coming back with her strength, though she looked very weak and fragile as she lay with loosely-folded hands.

'It is so nice to have all one's doubts and duties cut short by an indisputable decree,' she remarked one afternoon. 'I really had been ill even before the typhus broke out, but I hadn't time to think that it would be wiser to give in and rest.'

'You are not fitted for a nurse, Miss Lethmore. No one brought up as you have been, and endowed with your keen feeling, can be. A more callous woman would perform the work equally well, and with only a tithe of the strain to herself.'

'Thank you. You consider my two years wasted, then—my short two years, of which I am so proud, the only period during which I have actually lived.'

'You know best if they are wasted or not. I only contend that you are not justified in continuing such work any longer. This breakdown in your health is proof that you are not fitted for the life.'

'But any nurse may be forgiven for contracting an infectious illness. Why, three months in a fever hospital is part of their training; they all undergo it as a matter of course, and most of them run gaily through the whole gamut of disease, from the measles upwards. Major Edis, do you want me to desert the service?'

'I do; and I am rather glad you put it in that way, for it enables me to refer to myself as an example. I was never fit for the army, but all my people had been in it, and I also drifted into it as a matter of course. I do not regret it; I think it was very good for me in those early years; but when I got out to India the life began to pall tremendously. I think that Indian life is the most unintellectual existence I know, and calculated in every way to lower a man's standard. This might not be the case with all men, but, for my part, I could see I was not fitted for it, so I did not hesitate to "desert the service."'

'I always wondered why you left the army.'

'Well, I have ambitions and hopes of my own, and none of them military. Perhaps, if you will let me, I will tell you about them some day. I want you now to acknowledge that you are not fit for a nurse, and I want you to promise to forsake the life.'

'I will do neither: I think I am eminently fitted to be a nurse, barring the accident that I am my mother's only child, and that I possess money which I suppose it is my duty to spend wisely. I certainly shall not desert the life; you forget that I have gone through my trial by fire, my two years of training, and that now there remains to me the easier duties of sister or matron—duties of superintendence and skill, not of physical labour such as blacking the grates!'

'What idiocy it is to demand such menial work as that from nurses!'

'Oh, I wouldn't have missed it for worlds! It just serves to show how much real grit there is in a woman. If only the paying probationers at Guy's and the other big hospitals had to clean the grates, there would be fewer sentimental and worthless nurses in our ranks.'

'You are contradicting me out of sheer obstinacy to-day, Miss Lethmore. I have often heard you say that all cleaning and scrubbing should be done by servants.'

'That was what I said during my own days of cleaning and scrubbing: but seriously, for my own part, I am content to have faced the drudgery. Did not the prophet Harris make Laurence Oliphant wield a broom? Did not Ruskin put spades in the hands of the Oxford undergraduates? I give it you as an axiom that sweeping and digging enlarge the mind and enrich the character. In fact it is only a man or woman of considerable power who can perform these petty deeds. My favourite among the Tennysonian heroes is Gareth, who cleaned the saucepans and kettles.'

'I am afraid I shall never be a hero in your eyes.'

'You were once, when I was young and foolish, and you were in the army. But I find that my notion of a hero changes almost yearly.'

'My notion of a heroine has not changed for seven years.'

'How dull and stupid that must be!'

Just then the nurse came to warn Major Edis that he had outstayed his allotted time. Dinah, left alone, smiled and blushed, and then fell asleep and dreamed. She knew that the conversation would be resumed one day, and she was content to let things drift.

Next day, when he came in, Major Edis was carrying a huge bunch of daffodils. Dinah gave a cry of delight:—'O Major Edis! Daffodils! Oh, do give them to me! This is like spring and sunshine at last.' She stroked the long gray-green leaves, and shook the golden tassels before her eyes. It seemed to her that she had never known the full beauty of any flower before. 'Oh! I have been looking too much on the dark side of life lately. It isn't all pain and suffering. There are the flowers and the woods, and the hills, and the skies. How I should enjoy a month—a whole month—at Dorking. I wish I were going there instead of to Brighton.'

'The doctor thinks sea-breezes will be best for you at first. Dorking can come after Brighton, and it will be prettier later in the year, when the primroses are out.'

'I think I have earned a holiday in the country, don't you? I think I need it to give my mind a proper sense of the proportion of things

And then I will come back here and see what can be done for Phil and her comrades with the wobbly bones. Do you know that it was Phil who found me when I fainted?'

'Yes, I often see Phil; she seems to have given you all the affection of her heart. You are the only person she mentions without scorn or contempt; she makes me feel quite small by the supercilious way she looks me up and down, and she cheeks the big porter at the gate, who is, in my eyes, a very terrible and very powerful person, to be propitiated in every way.'

'Phil is a queer child; I first won her heart by never kissing or pitying her. She is a child of character, and makes up for the weakness of her vertebral column by a tremendous amount of mental backbone. One of my first duties, Major Edis, is to found and maintain a home for small victims of spinal disease. If I had enough money I should also found a colony for epileptics; but I should have to go to Germany and to the States first, and study the subject.'

'You may have all my money, Miss Lethmore; I should like you to take me as well; then I could escort you to Germany and America. But with or without me the money is at your disposal.'

'Oh! I couldn't!' cried Dinah.

'Why am I to be allowed to have no hand in helping the helpless? Cannot you believe that I can take an interest in all these things as well? O Dinah, I am yours heart and soul; cannot you take me and make me useful? I have loved you for so long, dear, not with any passing passion, but with a reverence and deep affection which has grown with my life. Dinah, surely you have seen and known, you must have a little love for me?'

Well, it was true; Dinah had seen and known, and she was in no fit state to fight against Major Edis in his present importunate mood; she capitulated.

'But I didn't mean to; I didn't ever mean to marry. It is so horribly commonplace, and like other girls.'

'I didn't mean to either, Dinah; but fate is too strong for us sometimes, and surely we two are entering on no rash engagement we are likely to repent. I nearly proposed to you seven years ago, but I

am glad I did not; my love then was not worthy of you, my beautiful heroine!'

Dinah was silent for a time.

'I suppose it is no use fighting against a great affection, but I hate the thought of leaving nursing to go and get married.'

'But Dinah, cannot you believe that I want to be your comrade, and to help you in your labours? I would not dare, dear, to ask you to forego one of your plans for my sake. Let us work together.'

'But somehow the notion of work is going for the present; I feel it would be nice just to do nothing, but be loved; just to have some one to take care of me, and to think for me; I want to pass out of the active voice into the passive.'

'That phase will not last long with you, I am sure, but we will foster it for the present. You know, of course, Dinah, that it is with your mother's consent I have been coming here all this time?'

'I supposed it was; poor mamma will be pleased to get rid of me in an orthodox manner. I wonder if she will be very shocked if we go to Bielefield for our honeymoon?'

'No, Dinah, there I draw the line! I will *not* go and stay at an epileptic colony on our honeymoon!'

'Oh, but I am to have my way in everything, and you are to help in all my plans.'

'After that pause of idleness for which your nature is crying out. I know a villa in the South of France which is a bower of bliss, and surrounded by the most exquisite scenery; the meadows around are all a mass of flowers, and the garden slopes down to the sea. Dinah, if you will marry me next month, I will take you there for Easter.'

'I shall not marry till next year,' said Dinah.

'Then you may go and spend your honeymoon amongst the epileptics, for it's not me that's going to wait till next year!'

And so the two quarrelled and joked and grew serious again; and Dinah drew plans and elevations and studied architecture, for she meant to build all sorts of convalescent institutions which were to be perfect models, and Major Edis criticised the plans, and pointed out their practical failings, and they quarrelled again and became friends again,

and found out a wonderful lot of points on which they both agreed, and just as many on which they both differed. It was a strange courtship, during which most of the conversation turned on epileptic colonies and convalescent institutions; and instead of jewels, Major Edis gave to his *fiancée* all the learned books he could find on the subject, and himself went to Liverpool and Leavesden to examine such poor provision for the epileptics as exists in England.

This convalescence from typhus was the happiest part of Dinah's life, and the nurses at the infirmary all took the greatest and the kindliest interest in this little romance going on in their midst. It is not often that a courtship is carried on in the infectious block of a hospital.

'To-morrow I am to be disinfected. I am to be allowed to go free,' announced Dinah one day to her lover. 'You must not come here to-morrow, but if you like to call at the nursing home of the infirmary about three, you may escort me to the station. I am going across to say good-bye to the matron and nurses, though they won't let me so much as peep into the wards just yet.'

'Don't you think the nurses will laugh at me? I think I'll wait outside for you in a cab.'

'You are a nice hero, you are! I'll send the porter to drag you out of the cab. You will have to shake hands with all the nurses; they are most anxious to see you. They've a sort of notion you would like to be married in the hospital chapel, and they propose to give you a photograph of a group of patients as a wedding present.'

And truly when Major Edis presented himself at the nursing home he found himself surrounded by a bevy of fair women in uniform, who were very frank and cordial with their congratulations. Marriage was a strange and infrequent episode in their view of life, and they seemed rather sorry for Dinah, regarding her almost as a deserter, or as one who had been ignominiously discharged as unfit for further service. And Dinah? She was not sure whether it was a sad or a joyful departure; she had a sneaking remembrance of old vows against marriage, yet she could not but rejoice in this new-found love which wrapped her round so fondly, shutting out all the sin and suffering, and opening her eyes once more to the many beauties of life. It was sweet, very sweet, to be

loved, and she was not likely to forget her mission to the wee children with the wobbly bones, for the passionate parting kiss of Phil burnt on

PHIL'S PASSIONATE PARTING KISS

her lips as she bade the child farewell at the door of the East-end Hospital.

A WILFUL SCOTCH LADDIE

ETURNING from a rapid constitutional which she had taken strictly 'on principle,' as she owned to herself with a rather amused smile, Sister Mona encountered one of her nurses at the door of her own room.

Her energetic greeting, 'I am thankful to see you, Sister, that I am!' was responded to rapidly, whilst the cloak and bonnet were being hastily exchanged for the official cap and apron.

'What is it, Nurse, nothing wrong with the new burnt baby I trust?'

'Oh no, Sister, I think that little thing is going to pull through; she ought, she 's so good, and I 've let her mother sit by her, and she 's a sensible woman and has a first-rate idea of keeping the child quiet and warm. No, it 's John again; that boy beats me, Sister, he really does, he 's so strong and his voice is so big, and he says he 's not going to mind anybody but you, and he 's tossing round till I 'm frightened about his leg. Mr. Smithson came in just now, and he said if John was not kept quiet he 'd lose the leg after all. I really could have cried, he spoke in such a cross way; and to make it worse he finished up, "Why, Nurse, I never thought you 'd let one of the children beat you like this, you generally coax them into such extraordinary goodness. I 've often told the students that if they mean to make a special study of youngsters, they ought to serve an apprenticeship to Nurse Ray." And then as he left the ward he said, "I leave that leg to Sister and you, Nurse, and if we save it, you shall share the credit."'

'Shows his sense; that's a wise young man, and we won't disappoint him. I 'll come to John at once,' said Sister briskly, and down the

ward she strolled, casting words of greeting and of criticism pretty freely, as she glanced from side to side at the occupants of the cots.

Could the boy by whose side she quietly seated herself be indeed the one whose perversity had fairly wearied out the most long-suffering of nurses? Surely not! This little lad lay quite still, the leg spoken of with such anxiety by doctor and nurse was in an admirable position, as Sister saw at a glance. The boy's head was quietly settled on the white pillow, and the unruly red hair was not more disordered than usual; but the cheeks were suspiciously flushed, and the eyelashes were undeniably wet; the eyes themselves were invisible, and a stranger might well have imagined that John was virtuously slumbering. Not so Sister; she smiled a little and then said to the child in the next bed, in a light, conversational kind of tone, 'Tommie, dear, if John wakes presently, tell him that I 've come home, and he can send me word if he wants me. I 'm going to have my tea,' and she rose from the chair as she spoke.

But John's blue eyes opened suddenly, and alas! so did his mouth, for he gave utterance to one of those howls which had caused Nurse to describe his voice as a big one. Sister hastily put her hands over her ears and exclaimed, 'I shall have to go away altogether, John, if you deafen me like this!'

'You sit aside me, then I 'll stop; but if ye don't, I 'll greet louder than that,' said the red-headed urchin defiantly. 'Ye didna tell me ye were goin' out, and I woke up after ye started, and I didna believe ye were really gone till doctor came. He 's rare cross about me shifting my leg, and he scolded, so I told him I should go on shufflin' about till you came back.'

'O John, I blush for you; and so you want your leg to be cut off, do you?'

The boy's face grew even redder as he muttered, 'Well, no, and so I didna really shift it a bit after doctor went awa', but I kept on pretending, just to vex Nurse.'

'Why do you want to tease Nurse Ray? She has been very good to you,' said Sister, with a caressing touch on the flushed cheek of the wilful little lad.

'I dinna ken,' said John, 'but ye see she 's no you—naebody is,' he

added, with the air of a person who has made a novel discovery. 'I wisna so vara naughty, after all. I made a noise and I waked that baby, and I was real sorry, for I like that baby.'

'Well, John, it is a pity, but I 'd been out a little walk, and I bought some scones to have a small tea-party with a Scotch boy. Doctor said that laddie might have one to-day, but I think it 'll have to wait over now.'

The Scotch laddie's face fell. 'Aw! did ye now, really and truly? Well, I 'll tell ye all the truth. I was very wriggly and cross, when I woke up, and I called out for ye, and when ye didna come quickly, as you always do when I want ye, why I felt bad, and so I howled a bit. Then Nurse came running up the ward, and she said, "Oh, do be quiet, John!" So I said, "I wunna then, till Sister comes." Then I saw that great big doctor was just behind, and 'deed I didna ken he was there, Sister,' continued John very pleadingly, 'or I wouldna ha' said that!'

'Goodness me, John! you don't mean that Mr. Macfarlane has been and found you behaving like that?' and Sister's voice was very grave now.

''Deed he has been,' said the boy, evidently on the verge of tears, 'just after my own doctor had gane; and he said, "Nurse, what naughty boy is this?" and she said, "It 's John Macgregor, sir, and he 's a bad compound fracture, and he 's not just as good as he might be this evening." "Does he often go on like this?" said the big doctor. "I 'm afraid he does, sir," said Nurse, "he got Sister up three times last night, and she 's a bad headache from it."'

'Well, John,' said Sister's voice, with a slight quiver of amusement which the child was too excited to observe, 'you seem to remember it all very well. Did he say any more?'

'Yes,' continued John in a very low voice, 'awfu' things!'

'Never mind, tell me, and we 'll talk it over,' rejoined Sister again.

John gave a gulp as if he had found something unpleasant to swallow, and then continued:—

'Well, he said, "Nurse, kindly tell Sister when she comes back, that this boy 's a disgrace to her ward," and then he turned to the

gentlemen he 'd got with him and said, "I 'm afraid she won't like that; she never lets any one know that the children worry her; she always says, 'They 're wonderfully good, considering all things,'" and then he laughed and said something about "Sister thinks children are far better patients than some old bachelors," and then they all laughed, and Mr. Macfarlane, he called to Nurse, "Don't forget my message."'

As the child ended, he threw his arms round Sister's neck crushing collar and cap unmercifully as he sobbed out, 'It wasna true! it wasna true! I didna mean to make yer head sair, and Nurse shouldna say so. My leg aches awfully sometimes, and you always make it better, you tell me lovely stories,' and he hugged her again, adding, 'Say it isna true!'

But Sister could not say that; she had felt all day that she must come to some understanding with the youngster. He had been so ill at first, that it had been necessary to humour him in every way, for his nerves, as well as his bones, were considerably disturbed by the very bad fall he had had from a see-saw in the play-ground at school. He had attached himself to Sister from the first moment of his arrival in hospital, and his affection was extremely exhausting to the recipient on account of the incessant demands it made upon her, in season and out of season.

John had now 'turned the corner,' as his mother said, and there was no reason why he should not learn to exercise a little consideration for other people. Mr. Macfarlane's unexpected visit happened opportunely, and gave the desired direction to his thoughts.

'My little laddie,' said Sister at last, 'it is true, I 'm sorry to say; but you 're not to be cross with Nurse any longer. You 've been ill, little John, very ill, but you are beginning to get well now. Your mother 's very glad, and Nurse is very glad, and I am very glad. So there are three grown-up people, not to speak of the doctors who mended your leg, laddie dear, and all these people think about you. Your temper has been a little ill too, I think;' here a smile began to show itself on the flushed face of the child, and gradually it spread into a grin, as the speaker continued, 'Yes, laddie, your temper fell sick when you had that fall, and I 've been thinking how best to physic it.

I will tell you my prescription. First dose:—Beg Nurse's pardon, and promise not to howl again.'

John looked grave.

'Secondly, there comes a sweet after the medicine, Sister to have her tea beside John, at once, and not to be obliged to blush for his rudeness ever again.'

No hesitation on John's part now, 'Nurse Ray, Nurse Ray, come fast!'

'Please,' put in Sister softly.

'Please,' repeated the boy with haste, 'Please come, vera fast,' and as she appeared with her usual pleasant smile, he seized her hand in his two fat little palms, and said eagerly, 'I'm sorry I teased you, I beg your pardon, I wunna scream again, Sister knows, and she's coming to have her tea by me, now, this minute. We'll let poor little Tommie ha'e some o' the scone, won't we, Sister?' he added with condescension.

And Sister went off for her tea-tray, feeling virtuously confident that nobody could ever accuse her of spoiling the children.

After that evening a marked change in John's behaviour was observed. Not that he became so unnaturally good as to make his friends anxious about him. The Scotch laddie was not by any means one of the typical children who pervade the pages of a certain kind of literature. His utterances were never of that priggishly moral tone which is supposed to have such a softening influence on the sin-hardened hearts of parents and guardians. John's father was a broad-shouldered, honest Scotchman, and as little likely to submit to being rebuked by his son, as the child was to administer any such preachment. The mother was equally well-favoured, and was immensely popular in the ward. She seemed to bring a draught of wholesome fresh air into the midst of the nursery party, who welcomed her joyously: 'John's mother, hi! come 'ee 'ere!' or, 'Hooray! 'ere's John's mother, an' she've brought us some more o' her new-laid eggs. Hi! missis! how many cocks an' 'ens 'ave you got to your 'ome?' etc. etc.

And the good soul would beam on the chattering throng, and laugh with the convalescents, and cry over the mortally-injured young creatures, till her husband said he feared his Jeanie would desert him

altogether some fine day, and take up her quarters in the hospital.

Mrs. Macgregor was by no means sorry to find her boy's fits of screaming, which she had looked upon as incurable, were gradually decreasing. The 'cute little laddie kept his own counsel and so did Sister, and in after years the mother often spoke of the early days when the puir laddie's fits o' temper tried her sorely; 'But he gat owre them beautifully when he was ill sae long in the Children's Ward. His temper got cured then, as well 's his leg, I 'm thinking. He was a dear, patient wee bairn, like maist o' the rest o' them.'

John's convalescence was a satisfactory and happy time to him. When his leg ceased to ache, he slept the night through, which was advantageous to others besides Sister! And he was less exacting in his demands upon her time, and far more obliging to Ray, whom he calmly annexed to himself, always referring to her proudly as 'My ain dear nursey.'

The leg having been very badly broken, took a long while to mend, even though John's evil propensity for wriggling was markedly modified since the day of Mr. Macfarlane's sarcastic remarks, and Mr. Smithson's forebodings that the limb would be lost after all.

But at last a day came when the Scotch laddie was declared 'discharged cured,' on the hospital register.

A few weeks later he appeared in the ward in great health and spirits, just returned from a month's visit to the North.

'There 's naething like your native air, is there, Sister? and so his father and I took him awa' to Scotland, and you 'll just see him run, will you then?' remarked proud Mrs. Macgregor.

With a glad pride in his eyes the boy started off, and as he pranced down the ward the height of his triumph was reached, for there stood Nurse Ray to welcome him.

'And which leg was the bad one?' said she.

A year after this, or thereabouts, just in the middle of the afternoon, a great stillness reigned over the ward; several nurses flitted noiselessly about, quieting the voices and anticipating all the unexpressed wants of the children, so far as they were able. The cause of the unusual

stillness was not far to seek; 'the doctors' were there. Not only the group of 'our own,' as the youngsters generally designated the younger members of the profession, but the great Mr. Macfarlane himself. He was talking quietly and rapidly to the students, who listened with respectful attention, whilst Sister and Nurse Ray stood near at hand.

Suddenly the silence was broken by a sound which disturbed every occupant of the ward, and interrupted the bedside lecture abruptly.

It was the shrill cry of a child—not one of the babies in the cots, no, this was the voice of a stranger, uttering a loud appeal for help. Some one in keen distress, not in personal pain, but in sore trouble of some sort. Sister realised this in a moment, and she turned with a gesture of apology to the surgeons, then moved off in rapid response to the agonised 'Sister, Sister, I want ye!' which again rang through the wards. Nurse Ray stood motionless as a statue, and the doctor went on with his discourse, but the former thought to herself with sudden comprehension, 'I know the voice, I 'm sure. Why, it 's John!'

The short lecture was over, the doctor finished his rounds for the day, and was going away up the ward; but at the door he found himself in the midst of a very unusual little group.

The central figure was a boy with a great head of red hair; his cap had fallen to the ground, and tears were flowing fast over his cheeks, as he said in appealing accents—

'He maunna dee, that he maunna! You mended me, and you must mend him. Oh, dinna say no, Sister, dinna let him dee!'

The little lad looked about eight or nine years old, and his shirt was whole and clean, but he was without a coat. The absence of this was soon accounted for.

There Sister sat, on a low chair, and in her lap, wrapped carefully in the boy's own warm jacket, lay a little white terrier. As the child's voice rose in his earnest plea for aid, the poor little dog lifted its head and licked his small master's hand, and then dropped back with a little moan. 'Just like one of the children,' said Nurse Ray, describing the scene later on. Mr. Macfarlane's attention was caught by the gleaming head of the boy: 'And so this is John Macgregor again,' he said with a smile. 'What did I tell you, my lad?'

'Please, sir, you called me a disgrace to the ward, and you said Sister wouldna like that, and she didna. But I wisna a disgrace long,' he added, with a touch of pride in spite of his tears.

'Well, what's the matter here, little man; do you want me to look at your dog?'

'Ay, sir,' said the Scotch boy boldly, 'and I want you to mend him, if you please.'

Sister lifted up a fold of the jacket and showed where the poor little beast had an ugly crooked wound in its side, from which blood was still flowing, though an attempt had been made to stanch it by the child with his own tiny cotton handkerchief.

'I'm not a dog's doctor, boy,' said the surgeon sarcastically.

'I dinna mind that, and Carlo needna ken, and I'll hold his head so he winna bite ye, 'deed then I will,' rejoined the boy earnestly.

'Well, well, Sister,' laughed Mr. Macfarlane, 'put the poor little brute on the table, and let's have some hot water, and I'll see what I can do.'

The results of the examination were altogether satisfactory, and as the boy picked up little Carlo lovingly after the stitches were put in, he said, half defiantly, to Mr. Macfarlane:—

'We're both of us vera much obleeged to you, sir; but please I'm no a disgrace to the ward, and Sister doesna spoil the children!'

'Here's sixpence for you, you cheeky little rascal! You can bring the dog up to see me on Tuesday, and take better care of him now. As for you, I'll send you into the men's ward if ever you break your leg again.'

MRS. JONES

DAINTY maiden who never needs to spend a single sixpence of her liberal allowance on the necessaries of life once presumed to find prodigious shortcomings in the methods followed by hard-working Mrs. Jones, who has 'brought up nine of 'em, miss, and paid me way, the Lord alone knows how!' And indeed even her patient husband hardly knows how his old woman has managed to make both ends meet, in summer and winter, in sickness and in health. It took two whole days' work at a wash-tub, in an employer's back-yard on a freezing cold day, to earn the trifle which paid for the bright feather in Jemima her eldest girl's hat. The dainty young lady told her in Sunday class afterwards that it 'was sinful waste,' and that she must tell her mother she should not be allowed to wear such things. However, Jemima rose to the occasion, and with bitter sarcasm remarked—

'I sha'n't go and tell my mother any of yer bloomin' impidence, but you can jest go home yerself and tell yer own "mar" as this yer class don't mean to come to any more Sunday schools as is kep' by persons as wears satin trimming on their gownds, and silk petticuts which they hitches up their frocks to show off!'

With this uncompromising statement, uttered in a shrill offensive manner, Miss Jemima Jones bounced out of the close schoolroom, and spent the next hour in descanting on her wrongs to every chance acquaintance whom she encountered.

Yet her mother, whose housekeeping and extravagance (?) were thus glibly condemned, was a bit of a heroine too. She had kept her children fed and clothed, and honest and truthful. Her husband gave her all his weekly wages—such low ones, too, as they were!—and then she, as regu-

larly as pay-day came, returned to him one shilling as pocket-money. When things were fairly bright she would propose his taking an additional sixpence, but it was an unusual red-letter day when this step could be ventured upon.

The youngest child was only two when the incident of the scarlet feather happened, and she was made a considerable pet by the whole of the family. She began to make it her practice to wait at the open door for her father's coming home from work, and directly he turned into the street he could discern the tiny figure on the doorstep which he knew would shortly greet him with a rapturous, 'Here 's my Daddy!'

She was so pretty, too, 'the flower of the flock,' he would say lovingly; and day after day through the summer the same scene occurred, and Poppet, as her family called her, was grown to be part of the interest of the street. There seemed no danger to fear; she was a cautious little creature, and always remained on the top step until her father's figure was recognised in the distance, when she descended the other three stone steps with infinite deliberation, arriving at the bottom in time to welcome him.

One evening he was later than usual, and Mrs. Jones came out and advised Poppet to come in, but the child begged hard to stay, and as it was still light and the air soft and mild, her mother yielded. The little maid was growing weary of her self-imposed task, and when her father appeared, the excitement proved too much for prudent Poppet. She started on her usually deliberate descent with unwise haste, missed her footing and fell, rolling over and over till she reached the pavement. The man ran to her and picked her up, hoping to find that she was only frightened, but as she clung to him she gasped out between her sobs: 'Daddy, Poppet's hurt!'

He hurried into the house and handed her over to her mother, but though the tears ceased, the poor little maid was very subdued all the evening. When she was undressed, her mother noticed several slight bruises and one rather large one on her hip, and the child shrank from being touched. However, Mrs. Jones had seen many falls and bruises during the years in which she 'had brought up nine of 'em,' and she

had every confidence that a warm tub and a quiet night would set Poppet all right.

This, however, proved an exception to the usual rapid recoveries of the other children. The days past on, and soon it was necessary to call in the doctor. Eventually, with many bitter tears, poor Mrs. Jones consented to resign her darling into skilled hands; 'S' long as its fur her good, I 'll do it,' was her one remark, as she left poor little Poppet in the Children's Ward recommended by the doctor.

It seemed that in the fall serious injury had been done to the bone, and an operation was necessary to prevent Poppet from being a cripple for life. And now came the moment when Mrs. Jones proved herself a heroine; for she sacrificed herself, her natural instincts and wishes, and she offered to keep out of the baby's sight until she was cured.

The child had cried bitterly at leave-taking, and it was probable that on each visit a similar scene would occur, and the doctor said the subsequent exhaustion would do harm to the little thing in her present state of health.

'You know, Mrs. Jones,' he said, kindly enough, although his manner was quick and sharp, 'she 'll be all right when she doesn't see you. They always are, here. It 's hard for you to hear me say the children miss their mothers much less than the mothers miss them. Heartless little beggars, aren't they, eh?'

But Mrs. Jones drew herself up with homely dignity, and remarked—

'*My* young 'uns is pertickler affectionate, and I don't hold with anybody else's bein' called heartless, just becos "out o' sight's out o' mind," as the sayin' is; but if you can cure her better if her don't fret, why, I 'll leave her alone. I spoke to the nurse and she 's a kind-hearted creature, and she 's fixed it for me to come in on visitin' days and stand by the door wi'out her seein' me.'

And for ten long weeks did the gaunt, careworn woman keep her word. A light screen was purposely placed to hide her from Poppet, whilst she was able to have a good view of the distant cot where the tiny figure lay. When convalescence began, and the child was able to play with some toys, an occasional ripple of laughter caused Mrs.

Jones to start forward unconsciously, but she always retired hastily to her ambush; and though the tears might sometimes lie wet on her cheeks, she never removed her eyes from the cot where Poppet lay. She was the first visitor in the ward, and the last to leave it when the bell rang out at five o'clock, and she always stood during the whole two hours, and scorned Nurse's offer of a chair with—

'No, thank 'ee, Nurse, I couldna bide on it, I sees her best standin'. Tired? Well, I be that, but it rests me to look at Poppet, bless her!—and you, too,' she would sometimes add, as she saw the confidence with which the little ones claimed their nurse's interest in all their small concerns.

The child got well at last, and was borne home in triumph in her father's arms. A week later, in response to the parents' urgent request, Nurse called at their home to see the little maid, on whom she had lavished love as well as skill and care.

She found the shabby house, and the poorly-furnished kitchen, in which half a dozen children were taking a meal which seemed to consist of thick slices of bread, spread sparsely with dripping, which was accompanied by a pale-coloured drink called by courtesy tea. At the corner of the table, on a high chair between father and mother sat little Poppet engaged with a piece of bread and sugar, and when her parents, after a warm welcome to the nurse, turned to the child, saying: 'Look 'ee, pet, here 's your best friend!' that ungrateful morsel of humanity gave utterance to the words—

'Don't want no nurse now; she ain't *my* nurse; I 've got Daddy, and I 've got mother!' and so until the visitor departed, spoilt Poppet continued the refrain, 'Don't want no nurse now, *I* don't!'

PETER

ETER was a special kind of child. His own strong personality impressed itself on every one with whom he came in contact, and it was not possible to forget him when once you had gazed into his charming little face. He had very beautiful dark eyes, and a clear skin, and delicate features. It was a pathetic face on ordinary occasions, but it could light up suddenly, whilst the fine eyes danced with merriment, for Peter had a great relish for a joke.

When he first came to the Children's Ward he was very ill indeed, but there was no clear history of the commencement of his failing health; he was 'always delicate, but never ailed anything special,' was his mother's opinion. The doctors hardly agreed with her, as they found he was far more seriously ill than had appeared at first sight. After an operation he mended rapidly in general health, and then became a great pet.

His condition had made him an object of interest, even before his own attractive ways had won all hearts; as he quaintly informed a visitor one day, 'I 'm a very interesting case, you know.' His popularity was so universal that there was soon no person in the establishment who would not cheerfully sacrifice time or convenience to please wee Peter. Yet the little fellow's own affections were by no means easily won, and he only admitted a chosen few to his friendship. His general solemnity seemed strange in such a young child, and so did his dainty, refined ways, for his parents were a most prosaic and common pair of people—very poor, and living a rough, struggling life. His courteous little manners were all his own; evidently neither inheritance nor

education had had anything to do with the fine instincts of this wee specimen of humanity.

All the students petted Peter, encouraging his odd remarks, and inventing humorous sayings on purpose to obtain the merry laugh which exhibited the dimples and white teeth so attractively. When he was able to be dressed, one of the young men would carry him about the wards, or into the garden if the weather permitted, and thus the little fellow became known to many of the adult patients, and received frequent invitations to visit other wards. But Peter was weak and easily tired, and his plaintive request to be taken back 'to my own bed and my own nurse' had to be promptly complied with, or else the big eyes would grow misty, and the terrible prospect of seeing the poor mite in tears had to be faced. This catastrophe was always instinctively avoided, for even in crying Peterkin differed from most other children; he never wept noisily, but when in pain or in trouble large tears slowly rolled down his cheeks, giving a most pathetic effect to the delicate little face, and appealing remorselessly to the conscience of any one who had failed in translating his wishes.

Poor little Peter! it was wonderful what great love that scrap of humanity managed to annex on all sides.

The first time he was allowed to leave his bed his toilet was quite an impressive ceremony; his own extreme earnestness and his conviction that his pride and pleasure were shared by all-comers, fairly secured the interest which he claimed so innocently.

A warm dressing-gown, the gift of a ward visitor, was lent to our pet on this first occasion, and doubtless he felt very manly in such a garment; but a few days later, when a little suit consisting of a knitted jersey and knickerbockers was placed at his service, the small boy was speechless with delight. Hitherto effeminate garments in a dilapidated condition had been his only experience, and his eyes shone with gratification at his improved circumstances.

As the days passed on, however, Peterkin's general health began to fail again, and there were signs of the old mischief threatening him.

The days grew longer and warmer, and visions of fair country scenes began to visit the minds of many fagged hospital workers.

'I suppose you could not send this child to the country for a week or so?' said a famous surgeon one day, after a long talk with another well-known doctor about Peter's condition. 'He would need great care, and he must come back immediately he complains of the pain again. He would be the better for a little change, though I fear it will do only temporary good. Can you manage it, and where will you send him?'

'Yes,' Sister answered, 'I think it can be done; I know the place and the people, if they are not afraid to have such a frail little mortal; they are certainly trustworthy and capable.'

'Where is it?'

'On a fine heathery common, just in Hampshire; it's a clean cottage, and the woman has mothered other children for me before.'

'Well, if you'll settle it I'll help with the money, for I suppose some one pays, don't they?' he added with an amused smile.

And thus it was promptly settled to give Peter change of air. His mother proved glad and willing he should go, and the child was curiously anxious to start off to the mysterious 'country.'

Accordingly one lovely May morning he and his favourite nurse managed to get into the right train at Waterloo, and thence they started on their short journey. Peter was entranced with this his first introduction to the railway. His large capacity for enjoyment was fairly satiated that day, for every novelty gave him pleasure; after they started he never once glanced into the carriage, his eyes were riveted on the world outside the windows, and he watched it with unflagging interest all the time. On exchanging the train for an open fly at Farnham, Peter condescended to lie back in Nurse's arms, whilst the horse toiled slowly up the steep road, past the fine old castle, and the barren hop-gardens, at last reaching the glorious extent of common. Every breeze across the heath seemed to promise fresh life for frail little Peter, and he gave a contented little sigh as he drank in the sweet reviving air.

At last they reached the cottage, where an early dinner was soon served for the new little lodger. His appetite had been very uncertain for some time, and even the delicacies offered by his many admirers, although accepted gratefully, were frequently left untouched. But the

journey and the drive appeared to have acted as tonics, for he ate a better meal than usual, and afterwards started to explore the garden. There were some mysterious-looking hutches, which Peter's hospital experience caused him to refer to as 'those lockers,' and when they were found to contain rabbits, and when a hen-coop was discovered to be the home of an exceedingly attractive family of chickens, the boy's measure of happiness was complete. He consented to leave the pig for future inspection, and willingly agreed to Nurse's suggestion that he should have a rest.

His new bed was another delight, for it was covered by a gay patchwork quilt of wonderful design, and he soon nestled down under it, and fell into tranquil sleep. He was watched over by a dear old woman whom he had promptly claimed as 'Grannie' on his first arrival. She certainly looked one of the most picturesque old ladies imaginable, and had a big loving heart in which all children found a home. Peter was soon a prime favourite, and was always welcomed in her cosy room, where he found much to amuse and interest him. I believe he spent all the time he was enforced by weather or weariness to pass indoors with Grannie, and he always carried his own collected treasures for her to decide what might be kept to take home, and what had better be returned to the woods. As live lizards and dead birds were amongst his stores, it was just as well that he confided his aspirations to so judicious a friend.

But of course this intimacy was of later growth, for on the first day he had not much to say to any one, and whilst he slept on, under Grannie's watchful eyes, his nurse quietly took her departure. That she would have to leave him had not entered into Peter's small mind, and she knew he would strongly resent the proceeding. Still there was no help for it, and she felt sure he would not take long to reconcile himself to his new surroundings and his friendly care-takers.

And so she stole away, taking a pleasant picture in her mind of the child flushed with sleep, and smiling as if he still had knowledge of the breezy heath.

'He sends his love, and he says he 's all right,' was the invariable message which reached us day after day for a fortnight, and sometimes

the letter added, 'We can't bear to think of parting with little Peter, and as for mother, she 's fairly set her heart upon him getting well again.' So the little favourite never lacked friends; the sturdy country children looked with awe at 'the white-faced little chap,' but were relieved to find that his laugh was as merry as their own, whilst his relish for fun was generally greater.

But when the third week came, Peter began to flag again, and he complained of 'the pain' once more; so, according to orders, his little bundle was packed up, and he was brought back to London by the cheery, sunburnt little country woman, who said he liked the journey, only he was 'always tired' now. And as for the Grannie, why she 'd been awake all night fretting over the child.

'It do seem hard for a little 'un like this to have to suffer. Grannie says its different for we, and we can put up with a bit o' pain, but for a baby like that it 's bad, very bad! Why, poor Grannie can't take comfort anyhow, she says her heart's just sore whenever she thinks of him.'

Poor little Peter! He parted regretfully from his country mother, and volunteered a kiss, which was a demonstration of affection he seldom indulged in; he also sent his love back to 'Gran,' with great earnestness. It was pathetic enough to listen to the woman's parting words to Nurse, 'Perhaps he 'll get well enough to come and bide with we again, and see how the chicks have grow'd, so I 'll only say "God bless him," and good-bye for the present, my dear!'

Away she bustled, cheery and hopeful, whilst Sister turned away with a lump in her throat, for she knew that the cleverest doctors in the world could do nothing more for him. The returning pain proved recurrent disease, and only temporary relief could be secured for the poor little patient.

There was great excitement in the hospital one day, for a royal visit was expected, and the chance of seeing the Prince and Princess of Wales 'close to,' as the children said, was eagerly anticipated.

'I expect he 'll wear his crown,' said one of the children.

'No, he won't,' said our Peter, 'I 've asked Nurse, and she says she 's sure he 'll leave it at home. Perhaps his mother don't like him to wear it in the streets.'

'How d' you know whether he 's got a mother or not?' said a shrewd little cockney.

Peter looked straight at the questioner in inquiring surprise, then, apparently convinced that the question was asked in good faith, he condescended to explain :—

'Of course I know all about his mother; she 's the Queen of England, and she 's got a crown herself.'

When the visitors came round the wards, they spoke to many of the eager-eyed little patients, and perhaps the point which most impressed these keen observers was the Prince's politeness.

'He 's took 'is 'at off, I 'm blessed if he ain't! Why, lots of toffs as comes don't ever move theirs! I reckon this 'un 's a gentleman, hi, Nurse?' All this in a shrill whisper, rather distracting to his attendant, who was anxious her charges should do her credit.

'Be quiet, Tommy dear; I 'll tell you anything you like after,' she said under her breath.

'Oh, I say!' continued the irrepressible Tommie, 'jest you look, he 's a-carryin' 'is 'at all the time! He 's talking to Sister ever so friendly, my eye! I wish he 'd look at me!'

But Tommie was struck dumb unexpectedly, for he found a beautiful lady was standing by his cot, holding out a yellow rose to him, and he took it in shy silence, whilst he stared solemnly up at the bright eyes which met his so frankly.

'What 's your name, little man?' said the Prince to Peter, meanwhile.

'Why I 'm Peter, the Irish boy,' replied the child; 'are you really the Queen's son?'

An amused smile and a nodded assent was followed by the query :—

'Nurse, what is the matter with this little boy?'

Her low-voiced reply banished the visitor's smile, and with a kindly good-bye, he passed on. But Peter was a proud boy that night, and quite realised the special notice which had been bestowed upon him; but he happily failed to realise why the smile had been succeeded by a look of deep pity.

Little Peter was fairly well for a week or two longer, often chatting

of past joys, and telling the other children wonderful tales of 'What we do in the country,' frequently adding, 'And my Grannie said I could go again any time, and particularly when the berries come ripe, so perhaps she 'll send and fetch me then.'

His own, or as he generally called her now, his 'London mother,' was pleased with his improved colour and increased cheerfulness, and having numerous other children and a struggle to make both ends meet, she accepted Peter's failing strength with much philosophy. This was more than his nurse could bring herself to do, and she watched him unweariedly, hoping against knowledge that he might live after all. She tried by every means in her power to brighten his days and conserve his strength.

The end came with surprising quietness one afternoon, and even the thought of the certain pain which he thus escaped could hardly make the nurses feel glad when they looked at the empty cot.

He was missed for many a day, and the letter which carried the news to the lonely country cottage was a dreary one to write. Sister heard afterwards that when it arrived there, the kindly country folk mourned for wee Peter as if he had been a child of their own kindred.

WILL EVERSLEY

‘ ERTAINLY, Will, you 've a right to hold your own opinion, and I sincerely hope you will manage to carry out your plans. But don't forget, my boy, that it will be a grievous disappointment to your father, so make it as little bitter to him as you can,’ and the soft pleading voice of the speaker would have influenced harder men than the son who was pacing the gravel by Mrs. Eversley's side.

He left off frowning and smiled at the dainty little woman, so pretty still, in spite of the streaks of grey in her hair, and the weariness in her bonnie brown eyes. The expression of patient endurance which usually characterised her face quite disappeared as she glanced up at Will, and a bright look of hope took its place.

‘All right, mother,’ he replied, ‘I 'll do what I can, but the governor's rather down on me just now, in fact I always seem to be put in the wrong,’ he concluded, bitterly.

He was decidedly plain, this broad-shouldered, red-haired young fellow, even his mother owned that. He was little addicted to the looking-glass, save during the morning's operation of shaving that strong square chin of his, and certainly neither face nor expression then called for admiration. In fact, as a school-boy, he had once volunteered the remark, ‘I say, mother, you 're awfully pretty, you know! It is rough on you to have such an ugly son.’ It was the only remark he had ever uttered on the subject, but it remained in her memory for many a day, though she thought it better to let the words remain unanswered save by a jesting reply. But now he had returned from College with no mean reputation, and he had just electrified his father, by a respectful, though

firm refusal to follow any profession save that of medicine. His father was a country rector, who valued his own position highly, chiefly because it was one which enabled him to indulge his love of study without fear of interruptions. A conscientious though common-place curate safely sheltered him from parish concerns, and his wife did the rest, by fulfilling as many of his social and professional duties as a parson's wife could possibly achieve. But she herself had ambitions and scruples, as well as delicate health, and so she wore out strength and spirits in the endeavour to do both his work and her own amongst the sick, the suffering, and the sorrowful, while he enjoyed cultured ease. But Will was of different clay, and, young as he was, Mrs. Eversley had already experienced occasional thrills, such as a quiet little hen might feel if she found herself rearing an eaglet.

'You see, Will,' she said with some hesitation, 'your father has always hoped you would succeed him in the family living; it seemed a natural thing for him to wish for, and he never took your distaste to it as anything but a boy's whim which would soon be outgrown.'

'I've no taste for turning parson, though it's doubtless a temptation to think I might live and die in Colesworthy,' rejoined Will sarcastically, 'and perhaps even marry Miss Higgins in course of time!'

His mother broke into a laugh as merry as any girl's at his conclusion.

'Not Miss Higgins please, Will dear, unless you're set upon having that particular wife; she would hardly be a daughter to my taste.'

'Nor a wife to mine, I assure you,' and Will's face lit up with a sunny smile which made it very comely in his mother's eyes; 'Miss Higgins's charms are conspicuous by their absence, and her voice is just like a corncrake's! But, mother dear, she's framed in gold, and her father's land joins the glebe, so the dear girl's an heiress and my father condescends to approve of her,' he added, somewhat defiantly.

Mrs. Eversley sighed and looked grave; she found a peace-

maker's career was by no means a smooth one, and now several more turns were taken round the pretty rectory garden before she spoke again.

'Wait till to-morrow, my son; I think your father will consent when he is more used to the idea, and then you can join the hospital in October. You have years of hard work before you, no more pleasant college parties, or rowing in the 'Varsity eight. Doctoring is a weary grind, day after day, and but a bare subsistence at the last. The money can be managed now, but your father will have nothing to leave you.'

'And what about yourself, little mother,' and Will looked rather anxiously in her face; 'shall you pinch yourself, I wonder, to give me a start in life?'

'No, Will, I think not, at present, and should it come to that by-and-by, we 'll share the small discomforts together, they will serve to make us still better friends.' And she slipped her hand through his arm and added in a more cheerful tone, 'Mind, Will, I don't say it didn't disappoint me at first, but I 'd rather have you a willing doctor than an unwilling parson, and I may live to see you a grand professor even yet!'

The shadows of evening had grown deeper whilst the two pursued their earnest talk, and most of the birds had fallen asleep before the conference on ways and means was ended.

And so Will entered as a student, exchanging pleasant University rooms for dismal mean-looking lodgings, whose sole attraction lay in their close proximity to the College. His landlady told him she'd 'had a many young gents in them two rooms, some of 'em real gentry, but others wos fast young chaps, she knowed. She did not mind a bit o' wholesome 'bacca in the 'ouse, nor yet a "bone or two" laying about, s' long 's they didn't want no hot suppers nor smoke in their beds, which wos dangerous, and a thing she could never put up with;' failing for want of breath to say more at the moment, she withdrew, and Will decided to check her long-winded confidences as far as possible in the future. However she found him a model lodger, and soon transferred him into her 'good books' as she phrased it.

Perhaps not even his mother knew how homesick the lad grew at times. The small discomforts of badly-cooked, indifferently-served food did not trouble him much, but he pined for air, for exercise, and even sometimes for a little more leisure. The theoretical and scientific side of his chosen profession engrossed him, and as one of the professors said of him, 'Eversley 's absolutely greedy for knowledge ; I never saw a more eager pupil. He absorbs science as if it were meat and drink.' The man to whom he was speaking, his junior in position, was an observant, keen-eyed young fellow, and he rejoined quickly, 'Well, sir, I hope he doesn't try to live on that nourishment only, but he looks like it sometimes ; I never saw any one so changed as he is since he came to the place, and he makes no friends.'

'Oh, he 'll get wiser presently, when he 's older ; I wish more men worked as he does,' replied the busy professor, and fell to talking of other things.

But it was later on, when his duties in the wards began, that Will felt himself a failure. He knew a good deal about medicine and surgery, about diseases and the symptoms thereof, but he knew very little of humanity, and he found himself brought suddenly into close contact with suffering men and women.

They were not 'cases' only, that was soon evident to him, and he felt personally ill-used, for he wanted 'cases,' and he had looked forward to them, but he had not expected this abrupt introduction to so much beyond and above mere diseases.

He grew restive, discontented, almost sullen. No one guessed at the thoughts which were filling his head. He was such a plain, unattractive man, proud and reserved, and more than a little scornful of most of his contemporaries. His abilities were brilliant, but they did not endear him to his fellows, and much of his shy reserve was set down to 'his beastly conceit' by other students.

The patients simply 'put up' with him, his touch was gentle, and he studiously considered their feelings, whenever he succeeded in understanding them, but many unskilful lads were far more popular than he was. In time he became qualified and got a good appointment on the staff, but he received only formal congratulations, and he instinctively

felt that no one in the place really rejoiced at his promotion. He was under Mr. Macfarlane, and the latter remarked to him one day when they were alone together—

'Young man, why don't you work better with the women? I don't think you are wise to hold yourself so aloof. I don't believe in their brains myself, but still they are up to many things concerning the patients which we men cannot learn without their help.'

'Indeed, sir, I don't hold myself aloof,' said Will Eversley rather dejectedly, 'at least I don't mean to do so, but I 'm afraid of them and they never like me, and so I suppose I 've got to make the best of it,' he added ruefully.

Mr. Macfarlane made a mental note of this reply, that he might endeavour, at his leisure, to think out how the speaker could possibly be 'the stuck-up young prig' which so many men thought him; then said—

'Oh, you 're shy, that 's it? Well, so am I, and with less excuse, seeing I 'm twice your age. Well, shy men are generally misjudged; they are thought proud when they are only awkward, and conceited when they are merely nervous; and heartless because they can't express sympathy, and so on. I 've had to put up with it, and so must you, but Eversley my boy, don't let yourself be crushed by it. As for no one liking you, why old Nurse Katherine, who is a privileged person, you know, says you 're one of the best men we 've had on for some time.'

'Does she, sir?' and Will smiled in amused recollection of the worthy old lady's personality.

'Yes, she says you 're anxious to learn. She sums up men as "those that don't know and don't want to," and "them as is ignorant but wishful to be taught."'

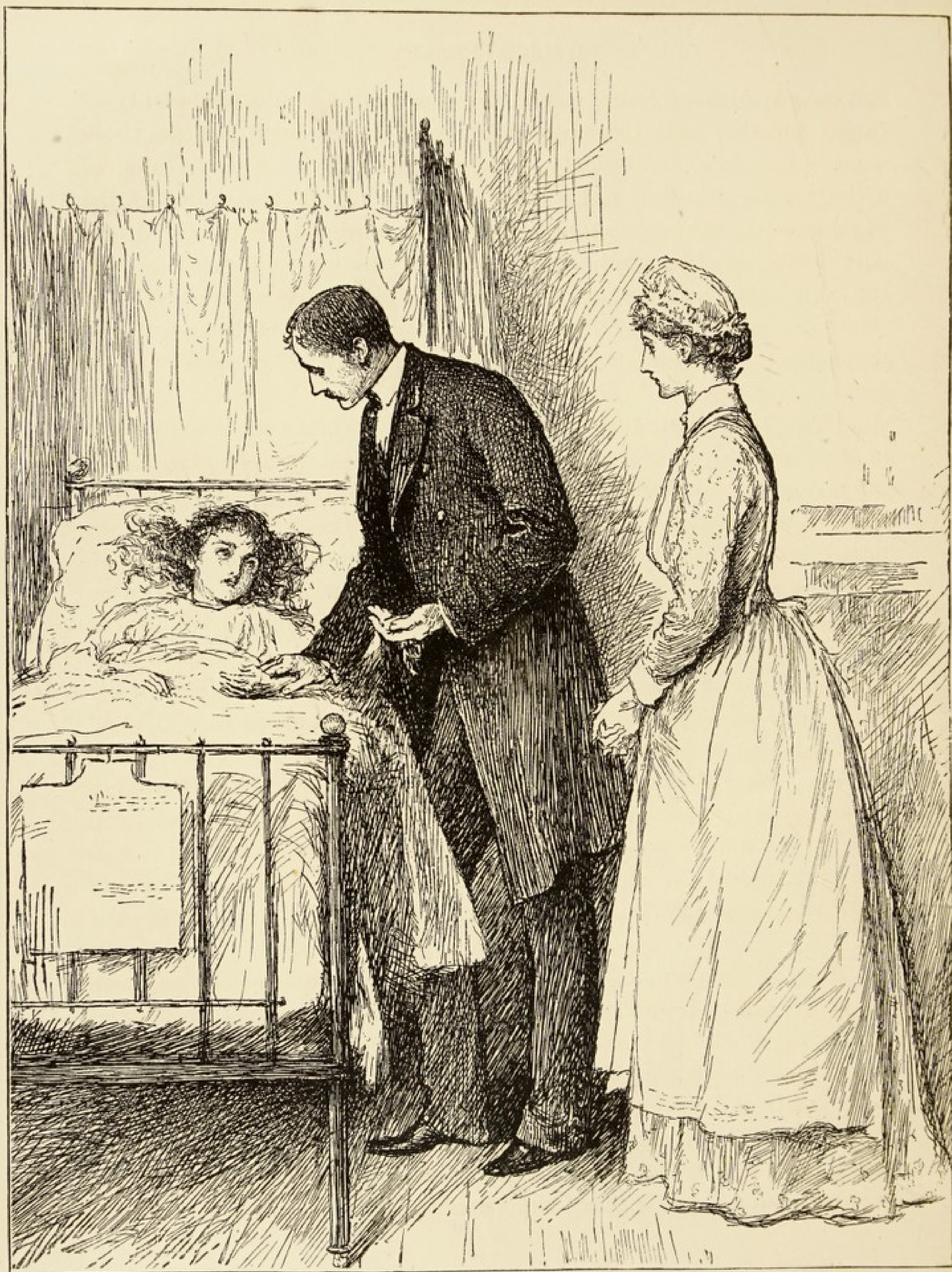
Will laughed outright: 'Of course I 'm only too delighted to get any hints I can from her. She doesn't frighten me! and sister Mona says that Nurse knows more of children than any woman in London.'

'No doubt of that,' rejoined his chief. 'Well, I must be going, and

just you remember, young man, that you 've got brains and plenty of them ; but they 're not much good alone in dealing with patients ; you want heart too, ay, and plenty of it,' and he strode off in something of a hurry, for he did not often concern himself much with the development of the coming race, but Will's powers had impressed him considerably, and he wanted to find out why he was so unpopular. On the other hand, stern, self-contained Will keenly appreciated the attempt made by the elder man to give him helpful advice, and instinctively felt that it had been no small effort to speak out so freely.

Some time after, Will happened to have several very serious cases in the Children's Ward, and they aroused a great deal of professional interest in his mind, and this was speedily followed by ambition that they should come to a successful issue. The children did not resent his brusque manner, and he would linger long over the cot in which a favourite patient lay. His attention and patience were rewarded, and three out of the four, who had caused him, as well as the Sister and nurses, very keen anxiety, made thoroughly good recoveries. The fourth was a difficult child to treat from the first, he was so badly hurt and so terribly frightened. He had been burnt about the neck and chest, and the friends had promptly torn off all his clothes, and replaced them by some inadequate old blankets, and brought him from a considerable distance to the hospital one bitter cold night, in an open cart. Poor souls, they probably knew nothing better to do, but it was a terrible ordeal for an always delicate child, and Sister shook her head when she saw him settled in a curtained cot close to the fire.

Poor little Teddie, he was only six, but his sufferings were altogether out of proportion to his age. He had a special nurse, who was luckily possessed of considerable tact as well as experience, and she soon won his confidence and calmed his overpowering terror. But he never quite got over the fright, and continued extremely nervous. Will Eversley was disappointed that the boy made no progress ; although the external injuries healed rapidly, the cold drive and exposure had laid the seeds of serious lung mischief, and the child had



'HE WOULD LINGER LONG OVER THE COT IN WHICH A FAVOURITE PATIENT LAY'

no strength to carry him through. One day the young doctor had been with Teddie for some time, trying a new remedy, and at last the little fellow became easier, freer from pain and discomfort. He lay back on the pillows, too weak for much speech, but he put out a thin little hand and clasped Will's cool fingers, looked at him with eyes full of gratitude, and then, as the latter stooped for a moment over the sick boy's bed, he found himself clasped round the neck and held firmly by two skinny little arms, whilst Teddie's hot lips pressed a hasty kiss on his cheek and his hoarse voice murmured, 'I loves you,' as he sank back again on the pillow.

'You are a grateful little chap,' said Will, blushing furiously, and looking round to see how many spectators there were of the incident, but Nurse was busy mending the fire, and as for Sister, why she had vanished altogether. After that day Teddie rallied a little, but it was only the flicker before the flame of life went out. However, his spirits as well as his health improved for the moment, and his mother began to take heart, and to talk hopefully of his returning home again 'some day.'

On Christmas morning Will, coming to pay an early visit to the child, was surprised to find his white curtains tastefully decked with sprays of berried holly, and a beautiful branch of the same tree making a kind of cornice over the cot.

'Nurse has made you look a little Christmas king, Teddie; I believe you 've all the best pieces of holly in the hospital, and I haven't even a bit.'

Nurse had learnt to interpret the looks of her little charges, and to spare them unnecessary words, and she now said quietly—

'I see that Teddie wishes you to have a good spray for yourself, Mr. Eversley, and he wishes you a happy Christmas, and he wants me to tell you something that his mother told me,' here something seemed to happen to Nurse, for her voice broke a little and she had to wait a moment ere she continued, 'Teddie's mother says it 's the first real Christmas that he 's ever seen, and he 's been lying here smiling for ever so long, with his eyes shining, watching the children turn out their "stockings," and he says he is better to-day. But indeed he 's a good boy, and he does not waste his breath talking.'

'I'm afraid he hasn't much breath left to waste,' said Eversley as he moved away from the bed, and his voice was somewhat husky as he spoke.

The children had a happy day, but the mirth was of a quiet order, and there was a great stillness in the corner where Teddie's bed stood. The quilt was strewn over with toys, and his unfailing interpreter, Nurse, explained to his mother that he wished them all taken home to his brothers and sisters.

When evening came, Eversley returned quietly again and seated himself by the child, who lay with closed eyes now, breathing very rapidly. Presently a faint sound of singing was heard outside the ward, and Sister came forward saying anxiously, 'Will the carol-singers disturb Teddie, do you think? He seems to have heard about them, and Nurse promised him they would come to-night. What do you think, Mr. Eversley?'

Will hesitated a moment in his usual awkward way, and his 'Just as you please, Sister,' sounded somewhat ungracious; but as she moved away she smiled faintly to herself as she thought; 'My poor wee Teddie has got into that young man's heart, whether he knows it or not.'

As she disappeared, watchful Will saw the child's eyes open and a gratified smile break over the delicate little face as Ted realised his doctor was beside him.

'I thought the carols was come; I want to go to sleep,' he said in his husky voice, 'ain't they never coming?'

But even as he spoke the ward door was opened and a procession of nurses entered, and came slowly towards him, whilst the grand old tune of 'Hark! the Herald Angels sing' filled the ward. Teddie lay smiling happily as the little band passed slowly on, and then he looked at Will with a sigh of absolute content, and the latter raised the feeble little head on his strong young arm, 'Good-night, doctor, kiss me,' and as Will's lips touched the little brow, the coldness of it made him shiver. He did not know what to do. Must he stay as he was with the dying child's face on his shoulder? Would the end come soon? All his usual self-confidence had deserted him. He wished that Nurse would come back, or Sister; where was Sister? He tried to turn his head,

but the action seemed to disturb the child, and he dared not repeat it. A slight movement of the curtain presently showed him that Nurse had not left him after all, she was motionless there in the shadow, and, apparently divining his thoughts, she stepped forward a moment, gave a nod in answer to the apologetic raising of his eye-brows with which Will glanced up from the sleeping child to her face. Before she retired again, Will had noted not only her look of infinite pity, but also the tears slowly coursing each other down her cheeks as she turned hastily away.

'Good God, does the woman suffer like that for these children? Why I thought they were only "cases" to her, and she always looks so quiet and calm. I never dreamt of these nurses feeling things acutely when they have seen so much sadness,' but his thoughts were suddenly arrested, for Teddie's little head lay like lead on his shoulder, and the troubled breathing ceased, and the child's sleep passed into that from which there is no awakening in this world.

'He has passed away peacefully after all, poor lad,' said Sister, coming forward and laying the motionless form on the pillows with the festive adornments of holly around it still; 'I am glad he had his Christmas Day with us; he wanted it so much,' and she turned to Nurse, who was drying her eyes surreptitiously, and added pitifully, 'Yes, another little life wasted, the friends did it unknowingly; ignorance brings us as many victims as either sin or poverty.'

Will turned away thoroughly roused, and puzzled indeed for that matter: 'Those two are just as upset about Teddie as if he were the first child they'd ever nursed. I felt a perfect fool standing by them with never a word to say. I think I'd better go for a walk.'

He soon strode out into the rain and plodded away through the mud, unconscious of both, as he followed his own bitter thoughts. What was the good of all his studies now, what was the good of anything? He had worked like a horse, giving up everything for his profession. He had no friends, he hadn't had time to make any, and the fellows were such fools, wasting their time, and often careless and half-hearted. He had small mercy for failures, this hard-headed and shy young man. He had never himself failed to achieve anything on

which he had set his own mind. At college his boat had always been the winning one, and at home even his father was now forced to own that his son was a complete success, whilst as for his mother!— Well, mothers were different to any one else; and Will remembered with sudden fear a line in her letter of this morning, 'I'm afraid I'm growing old, my boy, I feel so worn out. Try and run down to us for a day or two, early in the New Year.' Yes, he would do that certainly; and then his thoughts returned to his work. Teddie seemed his first failure. He had tried his utmost, and with unusual humility he had consulted older physicians, but they had all concurred in the verdict of 'no hope.'

Why should there be no hope in that case? Other children had lived and regained health and strength without half such care and attention as poor little Teddie had had. It had been horrible to sit there and feel so helpless. He had never felt like that before; it was simply unbearable to see suffering one could not control. 'Another little life wasted,' Sister had said, with a pathetic ring in her voice which seemed still in his ears. The path he was following appeared to come to an end just there, and Will was roused from his abstraction to find he had wandered into one of the dreary by-ways which fringe the river Thames. He looked at his watch by a faint gas-light outside a public-house. 'Eight o'clock! I'd better go back and see if I'm wanted in the wards,' and he returned with rapid steps along a more direct way than the one he had followed in coming. He was still some distance from the hospital when he overtook a man about his own age, hurrying along in his shirt sleeves, apparently indifferent to the pouring rain, and wearing on his head a clerical felt hat. This it was that had caught Will's attention, for a similar wide-awake was always associated in his mind with his father's ordinary aspect. Besides, although it was no unusual sight to see a man abroad in shirt sleeves in those unfashionable thoroughfares, such figures were never in Will's experience crowned with hats like these.

Instead of passing on, Eversley stopped a moment and noted that the large bundle in his arms consisted of a very heavy and apparently restless child, wrapped in some kind of black garment. The light from the street lamp fell on his own face at the moment, and the man in

the clerical hat exclaimed, 'Why, Eversley, what luck to meet you just now.'

'And surely you are Redman?' said Will, greatly surprised.

'Yes, I've been living by the river for the last four years, and I knew you were here, but I am too busy to make calls, and I thought I should run across you some day;' the little man spoke in a rapid breathless fashion. 'Can you help me, Eversley? This boy's badly hurt; he has been jumping through a trap out at a warehouse window. I saw the boys at it hours ago and told them it was dangerous, but they love jumping into the mud, so I expect they went at it again as soon as my back was turned. They are not bad boys, you know,' he said apologetically, 'only thoughtless.' But Will was quietly taking the boy from the little parson into his own strong arms. 'Mind his leg, I tied it on to a piece of wood, for it seems broken.'

'Let's go on,' said Will; 'how was it done?'

'I think he caught his leg in a chain which supports the shutter which they were using for a jumping-board. Any way the other boys came for me half an hour ago, said they were afraid to go home without him, and he couldn't walk.'

'I suppose they generally do come for you, Redman, eh?' said Will, with that sarcastic tone which used to make the other man shrink into himself in the old college days.

'Well if they do, it's only natural,' was the rather nervous reply; 'I am always at their service you know, and the women fetch me to sit up with their husbands when they are a bit off their heads, and when any one's dying, and so I get hold of them in that way, and then they listen to me sometimes.' The good little man spoke in quite a deprecating way, as if he were impelled to render an account of his work to his present companion, but he was evidently anxious to make as little as possible of it.

'But where's your coat, man, you'll catch your death on such a night?'

'Oh no, thank you, I've got a capital warm shirt on, it really is quite lucky I happened to have this one to-day, I sha'n't hurt a bit. Perhaps you won't mind taking the boy into the hospital? You see

the porters and people know me, they 're always most kind, but I really was beginning to wonder how I should manage when you came up. It is a little awkward, you see, for anything like this to get about the parish; it makes so much talk. I had only my cassock on when the boys met me, coming out of church after evensong, and I did not know there had been such a serious accident, so I just ran down without getting any help. Stupid, of course, very stupid. I never was clever like you, Eversley, I don't seem to look beyond the duty of the moment. Perhaps you would ask one of the porters to take care of the cassock for me, after the child's in bed? I 'll just go and get a coat and come and see how he is presently!'

The quaint little figure went off through the darkness as they reached the hospital gates, and Will laid down his rather restless burden on the couch in the Casualty Room. The surgeon and nurse came at once, and the boy, a funny, frightened little chap, explained with true cockney sharpness the details of the accident. 'Well, I wonder it 's not worse,' said the two doctors together, but Nurse thought to herself, 'I should think this is bad enough!'

It was a horrible wound, but the improvised splint had answered its purpose, and the child looked healthy and likely to prove a satisfactory kind of patient.

'Who picked you up, little man?' said Will with some curiosity.

'Why him as carried me, of course, Father Francis; I guess I won't go jumping again when the Father tells me to stop it.'

Nurse exclaimed at once, 'Father Francis! Oh, that accounts for the cassock. Last time it was his only greatcoat he put round a child whose clothes caught fire.'

'I never heard of that,' said the surgeon on duty; 'what was it?'

'The coat was quite spoilt,' replied Nurse, 'and the story got round to his people, and the poor things clubbed together; every one who 'd a few pence came forward and they bought him another. One of the porters lives down there and he told me about it; and when they took the new coat to the Clergy House, the dear little man was so pleased and surprised, and he tells every one who goes down there about his people being so careful over his comforts—not that he has many of those, I

imagine. I don't care for Ritualists myself,' she concluded, 'but there would be fewer dissenters if there were more churchmen like Father Francis.'

As Will went off to wash his hands, before going to the wards, 'more churchmen like Father Francis' echoed in his ears. So this eager, nervous man, who had seemed so humbly anxious to deprecate his criticisms, was actually that staunch little parson the well-known Father Francis!—a man who had succeeded in gaining respect from the roughest of his parishioners. He was the man of whom it was said that he had gone down fearlessly into the crowds of angry rioters during the dock strikes, and by his bold speech had calmed many a tumult. Then Will thought of that same man at college, and how stupid and dull he had thought him. Why, even to-night he had spoken of having 'tied the boy's leg to a piece of wood,' in such a way that Eversley was quite unprepared for the neat and efficient temporary splint revealed when the cassock was removed.

'He does not make much talk of his own merits, whatever his precious parish may do. I wonder what my father would have said to the scene to-night,' and Will smiled at the thought.

That night as he went his last rounds through the wards, those patients who were awake did not fail to notice that the doctor was unusually chatty. He had a remark for each of them, and seemed quite a different man; the nurses commented on it afterwards, and said, 'Really he was quite pleasant,' and 'What a pity he isn't always the same!'

Next morning Will received a telegram, 'Come at once, mother dangerously ill.' He had to make arrangements for a substitute as well as to get the necessary permission to leave his post, but it was managed for him with as little delay as possible, and he was soon in the train journeying westward. The brief telegram seemed imprinted on his brain, 'dangerously ill,'—impossible! Yet he thought of her yesterday's letter, in which she had spoken of being 'quite worn out'; but surely it could not be his mother of whom these things were said? She was so bright and so pretty, death could not be surely approaching *her*? His father, in a certain gracefully indolent way, was fond of talking about dying, and it had roused no feeling beyond impatience in the mind of his

practical son, but this was different. Death and his living, loving mother had surely nothing in common? Why should they talk of 'danger' in such a connection? It must be some stupid blunder at the office; he could not, nay, he would not believe it. He took a book out of his pocket and tried hard to read it, to do anything but think of that telegram. But now nature proved stronger than his will, and during most of the journey he sat looking idly through the window, thinking of nothing else.

At one of the stations a child got in with her mother, and seeing that she was lame and walked with crutches, Will stooped down and lifted her up. She smiled in his face, and said, 'Thank you, doctor,' much to his surprise. 'Do you know me, little woman?'

'Oh no, I 've never seen you afore, but I knows you be a doctor, 'cause you lifted me right; most everybody hurts me 'cept nurses and doctors. I likes nurses best, o' course, but I don't mind doctors,' she added with rather clumsy politeness.

Then Eversley fell to thinking again; ought he to have brought a nurse for his mother? Perhaps not, though; his father might have considered it officious, and the household as well as the parish would all devote themselves to her service he well knew. At last the station was reached, and he found himself approaching Colesworthy. The porter had greeted him respectfully: 'I 'm glad you 've come, Mr. William: the lady is alive still, but there ain't any hopes.'

He nodded in acknowledgment of the information, but could not trust himself to speak. His father met him at the door, looking very much distressed and disturbed.

'I was afraid you would not get this train, and your mother is asking constantly for you!'

'Why wasn't I sent for before? What is the matter with her?' said Will, in a voice which sorrow made a hard one.

'We only got alarmed yesterday, and there was no chance of letting you know; these wretched holidays seem to affect even the telegraph wires. To-day Dr. Arnold says it 's typhoid, or some low fever, he fears.'

'How could she get that?' said Will sternly, as he followed his father into the study.

'Arnold says she is thoroughly run down, and has been doing too much at Alstead. I certainly remember she said one day that she 'd never known such a sad winter before, but I did not fancy she felt ill herself. How could I? Your mother never will complain,' he said, with a certain amount of irritation in his manner, 'and the house is altogether upset; no one seems to know what to do. Will, people need not die of typhoid surely? I wish Arnold had not frightened me so!'

'Can't I go to her?' said his son, making an effort to stem the torrent of words; 'I must see her before I say anything,' and he opened the door and went away up the stairs.

Entering the bedroom softly, he saw a servant whom he recognised as one who had lived with his mother for years. She was pouring some milk into a glass, and went with it to the bed, and then Will heard his mother say feebly, 'Is not my son come yet?' and waiting only till the glass had been emptied, he advanced to the foot of the bed. There she lay, with flushed cheeks and unnaturally bright eyes; her thin hands clasped outside the sheets, her pretty hair brushed off her face, but there were more white threads than brown ones now, Will saw; and he noticed too that she was listening intently. He came close up to her, and the look of anticipation died immediately out of her eyes, to be succeeded by one of absolute content. With a sudden pang Will felt that he had seen that expression in little Teddie's eyes yesterday, when he found him watching by his side. He thrust the thought away. His mother should not die; he set his teeth savagely. Yes, he had fought Death for Teddie—and lost—but he would not be beaten again. He had gained many honours, and he looked forward to winning such fame as should be acceptable to his mother, and now disease had stepped in and bid fair to overset his most cherished plans. It should not be, he thought to himself with a sort of fury of rebellion in his strong young heart. And all the time he stood quietly waiting whilst his mother feasted her eyes on him, and seemed in no hurry to speak. Presently she said, quite quietly:—

'Will, you 're not half so ugly as you used to be,' and hearing such an unexpected remark he gave a short, startled laugh, and after kissing

her, he said hopefully, 'That's lucky for my patients, mother; so you, too, want to be one of them?'

She only smiled in answer, and said presently that she wished to talk to him, she had so much to say, and 'I may not be able to speak much longer; I think I wandered last night, I frightened your father; but there are things which must be said.'

The maid withdrew a little, and then Mrs. Eversley began to speak of what she had seen once in London, and how it had haunted her till now.

'Are you right to talk so much, mother,' interrupted Will anxiously.

'Yes, I must tell you before it's too late. Something must be done; do you hear me, it *must* be done, and you will remember that I said so. Room must be found for them, for all the poor sick people who can't be nursed at home; they are always being told there's "no room" for them. They had to stay in their dreadful close houses last year, when there was all that fever in London; all herded together, infecting hundreds of others, because there was no room made for them in the Fever Hospitals. Will, fancy if we were crowded like that, we must die.'

'Mother, please spare yourself, for my sake,' said Will, distressed at her agitation.

'I have much more to say, I *must* say it,' she continued with feverish haste, 'it's those three dreadful women whom I met in the street; I can't forget the sight! I had never seen such poor creatures before. We've nothing like that in this county, thank God for that! They were coarse and ragged and scarred, and one had a frightful black eye, and they seemed quite young, poor things! I noticed them because one was lame and the other two were holding her up; she was trying to hop on one foot, and the other was bare and bandaged; so I asked what ailed the girl, and they all stared at me, and then one said, "Oh, she'd been kicked, and now she'd got a bit of a splint on, to save her hurting the leg;" and then they had been to the hospital, "in there," pointing towards a building near, but the doctor said there wasn't a bed to spare. They seemed quite contented with his kind sympathy, and the poor

souls made no complaint, but said he'd advised them to go to St. Dunstan's, which was a good bit away. I asked them if they were going, and they laughed rudely in my face, and said the girl might quite as easily be sent to heaven, for she'd just about as much chance of getting there. It was awful to hear them, Will!'

'O mother, I wish you'd forget it! I'll do anything that you like, but it is not fit for you to hear or to think of such women,' he said, and his voice sounded stern.

His mother rested a little, and took the nourishment which the maid came forward to give her, but she went on presently:—

'My boy, if it's not fit for me to think of, it certainly is not fit for them to suffer such things. When they found I was anxious to help them they told me much more. They said such folks as themselves lived hard enough, and the best time they got was in hospital when they were bad, and even that bit of comfort was taken away now there was no room. I have never been able to get the words out of my head. We don't know anything down here, and I want those people to be helped, but I can't see the way, Will.' Her voice was growing very faint, and she seemed to lose the thread a little, and went on somewhat incoherently, 'No room! yes, no room, not even to die. It's very hard to be poor and sick, and to have no place found for you; very hard.'

Long afterwards a friend told Will the details of the story he learnt in outline at this time. His mother had herself taken the poor woman in a cab to St. Dunstan's Hospital, and had found every bed was full there also, but the medical officer had more resources than the doctor at the smaller institution, and considered the case serious enough to justify him in putting an extra bed into the accident ward for her. But the wretchedness of the three women seemed to have made a deep impression on Mrs. Eversley, for as her son sat unweariedly watching her on the day of his arrival, she suddenly roused herself with an effort to say to him, 'They were all so hopeless when they spoke of the poor creature having been kicked; they were not ashamed, nor sorry, nor frightened, merely acquiescent in that monotony of misery. There was no sign of expecting anything pleasant, anything different; no hope, Will! Fancy that! and they were quite young,—and there's no room!'

It was the last continuous conversation that the mother and son ever held; next day the former was so much worse that she could say little to any one. She was faithfully nursed and lovingly watched over, and the highest medical skill in England was freely obtained; but it was all in vain, and Death the Conqueror left Will vanquished and sore wounded by his fight. A sister of his father's had joined the Rectory party in their time of trouble, and now she offered to remain altogether with her brother, so poor Will was free to return to his work.

'What 's come to Eversley?' said a student one day, 'I can't get a rise out of him any way, and my chief object in life is gone.'

'His chief object in life seems gone too,' said another; 'I never saw a fellow so changed; he never used to care for a thing besides his work, and certainly not a hang for a patient, except as a case to do him credit. Now, he 's as gentle and sympathetic as a woman.'

'What do you think I caught him at yesterday?' said the first speaker; 'he 's been so affable lately that I thought I 'd get him to let me see that mounted specimen he was telling us about, so I went to his room. He opened the door himself, and he looked rather foolish and blushed right up into his luxuriant carroty locks, and then he said, "If you don't mind children, you can come in and look for it," so I thought I 'd just see what was up, and if the beggar hadn't got a tea-party on! Seven kids round the table, and the eldest of them was pouring out the tea. They 'd got a fine swagger sort of a set-out, and a clean table-cloth, and old Eversley walking round waiting on them. I 'm sure I never was so taken aback in my life!'

'But who were they?' asked his friend.

'Why patients, bless you! every blessed one of them. That little Peter was there, quite contented and comfortable, propped up with a pillow in the arm-chair. Eversley said I could stay if I liked, and if I would not disturb the children. "They don't get much pleasure in their lives," said he quite gently.'

'Well,' rejoined the other student, 'old Macfarlane 's a shrewd fellow, and I heard him tell some one last session, that if Eversley's heart were equal to his head, he 'd be the best modern man in the profession.'

* * * * * *

'Sister Mona, here are two visitors for you,' said Nurse Katherine, half a dozen years later; 'I did not know the doctor at first, he 's so much older and better looking.' She spoke without lowering her voice, not knowing the strangers were close behind her, but a deep voice said briskly—

'All right, Nurse Katherine! I can say that you are better looking too; but you don't get a day older, which isn't fair upon us juveniles, you know!'

'Dr. Eversley,' said Sister, with pleased recognition.

'Yes, Sister, and let me introduce my wife, she knows all about you,' said Will.

'Yes, that I do,' said the pretty, bright-faced girl at his side; I know about Peter, too, and John Macgregor, and little Bow-legs, and Teddie,' she added, with a quick glance at her husband.

'Dear little Teddie,' said Sister softly; 'you see our children are generally very undemonstrative, for when young creatures are unused to receiving caresses, they don't often offer them. Teddie was very affectionate and grateful. We missed him very much.'

'We 've come specially to-day to beg you to visit us at our own home,' said the young wife. 'No, you must not shake your head. I know you think you have no time to visit new friends, Will says so too; but he wants to consult you about something very important.'

'Cannot you tell me now,' said Sister, in answer; 'do, I am not too busy to listen, and besides I 'm really curious!'

Then Will interposed: 'Well its just this, Sister; you know I 've been lucky, I am really coining money now, and my books have had wonderful success, and Nell has a fortune of her own; and so we want to do something wise, before we squander our riches foolishly. Shall we build a new hospital, or shall we make it possible for closed wards already in existence to be opened again, free from debt?'

'Ask wiser folks than I am,' said Sister, in great surprise; 'I congratulate you, Dr. Eversley, on your wealth, but more still on your wife.'

'But I want your opinion, Sister,' he persisted. 'You make me

think of my mother, and this work is to be in memory of her. She died grieving over the poor souls for whom there is no room in the hospitals, because there are not enough beds. The sadness haunted her last hours, and Nell and I mean to get more room for the sick poor somehow!'

'Then by all means open the wards which are closed, as many as ever you can,' said Sister eagerly; 'let your money go to the immediate relief of the sufferers, with no toll paid out of it for bricks and mortar. And don't forget the children,' she added, looking down her ward, 'it's so dreadful having to cut short their convalescence and hurry them out to make space for more urgent cases. Good-bye, and good luck to you both, and please come and see me again!' and as they looked back at her, smiling as they passed out through the door, she said to Nurse Katherine, 'I think he's a lucky man to have secured such a sunbeam for his wife.'

'To think of that ugly young man turning into a fashionable physician beats me,' said the worthy old Nurse; 'I hear that people think there's nobody can equal him for cleverness, and he's a wonderful talent for children.'

'He's learnt to fight his old enemy Death with success, but also with more humility,' was Sister's unspoken thought, for she knew something of his struggles in the days now buried and gone; and she turned to comfort a wailing babe, whose early days were uneasy ones!

AN ORNAMENTAL PROBATIONER

‘ RAY, do you get your new probationers from Earlswood, Nurse Katherine?’ said an impatient doctor one day.

Now Nurse Katherine never was known to speak hastily, though her movements were almost as quick as when she had taken up nursing twenty years ago; she was a slim young girl then, and rather an unwieldy personage now. She handed the doctor all he required, and then answered him slowly—

‘Young women need patience, as well as young men do, but neither nursing nor obedience come by nature to folks.’

‘That 's true enough, Nurse,’ said the doctor, in a pleasanter voice, ‘but really that last new probationer you 've got is beyond a joke. I wonder Sister doesn't ask Matron to let her have another for use and keep this one for ornament!’ with which parting shaft he left the ward.

Nurse Katherine went quietly on with her work, passing round the ward with a tiny child toddling about at her heels most of the time. She had a large and comely face, which generally wore a somewhat stern expression, and kept the students, as well as her fellow-nurses, in considerable awe of her. But the babies took no heed, they quite understood that that severe look was no affair of theirs. They clung to her hands and clamoured to be picked up and nursed, and they generally conducted themselves like young people who clearly understood what kind of woman they had to deal with. It was from observing her attitude towards the little ones that people took courage to approach Nurse Katherine, and they invariably secured any help they craved from that capable creature.

She was feeling fairly puzzled on account of that identical new probationer of whom the doctor had spoken so scornfully. She had no

intention of ever letting him know how cordially she agreed in his verdict. No, she was one of those who instinctively always exhibit the best side of other women's characters to the world, and her seeming sternness was probably the result of the constant restraint she put upon her naturally quick temper. She found it a little trying to be always making the best of young ladies who certainly did not seem inclined to make the best of themselves. 'I wonder what in the world they come into hospital for, some of them; and when they find the work is not to their taste, why don't they own up to it honestly, and go away and leave us in peace?' she had said more than once, in strict confidence, to Sister.

To-day poor Nurse Katherine was really considerably bothered; she had trusted her new probationer to put a bundle of sheets, carefully counted and tied up by herself, down the shoot into the laundry. The self-confident young lady had declined any instructions, saying she knew all about it, she was sure. An hour later the Steward had sent for Nurse Katherine to upbraid her for her carelessness in permitting a number of her cherished cot sheets to be deposited in the receptacle for ashes and other refuse. To a conscientious woman this humiliation was great, and it was made worse by Probationer Enderby quietly declining to apologise to the Steward for her stupidity. 'He is so sensible,' reflected Nurse Katherine, 'and he would have thought no more about it if the girl had just said a word, but she declares she could not possibly say she was sorry for what was no fault of hers, and so the matter must be left alone, for of course *I* can't tell tales.'

Poor Probationer Enderby! She was a rather pretty and affected young lady, who had come to the hospital because she thought 'it must be so nice to give one's time up to doing good.' She was very fastidious as to the fit of her print gowns, and the cut of her aprons; in fact the particular shade of the cotton dresses had influenced her choice of this special hospital.

'I think the Sisters' costume is sweet,' she said the first evening, at tea-time. 'I shall tell Matron so; it is quite as important to study harmony in tone as in form, and I feel sure the darker tint would suit my style of figure better than the probationer's stripe.'

The nurse next to whom she was sitting gave a rather mischievous smile and said—

'I think I would not ask Matron for a Sister's dress, if I were you; there's no vacancy at present, and you may not know quite all the duties yet.'

'I've no doubt I shall find much to learn,' rejoined the unconscious aspirant, 'but education and culture must go for something. What a pity there are so few ladies amongst the nurses!'

'Dear me, do you think so? Why, I don't set up for being one myself, do you?' said the same nurse again.

Miss Enderby was positively horrified, the ground seemed giving way under her feet; she fairly gasped out her next remark—

'Of course I do! and I thought you were the Hon. Maud Inglis?'

'And what of that,' said the satirical Maud quite politely, 'as I said, I certainly should not think for a moment of setting up as a lady! I leave that to the ward maids and scrubbers.'

Miss Enderby drank off her own tea hastily, and wondered meantime what in the world her neighbour had meant her to understand by her extraordinary statement. She herself was the only daughter of a rich man. Hitherto she had found money all-powerful, and various less prosperous relatives had invested this new freak of the heiress's with a grand halo of virtue. She 'was leaving luxury for hard living,' and 'elegant idleness' for real, earnest work. Her father, a sensible man, opposed her whim at first, then consented to indulge her in it, on her faithfully promising to remain in the hospital for the three months she had stipulated for. Her mother was a frivolous woman, and entirely disapproved of the idea.

'You'll be sure to catch something unpleasant, and get sent home to be nursed; and besides that I dare say you'll have those young doctors making a fuss with you, and they are all as poor as church mice!'

At this the daughter tossed her head, picturing the whole medical staff at her feet. However, in due time she entered the nursing-school, and spent some days in the women's ward, where she distinguished herself in several small ways. She persistently broke the rules, and on

being remonstrated with and requested to read carefully those regulations laid down for probationers, she calmly replied : 'Thank you, I have studied them thoroughly, but I don't see how you can expect me to keep them!'

She also explained to the Sister that her ward management was defective, and offered to give her a few useful hints. Arriving late on duty one morning she seated herself in front of the fire; a nurse passing rapidly by arrested her steps to ask if Miss Enderby did not feel well? to which she replied, 'Yes, thanks, I'm only sitting here till the ward's tidy.'

'Oh!' said Nurse, 'is that all?' but being a kind-hearted woman, she presently returned to point out that it would be well if the new probationer gave a little help towards attaining the requisite order in this abode of sickness.

As a personal favour to the speaker, who seemed friendly, Miss Enderby decided to grant a helping hand, but was surprised to hear that not only were all the beds made, 'clean sheet day too, and that's no joke,' said her informant grimly, but a great many other duties besides were already completed without her aid. Presently Sister appeared, and to the surprise of the new probationer she passed her with only a pleasant 'good morning,' and went at once to a fidgety old patient and listened to her account of the many and mysterious 'pa'ains' which had prevented her from getting 'a wink o' sleep all night'!

'Altogether it's very evident,' said the girl to herself, 'that there's plenty of fuss made over the patients here, but I think their bodies are more considered than their souls.'

With this conviction borne in upon her, Miss Enderby took an early opportunity of airing her opinions, which were always listened to deferentially at home, and therefore would, she imagined, command attention elsewhere. Her suggestion that the making of patients' beds twice a day caused unnecessary drudgery for the nurses was met with considerable scorn by the latter; she was merely asked if she thought it possible that too much could be done for the comfort of people too ill to leave their beds? And her subsequent assertion that her object in

coming to hospital had been to devote herself to 'doing good,' was received in something like contemptuous silence. Well! she certainly began to fear that she was not appreciated in her present sphere, and the sensation was unpleasant.

There was a sudden rush of work in the Children's Ward, and Sister asked for an extra probationer, so Miss Enderby was sent there to see what help she could render. She assured Nurse Katherine, directly on her arrival, that she doted on children, they were 'so sweet and so patient.'

'I hope you 'll find these so,' said the experienced woman, 'I don't find many children are patient myself. They are perfectly good when they are comfortable and well, and a fretful child generally indicates the presence of an incompetent nurse, but don't look out for patience in babies; that 's a quality of older growth.'

Before an hour had passed the probationer returned to busy Nurse Katherine to say that she had no idea sick children needed so much waiting on, and certainly they were neither patient nor sweet.

'Never mind,' said the old nurse quite gently, 'they are suffering; don't forget that, my dear, they have come to us from such places as you have never dreamt of, and from the reek of impurity and sin; and for all that they are as good as possible when you once begin to take them the right way.'

Nurse Enderby looked interested: 'I 've been wondering why none of them use bad words, for they all seem low enough!' she said suddenly.

Nurse smiled at that: 'I am often puzzled myself, for the poor things heard little else till they came here. They never do say really bad words to us, and if a new boy makes a beginning the others set him down as if they were perfect little saints themselves, and they check his first questionable exclamation.'

'But what do *you* do?' said the new probationer, 'don't you *do* anything?'

'Yes, I always tell a child I suspect of saying anything offensive that if he does it again he will have to repeat it to Sister, and the threat 's enough; why, I cannot say, but I suppose the tone of the ward

gets hold of them and they are clean-tongued here at any rate, poor little mites!'

But the next time Nurse Katherine spoke to Miss Enderby, what she said gave great offence, although it was not intended to do so. A lady came to visit the ward, and she spoke to some of the children, and then began saying how noble she thought it of women to take up nursing, and Miss Enderby bridled at that, and looked for the moment 'every inch a nurse,' as she would herself have expressed it. But old Nurse Katherine said in her blunt way—

'Excuse me, but it's just you ladies that ruin the young nurses. You make them think too much of themselves and too little of the work. The useful ones have generally taken to it from choice, and there's no merit in pleasing yourself, now is there? And as for the other kind of women, why their manners are as mixed as their motives, and the less they are gushed over the better for every one. If only people would leave the good nurses alone for the sake of their merits, they might perhaps let off the indifferent ones too, and give them a chance of working out their own salvation.'

The visitor went on her way, feeling more than ever that hospitals belonged to a different world from the one she generally lived in! But Miss Enderby was far from contented, and attacked Nurse Katherine at once—

'I think it's very foolish of you to try and take all the romance off nursing; why, if it wasn't for the idea of doing something a little uncommon, you would not get half the applicants you do, I assure you!'

'That would be no disadvantage to me, my dear, and you must not say I take the romance out of the work; no, I couldn't do that; the life here is filled up with incidents and interests. 'Tis the false, unreal sentimentalism which I have fought and shall fight, all my days.'

'I don't see the difference,' said the girl impatiently.

Just then an interruption came, and a poor little baby was brought to Nurse by a porter.

'Broken leg; run over,' he said shortly; 'doctor's coming,—no friends; girl carrying it run over too, concussion, gone to "Women's Accident."'

'Thank you, Richard,' responded the nurse briefly, and she covered the poor little creature with a warm blanket. It was less than a year old,—an unattractive little thing, with two wide-open black eyes, and an old-fashioned, un-childlike expression. Another nurse appeared, and fetched clean night-gown, soap and water, etc., and proceeded to make the child comfortable before the doctor appeared. Nurse Katherine bethought her of her duty towards the new probationer, and went off to see where she was. There, in front of the fire, on a low rocking-chair, sat the girl playing with a child who lay contentedly enough on her lap.

'Did Sister say you might take Pollie out of her bed?' said Nurse quietly.

'Of course not; I certainly should see no necessity for asking leave about such a perfectly simple matter,' came the answer, in a very pert voice.

'I dare say not,' said the long-suffering Katherine, 'you don't understand a great many things I fear, but I must beg you, once for all, never to move the children without permission. You might do them a great deal of harm, because you know nothing about their diseases. Some of them can be nursed all day long, if you 've time to do it, but others have to be kept happy in their beds. You will get us all into trouble with the doctors if you play such tricks as these; you 'll understand things better soon, and then you will forgive me for being a particularly tiresome old woman.' She concluded her speech so pleasantly that Miss Enderby felt mollified, and inclined to be guided by experience so much greater than her own; and when the doctors came round that afternoon and stayed a long time by Pollie's bed, she learnt how seriously ill the child had been recently, and what very great care she still needed. After they left the ward, Sister bid her remain by the new patient, and try to get him to take some milk, for the poor little creature was feeling forlorn, and was feebly crying for his 'mammie.'

The other nurses were very busy at the end of the ward, and Sister went off in search of information about the new baby's relations. For the moment the new probationer felt busy and happy enough, but her serenity was disturbed by the entrance of a nice-looking student. She

was rather given to posing, was this spoilt young lady, at home, and she struck an attitude now, leaning over the cot. The young man came quickly towards her, glanced at the child, said comprehensively, 'New case? fracture?' and then, 'I say, Nurse, when Sister comes in I wish you'd ask her if she'll let you or one of the others pad this splint. She knows about it; and tell her that it's quite clean this time, mind you say that, I'll guarantee it's been well scrubbed and carbolised!' and he went off as he spoke, quite unaware that Miss Enderby's silence was due entirely to indignation. 'Stupid sort of girl,' he thought, 'hope she won't forget to tell Sister.'

Happily Sister returned very soon, and received the message quite calmly.

'I think he's a most impertinent young man,' added the probationer, 'to expect his messages carried and his work done in that off-hand way!'

'Do you?' said Sister, looking at the girl's flushed face in some surprise; 'I never knew him either impertinent or "off-hand" in any objectionable sense. He lives in lodgings, and his landlady's only child has hip-disease; she won't part with him, and Mr. Lawford has taught her how to manage the boy; but the splint was too much for them. The woman padded it as well as she could, under his directions, but it was not satisfactory, so I told him if he brought it here, quite clean, it should be done for him. Don't you see,' said Sister with some animation, 'that in helping students you help the doctors of the future, and moreover, you indirectly assist a vast number of sick people you will probably never personally know?'

'Yes, certainly, that makes a difference; still, I think he was wrong in asking one lady to "allow" another to do his work in that abrupt way; I am not accustomed to being addressed in that manner by gentlemen!'

Sister gave a merry little laugh, but only said—

'Well, I can promise you that I shall not let the poor child have his splint done by any save experienced fingers; besides this is not strictly hospital work, and therefore it goes into my off-duty time.'

To Miss Enderby's surprise the splint disappeared into Sister's own

room, and it lay ready for use, in a sheet of clean paper, when Mr. Lawford came for it the same evening.

When the probationer sought her couch that night she was honestly sleepy and weary, and she laid her head on her pillow very much tempted to ask to be moved from the Children's Ward, where the work seemed so very incessant! But with morning's light she certainly was less inclined to take this step, and she went on duty quite punctually, feeling moreover, a good deal interested in her small charge of the day before.

'I wonder if he is less home-sick,' she thought, as she entered the ward. He certainly looked neither sick nor sorry at the moment, for he lay sucking his thumb, with his beady black eyes steadily fixed on the occupant of the next little cot. This was an elfish young creature, apparently about twelve years old, with straight black hair and a pair of eyes an exact counterpart of those of the baby boy.

'Are you a new patient?' said Miss Enderby to the anxious-faced little girl.

'Why I'm belongin' to 'im,' she answered, pointing to the baby, 'and when I fust woke up 'course I thought 'ee wos dead. I know'd we wos run over together and I reckoned 'im wos killed, bein' so little. So I let on a fine old screech and woke up all the women in the haccident ward!' said the imp with complacent satisfaction, recalling the scene she had made last night.

'How did you get here?' asked the probationer, too much interested to remember that bed-making and not conversation was the duty required of her at the moment.

'Why the Nurse there said if I'd hold me noise, she'd find out where baby wos, her didn't fancy 'ee wos killed. O' course I thought she might tell me a lie, as like as not, but I jes' shut up for a minute, and the Sister from 'ere she wos fetched and d'rectly minute she seed me, she sez, "Oh, I'm sure she's my baby's sister; they're 'sactly like each other. I'll ask doctor to let her come and stay with me; she's only a mite of a child, and it's a pity to keep them apart." So she settled it with the nurse and the doctor, and jes' carr'd me down 'ere 'erself, but I told 'er plain 'twas my mother's baby, and she hadn't no right to call 'im hers!' ended the sharp-eyed little vixen.

Nurse Katherine approached at the moment, and after a pleasant word to the reunited sister and brother, she remarked very quietly to her probationer:—

'Whilst you 're amusing yourself, Nurse, you are forgetting all else; I want to teach you how to make the babies' beds without hurting them, but I can't wait whilst you satisfy your curiosity as to all the children's histories,' and for once Nurse Enderby did not defend herself, which the observant Katherine noted approvingly.

'Please Sister, Matron says, will you kindly send Probationer Enderby to speak to her, and will you expect Probationer Wilmington in her place?' was the message received at dinner-time in the Children's Ward. The Matron was a very fine-looking woman, with grey hair and beautiful dark eyes, and rather a stately demeanour. She asked Miss Enderby if she was quite well, and then proceeded to inquire as to her absence from breakfast on three successive mornings.

'Oh I was rather tired, and I thought I should prefer to spend an extra half-hour in bed,' said the probationer calmly. 'I never care about breakfast so early, and of course I don't imagine the rule about taking food before entering the wards can apply to me. Naturally a girl in my position must be the best judge of her own affairs.'

The Matron's handsome eyes opened a little wider than usual as she said—

'Many faults are forgiven in a new probationer which could not be overlooked in another, but indeed rules are made to be kept, not to be broken. Remember that once for all. Your first duty is to obey. Now is there anything you want to ask me?'

'Yes, I should very much like to know if it 's by your wish that the patients' comforts are always the first consideration?'

'But surely you never could imagine anything else?' said the Matron with fresh surprise.

'Oh dear yes, I assure you I never heard the patients mentioned till I came here. Everybody I know speaks first of the nurses, and asks whether a hospital is comfortable for them. I took a great deal of trouble to inquire into the privileges and the holidays, etc., at different institutions, and all my friends had something to say about the nurses'

arrangements everywhere, but the patients really never entered our thoughts!' concluded the girl frankly.

'Well, I hope they are beginning to claim your attention now,' said the Matron with a smile, 'but how was it that this hospital was honoured by your choice?'

With only a moment's hesitation the girl replied—

'I think it was chiefly because your uniform is unobjectionable. Of course it's far from perfect, but I dare say you'll improve it, and it's much better than the bright pinks and greens which are seldom in harmony, and therefore are never satisfactory.'

'I'm afraid I cannot spare you any more time just now; I have a great deal to do. You will go to the Male Accident Ward after dinner, and please try to keep the rules.'

Miss Enderby went back to the Children's Ward for a book she had left there, and said to Nurse Katherine—

'I wish Sister would let me stay here; I am beginning to like the little ones, and you are very patient with us all.'

'The choice does not lie with Sister, and we are very busy just now, so we shall be glad of a more experienced probationer, but if you come back again any time I shall welcome you, if you really prove fond of our babies; so good-bye for the present,' said the Nurse, whose experience of probationers was varied and large.

The 'Male Accident' was a large ward, and Miss Enderby found the nurses busy when she entered. 'Two new cases just come in,' one of the patients informed her; 'railway accident, reg'lar smash up.'

She stood still in some indecision, and then went towards the screened-off beds, and as the Sister appeared at the moment, 'Can I do anything? Matron sent me here,' she said.

The Sister glanced quickly at her. 'How long have you been in the hospital, only a few days? Well, you'd better not come behind here. It's a terrible accident. Could you take two more foot-warmers and fill them, with boiling water mind, and as quickly as possible, please?'

The girl moved rapidly away, impressed with the Sister's looks quite as much as her words. What a pretty woman she was, quite a

lovely face, and how pityingly she spoke! The foot-warmers were easily filled from a kettle which steamed away in readiness, and she soon gave them to Sister, who took them with a word of thanks. Then she went back to the fire, and was accosted by a patient in the nearest bed—

'I say, Nurse, you 'd better fill up that kettle or you 'll get into trouble by-and-by!'

Miss Enderby flushed a deep red with surprised annoyance but took no heed of the words, and presently the ward-maid came down and looked for a moment at the grate—

'I hope you ain't agoin' to splash my hearth like that whenever you 've got a bottle to fill. You 'd better take it into the scullery next time if you ain't handier at the job!'

A nurse came up at the moment, and hearing the concluding remark, she interposed quickly—

'Mrs. Brown, this won't do! You know Sister won't have you rude to new probationers, nor to old ones either. I 'll explain the mysteries of filling tins to Nurse in a minute or two, and now I want the kettle myself.' She took it up as she spoke and gave it an impatient shake, 'Why it 's empty just when it 's most wanted, I wonder who I must thank for that?'

She went off hastily, and Miss Enderby followed, and found that Sister was waiting for the boiling water.

'I 'm so sorry,' said the Nurse, 'the kettle's empty, Sister.'

'I think an unfilled kettle in a hospital is a kind of embodiment of selfishness or of culpable carelessness at least,' said Sister, with an amount of severity little expected by the new probationer.

'The man told me to fill it,' said the latter in explanation, 'but of course I should never dream of taking any orders from a patient.'

'I think you might take a common-sense hint from any one, without feeling your dignity in danger,' said Sister, as she retired to her new patients.

Presently she came back again to make use of the now boiling kettle, and Miss Enderby heard her say—

'The doctors say they can do nothing for the father; we are to

keep him quiet and warm, and he may live till his poor wife comes; that's all we can hope for. The son ought to live, but the arm must be removed, it is hopelessly mangled; I have not seen anything worse for some time.'

'Nor I,' said her chief nurse, 'but will it be done in the ward?'

'Yes, he's not fit to be moved, so get everything ready immediately.'

Miss Enderby came forward, and with her usual unmoved complacency ejaculated, 'I'm glad I shall have an opportunity of seeing an operation; I've been four whole days in the hospital, and really have been taught next to nothing as yet.'

Nurse stared, but Sister only said in her stateliest manner—

'I am sorry you have failed to make better use of your opportunities of learning. Nurse will show you how she takes the patients' temperatures presently, and you can first help to give them their tea. When you have been here three months, we shall know better whether we can trust you to see an operation; it is quite out of the question now.'

The girl felt a little crestfallen; she had no special taste for horrors, but the word 'operation,' had certainly charms. All her friends had wondered how she would stand such things, and she had boldly declared herself equal to facing any and every emergency. How different the reality was proving to all her preconceived notions!

After the patients' tea was given, and the probationer had had her first lesson in temperatures, she went away to her own cosy tea and on her return was asked what she knew of bed-making; to which she promptly rejoined, 'I always considered it house-maid's work at home, but here it seems elevated to the rank of a fine art I think!' She meant to speak satirically, but Nurse took her meaning literally—

'Why of course it is; everything depends upon how it's done; and nothing is of more service to the patients than to have their beds properly and methodically seen to—'

'I hate the word "service,"' said Miss Enderby in an irritated voice, 'it sounds menial.'

Certainly this nurse was an odd sort of person, for instead of answering the young lady's remark, she said—

'Do you know those old poems of George Herbert's, I wonder? Do you care for poetry?'

'Of course I do, Nurse,' was the surprised reply, 'Why you are obliged to care just now, with Browning Societies, and the new poet laureate under discussion, and so on; but why George Herbert?'

'Well I am fond of him myself; I was rather brought up on him in my youth, and I think there are some lines of his which run like this:—

> 'Nothing can be so mean
> Which with this tincture (for Thy sake)
> Will not grow bright and clean.
> A servant with this clause
> Makes drudgery divine:
> Who sweeps a room as for Thy laws,
> Makes that and the action fine.'

As Nurse ended she quietly walked away and began to tell the men about a strike in the day's paper, and then they explained to her how these things were managed, and who reaped the chief advantage from them; and even Miss Enderby had to own that in her cultured home circle she had seldom heard the questions of the hour discussed with such shrewd intelligence and animation. She said something of the kind to Sister, later on, and the latter said—

'Don't you see that these men live the things which your friends merely talk of? These miserable strikes, and the great question of the unemployed, are their own affairs, and they, the best of them at any rate, feel deeply how hard it is to get wrongs righted without doing wrong to much that is right in itself;' and again the probationer thought to herself—

'Really this is very odd society I am living in, but it's interesting!'

Sister seemed to know all about the patients, and who was married, and the names of the children; what clubs the men belonged to, and

whether trade was 'pretty brisk,' or 'slack.' Really it was curious to watch her walking about with her pretty face and stately air, quite as if the ward were her home.

One day when the 'railway smash' was an event of the past, the patients were chatting together in the twilight, and the nurses busy padding splints, Sister walked in and said—

'I have a little spare time this evening, what shall I do for my patients?'

She had hardly done speaking before a chorus of 'Sing to us, Sister!' was heard, and soon a few men who were dressed came in from the next ward, having been told what was going on.

Her voice was wonderfully beautiful, filling the ward yet never in the least overpowering. She stood in the middle of the room, with one hand resting on the curly head of a little boy, who had settled himself by her side. No wonder the men gazed with pleasure at such a picture of health and womanly grace. First she sang them a pretty modern ballad, and those who chose, joined in the chorus. Then an old man who had been ill a long time from an injury to his spine called out—

'Sister, please sing about "rest"; I 'm often thinking of that one when the pain wakes me of nights.'

And so she turned towards him, and began 'O rest in the Lord,' and there was not a sound in the ward whilst she sang; and when she had done the men never spoke till she bid them 'good-night' as she went through the door.

'What a pity you waste your fine voice like that!' said Miss Enderby afterwards in a somewhat patronising tone, 'I have heard professionals who had nothing like your compass. You really might get an engagement directly, and its quite the thing now for ladies to sing, and act too, for that matter.'

'Thanks,' said Sister somewhat stiffly, 'I am content with my present audience, and I do not see that I am wasting a gift which gives genuine pleasure to those who have so few joys in their lives. I can't expect an inexperienced girl to see these matters as I do, but if you 'd bury yourself, your own personality, Miss Enderby, down in a deep

grave out of sight, you would have more thought for your work and more kind sympathy for both sufferers and workers. I know you can do it if you will,' and her sunny smile seemed to take all the sting out of the words.

The doctors puzzled Miss Enderby even more than the patients had done. None of them took the slightest notice of her, and this was humiliating. The students rather avoided her, as the word had gone through their ranks that she was haughty and disobliging. However one young fellow seemed taken with her appearance, and made a good many unnecessary visits to the wards. Nurse's shrewd eyes soon observed this and she quietly warned the girl.

'I would not encourage young Rawlings if I were you; he 's got a bad name in the place. It 's said he was jilted by a pretty probationer when he first came, and has vowed to be revenged on the sex. He is always hanging about when a new nurse appears on the scene, but most of them are too wary to give him any encouragement. I thought I 'd tell you, though of course you won't thank me for it.'

So even the satisfaction of having aroused a tender sentiment was denied to the girl. She felt 'doing good' was a deadly dull business. The best nurses she met with laughed down all mention of the words, and would jestingly say, 'We 've no time to think whether we 're doing good. It 's quite enough to do one's best for the patients, the rest must be judged by results.'

So she gave up sentiment with her other illusions, and grew fond of the little boys who were intermingled with the adults, and settled into daily life after a fashion, though not a particularly satisfactory one as regarded her fellow-workers, who found themselves constantly called upon to do her duties as well as their own. It 's 'menial work,' was still her impression, and notwithstanding George Herbert's statements to the contrary, she said so to Sister one day.

'That 's an ugly word, a very ugly word for a hospital, please put it aside. What is your present grievance?'

'Why Nurse set me to wash that new boy, and she seemed to think it was rather promotion for me to do it!'

Sister laughed and said, 'I 'm glad you have done him so well, he looks a dear little man now.'

'Oh, I didn't do him,' said the girl looking annoyed, 'I considered it was not my work.'

But Nurse interrupted her, for she saw Sister beginning to frown—

'Oh never mind now, I did him, and his mother has been such fun; she 's just been in, and she said it was three years since he 'd had a regular washing, because he 'd had a bad knee all that time and she was frightened to touch him. And she hoped I had the doctor's leave, because she knew it was very dangerous to clean up the skin like that. However, she owned that Tommie looked "illigant"! As she went out of the ward she shook her head and said, "But it 's risky, Nuss, mighty risky! My poor mother was ill five years before she died, and we never washed her in life!"'

'O Nurse, your stories are really dreadful!' said Sister, laughing all the same.

The three months were nearly over, and Miss Enderby was going home. Her father had seen her at intervals, and thought the time had not been wasted, but wisely forbore to make comments.

When she went to bid the Matron farewell, she kindly informed her that she was rather sorry to leave, for she had been interested. Of course the institution was far from perfect, and she proceeded to point out instances of this. She then remarked that she thought she might perhaps come again some day, but the Matron said—

'No, that will not do; you have no vocation for nursing, and I cannot have the patients indifferently cared for. You don't like the realities of life. Your friends endowed this place with a romantic atmosphere, and you naturally took exception to the fact of its non-existence! It 's better for you to go away altogether, but perhaps some day you will understand the relative value of things. You must have learnt a little of what working lives are, even in this short time!'

And then the Matron's handsome eyes lost their gravity, and she

said merrily, 'Please don't go away intent upon writing a book on nurses or nursing. It's such a big subject you know, and it needs large experience to grapple with it fairly. Now good-bye,' and she held out her hand, and Miss Enderby grasped it heartily, and said quite unaffectedly—

'I was going to attempt some "Reminiscences," but perhaps I'd better not. Any way *you* need not have feared to read anything written about you.'

'Oh I don't in the least mind your trying; but please don't attempt to be instructive! I thought you were likely to dash into literature as a kind of intellectual antidote to our prosaic realities, but after all, your productions could not be more inaccurate or worthless than many already in print!'

WANTED—AN OPERATION

BRIGHT summer day, and buzzing flies and gleams of sunshine making the ward look the cheerful nursery which it aspired to be considered. Half the children were dozing, undisturbed by the wakefulness of the rest.

Suddenly an interruption occurred: 'Oh, indeed, the doctors think my boy's too weak for an operation, Nurse!' said an angry voice; 'is that what you say? Well then, you just tell 'em as his mother's the best judge of that! I wos told by the parish doctor as he 'd have to go under operation. Them wos his very words, and I 'll stick to it. I believe what the parish doctor says, in gineral any ways, 'cos you see he ain't got nothin' to gain by lyin' to we! He sez, sez he, you take yer son up to 'orspital, and I 'll drop a line to surgeon and tell 'im you'm willin' to act accordin' as he sez, and if he can't cure your boy, no man in England could do't. So I took and brought 'im, and a rare job it wos. Doctor sez, 'Clean him up a bit, Mrs. Tisby, and let him do yer credit.' So I give 'im a wash overnight, and a bit o' a polish agin this mornin', and here he is and here be I, and I ain't agoin' to let any 'orspital doctor persuade me as me and the parish doctor don't know best! The lad 's come a purpose for a' operation, and you 've got to have it done, you have, that 's jest about where it is! It ain't a bit o' good, Nuss, for you to stand there a-smilin', 'cos I tell yer straight, I 've told every one of the neighbours all about it, and I bean't agoin' to have 'em disappointed, not for no surgeon nor no nuss neither! Why the coort would never forgit it agin me, and I won't be fooled, so there! I giv' 'em my word as the little chap's ankle would be cut, and I ain't agoin' back on that. So you tell yer doctors jest wot you like, but 'ere Bill is and 'ere 'ee stays, and I won't come and see him till it 's done!'

The voice ceased, and the coarse-featured woman with a manly stride left the ward, and the amused nurse watched her cross the road and join a select party of neighbours, to whom she gave a spirited report of the interview, at least the spectator guessed as much by the woman's gestures, and frequent nods and signs towards the building she had just left.

'Poor little Bill!' said she softly, 'I 'm very much afraid his feelings count for little in the matter.'

'Nurse,' called the little thin voice which belonged to Bill himself, 'I wants yer.'

'All right,' and turning away from the window, she came to the cot, 'What is it, little man?'

The white face and wasted limbs filled her with infinite pity, and she took his tiny fingers into her firm, strong hand as she gazed down at the two pathetic brown eyes which looked at her with the dumb, pleading expression often seen in children as well as in dogs.

'What do you want, little Bill?' she asked, as the boy remained silent.

'I wants yer,' he said, with much decision. 'Wot did yer tell my mother? along of a' operation, I means?'

'Dear little Bill, don't you trouble yourself about that. Doctor thinks you are not strong enough to do anything but lie here and rest. I 'm to give you plenty to eat. Do you like eggs, little Bill?'

'Don't I jest!' said the child eagerly, 'I 'ad one once't, I 'member, it was all running about, and oh my! it was good!'

'Well, I 'm going to boil one for you now this minute, and cut you some thin bread-and-butter;' and so she did, and was well repaid by Bill's pleasure in the feast, although his performances in the eating line were very soon ended.

Later on, when the ward work was over, and the darkened windows encouraged sleep, Nurse passing quietly by heard the thin voice repeat the summons, 'I wants yer, Nuss,' and as she seated herself by his bed, poor little Bill unbosomed himself of his troubles. He thought he was eight, but he had the worldly wisdom which generally belongs to a lad of eighteen, and his knowledge of suffering was of long standing.

'Ye see there 's but one bed at our place for the five o' us, and lor' bless ye ! how they do knock me some nights !'

'I suppose it 's your ankle that gets most bumps ?' asked Nurse sympathetically, 'isn't it ?'

'That 's so,' continued the child, 'it 's allers in the way, mother says. Father 's kind, he is. Truly, *he* don't thump me ; Tom does when I squeal in the night, 'cos it wakes 'im. You see,' and the thin voice was lowered, 'mother 's a reg'lar bad 'un she is, when she 's bin drinkin', and she pawns father's tools an' he can't git work, and then there 's a shindy.' Bill's pathetic eyes had a look of fear in them now, and the remembrance of recent 'shindies' seemed very fresh in his memory.

'Don't send me 'ome, Nurse. You ask that doctor to let me "go under operation" as mother said, and then I 'll be kept here !'

But before Nurse could dash away the tears which had filled her eyes at the pitiful picture which the child's words conjured up, a grave voice startled them both. The 'big doctor,' as the little folks generally called him, was standing unobserved near the cot, and he spoke in a fashion gentle as the nurse's own when he said—

'You poor little scrap of humanity, I sha'n't operate on you to please anybody, but I 'm not going to send you home. Nurse, I 'm going to make this boy a present to you.'

Nurse looked at him and laughed, forgetting her wet eyes.

'Certainly, Mr. Macfarlane, I will accept him.'

'Of course you will,' he continued sharply, 'of course you will, and I shall be told presently he 's the best boy in the ward. I know you, and I know Sister, and in about a month you 'll be showing off that boy, so changed that even his unnatural mother wouldn't know him. Well, I suppose I must spare him a bed for the next three months at any rate. He wants "mothering" and feeding, and,' he hesitated a moment, and then added boldly, 'yes, he wants to be loved and fussed over, and that 's what you foolish women enjoy doing ; and you end by half breaking your hearts over other folk's children ;' and with a friendly nod to the boy, he left the ward muttering, 'Operate indeed ! do people

LITTLE BILL IS MOTHERED

think I'm a butcher that they're always wanting me to have a knife in my hand?'

Bill's claw-like fist was stretched out to grasp Nurse's apron, and the brown eyes shone with joy as the eager query came—

'Yer'll have me, now he's told ye to keep me?'

'Yes, little Bill, I'll keep you, and we'll have no more thumps for the poor ankle yet awhile. Go to sleep now and forget all about it; there's a rare good time coming for you, my wee man!'

CHRIS

‘ ELL, I call it beastly slow and beastly vulgar! I can't think why you fellows want to stop.’

‘But it 's so cheap, Lolo; front seats for sixpence. Why, man, what can you expect at the price?’

‘Well, I 'd rather pay several sixpences not to see that very unchildlike child twisting his limbs and endangering his life. I 've a good mind to interfere. And look at the clown's boots all trodden down at the heel, and the columbine's dress is dirty, and the whole thing is sordid and miserable. What those fools behind are laughing at, I cannot imagine.’

‘Oh, come, Lolo, there 's some real Irish humour in that clown, and that small boy is safe enough on that trapeze. Here, have an orange and enter into the spirit of the place,’ and the speaker threw an orange at Gerard Lorrimer—commonly called Lolo—who caught it and began to peel it, smiling the while.

They were a party of half-a-dozen young medical students who had turned in to an East-end booth just for the fun of the thing, and though the performance was very poor and mirthless they were all joking and laughing except Lorrimer, who was tired and wanted to get home to bed. Yet he was too good-natured to break up the party; besides he wanted to see that Tom Derring went home in decent time, for it wanted only a few days to his exam., and it would be Tom's last shot. There was a good deal of loud laughter, noise, and coarse talk going on all round, for the interlude of the trapeze business struck the audience as rather dull. Lorrimer peeled his orange, and listened with mingled amusement and disgust, till a little wavering cry, shrill with fear, struck his ear, and he looked up hastily to see a tiny figure in dirty pink tights fall with a

sickening crash on the stage. Lorrimer was beside that figure in a moment, and his companions were not far behind him.

'Keep the crowd back!' he cried to them, for the whole audience was pushing on to the little low stage. The students linked their arms together and leant back against the rush. The manager and his satellites came on from the wings, and shouted out and hustled till the people were beaten back to their seats. Meanwhile Lorrimer was carefully straightening the twisted limbs, and feeling for broken bones. The lad was quite unconscious.

'Is 'e dead, sir?' asked the clown, who knelt at the boy's other side.

'No, stunned. Bring a board covered with cushions or coats, and we 'll get him away from here.'

'You 're a doctor, sir?'

'Yes; more or less. Be quick.'

'How much damage, Lolo?' asked Tom Derring.

'Concussion, and probable injury to the spine. No bones broken; he seems to have kept them in a "green-stick" state.'

The board was brought and Lorrimer lifted the child on to it, and then he and Derring bore it off the stage to a sort of small general dressing-room behind the scenes.'

'Now, he 'd better go straight to the hospital,' said Lorrimer.

'No, 'e don't!' said the clown decidedly, ''e 's my boy, and I ain't agoin' to 'ave 'im practised on by you young gents.'

Lorrimer turned and looked at the speaker,—tried to look through the filthy mess of chalk and paint, and find out what sort of a countenance was behind.—'Are you his father?' he asked.

'Yes; and 'e sha'n't go to the 'orspital.'

Lorrimer sighed and looked pityingly at the unconscious little lad. The place was so dirty and stuffy, and already some shrill song was delighting the audience once more. 'I wish you would trust him to me,' he said, 'I assure you we will be very good to him at the hospital, and it will be far better for him to be there.'—The father hesitated; there was something about the powerful yet gentle face of Lorrimer which inspired trust in all who looked at him.—'In fact,' continued

Lolo speaking authoritatively, 'the child must go to the hospital, but you may come along too and see we don't hurt him. Put something over that dress, we can't wait till you change ; and fling a rug over the boy.'

'You 've got all the duds we 've got beneath 'im,' said the ancient columbine bitterly, 'we ain't toffs to 'ave 'ansome fur rugs lying around.'

'And your ulster and mine have been stolen, Lolo,' said Derring, who had been in search of these articles, 'and the other chaps have gone.'

'Off with your coat then, Derring,' said Lorrimer unbuttoning his, 'a walk in our shirt-sleeves won't hurt us, and the boy must be covered.'

And so ten minutes later a very quaint procession entered the casualty room of the East-end Hospital, and yet no one laughed at it.

The lights were low in the Children's Ward, and the nurses standing talking by the fire spoke in hushed voices, which seemed to intensify the stillness. Beside one of the many little cribs which stood in long rows along the walls, two figures were seated—Lorrimer and the clown. But the clown had now washed off the chalk, and got rid of his dirty calico costume, and looked merely like some half-starved tailor. Exactly what had induced Lorrimer to sit up with his small charge it is impossible to say. The house-surgeon had been busy when that quaint procession arrived, and had dismissed the case somewhat curtly with the order, 'Bed No. 10 in the Children's Ward.'

'I should like to watch awhile in case consciousness returns,' said Lorrimer.

'As you like,' said the surgeon with a short laugh.

'Can I stay ?' asked the father.

'Certainly,' replied Lorrimer, taking authority to himself, for the surgeon had vanished already. 'Only you had better take back these things and change, and then return. You will find me in the Children's Ward with the child.' Lorrimer was anxious the father should not think his boy neglected in any way ; he was also devoted to children, and counted those hours happiest which he spent in the wards put apart

for them. It was their small tongues which had abbreviated his name to 'Lolo,' till he was known throughout the whole hospital by that appellation only. He almost dreaded the time when his four years of student life would be up, and he would have to pursue his profession elsewhere.

'You look so tired, Mr. Lolo, will you not leave the child with us?' said a nurse.

'It is kind of you to think of me, Nurse Doris, but I prefer to stay. I am interested in the case, and was present when the accident occurred. Perhaps if I had interfered I might have prevented it.'

Nurse Doris silently brought a shaded lamp and stood it on a table beside Lorrimer, then she brought him a cup of tea on a neat little tray. Lorrimer had a copy of the *British Medical Journal* with him, but no one can conquer nature, and presently his eyes began to close, his head to droop. Nurse Doris, who was walking softly up and down and hushing a baby, looked well pleased, but the father, sitting on the other side of the bed, was anxious. Suppose his boy was dying, what was the use of a watcher who slept? The clown coughed; Lorrimer awoke with a start, and the nurse frowned.

'You don't think 'e looks worse, sir?' said the father apologetically.

'No, just the same. How many children have you?'

'Ten, sir; but none o' the others is so sharp as Chris.'

'Chris! is that his name?'

'Chris-tó-pher Hind, sir; you see we had a John and a Charlie and a Willie, and my old woman she sez, "Let's give this un a rattling good name"; so I axed the parson about it, and 'e sez, call 'im Chris-tó-pher, and Chris for short; and so we did.'

'I thought you were Irish when you were performing.'

'Lor', no, sir! I only puts that on to make the foolin' go down, 'cause Irishers are s'posed to be funny.' There was a pause, and Lorrimer began to nod again. 'P'raps you noticed, sir, that joke to-night about it bein' 'ereditary for the Irish to 'ave no children?' Mr. Hind laughed, only an apologetic little mirthless laugh, but it echoed queerly in the long dim ward.

'Yes, I noticed it.'

'Well, you see that wouldn't go down without it was Irish; calls them sorter jokes "bulls," I b'lieve. There's another one about a woman that spoke with a big brogue, and some one axed 'er if she was Irish. "Oirish, is it?" sez she; "yes, sure I am, but I had the misfortune to be born out av me native counthry."' Again the mirthless laugh, and it suddenly broke on Lolo's understanding that this clown was telling funny stories beside his unconscious child in order to keep 'the doctor' awake. Lolo got up and went to the window and looked out. What a strange world it was on which those patient, far-off stars were looking down! Nurse Doris was putting a fresh hot-water tin in Chris's bed, and talking in her gentle way to Mr. Hind. When Lorrimer came back she said—

'I wish you would go to bed, Mr. Lolo; it is nearly dawn, and what will Annie say if "her doctor" isn't here at ten in the morning to dress her arm?'

Lolo smiled and felt Chris's pulse and raised the lid of one of the closed eyes; 'I suppose there will be no change to-night?'

'We have had similar cases unconscious for days, you know, and the pulse is better. You must see there is no immediate danger, Mr. Lolo, and no necessity for you to lose all sleep and so be unfitted for your duties to-morrow.'

Lorrimer smiled; he was used to being cared for and ordered about by this gentle young nurse, who, though only about twenty-eight years of age, had been working in the ward before he began his studentship, and had given him many a lesson in bandaging.

'Look here, Mr. Hind, we had better both go away and leave the boy to Nurse Doris. You come back at noon to-morrow, and I will tell you what the surgeons say.'

The clown had come to have perfect faith in Lorrimer, whatever his view of hospital authorities in general might be. 'You'll be 'ere, sir, when the doctors come, and you won't let 'em hoperate without I knows?'

'I'll be here, and they sha'n't touch him without your consent.'

'Thank 'ee, sir; good-night. Thank 'ee very much, sir,' and the clown was gone.

The surgeons could do but little for Chris's case: there was no fracture, no bruise even, but he remained unconscious for three days. Then after a little quiver the closed eyelids opened, and a thin, far-away voice asked for water. Even after that the child did little but sleep for a week, and had to be roused every time he was fed; but gradually all his faculties returned, and Chris began to get better. As soon as the boy was out of danger the clown's affection seemed to wane; he had the nine others to think of, and having ascertained that Chris was comfortable, and not likely to be fit for work for long weeks to come, he and his troupe left the neighbourhood and were heard of no more for some time. Lolo had taken Chris under his special care, and so hurt the feelings of his former favourites in the Children's Ward. He always went straight to Chris when he entered the ward in the morning; he always spoke last to him when he left in the afternoon. And Lolo's favourites by day were always Nurse Doris's favourites by night, for this wistful-eyed nurse had a great admiration for the hard-working young student. She was older than he was, and because of a taint of insanity in her family she permitted to herself no thoughts of love or marriage, so there seemed no danger in the pleasant comradeship of these two workers in the children's cause.

Chris was a queer little bit of humanity, with none of the usual childish graces about him. He refused with scorn the toys the nurses offered him, and his sole amusement was to keep a sharp look-out on all that went on around him. One day the nurse asked him to watch that none of the semi-convalescent children went to her cupboard, and shortly after Sister Mona came along and took a bandage out of that receptacle. Chris said nothing then, but as soon as Nurse came back he remarked curtly, 'Sister's bin and nicked somethin' out o' that cupboard o' yourn.' Poor Chris evidently saw nothing strange in the thought that a sister should steal from a nurse. He was always suspicious of the sister, severe towards the nurses, and scornful of the other children. Even the surgeons could not impress him, and the chaff of the students he answered with a sharpness which was more irritating than amusing. Not a loveable character, and only Lolo in the day-time and Nurse Doris at night took much interest in the child. The day came when

Chris was to be permitted to get up for the first time, and when Lolo entered the ward and saw the empty crib, he looked in vain for Chris. But presently he discovered a very strange figure sitting before the fire. Nurse Katherine, a motherly old woman, had dressed Chris up in a gorgeous sailor suit covered with gold braid, and much too big for him. Chris had fought silently but viciously against these garments, but had only been scolded, and was at length obliged to give in through weakness. Getting up for the first time is always a trial to a convalescent, and Lolo noticed two tears in the tired little eyes, the only time he ever saw them there.

'Well, Chris, I 've got a note from your father; he 's at Epsom, and will be back next week to take you away. Will you be ready to go?'

'Yes.'

'Do you feel strong enough to trudge about and perhaps perform again?'

'I dunno; I want to go.'

'Does your back ache, Chris?' asked Lolo, leaning forward and gazing into the weary wee face.

'Yes, Mr. Lolo, awfully,' said Chris, with a sort of dull gratitude in his eyes towards the friend who divined his trials and pains.

'Most on the right side here by the hip?'

'Yes, just there.'

'Let me lift you, dear boy; is that better?' Lolo had gathered the child up in his great strong arms and lifted him on his knee. Chris was silent; he didn't like being nursed, but it was so much more comfortable lying flat like this with plenty of support for the aching back. In a short time Chris felt better; he actually volunteered a remark—

'These are stupid clothes; where are my own things?'

'We brought you here in your tights, little man, and you certainly can't put on those; but if you get up to-morrow I 'll ask Nurse merely to put you on a dressing-gown, that won't tire you so. Would you rather not get up to-morrow?'

'It 's nicer in bed.'

Lolo's face looked grave; the admission meant much from such an

independent little mortal as Chris.—'See, I will put you to bed now, and then to-morrow perhaps you won't be so tired.'

'O Mr. Lorrimer, Ten isn't to go to bed till after tea.'

'He is tired, Nurse.'

'And well he may be, the naughty boy! Wouldn't let Nurse Katherine dress him in those pretty clothes.'

Lolo put Chris down in his crib, and then walked apart with the nurse.

'There is damage to the spine, Nurse Katherine; the child ought never to have been allowed up. I will explain to Mr. Trevor to-morrow.'

'As you like, Mr. Lolo; there's not another dresser in the place that dares break the rules as you do; but then there's not another that gives equal time and thought to the children. I don't know what we should do without you now!' and the good-natured nurse passed on to soothe a crying baby.

Chris gradually got worse again. An abscess broke out on the emaciated little body, and it became evident that he was likely to be an invalid for years. He might live, the surgeon said, if he had good nursing, bracing air, and nourishing food, but how were these things to be secured to the son of a third-rate clown? No convalescent home would take a helpless child troubled with abscesses and keep him for years; and Chris was not likely to work on the sentimental pity of the rich ladies who came round the ward, he was such a thorough little heathen. He could not tell the Bible-reader what Easter Sunday commemorated, though he knew all about Easter Monday.

One day a lady gave Chris a tract; Lolo was taking notes at a table close by, and he heard Chris begin to spell out the tract in a low monotonous voice. It began with the story of a woman who fell into a well and was finally rescued; presently Chris read—'Dear-broth-er-I-beg-you-to-take-heed-you-al-so-have-fall-en-in-to-a-well-the-deep-well-of-sin-and-with-out-help-you-can-not-get-out.' Then Chris paused, turned rapidly over the remaining pages, and finally began at the beginning again. He evidently enjoyed the anecdote with which the tract commenced, but was far too wary to read the closing moral.

It was some months since the accident; the summer had come, but Chris still lay in his little crib, as quiet and pale as ever.

'Sister, we must discharge this child; he gets no better, and we have no room here for incurable cases,' said the surgeon one morning.

Lolo listened anxiously; he had long expected this.

'Is there no institution to which he could be sent, Mr. Trevor?'

'Not unless his father can pay 7s. 6d. a week for him!'

'It will kill the child to be trailed about with a circus troupe,' sighed Lolo, wondering if there was no means of saving this little life.

'Mr. Lolo, I will take the child.' It was Nurse Doris who spoke; she was on day-duty now and had overheard the surgeon's remark. 'I am leaving the hospital next Tuesday, and going to live at my own home on the south coast. It is very healthy, and I will take good care of Chris.'

'You, Nurse Doris!'

'Yes, Mr. Lolo, let me have Chris since I am losing my other little ones.'

'But why are you giving up nursing?'

Nurse Doris turned her head away and looked wistfully down the long line of little cribs. 'I must go, Mr Lolo, my people want me, and my work here is done.'

Lolo looked wonderingly at the quiet face beneath the becoming white cap; he was no great reader of character, but he knew that Nurse Doris was not telling him her true reason for leaving. After all, why should she? He knew nothing of her in her private capacity, he did not even know her proper name; they had met in the Children's Ward, they had worked together for the little ones, and now they were to part.

'Will your people welcome Chris?' he asked.

'My people let me live my own life, or I shouldn't be here,' said Nurse Doris. 'We have an old housekeeper who will look after Chris when I am otherwise engaged. Then our garden and the beach will be a constant amusement for him.'

'But have you thought you may be saddling yourself for life with the child? His father may desert him; you are accepting a great responsibility.'

'I know it; but I must have Chris. I must have one link with the old days when I am far from here. Do not say more, Mr. Lolo, but let me take Chris.'

'Would you like to go with Nurse Doris?' asked Lolo, leaning over the bed.

Chris looked up at Nurse Doris; she was not looking at him, her quiet eyes were fixed on Mr. Lolo, and her strong slender fingers were tightly clasped together.

'Yes; I like Nurse Doris,' said Chris condescendingly.

'I leave on Tuesday morning; can you get him a Thomas's splint by then, Mr. Lolo?'

'Certainly, Nurse, and I will write to his father. Is there anything else I can do?'

'Nothing,' said Nurse Doris, and she turned and went back to her work.

So on the Tuesday morning a cab came to the hospital gates, and a big black box was put on the top of it. Then a young lady in a neat travelling dress, and with a rather heavy veil wound round her face, came down the steps and got into the cab. She sat patiently waiting; her steady eye fixed on the gloomy entrance. If she was suddenly snapping short her life's work because beneath all her wondrous strength she had found a woman's weak heart; still she could bear in silence, she could wait patiently till the years should change this bitter present into a sad but sweet remembrance.

Once more the hospital doors swung wide, and there came forth into the sunshine a tall young student, whose face was bent lovingly over a tiny burden held carefully in the powerful arms. He strode down the steps and gave his burden into the charge of the young lady in the cab.

'Good-bye, Chris; good-bye, Nurse Doris; God bless you.'

'Good-bye, Mr. Lolo,'—she leant forward for one moment to watch him standing bare-headed there, and then she sank back and pressed her face against Chris's curls.

It was the last time either Chris or Nurse Doris saw Mr. Lolo,—he died that autumn of small-pox.

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