

Our Foreign Letter.

"LIGHT OF MY EYES,"



Sara is back in hospital again.

She was with us about a year ago for purulent ophthalmia;

both eyes were affected at the time. She was under treatment for about six weeks; the greatest care was taken of her, and for the first few days her eyes were bathed every hour and the lids painted each morning with a solution of nitrate of silver (grs. xv. aqua dist. 1 oz.) This was rather difficult to do, as the patient's eyelids were swollen to the thickness of an inch, and however gently the lids were everted the operation was a very painful one; so we occasionally gave poor Sara a whiff of chloroform. However, with constant attention, plenty of nourishing food, and fresh air, she made steady progress, and in a few weeks was quite well. She left the hospital cured, the sight of both eyes good, and her general health and appearance wonderfully improved. Three weeks ago she returned to us, looking a wreck; the sight of both eyes is gone; she is, in fact, totally blind, through dirt and neglect. A pitiful sight! She brought with her a little baby, four months old, very ill with double pneumonia. Temperature on admission was 105 degrees, respiration 40, pulse 120. Both patients were put to bed at once, the baby in a tent-cot, and a "bronchitis kettle" used, its chest and back rubbed twice daily with warm camphor oil under a gamgee jacket.

For several days there was very little change in the temperature, which still remained very high. I wanted to sponge the baby, but when the mother realised what I was going to do she was very agitated and protested so strongly that I had to give in to her. She is an Arab woman of the Greek religion, and one day, when it seemed impossible for the baby to live more than a few hours, she became almost frantic, and begged that her child might be christened. Of course permission was granted, and very soon a Syrian priest of the Greek religion arrived, accompanied by six small boys, who served as acolytes. They were admitted to the ward where the mother and child lay, and I had to undress the baby, as it is the custom of the Greek priests to immerse the children at their baptism. A foot-bath served the purpose of a font. This was put on a table and filled with tepid water; the priest lighted the six cierges, and each acolyte held one with both hands while the baptismal service was read in Arabic; he then took the baby and immersed it three times in the bath, at each immersion repeating the words, "In the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost," etc.

I began to wonder how many more times the baby was to take this plunge, and, thinking it had gone through more than enough, I put out my hands to take it from the priest. He looked at me and smiled, then placed the baby in my arms, saying, "You are her godmother." Soon after this the service ended, the benediction was pronounced, and priest and acolytes disappeared. A nice soft blanket was wrapped round the infant, who was quickly put to bed that it might lie snug and warm by its mother. I left my wards that night feeling very anxious about poor wee Nigemy, wondering what her fate would be. Very early next morning I went to the ward, and, to my great delight, found both mother and baby in a blissful sleep. There was a very marked improvement in the child's condition, the temperature was lower by two degrees, and respiration and pulse much less rapid.

From that day everything went well with dear little Nigemy. She has made a very good recovery, and very soon both patients will go back to their native village happy and well. Sara says the Spirit of God descended on her child during her baptism, and that is why she has made such progress since. It may be so; in any case those three immersions acted as a tepid sponge, and reduced the temperature as nothing else had done. However the cure was worked, we are all so thankful that this dear little life has been spared, and hope it may be a useful one to its poor blind mother.

This morning I saw such a smile on Sara's face as she bent her sightless eyes over her little one, her face close to the child's. She was crooning Arab songs to her, the refrain of which was something like this: "Ya aiyouny, ya aiyouny" ("light of my eyes, my eyes"); "Nushkir er Rob" (thank God), "you are healed, and your godmother will give you lots of clothes." I asked her who was the baby's godmother, and she said: "Why, you, of course, lady; you were the first to take my Nigemy from the hands of the priest." So it appears I must provide the layette for this baby! See what I have, unconsciously, let myself in for!

Syria.

SISTER MARIE.

URSING ABROAD.

Miss Lydia Holman, a Johns Hopkins nurse, has been doing most interesting pioneer work amongst the mountain whites in North Carolina, where she had to act as physician, dentist, and district nurse. She states: "The most difficult thing I have to do is to extract teeth. One winter I had an abscess myself and tried before the mirror to lance it, as there was no one else to do it. I was not successful and had to extract the tooth. When I put the forceps on I found at first that my elbows would not work, but finally I got my tooth out. Ever since then it has been most difficult for me to adjust the forceps, though I get the teeth out easier, because I am more accustomed to it."

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