

so quietly loved them all and liked to see them about her. They each meant a love-token from some friend whose heart went out to hers in sympathy—the oak-framed engraving, the Dresden vase, the pictured face in its silver circlet, the gold-topped smelling-bottle in her feeble hand, all expressed dumbly the human longing to help her bear her burden of months of pain.

She had fought so desperately at first against the disease which now pinioned her so tightly that each breath was a labour and each movement a weariness. Life seemed so desirable, so full of promise of gladness in things accomplished, and she had made, oh! so many plans for the golden future. Not selfish plans either. Her hopes, her aspirations all stretched out towards the care and the succouring of others, and her highest and most egotistical castle in the air but placed her in such a position that she could most surely minister to the poor and needy of God's earth.

For a long time she could not believe that the grim shadow of death was upon all these plans and hopes. Long after others had pityingly noted the failing strength, the hollow cheeks, and the hectic flush she had still clung to the delusion of returning health, and fancied her life was yet before her.

While still in the schoolroom she had resolved on her future, and gloried in the self-abnegation it was to bring her.

She would be a nurse. A friend, some years older than herself, whom she adored and idealised after the manner of girlhood, had just entered a hospital. She had been to see her, and the quaint severity of the nursing costume, no less than the great happiness of her friend in her work, took deep root in her imagination and heart, and from that day forward she yearned to join her.

Perhaps some dim instinct warned her that the years were few for work and must needs be quickly filled. She knew no rest until the nursing sisterhood at the hospital, who at first had demurred at her exceeding youth, had consented to receive her on trial.

Her work began, and she was happy—feverishly, ardently happy. It was a joy to be so tired that she fell asleep after a long day's work, before she could complete her evening prayer. Real self-sacrifice was in the labour that her friends called menial, in the intensely plain and often wholly unappetising food, in the hard, unyielding mattress on which she slept, the bare boards of the cold, half-furnished dormitory, destitute of all home comforts.

The patients were often exacting, irritable, trying. Their sickness unglorified by patience and redolent of past sinfulness.

They taxed her strength, and were querulous in their demands on patience and temper. She did her best, but her health failed under the constant strain, and after a few months the hospital verdict was "not strong enough," and she had to leave.

A short rest at home doing much for her, she soon tried again, her spirit unchecked by disappointment, her hopes of success as bright as ever.

But it was not to be. Each fresh venture, and she made many, all ended in the same way; and sorrowfully, at last, the bitter conviction forced itself slowly upon her that, while her friend was succeeding in her work, she herself must be content to leave hers unfinished.

The exceeding bitterness of the thought was at first

so great a shock that she felt as though she was even then losing her hold on life itself.

At last, dully, slowly, she accepted her lot. She could not do otherwise. Week by week, day by day, she felt her strength ebbing from her. She read the sealing of her fate in the guarded hopes of recovery held out by the doctors, in the forced cheerfulness of her relatives, and between the lines of the sympathetic letters from old-time friends and acquaintances. She grieved in heart, but gave no sign.

The home-people were kind; but they did not altogether understand. They thought she had been wilful, self-sufficient, chafing at the restraints of home, and longing for her own way. They did not comprehend the eager spirit that sought its solace in work they neither approved nor cared for. She was always as one apart from them. Her aspirations were on different lines, and often jarred on theirs. Now that she was ill they were sorry for her, and did all they could to smooth the hard pathway to the grave.

They put her into the bright front bedroom, and filled it with all things pleasant and desirable.

A trained nurse took up her position night and day, each sick fancy was attended to, and every point conceded to her. Yet true soul-sympathy was lacking, and the girl hungered for it. Week by week she grew steadily worse.

Her friend came to see her now and again, and in her absence she lay and longed for her—longed exceedingly for the clasp of her hand, the tones of her voice, the sense of strength that friendship gives. But the busy hospital worker, with her hands full of many responsibilities, had little time to spare for prolonged visits. However, this May afternoon she had made a special effort to come, for her last visit of a week ago had shown her practised eye that soon no more visits would be possible.

Her heart ached for the young life, cut off at its very zenith, and tears blurred the vision of the sharpened face, colourless save for its purpling lips, parted in painful breathings. The nurse went quietly out, and the two were left alone—one in the fulness of energetic womanhood, the other on the borderland of the fulness of the life beyond.

As the sympathetic presence made itself felt, the eyes opened from a light doze, and the cold fingers sought the warm life of the hand that covered them.

"Dear Dodo," murmured the weak voice, using the old pet name of familiar friendship, "I have wanted you so."

"I knew you did, darling," said the other, quietly, "so I have come."

There was silence except for the laboured breathing from the bed. Then the whispering voice spoke again:

"Let me look at you, Dodo. You make me feel strong; your face has strength in it, and I am so weak."

Tears gathered and almost fell. Through them she could feel rather than see the earnest, loving gaze of the soul looking out from those steadfast eyes. The gaze thrilled her as much as the clasp of the cold fingers. "I can't finish what I meant to do," went on the whisper, "you must finish it for me. It makes me strong to look at you. Perhaps, some time, when you feel weak and tired, I may come and look at you and make you strong; afterwards, when I am gone from this body, that isn't any use to me now."

The few words took a long while to say, and they ended with the faintest touch of the old whimsical

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