

ONLY A CHILD.

Then you will admit her, doctor? "Well, I don't know. She is only a child."

"But, doctor, you know there's no children's hospital in the city, and we can't do anything for her at the orphanage. If there's any hope of a cure, she should have a chance."

"But she will make a great deal of trouble. You know, Mrs. Bliss, it's a risky thing to admit a child of that age without a mother to take care of her."

"I know, but I don't think Lucile will make much trouble. She's such a bright, sunny-natured child! She never has made trouble, and she's used to being among strangers."

"Well, since you are so persistent, I suppose we may try her, for a few days at least. You may bring her this evening."

"Thank you, doctor."

This scrap of conversation reached me as I lay in my narrow white bed at the end of the long ward. A few minutes earlier Doctor Mills, the hospital superintendent, had passed through the ward, accompanied by a lady, who, I afterward learned, was Mrs. Bliss, the mother from an orphanage a few blocks away.

For some reason I have many fancies about the child with the attractive, foreign-sounding name. I wondered who she could be, and why they were bringing her here. Perhaps my homesick longing for the troop of merry brothers and sisters at home gave me such an interest in the idea of a child coming to the hospital.

All day I lay and listened as doctors or nurses approached, hoping to hear something about the new patient. I wished it might be our ward to which they would bring her, and waited with impatience for evening to come.

The bed next my own was vacant. After the tea-tray had been removed, a nurse came into the ward with some clean sheets on her arm, and stopped by the vacant bed I turned towards her eagerly.

"Are they going to bring in a new patient?" I asked.

"Yes, she answered, pleasantly. "Miss Scott gave orders to have this bed prepared. The patient will be in this evening so you will have a new neighbor."

"Do you know who it is?" I asked excitedly. "Miss Maynor was very kind, and though I was very shy and timid, I was not a bit afraid of her."

"I do not," she answered, smiling at my eager face. "You seem very much interested at the thought of a new neighbor. Are you getting more homesick?"

"Oh no," I answered, smiling in return, "but I heard Doctor Mills talking this morning of bringing a little girl to the hospital. I was just wondering if they will bring her here. I wish they would."

"There's Miss Scott now. I'll ask her if you like," Miss Maynor said, kindly, and turned to the head nurse, who was running in and out among beds, folding coverlets and arranging pillows for the night.

"Do you know the name of the new patient who is coming?" asked Miss Maynor. "Gracie would like to know who she is to have for a neighbor."

"Indeed, I do not," snapped Miss Scott, giving a scornful toss to the coverlet she was holding. "It's one of those little beggars from the orphanage! One would think Doctor Mills had taken leave of his senses! The idea of bringing a four-year-old child here to be waited on! It will take nearly the whole time of one nurse to look after her."

Evidently Miss Scott was not in a good humor. She seldom was. However, she had given me the information I wanted. I lay back on my pillow satisfied.

About an hour later Miss Maynor came gain, with a little girl in her arms, whom she brought directly round to my bed.

"Here's your little neighbor, Gracie," she said, unclasping the child's arms from her neck and placing her by my side. The little stranger did not seem a bit bashful, but smiled at me, showing the prettiest little row of white teeth, as I reached my hand toward her.

She was certainly a little beauty, even if she was a little beggar, as Miss Scott had said. She had just come from the bathroom, and her short, dark hair lay in little damp curls round her shapely head. The fair little face was flushed with a rosy glow, and the black eyes sparkled with childish happiness. She did not look at all like an invalid. She told me with the sweetest little lips that her name was "Luthele." Before Miss Maynor came to put her in bed we had become fast friends, and she let me with her sweet little good-night kisses upon my lips.

After Lucile was asleep that night, Miss Maynor came and sat by my side while she told me the little girl's story. Mrs. Bliss had been with her while she gave Lucile her bath, and told her all she herself knew. Lucile's parents had lived in the West, where she was born a few months before her father died. When only a year old she had shown a tendency to curvature of the spine. The mother sought medical advice, but the child's health steadily failed, until the physician told the anxious mother that her child could not live through another Western winter, and advised taking her East to the sea air.

When she wanted to go from bed to bed or cross the ward, she went with a little staggering run, much like that of a child just learning to walk.

During the beautiful autumn days she loved to sit on the sunny veranda, or climbing down on the gravelled walk below to amuse herself by picking out the roundest and smoothest pebbles and piling them in little heaps, or throwing them playfully. All about the hospital I learned to watch for her, and doctors, nurses and "helps," stopped as they passed to have a moment's chat, or to stroke the curly head, or at least to give a friendly nod and smile to the little maiden.

When the weather would not permit of going out, Lucile amused herself in the ward among the patients. Doctors, nurses and visitors brought her toys, candies and picturebooks, so that she was kept busy showing them to her friends.

She was a generous little thing, and baby though she was, had not forgotten her little friends in the orphanage. Mrs. Bliss never came to the hospital without taking the choicest of Lucile's playthings to one to her little wards.

The child was not much given to favoritism, but bestowed her smiles and graces freely on all; and yet there were a few whom she looked upon as special friends. From the night of her entrance into the hospital she seemed to regard me as her particular care; and when she found that I could not be out of bed at all, she would come and sit by the hour on my bed, showing her books and toys, or reading some pretty baby story out of her own sweet little brain; for she had not yet learned her letters.

Among the hospital staff, the physician of our ward, Dr. Linnett, was the child's special favorite. We never could understand what attraction she found in him. He was a dark, stern man, silent and reserved—one who had no babies of his own, and had never shown any fondness for children. His medical skill was of the highest, but his patients were all more or less afraid of him, white nurses and scrub-nurses had a wholesome dread of crossing his will.

But Lucile, by some sweet baby instinct, discovered the key to his heart. She had not been long in the ward before she had established the practice of running to him with her little tottering step as he entered the ward; and the stern doctor would stoop, lift the little one in his arms, and hold her thus, with the two little arms tightly clasped about his neck, would make the rounds of the ward.

When, in the course of her treatment, it became necessary for the child to lie quietly in bed, Doctor Linnett always extended his daily visit to sit a while by her side, listening to the baby chatter, holding the little hand or stroking the curly head, even bending over and allowing the little arms to be placed about his neck, and his head lowered until his face rested for a moment beside the fair little blossom on the pillow.

One other friend had Lucile among the hospital doctors, who loved her with a most fatherly affection—Doctor Freeman, the head surgeon on the hospital staff. Short, fat, blond and jolly, he was as entirely the opposite of Doctor Linnett as a man could be. From the day he made her acquaintance he seldom failed to call on Lucile when he came to the hospital. When she was again able to sit up, he brought his own little daughter to pay with her while he attended his patients in the surgical ward.

He never came to our ward while Doctor Linnett was in. The two men avoided each other. They had been associated on the hospital staff for years, but during all the time had never spoken. When chance, or necessity threw them together, they simply ignored each other's presence.

Among the hospital gossips it was said that the two had been close friends in boyhood and chums at college, but had quarrelled there, which neither had ever forgotten or forgiven.

Lucile grew steadily better, and though her back would never be entirely straight, yet she gained some control of her limbs, and could walk without assistance.

As Christmas approached we planned a Christmas tree to be set up in the ward dining room, and invited Mrs. Bliss to bring a dozen of her orphans to share the gifts. Doctors, nurses and patients each contributing something towards the success of this little plan. The unselfish generosity of our little Lucile and the interest we took in her had led us to make this effort to bring some Christmas brightness into the lives of these little orphans.

On the afternoon of the day before Christmas, doctors, nurses and all the patients who were able, assembled on the veranda to watch a procession marching along the street. Our ward being on the second floor, the veranda to which it opened afforded a fine view of the street, and there the hospital inmates had gathered until the veranda was crowded.

Lucile had gone out with the others, but no one noticed her until a sharp cry of pain and terror, and a sound of falling, caused all to turn. There at the foot of the veranda steps, in a helpless heap lay our pet.

Amid frightened shrieks from many voices two young doctors and Miss Maynor sprang down the steps, but Doctor Linnett was there before them. He had just alighted from his carriage which a moment before had driven into the yard.

Tenderly lifting the unconscious little form in his arms, he mounted the steps, passed the pale, terror-stricken crowd, his own face drawn as if in pain, and white even to the lips. The little head lay motionless on the doctor's arm, and one little arm hung limp and broken. Gently placing her on the bed, the doctor began a rapid examination. His stern face was almost rigid in its lines, and his lips were con-

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pressed as though with an effort at self-control. In a moment he spoke.

"Go for Freeman," he said, sharply. "He can save her if any one can."

As the young doctor by his side started to do his bidding, he turned, and with lips that trembled continued, "Tell him that is Lucile; he'll come for her."

One other command he gave. "Prepare Number Seventy," he said, and bent again over the unconscious form. Number Seventy was a ward in one of the upper stories containing a single bed and was reserved for the most critical cases. The nurse soon returned. "Number Seventy is ready, sir," she said.

Again lifting the child in his arms, and bidding Miss Maynor to follow, Doctor Linnett passed swiftly from the ward, and up the stairs. How slowly the long evening hours dragged by, as we waited in painful suspense for tidings from the little room above!

Doctor Freeman arrived, asked for Doctor Linnett and went up stairs; but still no word of hope reached us. Miss Maynor came down once or twice, and passed through the ward with pale face and tearful eyes, but to our questioning looks she only shook her head. We took tea in some way; few in our ward cared to eat. Nurses came and went, arranging all for the night. I do not know if others slept. The shock had brought on me a fit of nervous headache, and I lay, unable to raise my head, trying dumbly to pray for the little life which had grown so dear.

Manime in the upper ward, doctors and nurse worked silently, swiftly, skillfully. The broken arm was bound up and the bruised little body tenderly cared for. Still there was no sign of life save the faint beating of the little heart.

Hours passed, and at last the little head stirred, the uninjured arm was thrown out, poor Lucile had awakened to unconscious moanings and tossings; and still those two grave-faced men watched and waited. No word had passed between them save the barest professional forms. A messenger came to the hospital for Doctor Freeman, but received answer that he could not come.

Midnight passed, and at last the cold grew quiet; the restless moanings ceased, and the little girl fell asleep.

Doctor Linnett turned to Miss Maynor. "You may go down and rest," he said, and she went.

The long morning hours crept slowly by, and still the two doctors kept their silent watch over the sleeping child. Just as the faint streak of dawn glimmered over the city, Lucile stirred.

Doctor Linnett bent over her. "Lucile, darling," he said, softly. The little eyes opened with a look of intelligence, and the faint glimmer of a smile played on the sweet lips.

Dr. Linnett grasped his companion's hand. The tears were unheeded on his cheek, his voice broke with emotion. "Thank God! She is saved! She will live!" he exclaimed. "Frank, you saved her. From this day she shall be my child."

And as the Christmas bells rang out the joyful message, Peace on earth to men of good-will, the old past was buried, and peace and forgiveness entered two hearts which had so long held enmity and bitterness. In the glad new year which brought back health and happiness to Doctor Linnett's dear adoption daughter, the two physicians returned to their youthful affection, reconciled through the love of a little child.—E. J. Fulton, in Youth's Companion.

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DOMINION ATLANTIC RY. On and after 23rd Nov., 1896, the Steamer and Trains of this Railway will run as follows: Royal Mail S.S. Prince Rupert, MONDAY, WEDNESDAY, FRIDAY, SATURDAY. Lvs. St. J. at 8:00 a.m., ar. Digby 11:00 a.m. Lvs. Digby at 1:00 p.m., ar. St. John 4:00 p.m.

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