

"Surely, it will be very pleasant living here, if I am so fortunate as to get the place,' I thought, 'and it can't be so very hard to wait upon this invalid and her little child. I only hope I can please them.'

"The door opened; a tired-looking servant girl, evidently fresh from the kitchen scrubbing, stood before me, wiping the still dripping suds from her bare arms. She invited me in and took my card upstairs. In a few moments she returned and showed me to her mistress's room.

"A delicate-looking woman of perhaps twenty-six or seven reclined upon the bed, and a child of three summers was playing on the floor beside her. At a glance I had taken in the room and its occupants, and the first impression was that everything was pinched and scanty. Disorderly it certainly was, and after greeting me and asking me to take a chair (which I had to clear and dust first), Mrs. Henry proceeded to question me as to my qualifications, but in a rather timid manner, as though hardly sure she had a right to do even this. She had only ascertained that I had had no experience when her husband entered the room. It was soon evident that he was master there, for, though my services were required for the wife, he asked all questions and decided all points.

"He was not long in finding out my need, or in taking advantage of it to engage me at two dollars per week, giving, as his excuse for paying no more, the fact that I was inexperienced. And so I was, in a professional sense, but not in actual practice, as much of my time for the past five years had been spent by the bedside of my sick parents. However, necessity is a hard master, and I accepted the situation and entered upon my duties at once.

"I am not going to weary the reader with details. But in the month that followed I learned some of the reasons why marriage is a failure, and a good many things beside.

"A Nurse had only been engaged when kitchen girl after kitchen girl had refused to stay because the work was too hard. They found it really quite too much to take care of the house, iron, bake, tend door, wait upon an invalid, and follow up the varying movements of a small child, to say nothing of a little plain sewing and a good deal of mending. Yet Mr. Henry thought it very strange that a woman couldn't do so much as that for a family of three, when his mother took care of ten, and 'kept things in shape too.'

"Now, those little words 'amiable and obliging' in that 'ad' meant a good deal, as I found to my sorrow; for that child was the most irritable, and that husband the most exasperating,

of any human beings I ever met. I did not wonder that the wife was an invalid at twenty-four, for this man saw no reason why she could not do as much as his mother. He made no allowance for basement stairs, or for her thousand and one calls to the door where his mother had none, or, in fact, for the innumerable drafts upon her strength of which his mother knew nothing. Everything was furnished in the smallest possible quantities, and so grudgingly that, by-and-bye, she gave up the unequal struggle and lay down. Ah! why could he not have been wise in time, and by providing suitable help and necessary comforts have saved his wife her health and himself the expense of a physician and more? There are many men who are 'penny wise and pound foolish.'

"Well! I pitied my poor little mistress, out of whom all ambition and life seemed to be crushed, and I served her faithfully. At the close of the first month I had taken care of my invalid to her entire satisfaction; had lost two-thirds of every night's rest in caring for the fretful child; had extricated it from more mischief than a dozen ordinary children could possibly think up. I had put the house in perfect order, and made it look as pleasant as its meagre furnishings would allow; had mended innumerable garments, and done all the plain sewing that the poor wife could get material for. For once, Mr. Henry seemed to realise that it was economy to have it done while it could be done at so little expense; so I folded away sheets and pillow slips; two plain wrappers for Mrs. Henry; slips, bibs, and aprons for baby, and night-shirts for Mr. H., till I was really surprised at myself. And when, at the end of the month, he handed me eight dollars, with the remark that I 'had earned that mighty easy,' I begged leave to differ from him, and informed him that he must fill my place immediately, as my failing health from overwork and loss of sleep made it necessary for me to leave. You should have seen his look of blank amazement as he gasped:

"'Overwork! Why, I'd like to know what you've done?'

"As I did not feel called upon to inform a man so utterly blind to woman's work and care what my work had been, I left him unanswered, and soon after bade adieu to the house where I had served my first apprenticeship at 'working out.' But one thing I can assure you, I never after answered an 'ad' that called for a Nurse for mother and a Nurse for child, a plain sewer, and a woman who was so amiable and obliging that she would do everything and bear anything—all for two dollars a week.—ELLA MARIE MARBLE."

LUCINDA.

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