



UNIVERSIDADE DE ÉVORA

ESCOLA DE CIÊNCIAS SOCIAIS

DEPARTAMENTO DE LINGUÍSTICA E LITERATURAS

A Guerra Civil Americana em “The Brothers” e outros contos de Louisa May Alcott: uma tradução comentada

Volume II

Lúcia Maria Freitas Paulino

Orientação: Prof. Doutora Ana Clara Birrento

Mestrado em Línguas Aplicadas e Tradução

Área de especialização: *Ramo Profissionalizante*

Trabalho de Projeto

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M. L.

CHAPTER I

"The sun set—but not his hope:
Stars rose—his face was earlier up:
He spoke, and words more soft than rain
Brought back the Age of Gold again:
His action won such reverence sweet,
As hid all measure of the feat."

*H*_{USH!} let me listen."

Mrs. Snowden ceased her lively gossip, obedient to the command, and leaning her head upon her hand, Claudia sat silent.

Like a breath of purer air, the music floated through the room, bringing an exquisite delight to the gifted few, and stirring the dullest nature with a sense of something nobler than it knew. Frivolous women listened mutely, pleasure-seeking men confessed its charm, world-worn spirits lived again the better moments of their lives, and wounded hearts found in it a brief solace for the griefs so jealously concealed. At its magic touch the masks fell from many faces and a momentary softness made them fair, eye met eye with rare sincerity, false smiles faded, vapid conversation died abashed, and for a little space, Music, the divine enchantress, asserted her supremacy, wooing tenderly as any woman, ruling royally as any queen.

Like water in a desert place, Claudia's thirsty spirit drank in the silver sounds that fed her ear, and through the hush they came to her like a remembered strain. Their varying power swayed her like a wizard's wand, its subtle softness wrapped her senses in a blissful calm, its passion thrilled along her nerves like south winds full of an aroma fiery and sweet, its energy stirred her blood like martial music or heroic speech, —for this

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mellow voice seemed to bring her the low sigh of pines, the ardent breath of human lips, the grand anthem of the sea. It held her fast, and lifting her above the narrow bounds of time and place, blessed her with a loftier mood than she had ever known before, for midsummer night and warmth seemed born of it, and her solitary nature yearned to greet the genial influence as frost-bound grasses spring to meet the sun.

What the song was, she never heard, she never cared to know; to other ears it might be love-lay, barcarole, or miserere for the dead,—to her it was a melody devout and sweet as saintliest hymn, for it had touched the chords of that diviner self whose aspirations are the flowers of life, it had soothed the secret pain of a proud spirit, it had stirred the waters of a lonely heart, and from their depths a newborn patience rose with healing on its wings.

Silent she sat, one hand above her eyes, the other lying in her lap, unmoved since with her last words it rose and fell. The singer had been forgotten in the song, but as the music with triumphant swell soared upward and grew still, the spell was broken, the tide of conversation flowed again, and with an impatient sigh, Claudia looked up and saw her happy dream depart.

"Who is this man? you told me but I did not hear."

With the eagerness of a born gossip, Mrs. Snowden whispered the tale a second time in her friend's ear.

"This man (as you would never call him had you seen him) is a Spaniard, and of noble family, I'm sure, though he denies it. He is poor, of course,—these interesting exiles always are,—he teaches music, and though an accomplished gentleman and as proud as if the 'blue blood' of all the grandees of Spain flowed in his veins, he will not own to any rank, but steadily asserts that he is 'plain Paul Frere, trying honestly to earn his bread, and nothing more.' Ah, you like that, and the very thing that disappoints me most, will make the man a hero in your eyes."

"Honesty is an heroic virtue, and I honor it wherever it is found. What further, Jessie?" and Claudia looked a shade more interested than when the chat began.

"Only that in addition to his charming voice, he is a handsome soul, beside whom our pale-faced gentlemen look boyish and insipid to a mortifying degree. Endless romances are in progress, of which he may be the hero if he will, but unfortunately for his fair pupils the fine eyes of their master seem blind to any 'tremolo movements' but those set down in the book; and he hears them warble '*O mio Fernando*' in the tenderest of spoken languages as tranquilly as if it were a nursery song. He leads a solitary

life, devoted to his books and art, and rarely mixes in the society of which I think him a great ornament. This is all I know concerning him, and if you ever care to descend from your Mont Blanc of cool indifference, I fancy this minstrel will pay you for the effort. Look! that is he, the dark man with the melancholy eyes; deign to give me your opinion of my modern 'Thaddeus.'"

Claudia looked well, and, as she did so, vividly before her mind's eye rose a picture she had often pondered over when a child.

A painting of a tropical island, beautiful with the bloom and verdure of the South. An ardent sky, flushed with sunrise canopied the scene, palm trees lifted their crowned heads far into the fervid air, orange groves dropped dark shadows on the sward where flowers in rank luxuriance glowed like spires of flame, or shone like stars among the green. Bright-hued birds swung on vine and bough, dainty gazelles lifted their human eyes to greet the sun, and a summer sea seemed to flow low—singing to the bloomy shore. The first blush and dewiness of dawn lay over the still spot, but looking nearer, the eye saw that the palm's green crowns were rent, the vines hung torn as if by ruthless gusts, and the orange boughs were robbed of half their wealth, for fruit and flowers lay thick upon the sodden earth. Far on the horizon's edge, a thunderous cloud seemed rolling westward, and on the waves an ominous wreck swayed with the swaying of the treacherous sea.

Claudia saw a face that satisfied her eye as the voice had done her ear, and yet its comeliness was not its charm. Black locks streaked an ample forehead, black brows arched finely over southern eyes as full of softness as of fire. No color marred the pale bronze of the cheek, no beard hid the firm contour of the lips, no unmeaning smile destroyed the dignity of a thoughtful countenance, on which nature's hand had set the seal where-with she stamps the manhood that no art can counterfeit.

But as she searched it deeper, Claudia saw upon the forehead lines that seldom come to men of thirty, in the eye the shadow of some past despair, and about the closely folded lips traces of an impetuous nature tamed by suffering and taught by time. Here, as in the picture, the tempest seemed to have gone by, but though a gracious day had come, the cloud had left a shade behind. Sweet winds came wooingly from off the shore, and the sea serenely smiled above the wreck, but a vague unrest still stirred the air, and an undertone of human woe still whispered through the surges' song.

"So Dante might have looked before his genius changed the crown of

thorns into a crown of roses for the woman he loved,' thought Claudia, then said aloud in answer to her friend's last words,

"Yes, I like that face, less for its beauty than its strength. I like that austere simplicity of dress, that fine unconsciousness of self, and more than all I like the courtesy with which he listens to the poorest, plainest, least attractive woman in the room. Laugh, if you will, Jessie, I respect him more for his kindness to neglected Mary Low, than if for a fairer woman he had fought as many battles as Saint George. This is true courtesy, and it is the want of this reverence for womanhood in itself, which makes many of our so-called gentlemen what they are, and robs them of one attribute of real manliness."

"Heaven defend us! here is an Alpine avalanche of praise from our Diana! Come, be made known to this Endymion before you can congeal again," cried Jessie; for Claudia's words were full of energy, and in her eye shone an interest that softened its cold brilliancy and gave her countenance the warmth which was the charm it needed most. Claudia went, and soon found herself enjoying the delights of conversation in the finer sense of that word. Paul Frere did not offer her the stale compliments men usually think it proper to bestow upon a woman, as if her mind were like a dainty purse too limited for any small coin of any worth, nor did he offer her the witty gossips current in society, which, like crisp bank bills, rustle pleasantly, and are accepted as a "counterfeit presentiment," of that silver speech, which should marry sound to sense. He gave her sterling gold, that rang true to the ear, and bore the stamp of genuine belief, for unconsciously he put himself into his words, and made them what they should be,—the interpreters of one frank nature to another.

He took the few pale phantoms custom has condemned to serve as subjects of discourse between a man and a woman in a place like that, and giving them vitality and color, they became the actors of his thought, and made a living drama of that little hour. Yet he was no scholar erudite and polished by long study or generous culture. Adversity had been his college, experience his tutor, and life the book whose lessons stern and salutary he had learned with patient pain. Real wrong and suffering and want had given him a knowledge no philosopher could teach, real danger and desolation had lifted him above the petty fears that take the heroism out of daily life, and a fiery baptism had consecrated heart and mind and soul to one great aim, beside which other men's ambitions seemed most poor. This was the secret charm he owned, this gave the simplicity that dignified his manner, the sincerity that won in his address; this proved the

supremacy of character over culture, opulence and rank, and made him what he was—a man to command respect and confidence and love.

Dimly Claudia saw, and vaguely felt all this in that brief interview; but when it ended, she wished it were to come again, and felt as if she had left the glare and glitter of the stage whereon she played her part, for a moment had put off her mask to sit down in the ruddy circle of a household fire where little shadows danced upon the walls, and tender tones made common speech divine.

"It will be gone tomorrow, this pleasure beautiful and brief, and I shall fall back into my old disappointment again, as I have always done before"; she sighed within herself. Yet when she sat alone in her own home, it seemed no longer solitary, and like a happy child she lulled herself to sleep with fitful snatches of a song she had never heard but once.

CHAPTER II

Claudia stood alone in the world, a woman of strong character and independent will, gifted with beauty, opulence and position, possessing the admiration and esteem of many, the affection of a few whose love was worth desiring. All these good gifts were hers, and yet she was not satisfied. Home ties she had never known, mother-love had only blessed her long enough to make its loss most keenly felt, the sweet confidence of sisterhood had never warmed her with its innocent delights, "father" and "brother" were unknown words upon her lips, for she had never known the beauty and the strength of man's most sincere affection.

Many hands had knocked at the closed door, but knocked in vain, for the master had not come, and true to her finer instincts, Claudia would not make a worldly marriage or try to cheat her hunger into a painted feast. She would have all or nothing, and when friends urged or lovers pleaded, she answered steadily:

"I cannot act a lie, and receive where I have nothing to bestow. If I am to know the blessedness of love, it will come to me, and I can wait."

Love repaid her loyalty at last. Through the close-scented air of the conservatory where she had lived a solitary plant, there came a new influence, like a breath of ocean air, both strengthening and sweet. Then the past ceased to be a mournful memory; for over her lost hopes, the morning glories that had early died,—over her eager desires, the roses that had never bloomed—over broken friendships, the nests whence all the birds were flown—a pleasant twilight seemed to fall, and across the sombre present came the ruddy herald of a future dawn. It brought the magic moment when the flower could bloom, the master's hand whose touch

unbarred the door, the charmed voice that woke the sleeping princess, and sang to her of

"That new world, which is the old".

In "plain Paul Frere," Claudia found her hero, recognized her king, although like Bruce he came in minstrel guise and accepted royally the alms bestowed.

Slowly, by rare interviews, the swift language of the eye, and music's many wiles, Paul caught deeper glimpses into Claudia's solitary life, and felt the charm of an earnest nature shining through the maidenly reserve that veiled it from his search. He sang to her, and singing, watched the still fire that kindled in her eye, the content that touched her lips with something softer than a smile, the warmth that stole so beautifully to her face, melting the pride that chilled it, banishing the weariness that saddened it, and filling it with light, and hope, and bloom, as if at his command the woman's sorrows fell away and left a happy girl again. It was a dangerous power to wield, but with the consciousness of its possession came a sentiment that curbed a strong man's love of power, and left the subject to a just man's love of right.

He denied himself the happiness of ministering to Claudia the frequent feasts she loved, for it was offering her a wine more subtle than she knew, a wine whose potency her friend already felt. He seldom sang to her alone, but conversation was a rich reward for this renunciation, for in those hours, beautiful and brief, he found an interest that "grew by what it fed on," and soon felt that it was fast becoming sweeter to receive than to bestow.

Claudia was a student of like dangerous lore, for she too scanned her new friend warily and well; often with keen perceptions divining what she dared not seek, with swift instincts feeling what she could not see. Her first judgments had been just, her first impressions never changed. For each month of increasing friendship, was one of increasing honor and esteem.

This man who earned his bread, and asked no favors where he might have demanded many, who would accept no fictitious rank, listen to no flattering romance, who bore the traces of a fateful past, yet showed no bitterness of spirit, but went his way steadfastly, living to some high end unseen by human eyes, yet all-sustaining in itself,—this man seemed to Claudia the friend she had desired, for here she found a character built up by suffering and time, an eager intellect aspiring for the true, and valiant spirit looking straight and strong into the world.

To her ear the music of his life became more beautiful than any lay he sang, and on his shield her heart inscribed the fine old lines,

"Lord of himself, though not of lands,
And having nothing, yet hath all."

CHAPTER III

One balmy night, when early flowers were blossoming in Claudia's garden, and the west wind was the almoner of their sweet charities, she sat looking with thoughtful eyes into the shadowy stillness of the hour.

Miss Blank, the mild nonentity who played propriety in Claudia's house, had been absorbed into the darkness of an inner room, where sleep might descend upon her weary eyelids without an open breach of that decorum which was the good soul's staff of life.

Paul Frere, leaning in the shadow, looked down upon the bent head whereon the May moon dropped a shining benediction; and as he looked, his countenance grew young again with hope, and fervent with strong desire. Silence had fallen on them, for watching her, Paul forgot to speak, and Claudia was plucking leaf after leaf from a flower that had strayed from among the knot that graced her breast. One by one the crimson petals fluttered to the ground, and as she saw them fall a melancholy shadow swept across her face.

"What has the rose done that its life should be so short?" her friend asked as the last leaf left her hand.

As if the words recalled her to the present, Claudia looked at the dismantled stem, saying regretfully, "I forgot the flower, and now I have destroyed it with no skill to make it live again." She paused a moment, then added smiling as if at her own fancies, though the regretful cadence lingered in her voice, "This is my birth-night, and thinking of my past, the rose ceased to be a rose to me, and became a little symbol of my life. Each leaf I gathered seemed a year, and as it fell I thought how fast, how vainly, they had gone. They should have been fairer in aspirations, fuller of duties, richer in good deeds, happier in those hopes that make existence sweet, but now it is too late. Poor rose! Poor life!" and from the smiling lips there fell a sigh.

Paul took the relic of the rose, and with a gesture soft as a caress, broke from the stem a little bud just springing from its mossy sheath, saying with a glance as full of cheer as hers had been of despondency, "My friend, it never is too late. Out of the loneliest life may bloom a higher beauty than the lost rose knew. Let the first sanguine petals fall, their perfume

will remain a pleasant memory when they are dead; but cherish the fairer flower that comes so late, nurture it with sunshine, baptise it with dew, and though the garden never knows it more, it may make summer in some shady spot and bless a household with its breath and bloom. I have no gift wherewith to celebrate this night, but let me give you back a happier emblem of the life to be, and with it a prophecy that when another six and twenty years are gone, no sigh will mar your smile as you look back and say, 'Fair rose! Fair life!'"

Claudia looked up with traitorous eyes, and answered softly—"I accept the prophecy, and will fulfil it, if the black frost does not fall." Then with a wistful glance and all persuasive tone, she added, "You have forgotten one gift always in your power to bestow. Give it to me to-night, and usher in my happier years with music."

There was no denial to a request like that, and with a keen sense of delight Paul obeyed, singing as he had never sung before, for heart and soul were in the act, and all benignant influences lent their aid to beautify his gift. The silence of the night received the melody, and sent it whispering back like ripples breaking on the shore; the moonbeams danced like elves upon the keys, as if endowing human touch with their magnetic power; the west wind tuned its leafy orchestra to an airy symphony, and every odorous shrub and flower paid tribute to the happy hour.

With drooping lids and lips apart, Claudia listened, till on the surges of sweet sound her spirit floated far away into that blissful realm where human aspirations are fulfilled, where human hearts find their ideals, and renew again the innocent beliefs that made their childhood green.

Silence fell suddenly, startling Claudia from her dream. For a moment the radiance of the room grew dark before her eyes, then a swift light dawned, and in it she beheld the countenance of her friend transfigured by the power of that great passion which heaven has gifted with eternal youth. For a long moment nothing stirred, and across the little space that parted them the two regarded one another with wordless lips, but eyes whose finer language made all speech impertinent.

Paul bent on the woman whom he loved a look more tender than the most impassioned prayer, more potent than the subtlest appeal, more eloquent than the most fervent vow. He saw the maiden color flush and fade, saw the breath quicken and the lips grow tremulous, but the steadfast eyes never wavered, never fell, and through those windows of the soul, her woman's heart looked out and answered him.

There was no longer any doubt or fear or power to part them now, and

with a gesture full of something nobler than Pride, Paul stretched his hand to Claudia, and she took it fast in both her own.

To a believer in metempsychosis it would have been an easy task to decide the last shape Mrs. Snowden had endowed with life, for the old fable of the "cat transformed into a woman," might have been again suggested to a modern Aesop.

Soft of manner, smooth of tongue, stealthy of eye, this feline lady followed out the instincts of her nature with the fidelity of any veritable puss. With demure aspect and pleasant purrings she secured the admiration of innocents who forgot that velvet paws could scratch, and the friendship of comfortable souls who love to pet and be amused. Daintily picking her way through the troubles of this life, she slipped into cosy corners where rugs were softest and fires warmest, gambolling delightfully while the cream was plentiful, and the caresses graciously bestowed. Gossips and scandal were the rats and mice she feasted on, the prey she paraded with ill-disguised exultation when her prowlings and pouncings had brought them to light. Many a smart robin had been fascinated by her power, or escaping left his plumes behind; many a meek mouse had implored mercy for its indiscretion but found none, and many a blithe cricket's music ended when she glided through the grass. Dark holes and corners were hunted by her keen eye, the dust of forgotten rumors was disturbed by her covert tread, and secrets were hunted out with most untiring patience.

She had her enemies, what puss has not? Sundry honest mastiffs growled when she entered their domains, but scorned to molest a weaker foe; sundry pugs barked valiantly till she turned on them and with un-sheathed claws administered a swift quietus to their wrath; sundry jovial squirrels cracked their jokes and flourished defiance, but skipped nimbly from her way, and chattered on a bow she could not climb. More than one friend had found the pantry pillaged, and the milk of human kindness lapped dry by an indefatigable tongue; and yet no meeker countenance lifted its pensive eyes in church, no voice more indignantly rebuked the shortcomings of her race, and no greater martyr bewailed ingratitude when doors were shut upon her, and stern housewives shouted "scat!"

Wifehood and widowhood had only increased her love of freedom and confirmed her love of power. Claudia pitied her, and when others blamed, defended or excused, for her generous nature had no knowledge of duplicity or littleness of soul. Jessie seemed all candor, and though superficial, was full of winning ways and tender confidences that seemed sincere,

and very pleasant to the other's lonely heart. So Jessie haunted her friend's house, rode triumphantly in her carriage, made a shield of her regard, and disported herself at her expense, till a stronger force appeared, and the widow's reign abruptly ended.

The May moon had shown on Claudia's betrothal, and the harvest moon would shine upon her marriage. The months passed like a happy dream, and the midsummer of her life was in its prime. The stir and tattle that went on about her was like an idle wind, for she had gone out of the common world and believed that she cared little for its censure or its praise. What mattered it that Paul was poor—she was not rich? What mattered it that she knew little of his past—had she not all the present and the future for her own? What cared she for the tongues that called him "fortune-hunter", and herself romantic? he possessed a better fortune than any she could give, and she was blessed with a romance that taught her wiser lessons than reality had ever done. So they went their way, undisturbed by any wind that blew. Paul still gave her lessons, still retained his humble home as if no change had befallen him, and Claudia with all her energies alert, bestirred herself to "set her house in order, and make ready for the bridegroom's coming." But as each night fell, patient Teacher, busy Housewife vanished, and two lovers met. The sun set on all their cares, and twilight shed a peace upon them softer than the dew, for Joy was the musician now, and Love the fairy hostess of the guests who made high festival of that still hour.

The months had dwindled to a week, and in the gloaming of a sultry day, Paul came early to his tryst. Claudia was detained by lingering guests, and with a frown at their delay, her lover paced the room until she should come. Pausing suddenly in his restless march, Paul drew a letter from his breast and read it slowly as if his thoughts had been busy with its contents. It was a letter of many pages, written in decided characters, worn as if with frequent reading, and as he turned it his face wore a look it had never shown to Claudia's eyes. With a sudden impulse he raised his right hand to the light, and scanned it with a strange scrutiny. Across the palm stretched a wide purple scar, the relic of some wound healed long ago, but not effaced by time. Claudia had once asked as she caressed it what blow had left so deep a trace, and he had answered with a sudden clenching of the hand, a sudden fire in the eye, "Claudia, it is the memorial of a victory I won ten years ago; it was a righteous battle, but its memory is bitter. Let it sleep; and believe me, it is an honest hand, or I could never look in your true face and give it you again."

She had been content, and never touched the sad past by a word, for she wholly trusted where she wholly loved.

As Paul looked thoughtfully at that right hand of his, the left dropped at his side, and from among the loosely held papers, a single sheet escaped, and fluttered noiselessly among the white folds of the draperies, that swept the floor. The stir of departing feet aroused him from his reverie; with a quick gesture he crushed the letter, and lit it at the Roman lamp that always burned for him. Slowly the fateful pages shrivelled and grew black; silently he watched them burn, and when the last flame flickered and went out, he gathered up the ashes and gave them to the keeping of the wind. Then all the shadows faded from his face, and left the old composure there.

Claudia's voice called from below, and with the ardor of a boy he sprang down to meet the welcome he was hungering for.

As the door closed behind him, from the gloom of that inner room Jessie Snowden stole out and seized her prize. Listening with sharpened sense for any coming step, she swept the page with her keen eye, gathering its meaning before a dozen lines were read. The paper rustled with the tremor of her hand, and for a moment the room spun dizzily before her as she dropped into a seat, and sat staring straight into the air with a countenance where exultation and bewilderment were strangely blended. "Poor Claudia, " was the first thought that took shape in her mind, but a harder one usurped its place, an ominous glitter shone in her black eyes, as she muttered with a wicked smile, "I owe him this, and he shall have it."

An hour later Paul and Claudia sat in that same spot together, not yet content, for opposite still lounged Jessie Snowden, showing no symptoms of departure. Her cheek burned with a brilliant color, her black eyes glittered with repressed excitement and in gesture, look and tone there was a peculiar sharpness as if every sense were unwontedly alert, every nerve unwontedly high strung. She was not loquacious, but seemed waiting till speech would take effect; for all her feline instincts were awake, and she must torture a little before she dealt the blow. She knew the lovers wished her gone, yet still sat watchful and wary, till the auspicious moment came.

Paul was restless, for his southern temperament, more keenly alive to subtle influences than colder natures, vaguely warned him of the coming blow, unwillingly yielded to the baleful power it could not comprehend, unconsciously betrayed that Jessie's presence brought disquiet, and so doing placed a weapon in her hand, which she did not fail to use. Her eye was on him constantly, with a glance that stirred him like an insult, while

it held him like a spell. His courtesy was sorely tried, for whether he spoke or was mute, moved about the room or sat with averted face, he felt that eye still on him, with a look of mingled hatred, pity and contempt. He confronted it and bore it down; but when he turned, it rose again and haunted him with its aggressive shine. He fixed his regard on Claudia, and so forgot for a time, but it was always there and proved itself no fancy of a tired brain.

Claudia was weary and grudged the quiet hour which always left her refreshed, when no unwelcome presence marred its charm. She was unutterably tired of Jessie, and if a wish could have secured her absence, she would have vanished with the speed of a stage sprite at the wizard's will.

"Is't the old pain, Paul? Let me play Desdemona, and bind my handkerchief about your forehead as I have done before," and Claudia's voice soothed the ear with unspoken love.

Paul had leaned his head upon his hand, but as she spoke he lifted it and answered cheerfully, "I have no pain, but something in the atmosphere oppresses me. I fancy there is thunder in the air."

"There is" — and Jessie laughed a laugh that had no mirth in it, as she sat erect with sudden interest in her voice.

Paul swept aside the curtain, and looked out; the sky was cloudless and the evening star hung luminous and large on the horizon's edge.

"Ah, you think I am a false prophet, but wait an hour then look again. I see a fierce storm rolling up, though the cloud is 'no bigger than a man's hand' now."

As she spoke Jessie's eye glanced across the hand Paul had extended for the fan which Claudia was offering; he did not see the look, but unfurling the daintily carved toy, answered calmly as the stirred air cooled the fever of his cheek: "I cannot doubt you, Mrs. Snowden, for you look truly sibylline tonight; but if you read the future with such a gifted eye, can you not find us a fairer future than your storm foretells?"

"Did you ever know before that there was gipsy blood in my veins, and that I possessed the gipsy's power of second sight? Shall I use it, and tell your fortune like a veritable witch? May I, Claudia?"

Jessie's friend looked at her with a touch of wonder; for the flush was deepening on her cheek, the fire kindling in her eyes, and her whole aspect seemed to stir and brighten like a snake's before it springs.

"If Paul pleases I should like to hear your 'rede,' and we will cross your palm with silver by and by. Indeed I think the inspired phrenzy is descending upon you, Jessie, for you look like an electric battery fully

charged, and I dare not touch you lest I should receive a shock," Claudia answered, smiling at the sudden change.

"I *am* a battery to-night, and you *may* have your shock whenever you please. Come, Mr. Frere, your sovereign consents, come and let me try my power—if you dare."

A slight frown contracted Paul's brows, and a disdainful smile flitted across his lips; but Claudia waited and he silently obeyed.

"Not this hand, fate lies only in the *right*."

"Jessie, take mine instead, our fortunes henceforth will be the same!" cried Claudia, with eager voice remembering the mark Paul never showed.

But Jessie only laughed the metallic laugh again, clear and sharp as the jangle of a bell; and with a gesture of something like defiance Paul stretched his right hand to her, while the disdainful smile still sat upon his lips. Jessie did not touch it, but bent and scanned it eagerly, though nothing could be seen but the wide scar across the shapely palm.

A dead silence fell upon the three. Paul stood composed and motionless, Jessie paled visibly, and the quick throb of her heart grew audible, but Claudia felt the pain of that rude scrutiny, and leaning toward them asked impatiently, "Sibyl, what do you read?"

Jessie swayed slowly backward, and looking up at the defiant face above her, answered in a whisper that cut the silence like a knife.

"I see two letters,—M. L."

Paul did not start, his countenance did not change, but the fan dropped shattered from his grasp—the only sign that he had heard. Claudia's eyes were on them, but she could not speak, and the sibilant whisper came again.

"I know it all, for *this* remained to tell the secret, and *I* am the master now. See here!" and with a peal of laughter Jessie threw the paper at his feet.

CHAPTER IV

Paul gave one glance at the crumpled sheet, then turned on her with a look that sent her trembling to the door, as a gust would sweep a thistle down before it. It was the look of a hunted creature, driven to bay; wrath, abhorrence, and despair stirred the strong man's frame, looked out at his desperate eye, strengthened his uplifted arm, and had not his opponent been a woman some swift retribution would have fallen on her, for there was murder in his fiery blood.

Claudia sprang to his side, and at the touch of those restraining hands

a stern pallor settled on his countenance, a hard-won self-control quenched his passion, a bitter truth confronted his despair, and left him desolate but not degraded. His eye fixed on Jessie, and its hopelessness was more eloquent than a torrent of entreaties, its contempt more keen than the sharpest reproach.

"Go," he said with a strange hush in his voice, "I ask nothing of you, for I know you would be merciless to me; but if there be any compassion, any touch of nobleness in your nature you will spare your friend, remembering what she has been to you. Go, and mar my hard-won reputation as you will, the world's condemnation I will not accept, my judge is *here*."

"There will be no need of silence a week hence when the marriage day comes around and there is no bridegroom for the bride. I foretold the storm, and it has come; heaven help you through it, Claudia. Good night, pleasant dreams, and a fair tomorrow!"

Jessie Snowden tried to look exultant, but her white lips would not smile, and though the victory was hers she crept away like one who has suffered defeat.

Paul locked the door behind her, and turning, looked at Claudia with a world of anguish in his altered face. She moved as if to go to him, but a gesture arrested her, and uttering a broken exclamation Paul struck his scarred hand on the chimney piece with a force that left it bruised and bleeding, and dropping his hot forehead on the marble stood silent, struggling with a grief that had no solace.

Claudia paused a moment, mute and pale, watching the bowed figure and the red drops as they fell, then she went to him, and holding the wounded palm as if it were a suffering child, she laid her cheek to his, whispering tenderly: "Paul, you said this was an honest hand and I believe it still. There should not be a grain of dust between us two,—deal frankly with me now, and let me comfort you."

Paul lifted up his face wan with the tearless sorrow of a man, and gathering the beloved comforter close to his sore heart looked long into the countenance whose loving confidence had no reproach for him as yet. He held her fast for a little space, kissed her lips and forehead lingeringly, as if he took a mute farewell, then gently put her from him saying, as she sank into a seat—

"Claudia, I never meant to burden you with my unhappy past, believing that I did no wrong in burying it deep from human sight, and walking through the world as if it had never been. I see my error now, and bitterly I repent it. Put pity, prejudice, and pride away, and see me as I am. Hear and judge me, and by your judgment I will abide."

He paused, silently gathering calmness from his strength, and courage from his love; then, as if each word were wrung from him by a sharper pang than he had ever known before, he said slowly: "Claudia, those letters were once branded on my hand, they are the initials of a name— 'Maurice Lecroix.' Ten years ago he was my master, I his slave."

If Paul had raised his strong right arm and struck her, the act would not have daunted her with such a pale dismay, or shocked the power more rudely from her limbs. For an instant the tall shape wavered mistily before her and her heart stood still; then she girded up her energies, for with her own suffering came the memory of his, and, true woman through it all, she only covered up her face and cried: "Go on, I can hear it, Paul!"

Solemnly and steadily, as if it were his dying shrift, Paul stood before the woman he loved and told the story of his life.

"My father—God forgive him—was a Cuban planter, my mother a beautiful Quadroon, mercifully taken early out of slavery to an eternal freedom. I never knew her but she bequeathed to me my father's love, and I possessed it till he died. For fifteen years I was a happy child, and forgot that I was a slave—light tasks, kind treatment, and slight restraints so blinded me to the real hardships of my lot. I had a sister, heiress of my father's name and fortune, and she was my playmate all those years, sharing her pleasures and her pains with me, her small store of knowledge, her girlish accomplishments as she acquired them, and—more than all—the blessing of an artless love. I was her proud protector, her willing servitor, and in those childish days we were what heaven made us, brother and sister fond and free.

I was fifteen when my father died, and the black blight fell upon me in a single night. He had often promised me my freedom—strange gift from a father to a son!—but like other duties it had been neglected till too late. Death came suddenly, and I was left a sadder orphan than poor Nathalie, for my heritage was a curse that cancelled all past love by robbing me of liberty.

"Nathalie and I were separated—she went to her guardian's protection, I to the auction block. Her last words were, 'Be kind to Paul.' They promised; but when she was gone they sold me far away from my old home, and then I learned what it was to be a slave. Ah, Claudia, you shudder when I say those words; give your abhorrence to the man who dared to love you, but bestow a little pity on the desolate boy you never knew. I had a hard master, he a rebellious spirit to subdue; for I could not learn subjection, and my young blood burned within me at an insult or a blow. My father's kindness proved the direst misfortune that could have be-

fallen me, for I had been lifted up into humanity and now I was cast back among the brutes; I had been born with a high heart and an eager spirit, they had been cherished fifteen years, now they were to be crushed and broken by inevitable fate.

"Year after year I struggled on, growing more desperate, and tugging more fiercely at my chain as each went by, bringing manhood but not the right to enjoy or make it mine. I tried to escape, but in vain, and each failure added to my despair. I tried to hear of Nathalie, but she had learned to look on me in another light, and had forgotten the sweet tie that bound us once. I tried to become a chattel and be content, but my father had given me his own free instincts, aspirations, and desires, and I could not change my nature though I were to be a slave forever.

"Five miserable years dragged by—so short to tell of, such an eternity to live! I was twenty, and no young man ever looked into the world more eager to be up and doing, no young man ever saw so black a future as that which appalled me with its doom. I would not accept it, but made a last resolve to try once more for liberty, and if I failed, to end the life I could no longer bear. Watchfully I waited, warily I planned, desperately I staked my last hope—and lost it. I was betrayed and hunted down as ruthlessly as any wolf; but I tried to keep my vow; for as my pursuers clutched me I struck the blow that should have ended all, and the happiest moment of my life was that swift pang when the world passed from me with the exultant thought, 'I am free at last!'"

Paul paused, spent and breathless with rapid speech and strong emotion, and in the silence heard Claudia murmuring through a rain of tears: "Oh, my love! my love! was there no friend but death?"

That low cry was a stronger cordial to Paul's spirit than the rarest wine grape that ever grew. He looked yearningly across the narrow space that parted them, but though his eye blessed her for her pity, he did not pass the invisible barrier he had set up between them till her hand should throw it down or fix it there forever.

"These are bitter things for you to hear, dear heart. God knows they were bitter things to bear, but I am stronger for them now and you the calmer for your tears. A little more and happier times are coming. I could not lie, but came out of that 'valley of the shadow' a meeker soul; for though branded, buffeted, and bruised, I clung to life, blindly believing help must come, and it did. One day a shape passed before my eyes that seemed the angel of deliverance—it was Nathalie, and she was my master's guest. I gathered covertly that she was a gentle-woman, that she was

mistress of her fortune now, and soon to be a happy wife; and hearing these things I determined to make one appeal to her in my great need.

"I watched her, and one blessed night, defying every penalty, and waiting till the house was still, and her light burned alone as I had seen it many times before, I climbed the balcony and stood before her saying, 'I am Paul, help me in our father's name.' She did not recognize the blithe boy in the desperate man, but I told my misery, implored compassion and relief, I looked at her with her father's face, and nature pleaded better than my prayers, for she stretched her hands to me, saying, with tears as beautiful as those now shining on your cheek, 'Who should help you if not I? Be comforted and I will atone for this great neglect and wrong. Paul, have faith in me; I shall not fail.'

"Claudia, you loved me first for my great reverence for woman-kind; this is the secret of the virtue you commend, for when I was most desolate a woman succored me. Since then, in every little maid, I see the child who loved me when a boy, in every blooming girl, the Nathalie who saved me when a man, in every woman, high or low, the semblance of my truest friend, and do them honor in my sister's name."

"Heaven crown her with a happy life!" prayed Claudia, with fervent heart, and still more steadily her lover's voice went on.

"She kept her word, and did a just deed generously, for money flowed like water till I was free, then giving me a little store for present needs, she sent me out the richest man that walked the world. I left the island and went to and fro seeking for my place upon the earth. I never told my story, never betrayed my past, I have no sign of my despised race but my Spanish hue, and taking my father's native country for my own I found no bar in swarthy skin, or the only name I had a right to bear. I seared away all traces of a master's claim, and smiled as the flame tortured me, for liberty had set her seal upon my forehead, and my flesh and blood were *mine*.

"Then I took the rights and duties of a man upon me, feeling their weight and worth, looking proudly on them as a sacred trust won by much suffering, to be used worthily and restored to their bestower richer for my stewardship. I looked about me for some work to do, for now I labored for myself, and industry was sweet. I was a stranger in a strange land, friendless and poor; but I had energy and hope, two angels walking with me night and day.

"Music had always been my passion; now I chose it as my staff of life. In hospitable Germany I made true friends who aided me, and doing any honest work by day, I gave my nights to study, trying to repair the loss of years.

"Southern trees grow rapidly, for their sap is stirred by whirlwinds and fed with ardent heats. Fast I struggled up, groping for the light that dawned more fairly as I climbed; and when ten years were gone I seemed to have been born anew. Paul the slave was dead and his grave grown green; Paul the man had no part in him beyond the mournful memory of the youth that pined and died too soon. The world had done me a great wrong, yet I asked no atonement but the liberty to prove myself a man; no favor but the right to bury my dead past and make my future what I would. Other men's ambitions were not mine, for twenty years had been taken from me and I had no time to fight for any but the highest prize. I was grateful for the boon heaven sent me, and felt that my work was to build up an honest life, to till the nature given me, and sow therein a late harvest, that my sheaf might yet be worthy the Great Reaper's hand. If there be any power in sincere desire, any solace in devout belief,—that strength, that consolation will be mine. Man's opprobrium may oppress me, woman's pity may desert me, suffering and wrong may still pursue me,—yet I am not desolate; for when all human charities have cast me off I know that a Diviner love will take me in."

To Paul's voice came the music of a fervent faith, in his eye burned the fire of a quenchless hope, and on his countenance there shone a pale serenity that touched it with the youth time cannot take away. Past and present faded from his sight, for in that moment his spirit claimed its birthright, and beyond the creature of his love, his heart beheld the aspiration of his life.

"Claudia, I never thought to know affection like your own; never thought I could deserve so great a blessing; but when it came to me in tenderest guise, pleading to be taken in, how could I bar the door to such a welcome visitant? I did not, and the strong sweet angel entered in to kindle on my lonely hearth a household fire that can never die. Heaven help me if the ministering spirit goes!"

Through all the story of his own despairs and griefs Paul had not faltered, but gone resolutely on, painting his sufferings lightly for Claudia's sake, but now when he remembered the affection she had cherished, the anguish she might feel, the confidence she might believe betrayed, a keen remorse assailed him, and his courage failed. He thought of Claudia lost, and with an exclamation of passionate regret paced the long room with restless feet—paused for a little, looking out into the magic stillness of the night, and came back calm again.

"When you first gave me the good gift you have a right to take again, I told you I was orphaned, friendless, poor; but I did not tell you why I

was thus desolate, believing it was wiser to leave a bitter history untold. I thought I did no wrong, but I have learned that perfect peace is only- found in perfect truth; and I accept the lesson, for I was too proud of my success, and I am cast down into the dust to climb again with steadier feet. I let you judge me as an equal, showing you my weaknesses, my wants, my passions, and beliefs, as any happier lover might have done; you found some spark of manhood there, for you loved me, and that act should have made me worthier of the gift—but it did not. Claudia, forgive me; I was weak, but I struggled to be strong; for in the blissful months that have gone by, you showed me all your heart, enriched me with your confidence, and left no sorrow of your life untold—this brave sincerity became a mute reproach to me at last, for far down in *my* heart was a secret chamber never opened to your eye, for there my lost youth lay so stark and cold I dared not show you its dead face. But as the time came nearer when you were to endow me with the name which should go hand in hand with innocence and truth, this vague remorse for a silent wrong determined me to make confession of my past. I wrote it all, believing I could never tell it, as I have done to-night, learning that love can cast out fear. I wrote it and brought it many times, but never gave it, for O, Claudia! O, my heart! I loved you more than honor, and I could not give you up!"

From sleeping garden and still night a breath of air sighed through the room, as mournful and as sweet as those impassioned words, but Claudia never lifted up her hidden face, or stirred to answer it, for she was listening to a more divine appeal, and taking counsel in the silence of her heart.

Paul watched her, and the shadow of a great fear fell upon his face.

"I brought this confession here to-night, resolved to give it and be satisfied; but you did not come to meet me, and while I waited my love tempted me; the strong moment passed, and I burned it, yielding the nobler purpose for the dearer peace. This single page, how dropped I cannot tell, betrayed me to that —woman, and her malice forced on me the part I was not brave enough to play alone.

"Now, Claudia, all is told. Now, seeing what I have been, knowing what I desired to be, remembering mercifully what I am, try my crime and adjudge my punishment."

There was no need of that appeal, for judgment had been given long before the prayer came. Pride, and fear, and shame had dropped away, leaving the purer passion free; now justice and mercy took love by the hand and led it home. On Claudia's face there came a light more beautiful than any smile; on cheek and forehead glowed the fervor of her generous

blood, in eye and voice spoke the courage of her steadfast heart, as she flung down the barrier, saying only: "Mine still, mine forever, Paul!" and with that tender welcome took the wronged man to the shelter of her love.

Tears hot and heavy as a summer rain baptised the new born peace and words of broken gratitude sang its lullaby, as that strong nature cradled it with blessings and with prayers. Paul was the weaker now, and Claudia learned the greatness of past fear by the vehemence of present joy as they stood together tasting the sweetness of a moment that enriched their lives.

"Love, do you remember what this gift may cost? Do you remember what I am henceforth to other eyes? Can you bear to see familiar faces growing strange to you, to meet looks that wound you with their pity, to hear words that sting you with their truth, and find a shadow falling on your life from me?"

As he spoke, Paul lifted up that face, "clear-shining after rain," but it did not alter, did not lose its full content, as Claudia replied with fervent voice: "I do remember that I cannot pay too much for what is priceless; that when I was loveless and alone, there came a friend who never will desert me when all others fail; that from lowly places poets, philosophers, and kings have come; and when the world sneers at the name you give me, I can turn upon it saying with the pride that stirs me now: 'My husband has achieved a nobler success than men you honor, has surmounted greater obstacles, has conquered sterner foes, and risen to be an honest man.' "

Paul proved that he was one by still arming her against himself, still warning her of the cruel prejudices which he had such sad cause to know and fear.

"Your generous nature blinds you to the trials I foresee, the disappointments I foretell. In your world there will be no place for me, when this is known, and I cannot ask you to come down from your high place to sit beside an outcast's fire. I have not lost your love,—that was the blow I feared; and still possessing it I can relinquish much, and yield the new title I was soon to know, if I may keep the dear old one of 'friend.' It is no longer in our power to keep this secret unknown, and strengthen our affection by it, as I once hoped. Think of this, Claudia, in a calmer mood, weigh well the present and the future cost, for you have the power to make or mar your happiness.

"No loss of yours must be my gain, and I had rather never look into this

face again than live to see it saddened by a vain regret for any act I might have saved you from by timely pain."

"I will consider, I will prove myself before I take your peace into my hands; but, Paul, I know the answer that will come to all my doubts, I know I shall not change."

Claudia spoke steadily, for she knew herself; and when at length her lover went, her last words were, "Believe in me, I shall not change."

Slowly the clear flame of the lamp grew dim and died, softly Night sang her cradle hymn to hush the weary world, and solemnly the silence deepened as the hours went by, but Claudia with wakeful eyes trod to and fro, or sat an image of mute thought. She was not alone, for good and evil spirits compassed her about, making that still room the battle-field of a viewless conflict between man's law, and woman's love. All the worldly wisdom time had taught, now warned her of the worldly losses she might yet sustain, all the prejudices born of her position and strengthened by her education now assailed her with covert skill, all the pride grown with her growth now tempted her to forget the lover in the slave, and fear threatened her with public opinion, that grim ghost that haunts the wisest and the best. But high above the voice of pride, the sigh of fear, and the echo of "the world's dread laugh," still rose the whisper of her heart, undaunted, undismayed, and cried to her, —

"I was cold, and he cherished me beside his fire; hungry, and he gave me food; a stranger, and he took me in."

Slowly the moon climbed the zenith and dropped into the West, slowly the stars paled one by one, and the gray sky kindled ruddily as dawn came smiling from the hills. Slowly the pale shadow of all worldliness passed from Claudia's mind, and left it ready for the sun, slowly the spectral doubts, regrets and fears vanished one by one, and through the twilight of that brief eclipse arose the morning of a fairer day.

As young knights watched their arms of old in chapels haunted by the memory of warrior or saint, and came forth eager for heroic deeds, so Claudia in the early dawn braced on the armor consecrated by a night of prayerful vigil, and with valiant soul addressed herself to the duty which would bring her life's defeat or victory.

Paul found another Claudia than the one he left; for a woman steadfast and strong turned to him a countenance as full of courage as of cheer, when standing there again he looked deep into her eyes and offered her his hand as he had done on that betrothal night. Now, as then, she took it, and in a moment gave a sweet significance to those characters which were the only vestiges of his wrong, for bending she touched the scarred

palm with her lips, and whispered tenderly, "My love, there is no anguish in that brand, no humiliation in that claim, and I accept the bondage of the master who rules all the world."

As he spoke, Paul looked a happier, more *contented* slave, than those fabulous captives the South boasts of, but finds it hard to show.

Claudia led him back into the lower world again by asking with a sigh—"Paul, why should Jessie Snowden wish to wound me so? What cause have I given her for such dislike?"

A swift color swept across her lover's face, and the disdainful smile touched his lips again as he replied, "It is not a thing for me to tell; yet for the truth's sake I must. Jessie Snowden wooed what Claudia won. Heaven knows I have no cause for vanity, yet I could not help seeing in her eyes the regard it took so long to read in these more maidenly ones. I had no return to make, but gave all the friendship and respect I could to one for whom I had a most invincible distaste. There was no other cause for her dislike, yet I believe she hated me, or why should she speak with such malicious pleasure where a more generous woman would have held her peace? I have no faith in her, and by tomorrow I shall see in some changed face the first cloud of the storm she once foretold. Claudia, let us be married quietly, and go away until the gossips are grown weary, and we are forgotten."

Paul spoke with the sudden impulse of a nature sensitive and proud, but Claudia's energy was fully aroused and she answered with indignant color, "No, nothing must be changed. I asked my friends to see me made a proud and happy wife; shall I let them think I am ashamed to stand before them with the man I love? Paul, if I cannot bear a few harsh words, a few cold looks, a little pain, for you, of what worth is my love, of what use is my strength, and how shall I prove a fit friend and help-meet to you in the heavier cares and sorrows heaven sends us all?"

"Claudia, you are the braver of the two! I should be stronger if I had much to give; but I am so poor, this weight of obligation robs me of my courage. I am a weak soul, love, for I cannot trust, and I am still haunted by the fear that I shall one day read some sorrowful regret in this face, grown so wan with one night's watching for my sake."

Claudia dropped on her knee before him, and lifting up her earnest countenance, said, "Read it, Paul, and never doubt again. You spoke once of atonement,—make it by conquering your pride and receiving as freely as I give; for believe me, it is as hard a thing greatly to accept, as it is bountifully to bestow. You are not poor, for there can be no mine and thine between us two; you are not weak, for I lean on your strength, and

know it will not fail; you are not fearful now, for looking here, you see the wife who never can regret or know the shadow of a change." Paul brushed the brown locks back, and as he read it smiled again, for heart and eyes and tender lips confirmed the truth, and he was satisfied.

Jessie Snowden's secret haunted her like Lady Macbeth's, and like that strong-minded woman, she would have told it in her sleep, if she had not eased herself by confiding it to a single friend. "Dear Maria" promised an eternal silence, but "Dear Maria" was the well known "little bird" who gave the whisper to the air. Rumor sowed it broadcast, gossips nurtured it, and Claudia reaped a speedy harvest of discomforts and chagrins.

She thought herself well armed for the "war of words"; but women's tongues forged weapons whose blows she could not parry, and men's censure or coarse pity pierced her shield, and wounded deeper than she dared to tell. Her "dear five hundred friends" each came to save her from social suicide, and her peaceful drawing-room soon became a chamber of the Inquisition, where a daily "Council of Ten" tormented her with warnings, entreaties—and reproaches,—harder trials for a woman to bear, than the old tortures of rack and thirst and fire.

She bore herself bravely through these troublous times, but her pillow received bitter tears, heard passionate prayers and the throbbing of an indignant heart, that only calmed itself by the power of its love. Paul never saw a tear or heard a sigh,—for him the steady smile sat on her lips, a cheerful courage filled her eye; but he read her pain in the meekness which now beautified her face, and silently the trial now drew them nearer than before.

There was no mother to gather Claudia to her breast with blessings and with prayers when the marriage morning dawned, no sister to hover near her, April-like, with smiles and tears, no father to give her proudly to the man she loved, and few friends to make it a blithe festival; but a happier bride had never waited for her bridegroom's coming than Claudia as she looked out at the sunshine of a gracious day, and said within herself, "Heaven smiles upon me with auspicious skies, and in the depths of my own heart I hear a sweeter chime than any wedding bells can ring,—feel a truer peace than human commendation can bestow. Oh father, whom I never knew! oh mother, whom I wholly loved! be with me now, and bless me in this happy hour."

Paul came at last, fevered with the disquiet of much sleepless thought, and still disturbed by the gratitude of a generous nature, which believed itself unworthy of the gift relenting Fortune now bestowed. He saw a fair woman crowned for him, and remembering his past, looked at her, saying

with troubled and agitated voice—"Claudia, it is not yet too late." But the white shape fluttered from him to the threshold of the door, and looking back, only answered, "Come."

Music, the benignant spirit of their lives, breathed a solemn welcome as the solitary pair paced down the chancel, through the silken stir of an uprising throng. Down from the altar window, full of sacred symbols and rich hues, fell heaven's benediction in a flood of light, touching Paul's bent head with mellow rays, and bathing Claudia's bridal snow in bloom.

Silently that unconscious pair preached a better sermon than had ever echoed there, for it appealed to principles that never die, and made its text, "The love of liberty, the liberty of love."

Many a worldly man forgot his worldliness, and thinking of Paul's hard-won success, owned that he honored him. Many a frivolous woman felt her eye wet by sudden dew, her bosom stirred by sudden sympathy, as Claudia's clear, "I will," rose through the hush, and many a softened heart confessed the beauty of the deed it had condemned.

Stern bridegroom and pale bride, those two had come into the chapel's gloom; proud-eyed husband, blooming wife, those two made one, passed out into the sunlight on the sward, and down along that shining path they walked serenely into their new life.

The nine days' wonder died away and Paul and Claudia, listening to the murmur of the sea, forgot there was a world through all that happy month. But when they came again and took their places in the circle they had left, the old charm had departed; for prejudice, a sterner autocrat than the Czar of all the Russias, hedged them round with an invisible restraint, that seemed to shut them out from the genial intercourse they had before enjoyed. Claudia would take no hand that was not given as freely to her husband, and there were not many to press her own as cordially as they once had done. Then she began to realize the emptiness of her old life, for now she looked upon it with a clearer eye, and saw it would not stand the test she had applied.

This was the lesson she had needed, it taught her the value of true friendship, showed her the poverty of old beliefs, the bitterness of old desires, and strengthened her proud nature by the sharp discipline of pain.

Paul saw the loneliness that sometimes came upon her when her former pleasures ceased to satisfy, and began to feel that his forebodings would prove true. But they never did; for there came to them those good Samaritans who minister to soul as well as sense; these took them by the hand,

and through their honor for her husband, gave to Claudia the crowning lesson of her life.

They led her out of the world of wealth, and fashion, and pretense, into that other world that lies above it, full of the beauty of great deeds, high thoughts and humble souls, who walk its ways, rich in the virtues that

"Smell sweet, and blossom in the dust."

Like a child in fairyland she looked about her, feeling that here she might see again the aspirations of her youth, and find those happy visions true.

In this new world she found a finer rank than any she had left, for men whose righteous lives were their renown, whose virtues their estate, were peers of this realm, whose sovereign was Truth, whose ministers were Justice and Humanity, whose subjects all "who loved their neighbor better than themselves."

She found a truer chivalry than she had known before, for heroic deeds shone on her in the humblest guise, and she discovered knights of a nobler court than Arthur founded, or than Spenser sang. Saint Georges, valiant as of old, Sir Guyons, devout and strong, and silver-tongued Sir Launcelots without a stain, all fighting the good fight for love of God and universal right.

She found a fashion old as womanhood and beautiful as charity, whose votaries lived better poems than any pen could write; brave Britomarts redressing wrongs, meek Unas succoring the weak, high-hearted Maids of Orleans steadfast through long martyrdoms of labor for the poor, all going cheerfully along the by-ways of the world, and leaving them the greener for the touch of their unwearied feet.

She found a religion that welcomed all humanity to its broad church, and made its priest the peasant of Judea who preached the Sermon on the Mount.

Then, seeing these things, Claudia felt that she had found her place, and putting off her "purple of fine linen," gave herself to earnest work, which is the strengthening wine of life. Paul was no longer friendless and without a home, for here he found a country, and a welcome to that brotherhood which makes the whole world kin; and like the pilgrims in that fable never old, these two "went on their way rejoicing," leaving the shores of "Vanity Fair" behind them, and through the "Valley of Humiliation" climbed the mountains whence they saw the spires of the "Celestial City" shining in the sun.

Slowly all things right themselves when founded on truth. Time

brought tardy honors to Paul, and Claudia's false friends beckoned her to come and take her place again, but she only touched the little heads, looked up into her husband's face, and answered with a smile of beautiful content—"I cannot give the substance for the shadow, — cannot leave my world for yours. Put off the old delusions that blind you to the light, and come up here to me."

The Brothers

DOCTOR FRANCK came in as I sat sewing up the rents in an old shirt, that Tom might go tidily to his grave. New shirts were needed for living, and there was no wife or mother to "dress him handsome when he went to meet the Lord," as one woman said, describing the fine funeral she had pinched herself to give her son.

"Miss Dane, I'm in a quandary," began the Doctor, with that expression of countenance which says as plainly as words, "I want to ask a favor, but I wish you'd save me the trouble."

"Can I help you out of it?"

"Faith! I don't like to propose it, but you certainly can, if you please."

"Then name it, I beg."

"You see a Reb has just been brought in crazy with typhoid; a bad case every way; a drunken, rascally little captain somebody took the trouble to capture, but whom nobody wants to take the trouble to cure. The wards are full, the ladies worked to death, and willing to be for our own boys, but rather slow to risk their lives for a Reb. Now, you've had the fever, you like queer patients, your mate will see to your ward for a while, and I will find you a good attendant. The fellow won't last long, I fancy; but he can't die without some sort of care, you know. I've put him in the fourth story of the west wing, away from the rest. It is airy, quiet, and comfortable there. I'm on that ward, and will do my best for you in every way. Now, then, will you go?"

"Of course I will, out of perversity, if not common charity; for some of these people think that because I'm an abolitionist I am also a heathen, and I should rather like to show them that, though I cannot quite love my enemies, I am willing to take care of them."

"Very good; I thought you'd go; and speaking of abolition reminds me that you can have a contraband for servant, if you like. It is that fine mulatto fellow who was found burying his rebel master after the fight, and, being badly cut over the head, our boys brought him along. Will you have him?"

"By all means,—for I'll stand to my guns on that point, as on the other; these black boys are far more faithful and handy than some of the white scamps given me to serve, instead of being served by. But is this man well enough?"

"Yes, for that sort of work, and I think you'll like him. He must have been a handsome fellow before he got his face slashed; not much darker than myself; his master's son, I dare say, and the white blood makes him rather high and haughty about some things. He was in a bad way when he came in, but vowed he'd die in the street rather than turn in with the black fellows below; so I put him up in the west wing, to be out of the way, and he's seen to the captain all the morning. When can you go up?"

"As soon as Tom is laid out, Skinner moved, Haywood washed, Marble dressed, Charley rubbed, Downs taken up, Upham laid down, and the whole forty fed."

We both laughed, though the Doctor was on his way to the deadhouse and I held a shroud on my lap. But in a hospital one learns that cheerfulness is one's salvation; for, in an atmosphere of suffering and death, heaviness of heart would soon paralyze usefulness of hand, if the blessed gift of smiles had been denied us.

In an hour I took possession of my new charge, finding a dissipated-looking boy of nineteen or twenty raving in the solitary little room, with no one near him but the contraband in the room adjoining. Feeling decidedly more interest in the black man than in the white, yet remembering the Doctor's hint of his being "high and haughty," I glanced furtively at him as I scattered chloride of lime about the room to purify the air, and settled matters to suit myself. I had seen many contrabands, but never one so attractive as this. All colored men are called "boys," even if their heads are white; this boy was five-and-twenty at least, strong-limbed and manly, and had the look of one who never had been cowed by abuse or worn with oppressive labor. He sat on his bed doing nothing; no book, no pipe, no pen or paper anywhere appeared, yet anything less indolent or listless than his attitude and expression I never saw. Erect he sat, with a hand on either knee, and eyes fixed on the bare wall opposite, so

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rapt in some absorbing thought as to be unconscious of my presence, though the door stood wide open and my movements were by no means noiseless. His face was half averted, but I instantly approved the Doctor's taste, for the profile which I saw possessed all the attributes of comeliness belonging to his mixed race. He was more quadroon than mulatto, with Saxon features, Spanish complexion darkened by exposure, color in lips and cheek, waving hair, and an eye full of the passionate melancholy which in such men always seems to utter a mute protest against the broken law that doomed them at their birth. What could he be thinking of? The sick boy cursed and raved, I rustled to and fro, steps passed the door, bells rang, and the steady rumble of army-wagons came up from the street, still he never stirred. I had seen colored people in what they call "the black sulks," when, for days, they neither smiled nor spoke, and scarcely ate. But this was something more than that; for the man was not dully brooding over some small grievance; he seemed to see an all-absorbing fact or fancy recorded on the wall, which was a blank to me. I wondered if it were some deep wrong or sorrow, kept alive by memory and impotent regret; if he mourned for the dead master to whom he had been faithful to the end; or if the liberty now his were robbed of half its sweetness by the knowledge that some one near and dear to him still languished in the hell from which he had escaped. My heart quite warmed to him at that idea; I wanted to know and comfort him; and, following the impulse of the moment, I went in and touched him on the shoulder.

In an instant the man vanished and the slave appeared. Freedom was too new a boon to have wrought its blessed changes yet; and as he started up, with his hand at his temple, and an obsequious "Yes, Missis," any romance that had gathered round him fled away, leaving the saddest of all sad facts in living guise before me. Not only did the manhood seem to die out of him, but the comeliness that first attracted me; for, as he turned, I saw the ghastly wound that had laid open cheek and forehead. Being partly healed, it was no longer bandaged, but held together with strips of that transparent plaster which I never see without a shiver, and swift recollections of the scenes with which it is associated in my mind. Part of his black hair had been shorn away, and one eye was nearly closed; pain so distorted, and the cruel sabre-cut so marred that portion of his face, that, when I saw it, I felt as if a fine medal had been suddenly reversed, showing me a far more striking type of human suffering and wrong than Michael Angelo's bronze prisoner. By one of those

inexplicable processes that often teach us how little we understand ourselves, my purpose was suddenly changed; and, though I went in to offer comfort as a friend, I merely gave an order as a mistress.

"Will you open these windows? this man needs more air."

He obeyed at once, and, as he slowly urged up the unruly sash, the handsome profile was again turned toward me, and again I was possessed by my first impression so strongly that I involuntarily said,

"Thank you."

Perhaps it was fancy, but I thought that in the look of mingled surprise and something like reproach which he gave me, there was also a trace of grateful pleasure. But he said, in that tone of spiritless humility these poor souls learn so soon,—

"I isn't a white man, Missis, I'se a contraband."

"Yes, I know it; but a contraband is a free man, and I heartily congratulate you."

He liked that; his face shone, he squared his shoulders, lifted his head, and looked me full in the eye with a brisk,

"Thank ye, Missis; anything more to do fer yer?"

"Doctor Franck thought you would help me with this man, as there are many patients and few nurses or attendants. Have you had the fever?"

"No, Missis."

"They should have thought of that when they put him here; wounds and fevers should not be together. I'll try to get you moved."

He laughed a sudden laugh: if he had been a white man, I should have called it scornful; as he was a few shades darker than myself, I suppose it must be considered an insolent, or at least an unmannerly one.

"It don't matter, Missis. I'd rather be up here with the fever than down with those niggers; and there isn't no other place fer me."

Poor fellow! that was true. No ward in all the hospital would take him in to lie side by side with the most miserable white wreck there. Like the bat in Aesop's fable, he belonged to neither race; and the pride of one and the helplessness of the other, kept him hovering alone in the twilight a great sin has brought to overshadow the whole land.

"You shall stay, then; for I would far rather have you than my lazy Jack. But are you well and strong enough?"

"I guess I'll do, Missis."

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He spoke with a passive sort of acquiescence,—as if it did not much matter if he were not able, and no one would particularly rejoice if he were.

"Yes, I think you will. By what name shall I call you?"

"Bob, Missis."

Every woman has her pet whim; one of mine was to teach the men self-respect by treating them respectfully. Tom, Dick, and Harry would pass, when lads rejoiced in those familiar abbreviations; but to address men often old enough to be my father in that style did not suit my old-fashioned ideas of propriety. This "Bob" would never do; I should have found it as easy to call the chaplain "Gus" as my tragical-looking contraband by a title so strongly associated with the tail of a kite.

"What is your other name?" I asked. "I like to call my attendants by their last names rather than by their first."

"I'se got no other, Missis; we has our masters' names, or do without. Mine's dead, and I won't have anything of his 'bout me."

"Well, I'll call you Robert, then, and you may fill this pitcher for me, if you will be so kind."

He went; but, through all the tame obedience years of servitude had taught him, I could see that the proud spirit his father gave him was not yet subdued, for the look and gesture with which he repudiated his master's name were a more effective declaration of independence than any Fourth-of-July orator could have prepared.

We spent a curious week together. Robert seldom left his room, except upon my errands; and I was a prisoner all day, often all night, by the bedside of the rebel. The fever burned itself rapidly away, for there seemed little vitality to feed it in the feeble frame of this old young man, whose life had been none of the most righteous, judging from the revelations made by his unconscious lips; since more than once Robert authoritatively silenced him, when my gentler hushings were of no avail, and blasphemous wanderings or ribald camp-songs made my checks burn and Robert's face assume an aspect of disgust. The captain was the gentleman in the world's eye, but the contraband was the gentleman in mine;—I was a fanatic, and that accounts for such depravity of taste, I hope. I never asked Robert of himself, feeling that somewhere there was a spot still too sore to bear the lightest touch; but, from his language, manner, and intelligence, I inferred that his color had procured for him the few advantages within the reach of a quick-witted,

kindly-treated slave. Silent, grave, and thoughtful, but most serviceable, was my contraband; glad of the books I brought him, faithful in the performance of the duties I assigned to him, grateful for the friendliness I could not but feel and show toward him. Often I longed to ask what purpose was so visibly altering his aspect with such daily deepening gloom. But I never dared, and no one else had either time or desire to pry into the past of this specimen of one branch of the chivalrous "F. F. Vs."

On the seventh night, Dr. Franck suggested that it would be well for some one, besides the general watchman of the ward, to be with the captain, as it might be his last. Although the greater part of the two preceding nights had been spent there, of course I offered to remain,—for there is a strange fascination in these scenes, which renders one careless of fatigue and unconscious of fear until the crisis is past.

"Give him water as long as he can drink, and if he drops into a natural sleep, it may save him. I'll look in at midnight, when some change will probably take place. Nothing but sleep or a miracle will keep him now. Good-night."

Away went the Doctor; and, devouring a whole mouthful of grapes, I lowered the lamp, wet the captain's head, and sat down on a hard stool to begin my watch. The captain lay with his hot, haggard face turned toward me, filling the air with his poisonous breath, and feebly muttering, with lips and tongue so parched that the sanest speech would have been difficult to understand. Robert was stretched on his bed in the inner room, the door of which stood ajar, that a fresh draught from his open window might carry the fever-fumes away through mine. I could just see a long, dark figure, with the lighter outline of a face, and, having little else to do just then, I fell to thinking of this curious contraband, who evidently prized his freedom highly, yet seemed in no haste to enjoy it. Dr. Franck had offered to send him on to safer quarters, but he had said, "No, thank yer, sir, not yet," and then had gone away to fall into one of those black moods of his, which began to disturb me, because I had no power to lighten them. As I sat listening to the clocks from the steeples all about us, I amused myself with planning Robert's future, as I often did my own, and had dealt out to him a generous hand of trumps wherewith to play this game of life which hitherto had gone so cruelly against him, when a harsh choked voice called,

"Lucy!"

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It was the captain, and some new terror seemed to have gifted him with momentary strength.

"Yes, here's Lucy," I answered, hoping that by following the fancy I might quiet him,—for his face was damp with the clammy moisture, and his frame shaken with the nervous tremor that so often precedes death. His dull eye fixed upon me, dilating with a bewildered look of incredulity and wrath, till he broke out fiercely,

"That's a lie! she's dead,—and so's Bob, damn him!"

Finding speech a failure, I began to sing the quiet tune that had often soothed delirium like this; but hardly had the line,—

"See gentle patience smile on pain,"

passed my lips, when he clutched me by the wrist, whispering like one in mortal fear,

"Hush! she used to sing that way to Bob, but she never would to me. I swore I'd whip the devil out of her, and I did; but you know before she cut her throat she said she'd haunt me, and there she is!"

He pointed behind me with an aspect of such pale dismay, that I involuntarily glanced over my shoulder and started as if I had seen a veritable ghost; for, peering from the gloom of that inner room, I saw a shadowy face, with dark hair all about it, and a glimpse of scarlet at the throat. An instant showed me that it was only Robert leaning from his bed's foot, wrapped in a gray army-blanket, with his red shirt just visible above it, and his long hair disordered by sleep. But what a strange expression was on his face! The unmarred side was toward me, fixed and motionless as when I first observed it,—less absorbed now, but more intent. His eye glittered, his lips were apart like one who listened with every sense, and his whole aspect reminded me of a hound to which some wind had brought the scent of unsuspected prey.

"Do you know him, Robert? Does he mean you?"

"Laws, no, Missis; they all own half-a-dozen Bobs: but hearin' my name woke me; that's all."

He spoke quite naturally, and lay down again, while I returned to my charge, thinking that this paroxysm was probably his last. But by another hour I perceived a hopeful change; for the tremor had subsided, the cold dew was gone, his breathing was more regular, and Sleep, the healer, had descended to save or take him gently away. Doctor Franck looked in at midnight, bade me keep all cool and quiet, and not fail to administer a certain draught as

soon as the captain woke. Very much relieved, I laid my head on my arms, uncomfortably folded on the little table, and fancied I was about to perform one of the feats which practice renders possible, "sleeping with one eye open," as we say, a half-and-half doze, for all senses sleep but that of hearing; the faintest murmur, sigh, or motion will break it, and give one back ones wits much brightened by the brief permission to "stand at ease." On this night the experiment was a failure, for previous vigils, confinement, and much care had rendered naps a dangerous indulgence. Having roused half-a-dozen times in an hour to find all quiet, I dropped my heavy head on my arms, and, drowsily resolving to look up again in fifteen minutes, fell fast asleep.

The striking of a deep-voiced clock awoke me with a start. "That is one," thought I; but to my dismay, two more strokes followed, and in remorseful haste I sprang up to see what harm my long oblivion had done. A strong hand put me back into my seat, and held me there. It was Robert. The instant my eye met his my heart began to beat, and all along my nerves tingled that electric flash which foretells a danger that we cannot see. He was very pale, his mouth grim, and both eyes full of sombre fire; for even the wounded one was open now, all the more sinister for the deep scar above and below. But his touch was steady, his voice quiet, as he said, "Sit still, Missis; I won't hurt yer, nor scare yer, ef I can help it, but yer waked too soon."

"Let me go, Robert,—the captain is stirring,—I must give him something."

"No, Missis, yer can't stir an inch. Look here!"

Holding me with one hand, with the other he took up the glass in which I had left the draught, and showed me it was empty.

"Has he taken it?" I asked, more and more bewildered.

"I flung it out o' winder, Missis; he'll have to do without."

"But why, Robert? why did you do it?"

"'Kase I hate him!"

Impossible to doubt the truth of that; his whole face showed it, as he spoke through his set teeth, and launched a fiery glance at the unconscious captain. I could only hold my breath and stare blankly at him, wondering what mad act was coming next. I suppose I shook and turned white, as women have a foolish habit of doing when sudden danger daunts them; for Robert released my arm, sat down upon the bedside just in front of me, and said, with the ominous quietude that made me cold to see and hear

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"Don't yer be frightened, Missis; don't try to run away, fer the door's locked and the key in my pocket; don't yer cry out, fer yer'd have to scream a long while, with my hand on yer mouth, 'efore yer was heard. Be still, an' I'll tell yer what I'm gwine to do."

"Lord help us! he has taken the fever in some sudden, violent way, and is out of his head. I must humor him till some one comes"; in pursuance of which swift determination, I tried to say, quite composedly,

"I will be still and hear you; but open the window. Why did you shut it?"

"I'm sorry I can't do it, Missis; but yer'd jump out, or call, if I did, an' I'm not ready yet. I shut it to make yer sleep, an' heat would do it quicker'n anything else I could do."

The captain moved, and feebly muttered "Water!" Instinctively I rose to give it to him, but the heavy hand came down upon my shoulder, and in the same decided tone Robert said,

"The water went with the physic; let him call."

"Do let me go to him! he'll die without care!"

"I mean he shall; don't yer meddle, if yer please, Missis."

In spite of his quiet tone and respectful manner, I saw murder in his eyes, and turned faint with fear; yet the fear excited me, and, hardly knowing what I did, I seized the hands that had seized me, crying,

"No, no; you shall not kill him! It is base to hurt a helpless man. Why do you hate him? He is not your master."

"He's my brother."

I felt that answer from head to foot, and seemed to fathom what was coming, with a prescience vague, but unmistakable. One appeal was left to me, and I made it.

"Robert, tell me what it means? Do not commit a crime and make me accessory to it. There is a better way of righting wrong than by violence;— let me help you find it."

My voice trembled as I spoke, and I heard the frightened flutter of my heart; so did he, and if any little act of mine had ever won affection or respect from him, the memory of it served me then. He looked down, and seemed to put some question to himself; whatever it was, the answer was in my favor, for when his eyes rose again, they were gloomy, but not desperate.

"I *will* tell yer, Missis; but mind, this makes no difference; the boy is mine. I'll give the Lord a chance to take him fust: if He don't, I shall."

"Oh, no! remember he is your brother."

An unwise speech; I felt it as it passed my lips, for a black frown gathered on Robert's face, and his strong hands closed with an ugly sort of grip. But he did not touch the poor soul gasping there behind him, and seemed content to let the slow suffocation of that stifling room end his frail life. "I'm not like to forgit dat, Missis, when I've been thinkin' of it all this week. I knew him when they fetched him in, an' would 'a' done it long 'fore this, but I wanted to ask where Lucy was; he knows, — he told to-night, — an' now he's done for."

"Who is Lucy?" I asked hurriedly, intent on keeping his mind busy with any thought but murder.

With one of the swift transitions of a mixed temperament like this, at my question Robert's deep eyes filled, the clenched hands were spread before his face, and all I heard were the broken words,

"My wife, — he took her —"

In that instant every thought of fear was swallowed up in burning indignation for the wrong, and a perfect passion of pity for the desperate man so tempted to avenge an injury for which there seemed no redress but this. He was no longer slave or contraband, no drop of black blood marred him in my sight, but an infinite compassion yearned to save, to help, to comfort him. Words seemed so powerless I offered none, only put my hand on his poor head, wounded, homeless, bowed down with grief for which I had no cure, and softly smoothed the long, neglected hair, pitifully wondering the while where was the wife who must have loved this tenderhearted man so well.

The captain moaned again, and faintly whispered, "Air!" but I never stirred. God forgive me! just then I hated him as only a woman thinking of a sister woman's wrong could hate. Robert looked up; his eyes were dry again, his mouth grim. I saw that, said, "Tell me more," and he did; for sympathy is a gift the poorest may give, the proudest stoop to receive.

"Yer see, Missis, his father, — I might say ours, ef I warn't ashamed of both of 'em, — his father died two years ago, an' left us all to Marster Ned, — that's him here, eighteen then. He always hated me, I looked so like old Marster: he don't, — only the light skin an' hair. Old Marster was kind to all of us, me 'specially, an' bought Lucy off the next plantation down there in South Carolina, when he found I liked her. I married her, all I could; it warn't much, but we was true to one another till Marster Ned come home a year

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after an' made hell fer both of us. He sent my old mother to be used up in his rice-swamp in Georgy; he found me with my pretty Lucy, an' though young Miss cried, an' I prayed to him on my knees, an' Lucy run away, he wouldn't have no mercy; he brought her back, an' —took her."

"Oh, what did you do?" I cried, hot with helpless pain and passion.

How the man's outraged heart sent the blood flaming up into his face and deepened the tones of his impetuous voice, as he stretched his arm across the bed, saying, with a terribly expressive gesture, —

"I half murdered him, an' to-night I'll finish."

"Yes, yes—but go on now; what came next?"

He gave me a look that showed no white man could have felt a deeper degradation in remembering and confessing these last acts of brotherly oppression.

"They whipped me till I couldn't stand, an' then they sold me further South. Yer thought I was a white man once,—look here!"

With a sudden wrench he tore the shirt from neck to waist, and on his strong, brown shoulders showed me furrows deeply ploughed, wounds which, though healed, were ghastlier to me than any in that house. I could not speak to him, and, with the pathetic dignity a great grief lends the humblest sufferer, he ended his brief tragedy by simply saying,

"That's all, Missis. I'se never seen her since, an' now I never shall in this world,—maybe not in t'other."

"But, Robert, why think her dead? The captain was wandering when he said those sad things; perhaps he will retract them when he is sane. Don't despair; don't give up yet."

"No, Missis, I 'spect he's right; she was too proud to bear that long. It's like her to kill herself. I told her to, if there was no other way; an' she always minded me, Lucy did. My poor girl! Oh, it warn't right! No, by God, it warn't!

As the memory of this bitter wrong, this double bereavement, burned in his sore heart, the devil that lurks in every strong man's blood leaped up; he put his hand upon his brother's throat, and, watching the white face before him, muttered low between his teeth,

"I'm lettin' him go too easy; there' no pain in this; we a'n't even yet. I wish he knew me. Marster Ned! it's Bob; where's Lucy?"

From the captain's lips there came a long faint sigh, and nothing but a flutter of the eyelids showed that he still lived. A strange stillness filled the room as the elder brother held the younger's life suspended in his hand, while wavering between a dim hope and a deadly hate. In the whirl of thoughts that went on in my brain, only one was clear enough to act upon. I must prevent murder, if I could, — but how? What could I do up there alone, locked in with a dying man and a lunatic?—for any mind yielded utterly to any unrighteous impulse is mad while the impulse rules it. Strength I had not, nor much courage, neither time nor will for stratagem, and chance only could bring me help before it was too late. But one weapon I possessed,—a tongue,—often a woman's best defence; and sympathy, stronger than fear, gave me power to use it. What I said Heaven only knows, but surely Heaven helped me; words burned on my lips, tears streamed from my eyes, and some good angel prompted me to use the one name that had power to arrest my hearer's hand and touch his heart. For at that moment I heartily believed that Lucy lived, and this earnest faith roused in him a like belief.

He listened with the lowering look of one in whom brute instinct was sovereign for the time,—a look that makes the noblest countenance base. He was but a man,—a poor, untaught, outcast, outraged man. Life had few joys for him; the world offered him no honors, no success, no home, no love. What future would this crime mar? and why should he deny himself that sweet, yet bitter morsel called revenge? How many white men, with all New England's freedom, culture, Christianity, would not have felt as he felt then? Should I have reproached him for a human anguish, a human longing for redress, all now left him from the ruin of his few poor hopes? Who had taught him that self-control, self-sacrifice, are attributes that make men masters of the earth, and lift them nearer heaven? Should I have urged the beauty of forgiveness, the duty of devout submission? He had no religion, for he was no saintly "Uncle Tom," and Slavery's black shadow seemed to darken all the world to him, and shut out God. Should I have warned him of penalties, of judgments, and the potency of law? What did he know of justice, or the mercy that should temper that stern virtue, when every law, human and divine, had been broken on his hearthstone? Should I have tried to touch him by appeals to filial duty, to brotherly love? How had his appeals been answered? What memories had father and brother stored up in his heart to plead for either now? No,—all these influences, these associations, would

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have proved worse than useless, had I been calm enough to try them. I was not; but instinct, subtler than reason, showed me the one safe clue by which to lead this troubled soul from the labyrinth in which it groped and nearly fell. When I paused, breathless, Robert turned to me, asking, as if human assurances could strengthen his faith in Divine Omnipotence,

"Do you believe, if I let Marster Ned live, the Lord will give me back my Lucy?"

"As surely as there is a Lord, you will find her here or in the beautiful hereafter, where there is no black or white, no master and no slave."

He took his hand from his brother's throat, lifted his eyes from my face to the wintry sky beyond, as if searching for that blessed country, happier even than the happy North. Alas, it was the darkest hour before the dawn! — there was no star above, no light below but the pale glimmer of the lamp that showed the brother who had made him desolate. Like a blind man who believes there is a sun, yet cannot see it, he shook his head, let his arms drop nervelessly upon his knees, and sat there dumbly asking that question which many a soul whose faith is firmer fixed than his has asked in hours less dark than this, — "Where is God?" I saw the tide had turned, and strenuously tried to keep this rudderless life-boat from slipping back into the whirlpool wherein it had been so nearly lost.

"I have listened to you, Robert; now hear me, and heed what I say, because my heart is full of pity for you, full of hope for your future, and a desire to help you now. I want you to go away from here, from the temptation of this place, and the sad thoughts that haunt it. You have conquered yourself once, and I honor you for it, because, the harder the battle, the more glorious the victory; but it is safer to put a greater distance between you and this man. I will write you letters, give you money, and send you to good old Massachusetts to begin your new life a freeman, — yes, and a happy man; for when the captain is himself again, I will learn where Lucy is, and move heaven and earth to find and give her back to you. Will you do this, Robert?"

Slowly, very slowly, the answer came; for the purpose of a week, perhaps a year, was hard to relinquish in an hour.

"Yes, Missis, I will."

"Good! Now you are the man I thought you, and I'll work for you with all my heart. You need sleep, my poor fellow; go, and try to forget. The captain

is alive, and as yet you are spared that sin. No, don't look there; I'll care for him. Come, Robert, for Lucy's sake."

Thank Heaven for the immortality of love! for when all other means of salvation failed, a spark of this vital fire softened the man's iron will, until a woman's hand could bend it. He let me take from him the key, let me draw him gently away, and lead him to the solitude which now was the most healing balm I could bestow. Once in his little room, he fell down on his bed and lay there, as if spent with the sharpest conflict of his life. I slipped the bolt across his door, and unlocked my own, flung up the window, steadied myself with a breath of air, then rushed to Doctor Franck. He came; and till dawn we worked together, saving one brother's life, and taking earnest thought how best to secure the other's liberty. When the sun came up as blithely as if it shone only upon happy homes, the Doctor went to Robert. For an hour I heard the murmur of their voices; once I caught the sound of heavy sobs, and for a time a reverent hush, as if in the silence that good men were ministering to soul as well as body. When he departed he took Robert with him, pausing to tell me he should get him off as soon as possible, but not before we met again.

Nothing more was seen of them all day; another surgeon came to see the captain, and another attendant came to fill the empty place. I tried to rest, but could not, with the thought of poor Lucy tugging at my heart, and was soon back at my post again, anxiously hoping that my contraband had not been too hastily spirited away. Just as night fell there came a tap, and, opening, I saw Robert literally "clothed, and in his right mind." The Doctor had replaced the ragged suit with tidy garments, and no trace of the tempestuous night remained but deeper lines upon the forehead, and the docile look of a repentant child. He did not cross the threshold, did not offer me his hand,—only took off his cap, saying, with a traitorous falter in his voice,

"God bless yer, Missis! I'm gwine."

I put out both my hands, and held his fast.

"Good-by, Robert! Keep up good heart, and when I come home to Massachusetts we'll meet in a happier place than this. Are you quite ready, quite comfortable for your journey?"

"Yes, Missis, yes; the Doctor's fixed everything! I'se gwine with a friend of his; my papers are all right, an' I'm as happy as I can be till I find" —

He stopped there; then went on, with a glance into the room,—

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"I'm glad I didn't do it, an' I thank yer, Missis, fer hinderin' me—thank yer hearty; but I'm afraid I hate him jest the same."

Of course he did; and so did I; for these faulty hearts of ours cannot turn perfect in a night, but need frost and fire, wind and rain, to ripen and make them ready for the great harvest-home. Wishing to divert his mind, I put my poor mite into his hand, and, remembering the magic of a certain little book, I gave him mine, on whose dark cover whitely shone the Virgin Mother and the Child, the grand history of whose life the book contained. The money went into Robert's pocket with a grateful murmur, the book into his bosom, with a long look and a tremulous —

"I never saw *my* baby, Missis."

I broke down then; and though my eyes were too dim to see, I felt the touch of lips upon my hands, heard the sound of departing feet, and knew my contraband was gone.

WHEN ONE FEELS AN INTENSE DISLIKE, the less one says about the subject of it the better; therefore I shall merely record that the captain lived,—in time was exchanged; and that, whoever the other party was, I am convinced the Government got the best of the bargain. But long before this occurred, I had fulfilled my promise to Robert; for as soon as my patient recovered strength of memory enough to make his answer trustworthy, I asked, without any circumlocution,

"Captain Fairfax, where is Lucy?"

And too feeble to be angry, surprised, or insincere, he straightway answered,

"Dead, Miss Dane."

"And she killed herself when you sold Bob?"

"How the devil did you know that?" he muttered, with an expression half-remorseful, half-amazed; but I was satisfied, and said no more.

Of course this went to Robert, waiting far away there in a lonely home,—waiting, working, hoping for his Lucy. It almost broke my heart to do it; but delay was weak, deceit was wicked; so I sent the heavy tidings, and very soon the answer came,—only three lines; but I felt that the sustaining power of the man's life was gone.

"I thought I'd never see her any more; I'm glad to know she's out of trouble. I thank yer, Missis; an' if they let us, I'll fight fer yer till I'm killed, which I hope will be 'fore long."

Six months later he had his wish, and kept his word.

Every one knows the story of the attack on Fort Wagner; but we should not tire yet of recalling how our Fifty-Fourth, spent with three sleepless nights, a day's fast, and a march under the July sun, stormed the fort as night fell, facing death in many shapes, following their brave leaders through a fiery rain of shot and shell, fighting valiantly for "God and Governor Andrew," — how the regiment that went into action seven hundred strong, came out having had nearly half its number captured, killed, or wounded, leaving their young commander to be buried, like a chief of earlier times, with his body-guard around him, faithful to the death. Surely, the insult turns to honor, and the wide grave needs no monument but the heroism that consecrates it in our sight; surely, the hearts that held him nearest, see through their tears a noble victory in the seeming sad defeat; and surely, God's benediction was bestowed, when this loyal soul answered, as Death called the roll, "Lord, here am I, with the brothers Thou hast given me!"

The future must show how well that fight was fought; for though Fort Wagner once defied us, public prejudice is down; and through the cannon-smoke of that black night, the manhood of the colored race shines before many eyes that would not see, rings in many ears that would not hear, wins many hearts that would not hitherto believe.

When the news came that we were needed, there was none so glad as I to leave teaching contrabands, the new work I had taken up, and go to nurse "our boys," as my dusky flock so proudly called the wounded of the Fifty-Fourth. Feeling more satisfaction, as I assumed my big apron and turned up my cuffs, than if dressing for the President's levee, I fell to work in Hospital No. 10 at Beaufort. The scene was most familiar, and yet strange; for only dark faces looked up at me from the pallets so thickly laid along the floor, and I missed the sharp accent of my Yankee boys in the slower, softer voices calling cheerily to one another, or answering my questions with a stout, "We'll never give it up, Missis, till the last Reb's dead," or, "If our people's free, we can afford to die."

Passing from bed to bed, intent on making one pair of hands do the work of three, at least, I gradually washed, fed, and bandaged my way down the

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long line of sable heroes, and coming to the very last, found that he was my contraband. So old, so worn, so deathly weak and wan, I never should have known him but for the deep scar on his cheek. That side lay uppermost, and caught my eye at once; but even then I doubted, such an awful change had come upon him, when, turning to the ticket just above his head, I saw the name, "Robert Dane." That both assured and touched me, for, remembering that he had no name, I knew that he had taken mine. I longed for him to speak to me, to tell how he had fared since I lost sight of him, and let me perform some little service for him in return for many he had done for me; but he seemed asleep; and as I stood re-living that strange night again, a bright lad, who lay next him softly waving an old fan across both beds, looked up and said,

"I guess you know him, Missis?"

"You are right. Do you?"

"As much as any one was able to, Missis."

"Why do you say 'was,' as if the man were dead and gone?"

"I s'pose because I know he'll have to go. He's got a bad jab in the breast, an' is bleedin' inside, the Doctor says. He don't suffer any, only gets weaker 'n' weaker every minute. I've been fannin' him this long while, an' he's talked a little; but he don't know me now, so he's most gone, I guess."

There was so much sorrow and affection in the boy's face, that I remembered something, and asked, with redoubled interest, —

"Are you the one that brought him off? I was told about a boy who nearly lost his life in saving that of his mate."

I dare say the young fellow blushed, as any modest lad might have done; I could not see it, but I heard the chuckle of satisfaction that escaped him, as he glanced from his shattered arm and bandaged side to the pale figure opposite.

"Lord, Missis, that's nothin'; we boys always stan' by one another, an' I warn't goin' to leave him to be tormented any more by them cussed Rebs. He's been a slave once, though he don't look half so much like it as me, an' I was born in Boston."

He did not; for the speaker was as black as the ace of spades, — being a sturdy specimen, the knave of clubs would perhaps be a fitter representative, — but the dark freeman looked at the white slave with the pitiful, yet puzzled expression

I have so often seen on the faces of our wisest men, when this tangled question of Slavery presented itself, asking to be cut or patiently undone.

"Tell me what you know of this man; for, even if he were awake, he is too weak to talk."

"I never saw him till I joined the regiment, an' no one 'peared to have got much out of him. He was a shut-up sort of feller, an' didn't seem to care for anything but gettin' at the Rebs. Some say he was the fust man of us that enlisted; I know he fretted till we were off, an' when we pitched into Old Wagner, he fought like the devil."

"Were you with him when he was wounded? How was it?"

"Yes, Missis. There was somethin' queer about it; for he 'peared to know the chap that killed him, an' the chap knew him. I don't dare to ask, but I rather guess one owned the other some time; for, when they clinched, the chap sung out, 'Bob!' an' Dane, 'Marster Ned!' — then they went at it."

I sat down suddenly, for the old anger and compassion struggled in my heart, and I both longed and feared to hear what was to follow.

"You see, when the Colonel,—Lord keep an' send him back to us! — it a'n't certain yet, you know, Missis, though it's two days ago we lost him,— well, when the Colonel shouted, 'Rush on, boys, rush on!' Dane tore away as if he was goin' to take the fort alone; I was next him, an' kept close as we went through the ditch an' up the wall. Hi! warn't that a rusher!" and the boy flung up his well arm with a whoop, as if the mere memory of that stirring moment came over him in a gust of irrepressible excitement.

"Were you afraid?" I said, asking the question women often put, and receiving the answer they seldom fail to get.

"No, Missis!" — emphasis on the "Missis" — "I never thought of anything but the damn' Rebs, that scalp, slash, an' cut our ears off, when they git us. I was bound to let daylight into one of 'em at least, an' I did. Hope he liked it!"

"It is evident that you did. Now go on about Robert, for I should be at work."

"He was one of the fust up; I was just behind, an' though the whole thing happened in a minute, I remember how it was, for all I was yellin' an' knockin' round like mad. Just where we were, some sort of an officer was wavin' his sword an' cheerin' on his men; Dane saw him by a big flash that come by; he flung away his gun, give a leap, an' went at that feller as if he was Jeff,

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Beauregard, an' Lee, all in one. I scrabbled after as quick as I could, but was only up in time to see him git the sword straight through him an' drop into the ditch. You needn't ask what I did next, Missis, for I don't quite know myself; all I'm clear about is, that I managed somehow to pitch that Reb into the fort as dead as Moses, git hold of Dane, an' bring him off. Poor old feller! we said we went in to live or die; he said he went in to die, an' he's done it."

I had been intently watching the excited speaker; but as he regretfully added those last words I turned again, and Robert's eyes met mine,—those melancholy eyes, so full of an intelligence that proved he had heard, remembered, and reflected with that preternatural power which often outlives all other faculties. He knew me, yet gave no greeting; was glad to see a woman's face, yet had no smile wherewith to welcome it; felt that he was dying, yet uttered no farewell. He was too far across the river to return or linger now; departing thought, strength, breath, were spent in one grateful look, one murmur of submission to the last pang he could ever feel. His lips moved, and, bending to them, a whisper chilled my cheek, as it shaped the broken words,

"I'd 'a' done it,—but it's better so,—I'm satisfied."

Ah! well he might be, — for, as he turned his face from the shadow of the life that was, the sunshine of the life to be touched it with a beautiful content, and in the drawing of a breath my contraband found wife and home, eternal liberty and God.

A Hospital Christmas

"MERRY CHRISTMAS!" "MERRY CHRISTMAS!" "Merry Christmas, and lots of 'em, ma'am!" echoed from every side, as Miss Hale entered her ward in the gray December dawn. No wonder the greetings were hearty, that thin faces brightened, and eyes watched for the coming of this small luminary more eagerly than for the rising of the sun; for when they woke that morning, each man found that in the silence of the night some friendly hand had laid a little gift beside his bed. Very humble little gifts they were, but well chosen and thoughtfully bestowed by one who made the blithe anniversary pleasant even in a hospital, and sweetly taught the lesson of the hour — Peace on earth, good-will to man.

"I say, ma'am, these are just splendid. I've dreamt about such for a week, but I never thought I'd get 'em," cried one poor fellow, surveying a fine bunch of grapes with as much satisfaction as if he had found a fortune.

"Thank you kindly, Miss, for the paper and the fixing. I hated to keep borrowing, but I hadn't any money," said another, eyeing his gift with happy anticipations of the home letters with which the generous pages should be filled.

"They are dreadful soft and pretty, but I don't believe I'll ever wear 'em out; my legs are so wimbly there's no go in 'em," whispered a fever patient, looking sorrowfully at the swollen feet ornamented with a pair of carpet slippers gay with roses, and evidently made for his especial need.

"Please hang my posy basket on the gas-burner in the middle of the room, where all the boys can see it. It's too pretty for one alone."

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"But then you can't see it yourself, Joe, and you are fonder of such things than the rest," said Miss Hale, taking both the little basket and the hand of her pet patient, a lad of twenty, dying of rapid consumption.

"That's the reason I can spare it for a while, for I shall feel 'em in the room just the same, and they'll do the boys good. You pick out the one you like best, for me to keep, and hang up the rest till by-and-by, please."

She gave him a sprig of mignonette, and he smiled as he took it, for it reminded him of her in her sad-colored gown, as quiet and unobtrusive, but as grateful to the hearts of those about her as was the fresh scent of the flower to the lonely lad who never had known womanly tenderness and care until he found them in a hospital. Joe's prediction was verified; the flowers did do the boys good, for all welcomed them with approving glances, and all felt their refining influence more or less keenly, from cheery Ben, who paused to fill the cup inside with fresher water, to surly Sam, who stopped growling as his eye rested on a geranium very like the one blooming in his sweetheart's window when they parted a long year ago.

"Now, as this is to be a merry day, let us begin to enjoy it at once. Fling up the windows, Ben, and Barney, go for breakfast while I finish washing faces and settling bed-clothes."

With which directions the little woman fell to work with such infectious energy that in fifteen minutes thirty gentlemen with spandy clean faces and hands were partaking of refreshment with as much appetite as their various conditions would permit. Meantime the sun came up, looking bigger, brighter, jollier than usual, as he is apt to do on Christmas days. Not a snow-flake chilled the air that blew in as blandly as if winter had relented, and wished the "boys" the compliments of the season in his mildest mood; while a festival smell pervaded the whole house, and appetizing rumors of turkey, mince-pie, and oysters for dinner, circulated through the wards. When breakfast was done, the wounds dressed, directions for the day delivered, and as many, of the disagreeables as possible well over, the fun began. In any other place that would have been considered a very quiet morning; but to the weary invalids prisoned in that room, it was quite a whirl of excitement. None were dangerously ill but Joe, and all were easily amused, for weakness, homesickness and *ennui* made every trifle a joke or an event.

In came Ben, looking like a "Jack in the Green," with his load of hemlock and holly. Such of the men as could get about and had a hand to lend, lent it,

and soon, under Miss Hale's direction, a green bough hung at the head of each bed, depended from the gas-burners, and nodded over the fireplace, while the finishing effect was given by a cross and crown at the top and bottom of the room. Great was the interest, many were the mishaps, and frequent was the laughter which attended this performance; for wounded men, when convalescent, are particularly jovial. When "Daddy Mills," as one venerable volunteer was irreverently christened, expatiated learnedly upon the difference between "sprewce, hemlock and pine," how they all listened, each thinking of some familiar wood still pleasantly haunted by boyish recollections of stolen gunnings, gum-pickings, and bird-nestings. When quiet Hayward amazed the company, by coming out strong in a most unexpected direction, and telling with much effect the story of a certain "fine old gentleman" who supped on hemlock tea and died like a hero, what commendations were bestowed upon the immortal heathen in language more hearty than classical, as a twig of the historical tree was passed round like a new style of refreshment, that inquiring parties might satisfy themselves regarding the flavor of the Socratic draught. When Barney, the colored incapable, essayed a grand ornament above the door, and relying upon one insufficient nail, descended to survey his success with the proud exclamation, "Look at de neatness of dat job, gen'l'men," — at which point the whole thing tumbled down about his ears, — how they all shouted but Pneumonia Ned, who, having lost his voice, could only make ecstatic demonstrations with his legs. When Barney cast himself and his hammer despairingly upon the floor, and Miss Hale, stepping into a chair, pounded stoutly at the traitorous nail and performed some miracle with a bit of string which made all fast, what a burst of applause arose from the beds. When gruff Dr. Bangs came in to see what all the noise was about, and the same intrepid lady not only boldly explained, but stuck a bit of holly in his button-hole, and wished him a merry Christmas with such a face full of smiles that the crabbed old doctor felt himself giving in very fast, and bolted out again, calling Christmas a humbug, and exulting over the thirty emetics he would have to prescribe on the morrow, what indignant denials followed him. And when all was done, how everybody agreed with Joe when he said, "I think we are coming Christmas in great style; things look so green and pretty, I feel as I was settin' in a bower."

Pausing to survey her work, Miss Hale saw Sam looking as black as any thunder-cloud. He bounced over on his bed, the moment he caught her eye,

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but she followed him up, and gently covering the cold shoulder he evidently meant to show her, peeped over it, asking, with unabated gentleness, —

"What can I do for you, Sam? I want to have all the faces in my ward bright ones to-day."

"My box ain't come; they said I should have it two, three days ago; why don't they do it, then?" growled Ursa Major.

"It is a busy time, you know, but it will come if they promised, and patience won't delay it, I assure you."

"My patience is used up, and they are a mean set of slow coaches. I'd get it fast enough if I wore shoulder straps; as I don't, I'll bet I sha'n't see it till the things ain't fit to eat; the news is old, and I don't care a hang about it."

"I'll see what I can do; perhaps before the hurry of dinner begins some one will have time to go for it."

"Nobody ever does have time here but folks who would give all they are worth to be stirring round. You can't get it, I know; it's my luck, so don't you worry, ma'am."

Miss Hale did not "worry," but worked, and in time a messenger was found, provided with the necessary money, pass and directions, and despatched to hunt up the missing Christmas-box. Then she paused to see what came next, not that it was necessary to look for a task, but to decide which, out of many, was most important to do first.

"Why, Turner, crying again so soon? What is it now? the light head or the heavy feet?"

"It's my bones, ma'am. They ache so I can't lay easy any way, and I'm so tired I just wish I could die and be out of this misery," sobbed the poor ghost of a once strong and cheery fellow, as the kind hand wiped his tears away, and gently rubbed the weary shoulders.

"Don't wish that Turner, for die worst is over now, and all you need is to get your strength again. Make an effort to sit up a little; it is quite time you tried; a change of posture will help the ache wonderfully, and make this 'dreadful bed,' as you call it, seem very comfortable when you come back to it."

"I can't, ma'am, my legs ain't a bit of use, and I ain't strong enough even to try."

"You never will be if you don't try. Never mind the poor legs, Ben will carry you. I've got the matron's easy-chair all ready, and can make you very cosy by the fire. It's Christmas-day, you know; why not celebrate it by overcoming

the despondency which retards your recovery, and prove that illness has not taken all the manhood out of you?"

"It has, though, I'll never be the man I was, and may as well lay here till spring, for I shall be no use if I do get up."

If Sam was a growler, this man was a whiner, and few hospital wards are without both. But knowing that much suffering had soured the former and pitifully weakened the latter, their nurse had patience with them, and still hoped to bring them round again. As Turner whimpered out his last dismal speech she bethought herself of something which, in the hurry of the morning, had slipped her mind till now.

"By the way, I've got another present for you. The doctor thought I'd better not give it yet, lest it should excite you too much; but I think you need excitement to make you forget yourself, and that when you find how many blessings you have to be grateful for, you will make an effort to enjoy them."

"Blessings, ma'am? I don't see 'em."

"Don't you see one now?" and drawing a letter from her pocket she held it before his eyes. His listless face brightened a little as he took it, but gloomed over again as he said fretfully, "It's from wife, I guess. I like to get her letters, but they are always full of grievings and groanings over me, so they don't do me much good."

"She does not grieve and groan in this one. She is too happy to do that, and so will you be when you read it."

"I don't see why, — hey? — why you don't mean —"

"Yes I do!" cried the little woman, clapping her hands, and laughing so delightedly that the Knight of the Rueful Countenance was betrayed into a broad smile for the first time in many weeks. "Is not a splendid little daughter a present to rejoice over and be grateful for?"

"Hooray! hold on a bit, — it's all right, — I'll be out again in a minute."

After which remarkably spirited burst, Turner vanished under the bed-clothes, letter and all. Whether he read, laughed or cried, in the seclusion of that cotton grotto was unknown; but his nurse suspected that he did all three, for when he reappeared he looked as if during that pause he had dived into "his sea of troubles," and fished up his old self, again:

"What *will* I name her?" was his first remark, delivered with such vivacity that his neighbors began to think he was getting delirious again.

A Hospital Christmas

"What is your wife's name?" asked Miss Hale, gladly entering into the domesticities which were producing such a salutary effect.

"Her name's Ann, but neither of us like it. I'd fixed on George, for I wanted my boy called after me; and now you see I ain't a bit prepared for this young woman." Very proud of the young woman he seemed, nevertheless, and perfectly resigned to the loss of the expected son and heir.

"Why not call her Georgiana then? That combines both her parents' names, and is not a bad one in itself."

"Now that's just the brightest thing I ever heard in my life!" cried Turner, sitting bolt upright in his excitement, though half an hour before he would have considered it an utterly impossible feat. "Georgiana Butterfield Turner, — it's a tip-top name, ma'am, and we can call her Georgie just the same. Ann will like that, it's so genteel. Bless 'em both! don't I wish I was at home." And down he lay again, despairing.

"You can be before long, if you choose. Get your strength up, and off you go. Come, begin at once, drink your beef-tea, and sit up for a few minutes, just in honor of the good news, you know."

"I will, by George! — no, by Georgiana! That's a good one, ain't it?" and the whole ward was electrified by hearing a genuine giggle from the "Blueing-bag."

Down went the detested beef-tea, and up scrambled the determined drinker with many groans, and a curious jumble of chuckles, staggers, and fragmentary repetitions of his first, last, and only joke. But when fairly settled in the great rocking-chair, with the gray flannel gown comfortably on, and the new slippers getting their inaugural scorch, Turner forgot his bones, and swung to and fro before the fire, feeling amazingly well, and looking very like a trussed fowl being roasted in the primitive fashion. The languid importance of the man, and the irrepressible satisfaction of the parent, were both laughable and touching things to see, for the happy soul could not keep the glad tidings to himself. A hospital ward is often a small republic, beautifully governed by pity, patience, and the mutual sympathy which lessens mutual suffering. Turner was no favorite; but more than one honest fellow felt his heart warm towards him as they saw his dismal face kindle with fatherly pride, and heard the querulous quaver of his voice soften with fatherly affection, as he said, "My little Georgie, sir."

"He'll do now, ma'am; this has given him the boost he needed, and in a week or two he'll be off our hands."

Big Ben made the remark with a beaming countenance, and Big Ben deserves a word of praise, because he never said one for himself. An ex-patient, promoted to an attendant's place, which he filled so well that he was regarded as a model for all the rest to copy. Patient, strong, and tender, he seemed to combine many of the best traits of both man and woman; for he appeared to know by instinct where the soft spot was to be found in every heart, and how best to help sick body or sad soul. No one would have guessed this to have seen him lounging in the hall during one of the short rests he allowed himself. A brawny, six-foot fellow, in red shirt, blue trousers tucked into his boots, an old cap, visor always up, and under it a roughly-bearded, coarsely-featured face, whose prevailing expression was one of great gravity and kindness, though a humorous twinkle of the eye at times betrayed the man, whose droll sayings often set the boys in a roar. "A good-natured, clumsy body" would have been the verdict passed upon him by a casual observer; but watch him in his ward, and see how great a wrong that hasty judgment would have done him.

Unlike his predecessor, who helped himself generously when the meals came up, and carelessly served out rations for the rest, leaving even the most helpless to bungle for themselves or wait till he was done, shut himself into his pantry, and there, — to borrow a hospital phrase, — gormed, Ben often left nothing for himself, or took cheerfully such cold bits as remained when all the rest were served; so patiently feeding the weak, being hands and feet to the maimed, and a pleasant provider for all that, as one of the boys said, — "It gives a relish to the vittles to have Ben fetch 'em." If one were restless, Ben carried him in his strong arms; if one were undergoing the sharp torture of the surgeon's knife, Ben held him with a touch as firm as kind; if one were homesick, Ben wrote letters for him with great hearty blots and dashes under all the affectionate or important words. More than one poor fellow read his fate in Ben's pitiful eyes, and breathed his last breath away on Ben's broad breast, — always a quiet pillow till its work was done, then it would heave with genuine grief, as his big hand softly closed the tired eyes, and made another comrade ready for the last review. The war shows us many Bens, — for the same power of human pity which makes women brave also makes men tender; and each is the womanlier, the manlier, for these revelations of unsuspected strength and sympathies.

A Hospital Christmas

At twelve o'clock dinner was the prevailing idea in ward No. 3, and when the door opened every man sniffed, for savory odors broke loose from the kitchens and went roaming about the house. Now this Christmas dinner had been much talked of; for certain charitable and patriotic persons had endeavored to provide every hospital in Washington with materials for this time-honored feast. Some mistake in the list sent to head-quarters, some unpardonable neglect of orders, or some premeditated robbery, caused the long-expected dinner in the _____ Hospital to prove a dead failure; but to which of these causes it was attributable was never known, for the deepest mystery enveloped that sad transaction. The full weight of the dire disappointment was mercifully lightened by premonitions of the impending blow. Barney was often missing; for the attendants were to dine *en masse* after the patients were done, therefore a speedy banquet for the latter parties was ardently desired and he probably devoted his energies to goading on the cooks. From time to time he appeared in the doorway, flushed and breathless, made some thrilling announcement, and vanished, leaving ever-increasing appetite, impatience and expectation, behind him.

Dinner was to be served at one; at half-past twelve Barney proclaimed, "Dere ain't no vegetables but squash and pitaters." A universal groan arose; and several indignant parties on a short allowance of meat consigned the defaulting cook to a warmer climate than the tropical one he was then enjoying. At twenty minutes to one, Barney increased the excitement by whispering, ominously, "I say, de puddins isn't plummy ones."

"Fling a piller at him and shut the door, Ben," roared one irascible being, while several others *not* fond of puddings received the fact with equanimity. At quarter to one Barney piled up the agony by adding the bitter information, "Dere isn't but two turkeys for dis ward, and dey's little fellers."

Anxiety instantly, appeared in every countenance, and intricate calculations were made as to how far the two fowls would go when divided among thirty men; also friendly warnings were administered to several of the feebler gentlemen not to indulge too freely, if at all, for fear of relapses. Once more did the bird of evil omen return, for at ten minutes to one Barney croaked through the key-hole,

"Only jes half ob de pies has come, gen'l'men." That capped the climax, for the masculine palate has a predilection for pastry, and mince-pie was the sheet-anchor to which all had clung when other hopes went down. Even

Ben looked dismayed; not that he expected anything but the perfume and pickings for his share, but he had set his heart on having the dinner an honor to the institution and a memorable feast for the men, so far away from home, and all that usually makes the day a festival among the poorest. He looked pathetically grave as Turner began to fret, Sam began to swear under his breath, Hayward to sigh; Joe to wish it was all over, and the rest began to vent their emotions with a freedom which was anything but inspiring. At that moment Miss Hale came in with a great basket of apples and oranges in one hand, and several convivial-looking bottles in the other.

"Here is our dessert, boys! A kind friend remembered us, and we will drink her health in her own currant wine."

A feeble smile circulated round the room, and in some sanguine bosoms hope revived again. Ben briskly emptied the basket, while Miss Hale whispered to Joe, —

"I know you would be glad to get away from the confusion of this next hour, to enjoy a breath of fresh air, and dine quietly with Mrs. Burton round the corner, wouldn't you?"

"Oh, ma'am, so much! the noise, the smells, the fret and flurry, make me sick just to think of! But how can I go? that dreadful ambulance 'most killed me last time, and I'm weaker now."

"My dear boy, I have no thought of trying that again till our ambulances are made fit for the use of weak and wounded men. Mrs. Burton's carriage is at the door, with her motherly self inside, and all you have got to do is to let me bundle you up, and Ben carry you out."

With a long sigh of relief Joe submitted to both these processes, and when his nurse watched his happy face as the carriage slowly rolled away, she felt well repaid for the little sacrifice of rest and pleasure so quietly made; for Mrs. Burton came to carry her, not Joe, away.

"Now, Ben, help me to make this unfortunate dinner go off as well as we can," she whispered, "On many accounts it is a mercy that the men are spared the temptations of a more generous meal; pray don't tell them so, but make the best of it, as you know very well how to do."

"I'll try my best, Miss Hale, but I'm no less disappointed, for some of 'em, being no better than children, have been living on the thoughts of it for a week, and it comes hard to give it up."

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If Ben had been an old-time patriarch, and the thirty boys his sons, he could not have spoken with a more paternal regret, or gone to work with a better will. Putting several small tables together in the middle of the room, he left Miss Hale to make a judicious display of plates, knives and forks, while he departed for the banquet. Presently he returned, bearing the youthful turkeys and the vegetables in his tray, followed by Barney, looking unutterable things at a plum-pudding baked in a milk-pan, and six very small pies. Miss Hale played a lively tattoo as the procession approached, and, when the viands were arranged, with the red and yellow fruit prettily heaped up in the middle, it really did look like a dinner.

"Here's richness! here's the delicacies of the season and the comforts of life!" said Ben, falling back to survey the table with as much apparent satisfaction as if it had been a lord mayor's feast.

"Come, hurry up, and give us our dinner, what there is of it!" grumbled Sam.

"Boys," continued Ben, beginning to cut up the turkeys, "these noble birds have been sacrificed for the defenders of their country; they will go as far as ever they can, and, when they can't go any farther, we shall endeavor to supply their deficiencies with soup or ham, oysters having given out unexpectedly. Put it to vote; both have been provided on this joyful occasion, and a word will fetch either."

"Ham! ham!" resounded from all sides. Soup was an every-day affair, and therefore repudiated with scorn; but ham, being a rarity, was accepted as a proper reward of merit and a tacit acknowledgment of their wrongs.

The "noble birds" did go as far as possible, and were handsomely assisted by their fellow martyr. The pudding was not as plummy as could have been desired, but a slight exertion of fancy made the crusty knobs do duty for raisins. The pies were small, yet a laugh added flavor to the mouthful apiece, for, when Miss Hale asked Ben to cut them up, that individual regarded her with an inquiring aspect as he said, in his drollest tone, —

"I wouldn't wish to appear stupid, ma'am, but, when you mention 'pies,' I presume you allude to these trifles. 'Tarts,' or 'patties,' would meet my views better, in speaking of the third course of this lavish dinner. As such I will do my duty by 'em, hoping that the appetites is to match."

Carefully dividing the six pies into twenty-nine diminutive wedges, he placed each in the middle of a large clean plate, and handed them about

with the gravity of an undertaker. Dinner had restored good humor to many; this hit at the pies put the finishing touch to it, and from that moment an atmosphere of jollity prevailed. Healths were drunk in currant wine, apples and oranges flew about as an impromptu game of ball was got up, Miss Hale sang a Christmas carol, and Ben gambolled like a sportive giant as he cleared away. Pausing in one of his prances to and fro, he beckoned the nurse out, and, when she followed, handed her a plate heaped up with good things from a better table than she ever sat at now.

"From the matron, ma'am. Come right in here and eat it while it's hot; they are most through in the dining room, and you'll get nothing half so nice," said Ben, leading the way into his pantry and pointing to a sunny window-seat.

"Are you sure she meant it for me, and not for yourself, Ben?"

"Of course she did! Why, what should I do with it, when I've just been feasting sumptuously in this very room?"

"I don't exactly see what you have been feasting on," said Miss Hale, glancing round the tidy pantry as she sat down.

"Havin' eat up the food and washed up the dishes, it naturally follows that you don't see, ma'am. But if I go off in a fit by-and-by you'll know what it's owing to," answered Ben, vainly endeavoring to look like a man suffering from repletion.

"Such kind fibs are not set down against one, Ben, so I will eat your dinner, for if I don't, I know you will throw it out of the window to prove that you can't eat it."

"Thankee ma'am, I'm afraid I should; for, at the rate he's going on, Barney wouldn't be equal to it," said Ben, looking very much relieved, as he polished his last pewter, fork and hung his towels up to dry.

A pretty general siesta followed the excitement of dinner, but by three o'clock the public mind was ready for amusement, and the arrival of Sam's box provided it. He was asleep when it was brought in and quietly deposited at his bed's foot, ready to surprise him on awaking. The advent of a box was a great event, for the fortunate receiver seldom failed to "stand treat," and next best to getting things from one's own home was the getting them from some other boy's home. This was an unusually large box, and all felt impatient to have it opened, though Sam's exceeding crustiness prevented the indulgence of great expectations. Presently he roused, and the first thing his eye fell upon

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was the box, with his own name sprawling over it in big black letters. As if it were merely the continuance of his dream, he stared stupidly at it for a moment, then rubbed his eyes and sat up, exclaiming, —

"Hullo! that's mine!"

"Ah! who said it wouldn't come? who hadn't the faith of a grasshopper? and who don't half deserve it for being a Barker by nater as by name?" cried Ben, emphasizing each question with a bang on the box, as he waited, hammer in hand, for the arrival of the ward-master, whose duty it was to oversee the opening of such matters, lest contraband articles should do mischief to the owner or his neighbors.

"Ain't it a jolly big one? Knock it open, and don't wait for anybody or anything!" cried Sam, tumbling off his bed and beating impatiently on the lid with his one hand.

In came the ward-master, off came the cover, and out came a motley collection of apples, socks, dough-nuts, paper, pickles, photographs, pocket-handkerchiefs, gingerbread, letters, jelly, newspapers, tobacco, and cologne. "All right, glad it's come, — don't kill yourself," said the ward-master, as he took a hasty survey and walked off again. Drawing the box nearer the bed, Ben delicately followed, and Sam was left to brood over his treasures in peace.

At first all the others, following Ben's example, made elaborate pretences of going to sleep, being absorbed in books, or utterly uninterested in the outer world. But very soon curiosity got the better of politeness, and one by one they all turned round and stared. They might have done so from the first, for Sam was perfectly unconscious of everything but his own affairs, and, having read the letters, looked at the pictures, unfolded the bundles, turned everything inside out and upside down, tasted all the eatables and made a spectacle of himself with jelly, he paused to get his breath and find his way out of the confusion he had created. Presently he called out,—

"Miss Hale, will you come and right up my duds for me?" adding, as her woman's hands began to bring matters straight, "I don't know what to do with 'em all, for some won't keep long, and it will take pretty steady eating to get through 'em in time, supposin' appetite holds out."

"How do the others manage with their things?"

"You know they give 'em away; but I'll be hanged if I do, for they are always callin' names and pokin' fun at me. Guess they won't get anything out of me now."

The old morose look came back as he spoke, for it had disappeared while reading the home letters, touching the home gifts. Still busily folding and arranging, Miss Hale asked, —

"You know the story of the Three Cakes; which are you going to be — Harry, Peter, or Billy?"

Sam began to laugh at this sudden application of the nursery legend; and, seeing her advantage, Miss Hale pursued it:

"We all know how much you have suffered, and all respect you for the courage with which you have borne your long confinement and your loss; but don't you think you have given the boys some cause for making fun of you, as you say? You used to be a favorite, and can be again, if you will only put off these crusty ways, which will grow upon you faster than you think. Better lose both arms than cheerfulness and self-control, Sam."

Pausing to see how her little lecture was received, she saw that Sam's better self was waking up, and added yet another word, hoping to help a mental ailment as she had done so many physical ones. Looking up at him with her kind eyes, she said, in a lowered voice, —

"This day, on which the most perfect life began, is a good day for all of us to set about making ourselves readier to follow that divine example. Troubles are helpers if we take them kindly, and the bitterest may sweeten us for all our lives. Believe and try this, Sam, and when you go away from us let those who love you find that two battles have been fought, two victories won."

Sam made no answer, but sat thoughtfully picking at the half-eaten cookey in his hand. Presently he stole a glance about the room, and, as if all helps were waiting for him, his eye met Joe's. From his solitary corner by the fire and the bed he would seldom leave again until he went into his grave, the boy smiled back at him so heartily, so happily, that something gushed warm across Sam's heart as he looked down upon the faces of mother, sister, sweetheart, scattered round him, and remembered how poor his comrade was in all such tender ties, and yet how rich in that beautiful content, which, "having nothing, yet hath all." The man had no words in which to express this feeling, but it came to him and did him good, as he proved in his own way. "Miss Hale," he said, a little awkwardly, "I wish you'd pick out what you think each would like, and give 'em to the boys."

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He got a smile in answer that drove him to his cookey as a refuge, for his lips would tremble, and he felt half proud, half ashamed to have earned such bright approval.

"Let Ben help you, — he knows better than I. But you must give them all yourself, it will so surprise and please the boys; and then to-morrow we will write a capital letter home, telling what a jubilee we made over their fine box."

At this proposal Sam half repented; but, as Ben came lumbering up at Miss Hale's summons, he laid hold of his new resolution as if it was a sort of shower-bath and he held the string, one pull of which would finish the baptism. Dividing his most cherished possession, which (alas for romance!) was the tobacco, he bundled the larger half into a paper, whispering to Miss Hale, —

"Ben ain't exactly what you'd call a ministerin' angel to look at, but he is amazin' near one in his ways, so I'm goin' to begin with him."

Up came the "ministering angel," in red flannel and cow-hide boots; and Sam tucked the little parcel into his pocket, saying, as he began to rummage violently in the box, —

"Now jest hold your tongue, and lend a hand here about these things."

Ben was so taken aback by this proceeding that he stared blankly, till a look from Miss Hale enlightened him; and, taking his cue, he played his part as well as could be expected on so short a notice. Clapping Sam on the shoulder, — not the bad one, Ben was always thoughtful of those things, — he exclaimed heartily, —

"I always said you'd come round when this poor arm of yours got a good start, and here you are jollier'n ever. Lend a hand! so I will, a pair of 'em. What's to do? Pack these traps up again."

"No; I want you to tell what *you'd* do with 'em if they were yours. Free, you know, — as free as if they really was."

Ben held on to the box a minute as if this second surprise rather took him off his legs; but another look from the prime mover in this resolution steadied him, and he fell to work as if Sam had been in the habit of being "free."

"Well, let's see. I think I'd put the clothes and sich into this smaller box that the bottles come in, and stan' it under the table, handy. Here's newspapers-pictures in 'em, too! I should make a circulatin' lib'ry of them; they'll be a real treat. Pickles — well, I guess I should keep them on the winder

here as a kind of a relish dinner-times, or to pass along to them as long as for 'em. Cologne—that's a dreadful handsome bottle, ain't it? That, now, would be fust-rate to give away to somebody as was very fond of it, — a kind of a delicate attention, you know, if you happen to meet such a person anywheres."

Ben nodded towards Miss Hale, who was absorbed in folding pocket-handkerchiefs. Sam winked expressively, and patted the bottle as if congratulating himself that it was handsome, and that he did know what to do with it. The pantomime was not elegant, but as much real affection and respect went into it as if he had made a set speech, and presented the gift upon his knees.

"The letters and photographs I should probably keep under my pillow for a spell; the jelly I'd give to Miss Hale, to use for the sick ones; the cake-stuff and that pot of jam, that's gettin' ready to work, I'd stand treat with for tea, as dinner wasn't all we could have wished. The apples I'd keep to eat, and fling at Joe when he was too bashful to ask for one, and the *tobaccer* I would *not* go lavishin' on folks that have no business to be enjoyin' luxuries when many a poor feller is dyin' of want down to Charlestown. There, sir! that's what *I'd* do if any one was so clever as to send me a jolly box like this."

Sam was enjoying the full glow of his shower-bath by this time. As Ben designated the various articles, he set them apart; and when the inventory ended, he marched away with the first instalment: two of the biggest, rosiest apples for Joe, and all the pictorial papers. Pickles are not usually regarded as tokens of regard, but as Sam dealt them out one at a time, — for he would let nobody help him, and his single hand being the left, was as awkward as it was willing, — the boys' faces brightened; for a friendly word accompanied each, which made the sour gherkins as welcome as sweetmeats. With every trip the donor's spirits rose; for Ben circulated freely between whiles, and, thanks to him, not an allusion to the past marred the satisfaction of the present. Jam, soda-biscuits, and cake were such welcome additions to the usual bill of fare, that when supper was over a vote of thanks was passed, and speeches were made; for, being true Americans, the ruling passion found vent in the usual "Fellow-citizens!" and allusions to the "Star-spangled Banner." After which Sam subsided, feeling himself a public benefactor, and a man of mark.

A perfectly easy, pleasant day throughout would be almost an impossibility in any hospital, and this one was no exception to the general rule; for, at the usual time, Dr. Bangs went his rounds, leaving the customary amount

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of discomfort, discontent and dismay behind him. A skilful surgeon and an excellent man was Dr. Bangs, but not a sanguine or conciliatory individual; many cares and crosses caused him to regard the world as one large hospital, and his fellow-beings all more or less dangerously wounded patients in it. He saw life through the bluest of blue spectacles, and seemed to think that the sooner people quitted it the happier for them. He did his duty by the men, but if they recovered he looked half disappointed, and congratulated them with cheerful prophecies that there would come a time when they would wish they hadn't. If one died he seemed relieved, and surveyed him with pensive satisfaction, saying heartily, —

"He's comfortable, now, poor soul, and well out of this miserable world, thank God!"

But for Ben the sanitary influences of the doctor's ward would have been small, and Dante's doleful line might have been written on the threshold of the door,

"Who enters here leaves hope behind."

Ben and the doctor perfectly understood and liked each other, but never agreed, and always skirmished over the boys as if manful cheerfulness and medical despair were fighting for the soul and body of each one.

"Well," began the doctor, looking at Sam's arm, or, rather, all that was left of that member after two amputations, "we shall be ready for another turn at this in a day or two if it don't mend faster. Tetanus sometimes follows such cases; but that is soon over, and I should not object to a case of it, by way of variety." Sam's hopeful face fell, and he set his teeth as if the fatal symptoms were already felt.

"If one kind of lockjaw was more prevailing than 'tis, it wouldn't be a bad thing for some folks I could mention," observed Ben, covering the well-healed stump as carefully as if it were a sleeping baby; adding, as the doctor walked away, "There's a sanguinary old sawbones for you! Why, bless your buttons, Sam, you are doing splendid, and he goes on that way because there's no chance of his having another cut at you! Now he's squenchin' Turner, jest as we've blowed a spark of spirit into him. If ever there was a born extinguisher its Bangs!"

Ben rushed to the rescue, and not a minute too soon; for Turner, — who now labored under the delusion that his recovery depended solely upon his

getting out of bed every fifteen minutes, was sitting by the fire, looking up at the doctor, who pleasantly observed, while feeling his pulse, —

"So you are getting ready for another fever, are you? Well, we've grown rather fond of you, and will keep you six weeks longer if you have set your heart on it." Turner looked nervous, for the doctor's jokes were always grim ones; but Ben took the other hand in his, and gently rocked the chair as he replied, with great politeness, —

"This robust convalescent of ourn would be happy to oblige you, sir, but he has a pressin' engagement up to Jersey for next week, and couldn't stop on no account. You see Miss Turner wants a careful nuss for little Georgie, and he's a goin' to take the place."

Feeling himself on the brink of a laugh as Turner simpered with a ludicrous mixture of pride in his baby and fear for himself, Dr. Bangs said, with unusual sternness and a glance at Ben, —

"You take the responsibility of this step upon yourself, do you? Very well; then I wash my hands of Turner; only, if that bed is empty in a week, don't lay the blame of it at my door."

"Nothing shall induce me to do it, sir," briskly responded Ben. "Now then, turn in my boy, and sleep your prettiest, for I wouldn't but disappoint that cheerfulest of men for a month's wages; and that's liberal, as I ain't likely to get it."

"How is this young man after the rash dissipations of the day?" asked the doctor, pausing at the bed in the corner, after he had made a lively progress down the room, hotly followed by Ben.

"I'm first-rate, sir," panted Joe, who always said so, though each day found him feebler than the last. Every one was kind to Joe, even the gruff doctor, whose manner softened, and who was forced to frown heavily to hide the pity in his eyes.

"How's the cough?"

"Better, sir; being weaker, I can't fight against it as I used to do, so it comes rather easier."

"Sleep any last night?"

"Not much; but it's very pleasant laying here when the room is still, and no light but the fire. Ben keeps it bright; and, when I fret, he talks to me, and makes the time go telling stories till he gets so sleepy he can hardly speak.

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Dear old Ben! I hope he'll have some one as kind to him, when he needs it as I do now."

"He will get what he deserves by-and-by, you may be sure of that," said the doctor, as severely as if Ben merited eternal condemnation.

A great drop splashed down upon the hearth, as Joe spoke; but Ben put his foot on it, and turned about as if defying any one to say he shed it.

"Of all the perverse and reckless women whom I have known in the course of a forty years' practice, this one is the most perverse and reckless," said the doctor, abruptly addressing Miss Hale, who just then appeared, bringing Joe's "posy-basket" back. "You will oblige me, ma'am, by sitting in this chair with your hands folded for twenty minutes; the clock will then strike nine, and you will go straight up to your bed."

Miss Hale demurely sat down, and the doctor ponderously departed, sighing regretfully as he went through the room, as if disappointed that the whole thirty were not lying at death's door; but on the threshold he turned about, exclaimed:

"Good-night, boys! God bless you!" and vanished as precipitately as if a trap-door had swallowed him up.

Miss Hale was a perverse woman in some things; for, instead of folding her tired hands, she took a rusty-covered volume from the mantle-piece, and, sitting by Joe's bed, began to read aloud. One by one all other sounds grew still; one by one the men composed themselves to listen; and one by one the words of the sweet old Christmas story came to them, as the woman's quiet voice went reading on. If any wounded spirit needed balm, if any hungry heart asked food, if any upright purpose, newborn aspiration, or sincere repentance wavered for want of human strength, all found help, hope, and consolation in the beautiful and blessed influences of the book, the reader, and the hour.

The bells rung nine, the lights grew dim, the day's work was done; but Miss Hale lingered beside Joe's bed, for his face wore a wistful look, and he seemed loath to have her go.

"What is it, dear?" she said; "what can I do for you before I leave you to Ben's care?"

He drew her nearer, and whispered earnestly, —

"It's something that I know you'll do for me, because I can't do it for myself, not as I want it done, and you can. I'm going pretty fast now, ma'am; and

when some one else is laying here, I want you to tell the boys, — every one, from Ben to Barney, — how much I thanked 'em, how much I loved 'em, and how glad I was that I had known 'em, even for such a little while."

"Yes, Joe, I'll tell them all. What else can I do, my boy?"

"Only let me say to you what no one else must say for me, that all I want to live for is to try and do something in my poor way to show you how I thank you, ma'am. It isn't what you've said to me, it isn't what you've done for me alone, that makes me grateful; it's because you've learned me many things without knowing it, showed me what I ought to have been before, if I'd had any one to tell me how, and made this such a happy, home-like place, I shall be sorry when I have to go."

Poor Joe! it must have fared hardly with him all those twenty years, if a hospital seemed home-like, and a little sympathy, a little care, could fill him with such earnest gratitude. He stopped a moment to lay his cheek upon the hand he held in both of his, then hurried on as if he felt his breath beginning to give out:

"I dare say many boys have said this to you, ma'am, better than I can, for I don't say half I feel; but I know that none of 'em ever thanked you as I thank you in my heart, or ever loved you as I'll love you all my life. To-day I hadn't anything to give you, I'm so poor; but I wanted to tell you this, on the last Christmas I shall ever see."

It was a very humble kiss he gave that hand; but the fervor of a first love warmed it, and the sincerity of a great gratitude made it both a precious and pathetic gift to one who, half unconsciously, had made this brief and barren life so rich and happy at its close. Always womanly and tender, Miss Hale's face was doubly so, as she leaned over him, whispering, —

"I have had my present, now. Good-night, Joe."

Nelly's Hospital

NELLY SAT BESIDE HER MOTHER picking lint; but while her fingers flew, her eyes often looked wistfully out into the meadow, golden with buttercups and bright with sunshine. Presently she said, rather bashfully, but very earnestly, "Mamma, I want to tell you a little plan I've made, if you'll please not laugh."

"I think I can safely promise that, my dear," said her mother, putting down her work that she might listen quite respectfully.

Nelly looked pleased, and went on confidingly. "Since brother Will came home with his lame foot, and I've helped you tend him, I've heard a great deal about hospitals, and liked it very much. To-day I said I wanted to go and be a nurse, like Aunt Mercy; but Will laughed, and told me I'd better begin by nursing sick birds and butterflies and pussies before I tried to take care of men. I did not like to be made fun of, but I've been thinking that it would be very pleasant to have a little hospital all my own, and be a nurse in it, because, if I took pains, so many pretty creatures might be made well, perhaps. Could I, mamma?"

Her mother wanted to smile at the idea, but did not, for Nelly looked up with her heart and eyes so full of tender compassion, both for the unknown men for whom her little hands had done their best, and for the smaller sufferers nearer home, that she stroked the shining head, and answered readily: "Yes, Nelly, it will be a proper charity for such a young Samaritan, and you may learn much if you are in earnest. You must study how to feed and nurse your little patients, else your pity will do no good, and your hospital become a prison. I will help you, and Tony shall be your surgeon."

"O mamma, how good you always are to me! Indeed, I am in truly earnest; I will learn, I will be kind, and may I go now and begin?"

"You may, but tell me first where will you have your hospital?"

"In my room, mamma; it is so snug and sunny, and I never should forget it there," said Nelly.

"You must not forget it anywhere. I think that plan will not do. How would you like to find caterpillars walking in your bed, to hear sick pussies mewling in the night, to have beetles clinging to your clothes, or see mice, bugs, and birds tumbling down stairs whenever the door was open?" said her mother.

Nelly laughed at that thought a minute, then clapped her hands, and cried: "Let us have the old summer-house! My doves only use the upper part, and it would be so like Frank in the story-book. Please say yes again, mamma."

Her mother did say yes, and, snatching up her hat, Nelly ran to find Tony, the gardener's son, a pleasant lad of twelve, who was Nelly's favorite playmate. Tony pronounced the plan a "jolly" one, and, leaving his work, followed his young mistress to the summer-house, for she could not wait one minute.

"What must we do first?" she asked, as they stood looking in at the dim, dusty room, full of garden tools, bags of seeds, old flower-pots, and watering cans.

"Clear out the rubbish, miss," answered Tony.

"Here it goes, then," and Nelly began bundling everything out in such haste that she broke two flower-pots, scattered all the squash-seeds, and brought a pile of rakes and hoes clattering down about her ears.

"Just wait a bit, and let me take the lead, miss. You hand me things, I'll pile 'em in the barrow and wheel 'em off to the barn; then it will save time, and be finished up tidy."

Nelly did as he advised, and very soon nothing but dust remained.

"What next?" she asked, not knowing in the least.

"I'll sweep up while you see if Polly can come and scrub the room out. It ought to be done before you stay here, let alone the patients."

"So it had," said Nelly, looking very wise all of a sudden. "Will says the wards—that means the rooms, Tony—are scrubbed every day or two, and kept very clean, and well venti—something—I can't say it; bur it means having a plenty of air come in. I can clean windows while Polly mops, and then we shall soon be done."

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Away she ran, feeling very busy and important. Polly came, and very soon the room looked like another place. The four latticed windows were set wide open, so the sunshine came dancing through the vines that grew outside, and curious roses peeped in to see what frolic was afoot. The walls shone white again, for not a spider dared to stay; the wide seat which encircled the room was dustless now,—the floor as nice as willing hands could make it; and the south wind blew away all musty odors with its fragrant breath.

"How fine it looks!" cried Nelly, dancing on the doorstep, lest a footprint should mar the still damp floor.

"I'd almost like to fall sick for the sake of staying here," said Tony, admiringly. "Now, what sort of beds are you going to have, miss?"

"I suppose it won't do to put butterflies and toads and worms into beds like the real soldiers where Will was?" answered Nelly, looking anxious.

Tony could hardly help shouting at the idea; but, rather than trouble his little mistress, he said very soberly: "I'm afraid they wouldn't lay easy, not being used to it. Tucking up a butterfly would about kill him; the worms would be apt to get lost among the bed-clothes; and the toads would tumble out the first thing."

"I shall have to ask mamma about it. What will you do while I'm gone?" said Nelly, unwilling that a moment should be lost.

"I'll make frames for nettings to the window, else the doves will come in and eat up the sick people."

"I think they will know that it is a hospital, and be too kind to hurt or frighten their neighbors," began Nelly; but as she spoke, a plump white dove walked in, looked about with its red-ringed eyes, and quietly pecked up a tiny bug that had just ventured out from the crack where it had taken refuge when the deluge came.

"Yes, we must have the nettings. I'll ask mamma for some lace," said Nelly, when she saw that; and, taking her pet dove on her shoulder, told it about her hospital as she went toward the house; for, loving all little creatures as she did, it grieved her to have any harm befall even the least or plainest of them. She had a sweet child-fancy that her playmates understood her language as she did theirs, and that birds, flowers, animals, and insects felt for her the same affection which she felt for them. Love always makes friends, and nothing seemed to fear the gentle child; but welcomed her like a little sun who shone alike on all, and never suffered an eclipse.

She was gone some time, and when she came back her mind was full of new plans, one hand full of rushes, the other of books, while over her head floated the lace, and a bright green ribbon hung across her arm.

"Mamma says that the best beds will be little baskets, boxes, cages, and any sort of thing that suits the patient; for each will need different care and food and medicine. I have not baskets enough, so, as I cannot have pretty white beds, I am going to braid pretty green nests for my patients, and, while I do it, mamma thought you'd read to me the pages she has marked, so that we may begin right."

"Yes, miss; I like that. But what is the ribbon for?" asked Tony.

"O, that's for you. Will says that, if you are to be an army surgeon, you must have a green band on your arm; so I got this to tie on when we play hospital."

Tony let her decorate the sleeve of his gray jacket, and when the nettings were done, the welcome books were opened and enjoyed. It was a happy time, sitting in the sunshine with leaves pleasantly astir all about them, doves cooing overhead, and flowers sweetly gossiping together through the summer afternoon. Nelly wove her smooth, green rushes. Tony pored over his pages, and both found something better than fairy legends in the family histories of insects, birds, and beasts. All manner of wonders appeared, and were explained to them, till Nelly felt as if a new world had been given her, so full of beauty, interest, and pleasure that she never could be tired of studying it. Many of these things were not strange to Tony, because, born among plants, he had grown up with them as if they were brothers and sisters, and the sturdy, brown-faced boy had learned many lessons which no poet or philosopher could have taught him, unless he had become as childlike as himself, and studied from the same great book.

When the baskets were done, the marked pages all read, and the sun began to draw his rosy curtains round him before smiling "Good night," Nelly ranged the green beds round the room. Tony put in the screens, and the hospital was ready. The little nurse was so excited that she could hardly eat her supper, and directly afterwards ran up to tell Will how well she had succeeded with the first part of her enterprise. Now brother Will was a brave young officer, who had fought stoutly and done his duty like a man. But when lying weak and wounded at home the cheerful courage which had led him safely through many dangers seemed to have deserted him, and he was often gloomy, sad,

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or fretful, because he longed to be at his post again, and time passed very slowly. This troubled his mother, and made Nelly wonder why he found lying in a pleasant room so much harder than fighting battles or making weary marches. Anything that interested and amused him was very welcome, and when Nelly, climbing on the arm of his sofa, told her plans, mishaps, and successes, he laughed out more heartily than he had done for many a day, and his thin face began to twinkle with fun as it used to do so long ago. That pleased Nelly, and she chatted like any affectionate little magpie, till Will was really interested; for when one is ill, small things amuse.

"Do you expect your patients to come to you, Nelly?" he asked.

"No, I shall go and look for them. I often see poor things suffering in the garden, and the wood, and always feel as if they ought to be taken care of, as people are."

"You won't like to carry insane bugs, lame toads, and convulsive kittens in your hands, and they would not stay on a stretcher if you had one. You should have an ambulance and be a branch of the Sanitary Commission," said Will.

Nelly had often heard the words, but did not quite understand what they meant. So Will told her of that great and never-failing charity, to which thousands owe their lives; and the child listened with lips apart, eyes often full, and so much love and admiration in her heart that she could find no words in which to tell it. When her brother paused, she said earnestly: "Yes, I will be a Sanitary. This little cart of mine shall be my ambulance, and I'll never let my water-barrels go empty, never drive too fast, or be rough with my poor passengers, like some of the men you tell about. Does this look like an ambulance, Will?"

"Not a bit, but it shall, if you and mamma like to help me. I want four long bits of cane, a square of white cloth, some pieces of thin wood, and the gum-pot," said Will, sitting up to examine the little cart, feeling like a boy again as he took out his knife and began to whittle.

Up stairs and down stairs ran Nelly till all necessary materials were collected, and almost breathlessly she watched her brother arch the canes over the cart, cover them with the cloth, and fit in an upper shelf of small compartments, each lined with cotton-wool to serve as beds for wound insects, lest they should hurt one another or jostle out. The lower part was left free for any larger creatures which Nelly might find. Among her toys she had a tiny cask which only needed a peg to be water-tight; this was filled and fitted in

before, because, as the small sufferers needed no seats, there was no place for it behind, and, as Nelly was both horse and driver, it was more convenient in front. On each side of it stood a box of stores. In one were minute rollers, as bandages are called, a few bottles not yet filled, and a wee doll's jar of cold-cream, because Nelly could not feel that her outfit was complete without a medicine-chest. The other box was full of crumbs, bits of sugar, bird-seed, and grains of wheat and corn, lest any famished stranger should die for want of food before she got it home. Then mamma painted "U.S. San. Com." in bright letters on the cover, and Nelly received her charitable plaything with a long sigh of satisfaction.

"Nine o'clock already. Bless me, what a short evening this has been," exclaimed Will, as Nelly came to give him her good-night kiss.

"And such a happy one," she answered. "Thank you very, very much, dear Will. I only wish my little amb'lance was big enough for you to go in,—I'd so like to give you the first ride."

"Nothing I should like better, if it were possible, though I've a prejudice against ambulances in general. But as I cannot ride, I'll try and hop out to your hospital to-morrow, and see how you get on,"—which was a great deal for Captain Will to say, because he had been too listless to leave his sofa for several days.

That promise sent Nelly happily away to bed, only stopping to pop her head out of the window to see if it was likely to be a fair day to-morrow, and to tell Tony about the new plan as he passed below.

"Where shall you go to look for your first load of sick folks, miss?" he asked.

"All round the garden first, then through the grove, and home across the brook. Do you think I can find any patients so?" said Nelly.

"I know you will. Good night, miss," and Tony walked away with a merry look on his face, that Nelly would not have understood if she had seen it.

Up rose the sun bright and early, and up rose Nurse Nelly almost as early and as bright. Breakfast was taken in a great hurry, and before the dew was off the grass this branch of the S. C. was all astir. Papa, mamma, big brother and baby sister, men and maids, all looked out to see the funny little ambulance depart, and nowhere in all the summer fields was there a happier child than Nelly, as she went smiling down the garden path, where tall flowers kissed her as she passed and every blithe bird seemed singing a "Good speed!"

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"How I wonder what I shall find first," she thought, looking sharply on all sides as she went. Crickets chirped, grasshoppers leaped, ants worked busily at their subterranean houses, spiders spun shining webs from twig to twig, bees were coming for their bags of gold, and butterflies had just begun their holiday. A large white one alighted on the top of the ambulance, walked over the inscription as if spelling it letter by letter, then floated away from flower to flower, like one carrying the good news far and wide.

"Now every one will know about the hospital and be glad to see me coming," thought Nelly. And indeed it seemed so, for just then a blackbird, sitting on the garden wall, burst out with a song full of musical joy, Nelly's kitten came running after to stare at the wagon and rub her soft side against it, a bright-eyed toad looked out from his cool bower among the lily-leaves, and at that minute Nelly found her first patient. In one of the dewy cobwebs hanging from a shrub near by sat a fat black and yellow spider, watching a fly whose delicate wings were just caught in the net. The poor fly buzzed pitifully, and struggled so hard that the whole web shook; but the more he struggled, the more he entangled himself, and the fierce spider was preparing to descend that it might weave a shroud about its prey, when a little finger broke the threads and lifted the fly safely into the palm of a hand where he lay faintly humming his thanks.

Nelly had heard much about contrabands, knew who they were, and was very much interested in them; so, when she freed the poor black fly, she played he was her contraband, and felt glad that her first patient was one that needed help so much. Carefully brushing away as much of the web as she could, she left small Pompey, as she named him, to free his own legs, lest her clumsy fingers should hurt him; then she laid him in one of the soft beds with a grain or two of sugar if he needed refreshment, and bade him rest and recover from his fright, remembering that he was at liberty to fly away whenever he liked, because she had no wish to make a slave of him.

Feeling very happy over this new friend, Nelly went on singing softly as she walked, and presently she found a pretty caterpillar dressed in brown fur although the day was warm. He lay so still she thought him dead, till he rolled himself into a ball as she touched him.

"I think you are either faint from the heat of this thick coat of yours, or that you are going to make a cocoon of yourself, Mr. Fuzz," said Nelly.

"Now I want to see you turn into a butterfly, so I shall take you, and if you get lively again I will let you go. I shall play that you have given out on a march, as the soldiers sometimes do, and been left behind for the Sanitary people to see to."

In went sulky Mr. Fuzz, and on trundled the ambulance till a golden green rose-beetle was discovered, lying on his back kicking as if in a fit.

"Dear me, what shall I do for him?" thought Kelly. "He acts as baby did when she was so ill, and mamma put her in a warm bath. I haven't got my little tub here, or any hot water, and I'm afraid the beetle would not like it if I had. Perhaps he has pain in his stomach; I'll turn him over, and pat his back, as nurse does baby's when she cries for pain like that."

She set the beetle on his legs, and did her best to comfort him; but he was evidently in great distress, for he could not walk, and instead of lifting his emerald overcoat, and spreading the wings that lay underneath, he turned again, and kicked more violently than before. Not knowing what to do, Nelly put him into one of her soft nests for Tony to cure if possible. She found no more patients in the garden except a dead bee, which she wrapped in a leaf, and took home to bury. When she came to the grove, it was so green and cool she longed to sit and listen to the whisper of the pines, and watch the larch-tassels wave in the wind. But, recollecting her charitable errand, she went rustling along the pleasant path till she came to another patient, over which she stood considering several minutes before she could decide whether it was best to take it to her hospital, because it was a little gray snake, with a bruised tail. She knew it would not hurt her, yet she was afraid of it; she thought it pretty, yet could not like it; she pitied its pain, yet shrunk from helping it, for it had a fiery eye, and a keep quivering tongue, that looked as if longing to bite.

"He is a rebel, I wonder if I ought to be good to him," thought Nelly, watching the reptile writhe with pain. "Will said there were sick rebels in his hospital, and one was very kind to him. It says, too, in my little book, 'Love your enemies.' I think snakes are mine, but I guess I'll try and love him because God made him. Some boy will kill him if I leave him here, and then perhaps his mother will be very sad about it. Come, poor worm, I wish to help you, so be patient, and don't frighten me."

Then Nelly laid her little handkerchief on the ground, and with a stick gently lifted the wounded snake upon it, and, folding it together, laid it

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in the ambulance. She was thoughtful after that, and so busy puzzling her young head about the duty of loving those who hate us, and being kind to those who are disagreeable or unkind, that she went through the rest of the wood quite forgetful of her work. A soft "Queek, queek!" made her look up and listen. The sound came from the long meadow-grass, and, bending it carefully back, she found a half-fledged bird, with one wing trailing on the ground, and its eyes dim with pain or hunger.

"You darling thing, did you fall out of your nest and hurt your wing?" cried Nelly, looking up into the single tree that stood near by. No nest was to be seen, no parent birds hovered overhead, and little Robin could only tell its troubles in that mournful "Queek, queek, queek!"

Nelly ran to get both her chests, and, sitting down beside the bird, tried to feed it. To her great joy it ate crumb after crumb as if it were half starved, and soon fluttered nearer with a confiding fearlessness that made her very proud. Soon baby Robin seemed quite comfortable, his eye brightened, he "queeked" no more, and but for the drooping wing would have been himself again. With one of her bandages Nelly bound both wings closely to his sides for fear he should hurt himself by trying to fly; and though he seemed amazed at her proceedings, he behaved very well, only staring her, and ruffling up his few feathers in a funny way that made her laugh. Then she had to discover some way of accommodating her two large patients so that neither should hurt nor alarm the other. A bright thought came to her after much pondering. Carefully lifting the handkerchief, she pinned the two ends to the roof of the cart, and there swung little Forked tongue, while Rob lay easily below.

By this time Nelly began to wonder how it happened that she found so many more injured things than ever before. But it never entered her innocent head that Tony had searched the wood and meadow before she was up and laid most of these creatures ready to her hands, that she might not be disappointed. She had not yet lost her faith in fairies, so she fancied they too belonged to her small sisterhood, and presently it did really seem impossible to doubt that the good folk had been at work.

Coming to the bridge that crossed the brook, she stopped a moment to watch the water ripple over the bright pebbles, the ferns bend down to drink and the funny tadpoles frolic in quieter nooks, where the sun shone, and the dragon-flies swung among the rushes. When Nelly turned to go on her blue eyes opened wide, and the handle of the ambulance dropped with a noise



that caused a stout frog to skip into the water heels over head. Directly in the middle of the bridge was a pretty green tent, made of two tall burdock leaves. The stems were stuck into cracks between the boards, the tips were pinned together with a thorn, and one great buttercup nodded in the doorway like a sleepy sentinel. Nelly stared and smiled, listened, and looked about on every side. Nothing was seen but the quiet meadow and the shady grove nothing was heard but the babble of the brook and the cheery music of the bobolinks.

"Yes," said Nelly softly to herself, "that is a fairy tent, and in it I may find a baby elf sick with whooping-cough or scarlet-fever. How splendid it would be! only I could never nurse such a dainty thing."

Stooping eagerly, she peeped over the buttercup's drowsy head, and what seemed a tiny cock of hay. She had no time to feel disappointed for the haycock began to stir, and, looking nearer, she beheld two silvery gray mites, who wagged wee tails, and stretched themselves as if they had just waked up. Nelly knew that they were young field-mice, and rejoiced over them, feeling rather relieved that no fairy had appeared, though she still believed them to have had a hand in the matter.

"I shall call the mice my Babes in the Wood, because they are lost and

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covered up with leaves," said Nelly, as she laid them in her snugest bed where they nestled close together, and fell fast asleep again.

Being very anxious to get home, that she might tell her adventures and show how great was the need of a sanitary commission in that region, Nelly marched proudly up the avenue, and, having displayed her load, hurried to the hospital, where another applicant was waiting for her. On the step of the door lay a large turtle, with one claw gone, and on his back was pasted a bit of paper, with his name,—"Commodore Waddle, U.S.N." Nelly knew this was a joke of Will's, but welcomed the ancient mariner, and called Tony to help her get him in.

All that morning they were very busy settling the new-comers, for both people and books had to be consulted before they could decide what diet and treatment was best for each. The winged contraband had taken Nelly at her word, and flown away on the journey home. Little Rob was put in a large cage, where he could use his legs, yet not injure his lame wing. Forked-tongue lay under a wire cover, on sprigs of fennel, for the gardener said that snakes were fond of it. The Babes in the Wood were put to bed in one of the rush baskets, under a cotton-wool coverlet. Greenback, the beetle, found ease for his unknown aches in the warm heart of a rose, where he sunned himself all day. The Commodore was made happy in a tub of water, grass, and stones, and Mr. Fuzz was put in a well-ventilated glass box to decide whether he would be a cocoon or not.

Tony had not been idle while his mistress was away, and he showed her the hospital garden he had made close by, in which were cabbage, nettle, and mignonette plants for the butterflies, flowering herbs for the bees, chickweed and hemp for the birds, catnip for the pussies, and plenty of room left for whatever other patients might need. In the afternoon, while Nelly did her task at lint-picking, talking busily to Will as she worked, and interesting him in her affairs, Tony cleared a pretty spot in the grove for the burying-ground, and made ready some small bits of slate on which to write the names of those who died. He did not have it ready an hour too soon, for at sunset two little graves were needed, and Nurse Nelly shed tender tears for her first losses as she laid the motherless mice in one smooth hollow, and the gray-coated rebel in the other. She had learned to care for him already, and when she found him dead, was very glad she had been kind to him, hoping that he knew it, and died happier in her hospital than all alone in the shadowy wood.

The rest of Nelly's patients prospered, and of the many added afterward few died, because of Tony's skilful treatment and her own faithful care. Every morning when the day proved fair the little ambulance went out upon its charitable errand; every afternoon Nelly worked for the human sufferers whom she loved; and every evening brother Will read aloud to her from useful books, showed her wonders with his microscope, or prescribed remedies for the patients, whom he soon knew by name and took much interest in. It was Nelly's holiday; but, though she studied no lessons, she learned much, and unconsciously made her pretty play both an example and a rebuke for others.

At first it seemed a childish pastime, and people laughed. But there was something in the familiar words "Sanitary," "hospital," and "ambulance" that made them pleasant sounds to many ears. As reports of Nelly's work went through the neighborhood, other children came to see and copy her design. Rough lads looked ashamed when in her wards they found harmless creatures hurt by them, and going out they said among themselves, "We won't stone birds, chase butterflies, and drown the girls' little cats any more, though we won't tell them so." And most of the lads kept their word so well that people said there never had been so many birds before as all that summer haunted wood and field. Tender-hearted playmates brought their pets to be cured; even busy fathers had a friendly word for the small charity which reminded them so sweetly of the great one which should never be forgotten; lonely mothers sometimes looked out with wet eyes as the little ambulance went by, recalling thoughts of absent sons who might be journeying painfully to some far-off hospital, where brave women waited to tend them with hands as willing, hearts as tender, as those the gentle child gave to her self-appointed task.

At home the charm worked also. No more idle days for Nelly, or fretful ones for Will, because the little sister would not neglect the helpless creatures so dependent upon her, and the big brother was ashamed to complain after watching the patience of these lesser sufferers, and merrily said he would try to bear his own wound as quietly and bravely as the "Commodore" bore his. Nelly never knew how much good she had done Captain Will till he went away again in the early autumn. Then he thanked her for it, and though she cried for joy and sorrow, she never forgot it, because he left something behind him which always pleasantly reminded her of the double success her little hospital had won.

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When Will was gone and she had prayed softly in her heart that God would keep him safe and bring him home again, she dried her tears and went away to find comfort in the place where he had spent so many happy hours with her. She had not been there before that day, and when she reached the door she stood quite still and wanted very much to cry again, for something beautiful had happened. She had often asked Will for a motto for her hospital, and he had promised to find her one. She thought he had forgotten it; but even in the hurry of that busy day he had found time to do more than keep his word, while Nelly sat indoors, lovingly brightening the tarnished buttons on the blue coat that had seen so many battles.

Above the roof, where the doves cooed in the sun, now rustled a white flag with the golden "S. C." shining on it as the west wind tossed it to and fro. Below, on the smooth panel of the door, a skilful pencil had drawn two arching ferns, in whose soft shadow, poised upon a mushroom, stood a little figure of Nurse Nelly, and underneath it another of Dr. Tony bottling medicine, with spectacles upon his nose. Both hands of the miniature Nelly were outstretched, as if beckoning to a train of insects, birds, and beasts, which was so long that it not only circled round the lower rim of this fine sketch, but dwindled in the distance to mere dots and lines. Such merry conceits as one found there! A mouse bringing the tail it had lost in some cruel trap, a dor-bug with a shade over its eyes, an invalid butterfly carried in a tiny litter by long-legged spiders, a fat frog with gouty feet hopping upon crutches, Jenny Wren sobbing in a nice handkerchief, as she brought dead Cock Robin to be restored to life. Rabbits, lambs, cats, calves and turtles, all came trooping up to be healed by the benevolent little maid who welcomed them so heartily.

Nelly laughed at these comical mites till the tears ran down her cheeks, and thought she never could be tired of looking at them. But presently she saw four lines clearly printed underneath her picture, and her childish face grew sweetly serious as she read the words of a great poet, which Will had made both compliment and motto:

*"He prayeth best who loveth best
All things, both great and small;
For the dear God who loveth us,
He made and loveth all."*