

impatient ways, yet with all the courage of that finer nature underlying the faults which were not all of Tommy's making, he kept on his journey up Hill Difficulty. Tommy is no story-book wonder—a sinner one day, and a saint the next. He was a real Hospital boy, whom we all loved and mourned for, with all the faults of his class and surroundings, but such noble embers lay smouldering in the ashes, that, once kindled, they never went out. Again and again he failed, and was as passionate as ever, and worse; but something of the tenacity of his nation was in him, and he plodded onward, and no physical suffering could daunt our little patient, or surely the agony he so often writhed in, would have embittered an older heart than his.

Sister had but to smile as she passed and say "Sidney," and Tommy smiled back and nodded reassuringly; even if she and Tommy secundus appeared on friendly terms, such as would once have caused a gale of jealousy to rise. Tommy secundus—cured long, long ago—long ago buried the war-hatchet, and planted violets over it. Now he comes in nearly every Sunday, perches on his former rival's locker, and supplies him with the details of the family history, from the arrival of the baby's first tooth, to his own recently-acquired accomplishment of walking on his head—which latter I have the greatest difficulty to postpone a gratuitous exhibition of, and Sister always had grave doubts whether the performance did not come off after all on the landing outside, on the chance of the opening door giving Tommy primus a view of it. Tommy secundus brings his mother sometimes, who smooths the boy's hair, and holds his thin fingers, and bends over him as though he were a bairn of her own. Alas for Tommy! That is all the "mothering" he has known, and the royal gift of sympathy brings her and even the baby to see our laddie. Something fortunately charms the little one, possibly the still urbane Ward-cat, and she clings so tenderly to Tommy's neck, that the entire Ward are delighted, and so is he.

Time goes on, and Tommy's short earthly voyage is very nearly over. The respite is briefer and each agony more keen, and in his delirium he calls back all the details of Nurse's long-forgotten stories. Many an old tradition lives again in his wandering memory, and the very rose petals that fell in the eddying stream by Zutphen's field fall again, as her little patient lies hour after hour fighting his battle with every breath. The day comes when he strays no longer, but lies silent on Nurse's arm, the corner of his blanket doubled between his teeth for fear of moaning, "because it woke them up." Our wilful imperious Tommy is going beyond our ken, and as he hears the measured

tread that brings another sufferer into the harbour walls of the *Hotel Dieu*, he lifts his eyes to Sister's face; the dark valley is very near, which he loved to hear about, and the fight and the victory, but the Valley of the Shadow has to be crossed. "No, she shall stay," says Sister, comforting as usual, as she goes; and as her kindly face and gray hair—it has grown gray in the years she has spent in the *Hotel Dieu*, comforting and tending Tommies and Kitties of every age, from four to four-score—pass from our sight, the little boat drifts safely into port.

A sad story for Christmas? Well, perhaps it is; yet if we place the brief record of our Hospital boy's—following that great example of charity and goodwill that comes to us every Christmas as it did nineteen centuries ago—beside his hero's, who to him was a living actual friend in spite of the three hundred years that lay between them; if we realize how bravely, in the face of pain, of hereditary tendencies, of evil surroundings and up-bringsings, our little soldier fought and conquered, perhaps we shall not think it such a sad story after all.

R. OLIVER.

### A TRUE STORY OF A HOSPITAL CAT.

BY MISS ANNESLEY KENEALY,  
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#### CHAPTER I.

WE called him the "Death Cat," and he certainly looked it. Not a sleek, comfortable, well-fed tabby, nor an aristocratic tortoise-shell, whose path in life was strewn with the freshest milk and the daintiest morsels from his master's table; but a lean, long-haired, ancient-looking creature, with an uncanny, furtive look in his yellow eyes, as if he had grown grey and old in the service of sin.

He was never heard to purr, nor seen before a fire in that snug, cosy way that ordinary pussies love so well. He always seemed to hold himself aloof from his feline species, with their frivolities and irresponsibilities, as if his work was of a graver kind; and it was firmly believed in our Hospital that he had always been old and ugly, and just as he was when we first made his acquaintance. We never believed that he could have evolved from a soft ball of silky fluff, with merry, elastic, kittenish airs and graces; and one of the Doctors went so far as to assert that he was the veritable "scapegoat" amongst cats, and had therefore been made to take upon himself the sins and wickedness of his tribe. But very few of the Nurses were satisfied with this view, preferring to look upon him as an emissary of the Prince of Darkness himself,

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