

for tea. It would surely do just as well another day, and the light would be better. Many were the excuses that fatigue and disinclination suggested; but it was no use, I seemed irresistibly compelled to get out at H— by some power greater than my will, and in a few minutes I found myself plunging about in the outskirts of the little town in search of the case. It was dark by this time, and very difficult to find out the names of the street; but at last I succeeded in penetrating into a suburban garden, and thence through the open door into a back kitchen; and there to my horror was the little patient sitting up, as far as her splints would allow her, and brandishing above her head a paraffin lamp, partly in self-defence and partly as a weapon of war, against several younger children who were scrambling on the bed. I was just in time, the lamp was already toppling over, and in another minute the bed would probably have been in flames, and the little one, who was attached to it by her extension, would have been burnt alive. I saw clearly now why I had been forced to leave the train at H— Station.

Searching for cases, in and out of the slimy courts and slums of London, what memories of dinginess and squalor rise up before me! The long dark staircase, slippery with grease and destitute of banisters, the poor garrets reached at last, but almost impenetrable on account of the wet clothes hanging in lines across it to dry, the smell of the steam and soft-soap of washing day. The breadwinner, who has been out all night, snoring in a heap of frowsy bed-clothes; and the remains of more than one meal—red herring predominating—on the table. The mother, up to elbows in the washtub, comes forward somewhat unwillingly, as she strips the soap-suds from her arms, for she does not care that Sister should find Bobbie sitting up at the table, his stirrup off and his long splints laid aside, for “he’s that tiresome, he won’t lie still,” and small blame to him, poor mite; but how discouraging as to the prospects of a cure for hip disease! Trying, also, are the steep ladder stair-ways, over a cab stable, and the trap-door through which one arises, like jack-in-box, considerably startling the little inmate, who is, perhaps, lying on a thin pillow, laid upon two chairs, over the rail of one of which hangs the weight, a flat-iron, dangling by a string, said flat-iron being often taken into use, or lent to a neighbour, the child parting with it nothing loathe. Alas! for the prospects to the suffering limb!

Then there is the fried-fish shop. What can be more trying to the senses than the smell of poor bits of fish, fried in grease, and sold as “snacks” in so many of the back courts and streets? I remember one little patient, who lay in state in the back parlour of such an establishment. The

whole family—father and mother, grandparents and grown-up brothers—collected to witness Sister’s manœuvres with the splints and bandages, and said, doubtless, many admiring things to each other in their own tongue (they were German Jews); for the result was an invitation to spend the approaching Christmas Day with them, and “we will dress up a real nice tree, Sister, if you will come.” Christmas Day in a fried-fish shop in Bethnal Green, kept by a Jewish family! The idea was appalling, but so kindly meant, it hurt me to refuse it; and, after all, you must sometimes accept hospitality at the hands that are grateful, and have nothing else to offer; and try to forget, in drinking the cup of tea so earnestly pressed on you when a long distance from the Hospital, the preparations that you could not help witnessing; and try also not to see the mortar-stains on the hands of the kindly brick-layer’s labourer, who insists on making you a piece of buttered toast in acknowledgment of the services rendered to his little boy.

Talk of the ingratitude of the poor! I have never seen it. I may have been more fortunate than others; but I only know the grateful side of the hard-worked fathers and mothers, and can only remember the kindly words and cordial welcomes to Sister, who was reported to have come “ever such a way” to try and make the little sick household pet if possible more comfortable.

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